



2nd and 7 (Season of Change #2)

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Category: Sport

Description: Season of Change

Tyrone Wicawiil

A good quarterback knows how to pivot, how to shift on a dime, how to power through. Im no longer a quarterback, but I still adapt and persevere like no one else I know. From the outside, my life would seem anything but ideal. To me I have been blessed and I am grateful for every day I am given. My brother, Lyndell, is my world and everything I do is for him. And I have never regretted a single moment spent in dedication to his health and happiness.

More so when I realize all of my blood, sweat, and tears over the course of my 23 years has made me into the man I am and has led to the only thing Lyndell and I truly need but have never dared hoped to find a family.

Edith Edee Shingleton

Second year of college, Im getting the hang of things. I want to prove myself, show I have what it takes to be a photojournalist. Im given the prestigious assignment of photographing the university football team. It only takes me 3 seconds to realize I was tapped because no one else wants to put up with Coach Heacock and his ridiculous demands.

A few months on the sidelines changes my entire life. Friends, purpose, a boyfriend, and a big brother. Between the moments of pure joy, there is sadness and tragedy. Attempted murder, WWE style stadium fighting, police custody, popsicle eating contests, press conferences, and oddly placed mirrorscant regret the journey, when the destination is the arms of the man I love.

Authors Note: 2nd and 7 is book two in the Season of Change series. Each book will focus on a new couple, M/F or M/M and will end with that couples HFN, with a continuing story arc that is best read in order. This series includes crude humor, adult sexual content, coarse language, and all the good feels. If this isnt your game of choice, dont play with the men and women of Season of Change.

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“Did you stretch?” I nod my head at my brother with an indulgent smile.

“I did, Lyn.”

“Good. Good. Did you go potty?”

“Yes!” I answer with a chuckle.

“Where’s your water?”

I pat my little pouch where the water bladder sits in my mascot costume. “I got it right here, buddy.”

“Good. Good.” His dark eyes, so much like my own, drop down the length of my body, covered in light brown fake fur.

Today is the first game of the season and I am amped to get it started.

Love football season, beginning to end, even though I can’t play anymore.

Being the school mascot is all the fun without the constant pressure of being a player for a Big10 team.

Don’t get me wrong, if I thought I could physically handle playing, I’d be on that field in a different kind of uniform in a heartbeat, but I’ve accepted my fate...

and looking at my brother, watching his eyes still light up after so many years, I can’t

even be mad about it.

We're alive. We're healthy. And we've got the support of the university behind us...

except for Coach Heacock. And frankly, that man can go fuck himself.

Speaking of which, the little cockroach strides past us, looking down his nose at us both. With a smirk, I tip an imaginary hat at him as he passes.

"COACH!" Lyndell calls out after the head coach. My body stiffens as Coach slowly turns around.

"Yes, Lyndell?" He's usually polite to my brother.

I think that's one line he knows he can't cross.

Lyndell Wicawiil is the heart of the university's football program.

My brother is beloved by all, from faculty, to players, to coaches, to the janitorial staff.

It's difficult to be in Lyn's presence for more than a few minutes and not fall victim to his sweet innocence and enthusiasm.

"Don't forget to poop before the game, Coach." I drop my head, my body shaking with silent laughter.

"Thank you, Lyndell."

"Don't wanna run off field with the turtle head poking out again!"

“Jesus!” I can’t keep silent any longer, uproarious laughter escaping as I lean against the wall of the hallway.

“Tyrone,” Coach’s tone is chilling, but it doesn’t bother me anymore...or at least not as much as it used to. “Don’t you have some dancing and such to do? I guess if you can’t play football like a real man on the turf, you might as well prance around like a fucking fairy on it.”

I continue to laugh, his barbs not landing as sharply as they used to. “Yeah? And how do you get to that turf, Coach? Better make sure that golf cart is all charged up. Wouldn’t want you to have to walk the 50 feet on your own.”

Coach huffs, his face a mottled red as he turns away and stomps off.

Lyn watches him go with a sad shake of his head. “He poops a lot.” I rear back at the unnecessary observation by my brother. He meets my eyes with a shrug, “He should be less full of crap.”

I’m still laughing after I walk him to the laundry room in the athletic complex. He’s the towel boy for the team and takes his job very seriously. While he and the rest of the staff get everything ready, it’s my time to shine. I don the head of the costume inside the tunnel to the field.

I wait for the signal, then run out, motioning for the crowd to get up and make some noise.

Exaggerated movements, high energy, a few acrobatics.

It’s hot as fuck in this costume despite the air flow inside, but I love what I do.

I’m team-adjacent without the pressure and invasive nature of Heacock’s coaching

style, a term I use loosely, and a built-in excuse to let loose and have some fun. It's literally my job!

The crowd is ecstatic. Almost 110,000 people, bringing the stadium to life, like a living, breathing entity.

I still get goosebumps. The Alumni Association acts like a booster of sorts and is one of the best in the nation.

The "student" section is leading a white-out to start the season off right.

Near the 40-yard line, I'm standing before a huge section, usually occupied by alumni season ticket holders.

I lean forward with my hand to the approximate location of my ear, telling them I can't hear them.

When the ground practically trembles beneath my feet, I grin, though no one can see me, and do a backflip.

I land on my feet, the sounds of the crowd deafening.

You'd think I wouldn't be able to hear individual conversations with the swell of the crowd and my costume. Unfortunately, a few games a year the words of the crowd filter through. Especially the people who occupy the sidelines, they don't think I can hear anything through the head piece.

"One of the best quarterbacks in years and he gets hurt and now jumps around in a stupid costume."

"It's not like he did it on purpose. It was an accident," their neighbor says, leaning in

close.

“Bullshit. The money the university wasted on him...it’s criminal. He should have to pay it back.” I block out the rest of their conversation, moving to the center of the field. It’s nothing I haven’t heard before.

“Who is that?” I mutter to myself when the glare from a camera lens draws my eyes.

It shouldn’t, at a Big10 school, there are always cameras at games, not to mention, the number of people who record and take pictures hoping to go viral.

But the woman, nay, the goddess behind the camera has my full attention.

I stop completely, the rest of the stadium falling away as I watch this gorgeous creature move about to get the best shots.

She has a press badge, but it’s one issued by the school, so she must work on the school paper.

She stands up, putting her entire body on display.

I eat her up, beautiful toffee-colored flawless skin, long braids frame a full face with a mouth made for sin, thick body with big tits, and a heart-stopping smile.

She’s tall, probably less than half a foot shorter than me and I’m 6’1”.

“Wicawiil! Stop drooling and start dancing!” The Mic-Man, Addelsbach, a true senior, rushes past me, waving his hands to get my attention.

He can’t see my glare behind the head piece, but I’m sure he knows it’s there since he’s smirking at me.

Reluctantly, I force myself to follow him.

We round the stadium once more, then the opening ceremonies start.

By the time the game is in full-swing, I've lost track of her.

We lose, which sucks. But it was only by a field goal against last season's champions. Oddly enough, I'm more upset about the fact I don't see my mystery girl. I've been all over the stadium and athletic complex and can't find her.

"TY!" Lyn yells for me and I spin around in time to accept a bear hug from him.

It doesn't matter that he's 7 years older than me, he is my world.

No matter what happens at school, or work, or in my personal life, Lyndell is the best part of it all and always brings a smile to my face. "I'm hungry. Ice cream?"

I chuckle, "No. You know the rules. We lost—"

"Only by a field goal!" he whines. "And against the champions...ice cream will help soothe the pain of such a close game."

I lean around my brother and glare at Addelsbach. "Quit making him do your dirty work."

"But...ice cream." Addelsbach replies with a pout. He's 5'11" and 165 pounds of lean muscle and should not be pouting like a child.

"Dammit." I drop my head with a sigh. I don't even have to say it; they both know I'm going to agree.

“Ice cream!” Lyndell takes off, his excitement too much to stand still. He has an excuse, the goofball next to me bouncing on his feet does not.

I look him in the eye, my bag over my shoulder, “May your lactose be intolerant.”

Addelsbach gasps theatrically, “How dare you!”

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If he clenches that asshole any tighter, he's going to shit diamonds!

Jesus, what the fuck is his problem? I honestly can't tell.

Rumors abound regarding Coach Heacock, but I had hoped they were gross exaggerations.

I should have known with the list he sent over before the season even started that they were probably underselling just how fucking misogynistic, possibly racist, and antiquated he actually is.

I pass his position on the sidelines again in my quest for the best shots of the game.

I'm in my second year here, and I'm getting a chance to make a name for myself as a photojournalist by documenting the university's college football season.

I'm realizing I was selected because everyone else was smart enough to pass on dealing with Heacock. Ambition makes us stupid.

The three-page single spaced acceptable parameters list he sent to the editor-in-chief was like a blinking neon sign to run away and instead I let my need to prove myself propel me headfirst into a giant clusterfuck.

He provided a detailed and exhaustive list of acceptable angles and locations, which personnel to photograph and which to avoid, the places within university athletics where I am permitted and where to avoid.

He insisted on final approval or veto for any images before they are used in any way, shape, or form.

Also, I am to only photograph him from the left side and nipples up.

I gagged...repeatedly. Anything to do with his nipples is gross and not something I ever wish to think about ever again.

So, naturally, after we agreed to his ridiculous terms, my editor Destinaysia Bartley told me to document everything, no matter how small, anywhere and everywhere.

This man wants to muzzle the media...he's gonna get bit.

And nothing in the last game and a half has given me reason to refuse her.

Coach Heacock is one of the worst human beings I've ever had the displeasure of meeting.

Even our faculty advisor encouraged me to take pictures that tell an accurate and truthful story.

Capture every moment, heartache and highs, triumphs and tribulations whether they fall within his parameters or not.

And if I can find something to take him down, you best believe I'm gonna do it.

Especially after witnessing his abhorrent behavior toward Phia Kerr, this season's water girl. From what I've found out, Phia is incredibly intelligent, well respected by faculty and students alike, and generally a sweet person. She does not deserve Heacock's wrath.

The fact that our school “paper” is digital does not work in his favor.

He was overruled when he tried to get us banned, along with Phia.

Rumor has it, the board barely contained their joy at turning him down so spectacularly.

They knew what they were doing, giving us an all-access pass to tell the world who Coach Heacock really is.

Destinaysia told me that they’ve been trying to get rid of him for years.

He’s the last of the “old guard” and the current dean wants him gone and they don’t want to pay him anything as compensation.

I intend to do my job and do it well. We published my photos from the first game that fit Coach’s criteria, but we are keeping everything else I took for leverage or a better story later.

You’d think knowing there was a photographer running around, you and your players would be on your best behavior.

Heacock really believes he has enough power to remain untouchable while he dictates everyone else’s actions.

He isn’t my coach, and he isn’t my advisor either. And Lord knows he ain’t my momma.

I roll my eyes at Coach as I pass him, then start chuckling as I catch Big Prib stalking Phia.

I capture every moment on film and am abnormally happy that I did.

I've met Prib a couple times but haven't spent a great deal of time with him, though the campus grapevine speaks highly of him.

On and off the field. No lady drama, an excellent student, exceptional football player, and a leader on the team.

The fact that he doesn't want to go pro is astonishing and commendable.

I'm watching him and the plays on the field.

I catch the moment the action turns in Phia's direction.

Prib rushes to get to her before she's trampled to death.

He wraps his arms around her middle and hoists her into the air, his back to the field.

When the ball carrier is tackled, Prib absorbs the impact and barely moves, keeping Phia safe and sound.

Click. Click. Click.

I take picture after picture, giggling as he slowly lowers her to the ground and presses his body into hers.

He whispers something to her I'm too far away to hear, and when she turns around, she smiles up at him.

It drops quickly and she rushes off field to the tunnel.

A quick glance over my shoulder reveals the source of her distress.

I snap a few pics of Coach glaring at her retreating form.

Brandon Beiler, the offensive line coach, follows her, so I stay back and let him talk to her. I've noticed they've developed a fast friendship, but it isn't surprising. I've never met anyone who didn't like Brandon.

I pass him on my way to the tunnel. "Beiler." He smiles and I lift my camera and capture the moment. He's incredibly handsome, especially for someone 20 years my senior.

"Think you can put that thing away for a few minutes and help a girl out?" He nods toward the tunnel.

"What do you think I'm doing?" He laughs when I roll my eyes.

"She's a great girl." I nod in agreement, though I've never met her. "Could use a friend."

"Aside from you?" He nods. I smirk. "I think Big Prib would be happy to be her friend."

"A friend who doesn't want to see her naked." He shivers dramatically.

"Not nice to assume, Beiler. Don't think you know me just 'cause you saw me on a date a couple weeks ago."

He tilts his head. "Was that a date? Because from where I was sitting it looked like you had lost a bet and were suffering through the consequences."

I shake my head with a laugh. He's right, that date was awful. "Don't you have a game to coach?"

"I do." He points behind him. "Make her smile, please?"

"I'm on it." Inside the tunnel, I find Phia leaning against the wall, her hands on her thighs like she's catching her breath. "Girl, that was hot!"

Her head snaps up, a slow grin stretching her lips. "Almost dying, do it for you?"

I fan myself as I step closer. "Not usually, but the rescue...dayum! Edee Shingleton. School newspaper photographer." I hold out my hand for her to shake. Strong, firm grip. I can already tell she's good people.

"Phia Kerr. Sideline nuisance."

Waving off her concern, I tell her, "Ah, don't let Coach He-A-Cock into your head. He's a fucking asshole and not worth your time or tears."

"He-A-Cock? I love it!" She laughs so hard, tears fill her eyes. "Thank you, I desperately needed that."

I nod in understanding, "Glad I could help. I'll let you get back out there, just wanted to tell you, I got some good shots of Big Prib saving you if you want some vag vault material."

"Oh my gosh!" Her laughter follows me as I walk backward a few steps, then spin on my heel and leave her to finish collecting herself in the tunnel. On the sidelines again, I take a few shots of the cheerleaders, the band, Prib, and Phia when she returns.

"I told you, girl, you have to take the right kind of shots of the right kind of subjects!"

With a heavy sigh, I stand up and turn to find Heacock in the passenger seat of his golf-cart, scowling at me. “Hey!” I offer him a half-ass salute and wander off to do my thing.

I stop in my tracks about 20 feet down, when I look through my camera lens and find the mascot staring in my direction...

again. I tilt my head and snap a few pics of them.

I’ve caught them several times since last game, but I’m not sure who the mascot is.

I should know, but I hadn’t taken the time to learn anyone’s names if they weren’t a key player on the team.

Don’t get me wrong, everyone is essential; band member, mic-man, groundskeeper, towel boy, mascot and everyone in between. I just didn’t want to overwhelm myself with too much info at one time. Now, I’m kinda wishing I’d pushed myself to learn more.

The crowd goes wild as the clock counts down. We win and I can feel the energy from the stadium, like a pulse beating beneath my skin. A hum of excitement. I literally had nothing to do with today’s win and yet, I feel connected to the team. I guess this is school pride.

I stay behind as the field and stadium empty, capturing every minute of the win. Walking through the corridors of the athletic complex, I run into Lilly Geddes, who handles the PR for the team. We’ve been in communication since the summer when I was initially assigned to the football team.

“Get any good shots today?” she asks, leaning against the stone wall, her ankles crossed. Her casual posture lasts all of two seconds, before she slaps both high-heeled

feet to the ground and bounces slightly. “Please tell me you got every second of Pribula rescuing Ms. Kerr?”

“I did!” I reply with just slightly less enthusiasm. Lilly claps her hands.

“Put them in the shared folder as soon as you can. I’m gonna put them on the homepage! In a slideshow!”

I chuckle at her exuberance and the fact that Heacock will hate it. “Happy to oblige. Hey, who’s the mascot?”

Still smiling, she answers, “Tyrone Wicawiil.”

“That name is so familiar,” I muse, knowing I’ve heard it somewhere.

“Lyndell is his brother.”

“Oh! Lyndell! He’s such a sweetheart. He gave me a towel during the last game because it was so hot, I had to keep wiping sweat off my forehead and under my braids.”

“He’s as much a part of this school as the mascot itself.” Her eyes widen alarmingly. I turn to see what has her so concerned. Lyndell runs into me and picks me up. He squeezes me tight.

Laughing, I pat his shoulder. “Hi, Lyndell!”

“Lyn,” Lilly begins in a soft voice. “Put her down.”

“Sorry!” He drops me to the ground, but I manage to keep my balance as he abruptly lets me go. “We won!” He kisses my cheek, then Lilly’s before he takes off. “ICE

CREAM!”

We watch him go. “Edee, did something happen with Tyrone?”

“No. Not at all.” I wave her off and fiddle with the strap of my equipment bag. “Just wondered.”

She grins obnoxiously at me. “Of course. Well, if you wanted something to happen...I hear he’s single.”

“I haven’t even seen his face!” I blurt out, then backtrack. “I mean, good for him. Being single is great.”

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“What are you gonna get today?” I ask my brother. Fall on campus is easily my favorite time and place. Still plenty warm, some of the trees are beginning to turn, and there is an air of anticipatory excitement with the rest of the school year stretched out before us with limitless possibilities.

Also, the coeds showing off some skin ain’t bad to look at either.

He glances at me, quickly looking forward with a goofy grin. “Ice cream.”

“Nah! Nope. Lyndell, you can not live on ice cream alone.”

“You aren’t a doctor.” I laugh at his retort.

“True, but I am your brother, and I’d hate for you to develop diabetes.” He shrugs, not concerned in the least. He knows what diabetes is, however, it’s more of an abstract concept to him at this point. No worries, I’ll keep us both in good shape.

“Buffet. I want a little of everything.” I’m not surprised; that’s his usual go to.

“I want to see a couple vegetables on your plates.”

“You can see them.” I chuckle, openly staring at him, waiting him out. “Doesn’t mean I’ll eat them.”

“I’m just— Hey!” Lyndell sees something or someone and takes off.

He runs off the cement path and through the grass.

He stops in front of a woman and picks her up.

She squeals. Shit. “LYNDELL!” I run after him and by the time I get to them she’s laughing and he’s talking her ear off about buffets.

It’s camera girl. “Lyn, you can’t just pick up people whenever you feel like it. ”

“Yes, I can.” He flexes his arms after he drops her back to the ground. “I’m strong.”

“I know you are, but you need to ask permission before you touch someone. You don’t want to make them uncomfortable.”

His expression is immediately remorseful. “Sorry.” He apologizes to her softly, his head down.

“He’s right, Lyndell, you don’t want to upset someone. But I’ll let you in on a secret.” She’s so fucking beautiful, even more so up close. Lyn bends his knees slightly so she can whisper to him, “I don’t mind your hugs, Lyndell. Best I’ve ever had.”

My brother stands up straight, his shoulders back and his head held high. “I give great hugs.”

“I know.” She smiles up at me, her brows dipping in question.

I thrust my hand out. She takes it immediately, the softness of her palm skittering along my skin and straight to my dick. “Tyrone Wicawiil. This goof’s brother.” Her eyes widen in surprise.

“The mascot.”

I nod. “That’s me.”

Her toffee-colored skin pinkens slightly.

“I’ve heard a lot about you.” I swallow hard, wondering what exactly she’s heard.

Depends on who you talk to whether it’s my academic performance or the disappointment of my athletic career.

“Lilly said you were single—handedly the best mascot the school has had in years.” She stumbles over the words and I’m thinking that is not what she meant to say.

I’m enjoying her nervousness far more than I should.

“I don’t know about all that, but I like that you were talking about me.

” Lyndell snorts, but I’m not deterred. I give her a half grin and step a little closer to her.

I don’t flirt often, I’m over 6 feet tall, in excellent shape, and my dark reddish-brown skin tone draws in the ladies.

At this moment, and since the first moment I saw her a couple weeks ago, hers is the only opinion I care about.

“Wh-what are you two...where are you heading?” Before I can answer, Lyndell responds enthusiastically.

“Buffet. Pizza, burgers, mac and cheese...” he side-eyes me again, “vegetables, and ice cream.”

“Lyndell,” I grumble, making her giggle. The sound hits me square in the solar plexus. “We’ve been over this.”

“Ice cream is good, but have you ever had fresh veggies with ranch dip? So good.” I dip my chin at her in gratitude that she’s picked up on my frustration with my brother’s diet.

“Ranch?” He turns to me. “Do they have ranch?”

“Yes, a lot of people eat it on their salads.” He wrinkles his nose, I’m very familiar with his opinions on rabbit food.

“You don’t have to eat it with lettuce,” she continues. “Just some broccoli and cauliflower, a few carrot sticks. Super tasty.”

“Hmm.” He’s suspicious, but open to it. I could kiss her! “I’ll try it if you come with us.” Dammit. He’s smooth. He’s getting ice cream. He knows how to play the game too well.

“Oh!” She’s surprised by his invitation. “Do you even know my name?” I realize with a start, I do not.

“Yes,” he answers immediately, but his lips thin out as he mashes them to the side in thought. “No.”

“You shouldn’t invite strange women to eat with you, Lyndell. It’s not safe.”

“You aren’t strange.”

“Thank you. My name is Edee.” She holds out her hand to my brother and I think I fall a little more under her spell.

Lyndell takes her hand in his and pumps his arm twice.

“It’s lovely to meet you, Lyndell. I would love to eat with you and...

your brother,” she glances at me for a second, “but I’ve already eaten and I’m on my way to class right now.

” Edee crooks her finger and Lyndell happily bends down again, no doubt thinking she’s gonna tell him another secret.

Instead, she surprises us both by kissing him on the cheek.

“Thank you so much for inviting me, though.” She offers him a broad, toothy, welcoming smile.

I cough into my fist to hide my laughter as he dazedly stares at her, presses his palm to his cheek and blushes! I can’t blame him, she’s...incredible. The two of us stand stock still, watching her walk away, waving over her shoulder at us as she goes.

“Shit!” I mutter a moment after she disappears. “I didn’t get her number.”

“Your game needs some work.” I scoff at him, pushing his shoulder to get him moving.

“Keep it up and I won’t let you hang out with Addelsbach.”

“He has game. You should take notes.”

“I’m filling your plate with veggies. All the veggies.”

His right shoulder lifts slightly, “Get me ranch dressing...and I’ll try it.”

“You gotta little crush on the camera girl, brother?”

“No!” he answers too quickly.

“Good, she’s mine.” He nearly chokes on his own spit and I am not amused.

“She kissed my cheek.”

That little brat.

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My eyes track him as he does a backflip midfield.

I should be taking pictures, but instead my brain is taking snapshots of a man in a furry costume, letting my imagination run wild about all the sweaty, muscular real estate beneath the costume.

It's been a couple weeks since I ran into him and his brother and, unfortunately, our paths haven't crossed again.

The universe is fucking with me.

I lost track of him after last week's game and haven't seen him on campus.

My head snaps up and I spin around to find the water station.

I haven't seen Phia today. She's usually running around before the game getting things ready, a quiet presence on the sidelines during the game. Lyndell is there instead.

I tear myself away from watching Tyrone and approach Lyndell, hoping for some answers. "Hey, Lyndell!"

He greets me excitedly. "I ate broccoli!"

"That's great!"

"I had to cover it in ranch though. It's not good. You lied."

I bark a laugh, “Did not!”

“Did too!” he giggles, accepting a carrier of bottles from one of the trainers to refill.

“Lyndell, do you know where Phia is?”

He bites his bottom lip as he concentrates on refilling the bottles. “Green apple splatters.”

“WHAT?!?”

“She had the green apple splatters and went home. I’m towel boy and waterboy.”

“You are doing a great job!”

“I am.” I laugh at his confidence.

“I’ll let you get back to work, Lyndell. See you later.”

“Good. Good.” I wander down the sideline and notice for the first time the quiet subdued nature of the team.

Especially Prib. There’s an odd tension in the way he holds himself.

And now that I think about it, he hasn’t been as polished this game, like he’s distracted.

He must be concerned about Phia. I mean, don’t get me wrong, having the shits a hundred years ago was a dire situation, but now...

I’m sure she’ll be fine in a day or so. Probably ate something that didn’t agree with

her stomach.

I should have gotten her number, then I could check on her. Maybe I'll find Prib after the game and see if he can give her my number. I'd like to get together with her for lunch or just to hang out. She seems like someone I could be friends with.

After the game, I pack up quickly and park myself outside the locker room to wait for Prib. Tyrone walks out first, fresh and clean from the shower...where he was naked and water dripped down his washboard abs, following a happy little trail to his—

“Tyrone!” I say a little too loudly. He looks up from his phone and gives me a small smile when he sees me.

My stomach dips at the lackluster greeting, but my brain rallies as my eyes follow down the length of his body.

How does he make athletic pants and a t-shirt sexy?

Oh, right, cause the sleeves are torn off exposing his muscular arms, the profile of firm pecs, hard abs, and the pants accentuate his long, long, legs.

He's over 6 feet, but not by much, just enough to be taller than me so I'd have to stretch on my toes to kiss him.

I shake my head to get rid of inappropriate thoughts.

The haze of lust dissipates when I notice his expression is drawn. “Are you alright?”

“Hey, Edee. Sorry, I can't talk right now.”

“What's going on? Everyone seems off today.”

“Phia Kerr, the water girl, she’s missing.”

“Phia is missing? I thought she went home sick.”

“So did everyone else. But no one can get a hold of her.”

“I want to help. Find her, I mean.”

His shoulders loosen. “Thank you. Prib is really worried.”

Nearly the entire athletic department is searching the stadium and complex for her. I’m starting to think she’s not here when Tyrone gets a text message. “They found her stuff in the trainer’s room. Phone and keys. She didn’t go home.”

I follow him down the corridor toward the elevator. We ride down in charged silence. I step into the women’s bathroom, relieve my angry bladder and wash my hands. When I walk out, Tyrone is bouncing from foot to foot. “Did they find her?”

“They know she went into the hydration room, but she never came out.”

“What? Why didn’t you go there?” I start running down the hallway.

“I was waiting for you!” Aw, that’s so sweet. Now is not the time. I stop and he nearly barrels into me. “Where’s the hydration room?”

He chuckles softly and leads the way into the locker room. We stop short, the room packed with players and personnel. My heart stops when I hear a guttural scream from Prib. Oh, God. No. No!

“She’s alive!” someone yells and my heart restarts much faster than before. Thank God. I can’t believe this happened here. Someone tried to kill her, drown and

suffocate her in the hot tub. She's so sweet, who would want to hurt her?

Coach Heacock.

The name is screamed in my head. My stomach churns, my fingers tingly at the cold truth. He's the only one who hated her, the only one who was openly hostile with the poor girl. Is he capable of something like this? I don't know. I don't want him to be, but I can't ignore his behavior.

Ty leads me and Lyndell outside to the parking lot after the paramedics arrive.

We grab our bags on the way out and stand in a spot out of the way.

A crowd gathers and soon most of the lot is full.

Lyndell slips his hand into mine. Looking up at him, my breath hitches at the tears that stain his cheeks.

I squeeze his hand, offering my silent support.

I'm not sure how much time passes before the paramedics wheel Phia out on a gurney, Prib clutching her hand, walking alongside them.

Movement to the right catches my eye. I release Lyndell's hand and pull my camera out of my bag.

I start snapping pictures of the crowd, trying to get as many faces as I can.

Tyrone scowls at me, "You can't give them some privacy? Anything for a story?"

I swallow hard, understanding why he feels that way.

I hate that I'm doing this, but something in my gut tells me I need to.

Someone needs to document what's going on.

"Not for a story." I whisper. "Something's not right.

Someone tried to not just hurt her but kill her.

I'm taking pics of the crowd to gauge reactions.

Maybe I'll capture something that could help find out who did this to her. "

His scowl drops, an expression of contrition in its place. "Oh." He sighs, closes his eyes, and tips his head back. "I feel dumb."

Lyndell snorts. "You should."

"Don't sugarcoat it, Lyndell," Ty mutters.

"Edee is really smart. And nice."

I smile up at Lyndell. "Thank you."

"Welcome." Lyndell looks pointedly at his brother. "Ask her to let us walk her home." He does not know how to whisper properly. I cover my mouth with my hand.

Tyrone glares at Lyndell but meets my eyes with a soft smile. "Can we walk you home?"

"Sure." I accept easily. I like them. The Wicawiil brothers are hard to ignore.

Lyndell is as big as his brother and nearly as fit.

He must work out with Tyrone. As we walk through campus to my dorm, I feel special being flanked by them both.

Safe. We don't talk much, the events of the evening weighing heavily on us all.

We're feet away from the main doors, when they are thrown open.

My roommate comes out. Great. Just what this day needed.

My entire body braces for impact. Shaye notices me first, her sneer something I'm used to at this point.

She dismisses Lyndell but her demeanor changes instantly when she registers Tyrone.

"Ty!" Sweet as pie...I'm gonna be sick. "I know you aren't playing football anymore, but there's no reason to give up." She looks directly at me with pity. "Forget... her, buy me dinner, and I'll thank you properly."

"Fuck off, Shaye," he grits out, his jaw clenched, shoulders up near his ears. He's angry. That's hot.

"Whatever. Commit social suicide, see if I care. You aren't a has-been, Ty, you're a never-was." She titters as she walks between us, purposefully knocking into me on her way through.

I turn slowly to face Tyrone. "Not just a bitch to me then, she's an equal opportunity cunt."

"In more ways than one." My stomach drops...

he must have fucked her, or at least someone like her.

I'm not his type at all then. I'm not small, never been called petite a day in my life.

He's probably just being polite because I've been nice to Lyndell.

Lyndell likes me so he tags along like a good brother.

"Thanks for the walk home. Have a good night."

"Edee—"

"Gotta get up early and process the photos from today's game. I'll see you around." I cut him off, unlock the door and rush in. I try to think back over my interactions with Ty, I didn't give anything away about my little crush. Right? Shit, he probably thinks I'm pathetic.

And I'm a horrible person for feeling sorry for myself when Phia almost died! Literally. I'm the absolute worst.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

IT'S FUCKING KILLING ME!

Because I'm an idiot. Something Lyndell has taken great joy in pointing out while I pout and whine and bitch in every room of our small two-bedroom apartment. Addelsbach, Gill, Schultz and others have joined in, ribbing me for my lack of game.

I've found my one...but I can't contact her because I never got her fucking number.

I've been in her presence a few times, I've walked her home, we searched the entire stadium for Prib's girl and at no point in time did I think, "I need her number so I can call her. Ask her out properly. Inquire about her day. Gauge her feelings on oral sex. Does she need clitoral stim to cum or will my cock be enough for her to shatter in ecstasy?" You know, normal phone conversation between potential romantic partners.

I'm desperate. So, I've resorted to some light stalking. Nothing nefarious, just hanging around outside her dorm waiting to casually run into her and ask her for her number and preferred sexual position.

The door opens and I stand up from the bench I've taken over in the last week, but I sigh in disappointment when some dude emerges. I pull my phone out of my short's pocket when it vibrates with a message.

Addelsbach: Are you still camped out in front of her building?

Tyrone: No.

Addelsbach: *image*

My head snaps up, seeing the image of myself on my phone screen. It's taken from the side... "Motherfucker." I growl and flip Addelsbach off, settle on the bench with my arms crossed and my lips pursed. He's mocking me...and I deserve it.

My phone buzzes again.

Addelsbach: Douche. Don't you think DM-ing her on Insta is better than stalking her?

Tyrone: First, yes, but I didn't think of that. Second, not stalking, I'm using strategic placement for optimal visual identification for a serendipitous intervention.

Addelsbach: *image*

He sends me an image of the guy from You standing outside some girl's window.

Tyrone: That's entirely different.

At this point, it's probably not. Most people would consider my actions desperate and cringy.

I sigh in defeat, stand up and gather my bag and snacks.

I've been here for 4 hours. She ain't gonna show.

Or she saw me and is ignoring me. She was abrupt in her departure when Lyn and I dropped her off at the dorm.

Of course, the fact that she lives with Shaye is reason enough to run and hide. I can't

blame her for that.

Addelsbach: Is it though?

Tyrone: No, you're right. I'm being ridiculous. If we are meant to see each other, the universe will make it happen.

Addelsbach: How very new age hippie of you.

Addelsbach: Look up.

I glance up and nearly fall on my ass as I yelp in surprise. Edee is standing right in front of me, her left eyebrow raised in question, her lips twitching. She wants to laugh at me. Fair. I did just squeal like a fucking girl.

"Edee. What a pleasant surprise."

Her eyebrow rises impossibly higher. "Imagine my surprise, when Addelsbach texts me to come down and put you out of your misery." She glances at my bag full of supplies. "How long have you been sitting outside of my dorm?"

"Not long," I lie. Right to her face. She chuckles, obviously knowing I'm fibbing to save my stalker ass. "WAIT!" I spin around and point at Addelsbach, who is now standing with Gill and Schultz. "You had her number this whole fucking time? What the hell, man?"

"This was way more fun! Toodles!" The three of them wave merrily, then turn around and walk away.

Edee is laughing so hard, she rests her hand against my arm to hold herself up. Willing to take what I can get; I cover her hand with my own. When she rights

herself, her bright eyes meet mine and my chest hitches...she's pretty. Really pretty.

"I want your number." My eyes slowly close on a disappointed sigh. I have game, I swear. She just...she knocks me off my axis, in the best kind of way.

"You. Number. Too. "

I stare at her with my mouth parted. "I'm sorry, was that supposed to be a caveman?"

"Yes, of course. Didn't you get that by the deep voice?"

I shake off her bad impression. "Let's tap.

" She holds up her phone and I tap mine against hers and now we finally have each other's number.

I can text her. Call her. Facetime. A huge weight lifts from my chest as the relief loosens my muscles.

I don't think I realized how important this was to me; how important she is.

Though, I guess objectively, I should have known since I tried to justify stalking her for several days.

"Would you care to join Lyndell and I for dinner?"

"Sure. I'd love to." My lips stretch painfully in the biggest smile.

She agreed. Awesome. Edee puts her hands in the pockets of her jean shorts and rocks back and forth in her sandals.

Her toes are painted light purple. Her long, smooth legs are thick and juicy, toned and inviting.

My brows furrow, why isn't she walking away? She's just standing here.

"Uh...should I walk you to class?" She doesn't have a bookbag with her, no notebooks or computer. Edee snorts and shakes her head. "Uh...were you heading somewhere else? The library?"

"Ty, you asked me out to dinner."

"I did. I'll swing by later with Lyndell to pick you up."

"You do know it's dinnertime now, right?"

"Fuck! I've been sitting out here for like 6 hours!" Shit! No! She can't know that. She's gonna freak out and flee back into her dorm and file a report and I'll never see her again. Fuck! "I mean...not 6 hours...it feels like 6 hours, but it's only been—"

"360 minutes." Edee takes a deep breath, then loops her arm through mine and starts walking. "Come on. I heard stalking burns a lot of calories."

"Fucking Addy." I mutter much to her amusement. "Uh, speaking of Addelsbach, why does he—"

"I needed to interview him before the season started and he gave my editor his contact information for me to use. We've texted a few times. He really likes cat videos."

"He does. Unhealthy obsession," I agree.

“Like stalking?”

“Jesus, I’m never living this down, am I?”

She shrugs. “Probably not.”

“I just...I kept forgetting to get your number and then we had the bye week, and I wasn’t gonna see you and after what happened to Phia, I wanted to make sure you were ok. You seemed very off when Lyn and I brought you home.”

“Yeah, about that.” She glances up at me and then focuses on the path before us.

“I...I didn’t know...it bothered me, I guess, to hear Shaye speak like that to you.

I know you have a past, and I don’t blame you for that, I have my own...

limited experience. But I realized that if you’d been with girls like Shaye and other cheerleaders, I probably wasn’t your type, and you were just being polite because of Lyn—”

I cut her off with my mouth. Fuckin’ hell.

Her lips are soft and silky. I press harder, cupping her face with my hands.

When I lick across her lush lips, she moans and opens for me.

I take my time, and this right here is worth the potential prison sentence for stalking her. I soften the kiss and slowly pull back.

“You are very much my type, Edee. Everything about you sings to me.”

“But Shaye—”

I close my eyes and rest my forehead against her.

“I’ve never been with Shaye; she’s always been a bitch.

But I have been with some of the cheerleaders.

And the band. Majorettes. Dance squad.” She places her fingers over my lips to get me to stop talking.

“And the chess club president.” Her fingers slip and her mouth gapes in surprise.

“I like a smart woman.” My hands drift down her body to her wide hips.

I clutch them as I bring her closer to me.

“Which is only one of the reasons I like you.”

“You like ‘em limber, too,” she mumbles.

I dip my head down to her neck, breathing her in and pressing a soft kiss to the thin skin of her throat. “I look forward to learning how limber you are...” I step back, my hands falling from her sides, “in due time.” Interlacing our fingers, I resume our walk.

She clears her throat, “Where’s Lyndell?”

“Fuck!” I completely forgot. I take off at a fast jog, dragging her along with me. She’s laughing at me but struggling to keep up. “Sorry, sorry.” I slow down a little.

“What’s the rush?”

“Lyndell is done and I’m gonna be late picking him up.”

“From where?”

“He’s in the Good Work program, sort of.”

“What’s that?” she asks, her tone interested, if a little labored from our fast pace.

“Good Work is a program on campus that assists the intellectually disabled students in developing useful skills to find gainful employment and life lessons like maintaining a checking account, cooking, and basic home care.”

“I didn’t know that existed.” Her voice is thin, her eyes watery when she smiles up at me. “That’s amazing. What do you mean he’s ‘sort of’ in the program?”

I laugh thinking of my big brother. “This will be my 5th year here. He’s been with me since the first football training camp before my freshman year.

He has technically graduated from the program twice.

But the faculty let him hang around and help others in the program.

He works at the laundry facilities. He was promoted last year to supervisor.

” I am so proud of Lyndell. He has come so far in the last few years, all thanks to the exemplary and compassionate staff at the university.

“Wow!” She grins. “I didn’t know the towel boy was a professional.” Her free hand reaches across her body to brush my cheek. “You love him.”

“Of course, I do. He’s my brother.”

She shakes her head, her grin softening into a sweet smile. “It’s more than that.”

“He’s my fucking hero,” I say hoarsely, my throat straining with emotion. “He’s my world.”

Edee stops us, stepping in front of me. I look down at her, waiting. On her toes, she lightly brushes her lips against mine, once, twice. “Thank you for letting me be a part of your world.”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

I'm on a date with the university mascot and his brother.

The date part isn't weird, I've been on a few in my time, it's who it's with that is taking some getting used to.

We're sitting in one of the dining halls, nothing fancy, and not a typical location for a first date, but I'm having such an unexpectedly wonderful time.

I pull out my phone, under the guise of checking for messages, open the camera and hold it upright for a few seconds. The Wicawiil brothers bicker about laundry, of all things. Ty is doing it just to get a rise out of his big brother and Lyndell takes the bait.

"No! No!" Lyn shakes his head. "Why do you hate me so much?" he asks with a hearty chuckle.

"I don't hate you; I just think you're making it too complicated.

I wear clothes on my body, that body lays on sheets and under a blanket, and is dried daily with towels.

It's all mine...why can't I just wash them together?

The days of sorting into lights, and whites, and darks, and bedding, and towels...

over! Gone. Get with the times, brother.

" He flashes me a sinful grin of white teeth and pure happiness.

“Heathen!” Lyndell snaps back and I can’t hold back my own laughter any longer. They continue as I stop the video and text it to my mom.

Edee: *video* My dinner dates for the evening.

Mom responds less than a minute later.

Mom: Lucky girl! I hope you’re dating the one who knows how to properly sort his laundry. The other needs Jesus.

I snort, lifting my head when the two stop speaking all together. They are both staring at me expectantly.

“Sorry, gentleman. I relayed this particular debate to my mom, and she says that I better be dating Lyndell, because you,” I give Tyrone an unimpressed glare, “need Jesus. And I’m afraid I have to agree with her.

I had no idea how you played life fast and loose.

One red sock gets into a load of whites... complete anarchy!”

“Embrace the anarchy!” Tyrone yells, pounding his fist on the table. Lyndell loses it, laughing so hard tears fill his warm chocolate eyes. Several others in the dining hall offer their own support for overthrowing the system.

We finish eating dinner and have dessert. “I’ll trade you, Ty.” Lyndell offers after he’s cleaned his bowl of pudding.

Ty grins, leaning his elbows on the table and giving his brother his undivided attention.

Butterflies take flight in my stomach at the way he cares for Lyndell.

The devotion, admiration, love. Tyrone is a good man.

I slide my hand on his thigh under the table and squeeze.

I just want to touch him. His eyes slide to me, and his grin grows as he places his hand over mine and entwines our fingers. “Let’s hear it, Lyn.”

“I will give you...” Lyn’s eyes dart to me then back to his brother. “Edee for a piece of the chocolate chip cookie cake.” I gasp in outrage, but I start giggling and ruin it immediately.

“I’m worth more than a piece of cake!”

“It’s served warm with ice cream on top.” Lyn explains, like that will make me feel better about being bartered. Hmm...warm with ice cream? Now I want a piece of cake.

Ty sits back in his seat, his brows dipping down in consideration. These two, I swear. “You’ve already had dessert, Lyn.” Ty is stern in his reply, but Lyn isn’t dissuaded in the least.

“You haven’t had yours yet though.” Oh, that cheeky bugger. Ty definitely had dessert, but Lyn is talking about me!

“Lyn, watch yourself.”

Lyndell’s instantly crestfallen and remorseful. “I’m sorry, Edee, that was rude.”

“Thank you for your apology, Lyndell.”

His lips stretch to the side, his eyes lifting in amusement, “I’m sure warm chocolate chip cookie cake with fresh ice cream would make you feel better. And if you were to share...I heard that is caring.”

“Jesus!” Ty barks, his head falling back as he howls with laughter at his brother. I rest my head against Ty’s arm, my entire body shaking with merriment. Best dinner ever. Ty waves his hand at Lyn. “Go! Get your damned second dessert...you’re like a giant Hobbit!”

“Lyndell Baggins.” I laugh harder, watching Lyn hop up from his chair and practically skip back to the food line.

Sucking in a harsh breath, I tap Ty on his shoulder and wait for him to look at me. “Thank you.” I close my eyes, lift my head and press my lips to Ty’s. It’s soft, sweet, and over too quickly, but absolutely perfect.

“You’re welcome?” he responds, his words lifting up at the end in question. Men are clueless sometimes. I don’t need to explain, he’ll figure it out soon, I’m sure. Tyrone Wicawiil is a smart man.

Changing the subject, I ask, “Hey, have you spoken to Phia or Prib? How is she?”

“Yesterday.” He pulls his phone from his pocket, unlocks it, and hits Prib’s contact for a video call. A few seconds later, Phia and Prib fill the screen. Before any of us can speak, Phia squeals and claps her hands.

“Oh! Oh! Yay!”

“Babe, those are my sounds, you don’t share those with other people,” Prib growls adorably at his woman. Warms my heart to see them happy together.

“Hush! Ty and Edee are together! Oh, Lyndell! Hi!” She’s all kinds of chipper...

“She’s on medication.” Prib offers, as if reading my mind.

“Doesn’t mean I’m not happy to see them.” Phia shakes her head with a humph.
“Lyndell, how’s my hydration gear? Are you keeping it safe for me?”

“Yes.” Lyndell shoves a bite of cookie cake into his mouth, then slides another plate toward me. Yummy! “Are your green apples still splattering?”

Phia stares silent and unmoving for so long I think the call has frozen. “What?”

By some unspoken agreement, none of us offer an explanation, not wanting to revisit that horrible day when she was attacked. She’s healing and that’s what we need to focus on.

“I’ll be right back.” Phia gets up and wanders off screen.

“She’s been pissing non-stop.”

“Because you keep forcing her to drink?”

Prib shrugs, looking at Ty. “She will never be dehydrated again.” His eyes dart to the side, then he leans closer to the phone and whispers, “Edee, I can never thank you enough for your photos. They helped the police and the university immensely.”

I’m uncomfortable with the praise, so I reply, “Happy to help.”

“I mean it, Edee, the photos you supplied were invaluable. Those fucking morons high-fiving each other outside the stadium while Phia was being placed in the ambulance—” Prib cuts himself off, his voice and anger rising with every word.

“You managed to tie Yanok and Chester to Coach, and they turned on him real quick.”

I get a little thrill knowing my instincts were right. “How fucking dumb, right? Coach talked to them and hit them upside their heads...in plain view.” I feel Ty’s heated eyes on me, but I can’t look at him right now. It would be inappropriate to mount him in the middle of the commons dining hall.

“Hey, Edee?” Phia enters the frame, her head sideways like she’s leaning over the phone.

“This guy won’t tell me all the details, but I know enough to realize how grateful I am for your help.

And Ty? Thank you for being there for Prib and I, for looking for me.

I owe every one of you who took the time to search a debt I can never repay. ”

Ty clears his throat and grins, “You don’t owe me a damn thing, Lady Hydration.” His gaze shifts to Prib. “But you do.” Prib smiles, and Phia practically hip checks Prib to sit in front of the phone.

“Oh, how will you make him pay?”

“Dude.” We stare at Prib waiting for him to continue, when he shifts his focus to Phia.

“Did you just call me ‘dude’?”

“Uh...yeah. How you gonna sit there excited for my debt while he lets you off with a cutesy nickname?”

Phia's expression has Lyn, Ty and me laughing. She's unimpressed. "Because of the cutesy nickname."

"Whatever." He puts his hand on her forehead and pushes her back. "I owe you, man, you name it, I'll do it."

Ty steeples his fingers and maniacally laughs like a movie villain. "Excellent."

"Phia? When you return to campus, we're hanging out. We're friends."

Phia's eyes light up. "Yeah? Just like that?"

"Just like that."

"I'm warning you, I don't like sappy rom-coms, popcorn, or pillow fights."

"Woah! Woah! Woah!" Prib and Ty exclaim. Ty continues, "Pillow fights are a staple in any female friendship."

"Ty, we have pillow fights," Lyn offers.

"Yes, but our clothes are still on because we are literally fighting with pillows." I bite my bottom lip so hard I draw blood to keep from laughing out loud at Lyndell's confusion.

"Why wouldn't we wear clothes? Our hot dogs and beans would be flopping everywhere!"

I'm still chuckling a little later, on our walk back to my dorm.

It's easy being with Tyrone and Lyndell.

They are a package deal, and I feel like I'm getting a two-for-one special.

They love each other, that's obvious. I've met people before who cared for a family member, and several have behaved as if it's an obligation, rather than a privilege.

But Tyrone is truly honored to be with his big brother.

He takes pride in providing him with a safe space to learn and grow and be himself.

We haven't spoken about our upbringings, but I can't imagine they had a good one if Lyndell is with Tyrone here at college rather than at home with their parents.

I hope Tyrone will feel comfortable sharing that with me someday.

Until then, I'm just so damn happy to be here with him. With them.

We stop outside the main doors to my dorm. Ty stares down at me, his expression unreadable as he shifts from foot to foot. My heart races and my palms start to sweat. Every inch of me itches for him to reach out and touch me. I'm not sure how to tell him that though.

Lyn scoffs, loudly. Ty and I both look at him and I chuckle when he rolls his eyes so theatrically, he should be nominated for a Golden Globe.

"Ty." There is so much imbued in those two letters.

Exasperation, fondness, and a little stern brotherly love.

"Ask to kiss her. Then kiss her." He spins around and starts walking down the path toward a bench.

He throws over his shoulder, “On the lips or it doesn’t count. ”

“What?” Ty’s voice is strained, and it relaxes me enough to take the initiative.

We’ve kissed already, I don’t know why either of us is being shy now.

I put the toes of my shoes against his. Our bodies so close I can feel the warmth of him, breathe in the soothing scent of his cologne or body wash, whatever it is that makes me want to rub myself against him like a cat in heat.

His eyes, normally a dark brown, seem to shine lighter as he stares down at me, his lips twitching, resisting a smile.

“May I kiss you?” he husks out and I can’t do anything but nod.

One large hand on my hip, the other sliding up my neck to rub his thumb along the apple of my cheek, he brings us closer.

My tits smash against his firm chest, my arms wind around his middle.

He lowers his head as I raise mine and our lips meet briefly.

Tenderly. One of us growls. One of us whines.

And then our mouths open and our tongues meet, and I suddenly can’t get close enough to him.

He tastes like chocolate and vanilla ice cream and so damn delicious.

The doors open behind us, but we don’t separate, just slow down the kiss, softening. He sips from my lips and that is the best way to describe the way he overwhelms me.

It's a connection. A promise. A beginning.

I've never been more excited to see what tomorrow has to offer.

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

“Head Coach Brandon Beiler!” I bellow through the halls of the athletic complex.

So damn happy. Happy to be back at it, on the field, the roar of the crowd echoing in my soul.

Happy Heacock is locked up and Beiler is finally in charge.

Happy Lyndell is here to share it with me.

And happy because my girl will be on the sidelines.

It's a good day for football.

“Interim!” Beiler yells back. I shake my head as I close the distance between us.

“Dude, don’t play that game with me. It’s permanent. I know it, the university knows it, the team knows it...and you know it.”

“I don’t know it,” he mutters obstinately. My laughter fills the hallway, his lips twitching with a half-smile. “I know it, but I don’t know it .” He stresses the last couple words.

“Know it. Trust it. Your position is permanent.” He gets a gleam in his eyes that I don’t like.

“Your position on the team could be permanent.” My smile vanishes instantly. My chest tightens uncomfortably.

“Fuck off, Brandon,” I say, my anger obvious. Why would he say such a thing to me?

He holds my glare, his eyes earnest, his expression open and hopeful. “I’m serious.”

I sigh, the weight of lost dreams and disappointment are heavy as I lean against the wall. “My arm is chewed, I can’t throw. My leg won’t withstand the abuse of being tackled.”

“No, but you can coach.”

My body locks up tight. He can’t be serious. “What?” I was not expecting that.

His smile is so big and infectious enough that my own lips stretch to match his. Excitement like anticipation thrumming through my blood. “Schedule a meeting with your advisor and I’ll be there. Let’s get you the right educational requirements and get you on the coaching staff.”

“Serious?”

“Serious.”

“I don’t...I don’t know what to say.”

Beiler’s head tips back as he laughs. “That’s a first. Tyrone Wicawiil speechless!”

“Alright, alright. It’s not that funny.” But it is.

After the accident, I didn’t think I’d ever be on the field again.

Then when several teammates and coaches went to bat for me with the university, they found me a way to still be a part of the action.

Being the mascot has been an incredible experience...

but to coach? I never thought of it, honestly.

I'm in my last year of my Special Education degree.

Lyndell is everything to me, and I want to help others just like him.

Help them find their place in society where they can be valued rather than degraded.

Is there a way I can do that and coach football?

"I'll think about it."

He pats my shoulder. "Talk it over with Lyndell and perhaps a certain photographer?"

"She's amazing," I gush before snapping my mouth shut.

Beiler chuckles. "She is." He continues down the corridor, tossing over his shoulder, "Schedule that appointment with your advisor and let me know so I can be there."

"Thanks, Head Coach Brandon Beiler."

That was completely and utterly unexpected.

I have a lot to think about, I guess. But first, I have a crowd to rev up.

On the field, I run from one end to the other, pumping my arms, pitting seating section against section in an effort to determine who's the loudest. I'm sweating, I'm hot, but my smile won't quit.

Not that anyone can see it. Before the 1 st quarter begins, I spot Edee near the student section.

She glances up from behind her camera, her face lighting up when she sees me rushing her direction.

Her eyes widen and she lets out a squealing laugh as I bend low to wrap my arms around her legs and lift her up.

She starts snapping pics of the crowd as they go wild at my antics.

“What has gotten into you?” she speaks loud enough for me to hear her.

I answer honestly, “Hope.”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

“Will he sleep all night?” I ask, shifting on Ty’s couch in his shared apartment with Lyndell.

“Yeah. Game day always wears him out,” Ty says, taking a seat right next to me.

Our legs touch, the hair of his warm legs brushing against my smooth thighs.

“The excitement of the game, all the people, and his laundry duties. It’s a lot for him sometimes.

He really likes Phia, and he was ecstatic she was back.

” Ty chuckles with a fond smile as he speaks about his brother.

Lyndell is the one who invited me back to their apartment, though Ty insisted he was just about to ask.

It was cute how they bickered about it. Lyn was barely able to stay awake long enough to finish eating his dinner.

He kissed my cheek, told me he’d see me in the morning, and Ty snores so he hoped I brought ear plugs.

I just laughed, my stomach uneasy in a good way, having had no plans to stay the night.

I just wanted to spend time with Lyn and Ty.

The Wicawiil brothers are better than any tv show, movie, or book.

Especially since Ty looks like every book boyfriend I've ever latched onto. Smart. Compassionate. Patient. Driven. And hot as Hades. Something about the bald head and neatly trimmed goatee do it for me. Of course, the defined muscles might have something to do with it. Who knows?

"Come here." He slides an arm around my waist and hauls me into his lap.

Oh, well, that progressed quickly. I thought we'd talk some more, but if he wants to fool around, I ain't gonna argue.

Mom didn't raise no fool. "I want to talk to you about something." I don't know what I do with my face, but he starts laughing.

Hard. It's not amusing in any way. My vagina literally sighs in disappointment.

"Sorry, baby." Ty uses his hands on my back to pull me into him so he can kiss me.

Ok. This is better. We kiss for a long while, his tongue caressing mine, his hands slowly mapping out the contours of my body.

I arch my back slightly, thrusting my tits out in the hopes he'll play with them, but he breaks the kiss with a groan. "I really do need to talk to you."

"It can't wait?"

"It can...but I know it'll run on a loop in the back of my mind, and I don't want anything to distract me once I get to unwrap your body.

Run my tongue over every fucking inch of your silky skin.

Taste you until your flavor is fused into my DNA.

” His words are making me so hot. Unconsciously, I’m rocking my pelvis, wanting everything he’s talking about.

He releases a tortured groan, stilling me with his fingers digging into my hips.

This position isn’t helping, and I know he’s serious about needing to talk. Reluctantly, I slide back off his lap, but he drapes my bare legs over his lap. His hands are so big, wrapping easily around my thick thighs and defined calves.

“Go ahead. What’s on your mind?” I ask, a shiver working its way down my spine as he absently traces patterns on my legs with his fingertips. How is a person supposed to think when he does that?

“I am almost finished with my degree in Special Education.” Oh, Ty.

“Because of Lyn?”

“Yes. And others like him. So many who lack adequate support and resources.” His tone is indicative of his own personal struggle to find those same things for Lyn.

“And I was content with my plan. Starting in January, I would send out resumes and try to find a job in my field while I work on my master’s. ”

I swallow hard. “But now?” Have I done something to derail his future?

“Now, Coach Beiler has offered me a spot on the coaching staff for the football program.” I blink several times, in shock.

“Do you...do you want to be a coach?” We haven’t really spoken about his past. I

know he played football and there was an accident.

But I don't know specifics. For all I know, he hated football and was thrilled to become the mascot.

Or...football was his dream, and it was ripped away from him by the cruel hand of fate.

"I do." He looks surprised by his own answer.

"I do want to coach. I miss it." His voice drops to just above a whisper, "I miss it so much. I love being the mascot. I do. And I'm grateful that the university worked with me to find me something else to do to keep my scholarship, to give me a new purpose.

And though I love and miss the game, I'm glad I didn't have to endure Heacock for long.

It's just...I pivoted, accepted my limitations, and threw myself into this new purpose.
"

I scooch closer to him and wrap my arms around his neck. "What happened?" He exhales shakily and I instantly regret prying. "I'm sorry, you don't have to...that was intrusive...I'm so sorry—" He cuts me off with his mouth. It's soft and gentle and necessary.

"I guess I should start at the beginning."

"That's usually the best place." He snorts in response, his eyes drifting to the side, clearly lost in the memories of his past.

“Lyndell was born prematurely. His mother was an addict. When they finally brought him home from the hospital, our dad would go to work, and I don’t know if he was just that dumb or he didn’t care but he would leave Lyndell with the addict girlfriend.

I’ve been told by our dad’s mom, that Lyn’s mom got angry one time when he wouldn’t stop crying, and she shook him.

Violently. He was already developmentally delayed, but the shaking...

” Tears fill my eyes, and I don’t stop them as they roll down my cheeks.

My heart breaks for Lyndell. “In so many ways, he's still a child, despite being 30 years old. Anyway, his mom died from an overdose and our grandmother took care of Lyndell. Then dad met my mom, and he knocked her up. I was born and it wasn’t long for my mom to realize she didn’t want to be a mother to anyone, especially not someone else’s ‘retard’.

” I suck in a harsh breath, unable to comprehend treating anyone like that, let alone children.

“So, for years grandma took care of us and dad worked and then she died when I was 9. She wasn’t the nicest lady, but she fed, clothed, and cleaned us up.

At 9 years old I became Lyndell’s primary caregiver.

In middle school, my guidance counselor suggested football.

I didn’t have time for it, but he insisted I try it.

He and his wife helped me with Lyndell. I was good.

Really good. Had an arm like a rocket. Natural talent.

And that talent got me a full ride to several universities.

But here...Heacock was a massive dick, just wanted me for my arm.

But Beiler and several others went to bat for me.

To this day, I don't know how they did it, but my place on the team secured housing for Lyndell and me, as well as Lyndell's acceptance into the Good Work program. "

I'm a blubbering mess right now. I can't believe...so much in such a short life and to turn it around into something positive. To be so caring and understanding and to love Lyndell so fiercely...Tyrone is an exceptional human being.

"I knew I liked Beiler." Ty smiles. I don't know what else to say. Stupid platitudes and clichéd expressions are out of place in this conversation.

"You ever heard the saying, 'When you plan, God laughs'?" I nod, my mom has said something similar to that for as long as I can remember.

"I planned, I mapped out our future, I considered every contingency my freshman year. I had an opportunity that I would not waste. I kept my nose clean and buried in books, I worked out every chance I got, I practiced privately to hone my skills. I had a gift..." He trails off and my stomach bottoms out.

I knew this part was coming, but I got caught up in his story.

He shakes his head so forlornly. I can't stand the distance and now I understand why he wanted me to sit in his lap in the first place. I wrap myself around him tight, as if I can keep his pieces together by sheer will and body mass alone.

“Summer after my freshman year, Lyndell had been having seizures. He’s had them his whole life, but they were growing more frequent and far more intense than I’d ever seen.

I was driving us to his doctor’s appointment when he started convulsing in the front seat.

I don’t really know how it happened, but one minute I was trying to pull off the road to take care of him and the next paramedics and the fire department were using the jaws of life to retrieve me from the mangled remains of my car.

I remember screaming for Lyndell. I bruised my vocal chords in the process, but I wouldn’t stop until I laid eyes on him.

He was hurt, bleeding, and disoriented. The car was on its side.

I basically crushed the right side of my body.

The doctors told me that another vehicle hit us, we spun, and I tried to protect Lyn and ended up twisted in the driver’s seat facing the wrong direction.”

“Ty.” He rubs my back as I sob. I’m trying to keep it quiet, this isn’t about me, but I can’t...these two men have burrowed their way into my heart, and it isn’t going to give them up anytime soon, if ever.

“They were able to reset my arm and leg.” He extends his leg and lifts his right arm.

He tilts them and it’s then I notice the faint lines of his scars.

“Incredible work, isn’t it? Plastic surgeon at the university hospital.

After months of rehab and specialized workouts, the doctors told me that I would never be able to play football again.

At least not at the college or professional level.

I can't throw as far or as fast. And my body, especially my leg, cannot withstand the rigors of tackle football.

Not to mention the severity of my head wounds.

Contact sports were no longer an option. ”

“What about Lyndell?” He hums softly, squeezing me a little tighter.

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“We shared a hospital room for a while. His recovery took some time, but the good news is they were able to figure out that his seizure activity increased because of swelling in his brain. He had a craniotomy to remove part of his skull to reduce the pressure. Honestly, he’s been so much better since then.

I know most would consider this to be the worst moment of their life, but I feel that accident saved my brother.

It gave him a chance at a brighter future. ”

“Shit,” I mutter to myself. I just fell in love with Tyrone Wicawiil. Irrevocably. Absolutely. “Ty, where was your dad?”

“He...uh...he came to the hospital once. Ignored Lyn. Asked me if I’d play football again. I told him probably not. He left and we haven’t seen him since.”

“Fucking asshole!” His laughter rumbles beneath my ear, the sound oddly comforting.

“We don’t need him,” he says confidently. No, they don’t. Better off without him. “Having your entire life planned out and then being told that it’ll never happen is a jarring experience. I’ll be honest...it sucks. However, I had not only myself to take care of, but my brother.”

“So, you pivoted.”

“Exactly.” His voice changes, unburdened, lighter. “Do you know who Lilly Geddes

is?" I chuckle at the coincidence.

"I do. She handles PR for the team and athletics program. And is not a fan of Heacock."

"There isn't a single person on the face of this earth who likes that...

man." He kisses the top of my head and continues.

"Anyway, she had been working in the back office while in school. When she graduated, she was hired full-time. She worked under the PR director. She approached me after the football season ended just months after the accident. Said she had an idea and if she could get it heard by the right people, she could salvage my academic and athletic career."

I sit up, nearly smacking his chin, and bounce happily. "She's why you're the mascot?"

He grins as he nods. "Yup. The university ate it up, the feel-good story of the year. I lost my football scholarship. I could no longer play. But she convinced the powers that be to create a school spirit scholarship. I can't get tackled by 300-pound linemen, but I can do a back tuck with the best of them.

Heacock pitched a fit, but nobody cared.

Donning that costume meant I could still finish school, provide housing and meals for my brother and I, and make sure that I had a job when I graduated."

"But now you could coach?"

"I think...I want to do both?" I don't think he meant for it to come out as a question,

but I imagine he's thinking out loud. "I can finish my special education degree, begin my master's next fall...and coach." He's confident by the end. And I'm so fucking happy for him.

"You can! Aside from Beiler being in your corner, you've got most of the athletic faculty, Lilly, Lyndell, the team...and me." I'll just throw that out there.

"I've got you?" His voice drops a few octaves, and my nipples tighten in response. I nod like a bobblehead, my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. Just a few words, but I feel the gravity of the declaration. The significance.

"Always," I pledge without hesitation.

His brows dip, his jaw clenches, his prominent Adam's apple bobbing.

I lean in and lick a stripe up his throat right over it.

And then I'm suddenly airborne. Legs around his waist and arms around his neck, he carries me down the short hallway to his bedroom.

He sits on the edge of the bed and he isn't even out of breath.

Gah! I love his muscles. His strength; in every sense of the word.

This man... my man ...is unlike anyone else I've ever met.

No words are spoken. They are unnecessary.

We let our bodies do all the talking. Reverently, as if unwrapping a precious gift, he tugs my shirt over my head.

He licks his lips as he takes in the sight of my big boobs encased in ordinary cotton.

Eyes locked on mine, he slides his hand up my back and unclips my bra.

I drop my arms to my side and let it fall between us.

His eyes trace the path of his fingers, starting with his thumb across my bottom lip, over my chin, down my neck, and across the hills of my tits.

He groans as his fingertips tease the sensitive skin around my nipple.

I whine as my back arches, offering myself up to him in invitation, leaning back with my hands on his thighs.

He dips his head, licking around my nipple before wrapping his tongue around the hard peak.

Oh, that feels really fucking good. It feels better when he lightly sucks, every draw of his mouth causing a ripple of pleasure behind my clit.

I grind against the ridge of his erection, and he snarls in response, sucking harder, his other hand pinching my neglected nipple.

I scramble to keep him right where he is and reach between us to cup his cock.

I want it. Right now. He shifts slightly giving me better access to pull the waistband of his shorts down, his long, hard, thick cock bouncing free.

My right hand moves to the back of his head, holding him against my tit, and I shuffle off his lap just long enough to push my shorts and panties down.

I climb back up, straddling his hips, my pussy lips cradling the underside of his veiny cock.

I hold it where I want it and start pumping my thighs to move up and down.

I'm so wet, so close, he glides easily, pressing against my clit in delicious torture.

He releases my nipple, burying his head between my tits, growling and groaning.

His big hands dig into my back, urging me to move faster, his hips flexing.

I pinch both my nipples at the same time his middle finger brushes my asshole, and I shatter violently in his arms. Warmth spills between us, his magnificent cock twitching with every spurt, a pained grunt falling from his sweet, sinful lips.

The room is filled with the sounds of our harsh breathing. My heartbeat pounds in my ears. That was the single most pleasurable moment of my life. The orgasm was spectacular, but sharing it with Tyrone...

On the field earlier, I asked him what got into him.

Hope.

Ty gives me hope. Desire. Trust. Giddy anticipation. For him. For us. For Lyndell. For the future.

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I smile approaching the familiar building.

That same anticipation boils the blood in my veins, my heart racing, my dick twitching knowing his master is so close.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been a frequent visitor at Edee's dorm.

The door is unlocked from the front desk before I press the intercom button.

I wave at the guy behind the desk, and he waves back as I pass him to get to the stairs.

Between classes, meetings, practice, and spending time with Lyndell, I have spent every waking minute with Edee or talking to her on the phone or through texts.

We're inseparable. And I have never felt so at peace.

Even Lyndell is calmer with her around, settled.

The two of them are reading *The Hunger Games* together.

Mostly, Edee reading to Lyndell as he gets ready for bed, but she has him read a couple pages out loud every night.

I'm borderline obsessed with her and I ain't even mad about it.

She's incredible, open and warm, witty, and sexy as hell.

We haven't had much time alone, but we've gotten quite crafty at sneakily making out.

She's quickly becoming as important to me as Lyndell.

My world is expanding and I'm so deliriously happy.

Beiler met with me and my advisor. While I am not required to take any additional classes to be considered for a coaching position, Beiler was somehow able to convince the university to pay for several sports management classes, so I am better equipped to help the players navigate their athletic careers.

I'm so fucking excited, the possibilities are overwhelming when I start hyper-focusing on the big picture.

Edee has been a godsend, keeping me on track and taking it all one day at a time.

I decide to take the stairs up to the third floor, too much extra energy for me to stand still in an elevator.

I don't want to maul her the second I see her...

I should at least ask how her day has been first. That's the gentlemanly thing to do.

Then I'll jump her and bury my face between those thick thighs I've been dreaming about.

"Fuck," I mutter under my breath when the communal bathroom door opens and Edee's roommate Shaye exits, wearing only a towel and sandals, her shower caddy in her hand, her hair in a bun on the top of her head.

I guess it was only a matter of time before our good luck ran out.

We've managed to time our visits to avoid Shaye and her unpleasantness most of the time.

It helps the girl seems hell bent on obtaining a MRS degree rather than any actual education.

She's a whore.

Now, don't get all upset. I'm not a bad guy; I just happen to be a guy with eyes and a working brain cell or two. Plus, Edee said it first, so yell at her.

I know the moment she spots me, her entire demeanor changes.

Her back arches slightly, thrusting her tits out, testing the strength of that knot she's tied to hold up her towel.

A slow, manipulative smile forms, a calculated gleam in her eyes.

Here we go. "Tyrone!" she simpers, and I roll my eyes, not caring in the least that she sees me do it. "Handsome, what are you doing here?"

"I'm here to see my girlfriend." She scowls briefly, before plastering that flirtatious smile back on her face. She's a pretty girl, but ugly inside. Probably has massive trauma from a messed-up childhood, seeking validation in the arms of men who will never love her just like her own father.

I paid way more attention in psychology than I thought.

"Don't say 'girlfriend', Tyrone. It sounds so..."

“Permanent,” I finish for her. “It’ll be fiancé soon enough.”

“You wouldn’t?” she gasps, shaking her head. “No. She’s not WAG material, you need someone better, thinner, prettie—”

“Shut the fuck up, Shaye.” I don’t raise my voice, but there is heat in my tone. “You remember I don’t play anymore, right? No need to worry about WAGs.”

“Not playing, but as a coach—” My uproarious laughter has her snapping her mouth shut, her expression mutinous and it only makes me laugh harder.

She takes a deep breath, her hand on the doorknob of their room, smoothing out her Bitter Bitch Face.

“Ty, I know what you need, I’ll show you.

I’ll take good care of you.” She opens the door with one hand, still facing me, and uses the other to undo the towel.

It drops to the floor, but my eyes snap shut before I can see anything.

I have no desire to see her naked, and I certainly don’t want Edee to think I do.

I’m a smart man.

“The fuck?” I say, but my eyes open against my will when I register, I’ve harmonized with another male voice.

Edee is staring at the doorway with her jaw open, eyes alarmingly wide, arms outstretched.

I barely notice Shaye turning around, as I take in the middle-aged couple standing next to Edee, bearing a striking resemblance to my woman.

Her parents. Her father is a little taller than Edee, tanned white skin, dark brown hair.

Her mother is a little shorter, her skin tone only slightly darker than Edee's.

"I just...my towel...it slipped...I didn't—" Shaye's hands fly around willy-nilly as she flounders in her own embarrassment. Edee's mom, I'm assuming, growls at Shaye, bending to pick up the towel. She wraps it around Shaye and frog marches the girl from the room, pulling the door shut behind her.

"Babe," I decide to forget any of that ever happened and greet Edee. I use the knuckle of my index finger to push her mouth closed so I can kiss it. Arm around my shell-shocked girlfriend, I extend my hand toward her father. "Tyrone Wicawiil. It's an honor to meet you, sir."

"Dennis Shingleton."

"Father!" Edee exclaims. Loudly. "Sire. He sired me. With my mom. Mother. That was her." She points a shaky finger at the door.

"Surprise! They are visiting...without prior authorization. Unannounced. ISN'T THAT GREAT?"

!?" Her dad and I share a laugh, before I bring her fully into my chest and hold her while she processes everything from the last few minutes.

Her voice is so tiny as she speaks into my sternum. "Why was she naked?"

"I'm gonna guess 'cuz she's a bitch," her dad answers.

I nod, grinning at him over Edee's head. "Pretty much."

The door opens and Edee's mom stands to the side of the doorway, ushering in a chagrined Shaye. She mumbles an apology, grabs some clothes, and runs out of the room like the hounds of hell are chasing her.

In the awkward moment of silence that follows her departure, Edee's mom runs her dark gaze up and down my body, her lips pursed in displeasure. My balls squeak in fear and forcibly retreat into my body. I have not seen Edee angry or upset and if she is anything like her mother, I pray I never do.

First thing she ever says to me, "Have you started properly sorting your laundry? I can't have my daughter attach herself to an idiot. That kind of thing binds to DNA. I won't have idiots for grandchildren."

My balls slowly begin to descend. I smile genuinely at the woman who birthed my girl.

She's not mean, she's protective. "Mrs. Shingleton, it's wonderful to meet you.

Tyrone Wicawiil." Edee refuses to budge, an adorable "uh-uh" escaping as her arms tighten painfully around my middle.

I hold out my hand, but her mom grins, knocks my hand away, and wraps me in a hug...

with her daughter sandwiched between us.

I've never really had a mother. My grandmother raised us, but she wasn't what anyone would call motherly or nice.

Mrs. Gillison, my guidance counselor's wife, was the closest I've ever had.

She was amazing, so kind and caring, but for all that she claimed me and Lyndell as her other children, there was a distance I could never allow myself to bridge.

Right now? Even with Edee between us, there is no distance at all. It is impossible to be near Mrs. Shingleton and not be drawn in.

"I've always properly sorted my laundry, ma'am. I just like to give my brother a hard time."

"As you should. It is a younger sibling's responsibility to keep their older siblings humble." She releases us and steps back, plopping down on Edee's bed. "Where is Lyndell? I have some questions about stain removal."

I groan, my head falling back between my shoulders. "Please don't. Once he starts, he won't stop."

"I know, dear." She is unrepentant. And I like it.

"My wife is the youngest of 4 kids. She is a master at keeping people 'humble'," Dennis says with a laugh, his eyes locked on his wife.

"Lyndell is still at work." I glance at my watch. "I was just coming to get Edee so we can pick him up and head to dinner. Would you care to join us?"

"Thank you, we'd love to. But how about we take you all out to somewhere off campus that isn't part of a food plan."

My stomach growls, that nervous energy coming back at the thought of off-campus food. Edee chuckles, presses a kiss to my chest just over my heart through my t-shirt,

then stands up and faces her parents.

“The least you can do for arriving unannounced is dinner. 4-star rating or above only.”

Over an hour later, Lyndell is sitting with us at an upscale Italian restaurant miles away from campus.

Edee is pouting beside her father, glaring at her mom who sits between Lyndell and me.

She’s been attentive since we left the dorm room.

When she met Lyndell, the two started discussing stain removal techniques and they’ve barely taken a breath since.

Even as she talks to Lyndell, she mothers me.

Checking in to make sure I have everything I need, like I’m not 23-years-old... and I’m loving every minute of it.

“She has you. He’s mine.” I peek over at Edee as she whispers very loudly to her father. Dennis grins at his daughter.

“And you’ll have him back again soon. You’re dating Ty—” Edee’s head whips around so fast, I’m surprised it’s still upright. She’s gonna break her neck doing shit like that.

“I don’t care about Ty, she’s bogarting my Lyndell!

” Dennis laughs so loudly the entire dining room turns our way.

I pay them no mind; I'm too busy scowling at my traitorous girlfriend.

The audacity! She can whip, whip all she wants.

She can nae-nae too, for all I care. Edee finally meets my eyes and a little crease forms between hers. "What?"

"What? What ?!? You don't care about Ty? I'm Ty!" She waves her hand above the table.

"You know what I mean."

"No, I don't."

Edee's body jerks and she reaches below the table as she glares at her father. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply—"

"There was no 'implying'—"

"Ty?" Her voice is so sweet, her expression remorseful. Mmhm. "I'm sorry." She reaches across the table, dropping her hand palm up in the center. I don't hesitate to cover it with mine.

"I accept your apology," I announce magnanimously, much to everyone's amusement. "You can make it up to me later," I add with a salacious wink. Edee's cheeks pinken at my innuendo.

"I like you, son. Let's try to keep it that way."

"Mama Mary?" Lyndell started calling her that as soon as they met and Mary smiles every time he says it. "Can I stay at the hotel with you and Papa Pennis?"

“I don’t like Papa Pennis.”

Lyndell looks Dennis in the eye. “I’m not calling you Daddy Dennis.”

“Papa Pennis it is.”

Lyndell dips his chin curtly, then turns back to Mary. “Can I? They make too much noise with their popsicle eating contests. AND they have a secret freezer in Ty’s room because I can never find them in the kitchen.”

“What are you talking about, Lyn?” I ask before I can stop myself. I know better than to ask questions I don’t want to know the answer to. I should have asked him in private.

“ ‘Suck it harder.’ ‘Lick it good.’ ‘That’s the spot, Ty.’ I had a long day, a pipe burst in the kitchen of one of the dining halls and we had a lot of towels to launder. I want a good night’s sleep.”

My throat is so tight, I can barely breathe, let alone speak.

I lift the tablecloth and peer down at Edee, who slowly slithered down her seat to the floor with every word out of my brother’s mouth.

She looks up at me and I don’t know whether to laugh or cry at her expression.

Such despair. Her eyes pleading with me to help her, but I don’t know how.

“Lyn, honey, we’ll come pick you up bright and early and take you to breakfast. I have a feeling your brother and Edee will not be making any noise tonight. And I bet they are both very, very sorry for keeping you awake. In fact, I’m sure Ty will be happy to buy you your very own box of popsicles.”

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I can't stop smiling. My face literally hurts from it.

Mom and dad have been here for several days, though they are leaving tomorrow morning.

I love them, not because I'm supposed to but because they are genuinely great people and amazing parents.

I've always known I was lucky to have them in my corner.

Yet, to see them with Lyndell and Tyrone...

I'm considering nominating them for sainthood.

I've been looking for an online form to submit on their behalf.

The difference in Ty and Lyn is astounding and saddening at the same time.

The two of them are starved for parental approval and affection, desperate to be loved and cherished for who they are, not what they can provide for someone else.

They have never felt enough on their own.

Tyrone is a strong, capable, intelligent man.

And the way he looks at my mom with hearts in his eyes makes me swell with pride.

I can give him something he needs but would never ask for.

Family.

“That. Was. EPIC!” my grown-ass father cheers as he and mom meet me in the main concourse of the stadium near one of the entrances. We agreed to meet here after the game, and Ty and Lyn will be joining us as soon as they’re done.

My poor father. He loves sports. Any kind, he’ll watch it.

I’ve heard him yell, and cry, and cheer for a bull-riding championship, the same as he did for bowling.

Man is a rabid fan of any competition, but especially college.

Pro sports are great, but he says there’s nothing like watching college kids playing for the love of the game.

Of course, many dream of playing professionally, but at this stage in their life, they’re all heart.

What is about to give him a coronary, though, is that Ty was able to secure 50 yard-line seats for them, plus a tour of the athletic complex and sitting in on practice early this morning.

He’s been having significant trouble controlling the volume of his voice, his excitement too much for him to bear at times.

My mom has sighed at him so many times, I’m surprised she has oxygen left in her lungs, but it’s all with an indulgent smile.

Thankfully, we won today's game. So, everyone is in high spirits as they exit the stadium and find restaurants, homes, and parking lots to continue the party.

We'll be heading to the restaurant in the hotel my parents are staying in and then hitting the pool for some leisurely fun their last night here.

Mom bought Lyndell a floatie after strong-arming the hotel manager into allowing it.

Man never stood a chance against Mama Mary Shingleton.

"Had a good time?" I tease as my dad lifts me up on my toes in a bear hug.

"That's an understatement," Mom replies drily.

"Oh, I know. I could hear him throughout the game."

"The bullhorn didn't help." Mom complains, leaning in. "I don't know where he was keeping it, I didn't even know he had it."

"MAMA MARY!" Lyndell's booming voice carries through the facility and brings an immediate smile to my face and mom's.

"PAPA PENNIS!" Lyndell is very strong. He works out with Ty often.

I'm still surprised when he wraps his long arms around both of my parents and lifts them several inches off the ground.

"Excuse you!" I jut out my hip, planting my fist on it.

"Where's my hug?" Lyn grins, a mischievous glint in his dark eyes.

I have half a second head start before he picks me up and bounces me in his arms several times.

I'm laughing so hard I miss the first part of what the person passing by says.

I immediately feel the shift in mood, however.

“—fuckin’ retard ruined his life! Could be going pro by now if it wasn’t for Donald Downie!” The two college-aged guys start laughing. I open my mouth to set them straight, but Mama Mary beats me to it.

“Only ‘retard’ I see is you!” Oh, hell. Mom marches right up to them and gets in their face. My dad, used to her antics, puts his hand on Lyndell’s shoulder to comfort him. He tries to shrink in on himself, eyes downcast, shoulders slumping.

“What the fuck, woman!”

“Donald Downie. Are you serious right now? He doesn’t even have Down Syndrome.”

“Ok?” Douche number one is as confused as his friend.

“Are you Tyrone Wicawiil?”

Since they are both about 5’10” feet tall and super white, I think it’s obvious they are not my boyfriend. But it still takes them an inordinately long time to answer her.

“No?” They don’t sound so sure. Dad and I chuckle, Lyn stares on with wide eyes, his breathing shallow. How often does this happen?

“Whether Tyrone plays football, pro or not. Whether his future could have been

different. Whether he decimates a toilet after consuming two orders of sweet and sour chicken. None of that is your concern. He doesn't comment on your dismal prospects and the sad trajectory of your life. He's too busy living his own."

"And it's a great fucking life," Ty cuts in, surprising us all. He grins down at me, his arms sliding over my back and around my waist as he tugs me into his side. He kisses me, short and sweet, before addressing the two dickheads in front of us. "And it's none of your business."

"You should be playing—"

"And you should have been swallowed," Mom cuts in. The two guys are not happy, their faces growing increasingly redder as the showdown continues.

"Whatever. You're a bitch and he's a fucking furry." They turn and walk away. Mom takes a step to follow, her mouth opening to blast them once again, but Ty releases me and drags mom into a hug.

"Not fucking worth it, Mama Mary." He squeezes her tight. "But thank you for defending us."

"They insulted my boys! I will have their heads!" I glance back at Lyn when he snorts, my heart calming as I watch him relax slightly.

"Ty, how often does this kind of thing happen?" Dad must have picked up on it too. Lyn's reaction was conditioned.

Ty shrugs, then throws an arm over my shoulders, pressing a kiss to the top of my head. He's freshly showered and smells damn good. "Often enough. It's their problem, not mine. Life is good." Ty looks down at me and gives me a toothy grin. "Life is very good."

I close my eyes and savor the softness of his lips on mine, then my dad clears his throat obnoxiously and I open them to glare at him.

He glares right back. I clap my hands to get us moving.

“Alright, let’s go. I want copious amounts of food, including dessert, then I want to laze about in the pool and watch my boyfriend’s muscles flex as he swims around me.”

“Edee,” Lyn sucks in a sharp breath and for a moment I worry I’ve said something wrong. “You have to wait an hour after eating before you can get in the pool.”

I stand in front of Lyn and reach up to cup his cheeks. “I like to play fast and loose with the rules.” He smiles down at me, placing his large palms over my hands.

“Don’t poop in the pool. A kid did that one time when Ty took me to a pool, and we all had to get out for them to clean it up. I don’t want to miss out on swimming because you played fast and loose with your poop.”

Dropping my chin, the laughter starts in my toes and works its way up and out. We’re all laughing hysterically as we walk out of the stadium. I try to glare at my mom, but I can’t stop laughing. “I blame you. What did you do to my sweet, sweet Lyn?”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

In every college student's life, there are few things more glorious than a message from your professor announcing class is cancelled. Like angels singing, harps playing, sun parting the clouds, glorious.

Even better when your girl is about done with her last class of the day and your brother is working late. Edee and I have noticed he's been staying late often. I think he's got a crush on one of his classmates.

I lean against the stone steps and wait impatiently for Edee. She stops at the top a few minutes later and I watch entranced as her full lips stretch into a blinding smile...just for me.

"Well, isn't this a lovely surprise?" She slowly saunters down the steps, the late afternoon sun giving her skin a golden glow. She's the most beautiful woman I've ever met...and she's mine.

Something beats inside me, a primal call that's impossible to ignore. I stretch my hand out and she takes it happily. With a firm grip, I drag her behind me, the drumming louder and louder with every step across campus.

"What's gotten into you?" she asks on a laugh, slightly winded from the pace I've set.

My tongue feels too big for my mouth. I can't form any words.

I grunt in acknowledgement but keep moving.

It takes less than 10 minutes to reach my on-campus apartment.

I unlock my door and pull her inside, then use my body to crowd her against the closed door.

She looks up at me and it hits me hard...I love her.

I've loved her for a while now. It wasn't instant, it built slowly, over time.

Every touch, softly spoken word, her patience and unconditional support.

Her eyes dart back and forth, and she softens under my stare. Her body loosening in my hold, pressing against me. She nods twice, no words, just understanding. Acceptance. We're on the same page in the story of us.

Suddenly, the drumming slows, the burning need pushing me recedes, leaving nothing but love. I lean in, stopping with my lips just centimeters from hers. She inhales deeply and then I place my lips over hers and nothing in my life has ever felt as right as this. Us.

Bending my knees, I slide my hands under her thighs and lift her in my arms, turning for my bedroom, never breaking our kiss.

I kick the door shut behind us, sealing us in together, blocking out the world outside.

Nothing matters, no one exists but us. I reluctantly pull back long enough to tug her shirt up and over her head, then my own.

We strip each other slowly, our fingers dancing across the expanse of bare skin, our lips chasing the goosebumps they leave in their wake.

Naked, we tumble onto my bed, our bodies entwined from head to toe.

I can't get close enough...like I want to crawl inside her and never leave.

That drumming grows insistent, urging me to take, control, merge.

Her thighs cradle my hips, her soft tits cushioning my torso, her hard little nipples branding me.

Her nails drag down my back, scoring me on their quest. She palms my ass, locking her ankles behind me, tilting her pelvis up in a needy plea.

We hiss and moan when the leaking tip of my cock notches in the opening of her wet heat.

She pulls, I push and it's fucking pure bliss when I sink slowly inside her for the first time.

I lick across her lips, forcing my tongue into her mouth to tangle with her own.

She surrounds me completely, touch, taste, scent.

This is nirvana. Finding the other half of your soul.

Reuniting two halves of a whole. Joining, not just our bodies, but our hearts until they beat as one.

This isn't sex. This is a physical expression of our devotion, respect, love.

This is...so fucking good it makes a college mascot a poet.

I move languidly, making sure she feels every thick inch of me. Her nails dig into my biceps. Her moans ringing in my ears. Her panting breaths warm against my flesh as I

drive us up, up, up.

“ I’m so full, ” she whispers in a strained voice.

I lift my head from her neck and grin. She rolls her eyes, and in an exasperated tone she says, “Yes.” Her right hand slides up over my shoulder, her smooth palm brushing against the stubble of my cheek.

I watch her left hand trail across her breasts before stopping over the left side of her chest. “ Here. My heart is so full, Ty.”

Fuck. Her words unleash that beast inside.

He’s been drumming, drumming, drumming, demanding his release.

Fist planted beside her head, knees firmly in the mattress, I rise up to stare down at her.

I collar her with my free hand, squeezing just enough to keep her attention on me.

Her pussy grows impossibly tighter, gushing juices and precum as I pummel her like a battering ram.

And she takes it with a smile, her body begging for more.

The headboard smacks into the wall, the frame of my bed loudly protesting, but still her body begs.

Pointed nipples. Bouncing breasts. Flushed skin. Soft thighs. Wet pussy.

My mouth to her ear, I grit out, “Play with your clit, baby.” She whines lowly, but

instantly obeys, strumming her clit until she's crying out my name.

Her walls snap tight around my length, the pulsations milking me until I join her in release.

Head back, eyes closed, I roar like the animal I have become.

Sex has never...but like I said, this isn't sex. This is something more. So much more than I ever could have imagined.

“ Dear Professor,” she begins in a falsetto voice. “ I am unable to attend class today, due to my severely bruised cervix. I appreciate your patience in this delicate matter as my hoohaw recuperates. Sincerely, Hematoma Ho!”

My muscles give out as laughter overtakes my entire body. I collapse on top of her with an oomph of protest. I just had the most exquisite climax of my existence and I'm laughing so hard tears are leaking down my cheeks not a minute later.

Page 13

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

Holy shit! That was absolutely amazing. An epic late season win.

The team, especially Prib, were unstoppable.

And Ty. Good God, he was insane. He never stopped moving from one end to the other, revving up the crowd.

Not that they needed it, it was so loud during the game.

And now that it's over, the crowd might be thinning out, but it hasn't decreased the volume much.

Every play, every touchdown, every tackle...

madhouse! I captured as much of it as I could.

I'm not as fit as Ty and can't run back and forth, but I tried to take pics from any available angle.

I'm bouncing on my feet making my way through the back office halls. I spot Lilly talking with one of the security guards, so I hang back and let them finish. It's just a few seconds later, they are lingering over their goodbyes. Oh! How cute are they?!?

"Edee!" Lilly spots me once he's out of sight. "Hey!"

"Hey, Lilly. Who's that?" I ask, chuckling as she flushes from cleavage to forehead.

“Mr. Zeigler.” She winces and while I don’t know her that well, I’m sure she picked up on the breathy way she said his name.

“ Mr. Zeigler. ”

She clears her throat; her eyes focused over my shoulder to avoid eye contact. “He’s one of the security supervisors.”

“And is he supervising your security?”

“I know that was an innuendo, but it was a bad one and this conversation is now over.” I laugh, even as I hand over my camera for her to preview the pictures I took today. “Edee! These are incredible. Oh! I have so many ideas! I need to talk to the marketing department—”

“Lilly.” Her mouth snaps closed.

“Sorry!”

“No need to apologize. I think it’s great how enthusiastic you are about your job.”

“It’s a lot easier now that Heacock is behind bars.” I nod in understanding. I only dealt with the infuriating and homicidal man for a few weeks, Lilly’s been here for several years. “Do your magic and send me them as soon as possible.”

“No problem.”

She grins, “Celebrate the win properly, though. And say hello to Ty and Lyn.”

I wave above my head, not needing to be told twice to spend time with my man and my favorite laundry man.

I think a win like this deserves ice cream.

“Will do! Have a good night yourself.” Turning around to face her, I walk backward, teasing, “Be careful, though. I think Mr. Zeigler would be happy to...secure you.”

I wind my way through the stadium to our meeting spot.

Lyndell is waiting for me, his head down, hands in his pockets.

“Lyn?” He looks up at me with a forced smile.

“Hey, buddy, what’s wrong?” He shakes his head, smashing his lips together.

I want to push him to tell me if something happened, but I know he will when he’s ready.

“Did you still have something to show me?” At breakfast, we made plans to meet, and Lyn was excited to show me something about how the laundry is collected from the stadium for servicing.

“There he is!” Someone slurs. A large group approaches us, I recognize a few of them as cheerleaders, including my roommate Shaye.

She sneers at me but doesn’t speak. I can’t say the same for the others.

“You ran away, window licker. Come on, give Shaye a chance. She’s always open for business, even for someone like you. ”

“Fuck you, Matt.” Shaye’s face reddens in anger and probably embarrassment. I feel zero sympathy for her.

“You already did. Ty turned you down, but I’m sure his brother here would love to give you a ride.” This fucking asshole looks at Lyn, a mocking smirk on his face. “Shit, can retards even get it up?”

“You’re a dick,” one of the other cheerleaders spits out, but Matt is undeterred.

“Maybe he’s like one of those guys that...

uh...their junk is cut off.” Another guy snaps his fingers like that will improve his intelligence in any way.

Before I can react, Matt reaches out and grabs Lyndell between his legs and squeezes.

Lyn makes a sound of protest, half scream, half cry, and I see fucking red.

Dropping my bag on the ground, I slam my hand on Matt’s forearm, and he releases Lyn.

I step between them, cock my leg back and then kick him right in the dick.

He drops to his knees and all hell breaks loose.

The others start yelling, closing in on us, even Shaye.

Lyndell’s tortured sob gets my attention, and I spin around to help him.

He’s crouching on the ground, his hands over his ears, rocking back and forth. I have to get him out of here.

“Lyn.” I place my hand on his shoulder to get his attention. One second, I’m standing over him, the next I’m blinking on my side on the ground. I quickly scan the area, and

Lyn is nowhere to be seen.

“LYNDELL!”

“You fucking cunt!” The Matt guy is back up on his feet and angry as hell. Well, good, so am I.

I quickly stand up, ignoring the way my vision blackens at the edges for a few seconds, and look for a weapon.

I gasp in shock when a cold drink is thrown at me.

I charge the bitch who threw it, knocking her to the ground.

I spin around, spot the stack of foldable cushioned stadium seats, pick one up and start swinging.

I know there are people watching, I can hear them yelling for security, but none of them are stepping in.

No one is stopping this from happening. Why?

Lyndell was attacked, physically and verbally assaulted, and no one is helping. What is wrong with people?

I knock a couple of them down, but someone punches me in the stomach and kicks my knee out.

On my back, on the ground, Matt hovers over me with an unsettling grin.

“He should have died in that fucking accident. He ruined his brother’s life.

And looks like he's about to ruin yours too.

"Shaye, of all people, hands him a drink when he holds his hand out, wiggling his fingers.

He upends it, dumping it all over me. Another girl kicks me in the side, but I barely register the pain.

I'm so fucking angry, absolutely furious.

Matt turns around, starts bragging to the others.

I stand up quickly, jump on his back and cinch my legs around his waist. I pummel my fists into the sides of his face from behind.

Blindly hitting him wherever I can. He swings around, trying to dislodge me, but I hold strong.

"EVERYONE ON THE GROUND! POLICE! ON THE GROUND!" Rough hands on my shoulders, I'm pulled off Matt and pushed to my stomach on the ground.

My arms are cuffed behind my back. I watch numb as the others are as well.

It took them long enough, but honestly, everything happened so fast. It escalated quickly and I will never regret defending Lyndell or myself, but I'm worried about Lyndell.

He's quite capable, but being this upset and on his own is a dangerous combination.

Especially if so many people recognize him and blame him for the quick death of Ty's football career.

“LYNDELL!” I scream again, hoping he’s hiding somewhere close by. “Lyndell, come out now! Everything’s going to be alright.”

“SHUT UP!” the police officer hauling me up to my feet, yells at me.

“I will. I’m sorry. But Lyndell is missing. Please. They were harassing him, and he ran away and I don’t know where he is.”

“Lyndell Wicawiil?” I nod emphatically, ignoring the pain in my shoulders from my current position. “Keep your mouth shut, and I’ll let my captain know. They’ll find him.”

“Thank you. You have to notify his brother—”

“LYNDELL! EDEE!” Ty comes running up to the scene, but an officer bravely blocks his path. He holds Ty back, but it isn’t easy. Ty is desperate to get to me.

“I’m ok. But Lyndell—”

“Where is he?” Ty frantically scans the area, his breathing growing choppy when he doesn’t find him.

“He ran off. I couldn’t...I couldn’t go after him. Find him. He’s so scared, Ty.” The adrenalin drains at a quick pace. I’m scared, tired, sticky and wet, and in a considerable amount of pain. Tears stream down my face. “Find him.”

“Let her go! She didn’t do anything!” Ty’s blind support is wonderful, but misplaced. I most certainly did some damage and I ain’t sorry about it. I just wish I could have hurt more than a few of them. I glare at Shaye, a little triumphant watching her lose her shit.

“She broke my fucking nose!”

The officer pushing Matt out of the stadium shakes his head. “I think she broke more than that.”

We’re taken to our respective corners for questioning. The officer is far more polite now than he was when he slapped those cuffs on me. He listens as I explain what happened. I don’t lie or omit, I’m an honest person, but I make it clear that I was defending Lyndell and I.

“I’m going over there,” he points to a spot about 30 feet away where several officers and security staff are gathered, including Mr. Zeigler. “To piece together what happened. Then we’ll decide who is being charged with what and taken into custody.”

“What about Lyndell? Are you looking for him?”

He nods, his features softening ever so slightly.

I’ll take it. I don’t care about myself, whatever happens, happens.

But I need Lyndell to be ok. Safe. “Tyrone is inside with the captain and someone from the security team. They’re trying to figure out where he might have run off to.

Sit tight, and don’t move.” I bite my lip but nod.

I’ve never been handcuffed. Never had to deal with the police.

Never even been in a fight before. I’m worried about Ty, scared for Lyndell, and heartbroken over the whole fucking thing.

But I'm gonna hold my shit together because now isn't the time.

Shaye and the other women involved are crying, screaming, and arguing with the officers taking their statements.

They are not handling this well at all. And dammit, I'm better than them.

So, I'm clenching my asshole as tight as I can, forcing myself to breathe normally, and swallow down the bile threatening to rise in fear.

Inside the stadium corridor, raised voices catch my attention, but I can't make out what is being said, and I don't recognize any of them.

I can't call my parents because at this moment I can't even scratch my nose...

fuck! My nose itches. I wiggle it but it doesn't help.

I try to rub it on my shoulder, but I can't bend that way.

Why did I think about my fucking nose itching?

Ugh! I'm so mad right now. And my mom is gonna be furious. I just don't know if it will be at me or not.

I'm not entirely sure how long we sit here, but it's long enough for me to lose feeling in my right arm. And my left shoulder hurts like a motherfucker. The officer I talked to earlier, finally walks over, keys in hand. "Miss Shingleton, you are being released."

"I am?" That's surprising. I know I was defending us, but not everyone would agree my methods were necessary.

“Yes.”

“Why?”

The officer sighs, losing his patience with me and it makes me chuckle. He unlocks the cuffs and good Lord that fucking hurts! I rub the protesting muscles futilely. “Just say thank you.”

“Uh...I’m not capable of doing that.”

“Edith Shingleton?” A man stops to the side of me, his nostrils flaring, a hand running through his salt-and-pepper hair.

“My son Matt...” Ah, Matt’s dear old dad. He better hope the apple fell far from the tree, or I’m about to chop this fucking tree down.

There might be some residual adrenaline still coursing through my veins.

“Is a fucking asshole?”

His eyes widen in shock, before his features settle and he nods.

“Yes. Yes, he is. I am deeply sorry for what happened today. What he did and said to you, Mr. Wicawiil, and even Shaye, is unacceptable. His mother and I did not raise him to behave like this, but we’ve been having trouble with him since he started college.

” He sighs, weary and disappointed. “We will not be pressing charges, and I was hoping you would consider dropping any charges against Matt. Not because he deserves it, but because we are withdrawing him immediately and finding him help.”

Well, that takes the wind right out of my vengeful sails.

“While that option is less satisfying...I can agree to that. I hope whatever you do for him helps. He hurt one of the most beautiful souls I’ve ever met.

” His relief is obvious, but I’m not done.

“I cannot speak for Tyrone or Lyndell, however. He said some nasty things to Lyndell, but he physically assaulted him and violated him in a way that will leave a lasting impression.”

“Thank you.” Matt’s father grimaces at my words but remains kind.

“I won’t ask you to speak to Tyrone or Lyndell on Matt’s behalf, not that you would, but Matt...

it’s time for him to learn the consequences of his actions.

” He thanks me again and walks off, his entire demeanor telegraphing his defeat.

He has a hell of a fight on his hands regarding his son.

I only met him briefly, but it’s hard to miss the wealth of anger that lives inside him.

“Miss Shingleton, your belongings are just inside the entrance. They have not found Lyndell yet. We have officers canvassing the area. Last I heard, Tyrone was checking all of Lyndell’s favorite places.”

“Thank you.” I run toward the building, grab my bag and throw it over my shoulder. I have no idea where Ty is, but I don’t want him to be alone for a second longer. We’ll find Lyndell and bring him home. We have to.

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

I run my hands over my bald head, dragging them hard down my face.

It's been hours. Where is he? Where is Lyndell?

He isn't answering his phone because he left it behind at the stadium.

I have no way to track him. The police are canvassing along with campus security, but no one has seen hide or hair of him.

All campus security camera footage is being checked to see if they can find a general direction but so far, nothing.

My heart aches for him. He's alone. Scared.

And hurt. Emotionally, physically, it doesn't matter.

He hurts; I hurt. When I saw the way that fucker grabbed him...

I saw red, and it was only the police presence that kept me from rushing back down to the ground level and bashing his fucking head in the ground.

I need Edee. They can't possibly charge her, can they? She was defending Lyndell. She was defending herself too. And she did it magnificently. God, she was so brave, like a Valkyrie sounding the war cry as she jumped on that guy's back and started punching him anywhere she could.

I love her. I've known for a while, but the words haven't moved past my lips,

lingering on my tongue, waiting. I don't want to wait any longer. Call me Paula Cole, but I want to begin our life together right fucking now.

I just need to find Lyndell. And free her from police custody. And ask her father for permission...and her mom. Mama Mary runs that family. My phone vibrates in my pocket, and I hastily pull it out, hoping it's Lyndell. Close, it's Edee.

"Edee? Baby? Where are you?"

"I'm still at the stadium. Well, near the stadium." She's moving fast. Her voice is shaky as she runs. "Where are you?"

"I'm outside our apartment."

"Lyndell? Is he with you?"

I close my eyes and exhale shakily. My nerves and my overwhelming fear impossible to hide. "No. I don't know—"

"I'll be there in 7 minutes. We'll find him." She hangs up and I stare at my phone in my hand for several long seconds. A couple minutes later, a police cruiser pulls up to the curb, and the one of the officers I spoke to earlier steps out.

"Any word?"

I shake my head, "No, sir." He plants his hands on his hips and stares off down the street.

"Who the fuck—" He cuts himself off with a chuckle.

I follow his stare and can't help the smile that comes to my lips, seeing my woman

run full tilt toward me, her braids flying behind her, her bags banging against her hips.

I open my arms and catch her as she runs right into me.

I lift her a few inches off the ground and bury my face in her neck.

She nudges my face with her nose, and I shift enough to fuse our mouths together.

It's been only a few hours, but I've missed her.

I gentle the kiss, placing her back on solid ground, holding her until she's steady on her feet.

She's out of breath, a little sweaty, covered in something sticky, and so damn gorgeous.

Resting her cheek on my chest, humming as she hears my heartbeat under her ear, she glances at the police officer, and I feel her stiffen in my arms.

"How the hell did you get here before me?" she asks. The officer points to his cruiser with a grin.

"I drove."

"AHHH!" she yells, separating us, and pointing at the cop. "You could have given me a damn ride."

"I could have. But you didn't ask."

Edee agrees grudgingly. "True. But still. I ran. All the way here."

“The university has a great track and field program.”

“Shut it.” I don’t know what she’s been through in the last few hours, but her backbone is a bit sturdier than before her recent brush with the law.

Edee pulls her phone from her back pocket, taps on the screen and hands it over to me.

It’s on speaker. She bends at the waist as it rings, then stands with her hands behind her head and walks around.

“I hate running. Fuck! I hate running! Cramp! Lung cramp!”

“Why has my daughter been running?” Mama Mary answers, her voice commanding even over the phone.

“Lyn—” I stop, clear my throat and try again. “Lyndell is missing.”

“What?” Her side of the call is muffled as she yells for Dennis.

“We’re both here. What do you mean Lyndell is missing?”

” I explain what happened while my girl tries to stretch out her lungs and catch her breath.

Tears pool in her eyes as she watches me.

When I finish, she slides under my arm and nestles into me, her arm wrapped around my middle.

I feel like she’s holding me together at this point.

“We are on our way. Where have you checked?” I list off all the places the police, campus security, and I have checked. “Edee, did you—”

“I just got released from police custody like 15 minutes ago.”

“We’ll discuss that later,” Dennis sighs, but I can’t tell if it’s disappointment or just acceptance.

“He didn’t call us...why didn’t he call us?”

We could have been there hours ago!” I hate this, but I do love how they’ve adopted Lyndell and I.

There was zero hesitation. One minute, Lyn and I were a two-man team and then BOOM.

We’re part of a loving, supportive family.

“He left his phone at the stadium. Hell, he left everything behind and ran.”

“FUCK!” I yell toward the sky. “Officer, get someone to the Mountain Lion Manor hotel. That’s where he is.”

“Get in!” The officer waves to his cruiser, opening the back door for Edee and I to get in, while he clicks his radio and starts talking.

“We’ll be there as soon as we can. Call us as soon as you find him.”

“We love you both, be safe.” Dennis and Mary hang up. I sit in the back of the police cruiser, a first in my life, and stare wide-eyed at Edee. She glances around the interior with a grimace, shifting on the hard plastic seat beneath us.

“This is not for me.” Laughter bursts free, and I wrap her up in my arms and hold her tight, tears escaping as I press kisses to her neck, her jaw, cheeks, and finally her lips.

“I love you, Edee. So fucking much.” She smiles brightly, returning my kiss enthusiastically.

“I love you too, Ty.”

“I’m gonna need you two to stop doing that, or I’m gonna make one of you sit up front.”

“Yes, sir,” we agree in unison, our hands clutching between us.

The police radio crackles, “Lyndell Wicawiil is at the Mountain Lion Manor. Hotel staff have him settled in a booth in the restaurant with a bowl of ice cream.” The dispatcher or whoever is updating us says with a smile in their voice.

“Is he ok? Is he hurt?” I ask, leaning forward eagerly.

“He’s eating ice cream. I’m sure he’s fine.” I’ll believe it when I see him with my own two eyes. Edee and I are restless on the drive over, our knees bouncing, our fingers twitching, my heart racing out of my chest.

As soon as the vehicle stops, I try opening the door, but it’s locked...

because it’s a police car. Duh. The officer opens the door for me and I’m out like a rocket, nearly running into the automatic doors that slide open too slowly.

Edee’s on my heels as we enter the on-site restaurant.

I hear him sniffing first and my heart nearly stops.

He's right where they said. In a booth, his face blotchy and wet, a frown tipping his lips down despite the spoon full of ice cream.

"Lyn," I breathe out, relief, immense and overwhelming, buckles my knees. His head snaps up and he starts crying all over again.

"I'm sorry! I ruined it! I ruined your life! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" He drops the spoon, it clatters to the table, his hands coming up to his scalp to pull on his hair. He does this when he's upset.

"No, Lyn—"

"I wish I wasn't here! I wish I wasn't born! You could play! If I was gone, you could play football!"

"Lyn, stop, please stop!" I pull him from the booth and into my arms. "That's not true. Lyn, I love you so much. My life would be nothing without you. You make everything better. You make it bright and beautiful. You're light and magic and everything good in my world. You're my hero!"

"NO! I hurt you! I hurt Edee! She was bleeding...and...and...it's my fault!"

I take us to the ground, somehow managing to pull this grown-ass man over 6 feet tall into my lap.

I wrap my arms around him tight and clutch him as if my life depends on it.

It does. Lyndell is my life. "Shh. Shh. Lyn, everything's ok.

We're all ok. Safe. Together. Mama Mary and Papa Pennis are on their way.

Edee is here. And you. God! I lost my mind, brother, when I couldn't find you.

I was so scared I lost you.” We rock back and forth, his sobs slowing into deep shuddering breaths.

“Lyndell.” Edee’s voice breaks with so much emotion, I can’t look at her, or I will completely shatter right here on the hotel restaurant floor.

I will, later, at home, with her in my arms while we lie in bed, and Lyndell safe and sound in his own room.

But not right now. “Honey, I’m so sorry for everything that happened.

I should have protected you better—” Lyn cracks his head off my chin, and it hurts like a motherfucker, but both of us stare at her with dropped jaws and wide eyes.

“You...you’re sorry?” Lyn is having a hard time processing, so am I. “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

“Neither did you, Lyn. Those mean boys and girls should be sorry. Not you. Not me.” Oh, she’s good. Diabolical. But there is truth in her words, I know deep down she believes she’s at fault for not protecting him better.

“But I am sorry. I hit you. You fell—”

“I shouldn’t have touched you, Lyndell. You were uncomfortable and scared, and I never should have put my hands on you, even to comfort you, without your permission. Can you forgive me?”

“Can you forgive me?”

“There is nothing to forgive. I love you. I could never be mad at you, Lyn.”

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“I love you, too, Edee.” Lyn brightens a little at the declaration.

I knew it, it’s been easy to see, but it’s practically glowing in bright neon lights how much Edee means to Lyndell.

“I wanted Mama Mary and Papa Pennis. I came here...I knew they would help you. But...I can’t find them.

The lady at the desk said they aren’t here. ”

Edee wipes tears from under her eyes, “You came here looking for my parents because I was hurt?” He nods and I lean back fast enough to avoid being knocked in the jaw again. He has a hard head. “Ty’s right, you’re fucking magic, Lyndell.”

“Mr. Wicawiil?” Lyn and I both glance up at the hotel concierge who hovers behind Edee and the police officers. “Tyrone?”

“Yes?”

“Can we speak for a moment?” I had a feeling they would need to. Lyn caused a disturbance in their place of business, not to mention the ice cream, soda, and what’s left of a cheeseburger on the table where he was sitting. With a sigh, I tap Lyndell’s hip.

“Sit with Edee for a bit, buddy. I’ll be right back.” He nods, his eyes darting warily from me to the woman in the hotel uniform. She smiles softly at him which eases some of my concern. I kiss the top of Edee’s head on my way past.

In the lobby, she slides behind the desk and taps on her computer. “Mr. Shingleton has secured a room for him and his wife; they will be arriving in a few hours.”

“Thank you. How much do I owe for his meal?”

She meets my eyes and offers me another soft smile. “It’s on the house, sir.”

“No, please, I appreciate what you did for him. I imagine he was disruptive—”

“He was scared and alone and anyone who treated him poorly will be rewarded with a lifetime stay in the 8th circle of hell,” she spits out venomously. I like her. I look at her nametag.

“Veronica, thank you...for your compassion.” And bloodthirst.

She dips her head in acknowledgement. “Mr. Shingleton has also secured a room for you, Lyndell, and Miss Shingleton to stay tonight.”

“Oh, that’s not—”

“You have been through a trying ordeal, take the night to recuperate.” There’s no arguing with her...or Dennis. Or Mary. “However, I have upgraded you to our two-bedroom suite.”

“That’s definitely not necessary—”

“It’s my prerogative.”

“Yes, ma’am.” She reminds me of Mama Mary, only slightly less terrifying.

“Here are your keys. I will have dinner sent up shortly for you and Miss Shingleton

and a second dessert for Lyndell.” Dammit, I’m crying again. I sniffle like a little bitch and angrily wipe under my eyes.

“That’s really nice of you.”

Her right eyebrow cocks, as she replies drily, “You seem quite thrilled about it.”

“This is all just a lot to take.” I wave my hands around like a crazy person, but she just grins.

“I know. Why don’t you three go up, relax, and dinner will be up soon. I’m sure the Shingletons will notify you of their arrival.”

“Thank you.” My voice is hoarse, but who cares. This is...more than I could ever have expected.

“Hey, sexy. What are you up to later?” I spin around and stare at the officer who drove us here in shock. My brother was missing for hours and he’s hitting on the hotel clerk?

“If you must know, I’m going home later, pouring a glass of wine, and reading a book...in my tub.” What the fuck is happening right now? I get a little dizzy, ping-ponging between the two of them.

“Alone?” his voice drops a couple octaves as he leans on the counter next to me. I’m uncomfortable. I need an adult...a different adult.

“That depends...on you, officer.”

“I’ll pick you up at 10. I prefer my bubbles to be lavender scented.” With that, the officer taps the counter, then walks back into the restaurant. I stare after him, my

brain stuttering at what I just witnessed.

“That’s my husband.”

“Jesus.” I rub my hand over my head and down my face, laughter bubbling up from deep in my chest. “Thank you, Mrs. Officer. Enjoy your wine.”

“Oh, I will.” I start to walk away, but she calls me back.

“Ty, your brother...he’s a special young man.

And a wonderful friend to our daughter.” The surprises keep coming.

“She’s in her second year of the Good Work program at the university.

” Leaning over to whisper conspiratorially, she tells me, “They have crushes on each other and it’s absolutely adorable.

” Standing back, she slides a card over the counter toward me.

“Please call anytime to set something up for them to get together.”

I walk back to my brother and Edee on numb legs.

My brain rapid firing as it processes the insane events of the day.

I’m tired. Exhausted. Bone deep. Soul deep.

Lyn gives the officer his own statement and it makes me furious all over again, but Edee is there to keep me calm.

“We’ll talk once he’s asleep,” she tells me while the officer finishes up.

“Give us a call tomorrow once you’ve all had a chance to talk things through. Glad you’re ok, Lyndell. Clara will be happy to hear it, too.” Lyn’s complexion pinkens, his eyes dropping to the table as a slow smile spreads his lips. He DOES have a crush!

Arm over Edee’s shoulder, my other hand on the back of Lyn’s neck, the three of us make our way to the luxury suite. I yawn. Edee yawns. Lyndell yawns so big and long I can see his tonsils. I wouldn’t be surprised if the three of us pass out in the elevator on the way up.

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As exhausted as the three of us are, we're all too antsy to sleep.

Well, except Lyndell, but he's only fallen asleep a few minutes ago.

I sat down on the couch in the opulent living room of the two-bedroom suite we've been given after cleaning up quickly and changing into spare clothes from my bag, and eating the food they sent up for us.

Lyndell promptly laid down next to me and put his head in my lap.

I immediately started running my hand through his short hair, softly humming and it didn't take him long.

His sleep is fitful though. He sucks in sharp breaths every few moments since he's all cried out.

Ty pressed a kiss to my forehead, one to Lyndell's and then walked into one of the bedrooms while tapping on his phone.

The low murmur of his voice, calm and steady, is lulling me into a trance.

Or it could be the sheer exhaustion of the day.

The game. The fight. Being detained. The running.

I hate running, and I ran for Ty and Lyndell.

If that doesn't say love, nothing else will.

The anticipation. Fear drains you, even worse after the adrenaline leaves your body.

My "get up and go, got up and went" has never rung more true than right now.

Ty's hand on my shoulder stirs me awake.

I don't know how long I was out, but I can tell you it wasn't long enough.

He sits in the cushioned chair across the glass coffee table.

His eyes pinned on me with an intensity I've never seen before.

No, that's not true. I saw it earlier, at the stadium.

It's...unsettling. In a good way, if that makes any sense.

"Addelsbach, Prib, and Phia will be here in the morning. I'm sure others will join them. They want to see Lyndell for themselves."

"He's a popular guy." A ghost of a smile crosses Ty's face before it smooths out once more.

"Your parents will be here soon. They wanted to see Lyn, but since he's fallen asleep, they'll impatiently wait until morning." I nod, continuing to run my hand over Lyn's head. He whimpers in his sleep, so I rub my thumb between his eyebrows and around his eyes to his cheeks and he quiets down.

When I glance up, Ty's expression has changed. "Ty? He's safe. He's alright."

“Because of you,” he whispers hoarsely. “You saved him.”

“What? No, I didn’t.”

“You did. You stepped in and gave him a chance to run away.”

“I didn’t act fast enough,” I admit, the words like pus from a lanced boil, putrid and disgusting as I purge them. He was assaulted because I didn’t move fast enough.

“You hit them with cushioned stadium chairs. You jumped on that fucker’s back and swung like an MMA fighter. Broke his fucking orbital bone and nose.” Oh. Well. That’s good, I guess. A little smug satisfaction sits low in my gut. Beneath the guilt. Epic amounts of guilt.

“I don’t know what to say.” I’ll never think I did enough, and Ty will always think I did.

“I do.” He slides to his knees in front of me.

His large, warm, calloused hands take my left, completely engulfing it.

“I love you.” Tears prickle behind my eyes, my lips stretching into a smile.

I love hearing him say that. I love love.

I love our love. “I can’t begin to explain how fucking much I love you.

You can’t leave me. Ever. You are mine.” He scoots infinitesimally closer.

His eyes pleading, tone desperate. “I am yours. And we both belong to Lyndell. That’s final.

” A giggle bursts free and another and another until I’m laughing and crying and so damn giddy.

“Ok.” I use his grip on my hand to pull him closer so I can kiss him.

Our lips graze. “I love you, too.” I press my lips to his and we hold them there for long seconds, just enjoying being together like this.

I hate to do this right now, but we have to consider everything.

“Ty, we need to talk to Lilly. And Beiler. And you and Lyndell need to decide if you want to press charges against the guy, Matt, who grabbed Lyndell.” He sighs, sitting back on his heels, a scowl marring his handsome face.

“The accident was years ago, people are still harassing you and Lyndell. There has to be something we can do to stop it. You’ve moved on, everyone else should too.”

“I don’t want to draw attention to it.”

I sit upright, dislodging his hands so I can wave mine about while I talk.

I’m fucking pissed about what happened. “Yeah, I get that, but others are bringing attention to it. Ty, I was fighting, trying to protect Lyn and I, and nobody stepped in to help. They called for help, but no one physically intervened. Even the man who rents the stadium chairs just watched. Then he tried to get the police to arrest me for destruction of property!”

“Asshole.”

“Yes. He is. And so was everyone else who stood by and watched 6 people attack us. He put his hands on Lyndell—”

“He put his hands on both of you.” Ty interrupts me, his rage boiling just beneath the surface. Good, so’s mine.

“You don’t want to draw attention to it, I get that.

But you aren’t doing this for you. Or me.

You need to do this for Lyndell. He is the sweetest, most incredible human being I’ve ever met, and I will not sit back and allow people to so blatantly disrespect him for simply existing.

Phia’s right, the mentality surrounding football is toxic.

Something that can open doors for so many and do so much good is tainted by fucking assholes.

Something has to be said. Something has to be done. ”

He stares at me, but I hold my ground. I stare right the fuck back. He taps Lyndell on the shoulder. “Hey, buddy, let’s get you into bed. Come on.” Lyn groans but starts rolling off the couch to stand up.

“Ty...”

“Yeah, Lyn?”

“I don’t have any ear plugs. No popsicles tonight, ok?

” That little scamp! I follow them into the other bedroom and help Lyn get into bed.

Ty tucks him in, I kiss his forehead. He reaches for my hand when I turn to leave.

“Love you, sissy.” Emotion slams into me so hard and fast it steals my breath.

“Love you more, bubba.” He’s out before we close the door to his room.

Ty follows me to the living room area, where I turn everything off and make sure the latch is on the hotel door.

I feel his stare like prey to a predator.

I’m caught in his crosshairs and there is no escape.

I don’t know what I said or did, but I’m gonna have to figure it out so I can do it again.

I like this side of Ty. Feral. Raw. Animalistic. It’s fucking HAWT.

I add a little extra sway to my hips as I walk into our bedroom for the night.

His appreciative groan pebbles my nipples and settles into a pleasant pulse between my legs.

The door shuts behind him and before I can swing around to face him, I’m pushed over the side of the bed.

I laugh into the plush bedding. He rips my pants and underwear down, then lifts my legs onto the bed.

I shift to get comfortable, my shoulders down, ass up hanging over the edge of the bed.

“Jesus,” he mutters before I feel his teeth dig into the fleshy cheeks of my ass.

Big hands palm them as he spreads them apart.

I've never had anal sex, but he's touched my rear entrance several times during sex, and I like it.

A lot. I'm not opposed to trying it sometime, but now isn't the time.

And I'm grateful he agrees. His fingers slide through the lips of my pussy, coating themselves in my juices.

They circle my asshole, while his other hand finds my clit and strokes it lazily.

I shimmy out of my shirt and don't even waste time unhooking my bra, I just pull it off over my head and toss it with the shirt somewhere off to the side.

Blessedly naked and at his mercy, I release a hum of satisfaction and wait for him to rock my world.

The orgasm builds slowly, and just as I'm about to feel it crash into me, he pulls completely back and leaves me hanging. I growl into the mattress, his chuckles only fueling my frustration.

"On my cock, baby. Only on my cock." I open my mouth to snap at him, but he punches his hips and impales me with his hard, unforgiving length, stealing the breath from my lungs.

Two thrusts and I'm cumming so hard my vision darkens at the edges, and my body convulses uncontrollably.

I feel his teeth sink into my shoulder, his broad chiseled chest flush to my back.

“Gotta be quiet, Edee, or I won’t give you another one.

” I whine but bite my bottom lip to keep it inside.

His hands worship my body, teasing, pinching, tickling everywhere he can reach as he drives his cock into me over and over.

One hand between my thighs, his fingers rubbing my clit, the other massaging my tit, my nipple caught between two fingers, he whispers into my ear, “I can’t get enough of you.

Every time I think I’ve got a handle on how much I feel for you, you do something else that makes me love you more.

I’m obsessed with you. Your smile. Your laugh.

Your deep gushing pussy. Your fucking heart.

Thank you—” His breath hitches and he stutters over his words.

My eyes fill with tears, understanding to a cellular level just how he feels. “Thank you for loving me.”

“Ty...” Now isn’t the time for words, only pleasure, only a soul-deep connection that can never be severed.

I’m gonna yell at my mom for not warning me about love.

She gave me so many details regarding sex but never how love rips you apart and puts you back together better and stronger than before.

How it consumes you absolutely until you are no longer one person but two halves of a whole.

Never complete without the other. She's a big meanie.

"I've got you. And I'm never letting go," he promises darkly, his words burrow into my soul.

I feel bereft when he stands back up, my back cold without his touch.

But my pussy...it's so full of him. He bands an arm around my middle, his hand on my chest, and pulls me upright.

His hands cup my tits, using them as leverage to fuck into me.

Obscenely wet, he slides so easily, but I clench to hold him where I want him.

His chuckle skates across my skin. I grind down, swiveling my hips, my hands over his on my tits, kneading the tender flesh with him as he pushes me toward the precipice once more.

"I'm gonna flood this sweet, little pussy, then I'm gonna fall asleep inside you, your cunt keeping my cock warm all night.

" I make a strangled sound, then whimper as my climax washes over me.

It's divine. He grunts, moans, and exhales long and loudly as he finishes inside me.

He does indeed flood me until it's dripping down to the bed below.

I drop back to the bed, my ass up, my shoulders on the mattress, my entire body

shaking with laughter. Ty withdraws with a slap to my ass. In the bathroom, he wets a cloth and cleans himself, then me. I roll over to my back and continue to laugh so hard tears fall down my cheeks.

He lays down next to me, drawing me into his arms on our sides. His face in my neck, he asks grumpily, “What’s so fucking funny?”

“I have to pee!” I say first and he slaps my hip.

“So, go pee.” I turn to look at him and he rolls his eyes. “In the bathroom.” I roll off the bed and walk on unsteady legs into the bathroom. Do my business, wash my hands and look at myself in the mirror. I’m happy. Pure, unadulterated joy. And it looks good on me.

Crawling back in bed, I resume the position, my ass snug to his pelvis.

I lay on his left arm, his right across my middle.

A few moments later, his hard cock noses between my thighs and slides back inside me.

I wiggle a bit, then settle down once I’m comfy.

It’s an odd sensation, but I should be able to sleep like this. I giggle a few more times and he huffs.

“What?”

“If you...stay inside me all night...will it prune up like if you stay in the bath too long?”

“Jesus!” he exclaims, before laughing so hard the bed shakes.

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We've made it to the end of the regular season. It's been quite the season, I gotta say. Lots of change. Mostly for the good, definitely weeded out some bad seeds, and a better tomorrow for all of us is on the horizon. But it's been hard won. Painful, though growth often is.

After talking it over the morning after with Mary, Dennis, Edee, and of course, Lyndell, we decided to press charges against Matt.

He violated Lyndell, and his actions should have consequences.

A lesson to others, perhaps. Lyndell has had nightmares since, and the university provided a therapist for him to help him cope.

I sat in on a couple sessions. My brother is an amazing creature.

I've always known that, but his heart is so damn big.

I hear Edee laugh in the other room and it makes me smile. I'm sitting in the living room of Phia and Prib's apartment, hanging out with Prib while Phia gives Edee a tour. There are only a few rooms, not sure why it's taking so long, but it probably involves spilling the tea.

"Ty? How are you doing?" Prib asks from his spot on the couch.

"I'm good," I answer, my eyebrow cocked in question. Why is he asking?

"You sure? We've been sitting here in silence for 10 minutes."

“Shit!” I lift my wrist and am surprised to see he’s right. “Well,” I rub my hand over my neck, “I guess, I’m wondering...how do you deal with it?” We’re spilling the tea out here too, it seems.

“Deal with what?”

“The pressure? The disappointment from people you’ve never met?”

Prib shrugs with a grin. “Who cares?” He points to the bedroom, “The only opinions that matter are Phia’s, our families’, and...Beiler’s for some reason.”

“I know.” I shake my head. “That fucking guy.”

Prib sneers, “Always so nice and supportive and helpful.”

“What a fucking asshole.” He nods in agreement. My smile drops. “Edee and Tilly want to release a statement to the media, probably a small press conference.”

His head tilts. “You aren’t a player.”

“No, but I’m going to be a coach next season. And Lyndell is a valued and beloved member of the staff.” I pause, taking a deep breath. “And the shit Phia went through with Heacock...something’s gotta change, man.”

Prib sighs, “Fine. We’ll change the fucking world.” He drops his leg to the floor and sits forward with his elbows on his knees, looking me directly in the eye. “Can I have dinner first?” I laugh, tipping my head back.

“Sure. Heroism can’t happen on an empty stomach.”

The girls come out of the bedroom, grinning at the two of us. Phia walks by Prib to

join him on the couch, but he pulls her waist and plants her in his lap. Edee runs her hand over my head as she perches on the armrest of the chair I'm in.

“You two ready for dinner? We have important superhero shit to do, and I'm hungry.” They don't look surprised, so I'm assuming they overheard our conversation.

“We've been waiting for you two to finish your little gab-sesh,” Phia teases Prib, giggling when he starts tickling her.

Edee and I stand, waiting for them to finish.

I drop my arm over her shoulder and draw her close to kiss the top of her head.

She fits perfectly against me. Phia escapes, grabs her purse and rushes to the front door.

Prib slowly gets up, not so subtly adjusting his crotch.

I slap my hand over Edee's eyes and growl at him. He shrugs, the smug bastard.

“Hey, I forgot to ask. Phia, why do you have a mirror on your ceiling?” Phia squeaks, throws open the door and runs for it. Edee chuckles as she follows at a normal pace. Prib looks at me with a wicked grin. When he holds his hand up for a high-five, I oblige. Gotta respect the man's game.

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“I wish I had some Xanax or weed or a shot of something strong to give you,” Lilly whispers next to me. We’re standing off to the side, Tyrone and Lyndell on the small stage, sitting behind a short table, microphones in front of them.

“What? I’m good,” I respond, never taking my eyes off my guys.

I’m so damn proud of Lyndell. He’s doing so well, therapy is helping him immensely.

His nightmares have decreased, but it’s more than the attack.

The therapist is giving him an outlet to express so much of what confuses him in the world.

Helps him understand and accept his own illness, and navigate his relationship with Tyrone.

Ty is caregiver, brother, best friend, occasional disciplinarian, and so much more.

Oftentimes, the brother part is pushed aside.

And now that Ty and I are dating, talking about marriage and kids down the line, Lyndell needs to figure out his place amongst all the changes.

They are positive changes, but still difficult for him to process.

Every day, I see him grow lighter and brighter.

Therapy with the right professional makes all the difference.

And now, they are up on the stage, baring all for the world in the hopes that their words reach someone, anyone, and enact a ripple of positive change.

Lilly laughs quietly. “Sure, right. Totally good.” She places her hand over my hands and I still, realizing I’ve been wringing them in front of me. I’ve rubbed the skin of my hands raw. Shit. I’m not good. I’m worried. Nervous. Scared. Proud. Excited. Terrified.

I don’t want to go mama-bear again. I’d like my chair swinging days to be over.

“Thank you for joining us today. Lyndell and I are grateful for your time and attention.” Ty speaks slowly and clearly, appearing calm and collected. But I see the way his fingers tap on his thigh beneath the table.

“Hi,” Lyndell says, drawing a chuckle from the reporters, as he waves.

“As many of you know, my name is Tyrone Wicawiil. I came to this university on a football scholarship as a quarterback. Football...football was my chance, like many others, to live a life beyond the status quo. To see the world, to be a part of something bigger, to belong to something.” He pauses and inhales deeply.

On a slow exhale, he continues, “The first year was everything I could have hoped for. I worked hard, dedicated every available second to training. If I wanted to achieve my goals, I had to prove myself. Prove the university didn’t misplace their trust in me.

More than anything, though, I worked hard to provide for my brother, Lyndell.

From as far back as I can remember, he has been my world.

Everything that makes my life worth living.

I needed football as a means to provide for him, take care of him, give him the life he deserves.

I am not ashamed to admit that I believe I was put on this earth to serve him.

And I have thanked God every day for that blessing.

” Lyndell smiles at Ty and gives him a side hug.

“After my freshman year, Lyndell and I were in a car accident. Severe concussion, and my right arm and leg were injured too severely to ever play football again professionally. Many of you saw that accident as a death of sorts. The death of my career. The death of my potential. The death of the millions I could make.” Ty looks at Lyn and grins.

“For me, that accident saved my brother’s life.

I can never, will never regret that accident because the injuries we sustained uncovered Lyndell’s serious medical conditions, and the treatment for those...

they gave Lyndell a new beginning. Thanks to the university, their generosity, and the push from faculty and staff like Coach Brandon Beiler and Lilly Geddes in PR, Lyndell has thrived during his time here.

He isn’t just the towel boy for the team, he’s received real world job training, marketable skills, and a network of support that have made him the go-to guy on campus for tough stains.

” He pauses for the laughter to die down.

“He teaches newcomers in the Good Work program, passing on his hard-earned wisdom.

To know him is to love him. It's impossible to be in his presence and not feel joy.”

“He’s doing so well,” Lilly whispers. I nod, because he is. He has them wrapped around his little finger.

“Several weeks ago, several people tried to snuff out that joy. They tried to make him feel less. Unworthy. They assaulted him verbally. They violated him physically—”

“Edee kicked their butts,” Lyndell interrupts. I smile at him and give him a thumbs up which he enthusiastically returns.

“She did. Edee Shingleton took on six assailants by herself, defending Lyndell and herself, while others stood by and did nothing. They watched. They filmed it. All evil needs is for good men to do nothing. And nothing is exactly what they did. I might wear a costume, but my hearing is just fine. The whispers, the judgements, the idle gossip. For the past 4 years, I have taken the hits off the field. I have never been in denial about the court of public opinion, however, so long as no one came after Lyndell, my shoulders were strong enough to carry the burden. This isn’t the first time someone has said something to my brother and girlfriend this season.

It’s just the first time someone got physical too.

And it’s the first time I’ve ever regretted the game.

Ever wished I had never picked up that football in middle school.

I have remained in the periphery as a mascot because of my love of the game.

Lyndell loves to watch the games, loves being a part of the action in his own way.

But I'll be damned if I remain here after I graduate as part of the coaching staff, so my brother and girlfriend can be the punching bags of someone too drunk or too emotionally invested in a game to see their actions, their words have consequences. ”

Tears fill my eyes, but I blink them away. I don't want to cry now. I need to keep it together for him and Lyndell. “You should have given me some weed or a shot of something strong,” I murmur and Lilly makes a noise of agreement.

“Football means so many different things to different people. For some it's a hobby.

Others, a good time hanging with buddies and eating bad-for-you-food.

But for a few, it's life or death. And it doesn't need to be.

It's a game. At the end of the day, it's a game played by real people with real feelings, with real problems that they deal with every day.

Whether I play football or not doesn't affect any of you personally.

But watching my brother hurt, watching him suffer because of those who blame him unjustly, affects me personally.

I wish everyone had a Lyndell in their life.

He makes my days better. Makes me a better man.

I am here today, because I will be joining the coaching staff next year.

I love this university, I love the game, but I love my brother more.

And I'm putting everyone on notice, you mess with Lyndell again, my girl Edee will find the nearest chair and hit you with it.

” The reporters laugh. Lilly bumps her shoulder into mine with a chuckle.

“This game brings people together, do not allow it to tear people apart.” Ty looks at Lyndell and points to the mics.

“You have anything you want to add, Lyn?”

Lyn nods emphatically, leaning close to the cluster of microphones. “Ice cream makes everything better.”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:21 am

“What has gotten into you?” I ask, dumfounded, as my girlfriend rips my clothing off and shoves me onto the bed.

“God.” She grabs my hands and moves them up to her tits, and she starts to ride slow and steady. Her head drops back, eyes closed, her bottom lip caught between white teeth. I knead the heavy flesh, thumbing the painful peaks, pinching them between fingers, and lightly tugging.

Her head lolls around, her eyes heavy-lidded with arousal, but the depth of emotion that swirls in the chocolate gaze is too much.

Too close to my own, like looking in a mirror.

Her fingers trace the contours of my abs, over my pecs, and flick at my nipples.

Her hips swivel and rotate, her body undulating sensually as she takes me deeper and harder but never faster.

“I love you,” she tells me, her gaze locked with mine.

“I am so fucking proud of you. I’m in awe of you.

I love you so much. Love your heart. Love your mind.

Really, really love your cock.” She grinds back and forth on my cock, moaning when I lean forward to lick her nipple before sucking it into my mouth.

“How it fills me. I feel so empty without you. I ache for you, every fucking day.”

“Edee.” Her words are like a lit match to tinder.

The flames start in my balls and burn their way up, my orgasm threatening to consume me at any moment.

Two fingers of my right hand trace her lips, then push inside.

Her tongue swirls around them, coating them, then she sucks like she would my cock and I know my orgasm is imminent.

Our bodies shine with a sheen of sweat, she’s working us over good.

I love being inside her, any time, any place, any way.

But I fucking love it when she takes charge.

When she takes what she wants, uses me like her own personal fuck toy.

It’s hot as hell. I pinch her nipple hard and use it to pull her closer.

She arches her back, thrusting her tits in my face and her ass out.

My wet fingers follow the split of her ass and when I circle her back entrance, she starts whining low in her throat, her hips moving a little faster.

Two pumps of my fingers inside her ass, and she goes off like a shot.

The vise-like grip of her pussy threatening to break my shit off.

Her nails dig into my chest, drawing blood.

I thrust up into her a few more times and her pussy chokes my cock until he gives up the goods with a roar.

We twitch and moan, kissing sloppily, and exploring the other's body as we come down from such an epic high.

I band my arms around her back, and she melts into my hold, a boneless heap on my chest, her body still cradling my spent cock.

“You were amazing, Ty.”

I chuckle, kissing her damp forehead. “Thanks, you too.”

“No.” With a groan, she sits up to meet my eyes. “At the press conference, Ty. You were...so fucking amazing. I meant it, I'm so damn proud of you. Truly.”

“ Thank you .” My throat tightens, making it difficult to speak.

Her words mean more to me than she could ever know.

We take advantage of the quiet apartment, lazing in bed, making out.

After the press conference, Lyndell went out with his coworkers, their faculty advisor acting as chaperone.

He was so excited, they all were, talking about how they saw him on TV.

Clara smiled shyly at him and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

I've never seen him so damn giddy...and smug.

He got himself a girl, and now he thinks he's hot shit.

Well, I got one too, so I guess I can see his point.

Snuggling, still in bed a bit later, I whisper, "I saw the footage." She stiffens slightly against me but doesn't say anything.

"You...the way you..." I pause, shaking my head and giving myself a moment to organize my thoughts.

"Everything that has ever happened in my life; my mom abandoning me, my grandmother raising me while my dad did whatever, playing football, meeting Beiler, coming here, the accident, being the mascot. Every single moment has led me to right now. I've never been one for regret, but Edee...

how could I ever regret or want to change a single second of my life when it led me to you? "

Edee snuffles and groans. She smacks me on my chest. "Oh, boy, your mouth is writing checks your dick can't cash.

" She slides down my body and takes my limp cock into her hand, licking a swirling path up the length and then into her mouth.

It takes her mere seconds to bring it back to life.

Her body is on full display, her back deeply arched, her fine ass swaying back and forth as she takes her time, makes love to my cock with her warm, wet mouth.

With a pleased chuckle, I put my arms behind my head, and wink down at her. “I take it back.” She gazes up my body, giving me her attention. “My only regret is not having a mirror on my ceiling right now.”

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I blink rapidly, trying to dispel the tears that blur my vision. Taking pictures is difficult when you're crying...even if they are happy tears. Mr. and Mrs. Crue Pribula. Phia Pribula.

AHH! My girl is hitched! I'm so excited and happy and a big sap. I love love!

For it being short notice, Phia's mom and the coordinator at the Vegas wedding chapel pulled everything together so beautifully.

And Phia is a vision in a cocktail-style wedding dress.

It's a wonderful affair and blessedly short and sweet and right to the point.

Frills and attention aren't Prib and Phia's style.

"Edee, you alright?" Ty asks from beside me.

"I'm great!" He chuckles, kisses my forehead and leans back into his conversation with some of the guys from the team, including Beiler.

Lyndell is hanging out with Phia and Crue's parents and my own across the room.

A few other guests mill about and it's heartwarming to see how many people are here to support them from the university and football team.

Hell, Andres Abbott and Theo Prokop are here!

Of course, I'm told the happy couple is staying at Abbott's castle in Scotland for their honeymoon. His CASTLE!

The parents of the happy couple take us all out for a celebratory dinner.

The guys have a good time, relaxing now that the season is over and the Rose Bowl is in the rearview.

Listening to Beiler and Ty, I know that the next season is already on the horizon.

No rest for the wicked. I have fun sitting back, people-watching during the meal.

Especially Ty. He'd pivoted, accepted his physical limitations and found a new path to pursue.

Then Beiler put up a fork in the road, and in true Tyrone Wicawiil fashion, he forged his own path right down the middle.

He's continuing his education to obtain his master's for special education while coaching a Big10 football team...

and hopefully giving me plenty of orgasms along the way.

I'm not selfish, 10 to 20 a week seems fair.

Dinner winds down, and everyone starts to say their goodbyes to the newlyweds and find some trouble to get into for the night. It's Vegas, the possibilities are endless.

"When you get back, we're getting together, and I want all the deets." I tell Phia as I hug her one last time.

"Oh yeah?" she laughs, an eyebrow rising up her forehead.

“Yeah...like how did Prib secure the mirror to your ceiling and how did you convince your super to let him?”

“Ah...well, I invoke spousal privilege.” I toss my head back and laugh at her well-educated response.

“I’m gonna miss you like crazy, but I hope you and Prib have a great time. Relax, enjoy yourself...live in the moment.”

Phia looks at her husband and grins. “I’m learning to embrace the spontaneity.”

Ty and I walk hand in hand down the busy sidewalk, Lyn and my parents behind us. We have plans to meet up with a few of the others later, but we need to head back to the hotel to change and regroup.

Near the Bellagio, Lyndell grabs my other hand and he and Ty lead me inside the huge hotel.

“Why are we here?” I ask, though continue to follow them inside the Botanical Gardens just off the lobby.

My head is practically on a swivel, trying to take in everything there is to see.

It’s absolutely breathtaking; the artistry involved and the imaginative displays.

The brothers seem to be on a mission as I’m tugged through the garden. We stop at the giant chess board filled with topiary chess pieces. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. Ty and Lyn release my hands and begin weaving between the pieces, laughing, as they play hide-and-seek.

“Hey, Edee?” I glance to the right and spot Ty leaning around the large knight piece. “You wanna play a game of chess?”

I give him a shrug, chuckling at the lightness I see in his eyes. He's happy. Genuinely happy and it tickles me to witness it. "Sure, why not." The pieces are far too large to move, but who cares.

Ty steps out from behind the sculpted horse head and stops when the toes of his dress shoes touch my heels.

"This king is capturing his queen." He punctuates his statement with a kiss to my lips.

I miss him as soon as he breaks the kiss and I chase him with my eyes still closed, but there is nothing but air.

I blink them open and he's not there. Something taps my thigh, and I gasp when I find him and Lyn on one knee in front of me.

He opens a small ring box, revealing a gorgeous gold ring that looks familiar.

"Is that...?" He nods, licks his lips and swallows hard.

"When I asked your parents for permission to propose, your father insisted I take your grandmother's ring.

I couldn't say no. Your mom is scary, but this ring...

it's you. And I couldn't imagine it anywhere but around your finger telling the world that I am yours...

that I'm enough for you exactly as I am. "

"Ty—"

"Ty, you skipped me!" Lyn whispers with a glare at his brother, it makes me laugh.

When others join in, I realize we are surrounded by almost everyone that was at the wedding, minus Prib and Phia. My parents are watching with happy smiles, and Addelsbach is snapping pictures on my camera.

“Sorry, brother. Go ahead. I’ll wait...” Ty deadpans.

“Thank you.” Lyn smirks. He opens a box of his own, revealing a delicate gold necklace with an entwined heart pendant. “Edee, I love you. Will you be my sister?”

“Lyn, of course, I will! I love you too, big brother.” He lights up, wraps his arms around my legs and stands up with a whoop. I lean down and hug him, then pat his shoulder to put me back on the ground. Ty waits patiently.

I take a deep breath, my stomach doing somersaults and my palms itchy.

“May I?” Ty asks Lyn, who makes a sweeping gesture for Ty to get on with it.

“Edee. You captured me from the beginning; I never stood a chance against you. I want to live in checkmate with you for the rest of our lives. Will you marry me?”

I must take too long, since Lyn huffs and leans in to whisper loudly, “You’re supposed to say ‘yes’.”

“I am?” He nods, pointing at his brother, still on his knee.

“I’m glad you were here to help.” That makes Lyn preen like a peacock.

I look down at Ty with a soft smile, tears in my eyes.

Lifting my left hand between us, I wait for him to take it in his, the warmth of his skin soothing my nerves. “Yes.”