



# Fighting Temptation

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**Category:** Romance, Lesbian Romance

**Description:** If he doesn't shut his mouth, I might just do it for him. The only problem is I don't know whether to kiss him or punch him.

Theodore

College can't last forever, but it was nice getting a taste of freedom. I'm back home again, living in my childhood room, and having to put up with the golden child, Cypress. I don't know what's worse, walking in on them with my friend or being forced to share a bedroom. It'd be less confusing if they weren't so pretty.

Cypress

What's Theo's problem? Ever since his dad started dating my mom, he's been a total jerk. The last four years he's been off at college were a welcome relief. As far as I'm concerned, the sooner he gets a job and moves out the better. I'm too busy with MMA and college classes to deal with his mess.

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# Page 1

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Prologue

Cypress

Five Years Ago

“When do they get here?” I ask.

“It’ll be another ten to twenty minutes, hon,” my mom tells me as she tucks a longer strand of hair behind my ear. “But you don’t have to wait at the door. Why don’t you come help me with dinner?”

“I’m just excited. I’ve heard so much about Theodore from Ben, and I can’t wait to meet him.” It’s almost like I know him already from how much his father talks about him when he comes to see my mom. Mom and Ben have been dating for a few months now, but Ben’s son was spending the summer with his mom. I know he’s a few years older than me, but it’ll be nice having someone closer to my age to talk to. Anything’s better than watching Ben and Mom flirt and kiss. Ew.

“Earth to Cy. Come on, you can’t stand there the whole time. Let’s get busy. We want there to be food ready when they get here.” Mom walks into the kitchen again, and I follow along. Mom isn’t a great cook, and she could use the help. At least if I’m here, there’s a better chance dinner will be edible. There’s already a pot of spaghetti sauce on the stove that’s boiling over. I adjust the knob, turning the heat down as I grab the wooden spoon on the counter.

“Weren’t you going to do a salad too?” I ask. There’s no way she can burn that.

“Right.” Mom opens the fridge and pulls out veggies as I take over the stove. Spaghetti is easy enough, and I even throw some frozen garlic knots in the oven to go with it.

The doorbell rings, and I rush to answer it. “That must be them!” I skid to a stop when I get to the door, swinging it open to see Ben and his teenage son. He showed me a picture of Theodore before, but it doesn’t compare to the real thing. I know he’s seventeen, but I wasn’t expecting him to be so much bigger than me. Not just taller, but he’s wider and more muscular, too. Tousled dark blonde hair adorns his head, and he wears a disinterested sneer while looking down at the ground instead of looking at me.

“Cy, it’s great to see you. Son, this is Selene’s kid, Cypress. Cy, this is my son, Theodore,” he introduces us. I bite my inner cheek, not thrilled with Ben using the word kid, but I don’t correct him. It’s better than being called son. I know he’s trying to get my gender and pronouns right. He even said he’d warn his son about it before they showed up.

Theodore finally looks up at me. “Hey,” he mumbles.

“Is your mom in the kitchen?” Ben asks.

“Yup, come on in.” I step aside to let them in our apartment. Ben walks past me to the kitchen, leaving me in the living room with Theodore. “Do you want to play a video game, Theodore? Do you like video games? I don’t have a lot of them, but you can pick which one we play. You can call me Cy, by the way.”

“Slow down, Cy.” He crosses his arms over his chest, looking down at me. “What kind of name is Cypress, anyway?”

Maybe this is a bad idea. I don’t like his attitude. “It’s a type of tree. At least it’s

more original than Teddy.”

“It’s Theo.” He crosses his arms over his chest. He stares at me, and I glare right back.

“Dinner’s ready,” Mom calls from the kitchen. “Can you boys set the table?”

“Come on, Theo, I’ll show you where the dishes are.” I can be the bigger person here and be polite, even if Theo is acting like a turd. Theo rolls his eyes at me but follows me. Mom walks in holding the salad, and Ben follows her, holding the pot of spaghetti. I run into the kitchen to grab the garlic bread. When I get back, everyone is already taking seats. Mom is at one end of the table in her usual spot, and Ben is on the opposite end. Theo is already seated, leaving me only the spot across from him.

“So, Theodore, your dad tells me you’re going to be a senior this year. That’s exciting. Cy is starting high school, and I heard you’ll be at the same school.” Mom looks at Theo as she scoops a spoonful of noodles on her plate.

Theo shrugs, making a noncommittal grunt as he snags a garlic knot.

“Are you involved with any groups or sports?” Mom tries again.

“Theo is on the wrestling team,” Ben chimes in.

“Oh? That’s great. Cy does Jiu Jitsu,” she offers the bit of information like it’s similar. Like wrestling and JiuJitsu are anywhere near the same just because they’re both fighting.

“You do Jiu Jitsu?” Theo asks. His eyes glance over at me as he raises an eyebrow. I know I’m on the smaller side, but I haven’t hit my growth spurt yet. Most people underestimate me. I use that to my advantage.

“Yeah, maybe we could spar sometime. We could go by MMA rules,” I offer.

“Nah, I only wrestle.” Theo pokes at his spaghetti as he goes silent again.

“Well, boys, we’re glad we could get everyone here tonight. As you know, Selene and I have been dating for a few months now, and we wanted to have you two meet before we decided, but ...” Ben glances at my mom and she nods. “We’ve been talking, and Selene and I are planning on moving in together.”

“We’re moving?” Theo’s voice rises as he looks at his dad.

“Actually, Cy and I will move in with you. The house is big enough to fit everyone. You’ll only have to share a room until we can clear out your father’s office,” Mom says.

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“I have to share a room with them? How is that okay? Are they even a boy?” He sneers, glaring at my outfit.

“Theodore, that’s rude. It’s not okay to talk like that,” Ben scolds him.

It doesn’t surprise me, but I was really hoping he wouldn’t be an asshole. I glance down at the sequin rainbow shirt I’m wearing, running my fingers over the embroidered cloud. “I’m nonbinary,” I interrupt Ben. “And I’m sure we can figure it out, at least until my room is ready.”

I don’t know what I did to piss Theo off, other than existing. His dad seems like a nice guy and Mom likes him. Maybe we just need a better chance to get to know each other.

### Chapter One

#### Theo

I toss my bag on my twin bed and glance around the room. It’s not much to look at. A single bed, built-in closet that barely has room for my dresser, a small window that lets the sun shine on my old desk. My wrestling trophies, sitting on the shelf. Four years and it still looks the same. Dad never bothered to redecorate, and Selene refused to, insisting it be ready for me when I finished college. Guess I have her to thank for not turning my room into an office or something. Not that that makes it any easier.

Four years of freedom living in the dorms during college and, just like that, I’m back home in my old high school room. At least it’s all temporary. All I have to do is get a

job and save up enough money to rent an apartment. It won't be long before I'm out of here again.

Music blares through the wall along with Cypress's off-pitch humming. God, I don't miss that. What I wouldn't give to not have to put up with the golden child. Our parents got married a few short months after they moved in when I was seventeen, and ever since I've had to put up with the comparisons. Cypress got an 'A' on their math test. Cypress volunteers at the local soup kitchen, cooking for the homeless. Cypress never sneaks in late from partying. Blah, blah, blah. What a kiss ass.

I toss myself on the bed and kick off my shoes. My phone chimes with a new message, and I glance at the screen.

Eric: You back in town yet? Want to catch up? We could go for a beer.

Just got home. I'm supposed to have dinner with the family tonight, but I can meet up later. Around seven?

Speaking of the family, I didn't run into anyone on my way in. Dad's probably still at work, and who knows where Selene is. I grab the remote, turn the TV on, and scroll through my options, but nothing is catching my attention. Maybe I should just take a nap instead. I am a little tired from driving most of the day. A show I've seen before catches my eye, and I settle in on my bed, letting it play in the background. Just as I'm about to drift off, Cy's singing gets louder. Ugh, I haven't even been home for a whole day, and they're already ruining it for me. I throw my pillow at the wall, but it hits with a dull thud, barely loud enough for me to hear. My hand goes for the remote, turning up the show to drown out Cy.

I glance at my phone to check the time. Dad usually gets off work at four. It'll take him roughly twenty minutes to drive home. I'm still holding my phone when a new message pops up.

Mom: Did you make it to your dad's yet? Hope the drive wasn't too terrible.

I type out a quick response, hoping it will be enough.

I'm here. The drive wasn't too bad, but it was still long. I'll talk to you soon.

I turn the volume on the TV higher, but it's still not enough. My mind jumps around to different thoughts as I watch the show. I'm already thinking about where to apply for a job. It'll be nice to catch up with some of my friends from high school. It's hard to believe it's been four years already.

Someone knocks on my door, but I try to ignore it. The knocking comes again and with a groan, I go to answer the door. Selene is there wearing a messy apron over her jeans and T-shirt. Great, if she's been cooking, the food is probably disgusting.

"Hey Theo, you must have sneaked right past me while I was in the kitchen. I can't believe you're all finished with college and living with us again." She smiles as she goes on about something, but I'm not really paying attention. "Well, dinner is about ready. Your dad got held up in traffic, so we're just waiting for him to get back. Why don't you come downstairs, and we'll get started setting everything up, so it's ready when he gets here?"

I roll my eyes behind my stepmom's back, but I still follow her downstairs. It's not that I think Selene is a bad person, but having a stepmom was never something I wanted. I was seventeen when they got married. And besides, I have a mom. She might have moved away after she and my dad divorced, but we still keep in contact. She even helped pay for my schooling and set it up so I could use her address to avoid out-of-state fees. I considered moving in with her after graduation, but it just didn't feel like home. Philly is where I grew up. I don't know if I'll want to stay here forever, but for right now it'll do.



My eyes meet Cy's as I step off the last stair. They must have come down earlier. I didn't even notice when they stopped singing. Cy flips their long brown hair over their shoulder, looking down their nose at me before they turn and head for the dining room. Most of the time we don't talk, but I can already tell Cy is about as happy about me being back home as I am. Joy.

I take a seat on one side of our little square table, and Cy follows their mom to the kitchen. Faint talking drifts from the other room, but I ignore it and pull out my phone again. Right until the front door closes. I can't see it from where I'm sitting, but I don't have to wait long before my father walks in the room. He glances at me for a moment before looking towards the kitchen. "Welcome home, Theo. Where's—" He cuts off as Selene and Cypress walk in holding the food.

"Did you have a nice day at work, sweetie?" she asks, taking a step closer to my dad and giving him a quick kiss.

I ignore the back-and-forth chatter as Dad talks about his day. Cy and Selene set the food on the table, and I look up from the game I'm playing to check if it's worth eating. Maybe I'll be better off getting a bite to eat with Eric later.

"The meatloaf smells great, dear." Dad takes his seat on my right, with Selene on my left. Cy sits across from me, completing the square.

"Thanks, Cy helped," Selene says, putting her hand on their shoulder.

"Can you put the phone away at the table, Theo?" Dad asks. "Come on, you must have some stories to tell from school."

All eyes turn to me. I help myself to a slice of meatloaf, adding mashed potatoes to my plate to drag out the moment while I think of something to say. Maybe I should just keep quiet. Act like I didn't hear anything to begin with. "It was school." I shrug.

“There were classrooms, a library, the usual shit.”

“Watch your language, son.” Selene looks at me.

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“Not your son,” I mutter under my breath. “You know what? I’ve got somewhere to be. Be back later,” I excuse myself from the table without taking a bite. No one bothers to say a word or attempt to stop me as I head to my room again. I text out a quick message to Eric as I grab my shit to leave.

Dinner was a bust. I’m leaving the house. Wanna meet up early?

Eric: I’m on shift for another half hour. You can drop by, though. I can get you a cheap pizza with my employee discount.

It’s probably better than meatloaf, anyway. My car is still loaded up with shit. I didn’t bother to unpack earlier, but I don’t think it’ll matter. I already took the important stuff in my bag inside earlier. Most of what’s still in the car is clothes. It’ll be fine. I fire up the engine and head for the pizzeria and arcade where Eric works.

Luckily, it’s not much of a drive from our townhouse to get there. I’m already tired from driving home, and I’m not thrilled about being in the car again. It only takes a few minutes before I’m pulling into the parking lot for the strip mall and finding a spot. I lock up the car and walk up to the building, ignoring the other nearby shops and walking toward the sign that says, ‘Pie in the Sky Pizzeria & Arcade.’

The lights inside are dimmer than the sunlight outside. The noise of traffic drifts away, replaced by the ringing arcade machines’ sound effects. Stepping in sends me right back to the mindset of being in high school and killing time with my friends. I pull out my phone to text Eric again, but before I can send a message, he calls my name from across the room. “Hey, Theo.”

“Nice uniform,” I comment, looking him up and down as I take in the polyester mess he’s wearing. The dim lighting only makes the colors look tackier and casts a pale, sickly color to Eric’s face. His short brown hair is held back from his face with a matching visor.

“Yeah, laugh it up. At least I have a job,” he taunts.

“Dude, you work at a pizza place. It’s not something to be proud of.”

“I have money coming in and my own apartment,” he brags. “I don’t have to bail out on dinner early because of family shit. What happened, anyway?”

“Didn’t you say you could get me discount food?” I change the subject. “I could go for some pizza.”

Eric rolls his eyes but leads me over to a two-seater table and hands me a menu. “What can I get you?” he asks.

I barely glance at the menu before I make up my mind. “Let’s go with two slices of Hawaiian and an orange soda.”

Eric collects the menu, tucking it under his arm. “I’ll get right on it.” He walks away, stopping at a few other tables along the way to greet customers and check in. I turn my attention to the arcade portion of the restaurant, looking for new machines. Eric doesn’t leave me waiting for long before he walks back with a tray in his hand loaded up with food. He drops a plate in front of me with two large slices of pizza, setting the cup on the side. “I get off the clock in like ten minutes,” he tells me as he sets down a second plate across the table from me. “I just need to finish up and I’ll be back soon. Don’t eat my food.” With that, Eric disappears, heading off to do his job.

I know I only avoided the conversation temporarily, but on one thing, I’ll admit Eric

had a point. Having my own apartment sounds pretty nice right about now. Not having to deal with family drama. Not having to worry about roommates. Being able to bring a girl home occasionally. I can't deny the appeal. But Eric didn't bother with college after high school. He went right to working and saving up money to move out. I'm hoping I can get a better job than serving pizza at our old high school hangout.

"So, how is home sweet home?" Eric asks when he sits down again.

"Any chance you're looking for a roommate?" I joke.

"You couldn't afford it." Eric lifts his pizza slice to his mouth and takes a bite. "You looking for a job yet?"

"Nah, I'll give it a week. Get settled at home first. I haven't even unpacked all my stuff yet."

"Well, it's nice to see you home. How was it, anyway? Did you have fun in your out-of-state college?"

"It was nice," I admit. No Dad harassing me for my choices. No comparing me to the perfect golden child. No dealing with Cy and their weirdness. I got the chance to just be myself for a little while and not have to worry about what my family thinks. Of course, it would be over too soon. After that brief taste of freedom, I can't wait to be on my own again.

## Chapter Two

### Cypress

I sort through my dresser, pulling out workout clothes and tossing them on my bed.

Just for fun, I add a mesh dark blue jock strap to the mix to finish the outfit. It's early morning, but I didn't get much sleep last night after being woken up around midnight when Theo snuck in. At least I don't have to worry about running into him this morning as I get ready to head off to the gym for training.

I grab my clothes, taking the bundle with me to the bathroom for a quick shower. I rush through the motions, scrubbing myself clean and washing my hair. When I step out, I pull on the jock and follow it with the leggings and tank top I picked out. The leggings are a swirling mixture of deep purple and black that reminds me of space designs. The tank is just plain black. I quickly throw my long hair into a ponytail at the base of my neck and call it good enough. I can fix my hair when I get there.

We only live a few miles away from the gym I train at. On my bike it's a thirty-minute ride. I could get there quicker if I drove, but riding my bike has the added bonus of being a decent warm-up for my work-out. By the time I get to the Knockout Training Facility, I've worked up a decent sweat. It's as much from the rising summer temperatures as it is the ride. Only nine a.m. and clearly today is going to be a hot one. I lock up my bike outside the building, my hand going to my hair as I walk in. The receptionist, Emmet, waves me along, recognizing me like he usually does.

I glance in the mirror as I walk into the locker room. Ugh, the combination of helmet hair and sweat isn't the best look on me. Some of my hair must have escaped the ponytail as I was riding. I pull out a brush from my cross-body bag, running it through my long hair. The length probably isn't the most practical for MMA, but I've gotten good at French braiding over the years. I part my hair evenly down the middle and plait it in two tight braids that end just below my shoulders. Grabbing my bag, I pull my hand wraps out and shove the rest into a locker. There are a few other people here, but for the most part we do our own thing. And that suits me just fine, I'm here to train.

To get to the weight room, I make my way through the large open area of the gym

first. I pause to watch a pair of fighters in the ring for a moment before stepping into the training room. Once inside the room, I find a free punching bag and get into it, going through combos. I've done the moves so many times that I don't have to think about it.

It started with Judo when I was little. My mom wanted me to have a way to defend myself after one too many bullies had a problem with the way I dressed. Elementary school kids aren't the most open-minded about a little boy wearing bright colors and skirts. My mom never cared, though. She was always encouraging, letting me pick what I wanted to wear no matter what section of the store it came out of. I don't think it surprised her at all when I came out as nonbinary. She might not have been familiar with the term, but nothing about me really changed. I grew out my hair, switched to they/them pronouns, and kept wearing whatever I wanted.

The bullying didn't get easier as I got older. Whether I stood up for myself or not, I still drew attention. Judo became an escape for me. I loved following the movements and learning the throws and grapples. When I reached middle school, I transitioned to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I got tired of just defending myself and wanted to learn a martial art with striking moves. When it came to bullies, I still did my best to hold back, but at least in the ring I can let out some of that anger. It only made sense to switch to MMA as I got older.

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When I finish up my combos, I clean up my area and walk to the weight room. My muscles are already tired, but I push through it, grabbing a pair of dumbbells and slowly going through the reps as I sit on the bench.

I don't know how to feel about Theo moving back in. We never really got to know each other before he left for college. I wanted to bond with him before we met, but I wasn't prepared for him to be as bad of a bully as the kids at school. What started out as an awkward first meeting for us only got worse when I moved in. Theo never attempted to get to know me in the time that we shared a room, and once I was in my own bedroom, he did his best to ignore my existence all together. I honestly don't get it because I tried to be friendly. It was only after I realized what an ass hat Theo is that I decided to ignore him back. It's easier this way for both of us.

When I finish up my reps, the muscles in my arms are throbbing. Maybe I overdid it, especially considering I still need to ride home. I don't bother with a shower in the locker room. It doesn't make sense when I'll just be sweating more. Instead, I grab my things, slinging my bag onto my back and buckling my helmet on. The trip home takes longer than usual because I'm going at a slower pace. I lock up my bike in the garage and walk inside, heading for the kitchen. Only to run into Theo pouring himself a bowl of cereal.

"Did you just wake up?" I ask. I can't help myself. The words just burst out.

"So, what if I did?" Theo scoffs. His eyes look me over, taking in my workout clothes and sweaty appearance. "Where were you? Yoga?"

I roll my eyes and reach around him to grab an electrolyte drink from the fridge.



“Whatever,” I mutter. His insult doesn’t sting much. I’m not worried about some toxic masculinity complex. There’s no shame in yoga. It’s a great way to train for flexibility, but I doubt Theo cares about that. I take my drink with me up the stairs to my bedroom and close the door behind me. I toss my bag on the bed and pull my shirt off. Grabbing a fresh change of clothes, I make my way to the bathroom for a quick shower. My mind switches gears as I think of what I need to do for my online classes today.

Unlike Theo, I chose a nearby community college that allows me to knock out my general education without moving away from home. I plan on transferring to finish out my degree in a couple of semesters, but in the meantime, it lets me train and compete in MMA competitions for some extra cash. I do what classes I can online and go to the small campus for in person classes a couple times a week. Taking summer session also means I finish my courses faster.

My schedule keeps me busy, but for the most part I like it. The one thing that sucks is trying to find a time and place for hookups. I have accounts on a couple of free dating apps, but most experiences tend to be quick fucks rather than actual dating. Honestly, I’m not looking for more. The last thing I need right now is to get distracted by a relationship and derail my plans. Hookups suit me just fine.

When I get back to my room, I do a quick skim through the posted assignments for the week, checking due dates. There are a couple of assignments I need to get done today, but it shouldn’t take too long. I turn my Bluetooth headset on and blare my music as I get to work. It makes it easier to focus on my schoolwork without getting distracted by thoughts of Theo or getting laid. Maybe I should hit up a club this weekend, try my luck to find someone for the night. Until then, I’ll just have to make do with my hand and some porn. I adjust my dick idly; it’s half hard just thinking about the possibility of sex. Shaking my head, I try to refocus as I read over the assignment for my English class.

My stomach growls, interrupting my train of thought. I can't remember if I had breakfast, but I know I didn't bother with lunch once I ran into Theo in the kitchen. I close my laptop and grab a new shirt from my closet that isn't covered in sweat. Mom is in the kitchen this time when I get downstairs. She stands at the counter chopping up vegetables for dinner. "Hey Mom," I say as I open the fridge to check out my options.

"Are you just now looking for lunch?" she asks. "Dinner will be ready soon."

"I got carried away in my schoolwork and didn't notice what time it was," I say. It's mostly true, and there's no point in bringing up what happened earlier with Theo. Mom doesn't like to get in the middle of our arguments, insisting it's just normal sibling rivalry. As if Theo, being a sexist jerk, is the same as us fighting over who's hogging the bathroom.

Speaking of Theo, footsteps echo down the stairs before he steps foot into the hall. He doesn't even look at us as he heads for the door. "Theo," Mom calls out. He pauses at the door but doesn't bother to turn around. "Are you going to be home for dinner tonight?"

"Nah," Theo mutters, his hand on the doorknob.

"Wait, your father and I were going to tell you at dinner, but ..." Mom hesitates, and Theo finally turns around to look at her. "We'll be gone Saturday night. You two will have the house to yourselves until we get back Sunday evening. Try not to burn the place down," she jokes.

"Great, thanks for the warning." Theo turns around again and opens the door. He doesn't bother to say goodbye as the door slams behind him.

"Where are you and Dad going?" I ask.

“Oh, we’re going to visit his sister, Taylor. She’s having a baby soon, remember?” She doesn’t wait for an answer before continuing on. “We missed the baby shower, but I thought it’d be nice to visit and see if we can help out with anything before the baby comes. You’ll be okay here with Theo, right? He’s just adjusting to being home again.”

I try not to let it show how much it annoys me that she makes excuses for him. “We’ll be fine,” I answer honestly. Theo will probably just ignore me. It’ll be like being home alone. Maybe he’ll even go out that night like he has been. Not to mention, it’ll be convenient for my weekend plans. I won’t have to worry about hooking up at a club or finding someone with an apartment if I can just bring them back here.

“You could always come with us,” she offers. “I’m sure they wouldn’t mind an extra pair of hands with the kids. You’re always so good with little ones.”

“I can’t,” I say immediately. “I’ve got training at the gym and homework to do. Maybe another time.”

“Well, alright, you can call me if there’s any trouble.”

“Sure, but we’ll figure it out. It’s not the first time we’ve been home alone.” I grab a bag of lunch meat and fixings for a sandwich. It only takes me a few moments to throw everything together. “Let me know when dinner’s ready. We can talk about it more then, but I need to get back to my schoolwork.”

I take my food upstairs with me, setting it on my desk when I get inside my room. My focus is on pulling out my phone, but the first guy that comes to mind is a friend I’ve fooled around with a few times. At least if I hit him up, I won’t have to worry about any awkwardness of a one-night stand.

Hey, what are you doing Saturday night? Any chance you’d want to come over for a

few hours? My parents won't be home.

I'm sure Eric will get the hint without me having to spell it out for him.

### Chapter Three

Theo

I stare at my computer, rereading the question on the online application. It doesn't make any more sense the second time around.

You have a bouquet of flowers. All but two are roses, all but two are daisies, and all but two are tulips. How many flowers do you have?

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I don't fucking know. Six? How in hell is this even relevant to a job? I click the application closed, not bothering to even finish it. It's all crap nonsense, anyway. How does my ability to figure out some brainteaser puzzles prove anything? Shouldn't my degree be enough proof that I can do an entry-level accounting job?

Whatever. It's probably about time for me to take a break, anyway. I've been working hard filling out applications and sending resumes to jobs online for a couple of hours now. All that work and I've only gotten through five job postings. It's no wonder unemployment is so high when they waste everyone's time with online personality assessments that don't prove shit.

I pull my phone out, idly looking for messages on the dating app I recently updated for the area. There are a couple of new matches, but nothing looks promising. I can always check again later. It's not like I have to worry about getting home late. Dad and Selene left a few hours back and won't be home for the entire weekend.

I'd rather not be stuck with the golden child, but beggars can't be choosers. At least I don't have to worry about awkward family dinners. I've avoided them so far, but I know it's just a matter of time. Dad isn't going to let me get away with missing dinner forever, and I don't need him to. I only need to stay here for as long as it takes to save up to get an apartment. In the meantime, I guess I better get used to all the well-meaning questions.

Will you be here for dinner?

When are you coming home?

How's job hunting going?

The questions just go round and round in my head, annoying me and setting me off. It's not like I can snap my fingers and make a job offer happen. I shove my phone in my pocket and head downstairs to scout for food. There has to be something I can eat in the fridge. If not, I guess I can order in something or drive somewhere to pick it up. My eyes scan over the contents of the fridge, but nothing catches my attention. I pull out my phone again and pull up a list of restaurants nearby. Chinese sounds good. Guess I'm going for a drive.

I call the number listed and put in my order. The lady on the phone lets me know it should be ready in about twenty minutes. That should be just enough time to play a game on my phone before I head out. I don't actually know if Cy is even here right now. I was in my room when our parents left, and I haven't seen them since. Either way, there's no point in letting them know I'm leaving if they are home. I make the quick drive to the restaurant, pay for my food, and head home again. My hand goes to the radio, turning up the music as I drive back. I might not have a job or an apartment to myself, but at least for tonight, I won't have to put up with any family bullshit.

That thought is quickly dashed when I notice a familiar car in the driveway when I get back. That's weird. What's Eric doing here? I swear that's his car. When I don't see him in the driver's seat or at the front door waiting for me, I almost dismiss the thought. I'll text him when I sit down with my food. I slide the key into the door and make my way inside. Cy still isn't anywhere to be seen. Works for me.

I stretch out with my food on the couch. Might as well take advantage of the bigger TV while I relax. As I scroll through my options on TV, I grab a carton from the bag along with a pair of chopsticks. Then I hear a creak from upstairs. My finger pauses on the remote as I wait for another sound. There's a faint moan a few moments later. Great. Cy must have company over.

I hit the button, not caring what show it landed on. I'm not going to sit here and listen to Cy get laid. That'd only be more pathetic than me being in a dry spell. I grab my phone to text Eric as the thought occurs to me. My thumb taps on the screen typing out a message, but before I hit send, a low battery warning pops up on the screen. Ugh, I'll have to grab a charger from my room.

I finish up my text to Eric and shove my phone in my pocket as I head up the stairs. It's a decent distraction from the noises. At least until I hear a notification chime right after I send the message.

It can't be—can it?

My eyes stray towards Cy's room, but the closed door blocks any possible proof of my outlandish theory. It has to be a coincidence. Cy's phone went off right when I sent the message. There's no way it could possibly be Eric in there with them. Right? My feet take a step forward, but it's an answer I'm not sure I want to find out. I pull out my phone again, sending off a second message to Eric. The phone in Cy's room chimes again. My hand goes to the doorknob. They probably locked it. I really should walk away and grab my charger like I was first planning. Just ignore the whole thing.

The doorknob turns easily in my grip, and the door opens an inch. I can't see anything yet; the desk is in front of the door, and no one is sitting there. Fuck it, I've come this far. I might as well take a quick peek and see if it is Eric. There's another moan as I carefully push the door wider. Then I see them, and I freeze. My feet are glued to the floor as I take in the sight before me.

Eric is on his knees in front of the bed. Cy stands in front of him with their hands braced on the mattress on either side of Eric's head. They bite back a moan as their hips move forward in a slow, languid motion. I can't see much from the angle. Cy's back is to me. From behind, I could almost think Cy is a woman. Their long brown

hair hangs down their bare back, swaying along with the steady motion of their thrusts. Almost, if it wasn't for the bit of their erection I catch a glimpse of each time it disappears down Eric's throat.

My own dick throbs, reacting to the erotic scene before me. I reach down to adjust it before it starts to hurt from being pressed against the zipper of my shorts. I should be leaving. Any minute now ...

Cy's hand goes to the back of Eric's head, pulling him closer. "Take it. Swallow," they say, and I choke back a moan of my own as my dick begs for attention.

Now's the time I should be getting the fuck out of here. Not standing in the doorway and watching like a creeper. I grab the doorknob again to pull it back into place, but that's when the door creaks. Cy glances over their shoulder and our eyes meet. Right before they come. Their face scrunches up as they thrust their hips forward one last time and groan.

My dick twitches in my pants, pressing hard against my hand that is still on my bulge. I yank my hand away from my crotch and pull the door shut the rest of the way. I'm not ready for that conversation. Eric's voice comes from behind the door, "oh fuck." Cy's chuckle follows. I need to get the hell out of here. Fast.

My phone chimes with a new notification as I step into my room, pulling the door closed behind me. There's a new message from Eric. I'm half afraid to see what it says, but I click it open.

Eric: I should have told you before. I'm sorry.

You're sorry? Did you accidentally fall face first onto Cy's cock?

I look over the message, then delete it. I don't know what we're supposed to say in



this situation. There's not a great script for when you find your best friend having sex with your stepsibling. There is one thing that's sticking out more than everything else, though. I type a new message.

Told me what? That you're not straight?

Eric has never mentioned anything other than being interested in girls. Or I must have missed that if he did. My phone beeps, warning me again about the low battery. I grab a charge cord and plug it in but leave it on my desk. I need to go grab my food from downstairs and hope I don't run into either of them along the way.

Cy's door is closed as I walk into the hallway again. So far, so good. I make it downstairs without an issue and turn off the TV. It doesn't take me long to gather up my food into the takeout bag again, but I hesitate when I get to the stairs. There is talking coming from Cy's bedroom. Maybe it'd be better to leave again. I don't have to think about what I just saw if I'm busy doing something else.

I don't have to picture the way Cy bit their lip right when they orgasmed. The way their long hair and slim waist looked feminine from behind. So at odds with the way they were thrusting ...

Fuck. Stop thinking about it, Theo. They're my stepsibling. Even if they weren't confusing enough with the nonbinary thing, they'd still be off limits. I should've left the door closed. This is so fucked up. And why the hell did I get hard?

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 13, 2025, 3:36 am*

It had to be some instinctive reaction to the sexual situation. I'm not into guys. Especially twink femme guys like Cypress. It doesn't even make sense. What's the point of being into guys if the guy is just as feminine as a girl? That must be what threw me off with Cy. They're too pretty and my dick wasn't thinking straight.

A door closes upstairs, followed by footsteps down the stairs. I panic for a moment until I see it's Eric. At least he's wearing clothes now. He looks at me as he gets to the bottom of the stairs and opens his mouth like he's going to say something, but I don't waste my time. I push past him up the stairs to my room. Part of me expects him to follow me and try to talk about what just happened, which leaves me pleasantly surprised when I hear the front door close. That's one person down I don't have to talk to tonight. Now I just need to avoid Cy. Luckily, their door stays closed as I walk through the hall to my own again.

Guess I won't have to worry about hearing more noises with Eric gone. My phone chimes with a new text message and I glance over at the desk where it's charging. When I open the thread, there's more than one message from Eric.

Eric: I'm pan.

Eric: I don't care what parts someone has.

I debate what to write back to that, but I don't really care how Eric labels himself. There's a more pressing issue here. The person he hooked up with is my stepsibling and this is the first I'm hearing of it.

Are you dating Cy?

Eric:No. We're not dating.

I'm tempted to call him out on it and ask more questions. Like, how long has this been going on? They looked pretty familiar with each other, and I seriously doubt this is the first time it's happened.

Cy's door closing catches my attention, but the noise is quickly followed by their heavy footsteps and banging on my door. "How about next time you knock instead of being a fucking perv?" Cy calls through the door.

I storm over to the door, swinging it open to see them standing there. Cy is wearing clothes now, but their long brown hair hangs in a mess around their shoulders. I meant to yell something back at them, but my mind goes blank. I'm still picturing their naked body as they thrust their hips. "How about you find someone to fuck that isn't my friend?" My tone is blunt, but I don't raise my voice.

"Sorry, I didn't realize you had dibs. If you're interested, go for it. As long as you don't mind my sloppy seconds," Cy flips their hair over one shoulder, glaring at me.

"I'm not interested." I grind my teeth. "You know what? I don't give a shit. I'm not into guys, and I don't care who you fuck." I slam the door in Cy's face, effectively ending the conversation.

"Sure, you're straight," Cy calls through the door. "Whatever you have to tell yourself to get through the day, Teddy." Their footsteps echo through the hall until a door closes, then the shower starts up. I doubt that's the end of whatever shitty conversation we'll have on the matter, but whatever.

I grab my food and take it to my bed while turning on the TV to the show I was watching earlier. Fuck Cy and fuck Eric. I'm gonna enjoy the rest of my night and not think about what I just saw.

If I don't focus on images of Cy's ass in my head, I won't need to worry about why the sight turned me on. It's only a big deal if I make it into one.

## Chapter Four

### Cypress

"I still don't see what the big deal is," I tell Eric. "Theo's the one who walked in on us. It's not like we were doing anything wrong. Are you ashamed of being with me because he's my stepbrother or because you got caught with my dick in your mouth?"

Eric winces. "Really Cy, do you have to say it like that?" he asks. "Someone could hear you." He looks around the pizzeria where he works, but it's basically dead this morning.

Still, I know I'm being a bit unfair. It's not like I expected Theo to barge in on us, but I don't understand why Eric doesn't want to meet up anymore. It's not like he didn't already know Theo was my stepbrother when we first started all this. "No one's here. That's why you were okay with us talking here to begin with, remember?" I idly stir the straw around my glass of soda. "I should probably just go. If you don't want to hook up anymore, whatever. It's all good." I stand up from the table I was at and grab my gym bag. That's the other reason we met here. Eric's job is in the same shopping center as the gym I go to.

He grabs my wrist as I'm about to leave the restaurant. "I'll think about it. If we do hook up again, maybe we should stick to my apartment?"

I look him over, debating if it's even worth it. Eric is hot, in a mostly toned jock kinda way. Fancy haircut, nice clothes. He's a decent enough fuck buddy for when either of us need it, but I don't know if he's worth all this trouble. I'll admit the idea of us pissing off Theo is a benefit, though. "Sure, whatever. I need to go. We'll figure

out the rest later.”

I walk across the shopping center, making my way to Knockout gym. Once inside, I wave at Emmet as I walk towards the locker room. I pull my work out clothes out of my gym bag to get ready, stripping off the snug T-shirt and skirt I was wearing in favor of a pair of athletic shorts and a loose tank top. I lock up the rest of my things and jog over to the classroom area just in time to see Sam at the front of the class, leading everyone with stretches. Her eyes meet mine as I walk in. We both know I walked in late, but she doesn't call me out on it.

Sam leads us through warm-ups, then drills, before she finally pairs us up for a few quick move demonstrations. I get paired with a guy who's probably around my age, but I don't really recognize him. I don't take the time to talk to him either. My focus is on the class and training. I have enough boy drama as it is.

We go from simple move combos to sparring in the middle of the room. Sam stops to explain the rules before she calls on two girls to enter the circle made up of the rest of us. I watch as the girls face each other. They size each other up looking for an opening before one dives for the other's legs, going for a takedown. They roll around on the floor before one gets the upper hand pinning down the other. Sam calls another pair up. I analyze each fighter's moves until it's my turn.

I get paired with the same boy from warm-ups. He's decent, but his hip twitches when he goes for a roundhouse kick. Deftly, I dodge the kick, punching him in the stomach with a quick jab. My fist connects with a solid thwunk. He strikes back with an uppercut clipping the edge of my chin. The outside world fades away as I fight. My focus zeroes in on my opponent. It takes a few more hits before I win the match, and I don't come out of it without a few bumps of my own.

“Good fight, man.” I clap him on the shoulder as we leave the ring.

He gives me a once over, checking me out before a smirk spreads over his face. “You too.”

I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t looking at him as the class finishes up. It’s a shame the house is so full of people again. I probably couldn’t sneak a guy in even if I wanted to. Oh well. Nothing wrong with a little flirting. The group disperses, some of us headed for the locker rooms, while others leave or head for different training rooms. I follow the group to the locker room, grabbing my things for a quick shower before I change clothes.

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I'm back in my T-shirt and skirt from earlier when I run into the guy from class again. He does a double take at seeing me in my casual clothes but recovers quickly, giving me a slight smile. The gym is queer friendly with a strict no harassment clause in the contracts, but that doesn't mean I don't turn a few heads still. It can confuse people when I switch from masc workout clothes to femme street clothes or vice versa. I shrug it off, veering toward the exit instead of his direction. I didn't feel up to riding my bike this morning, meaning I drove to the gym for a change.

I walk over to my bubblegum pink Honda Civic and unlock the car. It's not the most expensive vehicle, but I wasn't going for flashy when I bought it. I just needed something to get around town. I got the custom paint job and license plate after the fact. With the steady flow of traffic, the drive takes longer than I'd like.

Mom is in the kitchen when I get home. I walk past her to the stairs, making my way to my bedroom. The shower is going as I pass by, meaning Theo must be home. I ignore it and open my door before kicking off my shoes and dropping my bag near the door.

I strip off my shirt, using it to wipe the sweat from my forehead. Despite the air conditioning in my car, this day has still warmed up. It doesn't bother me staying topless as I sit down at my desk, setting up my laptop for school. I put in my ear buds, turning up the music as I go through my assignments, narrowing down what I need to get done today.

A loud creak throws me off, but I ignore it until a drop of water lands on my forehead. What the? I look up at the ceiling. There are a few more drops of water lingering there. That's all the warning I get before a louder creak that turns into a

snap. The plaster above my bed falls in huge wet chunks along with a gush of water, and I scream, jumping out of my desk chair.

“Cy?” Mom calls through the door. “Are you okay?”

The water is still dripping where the ceiling caved in, but it’s stopped gushing now. “Yeah,” I call back hesitantly. I’m okay, but my bed isn’t. I take a step closer, looking up at the hole into the crawlspace above the room. There’s no hole in the ceiling. I can’t see straight to the sky, but I can see the wet wooden beam where the water must have gotten in when it rained the other day. It was just a matter of time before the whole thing collapsed.Fuck.

“Can you get the door? What happened?” Mom calls out again.

“The ceiling fell in,” I yell as I make my way carefully under the still intact parts of the ceiling to the door. Pulling the door open, I see my mom standing in the hall, and Theo peeking out of his room to observe the drama. Mom ushers me out of the room while she steps closer, looking up to see what happened.

“I’m gonna have to call someone. I think a pipe might have burst,” she sighs. “At least no one got hurt.”

“What about my bed?” I ask. “Where am I supposed to sleep tonight?”

“We’ll get the air mattress out and you can sleep in Theo’s room—”

“What?!” Theo interrupts before I get the chance.

“Just until we can sort this out and get it repaired,” Mom continues.

“I’ll sleep on the couch,” I volunteer.



“Enough, both of you. Right now, I need to go turn off the water. I’ll talk it over with your father when he gets home, but really Cy, you can’t sleep on the couch.” Mom gestures toward my room. “Go ahead and grab what you need, but I don’t want you spending more time in this room than necessary.”

“Fine,” I huff. I make my way into the room again and grab my gym bag, dumping out the workout clothes from earlier so I can load it up with clean clothes from my closet. While I’m at it, I pull on a fresh T-shirt. After that I grab my laptop and school bag. I’ll need more things soon, but it’s enough to get me through the night. I take my things with me to the living room, ignoring Mom’s suggestion that I should sleep in Theo’s room for now. Neither one of us wants that.

It’s awkward enough that he walked in on me the other night, but to have to share a room with him? Why the hell did Theo even open my door to begin with? I’m sure he could tell what we were doing from the noises before he decided to take a peek.

I pop in my earbuds and turn on music as I take a seat on the couch. One way or another, I still need to focus on my homework. Even if my mind has veered totally off track. How was it only this morning I was talking to Eric about the other night? After all that happened, he’s hesitant about hooking up again anytime soon, but that’s not going to matter if I’m stuck sharing a room with Theo. I’ll have even less privacy than before. I guess I could take Eric up on his invite back to his place, but he wasn’t too thrilled with me already. Or maybe it’s time to ditch him and forget the whole thing. It’s not like it was ever more than sex.

Ugh, I shake off the thought and look at my laptop again. I still need to get my assignments done, and I should probably focus more on that and less on getting my rocks off. It doesn’t help that Theo walking in on us almost ruined my orgasm. I was right on the edge when he opened the door and instead of enjoying it, all I could think of at that moment was the look of shock on Theo’s face mixed with something else. I’m not sure what. But the whole thing was ten kinds of awkward and fucked up.

Before I can get too far into my homework, the doorbell rings. Mom walks past me to answer it, and I listen in when I hear her explaining the situation. From the way the guy's dressed, I can guess he must be a plumber or something. I try not to be obvious as I follow them up to my room.

Mom is telling the guy that she already shut off the water for the upper half of the house. He sets up a ladder in the middle of my room to get a better look. "It's definitely a burst pipe," he calls down.

Mom looks into the hall and catches me watching them. She makes eye contact with me and gestures with her chin toward the stairs. I get the message, but I'm not happy about it. She'll probably give me the details later, but I'd like to know how long this is all going to take. Maybe if I get lucky, the plumber can fix it all today, and I'll be back in my room by tonight. It's probably wishful thinking, but it beats the alternative. Still, I turn to make my way down the stairs again and try to do my homework. It's a bit of a lost cause at this point. I'm focused on everything else and keep rereading the same sentences over and over.

It doesn't take that long before Mom and the plumber come downstairs again. The guy is still talking about the leak and possible water damage. He hands mom a business card saying something about calling someone else. There goes my fantasy of all of this being done today. "What did he say?" I ask when the door closes behind him.

"Your dad will be home from work soon. We'll discuss it all at dinner when he gets here," she says. Then she turns and heads to the kitchen.

It's about half an hour later when the door opens and Ben walks in. "Hey Cy," he says as he kicks off his shoes. "Doing schoolwork?" He looks at my laptop and raises an eyebrow.

“Something like that,” I mutter. There hasn’t been much progress with everything on my mind.

“We had a bit of an incident,” Mom interrupts, popping out of the kitchen to join the conversation. “I’ll explain.” She grabs Ben’s hand and drags him to the kitchen. I get the feeling Mom doesn’t like the idea of me sleeping on the couch, but there isn’t a chance of this repair only taking a day or two. In essence, I’m screwed either way. This doesn’t end well for me.

I finish up the last assignment I’m working on and submit it before packing up my things for later. It’s just about dinnertime, and I’ll know what’s happening soon enough. For the first time in a while, Theo comes downstairs to eat with the family. He looks at me for a moment before his eyes turn the other direction and he keeps walking. Theo takes his usual spot at the table, leaving me to sit across from him. Luckily, before it can get too quiet, Mom and Ben come out holding trays of food. No one talks as they set the food down and take their spots on the other sides of our square table.

I keep quiet, not so patiently waiting for Mom or Ben to bring it up. Theo isn’t as patient. The moment we’re all seated and passing around the noodle casserole Mom made, he opens his mouth. “I’m not sharing my room.”

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“Theodore,” Ben says his name sharply. “You may be an adult, but for as long as you live under my roof, you will respect our rules. The two of you can share Theo’s room. At least long enough for us to fix the issue in Cy’s room and get things sorted out. The plumber fixed the leak for now, but we need to have someone come look over everything and assess for water damage. It might take a few weeks.”

### Chapter Five

#### Theo

I took my dinner to my room after Dad’s ultimatum. Didn’t see the point in eating with my family when my opinion on the matter was ignored. Why shove Cy and me in the same room if neither of us wants it? Hell if I fucking know, but getting a job and moving out just jumped higher on my priority list. I’ll be damned if I stick around here any longer than necessary. The only reason I’m still here right now is because I don’t know where else to go.

My first thought of someone to crash with is Eric, but after what happened with him the other day, that option is off the table. It’s only a matter of time before Cy is going to come knocking on my door, no matter how much both of us are trying to avoid it. I might as well make the best of this mess, and we can ignore each other as much as possible. Hopefully, it won’t take long to fix Cy’s room and get them out of my hair.

The knock on my door happens right at six o’clock. I huff a sigh and roll off the bed to unlock the door. Instead of Cy, I find myself face to face with Selene. “I brought an air mattress. It’ll have to work for tonight. We’ll figure out something better in the next day or two. Come on in, Cy.”

I take a step back, but I can't wipe the scowl off my face as they invade my space, looking for a spot to set up Cypress's bed. I do my best to ignore them and focus on my phone, but the sound of the air pump makes it impossible. Selene heads out when she sees that we're not attacking each other, but it still leaves me in an awkward situation. Stuck with Cy.

Unable to help myself, I look over to see what they're doing as they pull a set of sheets onto the mattress. A chuckle escapes my lips before I can bite it back. "Those are your bed sheets?" I ask. I know I'm only making things worse, but I can't help it. What grown adult still sleeps with My Little Pony sheets?

Cy flips their hair over their shoulder to glare at me. "You got a problem with it?" they ask. "Newsflash, I don't want to be here anymore than you want me here." With that, Cy turns their back to me and grabs the hem of their shirt, pulling it off in one fluid motion.

"You're not going to the bathroom to change?" I know I shouldn't be a total ass calling them out on changing in my room. It shouldn't even be an issue. It's not the first time we've shared a bedroom. It's not even the first time we've undressed in the same room. But I shouldn't be staring at Cy's ass waiting for them to take off the rest of their clothes.

"Why? It's nothing you haven't seen before," Cy laughs, shaking their head as they undo their pants next. "What's the problem? Afraid you might see something you like?"

Their joke hits the nail on the head, but I don't know what to say. Cy pushes their pants down, revealing a bright pink pair of briefs. The snug underwear clings to Cy's bubble butt, framing it rather than hiding anything.

"In your dreams." The retort falls flat, but it kicks my mind into gear. I move my eyes

off Cy's colorful briefs and roll onto my side, facing the wall. I pull out my phone again, focusing on the game I was playing before Cy and Selene interrupted me. With the sounds and background music, it's a little easier to ignore Cy's presence in my room. Right up until Cy starts watching a show on their phone.

I raise the volume on my phone even though I don't really need it for the game. I'm just being petty, and I know it, but I'm not above annoying Cypress just for shits and giggles. They sigh, muttering under their breath as they shuffle around on the air mattress. "This is stupid," Cy sasses. "Neither one of us can hear our phones, and do you really need the volume that loud for a game?"

I press the button to turn it up further, but the notification chimes telling me my phone is already at full volume.

"Fuck this shit," Cy says before their phone goes quiet. I give it a minute before rolling over to glance at them. Cy has their phone going on the show still, but there are earbuds in their ears to block out my noises. My victory feels almost hollow, all things considered. I sigh and turn down the volume on my phone to a more reasonable level.

I shuffle around on the bed, getting more comfortable, but I'm still wearing my jeans. Usually, I sleep in a lot less. At home I tend to sleep naked, but at school I got used to sleeping in my boxers. My jeans feel tight and uncomfortable, but the last thing I need right now is to strip down to nothing in front of Cy. This situation is awkward enough as it is. Even the thought of stripping down to my underwear is daunting, but I know I won't be able to sleep in all of these clothes.

I glance around the room, looking for my options. I could turn off the light and strip in the dark. Cy might give me shit about it, but at least I won't be giving them a show without the lights on. "I'm going to bed," I announce before getting up to turn off the light.

At the foot of my bed, I kick off my pants, leaving my jeans in a tangled lump on the floor. Then I pull my T-shirt off and climb into bed. From the light of Cy's phone, their face is lit up enough to let me know they don't turn to look as I undress. With a bit more tossing and turning I settle into the bed, feeling a little less on edge, but I can't ignore Cy's presence. I know they're still awake, but Cy hasn't made any noises since they put in their earbuds.

Instead of playing my game, I lie in bed and try to sleep, but my eyes keep going back to Cy. They flip from their stomach to their back, holding the phone over their eyes to watch their show. Cy moves their hand down, fussing with the sheet near their crotch. They glance at me, and I hold still, trying to pretend I'm already asleep. They look at their phone again and their hand goes to the same spot, adjusting themselves.

My dick gives a half-confused twitch as the image of Cy's ass in those briefs pops into my head again. I don't know what I expect to happen next. Cy's hand moves off their crotch and falls to their side. I keep watching Cy in the dim light of their phone, but eventually I just fall asleep.

The ring of my phone wakes me up. I don't bother to look at the screen as I grab it and bring it to my ear. "Hello?" I mumble.

"Theodore, I'm glad I caught you." Mom's voice wakes my brain in a hurry.

I fight back a groan as I sit up and look around. Luckily, it looks like Cy's already left. The room is empty other than me.

"Are you still there?" Mom asks.

I curse under my breath. "Yeah, still here. Sorry, I uh ... I was just waking up."

"Just waking up?" Her voice goes up an octave. "It has to be after ten there."

“I had a hard time falling asleep. Cy kept tossing and turning.” I realize my mistake as soon as the words leave my lips.

“What do you mean? You could hear him through the wall?” She scoffs, purposely misgendering Cy. I know it’d be a waste of time to correct her, but it still gets on my nerves.

“Cy had to sleep in my room last night. There was a plumbing problem, but they should be back in their room soon.” There’s no point in telling her that soon is probably a few weeks. That’d just piss her off more.



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“You’re sharing a room with him? How is that okay? I told you that you should have just stayed here after you finished college. It’s better than having to be around that boy. Let alone share a room with him.” Her words drip with undertones, making it obvious how she thinks Cy is a bad influence. That my being in the same room as them could only lead to them attempting to seduce me. What would she think if she knew that not only did Cy do nothing, but I’m the one having filthy thoughts about them?

“It’s fine, Mom. Was there something else you were calling about?” I try to change the subject.

“You left a few things here, and I figured I’d let you know before I sent it over.” She goes on, but it sounds more like she’s calling to check in on me when she changes the subject again. “How’s job hunting going?”

“It’s fine. Actually, I should probably get back to it. Let me know when you send the box.” I don’t wait for a response as I hang up the phone. It’s bad enough having Dad harass me about job hunting, but listening to Mom’s judgment about Cy is too much first thing in the morning. My own thoughts are confusing enough without her bullshit.

Cy’s gender identity might be confusing to me, but that doesn’t make it any less valid. I try not to let her words bug me, but it hits harder this time around.

The next few days pass with a weird standoff. Cy does their best to avoid me during the day, and at night they put in their earbuds and focus on their phone. But gradually, more and more of Cy’s shit from their room has been showing up in mine.

I'd be the first to admit I'm not a clean freak. I've dealt with my fair share of roommates in the dorms during college, but none of them had a tendency of leaving a mess quite like this. Cy's clothes litter the floor and the surface of the air mattress. With the combination of leggings, skirts, T-shirts, and athletic shorts, it looks like a department store blew up in here. That's not even mentioning the smell. There's a strange blend of sweaty body odor and something floral. Probably some perfume or something Cy wears.

The end result is that being in my room is making me nauseous.

I open the windows and grab a piece of clothing off the floor, piling it on top of the mess on the air mattress. Like usual, Cy is gone somewhere avoiding me, so they aren't here to protest as I toss all their shit on the air mattress. By the time I finish, there's a sizeable mound of clothes. Other than the bed, the room looks a little better, but it didn't help the smell. An idea pops in my head and I duck into the bathroom to grab a can of air freshener.

The sweet, cloying scent of mango and coconut fills the air as I press the button down. Usually, the tropical scent doesn't bother me, but I must spray more than I should. I cough, clearing my throat. Cy's smell is out of the room now, but I'm not sure if this is better. A deep purple scrap of fabric catches my attention. It's half buried at the foot of the bed by Cy's blankets, but it's still on the floor rather than on the bed. I swoop down to grab it, then realize what I'm holding. The purple jockstrap looks flashier than others I've seen. The side panels are mesh, and the fabric is surprisingly soft. A thought pops into my head of how the garment might look on Cy, and I immediately regret it.

Cy's in great shape and the curve of their ass is a major source of confusion for me. They have a perfect bubble butt, and if it were on a girl, I'd say it's sexy as fuck. The thought of this scrap of fabric framing Cy's ass has my dick hardening in my pants. Against my better judgement, I hold up the waistband with both hands to get a better

idea of how it'd look.

The jiggle of the doorknob gives me a second of warning. Cy's coming in, and I don't need them to catch me staring at their underwear like some kind of perv. I dart to my bed, tossing myself onto my stomach and dropping the jock on top of the air mattress as the door opens. I pull out my phone, staring intently at the screen as I try to keep my cool.

"The fuck?" Cy asks as they look over the pile of clothes first, then glance at me on my bed. "What were you doing? That's my stuff," they complain.

"Then maybe you shouldn't leave your shit lying all over the floor." I sit up, my eyes meeting Cy's. They look pissed.

Cy crosses their arms over their chest. "Look, neither of us wants me to be in here. You don't have to be an asshole about it."

"An asshole? You're the one who came into my room and made a huge fucking mess," I scoot to the edge of the bed, standing up to be face to face with Cy.

"Where the hell do you expect me to put my things?" They take a step closer, getting in my space.

I react without thinking. My fist flies forward, but Cy dodges the hit, grabbing my wrist.

"The fuck?" Cy places their hand on my chest, shoving me back a step. The back of my legs hits the bed, and both of us fall, Cy landing on top of me. They pin my wrists to the bed as their body covers mine. A flash of Cy grabbing Eric's hair and pulling him in as they thrust into his mouth pops into my head. It's the worst possible time, but my dick throbs, filing with blood.

“Get off me...” I mean to yell the words at them, but it comes out as more of a muttered grunt.

“What’s the matter?” Cy taunts. “Did you get more than you bargained for? Did you think I’d just keep quiet and take it?”

Take it. Swallow.

Those were the words Cy said right before they came.

“Theo? Hello? Are you listening?” Cy snaps at me as they still hold me down to the bed.

I don’t say anything. I’m too focused on the rock-hard erection in my pants.

“Are you hard?” Cy asks, letting go of my arm to look down at my crotch.

## Chapter Six

### Cypress

Theo freezes under me, his entire body going stiff. His eyes don’t meet mine when I look at his face, but there’s no denying it. His dick is pressing into my thigh like a steel rod.

Of all the possible ways a fight with Theo could end, this wasn’t on my list.

I’m not surprised he took a swing at me, or that it quickly led to us tangled up and falling, but I don’t know what to do now. Pandora’s box has opened, and there’s no shoving this back in and ignoring it.

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“Get off me!” Theo says it louder this time, his hands going to my shoulders and pushing me.

“Why? What’s the problem, Theo?” My hand goes to his thigh, rubbing over the denim of his jeans to tease him. I don’t know where the hell my mind is at. It’s onlygoing to piss Theo off more, but the idea of pushing him is setting me off. My dick twitches. “Is that why you walked in on me and Eric? Curious about what you’re missing out on?”

My hand moves to the fly of Theo’s pants, but I hesitate. It’s one thing to tease him, but I’m pushing that line. “Cypress,” Theo breathes my name lightly, as my hand traces the outline of his dick through the fabric. A knock on the door interrupts the moment.

“Cy, Theo? Is everything okay in there? I heard a crash.” Mom’s voice travels through the door, and it hits like ice water.

I stand up, pulling my body away from Theo’s. “We’re fine, Mom. I tripped,” I call back.

“Alright, well, be careful.” Mom’s footsteps get softer as she walks away, and I let out a sigh of relief.

When I look at Theo again, he’s still lying on the bed, eyes clenched shut as he bites his lip. “I’ll clean up,” I say. “But next time, don’t touch my stuff.” I don’t wait for Theo’s answer as I head for the hall. I shake my head, trying to erase what just happened from my mind.

Did I seriously just feel up my stepbrother?

I must be going stir crazy from being stuck with Theo. There's no other possible explanation for my actions.

I head to my room, ignoring the thought for now. The real reason I've left Theo's room a mess is because I didn't have anywhere to put my things. I don't have a dresser or a dirty clothes hamper. Nothing is set up for me there because this wasn't supposed to be long term. I was hoping to only stay in Theo's room for a couple of nights, but I don't have a clue what's going on with my bedroom.

When I open the door, it's still a mess. The bed is dry, but a chunk of the ceiling is on the floor, moved off my bed. An inspector came to check it out and said the water needs to dry out before they could assess the damage further. The plumber fixed the pipe, but we don't know how long it was leaking before it burst. There might be mold to deal with and it's not safe for me to stay in my room just in case.

I grab my laundry bag, along with a change of clothes. I'll gather up what Theo dumped on the air mattress and do laundry. While that's going, I can switch out my clothes and go for a jog around the neighborhood. It'll give both of us some time apart and maybe the exercise will snap my brain into working correctly.

When I get back to Theo's room, he's gone. I open the laundry bag and shove the dirty clothes in until the air mattress is empty again. With that done, there's really no point in going to the bathroom just to change clothes. I strip off my shirt and pants, tossing them in the bag as well. The door opens as I'm pulling my shorts over my ass.

I don't say anything, but Theo cusses under his breath.

"Try knocking," I say. "It'd save us both some trouble." I pull my shirt on next and shove my feet into my shoes. Theo ignores me, going to sit on his bed. "I'm going for

a run after I start my laundry. If we're gonna make this work, it might help to talk." I do my best to offer up an olive branch, but after earlier, we need to clear the air.

Theo looks up at me. "If you're going on a run, how are we gonna talk?" Theo lifts his hands to make air quotes as he mocks me.

I drop the laundry bag, giving him my full attention. "I get it, okay? The situation sucks. I don't want to be here anymore than you want me here. If you want a chance to take that anger out and go all macho man and fight me, why don't we take this to the gym? This is nowhere to fight, and I'm all on board for making this physical. I'd gladly kick your ass."

Theo looks me up and down before he stands up from his bed. "I'll run with you," he says. "You were going to go for a jog, anyway. Let's race."

"Okay. Let's make it more interesting. If I beat you, I get to sleep on the bed tonight, and you take the air mattress." I hold out my hand for a handshake.

"And when I win ..." Theo stalls, looking around the room until his eyes land on my bag of dirty laundry. "You have to wash my dirty clothes. For a week."

"Ew. If your bet is for a week, then mine is too. I get the bed for an entire week if I win."

"Deal." Theo slaps his hand into mine and pumps my arm in a firm shake. "I need to change, but I'll see you out front in ten."

I grab my laundry, slinging it over my shoulder as I leave. Might as well use the time to get the machines started as Theo gets changed. The laundry room is downstairs, and by the time I get the machine loaded and started, Theo's making his way down the staircase. "Ready?" I ask.

“Let’s do it,” Theo answers. He smirks as he looks me over, like he’s sizing me up before a fight. The tension rises as we make our way outside. I’m bouncing on my feet, eager to get started.

“We’ll go up the side road, around the corner store, and back. That work for you?” It’s a shorter route than I was originally thinking, probably around half a mile, but if we’re going for speed over distance, we’ll still be worn out by the end of it.

Theo nods. “On three?” he asks.

“Three, two, one,” we count it down together.

My foot hits the pavement with a heavy slap. Theo sprints ahead of me, taking the lead. My heart beats faster. I’m tempted to run full out, but I know better. Theo is using all his muscles to sprint ahead. I’m better off holding my steady pace and waiting for him to wear out. Hopefully, I’m not screwing myself in the process.

I pick up speed as I catch sight of Theo by the corner store. He’s slowed down from a sprint. I pump my legs harder, closing the distance between us. Theo picks up his pace, meeting mine as his breath leaves him in heavy pants. His head turns in my direction as I catch up to him, running at his side. I barely catch the warning glance of his eyes before his hand reaches out and shoves my shoulder. I trip over myself, giving him the lead again for a moment.

Thefuck.



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I push harder. I'm going to win this. Theo looks over his shoulder for a moment before he sprints toward the house. I go all out. As I close in on Theo, an idea pops into my head. My hand strikes out, slapping his ass. The shock of it makes him freeze for a moment, and I skid to a stop as I pass the boundary of our driveway.

"That's cheating," Theo complains as he walks the last of the distance.

"And shoving me wasn't?" I retort. "I won. I get the bed tonight."

Theo bites his lip, his cheeks going red with anger. "Fine," with that word, he heads inside, slamming the door behind him.

I take a few slower breaths and shake my head. Whatever just happened between us, I didn't get the chance to clear my head like I wanted with the run. Still, my chest feels lighter, like something has changed between us. I think I almost saw a hint of a smile when Theo accused me of cheating. Plus, it means I don't have to sleep on the air mattress tonight. That thing is nowhere near comfortable.

I leave Theo to stew in his thoughts and make my way to the kitchen instead. Mom is already there, and she turns to look at me as I enter the room. "You need any help with dinner?" I ask.

"I wouldn't turn it down," she answers. "You look a little sweaty, though. Did you want to wash up first?"

"It's fine, I just went for a jog with Theo," I answer as I make my way to the sink and wash my hands.

“You went for a jog with Theo?” she asks, raising an eyebrow. When I shrug, she goes back to cutting up the tomato in front of her. “That’s nice ...” Mom trails off.

I can feel the awkwardness of the moment, but it doesn’t stop the small chuckle that leaves my lips. I can’t imagine telling her all the details of today, but all things considered, I feel a little less on edge being around Theo than I typically do. “Yeah, it was nice,” I say honestly.

As usual, Theo ignores everyone at the dinner table. He pushes around his food, eating the occasional bite while staying silent. But every once in a while, he glances at me across the table. I know we aren’t talking about what happened earlier, but it doesn’t change the fact that it happened.

Theo can blame it on some bullshit excuse like adrenaline if he wants, but he was hard. I didn’t imagine the way he froze up and said my name in that breathy moan. Hewas turned on, and I was too. I shouldn’t have pushed him the way I did. It wasn’t right to escalate it, but I wasn’t thinking clearly at the moment. I haven’t had sex since Theo walked in on me with Eric.

I might not be attracted to Theo. He’s my stepbrother, for fuck’s sake. But I was too caught up in the moment. There was a strange thrill of knowing I was the one turning him on.

Now we just need to move on and keep ignoring it. It’s better if we keep hating each other. Or maybe we can come to some sort of truce. But there’s no way this can lead to more. Teasing Theo is one thing, but crossing the line and losing clothes is out of the question.

## Chapter Seven

Theo

I roll over, keeping my eyes closed, but the new position isn't any more comfortable than the last. Damn Cy. Fuck them for taking my bed. Sleeping on the airbed is miserable. The mattress shifts under me, and my hip hits the floor as a gush of air escapes. You got to be fucking kidding me. I grab my phone, using the light on it to give me a better view of the mattress that now lies deflated on the floor, a lumpy mess of air pockets. Fuck my life.

It's only two a.m. I can't sleep like this, and Cy is sound asleep on my bed. I bite my lip, but it doesn't take more than a moment to make up my mind.

"What are you doing?" Cy asks, opening their eyes partially as I climb into the bed next to them.

"The air mattress deflated," I whisper.

"Well, I'm not sleeping on the floor," they argue.

"I didn't ask you to," I grumble back. I turn my back to Cy and settle in. It's a tight fit in my full-size bed, but it could be worse. Cy doesn't say anything, but they scoot, giving me more room.

I'm physically more comfortable now, but my mind is racing. I'm in nothing but my boxers and Cy isn't wearing much more. They had on a pair of sleep pants before we went to bed, but I didn't notice if they took them off. We could both be in just our underwear.

My dick twitches, chubbing up while I try to ignore it. The past couple of days have been awkward. Ever since Cy kinda groped me, I can't stop thinking about it. The way their eyes lit up. My heart racing. The blood filling my erection as I eagerly waited for them to touch me. Then they did. Their hand was on my groin.

Then we were interrupted by a damn knock.

I have no clue what would've happened if Selene hadn't shown up at that moment. Would Cy have kept going? Did I want them to? Some questions are better left unanswered.

I roll over onto my front, pressing my semi into the bed. If I ignore the tent in my boxers, it doesn't exist. If I don't admit the weird sexual tension between me and Cypress, it isn't a thing. If I don't think of their ass bent over as they pulled on their pants, I won't focus on the thoughts racing in my head. I won't think about how it would feel to be in Eric's place, on my knees with Cy's dick in my mouth.

Damn it, Theo. Focus. I do my best to think of all the unsexy things that come to mind. Scrubbing toilets, filling out job applications, Selene's cooking, taking out the trash. Eventually, I fall asleep.

Cy's eyes meet mine as they lick their lips. Their hand runs down my side until one manicured nail scrapes over my hip bone. My dick stands straight up. I thrust my hips, chasing their touch, and Cy laughs, shaking their head at me. "So impatient. Turn around," they tell me.

My body shifts so Cy is pressed up against my back. Their long frame curls around me, and I feel their dick press against my ass. "You want this?" they whisper in my ear.

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My hips shift, but the press of Cy's erection against my ass feels different this time. Realer. My eyes snap open.

Cy's pressed against me for real. That part wasn't a dream. Their arm is wrapped around me, holding me to them. My underwear is still on but shoved down enough for my dick to pop out of the waistband. Luckily, Cy still seems to be asleep.

But I have no clue how I'm going to keep it that way while also getting out of Cy's arms. It'd be easier if I wasn't still harder than a rock. I shift, trying to roll out of Cy's grip, but I only manage to roll onto my back. Their leg lifts, bent at the knee, and drapes over my thigh. Cy's hand rests on my chest as they curl into my side. Then they grunt and open their eyes.

Cy blinks, watching their hand trail slowly through my chest hair. I freeze, my whole body going tense as Cy chuckles. "Hell of a way to wake up," they say. "Do you usually sleep naked?"

"Yeah, I do," I retort. "It wouldn't have mattered if you weren't in my bed."

"Wait." Cy's leg presses down on me, keeping me in place. They trail their hand to one of my nipples and scrape their nail over the pebbled flesh. I try to hold back a moan. "It doesn't matter. No hard feelings?" they laugh. "Pun intended."

My dick twitches, and I feel Cy's press into my thigh in response. "You're such a fucking asshole," I mutter.

"First, you're cuddled into me half naked, and now you're talking about fucking

assholes? Damn, you must be desperate. Maybe I should do you a favor and help you out with that.” Cy moves their hand lower while looking in my eyes, waiting for my response.

They can’t be serious. Can they?

“Hello, earth to Theo?” Cy says when I stay silent. “I might be an ass, but I do believe in consent.”

“You’re joking, right?” I ask. Cy meets my eyes, and for a moment neither one of us says a word. There’s no denying that we’re both turned on, but are we really doing this?

“Joking, of course,” Cy says, holding their hands up in surrender. “No need to get your panties in a twist.”

“I don’t wear panties.”

“Shame. You’d look good in them,” Cy shrugs their eyebrows with a smirk.

I shove Cy’s shoulder, and they grab my wrist, pinning my hand over my head. Cy leans over me, and somewhere in the back of my mind I’m thinking of kissing them.

“Let. Me. Go.”

“Be honest,” Cy says. “Do you want me to get off of you, or do you want me to get you off?”

I meet Cy’s eyes, but I can’t make the words come out of my lips.

“You stopped fighting me,” Cy taunts, loosening their grip on my wrist. “You want my hand on your dick, Theo?” They move their hand up and down my forearm,

mimicking jerking me off. “Tell me you want it, and I’ll do it.”

“I ... touch me.” The words sound breathy. Needy. Like I’m begging for it.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

Cy’s hand wraps around my dick, and I bite my lip, trying to keep back a moan. I must still be dreaming. Cy’s thumb traces the head of my dick while they look down at me. “If I knew it was this easy to shut you up ...” Cy trails off, shaking their head.

“Fuck you,” I tell them, but the groan that follows doesn’t help.

“Maybe. If you ask nicely,” Cy laughs, their hand working me faster. “Would you want that, Teddy? Your dick wrapped in my hot, tight—”

I cut Cy’s words off with a harsh kiss. Part of me expects them to push me off or bite my tongue, but I can’t keep listening to their words. The image of Cy bent over as I fuck their ass is too tempting.

Their lips press against mine with a clash of teeth and tongues. It’s like no other kiss I’ve ever had. My balls tighten and Cy strokes me faster, tightening their grip on my dick. “Shit,” I mutter.

Cy presses a kiss to my chest; their hand tightens on my wrist. The only warning I get is their teeth scraping over my nipple before they bite down. For a second, my vision whites out. My entire body tenses as I come. Then I go lax, my tension melting away.

Cy lets go of my wrist first. They sit back, lifting their head from my chest. The last point of contact between us is their hand on my dick. I’m still a bit hazy with post-orgasm bliss. At least that’s the excuse I tell myself for why I’m still lying here.

“Damn, Teddy. Didn’t realize you had it in you,” Cy lifts their hand, looking at the mess I left behind. Their eyes meet mine as Cy opens their mouth, their tongue coming out. I grab their wrist without thinking. “Too gay for you?” they taunt.

I laugh, letting go of their hand. As soon as the noise escapes me, I lose it, cracking up. This whole situation is ridiculous. “We’re stepsiblings,” I finally manage to say.

“So? Keyword there beingstep, as in no blood relations.”



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“Yeah? What about the part where I don’t do this shit?” Another delirious chuckle escapes. “We hate each other, and I’m straight.”

“Are you?” Cy arches an eyebrow. “Does that mean you’re not going to return the favor?” Cy slides their hand down to adjust the bulge in their underwear. With how tented out the fabric is, it’s clear they’re hard.

The worst part is, I can’t completely deny my interest. Instead, I keep my mouth shut.

“I should’ve figured,” Cy says. “Fine, but it doesn’t change the fact that you were into that.” They stand up from the bed, stretching their arms over the head. The pose arches their back, accentuating the lean muscles of their abs. My eyes trail down to the v of their hips until I’m staring at Cy’s crotch. The thin fabric of their underwear isn’t hiding much. “I’m gonna go take a shower,” they announce. “If you don’t want to talk about it, whatever. Good luck forgetting it was my hand around your dick when you came.”

## Chapter Eight

### Cypress

My fist strikes forward, slamming into the punching bag. I do my best to picture Theo’s smug face, but his orgasm face pops into my head instead. I hit harder. I don’t know what the fuck came over me this morning. I shouldn’t know what Theo’s O-face looks like. I shouldn’t have still been thinking of it as I jerked off in the shower. This whole thing is so fucked up.

“Damn, you’re gonna hurt your hand swinging like that.” The voice snaps me out of my head. I look over to see one of the other fighters. She’s around my age and just recently started coming here. I think her name is Ames or something. She grabs the bag, holding it steady as I hit it again. “Wanna talk about it?” she asks.

“Nope.” I swing my leg into a roundhouse kick, striking the bag with a heavy thump. My fists make contact with the bag, but I can’t picture beating Theo’s face in as vividly as I used to. I have no clue where we stand now, but I’ve made things all kinds of awkward.

That’s what I get for thinking with my dick.

I stop when my hands are throbbing. Without saying anything, I switch off with Ames. She punches the bag, doing combos as I hold it in place. I notice Sam off to the side of the room watching us, but she doesn’t interrupt. “Good luck with whatever you’ve got going on,” Ames tells me when we split ways. I head for the locker room, but she moves on to a different part of the gym to continue with her workout.

When I get there, I grab my things and head for the shower. I strip off my clothes, moving under the water. It was easier to just react in the moment. Theo amps me up, and I wasn’t thinking. Making it sexual was just another way to fuck with him. I didn’t think he’d want it and beg me to touch him, or that I’d get so turned on by it. And what the fuck does that mean? The thrill of rendering Theo speechless with lust had me hard enough to pound nails.

The breathy way he moaned the word touch me.

My dick twitches with the memory. Theo is an asshole. Unfortunately, he’s a hot asshole, but it shouldn’t be as hot as it was to see him give in to me. I shouldn’t be thinking of ways to rile him up and make it all happen again. What would it take to get him to touch me?

He might claim to be straight, but he wanted what happened. Hell, he kissed me.

I don't know how much I can call it a kiss. My lips are swollen and cut from the aftermath of Theo's teeth. I know he did it to shut me up, butdamn.

I wrap my hand around my dick and take a deep breath. This really isn't the time or place to be thinking about it. I need to finish my shower and get out of here. All the same, it takes a few moments of not thinking about Theo before my dick goes soft again.

I must have some sort of death wish to want to continue pushing my luck. Theo made a good point about us being stepsiblings, but ... does it really matter? It's not like this is going anywhere. He's so deep in the closet, he's never gonna admit he liked it. Besides, this isn't about romance. Theo made it clear he still hates me. That was part of what made it so hot.

And how fucked up is that? I got off on knowing that my stepbrother might hate me, but I made him hard.

I'm gonna need some expensive therapy.

I laugh at the thought as I get dressed and dry off my hair. My pink car is easy to spot in the parking lot, but I'm moving on autopilot as I make my way home. Part of me is hoping Theo won't be there, so I won't have to worry about what happens next. But part of me wants to see him again.

There's a truck in the driveway as I pull up. Before I can make my way to Theo's room, I catch a glimpse of workers banging around in my room. Theo's gone, but I drop my things in his room and head downstairs to find Mom. She looks up from her phone as I walk into the living room. "Hey, Cy."

“What’s goin’ on in my room?” I ask.

“The workers are ripping out the old insulation. If everything goes well, you should be back in the room by this weekend. Just hang in there a little longer, alright?”

I should be thrilled. I’ll be able to get out of Theo’s room and back into my own bed in just a few days. My heart beats faster, and I bite my lip. The pain reminds me of Theo’s mouth on mine. “That’s great,” I mutter. “I’m gonna get some homework done. I’ll see you at dinner.”

I shut myself up in Theo’s room, taking over his desk with my laptop. I pop my earbuds into place and try to focus on my classwork. It’s easier than thinking about Theo, or what it means that we only have to put up with each other for a few more days. It’s still three days too many. I haven’t seen him since I left the room this morning after jerking him off.

My phone chimes with a new notification, and I glance over to see a message pop up from Eric. We haven’t talked much lately, but I wonder what he would think about the situation between me and Theo. I open the message, reading over the words slowly.

Eric: You busy tomorrow night?

A chuckle leaves my lips. The offer of a booty call couldn’t be more obvious. Maybe I should take him up on it. Get my mind off Theo, but the idea of having sex with Eric doesn’t sound anywhere near as thrilling.

I’m free if you want to hang out. Not in the mood to fuck.

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There's no use beating around the bush. It's probably still a good idea not to be around Theo, but I don't want to have sex with Eric. Dots appear letting me know he's writing something back.

Eric:That's fine. Meet at my place around 6?

I text back a thumbs-up emoji and look at my computer again. It's three pm now, and Theo is still missing. I can't blame him for wanting to avoid me after this morning. Still, it's not like we can avoid each other altogether. Not while sleeping in the same room. It's almost a shame Eric doesn't want to meet up tonight. Maybe he'd let me crash on his couch and avoid Theo.

Theo shows up just as we sit down for dinner. He glances at the table, meeting his father's eyes before he looks down at his clothes. That's when I notice the yellow rubber duck picture on his shirt. I can't fully hold back my laugh. The uniform looks completely out of place. Theo must be desperate for a job if he's working at a car wash.

Theo looks at me as I cover my mouth. His green eyes light up, but just as I think he's gonna make some snide remark, he turns toward the stairs. "I'm gonna change," he calls out as he walks away. "I'll be down in a minute."

No one talks as we wait for Theo. He's dressed in a plain green T-shirt and jeans when he comes back. Theo takes his chair across the table from me. "Does this mean you got a job?" Ben asks.

"Yup," Theo pops the p of the word as he helps himself to the food, loading up his

plate. "I know it's not much."

"Everyone has to start somewhere," Ben says with a shrug. He seems more excited by Theo's job than Theo.

I can't stop myself from sneaking glances at Theo during dinner. I keep hoping to find him looking at me, but he doesn't meet my eyes. When I finish eating, he's still scooting his food around with his fork. "Dinner was great, thanks Mom," I say as I stand up and take my plate into the kitchen. My eyes land on the unmade bed as I walk into Theo's room. He didn't bother cleaning up after this morning, but I'm not looking forward to sleeping on his jizz soaked sheets.

I'm stripping the bed as the door opens. "What are you doing?" Theo asks.

"What's it look like I'm doing? Getting the bed ready so I have somewhere to sleep tonight. I don't know about you, but I don't like sleeping in crusty sheets."

Theo's cheeks go red, but I'm not sure if he's embarrassed or pissed. "I'm not sleeping on the floor," he says.

"No one's making you, but I'm sleeping on the bed. I won the race." I turn around to get a better look at Theo and my hand goes to my hip.

"The bet didn't includethat." Theo's hand gestures to the dirty sheet I tossed on the floor.

"Friday." I bite my lip to keep from saying something worse. "Mom said I should be back in my room by this weekend. After that, I'm out of your hair. In the meantime, I think we can share the bed. It's big enough for both of us and for the record, I didn't startthat. Your underwear were already around your thighs by the time I woke up."

“I was asleep.” Theo’s voice gets harsher, but he doesn’t get louder. “You were the one who offered to ...”

“To ...” I wave my hand, motioning for him to continue. “You can say it, you know. I got you to say it this morning. It’s not like I did anything you didn’t want.”

Theo crosses his arms over his chest and clenches his eyes shut. “That’s not happening again,” he mutters.

“Whatever, but I’m not sleeping on the floor either. We can share the bed for a couple of days. You got a clean set of sheets, or do I need to grab some from my room?” I’m hoping Theo will drop it and move on with the change of subject, but his eyes are glued to the now bare bed. “Alright, pink satin sheets it is.”

“I have other sheets,” Theo mutters. He turns to his dresser, opening one of the drawers.

It’s almost too easy to mess with him. Still, I don’t say anything as Theo pulls out a boring dark green cotton set of sheets. It’s an exact duplicate of the sheets I just pulled off. He helps me dress the bed again and when it’s all said and done, I take a seat at the head of the bed. Theo avoids me, sitting at his desk and staring at his phone.

As it gets darker, we stay in our spots, but we can’t keep this up all night. Theo can’t be planning to sleep in the desk chair. I stand up from the bed and turn my back to Theo as I pull off my shirt. I know it’s a bad idea, but part of me wants to get a reaction out of Theo. If I’m not staring at him as he watches me undress, he’s more likely to sneaka glance. My hands go to my pants next. I undo my jeans, pushing the fabric over my ass. Then I hear Theo’s sharp intake of breath. I bite my lip to hold back a laugh. He probably wasn’t expecting to see my bare ass framed by the straps of my rainbow jock. I almost wish I hadn’t turned around so I could see his face right

now.

“You mind turning off the light? I’m going to bed,” I tell him as I slip under the covers in just the jock strap. I’m playing with fire right now and I know it. But it doesn’t mean I’m any less turned on.

It takes a moment before the room goes dark. I can see the glow of light from Theo’s phone, but it looks like he’s still standing in the middle of the room debating what to do. He sets his phone on the bedside table, then I hear him kick off his shoes and pants. “I’m not gay,” he says softly as he lies down next to me.

This time I can’t hold back my laugh. “I’m not gay either,” I answer back.

I can feel Theo glaring at me in the dark, but he doesn’t say anything.

“I’m bi. You know there are other options than just gay or straight, and letting me jerk you off doesn’t make you—” Theo covers my mouth with his hand, cutting me off.

“Can you just shut up?” Theo’s words say one thing, but it’s impossible to miss the erection poking my thigh.

I should ignore it. I should be the bigger person.

Instead, I lick his hand, and Theo pulls away. “Make me.”



### Chapter Nine

Theo

Cy holds perfectly still. Watching me. Waiting for me to make the next move. Tomakethem shut up.

There's a playful look in their eyes, daring me to say something. Dosomething.

If only I wasn't completely frozen.

"Come on," Cy scoots closer, grabbing my hand that was just on their mouth. They open their lips to slide their tongue over my finger in a slow seductive mockery of a blow job. "You want me to stop talking about your dick? Then why don't you give me a reason to stop?"

There's no mistaking Cy's meaning.

The idea of them sucking me off should be disgusting, but my dick throbs, growing thicker. I swallow as I push up to a sitting position, pulling my hand away from Cy. They stay there, still watching me. It'd almost be easier ifCy were the one leading this. It's harder to move myself in front of their face. It means admitting I want it.

Cy stays lying down as their hand goes to my hip, guiding me closer as they move between my legs. They look up at me as they lick their lips. I shove my boxers down, moving the fabric out of the way to free my dick. Their tongue curls around the tip, tracing my slit, and I bite my lip. "Is this what you wanted?" Cy asks.

“I ... don’t. I’m not—” My words change into a moan as Cy sucks me deeper into their mouth. Their hand moves to my lower back, pulling me in until my dick hits the back of their throat. My hand goes to Cy’s hair. Threading my fingers through the long brown locks, it’s almost possible to pretend they’re someone else. Their hair hangs loose over their bare back and with the way they’re lying face down, all I can see is their ass framed by that scrap of fabric Cy calls underwear.

Then Cy pulls off. Their mouth leaving my dick with a pop. “You’re notwhat?” they ask. “You want me to stop, Teddy? If this is toogayfor you ...” they trail off, giving my dick another teasing lick.

I know Cy is fucking with me. Trying to get me to say something like this morning. Waiting for me to ask them to touch me. To admit I want this.

My dick aches, missing the touch of their mouth. “No.”

“What was that?” Cy moves their hand, no longer touching me.

“I ... I want it. Just don’t stop. Please.” I loosen my grip on Cy’s hair. It’s tempting to pull their mouth back to my dick, but I don’t think that will get me the results I want. Cy doesn’t waste time dragging more words from me. Their lips seal around my erection. I might be the one with my cock in Cy’s mouth, but we both know they’re steering this train wreck.

I give up the pretense of thinking it could be anyone else but Cypress. Something about this whole situation feels different from any girl sucking me off. Cy works me over with firm, confident slurps and sucks, their hand wrapped around the base of my dick. I’m embarrassingly close to coming, and they’ve barely started. My hand tightens in Cy’s hair, pulling at the long brown strands. “Close,” the warning leaves my lips with a moan.

But Cy pulls off again.

“What?” I ask, not sure what I did wrong.

“Shh, it’s fine. Just give me a moment.” Cy sits up, and their hands move to the waistband of their underwear. They shove the fabric off, wrapping their hand around their dick and stroking it. My eyes are glued to where Cy’s hand idly plays with their cock.

They don’t give me any warning as they lean down again, taking my length back into their mouth. I can still see Cy’s hand moving as they jerk themselves off. I’m so busy watching them that the delicious feeling of their mouth is more of an afterthought. The slide of Cy’s hand over their cock is hotter than I thought it’d be. It’s hard to think of why I didn’t want to do this. I come watching the tip of Cy’s thumb dip into the slit of their dick. A drop of pre-come transferring to their finger.

Cy sits up again, breathing heavily as their hand works faster. Their eyes close as they let out a moan. There’s a trail of saliva mixed with cum at the corner of Cy’s mouth, but I’m too blissed out to say anything as a hot splash hits my leg. Cy just came on me.

I stay still as Cy settles into place on the bed next to me. “So much for the clean sheets,” they say with a laugh.

“You just ...” My hand reaches around for something to wipe off the mess, but as I lift the fabric to my leg Cy laughs harder. I’m holding their rainbow underwear. It doesn’t do much as I wipe off the puddle they left behind.

“Let me help,” Cy says with another chuckle as they sit up again. They grab my shirt from the floor and use it to wipe away what’s left. Cy’s eyes meet mine as they drop the shirt off the side again, and I swear I see a slight smile.

I still have no idea what we're doing. This isn't like us. I could write off the first time as some crazy one-off, but ... now?

"Little advice, don't overthink it. Straight, bi, gay, the labels don't really matter. Get some sleep." Cy goes silent and I try not to over-analyze what just happened. If only it was that easy.

I wave the next car in line forward, motioning with my hands to line up their wheels for the car wash. It's not the best job, and it has absolutely nothing to do with my major, but it's better than staying home all day. At least I'm getting paid. I hold my hand up in a stop position and gesture to the sign that tells the driver to put it in neutral. From there, I follow the checklist in my mind, hitting the buttons on the control panel to signal the automatic wash cycle that was selected.

Another car pulls up, and I grit my teeth. It's a bright pink in color, and the driver is grinning at me with a knowing smirk. Cy must have seen my uniform yesterday when I got back from work. Their window is already down, and Cy waves at me as I walk closer.

"Welcome to Speedy Duck Car Wash. How can I help you today?" I push through my memorized sales pitch, stating the prices for each wash.

"You know I'm a little disappointed it's an automatic car wash. I was hoping you'd clean my car with a sponge in a speedo." Cy looks me over like they're imagining it.

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I clench my jaw, but my dick gives a small twitch. Traitorous jerk. “You wish,” I mutter.

Cy shrugs, pulling out their wallet. “Whatever, just do the gold level wash.” They hold out a twenty-dollar bill in my direction.

I grab it, reaching into the pouch at my waist to get change. Cy grabs my wrist as I hand back the extra. They take a bill and tuck it into the waistband, holding up my apron pouch. “That’s for you,” they say with a wink.

“Thanks,” I pull back, trying to play nice while I’m at work, but Cy is getting on my last nerve.

“Oh, and Teddy, don’t forget the wax. I want it to shine.” The mocking way Cy calls me Teddy usually bugs the shit out of me, but the last time they called me that we were naked. It’s harder to be annoyed about the nickname when I can still remember how Cy’s voice sounded as they teased me before sucking me off. My cock throbs, getting harder in my pants, but I do my best to ignore it.

Cy rolls up their window, and I direct them onto the track for the car wash. My fingers jab at the buttons, hitting them harder than necessary. The license plate of Cy’s car catches my eye as it disappears into the car wash. The plate reads ‘IEATA55.’ How did that plate ever get approved? I don’t even want to know.

“Everything good here?” My coworker pops his head around the corner from the building office.

“Yeah, uh, can I take a quick break? I need to grab a drink. It’s hot out here.” The excuse isn’t a total lie, but I need a moment after dealing with Cypress. I don’t know why they came to this car wash other than to fuck with me. Missionfuckingaccomplished.

“Sure, there’s a vending machine inside. I’ll switch off with you.” Ryan walks out to where I am, and I say a quick thanks as I duck in the building.

The vending machine is easy to find, and I really do need something to drink. I mull over my choices before pulling out the five Cy tipped me and sliding it into the machine. That’s when my phone chimes. I probably shouldn’t be checking my notifications at work, but I’m honestly not that attached to the job. I pull out my phone as I take a drink and see there’s a new text message.

Cy:BTW, I’ll be out late tonight. Hanging out with a friend. Don’t wait up.

I don’t even realize my hand strikes out until it hits the glass of the vending machine with a heavy thump. My hand is throbbing, but I have a bigger issue. My boss is looking right at me, and he looks pissed.

“Theo,” he calls out my name.Fuck,I’m in trouble now.

“Sorry, it uh, ate my change.” I stumble for an excuse. “It won’t happen again.”

“Make sure it doesn’t. I can’t have that kind of behavior here. Now get back to work.”

I nod and get outside again, taking my drink with me. Ryan is still there waiting for me, but my mind is stuck on Cy. It’s like they sent the message just to tell me they’re hooking up with someone else.

I know I have no right to be jealous. It's not like we're in any sort of relationship. Hell, we haven't talked about any of this bullshit, and it's probably best for both of us if it stops now. Cy is my stepsibling. I shouldn't care if they're sleeping around. So, why does it bother me? The thought of Cy on their knees for someone else has me gritting my teeth for the rest of my shift.

## Chapter Ten

### Cypress

Riling Theo up was fun, but maybe I shouldn't have texted him about meeting up with Eric. I didn't drop any names, but I don't think the two of them have made up since the whole incident. I intentionally meant for my text to make it seem like I was hooking up tonight. Nothing is happening with Eric anymore, but Theo doesn't know that. Which is probably for the best, because whatever is going on between me and Theo only complicates things.

The truth of the matter is, I don't know what I'm doing. I'm in over my head, and I don't know what the endgame is with Theo. Sex with him is thrilling and dangerous, but it's a bad idea. Not only because we don't get along, but we're stepsiblings. This thing doesn't have a happy ending.

I pull my car into the parking lot behind Eric's building. He lives in an apartment complex that's been renovated from an older building. I head inside and climb the stairs to his floor before I get to his flat. My hand raps on the door and within minutes, it opens. Eric stands there, giving me a quick glance over before he opens the door wider. "Wasn't sure you were going to show," he says.

"It's better than being stuck at home with Theo," I complain with a shrug. "There was a busted pipe that messed up my room, which means we've been rooming together for the past week and a half." I toss myself on Eric's couch, making myself at home.

“You’re rooming with Theo?” he asks, one of his eyebrows lifting in confusion. “That must be awkward. He still won’t even talk to me after he walked in on us.”

I bite my lip, thinking about how to answer that. Theo and I aren’t really talking, either. “It’s whatever,” I shrug. “We mostly ignore each other. I’ll be back in my room tomorrow.”

“Well, at least there’s that,” Eric says. He walks closer to where I’m sitting on the couch but stays standing. “You want a drink or anything? Beer?”

I guess one beer won’t hurt. I’ll be here long enough to sober up before I drive home. “Sure.”

Eric heads for the kitchen, grabbing a couple of beers for us before he returns to the living room. He sits down on the couch next to me and hands me a bottle of beer. “How’s training going? You have any fights coming up soon?”

“Training is good. I’m struggling to keep up with my schoolwork without being able to hide out in my room, though. There’s still a few months before my next competition. What about you? How’s work?”

“It’s work,” Eric says with a laugh. “It’s not fun, but it pays the bills.”



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“Can’t be worse than the job Theo got.” I smirk thinking of how pissed off he looked to see me earlier when I drove to the car wash. “He’s washing cars over at one of those automatic car washes.”

“No way,” Eric shakes his head. “Guess he got tired of trying to get something related to his degree. I know he was stressed out about finding something before.”

Eric’s words make me pause. Part of me knew Theo probably just took the job to hold him over, but I didn’t realize he was stressing out about not being able to find a job. I feel a little guilty about teasing him, but only a little. It’s not like he wouldn’t have done the same if the tables were turned.

I grab the remote off the side table, turning on the TV to look through the different streaming apps. “Sorry,” I say as I scroll through the different show options. “I mean, I’m sorry if getting caught hooking up with me messed up your friendship with Theo. Most of the time he’s a total asshole, but ... I don’t know. I guess he isn’t completely terrible.”

“That’s high praise from you. Are you sick? Or is being stuck in the same room as Theo giving you Stockholm syndrome?” he asks.

A chuckle escapes my lips, and I take another sip of my beer as I debate what to say. I set the remote down, not bothering to keep looking for something to watch. “Neither, it’s just, I don’t know. I always figured Theo was a jerk because of how he treated me when we first met, but I don’t know.”

Eric takes a sip of his beer, taking a moment before he says anything. “Look, I’m not

trying to get in the middle of whatever weird sibling rivalry you two have going on. But I was friends with Theo before his mom moved away. There's more to Theo's bullshit than you think."

"His mom?" I ask. I've only met her a handful of times in passing. "What's she got to do with it?"

"She's a piece of work. With a mom like her, let's just say it's no wonder Theo is as bigoted as he is."

"Bigoted? Theo's so far in the closet, he's consorting with the White Witch."

"Theo, in the closet? You think he's secretly into guys?" Eric asks, raising his eyebrow.

I drain what's left of my beer. "I think Theo's bigoted bullshit is because he doesn't want to admit he likes dick." After his little protest over the word gay, I don't know what else it could be but internalized homophobia.

Eric stares at me before placing his hand over mine to take the empty beer bottle. "Maybe." The look on his face says he doesn't believe me, but whatever.

He didn't see Theo all needy and begging for me to touch him. "Did you know Theo sleeps naked?" I ask, changing the topic slightly.

"Do I want to know how you know this?"

"We're rooming together," I answer with a shrug. "It's almost a shame he's such an asshole. He looks kinda hot naked." The moment the words escape my lips, I realize I fucked up.

Eric's eyes widen. "You're not telling me something."

"It's nothing," I answer.

"That means there's definitely something. Come on." Eric places his hand on my thigh, and I bite my lip.

"I was joking. Mostly."

"Cy, what happened?"

I clench my jaw. "I sucked Theo off."

Eric's hand tightens its grip on my leg, but he doesn't say anything.

I open my eyes when the silence continues. Eric is staring at me wide-eyed. "Is this still a joke?"

I shake my head slowly. "He was being a homophobic jerk, and we were arguing, then next thing I know my hand was on his dick."

"How does arguing lead to you giving Theo a bj?" Eric crosses his arms across his chest.

"I don't know. It just kinda happened. I thought flirting with Theo would freak him out; I didn't think he'd get turned on by the offer. It's fucked up, I know, but it's not like we're actually related."

"Regardless of that, what the fuck? You and Theo? You two are constantly arguing and at each other's throats."

“I know. That’s part of what made it so fun. I can’t explain it. Besides, it doesn’t really matter. My room will be back to normal by tomorrow and we can go back to sleeping in our own beds and acting like it never happened.” Or at least I can try. As hot as it was to get Theo all worked up, he still never touched me. Which is exactly the thought I shouldn’t focus on. I need to move on and not push this thing until Theo breaks. Too bad I love a challenge.

“Sure, and maybe Theo will actually talk to me again,” Eric answers sarcastically.

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“You never know,” I say with a shrug. “I should probably get going soon. Thanks for the beer, but it’s getting late.”

“You can crash here if you want,” Eric offers. “Unless you’d rather sleep with Theo.”

A forced laugh escapes my lips. I should take Eric up on his offer. Sleeping on his couch is better than tempting fate and sharing a bed with Theo again. “Thanks, I could crash on the couch. I’ll be out early in the morning. Got to hit the gym.”

Eric bites his lip, then grabs the beer bottles, taking them to the kitchen. I hear the clink of the bottles landing in the recycling before he walks back into the room. “You want to watch something?” he offers as he takes a seat on the couch again. I know he’s trying to change the subject, but the point isn’t lost on me. We both know it’s a horrible idea for me to mess around with Theo. Whatever we’re doing needs to stop.

“Sure,” I agree. I grab the remote and hand it to Eric. “Here, you pick.”

We don’t talk as the TV plays, but I’m still thinking of Theo. The broken way his words turned to nonsense as I sucked him off. It shouldn’t be as hot as it is.

## Chapter Eleven

### Theo

My phone rings again, but with a glance at the caller id, I leave it where it is. I can’t deal with Mom’s bullshit right now. Not with everything on my mind. It’s been a week since Cy left, and it’s still all I can think about. The ringing stops, and I sigh a

breath of relief. At least until the notification for a new voicemail pops up. I can't ignore Mom forever, but I don't need her voice in my head right now. It's difficult enough to sort out my own feelings on the matter.

Maybe I need to face the facts. Regardless of what happened with Cypress, I can't keep denying it. I'm not straight. And maybe it'd be easier to move on from the inappropriate thoughts about Cy if I'm willing to admit that and explore a little. I grab my phone, trying to think of a low-pressure way to take a little risk. A google search of clubs in the area leads me to a result that doesn't look too scary. I tap my finger on my desk, debating my options. Still, just going to a gay club doesn't have to mean anything. I can try to dance and maybe flirt a little, nothing more has to happen.

With my mind made up, I grab a fresh shirt from my closet. I have no idea what to wear to something like this, but I'm guessing a button-up shirt and nice jeans will work. Once I'm dressed, I grab my keys and take a deep breath. It's now or never.

The parking lot is crowded when I pull up, but I find a spot that isn't too far from the club. I still have to make myself do it. Walk into that club and flirt with a guy. My jaw tightens enough that it hurts, but I take a step out of the car. Then another. Before I know it, I'm standing in a short line waiting to get in. I wipe my sweaty palms on my jeans as I walk inside the building. Despite it being a weekday night, the dance floor is packed. I take a deep breath as I scan the crowd, looking for someone to catch my interest.

My heart beats faster as I notice a guy dancing. The way he moves his hips, shaking his ass, is the first thing to get my attention. The tight denim of his jeans shows off the curves of his butt, and I can't look away. I've noticed other guys before, but I've never really let myself look. I pull my eyes away from his ass to look up at the see through shirt and finally the short brown hair on his head. I can't see his face from this angle, but I find myself walking closer to get a better look.

My shoulder bumps into someone as I make my way across the dance floor. A hand grabs my wrist, pulling me to a stop. “Theo? No fucking way.” The familiar voice makes me stop. I turn and find myself face to face with Eric.

We still haven’t talked after I walked in on him and Cy, and maybe I owe him an apology, but I don’t know what to say. “Can I buy you a drink?” I ask. I’m gonna need one myself for whatever talk is coming.

“Sure.” Eric grabs my wrist, pulling me through the crowd to the bar. He yells his order to the bartender, then both their eyes go to me.

“Uh rum and coke,” I say. I pull out my wallet, paying for both drinks. Eric takes a seat on a bar stool next to me. He rests one arm on the bar as he faces me, his eyes looking me over slowly. “What?” I ask.

“Nothing,” Eric shrugs. “Just honestly wasn’t expecting to see you here. You do know what kind of a club this is, right?” There’s a teasing tone to Eric’s words, but I bite my lip. This isn’t about him. I’m here for me and him being here doesn’t change that.

The bartender sets down our drinks, and I don’t waste time thinking of how to answer Eric. I grab my glass, bringing it to my lips to take a large gulp. The alcohol burns my throat, but it gives me the courage to say what I’m about to. “I know what kind of club it is.”

“You stopped talking to me when you found out I’m pansexual.”

“No, I stopped talking to you when I found you hooking up with Cypress,” I retort. I don’t really want to rehash all of this, but it doesn’t feel like I have much of a choice.

“Why does it matter?” Eric grabs the straw in his drink, moving it in a lazy circle

around the glass.

“They’re my stepsibling. You don’t think I’d rather hear that information from you than walk in on the two of you?”

“Why did you walk in on us? You know that part still doesn’t add up. You didn’t knock or anything.” He lifts the glass to his lips, taking a drink.

I don’t say anything. Hearing Eric’s ringtone when I texted him isn’t a decent excuse. Besides, it doesn’t change the fact that I could hear them moaning. I knew what I was walking in on before I opened the door. I just didn’t want to believe the obvious signs that Eric was with Cy. “I was curious, alright?” I shrug, but admitting it feels like a weight lifted. “I saw your car in the driveway, and I couldn’t believe it was you with Cy.” I’ve never told any of my friends about my attraction to guys. If I hadn’t walked in on Eric with Cy, I probably wouldn’t be telling him now either. Thinking of him with Cy sends a different range of emotions to my head than when it first happened.

I’m still pissed, but not at Eric for hooking up with Cy. I’m pissed because Eric could actually be with Cy. He doesn’t have the issues I do with Cy being my stepsibling. He didn’t scare Cy off with homophobic bullshit. I can’t claim to be unaware of the crap that comes out of my lips when I’m around Cy. I open my mouth, and my mom just jumps out. It’s not them I have an issue with.

I take another drink of my cocktail and glance out at the dance floor again. I’m not looking at Eric, so I’m a little surprised when I hear his next question. “Do you want to dance?”

I turn to get a better look at Eric, but he isn’t sneering or smirking. His eyes meet mine, calmly waiting for a response. “Sure,” I answer, not really thinking it through. I stand up from my spot at the bar and follow Eric back through the crowd. He makes the first move, taking a drink of his bright blue cocktail, before he places his other



hand at my hip, pulling me closer to him.

For all the time we've been friends, I don't think I've ever really looked at Eric. He has a similar build to mine. We're both bigger guys, and I've seen firsthand how that translates to rolling around on the wrestling mat. It's a stretch to look at him, not as a possible wrestling opponent, but as someone I might find attractive. Objectively speaking, Eric is good looking. He has a sharp square jaw with a touch of stubble and his brown hair is short in a basic fade. But I don't feel any attraction to him.

I place my hand hesitantly on Eric's shoulder. I'm not sure how this works. I've only ever danced with women and never like this. He laughs as I accidentally step on his foot and our hips bump.

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“Relax,” Eric calls over the music. He turns around so his ass is facing me and backs into me. Eric grabs my hand, placing it on his hip as he moves. My heartbeat picks up, but it’s about the awkwardness of our current position. My dick stays soft, despite the way he’s rubbing against me. “Look around,” Eric tells me. “Who catches your interest?”

My eyes go to the place I saw the guy dancing earlier, but he’s nowhere to be seen. I’m searching the crowd for someone else that catches my attention when a skinny figure with long brown hair twirls around. No fucking way. I was doing this to get away from Cy, and somehow, I picked the club they’re dancing at. What are the fucking odds?

It doesn’t make it any easier to pull my eyes away from them as Cy dances in the middle of a couple of guys. One guy is pressed up against Cy’s back with his hands on their hips while another is in front of them with his arms around Cy’s neck. I hardly realize I’m walking toward the group of them until they get closer.

Eric doesn’t say anything as he follows me through the crowd. We aren’t far from Cypress, but I can tell the moment they see me. Cy’s hips falter in their rhythm as their eyes meet mine. Then they lean closer to the guy in front of them, whispering something in his ear. I can’t hear anything over the music, but Cy pulls the guy closer, sandwiching himself between the both of them, as they sway their hips.

My face heats up. I want to grab those guys off of Cy and replace them on the dance floor. It’s entirely irrational, but the thought of them taking Cy somewhere for sex has popped into my head, and now I can’t unsee it. The three of them grinding together with much less clothing.

Eric steps in front of me before I can lay hands on the guy at Cy's front. He motions with his head off to the side and the guy follows Eric, leaving Cy to me. They wrap their arms around my neck, still keeping their ass glued to the guy behind them. "What are you doing here?" Cy asks. "It's not too gay for you?"

I place my hands on Cy's hips, pulling them into me. Unlike the moment I was dancing with Eric, there's no hiding my reaction. The slight brush of their groin against mine has my dick thickening. "What are you doing here?" I ask, turning the question around on Cy without answering it myself. "Are you so hard up that any dick will do?"

Cy laughs, taking a step closer to me. The other guy takes the hint when I glare at him over Cy's shoulder. They lean in closer to talk into my ear. "And what would you know about that? Last I checked, you're so afraid of any dick that isn't yours that you can't bring yourself to admit how much you want it. You want to fool around? Touch me back. I'm not wasting my time with this when I don't get anything out of it."

## Chapter Twelve

### Cypress

I suck in a gulp of semi-fresh air. The alley isn't the cleanest, but I needed a breather after my run in with Theo on the dance floor. My heart is still beating double time. I'm supposed to be ignoring him and moving on, not daring him to touch me back.

The back door of the club opens and a familiar figure steps out. Theo isn't holding his drink anymore, but he doesn't look entirely drunk either. "You think this is easy for me?" he asks. "Like somehow admitting that I find you hot is gonna change everything." Theo punches forward, his hand striking the brick wall of the building. I grab his wrist, pulling him to me, his back to my chest, and wrap both of our arms around him. Theo fights the embrace, and I instinctively move my hand higher,

pressing the side of my wrist against his neck. A sharp intake of air hits my hand as he goes still. His Adam's apple bobs as he swallows hard.

"Admit it, you're just fighting because you like me to put you in your place," I taunt him.

Theo stiffens in my grip, but he doesn't say anything.

I move my hand that isn't at his throat to the waistband of his jeans. Theo doesn't attempt to fight me off as I undo the button and zipper. "Are you hard right now? Thinking about my hands getting you off?"

"Fuck, please." Theo groans, backing his body up into mine.

It's harder to stick to my guns than I thought it'd be. Touching Theo and getting him off in this alley is a terrible idea. Anyone could walk out and see us. "Turn around," I tell him.

Theo lets out a heavy breath as he turns around to face me. He keeps his eyes focused on the ground, not looking at me. I'm sure it's because he's embarrassed, but he doesn't even realize how it makes him look. The way he gives in and submits to me is exhilarating. I move my hand to Theo's shoulder, pressing down firmly. "Get on your knees."

Theo's eyes snap up to meet mine as he takes in a sharp inhale of breath.

"Come on, Teddy. Let's drop the nonsense. Your mouth on my dick, or we can stop now and call it quits." I'm not sure what outcome I'm hoping for. My dick is aching hard, but I know I'm pushing Theo way out of his comfort level.

He looks at me before his eyes drop to the ground. Theo bites his lower lip, and I'm

sure he's going to storm away or try to hit me again. Then his knee bends. He smoothly kneels down until he's on his knees in front of me. Theo's hand goes on my hip, but he doesn't take the lead.

I open the fly of my jeans, undoing them enough to shove the fabric out of the way without showing off my ass to anyone who might step out of the building. I pull out my cock, grabbing it at the base. My dick traces the line of Theo's lower lip. "Open up that mouth of yours. It's time you put it to some good use."

Theo's lips part as his tongue darts out in a quick movement. A wet brush of muscle as he tentatively traces the head of my dick with his tongue. I give him a moment to explore before I thread my fingers into his hair and tighten my grip. As much as I want to thrust into his mouth and get myself off, I need to touch base first.

"Teddy, if you want me to stop at any time just tap my hip, but if not ..." I use my grip on Theo's hair to pull him closer, and his grip on my hip tightens, but he opens his mouth wider. My dick slides deeper into his mouth. I almost can't believe my eyes. Theo is on his knees, sucking me off in an alley. This has to be a dream.

His other hand goes to his open jeans, pulling out his dick. Theo moans around my erection, and the sound drives me to move my hips, making a shallow thrust. I keep expecting Theo to tap my leg and back out, but he doesn't. When my thrusts slow, he moves closer, sucking me deeper.

My dick twitches, and I know I'm getting close. Watching the movement of Theo's arm as he jerks himself off is hypnotizing. I can't believe he's enjoying this as much as I am, despite the obvious proof. I can't stop the reaction of my body either. "Gonna come," I warn him.

Theo's eyes dart up to meet mine as I hit my peak. My balls tighten and he sucks harder, his hand gripping me harder as I come. I'm breathing heavily as Theo

pulls away, coughing. Part of me wants to laugh out of disbelief. Instead, I offer, “You want me to get you off?”

“Um, no need.” Theo coughs again, wiping the back of his hand across his mouth. “I, uh, already got off.” He stands up, tucking everything back into place before he zips and buttons his jeans. Theo grimaces, looking at his hand, then wipes it on the leg of his pants.

I don’t know what to say, but it feels like I should say something. I’m messing this whole thing up with Theo and probably only confusing him more. “We should ...” I shake my head, but I can’t make the words come out right.

“Fix your pants,” Theo tells me with a quick gesture. His cheeks go red, and he’s not meeting my eyes, but he’s not running away either.

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My hands go to my jeans, running on autopilot as I reposition myself and refasten my fly. “Teddy, wait,” I say, and this time Theo looks at me. “We need to talk about this.”

“There’s nothing to talk about,” he tells me, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Really? If it was only the one time, I might believe that, but three times? I mean, have you ever hooked up with someone who wasn’t a woman?”

“No.” Theo’s jaw tightens until his lips press into a thin line. I guess it’s better than him retorting with his typical I’m not gayline.

Still, it doesn’t make me feel great about grabbing his hair and fucking his mouth. I might have given Theo an out by telling him I could tap my thigh, but this is all a bit much. He just gets me so worked up that I’m not thinking about how new all of this is for Theo. I’m too horny and pissed off to think of much of anything.

The rattling of the back door cuts off the words I’m about to say. Eric’s head pops out, looking around the corner. I bite back a laugh when he notices us and gives a little wave. Theo’s eyes shut, and he groans. “I was wondering where you two disappeared to,” Eric says. “At least it looks like you haven’t killed each other yet.” He’s doing a surprisingly good job of pretending he doesn’t know what we were up to out here. As if the new stain on Theo’s pants isn’t obvious enough.

Theo pushes past me, not saying a word as he heads back to the club. Before I can follow him, Eric grabs my wrist as I’m passing him. “I’m gonna leave. I need to get some sleep before my shift tomorrow afternoon. Do you still need a ride home?” he asks.

We came together, but at the time I had no clue Theo would show up. “I’ll be fine,” I answer. “Theo can give me a ride.”

“You sure you know what you’re doing with Theo?” Eric’s eyes meet mine.

Honestly, I don’t have a clue. I’m playing all of this by ear. What I do know is being around Theo is too fucking tempting to ignore. “Not really, but I can handle it,” I answer.

He looks me over, his lips set in a half frown. “Alright, well, it’s your funeral. Good luck.” Eric pats me on the shoulder, then turns and heads inside the club. We split ways as he heads for the main entrance.

I look around the club, searching for Theo and hoping he hasn’t already left as well. Luck must be in my favor, because I spot Theo at the bar. By the time I make my way over, he’s got a new drink. It’s probably a good thing I’m sober. I’m guessing he drove here tonight, and I doubt Theo will be in any shape to drive back at the rate he’s going. “Hey,” I say as I take a spot on the stool next to him. Theo doesn’t look at me. He keeps his eyes focused on his drink as he drains it. “Teddy,” I change tactics, switching to the pet name I know he hates. Asweird as it is, the name is growing on me. I keep slipping up, calling him Teddy when our pants are down.

Theo glances at me out of the corner of his eye as he stirs his drink with the straw. He doesn’t say anything.

“Dance with me?” I ask. I should push him to talk about all of this, but what’s the point when he’s too drunk to remember the conversation?

Theo picks up his drink, bringing the glass to his lips as he drains what’s left. He wobbles when he stands up, placing his hand on the bar. “Sure, might as well.”



I wrap my arm around his shoulders, leading him to the dance floor. Even though we briefly danced together earlier, I'm still expecting him to pull away. My arms go to Teddy's neck, and he places his hands on my hips. Our bodies move in a slower sway than the music, but Theo is looking right at me. I watch his eyes as we dance. The usual tension of being around Theo melts away with the beat of the music. I take a step closer and lean my head on his chest. Theo's arm wraps around my waist, holding my body to his, chest to chest.

"I'm sorry," he whispers. It could be about any of over a hundred things, but I don't want to ruin the moment.

"We'll talk later," I say. I look at his eyes and Theo leans in. For a moment, I think he's going to kiss me. His hand raises to brush a section of hair behind my ear.

"How are you so damn pretty?" he mumbles. I don't think Theo means to say the words out loud. Still, it just makes it easier to shrug off his behavior. When he sobers up, we'll be back to trading insults.

## Chapter Thirteen

Theo

Cy is sitting on the couch as I walk in the front door. They turn to look at me over their shoulder as the door closes. "Hey," they say.

"Hey," I echo back. We still haven't talked since the incident at the club the other night. I've been working, and Cy's been doing whatever it is they do. Things are at a weird standstill with Cy. We eat dinner each night, stealing looks at each other instead of arguing.

"You want to play?" They gesture toward the TV with their head. I glance at the

screen, seeing a familiar first-person shooter game. I didn't think something like this would catch Cy's interest.

"I need to change," I answer. "Are Dad and Selene around?"

One of Cy's eyebrows raises at my question. "It's just us, I think. Mom went out for groceries, and Ben should still be at work."

"K, uh, let me get out of my uniform, but yeah, the game sounds fun." I head for my room, not waiting for Cypress to answer. It only takes a couple of minutes to strip off my work clothes and switch it out with a T-shirt and a pair of shorts. Cy is still sitting on the couch when I walk downstairs, but they're playing the game now. Their fingers move over the controller as they focus on the screen. I take the opportunity to look them over. Cy is wearing a tight white crop top that leaves a bit of their belly showing and a pleated mini skirt. Just knowing how easy access it'd be to start something right now makes my dick twitch at the thought. I take a seat on the opposite side of the couch, leaving a good distance between us.

Cy grabs a second controller, handing it to me. The first round, we don't talk. We go through the motions, playing the game and focusing on our characters rather than each other. But as the rounds go on, Cy glances over at me. Their comments start out related to the game, warning me about an enemy, or pointing out weapons and care packages. We finish another round, and Cy turns my direction. "You're not bad." Their hand goes to my shoulder, giving me a playful shove.

"I could say the same about you," I answer back. "I didn't know you played games like this."

Cy shrugs, starting another round. "There's a lot you don't know about me. It's not like we've spent much time together over the last few years."

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I can read between the lines. Cy wasn't the one starting shit when we first met. I never really tried to get to know them. "We could try to get to know each other now," I offer. Cy glances at me but doesn't answer. "I know you do MMA, but you're taking classes too, right? What's your major?"

"Environmental Science," they answer.

"What? How does that work? I don't know what that means," I admit.

"Studying the environment. Like ways to preserve nature, help the earth, that kind of thing. Ideally, I'd like to be a park ranger or maybe a naturalist."

"A naturist? Isn't that just a fancy word for being a nudist?" The joke leaves my lips without much of a thought.

"You ass. I get it. You wish you looked as good naked as I do," they taunt.

I laugh, but don't bother to answer.

"Remind me, what did you major in? Car washing? Or was it cleaning in general? I hear they're looking for a new janitor at the gym I go to." Cy's smirking at me. Their game paused as they focus on our conversation.

"Ha, ha, very funny. I got my degree in business with a minor in accounting."

"You behind a desk crunching numbers all day? I don't see it," Cy says.

“Oh yeah? What do you see me doing?” I ask.

Cy meets my eyes before they look at my lips. It’s at this moment I realize how close we are. I must have scooted closer as we were talking, not realizing it. My face is right in front of theirs. Cy licks their lower lip, and my eyes trace the movement of their tongue. I’m not sure who closes the gap, but our lips touch. Then my phone rings. Cy pulls back with a forced laugh, “Go ahead answer it.”

I pull my phone out of my pocket and bite my lip when I see who’s calling. I’ve been avoiding Mom’s calls for the most part since I’ve been messing around with Cy. Occasionally I’ll answer and make some excuse to end the call in a hurry. With Cy’s glance at my phone, I know I can’t ignore this call. They would think it was weird if I didn’t answer.

“Hey Mom,” I say as I pick up the call.

“Theodore, I was starting to think you lost your phone or something. Is everything fine?” She sounds almost concerned, but before I can answer, she carries on. “I called your father, and he assured me that the issue with your stepbrother’s room has been taken care of.”

“Yeah, Cypress’s room is all fixed. I’m sorry I haven’t answered. I’ve just been busy. I got a job and the hours have been all over the place.”

“You got a job? That’s great. Where are you working?” she asks.

“It’s a carwash,” I answer. I know it won’t be up to her standards, but it doesn’t lessen the blow of her next words.

“A carwash? You’re doing accounting for a carwash?” Her voice pitches higher, and I grind my teeth. Cy places their hand on my thigh and looks at me with a reassuring

smile. I don't think they can hear Mom, but they're clearly picking up on my uneasiness.

"No. Actually, I'm just a regular employee there. It's a decent job though—"

"Theodore, I didn't pay for you to go to college to wash cars," she cuts me off.

"I know, Mom. It's not a big deal though, I'm just working there for now. I'll switch to a better job later."

"I said you should have stayed here. My friend Lauren has a brother that works in accounting. I could get you in there," she tells me. "I don't understand why you had to go back to your father's house. Plus, here you wouldn't have to worry about having to be around that boy."

"Cypress," I correct her. "And there's nothing wrong with them." Cy's eyes widen and their hand tightens on my thigh.

"Theodore, that's no way to talk to your mother. I know your father and his wife are fine in letting Cypress carry on with that delusion about his gender, but that doesn't make it okay. It's not right."

"No, Mom. You're the one who's wrong. Cypress is nonbinary and they use they/them pronouns. It's not okay for you to misgender them. I'm tired of your transphobic remarks." A weight lifts from my shoulders, but the proud smile on Cy's face makes it easier to drop the last bomb. "And by the way, when you insult Cy and other LGBTQ people, you're insulting me. I'm bisexual. I let you keep me from admitting it for years, but I'm tired of it."

"Theodore," her voice hits a higher shrill note, but I pull the phone away from my ear and hit the end call button.

“I can’t believe you just said all that,” Cy tells me. “You didn’t have to defend me.”

It hits me what I said. “I just came out to my mom.”

“You did. I’m so proud of you right now.” Cy leans in, pressing a kiss to my cheek. “I know you haven’t been with a guy, but I’m not the only reason you’re saying you’re bi, right? You’ve been interested in guys before, right?”

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“Yeah,” I admit. “It’s not about you. I’ve been attracted to guys before, but I’ve never really acted on it. With the way my mom talks about gay and trans people, I just ...” I shake my head. “It was hard to ignore her voice in my head.”

“But you went to that club,” Cy says. The smirk on their face reminds me of what happened in the alley. I lean in this time and kiss Cy. Their tongue laps at my lips until I open my mouth, letting them in.

From all our previous hookups, I expect Cy to be rough. It’s kinda become our thing. So, I’m left surprised when their lips stay sweet. Cy kisses me deeper, our tongues intertwining, but this feels different. Their hand goes to the back of my head, holding me there as we continue to kiss. I move my hand to Cy’s thigh, and my fingers brush against the fabric of their skirt. I’m moving my hand higher up their leg when the door slams closed.

We jump away from each other at the same moment, but as I turn and look at my dad, I know it’s too late. His jaw drops as he stares at us wide eyed. “Uh, Theo? Cy?” His hand points at each of us in turn as he mutters under his breath. “Somebody better tell me what’s going on here.”

I freeze. A cold feeling of dread travels down my spine.

“Nothing,” Cy answers. “It’s not a big deal. We were just joking around.” They cross their arms over their chest, but my hand is still on Cy’s leg. I feel the way they twitch as they lie.

“Is that right?” Dad asks. He places his hand on his hip, taking a stubborn stance of

his own.

“No,” I answer. “I—we ... I don’t know what it is,” I admit. It would’ve been smarter of me to keep my mouth shut and let Cy take the fall. But I’m still riding the high of coming out to my mom. I don’t want to lie and hide this anymore.

“You’re stepsiblings,” he says. “This can’t—This isn’t happening. Not under my roof.” It’s not often that Dad loses his temper, but I can already tell this is going to be the exception.

Cy’s hand goes on top of mine, and they take a deep breath. “Then I guess it’s a good thing I’m moving—”

“No,” I cut them off. “You don’t have to do that.” I turn to look at Dad. “I’ll get my shit and be out.”

“Theo, wait. That’s not what I meant, dammit.”

I tune him out. I’m already halfway up the stairs, but I hear the echo of footsteps behind me. My mind goes on autopilot; I grab my duffel, shoving clothes into it. “Theo,” Cy’s voice makes me pause. “You don’t have to leave. Where are you even going to go?”

I grab their wrist, pulling them into my room and closing the door behind us. “I’ll crash with Eric for a bit if I have to. It’s not a big deal. I was already planning on getting an apartment.” I was just figuring I’d have more money saved up when I did leave.

“I don’t get it, though. It’s not like we’re dating,” they say.

My hand hesitates, still holding a shirt. “I meant it. I don’t know what we’re doing,



but I don't want it to stop. At least not because of this."

"What are you saying?" Cy asks. Their eyebrows furrow together.

"I don't know. It's probably ridiculous to even consider," I shake my head, not finishing the sentence.

Cy takes a step closer, their lips meeting mine in another quick kiss. "You want to be my boyfriend? I'm open to the idea if you are."

"Theo," Dad calls through the door. His knocking is loud, impossible to ignore.

"I need to go," I tell Cy. "I'll text you, and we'll talk. Either way, I can't be here tonight." I sling my duffel over my shoulder.

Dad is standing in the doorway as I open my door. "Theo," he says my name again, but I don't wait for whatever he's about to say. He's not blocking my way, and it's easy enough to push past him and head down the stairs. I don't know that anything will come of this, but it's better that I'm not in the same house as Dad tonight. We don't need to say something we'd regret.

I toss my bag in my car and drive. I'm halfway to Eric's apartment when I realize I should probably call him first. The phone rings, the noise echoing over the car speakers as I drive. Then Eric's voice comes through. "Hey Theo, what's up?"

"Uh, any chance I can crash at your place tonight?" I cut to the chase.

"Sure, but what's going on?"

I can't blame him for asking. It's not like we've been talking much, but this isn't something to say over the phone. "I'll explain when I get there. It'll only be a few

more minutes.” We end the call, but I’m debating what I’m going to say to Eric once I get there. If I tell him about what’s been going on with me and Cy, he’ll probably think it’s as inappropriate as Dad clearly does.

After all, it was my own immediate reaction the first time. We’re stepsiblings, and I get how taboo this is, but it’s not like we’re blood related. Hell, I was seventeen when Cy moved in, practically a grown up. We weren’t raised together. I didn’t make any attempt to get to know Cypress before I went off to college. When you get right down to it, our parents getting married never really made us siblings. We don’t have a bond like that. The feelings I have for Cy aren’t the brotherly kind.

Eric meets me at the door when I show up. He eyes the duffel bag slung over my shoulder before he looks at my face. His eyebrows lift in a question. “That’s a lot of stuff for one night.”

“I’ll figure out a better plan in the morning,” I say with a shrug. I push past Eric and into the living room of his tiny flat. “I just need somewhere to crash.”

“Theo, what’s going on? You can’t just show up with all your stuff packed and expect me not to ask questions. Do you need help?” he asks. “You’re kinda scaring me here.”

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“Kinda got into an argument with my dad,” I admit. Eric looks at me, waiting for me to continue. It takes me a moment before I decide to just say it. “He caught me and Cy making out.”

Eric bites his lip, but he doesn’t say anything. The half-muffled laugh is his only reaction. He doesn’t seem as surprised by the news as I expected.

“You knew?” I ask.

“Cy might have mentioned there was something going on, but Theo come on. It’s not like the two of you were that subtle at the club.”

My cheeks heat up as thoughts of what we were up to in the alley pop in my head.

Eric smirks. “What exactly is going on with you and Cy? It’s okay for you to mess around with them, but you freaked out on me for it? How was I supposed to know you were jealous?”

A laugh escapes my lips. “I wasn’t. Not at first. And I don’t know what we’re doing. I just know I wasn’t gonna stick around and have my dad yell at me.”

### Chapter Fourteen

#### Cypress

I’m fighting the urge to bolt from the room as I sit at the dinner table. Ben keeps looking at me, but he hasn’t said anything. We’re both ignoring the elephant in the

room. Part of me is pissed that Theo skipped out, leaving me to deal with this awkward dinner on my own. I don't even know if Ben told my mom what he walked in on.

Theo texted me a bit ago that he's at Eric's, and he told Eric what happened. I know Theo and I need to have a talk, but I'm going off the rails right now. I don't have a plan for any of this. This thing with Theo was impulsive, and I went into it knowing it wasn't going to turn into anything. Now the tables have turned and I'm looking for a Plan B.

Theo mentioned looking into getting his own apartment. Something he was probably already planning on doing, but I don't want to be here anymore either. Especially not if we're going to keep on fooling around or possibly ... dating? God, why does the idea of that sound so weird?

Before Ben walked in and interrupted us, I was thinking of what Theo and I could get up to in one of our bedrooms. From the way his hand was going up my skirt, I think he felt the same. And how the hell are we supposed to do anything now? Theo is spending the night at Eric's, and I'm stuck here.

I push my food around on my plate, not feeling too hungry, all things considered. "Thanks for the food, but uh, I'm not feeling great." I stand up from the table, and Ben looks at me again like he's waiting for me to say something. "I think I'm just gonna get some rest."

"Alright hun," Mom answers. "Get some rest, and hopefully you'll feel better in the morning."

Once I'm back in my room, I pull out my phone and open the text thread with Theo.

Dinner was so awkward, but I don't think your dad told my mom.

The three little dots pop up almost immediately, letting me know he's typing something back.

Theo:Sorry you had to go through that alone.

His message doesn't say much, but I get it. The subject is still touchy.

I'm just upset your dad walked in when he did. Would have been way more fun to have a little more time to ourselves.

I'm hoping Theo will pick up on the flirty undertone of my message, but this still feels like I'm pushing it. I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop and Theo to tell me this was all some elaborate joke. That he was just using me as some convenient way to get off.

Theo:Yeah? What were you planning on doing with that extra time?

You.

I send the message before I can overthink it. If nothing else, it'll give Theo something to think about. We haven't had penetrative sex yet, but with how hot everything we've done so far has been, I know it's gonna be good. It wasn't even really something I considered before. I wasn't exactly planning any of this out. Besides, having sex in one of our rooms while our parents could have walked in on us would have been an even more mortifying way to get caught. I don't want to worry about that when I finally get to have sex with Theo.

A new message pops up on my phone.

Theo:Fuck. Thanks for putting that image in my head. Now I've got a hard-on.

I laugh as I reread the text. Theo's being surprisingly chill about all of this.

Hang out with me tomorrow? I need to go to the gym in the morning to work out, but maybe after that?

Theo: Can I come to the gym with you?

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I type out a quick sure and we make plans to meet up around seven. Eventually I fall asleep thinking about all the fun things Theo and I can get up to when I get him alone again.

Theo is wearing loose athletic shorts and a tank top when I meet up with him in front of the gym. The look is hot and I'm considering skipping out on my training for a different type of workout. "You joining the gym?" I ask. I don't know what he's thinking.

"I don't know," Theo answers. "I was hoping I could get a visitor pass for the day or something. Just need to work off some of this energy. I'm still pissed at my parents, and I don't want it to get physical when I have to get the rest of my stuff."

"He was so awkward last night." I grab Theo's arm and pull him up to the front desk with me. "Hey Emmitt," I greet the receptionist. "Brought my friend along today. Any chance he can get a visitor pass?"

Emmitt looks at Theo, glancing down to our laced fingers. I'm kind of glad Theo's never come to any of my fights or stuff before right now. "Sure, I'll just need to see your ID and have you fill this out." He slides a form over the counter for Theo, and Theo drops my hand to sort it all out.

He waits until we're in the locker room to raise one eyebrow at me. "Friend?"

"Well, it's not the best idea to introduce you as my stepbrother when someone might see you with my tongue down your throat, is it?" I ask as I shove my bag in a locker and strip off my jacket along with my T-shirt. Unlike him, I didn't come already

dressed to work out.

Theo blushes and closes his eyes, not looking at me as I change clothes. Huh, I guess I'm getting him a little too worked up too. I better reel it in if I don't want him to pop an obvious boner in his shorts. That'd be embarrassing, and the other guys would tease me about it later.

"Come on," I tell Theo. "We can warm up with some cardio." Theo follows me to the cardio room, and we get on a pair of treadmills that are next to each other. He glances over at me as he raises the speed and I grin. My hand hits the button, raising my speed to match his. "This is supposed to be a warm-up," I chide him. "If you want to lose, we can go right to the ring. How long has it been since you wrestled?" The challenge leaves my lips, and Theo glances down at my ass. I think he has something else on his mind.

"Years," he admits. "Besides, wrestling and MMA aren't the same. I don't see that ending well."

"It could be fun," I say, waggling my eyebrows. I slow down the treadmill as it hits five minutes. I'd originally planned to focus on weights for today, but now that the idea is there, I can't pass it up. I'm eager to pin Theo to the mat.

He steps off the treadmill and looks around. "Fine, but can we stick to wrestling and grappling? It wouldn't look great if I show up to work with a black eye."

"I'll spare your face," I agree. Theo shakes his head in amusement at me but doesn't say anything as he follows me to the sparring area. He does a few stretches, and I watch the strip of skin that pops out of his shirt just above his hips. The sharp V of his hip bones gives me dirty thoughts. Maybe this is a bad idea, but it's too late to call it off now.



We take our positions and countdown to start the match. Theo's eyes roam over me, looking for an opening. He strikes out first, his leg telling me which way he's heading. I move out of the way, sweeping his leg out from under him, but he doesn't fall that easily. Theo's arms go around my waist, and he maneuvers me backwards. My next attempt to send him to the ground ends up with both of us falling, our legs intertwined. Theo laughs it off, but I take advantage of the situation to pin his body with mine. Our eyes meet and Theo takes a heavy breath.

My leg is between his, and I can feel the hard press of his erection against my thigh. Theo twists in my grip, not managing to shake me off, but his dick is grinding against my leg. Damn, he looks good all flustered, and I need to change that line of thought before I attack him in a different sort of way. "You give?" I ask.

His eyes go to my lips, warning me before his mouth slams into mine. My grip on Theo's arm tightens as I give into the kiss, sliding my tongue in to meet his.

"Cy, no making out on the mats." Levi's voice breaks through my cloud of lust. I pull back to look at him and laugh.

Next to him is another familiar face. Ames shoves Levi playfully as she calls to me. "Yeah, take it to the showers like the rest of us."

"We should, uh, probably get back to working out," Theo says as I get off of him.

"Or we could leave and find another way to burn some calories," I offer. "Maybe hit the showers," I joke as I hold out my hand to help him up.

"I got a better idea. You can come with me back to Eric's. I have a meeting with the building supervisor to talk about renting an apartment. Eric helped me set it up. He said the rent isn't too bad. I might even be able to move in immediately."

“Sounds good,” I agree. “But maybe we should shower off this sweat first.”

Overall, I didn’t work out anywhere as long as I usually do, but I don’t think it’s gonna matter with how hyped up I am around Theo. I take a quick shower in the locker room, but Theo says he’ll shower back at Eric’s because he didn’t bring a change of clothes. It probably has more to do with not wanting to be naked next to me in the shower stalls, but I don’t push it. I’ve got plans for us tonight that don’t include shower sex with whatever improv lube I have on hand.

## Chapter Fifteen

### Theo

The supervisor’s name is Noah. He lives in an apartment on the first floor of the building. Eric explained to me before that the building has been redone into apartments, but it used to be a hotel once upon a time. In any case, it’s a hell of a deal, but I’m still not sure I can afford it. It’ll be tight at first.

“Are you gonna ask?” Cy says as we leave Eric’s apartment to meet up with Noah. Eric was at work, but he gave me a key earlier.

“Ask what?”

“Come on, you don’t really expect me to stay living with our parents after the mess the other day, do you? I’ve got some money saved up from winning fights and odd jobs. I can help out.”

“I don’t want your money,” I answer instinctively. Cy bites their lip clearly about to argue with me. “But I guess we can try rooming together.”

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“Really?” they ask. “I’m not moving too fast for you?”

“Maybe,” I answer truthfully. “But you’re right. I don’t want you to have to stay there, and it makes more sense for us to share than getting two separate places.”

Cy moves their hand to my head, pressing the back of it against my forehead. “Are you feeling okay?” they ask. “There’s no way you just agreed with me and admitted I’m right. Were you abducted by aliens or something?”

“Knock it off,” I tell them, but I can’t hide my hint of a smile.

Their eyes go wide as Cy fights off a laugh. “Did they probe you?”

My cheeks heat. Not because of the joke, but because of what we were talking about before. Cy’s not-so-subtle hints that they want to have sex with me. I might be new to a lot of this, but I’m not sure how this works. I’m on board if I’m the one doing the fucking, but the idea of Cy fucking me ...

I shove Cy toward the wall. “Shut up. Or I might probe you later.”

“Don’t threaten me with a good time,” Cy says with a chuckle. “Come on, let’s go talk to the supervisor. You can probe me afterwards.” They wink at me, not waiting for a response before they walk down the hall.

I take a moment to catch my breath and tell my dick to go down. It’s not going to be a great first meeting if I show up with a hard-on.

Cy knocks on the door when I catch up. It opens, showing the face of an older guy, probably around my dad's age. "Hello?" he asks.

"Hey, I'm Theo. I'm looking for the supervisor, Noah. My friend Eric lives here. He said there's a flat available for rent. I was hoping to see it and talk about the possibility of moving in."

"Right, Eric's friend. He texted me about you. I'm Noah. Hang on and I'll grab the key so you can take a look at the place." Noah closes the door for a moment, and I glance at Cy. They give me an encouraging smile, but it doesn't take long before the door opens again. "It's this way." Noah leads us down the hall until he stops at another door. He pulls the key from his pocket and opens it to an apartment that looks similar to Eric's, if it was empty.

"I'm sure Eric told you, but the rentals aren't very big. It's mostly singles living here. Are the two of you both looking to move in?" Noah's eyes go from me to Cy. "I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name."

"It's Cypress, or you can call me Cy. They/them pronouns. And yeah, we're kind of a package deal." Cy wraps their arm around my shoulders, pulling me into them. I fight the urge to pull away. It takes a moment to remind myself that there's no reason to hide here. Noah has no clue about us being stepsiblings, and it's probably better to figure out before we move in if the guy has an issue with us.

But Noah doesn't even flinch at Cy's statement that we're together. "Great. Well, come on in and have a look at the place. If you're still interested after, then we can talk about rent and policies."

Cy leads me from the living room slash kitchen to the tiny bedroom. There's already what looks like a queen size bed frame there along with a couple of nightstands. "Does this come with the apartment?" Cy asks.

“If you want it,” Noah says with a shrug. “The previous tenant left it, and I didn’t feel like hauling it out. You can get a new mattress and use it though; it looks to be in good shape.”

Cy looks at me, the question clear in their eyes. They’re looking for my approval on the place. It’s tiny, but it’ll do for now. “Let’s talk numbers,” I tell Noah. “We’re interested.”

Cy looks out the window of the car at our parents’ house, then at me. “Ready?” they ask.

We figured out the money and made a payment for the first month’s rent, meaning the apartment is ours as soon as we want to move in. But all of Cy’s things are still at home and most of mine too. I ordered a mattress online to deliver straight to the apartment so we won’t have to transport it, but I can’t avoid getting the rest of our stuff. We left Cy’s car parked there and took my car back together.

I nod, and Cy gets out of the car, walking up the steps. As we make our way through the house, I keep half expecting Dad or Selene to pop out, but it doesn’t look like anyone is around. “Grab your stuff,” I tell Cy, and we split our separate ways. Yesterday I was in a hurry to get out, after the run in with Dad, but I still grabbed a good amount of clothes. I focus on gathering up my laptop, charge wires, and other necessities. When I get all my things together, I head for Cy’s room.

They’re moving clothes from their closet to a suitcase open on the bed. It’s a bit of a mess. The heap of clothes looks like too much to fit. “Where are you gonna put all that?” I ask.

Cy turns around, placing one hand on their hip. “I need clothes.”

“Yeah,” I agree, but my hand pulls out a sweater. “But it’s the middle of July. We’ve

got time to figure out some of this.”

They take a step closer to me, their hand covering my grip on the sweater. “Do you have any idea how much that sweater costs? It’s cashmere.”

“Are we really gonna argue over a sweater?” I ask with a laugh.

Cy’s grip tightens on my hand as they use the grip to pull me closer to them. Our lips meet, and I stumble back a step, falling onto the bed. Cy moves their hand to their crotch, adjusting their dick. “Damn, you have any idea how tempting it is to see you spread out on my bed? Fine, I can come back for the rest another time. Let’s go to our apartment. I want to break it in the right way.” Cy’s hand runs up my thigh, teasing the outline of my dick through my shorts.

“Ahem,” the sound of Selene clearing her throat as she knocks on the doorframe draws our attention. “Hope you weren’t planning on leaving without telling me goodbye,” she tells us.

“We, uh...” I trail off, not sure what to say. Unlike Dad, she doesn’t seem pissed about finding us in a compromising situation. If anything, from the smile on her face, it looks like she’s trying not to laugh.

“We weren’t sure if you knew,” Cy says. “And we kind of figured you’d be as freaked out about finding out as Ben was.”

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“Freaked out?” Selene asks. “I’m a bit surprised, but I’m not upset. Your dad and I were talking about it last night. But I don’t really understand how the two of you went from hating each other to this.” Her hand gestures between the two of us and my cheeks heat.

“You know what they say, ‘there’s a thin line between love and hate.’” Cy jokes.

“You’re not weirded out by us being stepsiblings?” I ask.

Selene turns to look at me and the corner of her mouth lifts slightly. “Theo, you were seventeen when I married your father. I was never trying to replace your mom, and I didn’t expect the two of you to play happy family. You barely even got a chance to know each other before you left for college.”

“See,” Cy says with a laugh as they hit my shoulder. “I said it wasn’t a big deal.”

“What about Dad? Does he feel that way?” I ask.

Selene sighs. “He’ll get there. And I understand why you’re leaving, but don’t feel like you have to stay away. I’ll talk with him, and we’ll figure this out. Give me a hug before you leave.” She holds her hand out toward Cy, and they go to hug their mom. Then she looks at me. “You too Theo, get over here.”

I wipe my hands on my shorts and join them. It all feels a bit off, but not in a bad way. “Thanks, Mom,” Cy says.

“Let me know if you two need anything. But you might want to get out of here before

Ben gets home from work.” She places a kiss on Cy’s cheek and lets us go.

Cy walks back to their suitcase, shoving the clothes down so it will shut. “K,I’m ready.”

We drag our things back to my car, loading them up in the trunk, and make our way back to the apartment. Cy’s hand goes on my thigh as I’m driving. “I just wanna check in before we get there. Is sex something you’re on board with? Or do you need me to hold off?”

My dick twitches at the idea. “I’m not sure this is the safest conversation while I’m driving,” I joke, but Cy just looks at me, still waiting for an answer. “I’m interested, but I don’t know. I’ve never done it with ...”

“You’re not a virgin, though, right?” Cy asks.

“No. I’ve been with girls,” I answer. “I’m just not sure how all this works with us. I’m not really into the idea of ...”

“You don’t want to bottom?” Cy asks bluntly.

“Yeah, that.”

“Your loss,” they say with another teasing caress of my thigh. “But that’s fine with me. I’m all for your dick in my hole.”

My dick twitches, thickening in my pants with Cy’s dirty talk. It takes all my effort not to drive faster so we can get there sooner.

Chapter Sixteen



## Cypress

My lips are on Theo's before the door even closes. I press his body into the wall next to us and work my lips lower to his neck. He melts into the touch, his body going lax against mine. Fuck, with how Theo gives in to me, it's almost a shame he isn't interested in bottoming. I guess it's a good thing for both of us that I'm vers. I might be the one bottoming, but Theo isn't even trying to fight me for control.

He lets me take the lead as I pull him along to our new bedroom. I back away long enough to kick off my shoes and look for my suitcase I tossed in the corner earlier. We had to wait for the mattress to be delivered, but now that that's over, there won't be any other interruptions tonight. "Get naked," I tell Theo.

"What?" He glances at me, trying to adjust the obvious bulge in his pants.

"Strip your clothes off and get on the bed." I give him a light tap on the ass. "Go on, I just need to grab supplies."

Theo listens this time, his hands going to his shirt. I head for my things and rifle through my bag until I find the bottle of lube and condoms I shoved in there. When I turn around, Theo is naked and climbing onto the bed. His bare ass is the first thing I see as he heads for the pillows on all fours. I know he said he's not interested in butt stuff, but I'm tempted to grab a hold of his ass cheeks and spread them to eat his hole.

My dick twitches and I force my brain to refocus. I can talk Theo into letting me rim him another time. Tonight, the goal is his cock in my ass. I make quick work of my shirt and pants but leave my jock strap in place. I'm half surprised that Theo didn't get a good look at it earlier at the gym, but he was trying not to look at me while we were in the locker room.

"Damn," Theo says as he looks me over.

“Like what you see?” I tease my fingers over the tented purple fabric of the jock. I get on the bed and balance on my knees, giving Theo a decent view as I rub myself through the underwear.

“Shit, Cy. I’m so fucking hard right now.” His hand goes to his dick, wrapping around the base.

I place my hand on his wrist, moving his hand to my hip. “Hands on me. Feel free to touch, but I don’t want you to come too early.” I grab the bottle of lube, slicking up a few fingers. I lean down, arching my back to get a better angle. With a little effort, I find a position that lets me suck Theo and finger myself at the same time.

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A groan escapes his lips as he melts into the bed. “Fuck,” Theo says, his hand moving to my hair and tightening on the locks. I push a finger into my hole and suck on the tip of his dick. Theo’s moans as I tease him are like music to my ears as I quickly prep myself. There’s just something satisfying about watching Theo fall to pieces under my touch.

I work in a second finger, getting myself loose enough to take him without any issues, but I’m still rushing. It’s gonna burn, and I’m looking forward to it. I lift my mouth and look down at Theo under me. His body is relaxed as he grabs the bedsheets, riding the waves of arousal. I grab a condom and rip it open, then roll the rubber down his length. Theo’s cheeks go pink as he watches me. “What?” I ask.

“Nothing, just kinda wish we could skip the condom.”

“You wanna fuck me bare?” I ask. The idea has its appeal. Thinking of Theo claiming me that way has my dick twitching, but it’s not happening tonight. “We can get tested soon and make sure everything checks out. Until then, you’ll just have to imagine your cum leaking out of me.”

Theo bites his lip and muffles a groan. I straddle his hips, positioning my hole over his dick. With a little help from my hand holding him steady, I get the head lined up and push down. Fuck. I don’t want to say it and give Theo a bigger ego than he already has, but Theo’s dick is fucking gorgeous. Thick with a decent length. It’s enough to burn as he enters me, and the slight curve has him brushing against my prostate.

He bites his lip as he bottoms out. “Fuck, you’re tight.”

I press a quick kiss to Theo's temple. "Just relax and enjoy it. Try not to come too quick and let me do the work." I give a tentative roll of my hips. His hips push up to meet me, and our bodies slam together. I place my hand on Theo's chest, scratching his nipple with my nail. "You sure you don't want to bottom?" I tease. "This feels so good. Your dick filling me up and stretching me out." I slam my hips down with a bit more force, and Theo's dick hits my prostate.

Theo doesn't say anything, but his eyes meet mine as he thrusts his hips up. His eyes are clouded with lust, and he groans as I pinch his nipple. Our bodies move together with each thrust, and I bite my lip, trying to keep my moans from being too loud.

"Don't hold back." Theo's hand moves to my jock, pushing the fabric down to release my cock. "I wanna see you come," he tells me. He wraps his hand around my dick, stroking me as I ride him.

My body tightens as I get closer, but my movements slow down. Theo grabs me by the waist, pushing me back to lie down as he lifts my legs and repositions us. Theo pushes in again, and I moan as he hits my prostate. The new angle gives him the ability to control the speed of his hips, and he takes advantage of it, slamming his cock into me. "Fuck, Teddy."

Theo laughs, leaning in to press a kiss to my neck. "Feel good?"

"Don't fucking stop," I tell him. I move my hand to my dick, pulling on it in time with his thrusts. It doesn't take much to get me over the edge. My body tightens up and ropes of cum shoot out of me, landing on Theo's chest. He keeps fucking me through it until my dick twitches to a stop.

"Damn," Theo says as he pulls out of me. He's looking at me with lust blown eyes, but his dick is still hard.

“I wanna get you off,” I tell him. My voice comes out a bit ragged, but I want to do more. I want him to feel as good as I do.

Theo’s hand is on his dick, pulling off the condom. He strokes the length of his shaft slowly as he looks at me. “It’s not gonna take much. I came close a few times during all of that.”

I grab his wrist, pulling him down to lie next to me and press our lips together. As we’re kissing, I move my hand down to jerk Theo off. He bites my lip as a groan escapes him. I feel the heat of his cum hitting my skin, and our kiss ends with both of us panting. “Teddy?” I say his name softly, and Theo answers with a grunt. “Does it still bother you when I call you that?”

He chuckles, his hand moving to grab my ass. “Not so much anymore. It feels more like a pet name. Like something you’d call your boyfriend.”

“Boyfriend, huh? Is that what we’re calling this?” I tease.

“Well, I kinda figured we’re dating. I mean, you moved in with me. Or is it the wrong term? Does boyfriend not work for you?”

“I’m not big on it,” I admit. “You can call me your partner, or I had one relationship before where she called me her joyfriend.”

“Joyfriend?” Theo looks at me with one of his eyebrows arched. “I kinda like that. It fits you.”

I lace my fingers with Theo’s and bring our hands up to kiss his. “We’re gonna need a shower,” I tell him.

“Yeah, we should probably change the sheets too,” Theo agrees with a smirk. “Come

on.”

We make our way to the bathroom to clean up. As we’re standing under the water together, I wrap Theo in my arms. “This is nice. Being alone with you and not having to worry about getting caught.”

“Yeah, it’s almost too bad we can’t stay here forever. Still have to do things like work and school. We should probably get a desk for you to work on your laptop.”

I move my hand lower, teasing at the top of Theo’s ass. “That’s a later problem. Let’s just relax and enjoy this.”

“Enjoy what?” He says as his body tenses in my grip. “What are you up to?”

I wasn’t up to anything, but Theo’s words have me wanting to give him something to worry about. I slide my finger further down the crease of his ass, but Theo’s body goes rigid. “Relax. if you change your mind and want to try something, let me know. But otherwise, I’m not crossing any lines. No penetration.” I’m not technically going against what he said. My finger isn’t in Theo. I said nothing about not teasing him a bit.

“Cy,” Theo says my name in warning.

“Damn that’s hot. I love it when you get all growly on me.” I press my lips to his, kissing him soundly.

### Epilogue

Theo

The guy across from Cy lands a punch, striking them square in the chest. I cringe from the sidelines, watching the match. Even after all this time, it doesn't get easier to watch Cy in the ring. I'm tempted to step in front of them and strike the other guy out, even though I know Cy can handle their own. I just hate watching them get hurt.

They take the hit, returning it with an uppercut to the guy's jaw. I bite my lip as I notice a small hickey on Cy's inner thigh peeking out of their shorts. I might have gotten a little carried away last night, but it was a special occasion. We've been living together for two years now and it's still hard to believe.

Everything happened in a bit of a rush when we first moved out. Dad was pissed, and we didn't really have a plan, but we scraped together enough money between the two of us to figure out rent each month. That is until I got a better job. I started hanging out more at Knockout Gym with Cy, and Corbett, the accountant there, helped set me up with an interview with a nearby office. And at Cy's urging, I even got my own membership at the gym. I'm not competing or anything like they do, but it's nice to have the membership just to keep in shape.

The guy knocks Cy to the ground, but they flip over, straddling his back. Cy gets him in a choke hold, and my body tightens as I watch. Waiting to see if the guy will tap out. He tries to buck Cy off, but they hold tight. Finally, his hand goes to Cy's bicep, and he taps until Cy lets go. A cheer erupts from the group around me. The ref calls the match announcing Cy's win.

Corbett hugs me, his hand patting me on the back. “Tell Cy congrats for me. You two got something special planned for tonight?”

“Nothing huge. We’re going out for dinner, then back to our place for the night.” My hand goes to my pocket as I talk, double checking the box is still where I left it. I’ve been working up my nerves to ask Cy something important, and I think tonight is the night.

Corbett walks with me toward the locker room so he can meet up with his boyfriend Fred. He walks out first, leaving me to wait alone for Cypress. They’ve changed clothes from the match. No longer only in a small pair of athletic shorts. Cy has a loose muscle tank on, along with a pair of bright pink leggings. On most people, it’d look like an odd mix of clothes, but Cy makes it work. I pull them in for a hug. “You did great, love. Did you still feel up to going to dinner?” It was the original plan, but it doesn’t hurt to check in and make sure they’re up to it after the fight.

“Any chance we can just grab something on the way home? Chinese maybe?” they ask.

“Sure.” It’s not what I originally had planned, but dinner at home works too. There’s no rule that says I have to make a big deal out of this. Still, it doesn’t stop me from overthinking all of it as I pull into our favorite Chinese place. Cy leads the way, walking to the counter to put in a takeout order.

I drive us back to our apartment. We’re still living in the same place, but we’ll see about getting something bigger once Cy finishes school and gets a job. It works, and we don’t mind being squished together all the time. Anytime we get too upset with each other, it typically leads to angry sex, and then we get over it. Sometimes I think Cy pisses me off on purpose just to get me riled up, but I kinda like it.

They follow me inside, setting the food on the coffee table in front of the couch while I kick off my shoes and make my way over to join them. As Cy is shuffling through



the containers of takeout, I reach in my pocket and pull out the ring box. I use the food as a distraction, dropping to one knee and waiting for Cy to look at me. They keep sorting through the bags, taking a moment to realize I've gone silent.

Cy's jaw drops as they look at the ring box. "Is that what I think it is?"

I open the box to show them what's inside. "Cypress, will you marry me?"

"Yes! Fuck yes!" they kneel to my level, not bothering with the ring as they press their lips to mine. "Love you so much," Cy tells me between kisses.

I pull the ring from the box, grabbing their hand to slip it on their finger. "I love you, too."

The End