



Healing of the Heart

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Category: Erotic, Romance, New Adult, Lesbian Romance

Description: They hate each other, don't they?

This is an Enemies to Lovers, Forced Proximity Lesbian/Sapphic Romance between Surgeons. It is steamy, yet sweet and always a Happy Ever After.

Dr. Amory Paver and Dr. Blake Gold have a long standing rivalry since medical school ever since Blake slept with Amory's girlfriend. Now they are both top surgeons in their field and they are sent on a mission to a remote village in Africa together.

Only they don't realise who they will be working with until they get there.

They will have to share a cabin and there is only one bed.

Sparks fly between them and long buried feelings are stirred up.

Those feelings are still hate, aren't they?

Total Pages (Source): 48

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AMORY

Dr. Amory Paver is off work today. It's a rarity for her, as she is one of the many needed physicians in their busy city, but it's not all fun and games. She is packing, preparing for a Doctors Without Borders trip to Africa. She's never been to Africa, never even been out of the country for longer than a week, and she doubts that a week-long trip to England over a decade ago is going to prepare her for the struggles of living in Africa.

Her dining room table is filled with pamphlets and printed out articles about culture shock, information about Zambia, and Cholera. After all, she's not going on this trip for fun; she has a job to do.

Amory is in her bedroom, an open suitcase on her bed as she looks through her closet. Button-ups still attached to the hangers are thrown in piles on the bed, and she can't decide what to pack. There's only limited space in her suitcase and she doesn't know what would be best to wear.

It's Africa so the weather will probably be stifling, especially since it's the middle of June. But she still has to maintain an air of professionalism and, despite the temptation, she can't wear nothing but tank tops and shorts to work for the next several months.

Her mom has been texting her, knowing how nervous she's been. Amory's parents split when she was a teenager, and she doesn't talk to her father much, but her mom

has always been her biggest supporter and her biggest worrier.

Mom: Remember to pack pajamas.

Amory: I know

She didn't know. Amory had, in fact, forgotten to pack pajamas. She listens to her mom and packs some sweatpants and a couple night shirts and looks at her open suitcase in contemplation.

Mom: I love you

Amory: I love you too

Mom: Remember to text me when you get to the airport tomorrow.

Amory: I will. Promise

She has a couple of black slacks packed already, but shirts are much harder to decide on. Most of her clothes are suited to cool air and rain, not summer heat, but she's certain that she has some short-sleeve button-ups somewhere, she just can't find them.

Amory groans in frustration and opens her dresser drawers, all of them at the same time, which is counter productive, but she's frustrated and doesn't care. She decides to ignore the shirt problem for now and instead chooses to focus on packing socks and underwear, working her way through the top drawer, which holds a hoard of white panties to be worn under scrubs, funky patterned socks, and a pink rabbit vibrator.

She throws all of it in the suitcase, debating on the vibrator and the potential

embarrassment that it will cause her when it goes through airport security. But, she decides, she won't be there when they check her luggage, so she throws it in the zippered pouch on the side.

Mom: Don't forget socks.

Amory: Just packed them.

As she clears out her underwear drawer, she feels something hard at the bottom of the drawer and furrows her eyebrows in confusion.

She reaches to the bottom of the drawer and pulls out a black box and her heart drops. She knows what this is now. It's been years, and she almost managed to forget about it. She honestly doesn't know how it got there. She doesn't remember putting it in that drawer, but she supposes she tried so hard to forget Natalie that she must have forgotten everything.

Now, however, she can't forget anything. How much she loved Natalie, the sharp feelings of pain and betrayal that she felt when she walked in on her in bed with that obnoxious Dr. Blake Gold. She starts to cry.

She wanted to marry Natalie, wanted to build a life with her. They lived together, owned a cat together, but now Amory lives alone. She didn't even get to keep their cat, Harold.

She misses Natalie and hates her for it. She trusted her and Natalie betrayed that trust, left a chasm in her heart too deep for anyone to fill. She also hates Dr. Gold. They were never close, rivals through medical school, but she thought that they could put that away when they got into the same residency program. They didn't, but Amory never expected Dr. Gold to cheat with Natalie. Then again, she never expected anyone to cheat with Natalie.

She thought Natalie would always be faithful. Now, she just feels stupid and betrayed. She wishes that she never trusted Natalie with her heart, that she would have seen the signs before it got to that point. But she never noticed when Natalie looked at other women, and she didn't care when Natalie started wanting to have sex more than usual.

Tears are running down her cheeks as she remembers the fight that occurred after she left their bedroom. She had just witnessed Dr. Gold fucking her girlfriend, yet Natalie still had the audacity to beg for forgiveness, to claim that it would never happen again. As if that mattered.

She screamed and cried and kicked Natalie out of the house, listening to her beg through the locked door to be let back in. Natalie stayed there for about thirty minutes before she left. Amory still doesn't know where she went for the night, gets angry if she thinks that she went to Dr. Gold's house. But she came back the next day while Amory was at work and left with all of their stuff and Harold.

She left a note, still begging for forgiveness. But Amory could never forgive her. She even took their cat, for crying out loud.

She feels like she's back there, and she wants to scream and cry again. She has barely heard from Natalie since. There have been a couple of long apology texts and unanswered phone calls, but Amory never responded. She couldn't. She doesn't even know what she would have said. Sometimes she wonders what would have happened if she did answer, but she knows that she could never forgive Natalie for what she did.

It's been over five years since Natalie last texted Amory, drunk and telling her that Harold had died, and it's been over seven years since the breakup. But she's still not over it and she hates herself for it. She hasn't dated anyone else, hasn't fallen in love again. She feels like a dumb teenager and she's thirty-five now and an accomplished

surgeon, for crying out loud.

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Amory opens the box and looks at the diamond ring inside. It's a simple ring. Natalie always liked simple jewelry, and that's what Amory got for her because she wanted her to wear it for a long time. But she never got the chance to wear it.

Amory doesn't know how long the affair lasted. Sometimes the curious and self-destructive part of her brain wants to know how long Natalie was sleeping with Dr. Gold, and if she was even the only one.

Amory looks at the ring and looks around her bedroom, where the window is open, letting a slight breeze through. She remembers carrying the ring around in her pocket, waiting for the perfect moment. She had planned a date with the two of them at the park where they had their first date. It wasn't elaborate or anything, but it was sentimental, and Amory was always a sentimental person.

She thought Natalie was, too. But, clearly, she wasn't sentimental enough to be faithful.

Amory's sadness at what Natalie did morphs to anger. After all, how dare she cheat on her, throw away their life together and betray her like that. How dare she cheat on her with her rival, someone she had complained to Natalie about countless times. Natalie knew how much Amory and Dr. Gold didn't get along, yet she chose Dr. Gold of all people on the planet to sleep with. It wasn't fucking fair. Nothing about that situation was fair or okay, and Amory boils in anger thinking about it.

She looks at the ring and grows angrier. She wants nothing more than to destroy the memories of Natalie, to forget her once and for all, but she can't. So, she does the next best thing, she gets rid of the ring.

In a fit of anger and hurt, she throws the ring out of her bedroom window and watches as it flies outside, never to be seen again.

Amory looks at her phone and sighs. She's been ignoring the buzzing while looking at the ring and she can't ignore the buzzing anymore.

Mom: Don't forget your laptop

Mom: And bring a book for the airport

Mom: You got all of your vaccines, right?

Mom: Wait, you told me before you did. Never mind.

Mom: What are you eating for supper?

Mom: Do you want me to come over?

Mom: It'll be a while before I see you again.

Mom: Amory?

Mom: Amory?

Mom: Call me when you see this

Amory: Sorry. I was packing. I'll call you later.

Mom: Okay

Amory: But yeah, you can come over.

Mom: Be there in an hour

Amory sighs and looks at her open window. She sits on her floor for a moment before she stands up and walks to her kitchen. She starts to clear her dining room table of all the pamphlets and papers.

When her mom shows up, she brings groceries, dropping them on the floor to give her only child a big hug.

“Hi Mom,” Amory greets her mom, Kara.

“Hi darling! Do you want to help me make supper?”

“Of course,” Amory says, “just let me finish the dishes real quick.”

“I’ll help you,” Kara tells her. “And then we can get started on food. Who knows when the next time you’ll have a good, home-cooked meal will be.”

“I’m sure it won’t be long,” Amory says. “I can cook myself, you know.”

Kara laughs. “No, you can’t.”

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Amory shakes her head. “Mom,” she complains.

“I’m just telling the truth,” Kara says. “If I weren’t here to help you, you’d probably starve to death.”

“I would not,” Amory says, shaking her head. She knows she’s not a good cook, but she’s thirty-five. She can take care of herself, for crying out loud.

“What do you think I do when you’re not here?” she asks her mom.

“Starve,” Kara says.

Amory scoffs but gives up on arguing. “Whatever, let’s just make supper.”

“So you don’t starve,” Kara insists, and Amory groans.

“I can cook,” Amory states.

“Without catching the stove on fire?” Kara asks.

Amory groans. “It was one time, and I was a teenager,” she says, “I’ve gotten better.”

“Mmm,” Kara hums, looking in the sink. She pulls out a pot, holding it up to Amory so that she can see the bottom of it. “Well, from the looks of things, you still burn everything.”

“Mom,” Amory protests, swatting the pot away from her face. Amory pouts.

“I’m just saying,” Kara says, but then looks at her daughter’s pout and gives her a hug. “You know I just worry about you,” she says.

“Yeah,” Amory says, hugging her mom back.

“And promise me that you’ll take care of yourself while you’re gone.”

“I will, Mom,” Amory says, “I promise.”

“Good,” Kara says. “Now let’s make supper.”

2

BLAKE

Dr. Blake Gold is exhausted on her feet. She has spent the last six hours at work, rushing from room to room to help various patients. She wants nothing more than to go home and sleep, but she knows that she can’t. She still has two more hours left in the workday and a certain someone waiting for her to finish working so that they can go home together.

She also still has to pack before her flight tomorrow. She has barely started yet, and she suspects that she won’t be getting any sleep tonight. But, she supposes, she can always sleep on the plane. It is a long flight, after all.

Dr. Gold walks into another patient’s room for yet another consultation. Fortunately, this one is easy. The patient is a seven-year-old boy displaying classic flu symptoms and all it takes is a test to confirm the diagnosis. Dr. Gold prays that the flu doesn’t start going around their town. It might be the middle of summer and out of the typical sick season, but stranger things have happened.

She makes her way out of the room when she's stopped by a nurse calling her name.

"Doctor Gold," the nurse, Hannah, says, "How are you doing?"

Blake stops and looks at Hannah. "Good."

"Are you excited for your trip?" Hannah asks. "Zambia, right? That's exciting."

"Oh yeah," Blake says, "I'm super excited."

"Are you nervous?" she asks.

"No, it's not my first trip out of the country."

"Oh yeah," Hannah says, "I heard from a couple of the other nurses that you've done trips with Doctors Without Borders a few times over the years. That's so cool."

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“Yeah,” Blake agrees, “it is pretty cool. It’s always nice to visit new places and help people. Why? Are you thinking about going?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Hannah says.

“You should,” Blake tells her. “It’s really rewarding and it’s always fun to explore new places.”

“Don’t you have to worry about getting sick?”

“Yeah, but there are vaccines for almost everything,” Blake explains.

“Have you gotten your vaccine for Cholera?” Hannah asks.

“I have, and I’m up to date on everything else, so I should be good.”

“But what if you’re not?” Hannah asks, “aren’t you worried?”

“Not really,” Blake says. “This isn’t my first rodeo.”

Hannah laughs. “I suppose that’s true,” she says. “Well, in any case, good luck and I hope you have fun.”

“Well, I don’t know how much fun I’ll be having since this is a work trip, but I’m sure I’ll find something,” Blake says.

“Or someone,” Hannah says, giving her a knowing look before Blake feels a hand on

her waist.

“And what are you two talking about?” Dr. Taylor asks, joining the conversation.

“Doctor Gold’s trip,” Hannah answers.

“Oh yeah?” Dr. Taylor asks, looking at Blake flirtatiously. “Are you excited?”

Dr. Gold and Dr. Jenna Taylor aren’t in a real relationship or anything, but the sex is good. Jenna has made it clear multiple times that she’s not interested in anything more serious than fuck buddies, and Blake doesn’t think she even knows how to be in a relationship. The closest she ever came was with Natalie, but she didn’t have Natalie’s heart. At least, not completely.

Dr. Gold smiles at Dr. Taylor and gives her a wink. Hannah leaves, letting the two of them converse alone.

“So, are you coming over to my place after work?” Blake asks.

“Don’t you have to pack?” Jenna asks, but she doesn’t sound too concerned. Jenna knows Blake well. They were friends for a long time before they decided to start having sex with one another.

“Eh,” Blake says with a shrug, “it can wait.”

“Okay,” Jenna says with a laugh, “in that case, I’d love to come over. I need to head home first. Maybe I can show you my new toys.”

“That sounds like a plan,” Blake says.

Jenna looks around to see if anyone’s watching before she leans in and gives Blake a

quick kiss on the cheek.

“I’ll see you later,” she says.

Jenna leaves, going back to her job, and Blake goes back to work as well. She knows that these next two hours are going to be incredibly slow. Especially as she fantasizes about having Jenna on her back, moaning for her as she fucks her. Jenna is fun, but Blake knows they aren’t right for each other in any way other than the bedroom.

It is just a bit of fun and Blake wonders how long it will last and what or who will be next for her.

When Blake leaves the clinic where she works, she gets a phone call. It’s Jenna, and she answers immediately.

“Hey,” she says, “what’s up?”

Jenna takes a moment to respond, and Blake can hear shuffling in the background.

“I’m packing my stuff right now, but is it okay if I spend the night at your place?”

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“Of course,” Blake responds, “is everything alright?”

“Yeah,” Jenna answers. “I just met someone online and we’re planning to meet tomorrow before work and your place is closer to the city. Plus, I can drop you off at the airport first.”

“Okay, yeah,” Blake responds, “that sounds good, just don’t mind the mess.”

“Your place is always a mess,” Jenna says, “and I never mind.”

“Do you want the couch or to share the bed?” Blake asks, trying to think if she has any spare bedding clean to put on the couch. She knows that she really should have cleaned her house before she is set to go on her trip, but she’s been so busy. That, and cleaning is sometimes very difficult for her. She’s never understood the people who enjoy cleaning, and she wonders if she can pay someone to clean for her while she’s away.

“The bed is fine,” Jenna says, “I’ll be there in about an hour.”

“That works,” Blake says, already almost to her apartment. She lives close to the clinic, walking distance, which works great for her, but sometimes she wishes she could get a house or something. Maybe something in the suburbs, away from all of the traffic noise. Something peaceful and stereotypical, but she supposes she’s never really had a reason to settle down like that.

When she gets home, she does some light cleaning. Even if she decides to pay someone to clean her house while she’s away, and Jenna agrees to watch over things,

she should at least empty her apartment of all the trash so she doesn't get bugs or anything gross like that. She may be messy, but she's not gross.

After about thirty minutes, Blake decides that she has earned a break. She sits on the couch and makes a psst psst sound. Soon, four small paws come scampering into the living room. It's Millie, her black and white short-haired cat.

Blake pats the empty spot on the couch beside her and Millie jumps from the floor onto the couch. Blake sits there for a while, just petting her cat while she waits.

Jenna comes later. With a knock on the door, soon she's pressed against it with Blake's lips on hers. She moans into Blake's mouth and Blake presses against her, wanting to be as close to her as is possible with both of them fully dressed.

"Should we take this to the bedroom?" Jenna asks.

"Please," Blake says, breathless, and the two of them head to her bedroom.

Blake enjoys how good Jenna feels under her. How good she sounds when she moans in Blake's ear.

She can't believe Jenna ever thought she was straight. She is certainly not straight. To Blake, having sex with men was like a bad joke. One she never cared to try.

The first time Blake had sex with a woman was the first time she orgasmed. It was mind-blowing. Blake had always known that lesbians existed, but until that fateful day in college, she could have sworn that wasn't her. Until it was, and then there was no going back.

Blake moans when Jenna removes her bra and touches her breasts. It's been a week or so since the last time the two of them have had sex and she misses it.

She helps Jenna strip from her clothes and the two of them fumble towards the bed. Blake laughs when they land among the pillows, and she takes Jenna's mouth into hers, gasping as the two of them make out.

Blake remembers the fear she felt when she figured out that she was definitely, one hundred percent attracted to women—and when she realized she'd have to tell other people. It went well at first, when she told her friends. Only one of them had a problem with it and it was a super religious girl who later apologized for her negative reaction. Her parents, however, were a different story, and Blake waited a long time to tell them.

She still remembers the shocked looks on their faces when she introduced her then-girlfriend to them at her college graduation. Her dad screamed and made a scene in public, something that shocked her. And her mom cried, something that hurt her more than anything.

Now, it doesn't hurt as much. Blake knows who she is and has come to love herself for it. Her parents never got that far, though, and she's barely talked to them since. Blake has learned how to be fine with it, though, and she rarely even misses them. She didn't even miss them when they failed to show up to her graduation from medical school. Something that she knows her dad would have swelled with pride at had she not had a penchant for fucking women.

When Jenna touches Blake's clit, every single thought she had flies out the window, she's back in the present moment, and all she knows is how much she loves women.

“Oh god,” Blake says.

Jenna laughs and kisses her shoulder as she begins to rub little circles into Blake's clit. Blake grabs her head and mumbles incoherencies. It's so much, and it feels like heaven.

Blake and Jenna continue through kisses and skillful touches until both of them orgasm at least once. For Blake, she comes twice, making up for the last time they were together when sex was cut short and she didn't get to orgasm even once. Jenna comes with a scream, and lies back on the bed, completely spent.

Blake laughs and kisses her shoulder. Even though neither Jenna nor Blake want their relationship to turn romantic, they still give each other little affections, such as sweet kisses and holding hands. After all, they are friends, and Blake has always been touchy feely with her friends.

Blake lays next to Jenna and cuddles beside her, being the big spoon. This used to be her all-time favorite part of sex—the cuddling after. With Jenna, it's a little awkward, but she does still enjoy it. It makes her sad sometimes, though, to think that she doesn't have a relationship where she can do this all the time with someone. She misses the sweet intimacy that she used to find in her romantic relationships, when they were a little more than just friends or fuck buddies. She doesn't know how to explain that feeling, but she wants it again.

The last time she really thought she found someone she could be with for a long time, the other woman turned out to be in a relationship with someone else and broke it off after the other woman found out. Blake shouldn't be surprised. She should have known better. She knew that Natalie was in a relationship, that she had a girlfriend, but Blake was so sickly head over heels that she didn't care.

She hoped that Natalie would leave her girlfriend and that the two of them would be together. But that was a foolish, immature hope. Now, Blake knows that. Natalie broke it off with Blake almost immediately after her girlfriend caught them in bed together, and it doesn't seem like she ever looked back.

Blake doesn't know what happened after they got caught, doesn't know if she and her girlfriend made up, or if they're still together seven years later. All Blake does know

is that she hasn't been in a relationship herself since.

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She doesn't know why. She's had tougher heartbreaks than Natalie, and she's never had much of a problem dusting off the dirt and getting back in the saddle of the dating world. With Natalie, however, she did experience something that she hasn't with her other failed relationships. She felt guilt. So much guilt that it was overpowering.

It didn't help that Blake knew Natalie's girlfriend after all. Natalie had never given her a name or shown her a picture of her girlfriend, but when she opened the door to see Natalie and Blake in bed, Blake knew exactly who she was.

To be perfectly honest, Blake doesn't know why knowing Natalie's girlfriend made her feel so much guilt. The two of them had hated each other for years. Dr. Amory Paver used to sabotage Blake's notes in med school and gossip about her, and Blake would steal patients from Amory and erase her name from charts during their residency. They had always hated each other.

But, Blake supposes, she still can't forget the look on Amory's face when she caught Natalie in bed with Blake. It was the most heartbroken expression that Blake had ever seen on another person, and she can never forget that expression.

After a while of cuddling, Jenna falls asleep, and Blake carefully removes herself from the bed. She walks to the closet in her hallway. She supposes it was meant to be a linen closet, but Blake hardly uses the fixtures of her apartment for their intended purposes, and instead uses it to hold random junk that she rarely uses. It's also the closet where she keeps her suitcase.

She finds her suitcase at the bottom of the closet. It's a black, giant thing with wheels,

so it's easy enough to move around and Blake is grateful for that. Otherwise, she'd have to lug the giant thing around.

Blake wheels the suitcase into her bedroom and tries her best to be quiet while she packs everything she thinks she'll need. When she's done with that, she goes back to the closet and digs out her old college backpack. She's used it a few times over the years, but not often. It's giant and she usually prefers to pack lightly.

For such a long flight, however, packing lightly isn't a good idea. She shoves her laptop, some books and a light blanket into the backpack. She'll probably think of something last minute to bring with her, but for now, this is a good combination.

3

AMORY

Amory takes the bus to the airport, leaving early in the morning. Her mom had offered to stay the night and drive her, but Amory refused. She already bought the bus pass over a week ago and didn't want it to go to waste. Plus, her mom has work today and Amory didn't want to risk her missing it.

It's a little awkward, taking the bus to the airport. This is not the first time Amory has taken the bus, but it is the first time she's taken the bus carrying so much with her. She's also dead tired and fights the urge to rest her head on her suitcase and take a nap. She decides that despite the desire, it's probably not the best idea. Their city is fairly safe, but she doesn't want to risk someone seeing her sleep and decide to take her backpack from beside her.

When Amory gets to the airport, she checks in her luggage and heads through airport security. All she has on her is a small backpack with a laptop and a travel pillow, so the journey through TSA is relatively painless. She arrived at the airport over an hour

early, so there isn't much to do besides sit and wait.

Mom: Are you at the airport?

Amory: yeah.

Mom: Good luck. Have a safe trip.

Amory: Thnx. Love you.

Mom: I love you too

She opens her backpack and takes out her laptop to make the wait go faster. She opens a book on her laptop and starts to read. It's a steamy romance novel- The CEO by Emily Hayes. She might be a doctor, but her reading for fun material doesn't reflect that. And she's been addicted to romance novels ever since her and Natalie broke up.

They help ease the ache in her heart and desire for a relationship. Not by much, but while she reads about hot sex and happy ever afters, she can forget her own relationship status and that helps. She can imagine that she's in a whirlwind romance with lots of love and great sex.

She sits and reads while she waits for the plane to begin boarding. When it's her turn to get on the plane, she puts away her laptop and boards. There are no assigned seats so she finds a place next to a window and waits.

She has to sit next to a window seat, she has decided. If she doesn't have the ability to look outside, her head will fill with all kinds of terrifying ideas and the fear that they're going to crash. So she has to look outside to assure herself that they're fine. This is Amory's least favorite part of travel—flying. Planes terrify her. Just being on

one gives her anxiety.

She's heard too many horror stories of planes crashing or a plane ride just being hell with the other passengers on board. She really hopes there isn't a screaming baby on board the entire time or some old lady who won't shut up the entire time. She just wants to be able to fall asleep during the plane ride and wake up at the airport in one piece.

When someone sits beside her, Amory inwardly groans and decides that she should be a polite passenger and greet the person sitting next to her, but when she turns to look, her heart stops and her blood boils.

Standing there, in a suit with a blanket over her shoulders is Amory's least favorite person—Dr. Blake Gold. Med school rival, residency enemy, the-one-who-fucked-her-girlfriend, yes, that Dr. Blake Gold.

“Fancy seeing you here,” Blake says with a smirk, one that Amory wants to punch off of her striking face.

Dr. Blake Gold is tall and fit looking with short dark hair. She has big dark brown eyes and an overconfident smirk. Amory still hates her.

Amory really can't escape this woman or the painful memories. First it was finding the ring in her dresser and now this- it has been a rough 24 hours. She scowls and turns around, crossing her arms.

“What?” Blake prods.

“I have nothing to say to you,” Amory says.

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“Suit yourself,” Blake says, reaching beside her to where she’s put her own backpack. She opens it and pulls out a book.

Amory tries not to look, but she can’t stop herself. Her very being is filled with anger at what Blake did to her, but she can’t help her curiosity.

“What are you even doing here?” she asks.

“I thought you have nothing to say to me.” Blake responds, smirking again.

Amory wants to punch her in the face, but manages not to.

“Shut up.” Amory says, angry but dying to know why Blake is there. Amory’s mind immediately goes to the worst conclusion, that maybe Blake is here for the same reason she is. She tries to reason with herself, that it’s highly unlikely that Blake would also be going to Africa to help with the recent Cholera outbreak. But then Blake opens her mouth.

“I’m going to Zambia,” Blake announces.

Amory’s world stutters and she freezes for a moment.

“Shut up. No, you’re not,” Amory responds.

“Yes, I am,” Blake says, “and I’m assuming by your displeasure that’s where you’re going as well.”

“I can’t believe this is happening,” Amory says.

“Well, believe it, sweetheart,” Blake says, “because it is.”

Blake’s brown eyes glimmered and sparkled. Amory couldn’t help but admit to herself that she was very attractive. Why did she have to be so goddamn tall and good-looking?

Amory groans. “Why do you have to be here? Couldn’t you have at least sat somewhere else?”

“What? And miss a chance to see your beautiful face?”

Amory blushes but groans again. “Shut up.”

“You keep saying that,” Blake says.

“Well I mean it,” Amory retorts.

“Yet you keep talking to me,” Blake points out. She runs a hand through her short dark hair, ruffling it. Even her messy hair is sexy.

God, I hate her.

“Fine,” Amory says, crossing her arms and looking out the window.

Blake laughs and starts to read her book just as a flight attendant begins the pre-flight speech.

Amory is able to ignore Blake for the first hour or so of the flight. It’s been years since she’s been on a plane, and despite her fears, she’s fascinated by how the clouds

look and how tiny the city looks below them.

However, soon her curiosity gets the better of her and she can't ignore Blake any longer. She needs to know.

"So why are you going to Zambia?" Amory asks, pretty much already having assumed the answer, but she wants the confirmation.

Blake stops reading her book and smirks at Amory. Amory tries to ignore the heat and anger she feels under Blake's gaze.

"I'm on a work trip," Blake answers, but doesn't provide any more information.

It doesn't matter, though, because with a sinking feeling in her chest, Amory thinks she knows why Blake is going to the same place as her.

"Please tell me you're not with Doctors Without Borders to help with the Cholera outbreak," Amory says.

Blake looks at her but doesn't say anything for a moment. She flips a page in her book before she puts it down.

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“So you want me to lie to you?” she asks, drawing back full lips from perfect white teeth.

Amory groans and puts her head into her hands.

“You have got to be kidding me,” she says.

“Sorry, sweetheart,” Blake says, but she doesn’t sound sorry and Amory wants to punch her again.

She sees Blake’s strong capable looking hands and can only imagine them fucking Natalie.

Oh for god’s sake.

Amory groans again and looks out the window. She knew that she wouldn’t be the only doctor coming from the US to help, but she never dreamed that one of her colleagues would be none other than Dr. Blake Gold, her old rival, hated enemy, the woman who slept with her girlfriend.

She can’t believe her misfortune, and she swears that this must have been intentional by some cruel design. It’s not a secret that she doesn’t like Dr. Gold, and someone is surely laughing at her right now.

She doesn’t know how she’s going to be able to make it through this entire trip with her professionalism intact. Blake is infuriating as ever, and what’s worse is that she is acting like she never wronged Amory. Did she somehow forget what she did to her,

or does she just not care? Amory can't figure it out and it drives her crazy as the flight drags on.

She can't fall asleep like she had planned, instead analyzing her interactions with Blake. She can't get over how infuriating the other woman is or how her belly heats up every time she glances at her.

She then starts thinking of Natalie, for the second time this week, and she hates it. She has tried so hard to forget the woman she once loved, and she has been mostly successful over the years, burying herself in her work instead of thinking about her ex-girlfriend and how she can't trust anyone enough to date again.

But now she can't forget her. Dr. Blake Gold's mere presence demands thinking about her. She wonders what Natalie saw in her. She's obviously attractive, sure, but Amory can't get over how infuriating she is, how self-assured and overly confident. Maybe that's the appeal, because compared to Blake, Amory's never had much confidence.

Amory has always had to work so hard to be good enough as a doctor, she never had enough time for fun or the pleasures in life. Medicine always seemed to come naturally to Blake, everything was always easy for her including seducing women. All of them. Including the straight ones and other people's girlfriends.

No woman was safe around Dr. Blake Gold's infuriatingly perfect smile and easy charm, it was a well known fact.

Amory doesn't get it; what could possibly drive someone to cheat on or with someone's partner? She would never dream of it, always being loyal, but she wants to know what would drive someone to that. It's a self-destructive curiosity, she knows that. But it doesn't stop her from overthinking.

Maybe there was something wrong with her and that's why Natalie decided to cheat. Maybe she wasn't there enough or wasn't good enough in bed. What does Dr. Blake Gold have that she doesn't?

Amory can't stop thinking about it and it's driving her crazy. She opens up her laptop and goes to one of the downloaded books. If Blake can read while sitting beside her, then so can she. But she has trouble focusing on the words. Blake's presence distracts her.

The rest of the plane ride continues like that. Blake reading, Amory trying to read and failing. Amory just hopes and prays that wherever Blake is going, it's not the same place as her. There are surely over a dozen different clinics open to support the Cholera outbreak. After all, the plane ride could just be a coincidence. When they get to the airport, it could turn out that Blake is going to a completely different clinic, and that's what Amory hopes for.

Her hopes don't work, though. When they get to the airport, both of them are silent as they collect their luggage, Amory looks around for the driver that was promised would come for her, and she sees a cardboard sign with her name on it. Dr. Paver. Below her name, however, is another and she wants to cry. Dr. Gold.

Amory looks at Blake and sees that Blake is already looking at her. Beautiful eyes and face. Lovely broad shoulders and a natural elegance to her movement.

"I hate you," Amory says to Blake with as much venom as she can muster.

She can't deny the feelings of pleasure and guilt that she feels when Blake's expression changes to one of hurt. Blake doesn't say anything and the two of them walk over to the man holding the sign.

"Nice to meet you," Amory says, ignoring Blake, "I'm Doctor Paver."

“And I’m Doctor Gold,” Blake says.

“Welcome,” the man says, “I’m Rajan, and I’m here to drive you to your cabin.”

“Wait,” Amory says, “our cabin? we’re sharing a cabin?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Rajan says. “We usually have two to a cabin, sometimes three or four, but you two will be the only ones sharing your cabin.”

“Great,” Amory says, trying to not let her displeasure show as she looks at Blake. As if this day couldn’t get worse. She doesn’t know how she’s going to survive this trip if Blake is going to be the first person she sees in the morning and the last thing she sees before she goes to bed.

“Come, come,” Rajan says. “Let’s go to the car and I will show you around.”

Rajan talks as he leads them outside to a black car, seemingly unaware of Blake and Amory’s animosity toward one another, and the dirty looks that Amory keeps giving Blake. But all Blake does is smile and smirk back, and it drives her crazy. When Rajan finds the car in the airport parking lot, he helps the two of them put their luggage in the trunk, and then Blake and Amory get inside, sharing the backseat.

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Rajan gets into the driver's seat and begins to drive once everyone is situated and buckled.

On the way to their cabin, he shows them the city, pointing out markets and businesses that he thinks they will find interesting.

But what Amory really finds interesting is the clinic. Rajan informs them that it's only a five-minute walk away from where they're staying and she almost misses it, but when she sees the small building with people standing outside in a line she's excited to get to work.

Rajan drives for another block, and they arrive at an area surrounded by small cabins. Rajan points out their cabin and parks the car.

"Here we are," he says. "Do you need help bringing in your bags?"

"No thank you," Blake says.

"We got it, thank you," Amory tells him.

"Of course," Rajan says, unlocking the car doors and popping the trunk. He stays in the car, and once the two of them remove their backpacks and luggage, he rolls down the window to the driver's side. He reaches his hand outside, holding two metal keys.

Blake reaches forward and takes them from Rajan's hand. "Thank you," she says.

"I'm going to leave but I'm sure I'll see you two around," he says.

“Bye,” Amory tells him.

“Have a safe drive back,” Blake says.

“Oh, I live super close,” Rajan says, “I’ll be safe. You two settle in well.”

“We will,” Blake says, and Amory can’t help the glare that she gives her.

Rajan drives away, unaware of the situation the women are in.

Blake holds the keys to the cabin in her hand and looks at Amory.

She is infuriatingly attractive.

“Shall we go in?” she asks.

“Okay,” Amory says with a sigh, “let’s go.”

4

BLAKE

Blake looks behind her at Dr. Amory Paver as she unlocks the door to the cabin. Amory has looked angry throughout the flight and her lovely face looks upset now and Blake can’t blame her. Blake knows she messed up all those years ago, but she doesn’t know what to do about it.

Amory’s long hair is escaping the elastic and soft honeyed tendrils are falling over her face. It has never escaped Blake’s notice that Amory is beautiful; with a lovely feminine face and delicate features and big aqua blue eyes. Although the problem with Amory is that she has always been way too uptight.

Her and Amory were never very close, but what do you say to the girl whose girlfriend you fucked years ago? And now they're sharing a cabin together and are expected to work together for the first time in years.

Blake doesn't understand why, but she hopes that maybe this is a second chance. That maybe she can make amends, even if she doesn't know how.

She opens the door and holds it open for Amory, who walks through, dragging her suitcase behind her, and Blake can't help but look at the swing of her hips below her backpack. She looks away. She shouldn't have looked in the first place.

Once Amory is inside, Blake rolls her suitcase through the door and shuts the door behind her before she looks around. There's a little kitchen area, a room that leads to a small bathroom, and a problem.

"What the fuck," Amory says, looking in the center of the room, where Blake is also looking. "There's only one bed?"

It's not a big bed either. It's one of those long twins, like the kind you see on college campuses.

"Well," Blake says, not really sure what to say, "yeah there is."

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“What are we supposed to do?” Amory asks. “Where are we supposed to sleep?”

“I suppose we could share the bed,” Blake suggests, and Amory makes a noise of disgust that reminds her that Amory hates her, that they’re supposed to hate each other.

“I am not sharing a bed with you,” Amory declares, and Blake has to pretend that statement doesn’t hurt her.

“Well, where are you going to sleep then?” Blake asks. “Because I’m not sleeping on the floor.” It doesn’t matter to her that Amory hates her, and probably rightfully, if she wants to make a big deal out of sharing a bed, then she can sleep somewhere else.

“Fine,” Amory says, “I’ll sleep on the floor, then.”

“Seriously?” Blake asks.

“It’s better than sleeping with you,” Amory says, and Blake rolls her eyes. It’s just a bed. Amory is being too overdramatic.

“If that’s what you want, then fine,” Blake responds.

“I hate this,” Amory says.

“Like you hate me?” Blake asks, unable to resist the temptation to get a rise out of her. And, okay, if she’s honest with herself, the idea that anyone hates her stings. But, she supposes she deserves it. She didn’t know that Natalie was Amory’s girlfriend

until Amory walked in on the two of them together, but she did know that Natalie had a girlfriend and she still slept with her.

It was horrible, what she did, and she can recognize that now, even if younger and hornier her didn't see what a bad idea sleeping with someone else's girlfriend was. She also knows that at times she was a bitch to Amory at med school and during their surgical residency together, but Amory was never a saint. The two of them were at each other's throats the entire time they knew one another.

It all came to a head when Amory caught Blake with Natalie, however, and the two of them have hardly spoken since.

"I hate you more than this place," Amory states, and Blake can't ignore how much that hurts, no matter how much she wants to.

There's something about being hated that never sits well. Even if she knows she deserves it, she can't shake this urge to do something about it, to make it up to Amory, to apologize and mean it. After all, they're both queer women in the medical field. On paper, the two of them have more similarities than differences. But, Blake supposes, that's not how life works out.

"I'm going to boil some water," Blake says, changing the subject, "I'm starving."

"Fine," Amory says.

"Do you want to help?" Blake asks.

Amory sighs. "I guess so. Maybe prove to my mother that I'm not going to starve to death."

Blake doesn't know what Amory's talking about so she walks over to the small

kitchen area and looks around to see what is there. She finds some pots and pans, pasta, and ground beef in the fridge. There are also some canned fruits and vegetables and beans. Beans sound like a good idea, but with how long they take to cook, she knows they'll be there all night, so her and Amory decide on pasta with meat.

There are also some juices and bottles of water in the fridge to drink. With cholera going around, she supposes that's a much safer alternative than drinking tap water, but for the pasta, as long as they boil the water, it'll be safe.

She starts to cook and Amory helps her in silence. It's not a comfortable silence either. In fact, it's one of the most uncomfortable silences Blake's ever experienced. Amory's anger radiates off of her like light off of a star, and Blake keeps glancing at her only to receive glares in return. She tries to not let it bother her.

She gives Amory a smirk and Amory looks away in frustration.

"Are there any spices here?" Amory asks.

"I'll look," Blake says, finding some spices in a cabinet above her head. She hands them to Amory, who doesn't even give her a thank you.

Blake finishes boiling the pasta and Amory seasons it. The two of them sit at the small table in the cabin and eat.

Blake moans when she puts some of the food in her mouth. Amory did a good job.

"This is so good," she says.

"Tell that to my mother," Amory says.

"What?" Blake asks.

“Nothing,” Amory says.

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“No,” Blake says, “what about your mother?”

“It’s nothing. She just thinks I can’t cook.”

“Well, she must not have tastebuds,” Blake says. “This is great.”

Amory shrugs. “Anyone can make pasta.”

“I don’t know about that,” Blake says. “You should have seen me when I was still in college, before medical school. I couldn’t even cook ramen.”

Amory looks at her in concern. “What did you even eat?” she asks.

“Well, I spent way too much money on a meal plan,” Blake says, “but when the dining halls were closed, I would just eat ramen out of the packets.”

Amory cringes. “Gross.”

“I know,” Blake says, “but this is good.” She motions to the pasta.

Amory doesn’t say anything else, but she does smile at Blake’s compliment.

“I’m exhausted,” Blake says. Between the food and not being able to sleep through the plane ride, she really wants to sleep for a whole day. But she knows she can’t do that. She’s scheduled to work tomorrow, bright and early. And the time zones are definitely confusing to her.

“Me too,” Amory says, “that plane ride did not agree with me at all.”

“Let’s turn in,” Blake says, and then she looks at Amory, the bed, and the floor. “Are you sure you want to sleep on the floor?”

Amory glares at Blake. “I’m not sleeping with you.”

“Suit yourself,” Blake says, “but I’m sure the bed is a lot more comfortable than this cabin floor.”

“I’ll cope,” Amory deadpans.

“Fine,” Blake says, not knowing what else to say. After all, Amory is a grown adult. If she wants to make such a big deal out of sharing a bed, Blake can’t stop her.

“At least take some of the pillows and blankets,” Blake says.

“Oh, I was planning on it.”

Blake goes to the bed and takes one of the two comforters and a pillow and puts them on the floor. She wants to help Amory set up her sleeping spot, but she’s not sure how well that will be received and her and Amory are already on thin ice as it is. So she watches as Amory fluffs the pillow and folds the blanket in half, sleeping bag style.

“That looks so comfy,” Blake says, sarcastically.

“Shut up,” Amory says, her aqua eyes flashing dangerously and Blake does, going over to the bed and wrapping herself in the leftover blanket.

She watches as Amory settles herself on the floor and sighs to herself. She never

knew Amory to be so stubborn, but she supposes she shouldn't be surprised. It takes a certain amount of stubbornness to become a doctor, after all.

Blake is exhausted, but Jenna keeps texting her. She knows that it's not her fault. They didn't really plan for the time zone changes very well, but Blake finds herself growing frustrated at the lack of sleep.

Jenna: Did you get there safely? I never heard from you after you landed

Blake: Yes, but you're never going to believe what happened

Blake looks to the floor, where Amory is trying to fall asleep, turning on her sides and trying to find a comfortable position.

Jenna: Tell me this doesn't have something to do with Dr. Paver

Blake had told Jenna about the plane ride and everything, but she failed to update her about the cabin situation.

Blake: we're sharing a cabin

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Jenna: Omg. Godspeed my friend

Blake: lol. I need it. She hates my guts

Jenna: I mean, not to sound like a bitch, but can you blame her?

Blake: Nope, I can't, but that's the sucky part.

Blake: I want to apologize but I don't even know how

Jenna: I mean, you can say you're sorry, but who knows if she'll even believe you

Blake: I just want to let her know that I'm not the same person I was back then

Blake: What I did was super fucked up, but I know that now.

Jenna: So tell her that.

Blake: Yeah, but who knows if she'll listen

Jenna: Well you can't make her listen

Jenna: But you'll never know if you don't try. You'll just both be miserable

Blake sighs to herself and looks at Amory again. Amory's eyes are closed, long eyelashes flickering, but Blake can tell by her breaths that she's still awake. She thinks to herself, why does she have to be so stubborn? But, then again, why did

Blake have to sleep with her girlfriend?

Blake: Yeah. I might talk to her later. It's super late over here right now

Blake: And we're both super tired so I'm gonna talk to you later.

Jenna: Okay. Good night.

Blake: Good night.

Blake closes her eyes and falls asleep. It doesn't last long, however. She wakes up again a couple hours later to Amory tossing and turning on the floor. Blake tries hard to ignore her and go back to sleep, but she can't. Amory sighing and turning on the floor invades her thoughts, and she can't clear her mind enough to fall asleep.

Blake sighs and then she starts to get annoyed. Like, she gets that Amory hates her, and she understands why, but she doesn't need to be so stubborn about it to the point where she's uncomfortable. She doesn't get it. She would never do that if she were in Amory's shoes. But then again, she's not, and has never been in Amory's situation.

Amory turns over again and groans.

Blake rolls her eyes and looks over to where Amory is sleeping. It wouldn't be so bad if Amory wasn't so loud about her discomfort, but now Blake can't sleep and she needs her sleep. She's still like a teenager sometimes, especially when it comes to sleep. If she doesn't get at least nine hours, she's miserable the next day. That's part of the reason she was so bitchy during medical school and her residency.

Blake tries to ignore Amory once again, and it works for about an hour, as she's able to fall into a restless sleep, but then she wakes up again and she's getting pissed off. She really needs Amory to either stop rolling around or join her in the bed.

Maybe naked.

For fuck's sake, Blake! Turn off your inappropriate sex drive for once.

“Oh,” Blake says, giving an overdramatic moan, “this bed sure is comfy.”

“Fuck off.”

“It's so comfy, I could sleep here forever,” Blake says.

“Fuck off,” Amory says again with a groan.

“Well at least I'm not tossing and turning,” Blake says. “I'm sleeping on a comfortable mattress, so comfortable I could sink into it.”

“You need to shut up,” Amory says.

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“Says you,” Blake says. “You’re making so much noise I’m sure the clinic can hear you from here.”

“Well excuse me, but I’m uncomfortable.”

“And who’s fault is that, darling?” Blake asks. “Huh?”

“Yours,” Amory says.

“Mine?” Blake asks. “How is it my fault?”

“Why don’t you ask my ex-girlfriend?” Amory says.

“I didn’t know she was your girlfriend at the time.”

“That’s bullshit,” Amory states. “How could you possibly not know?”

“Well, it’s not like I’m some crazy stalker who knows every detail of your life,” Blake says, “and she never mentioned you.”

“Seriously?” Amory asks.

“Yes, seriously,” Blake says. “She said she had a girlfriend, but she never said who or gave me a name.”

“Wait,” Amory responds, “you knew she had a girlfriend and you still slept with her? Even if you didn’t know she was my girlfriend, that’s still so fucked up.”

Blake frowns, but Amory is right. What she did all those years ago is fucked up, but still, it was years ago. She was a different person back then.

“I was an idiot,” Blake says.

“You got that right,” Amory agrees.

“But for what it’s worth,” Blake continues, “I wouldn’t do that now. I’ve learned from my mistakes.”

“Is that supposed to make it better?” Amory asks.

“What do you want from me?” Blake asks. “An apology? Because I am sorry. What I did was fucked up. Even if we never liked each other, what I did was messed up and I never should have slept with Natalie.”

“I don’t care if you’re sorry,” Amory replies, venom in her words. “What I want is for you to drop dead.”

“What is your problem?” Blake asks.

“You slept with my girlfriend!” Amory exclaims.

“Years ago,” Blake says. “And I’ve changed since then. People are allowed to change. Just like I know you’ve changed over the years, or do you want to tell me that you’re the same girl who sabotaged my biology notes in med school?”

Amory frowns but she doesn’t know what to say to Blake. She can’t disagree with her, because she’s right, but she doesn’t want to agree with her either.

“Whatever,” Amory says, turning over on her pillow, but she stops tossing around as

much and Blake is able to relax some.

It takes Blake a while, however, after what she said. She wonders if her words got to Amory or if the other woman is just content to hate her for the rest of her life. If so, this is going to be the longest and most painful trip ever.

And why can't I stop wondering what she looks like naked?

5

AMORY

Amory is in pain as she works. Her back aches and her neck has a crick in it, probably from sleeping on the floor all night. She is also exhausted. She was hardly able to sleep last night in the same cabin as Blake Gold and the floor was not comfortable at all.

She is faced with another cholera patient in the small clinic where they're working. She can hear Blake's gravelly sexy voice from behind the curtain and rolls her eyes as she tries desperately to tune it out and focus on her patient.

Why is her voice sexy?

The patient already has an IV in her arm and Amory prescribes some antibiotics to help before she leaves the small curtained-off area and heads to help another patient.

The day goes by like that and it's mind numbing, treating the same thing over and over again, but Amory is happy to help. She can't, however, stop thinking about Blake and their conversation last night. The repetitiveness of her work doesn't help either. She already has an overactive brain and is easily able to overthink while she works.

She doesn't want to forgive Blake. In her mind, what Blake did is unforgivable, but what she said last night has stuck in her mind. Blake is right, people do change, and they do stupid stuff when they're younger. Amory can attest to that. She did some horrible things when she was younger, like leaving a friend at a party and sabotaging Blake's notes.

But she's a different person now. She would never dream of doing those things now. She's learned and grown as she's gotten older and lived more. She wonders if she's being too harsh and if Blake has really changed. And if so, how much? Amory still knows Blake as the overly competitive, arrogant girlfriend stealer that she was when they were in their residency program together. She doesn't know her as the insightful and apologetic person that she was last night. Maybe she really should give Blake a second chance, get to know her better.

Amory thinks about how she has changed. She used to be a lot more optimistic, hopeful for the future, and full of love. Now, however, she's a lot more jaded, and she

hasn't tried to date since Natalie.

She's still hurt, and Blake is partially responsible for that hurt, but now Amory's confused and conflicted as well. Even though she said differently, Blake not knowing that Natalie was her girlfriend changes things.

Amory had always assumed that Blake had slept with Natalie to target her specifically. She thought that Blake knew, but now that Amory knows differently, she doesn't know how to feel about that. Her idea that Blake was just vindictive has changed, and she feels like she doesn't know anything anymore, especially not how to feel.

Amory continues working, despite the pain in her hip, the crick in her neck, and the confusion in her heart. She enjoys working, enjoys her job, and enjoys making a seven-year-old Cholera patient smile as she distracts him from the IV that she puts into him. However, when the next set of doctors arrives and it's time to go back to the cabin, she is relieved.

The clinic is incredibly cramped and noisy and right now Amory needs some fresh air and quiet. Hopefully she can get some of that in the small cabin that she's sharing with someone she hates.

When she puts up her things into the locker with her name on it, she walks to the front doors of the clinic where she sees that Blake is waiting for her. That definitely doesn't help her confusion. She doesn't know why Blake is trying so hard to make amends or build a relationship with her when she said that she hates her. But now, looking at the painfully handsome Blake, casually lounging against the wall in black slacks and a tank top that shows off her athletic build, she takes a deep breath. Blake's brown eyes are enchanting and she has a smile on her face that looks seductive and Amory can't decide if that is on purpose, and now she's not so sure what she feels about her.

“Are you ready to go?” Blake asks, her white doctor’s coat already off and probably stashed away in her locker.

“So ready,” Amory says with an exhausted sigh.

“That bad, huh?” Blake asks, not even looking tired, and Amory feels jealous of her for that.

“I think I slept on my hip,” Amory admits. “It hurts.”

“Oh, poor baby,” Blake says with a smirk, one that Amory wants to wipe off her face. “It’s almost like there’s a bed that you could have slept on instead.”

Amory and Blake leave the clinic, letting the doors fall closed behind them.

“Oh fuck off,” Amory says, walking away from Blake.

Blake just laughs, loud and joyous, as she walks to catch up with Amory.

Amory frowns and her heart twinges. Since when did Blake become so easy going? She was definitely not like this the last time the two knew each other. She then realizes that Blake is right; she has changed, and Amory doesn’t know her at all anymore. She used to always be stressed and a huge flirt, saving her smiles for doctors or nurses that she thought she had a shot of sleeping with. Maybe she still uses that charming smile to get what she wants. Is that what she is trying to do with Amory?

When the two get to the cabin, Blake holds the door open for Amory, and Amory can’t help but think this is something a girlfriend would do. Maybe Blake is just that kind of person now. She definitely seems a lot more caring and kind.

It's past five o'clock when they get inside the cabin and Amory is starving. The clinic had sandwiches for lunch, but they were honestly not that filling. And Amory wants real food. Fruits and vegetables. She also wants beans, but she knows that those will take hours to prepare.

"Tomorrow morning, before work," Amory suggests, "we should set out a pot of beans so that we can come back to supper."

"Oooh," Blake says, "that sounds like a great idea. I want chili."

Amory moans at the mention of her favorite food. "Chili sounds so good."

"That settles it then," Blake says. "I saw some canned tomatoes in the cabinets yesterday, so we'll have chili tomorrow. How about fried chicken tonight?"

"That sounds great," Amory says. "Except I have no clue how to make fried chicken."

"I'll show you," Blake offers. "My fried chicken is the best."

"You're full of yourself," Amory says.

"Maybe," Blake says with a shrug, "but it's true."

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“I’ll be the judge of that,” Amory says, but she gives Blake a small smile.

“Okay,” Blake says with a laugh as she walks to the kitchen area, “come over here and I’ll show you how it’s done.

The two of them work on making the fried chicken, and Amory is conflicted. This is the woman she’s supposed to hate, who slept with her girlfriend, and made her life miserable for years. But now, as Blake shows her how to make fried chicken and the two of them make small talk, she can’t help but think how easy Blake is to get along with. Honestly, Amory thinks, if the two of them had met like this and not all those years ago when both of them were at their worst, she can easily see the two of them becoming fast friends.

That thought terrifies her. She feels so conflicted around Blake, but she decides she needs to get over herself and make the best of things. After all, the two of them are working together and sharing a cabin. She can’t just be miserable the entire time. Her grudge against Blake begins to dissolve little by little as the other woman patiently shows her how to bread and fry chicken.

“And now you know how to make fried chicken,” Blake says, using tongs to take the last piece out of the frying pan. “It wasn’t that hard, was it?”

“No,” Amory agrees. “Now we just have to see if it’s as good as you say it is.”

“It is,” Blake promises, “and if it’s not, I’ll just blame you.”

“Hey,” Amory exclaims at the joke, giving Blake a playful smile and a pout, “that’s

not fair.”

“I think it’s very fair,” Blake says, tousling Amory’s hair.

Amory fixes her hair and laughs at the attention. She’s having a good time with Blake right now, and she kind of hopes that doesn’t change.

Blake puts two plates of fried chicken on the small table and takes a seat. She motions to Amory to sit down. “Come on,” she says, “don’t just stand there looking all pretty. Let’s eat.”

Amory blushes a little at being called pretty, but then curses herself for it, for being affected positively by something Blake said. She probably didn’t mean anything by it, and besides, Amory reminds herself, changed or not, this is still the woman who helped destroy her love life.

But Amory can’t help liking being called pretty or being affected by it. It’s been so long since anyone’s said anything like that to her.

“Okay,” Amory says, trying hard to stop blushing as she sits down, but Blake notices.

“Aw, you’re blushing.”

“Shut up,” Amory says, her lips in a straight line as she tries to hide behind her hair.

“No I’m not.”

“Don’t worry,” Blake says, “it’s cute.”

“It’s not cute,” Amory counters, “it’s annoying.”

“Well, I’m sure it’s nothing new.”

“What do you mean?” Amory asks.

“People must call you pretty all the time,” Blake says.

“They don’t, actually.”

“Really?” Blake asks.

“Yep.”

“Well, that’s a shame,” Blake says, “because you’re really very beautiful. People should tell you that more.”

Amory blushes again.

“What? It’s true.”

“Shut up,” Amory says.

“Why?” Blake asks. “Don’t you think you’re pretty?”

“Not really,” Amory says.

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Blake shakes her head. “And that’s why people should tell you that more. Maybe you’d start to believe it.”

“Can we just eat,” Amory asks, thoroughly embarrassed.

“Fine,” Blake says and then adds, “Pretty girl.”

Amory’s face is on fire, and she quickly takes a bite out of a piece of fried chicken to distract herself from Blake’s words, and it works. Amory moans into the food and takes another bite.

“Oh my god, this is so good!”

“Right?” Blake says with a smirk. “I told you I make the best fried chicken.”

“Well, I believe you now,” Amory says.

“You should always believe me,” Blake responds. “I’m no liar.”

Amory tries not to think about that statement too hard. Because Blake is a cheater, or at least she was, and that’s no better than a liar.

The two of them eat their food, talking a little as they do so.

“I wish this place had a TV or something,” Blake says. “What are we supposed to do when we’re not at work? Go crazy from boredom?”

“I don’t know. I guess they didn’t think about entertainment when they set this place up.”

“I suppose I can’t blame them too much,” Blake says. “It is a pretty bad outbreak.”

“I brought some cards with me,” Amory offers. “We can play some games.”

“Ooh,” Blake says, “we can play poker.”

“I don’t have any cash to bet.”

“How about strip poker?” Blake says with another smirk.

Amory flushes and doesn’t know how to respond at first, but she’s pretty sure Blake is only joking. She has to be, right?

“Yeah right.”

“Hey, I’m never opposed to seeing pretty women naked.”

“You’d have to win for that to happen,” Amory says, “and I doubt that would happen.”

Blake shrugs. “You’re probably right. I’m shit at poker.”

“I remember,” Amory says, remembering how the residents would play poker and bet on cases when they had the time.

“How about we just play for fun?” Amory suggests. “No betting.”

“Fine,” Blake says, then adds, “Beats doing nothing.”

The two of them spend about an hour playing poker together, and Blake sucks just as much as she did when Amory knew her.

“Maybe it’s a good thing we didn’t play strip poker,” Blake says as she loses another round.

“Why?” Amory asks. “Don’t want me to see you naked?”

“I mean,” Blake says, winking at her, “I wouldn’t mind that much.”

Amory blushes again and Blake laughs at her. Amory can’t tell if Blake is flirting, but she’s sure that whatever she’s doing is just so that she can embarrass her.

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“Come on,” Blake says, “let’s get ready for bed.”

“Fine, but I’m changing in the bathroom.”

Blake laughs. “Okay, sweetheart.”

“No nudity for you, you pervert,” Amory retorts, and Blake only laughs harder.

“Okay then, while you go to the bathroom, I’ll change out here and be very disappointed that I don’t get to see your breasts.”

Amory gasps, but she laughs. “Gosh, you’re such a pervert.”

“I never claimed not to be,” Blake says.

Amory just laughs and gathers her clothes before she goes into the bathroom to change. When she comes out of the bathroom, she sees that Blake has also changed into sleep clothes and is staring at the pile of blankets where Amory slept last night.

“Are you still sleeping on that monstrosity?” Blake asks.

“You mean the floor?” Amory asks. “Yeah.”

“That can’t be comfortable.”

“It’s not,” Amory admits. “I’ve had a pain in my side all day.”

Blake gives her a disapproving look. “You know you can still sleep on the bed with me; I won’t bite.”

“I am not sleeping with you.”

“Damn,” Blake says, “I’m not asking to have sex with you, just offering a comfortable place to sleep. You know, where you won’t wake up with a pain in your side.”

“I’m good,” Amory says, holding on to her stubbornness.

“Suit yourself,” Blake says. “But it really is a comfortable bed.”

“Oh, fuck off,” Amory says.

She goes to the floor and lays her head down on the pillow, wrapping the blanket around her. Blake goes to the bed and lies down. Amory tries to ignore how the hard wood digs into her hip bone.

She closes her eyes and tries to ignore Blake. She turns around to the other side, the opposite of the one she slept on last night.

She hears Blake sigh from the bed and tries to ignore her.

“Oh my,” Blake says in an overly dramatic voice, “This bed sure is comfy.”

“Oh, shut up,” Amory says with a groan. “Not this again.”

It was annoying enough to hear Blake compliment the bed last night while she was trying to sleep, but she doesn’t want to hear it for a second day in a row. Or any more days, which is sure to happen as long as Amory chooses to sleep on the floor.

“I’m just saying that I can hear you tossing and turning from the floor. And the bed is comfy. It also doesn’t cause me pain or any of that shit.”

Amory tries to ignore her, but she can’t easily ignore the pain on her side.

“You know what?” Amory says, “I’m tired of this shit.”

Amory stands up and walks over to the bed, carrying the pillow and blanket that she was using.

“Move over,” she says to Blake.

“Finally! Do you know how hard it is sleeping while hearing you move around like that?”

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“Try sleeping on the floor.”

“No thanks,” Blake says, and she moves over so that Amory can get in the bed with her.

Amory gets in the bed beside Blake and gives her a hard stare. “And no funny business, either. This is strictly professional.”

Amory puts a pillow under her head and turns to face away from Blake. It’s a little awkward, because while the bed is comfortable, it is still small, and she can’t avoid touching Blake while she lays down.

“Whatever you say, sweetheart,” Blake says, turning around to face away from Amory as well to make her a little more comfortable. “Just shush so I can go to sleep. I’m tired.”

“Fine,” Amory agrees. She has to be honest with herself, this bed is comfortable and she falls asleep easily.

When Amory wakes up, Blake is no longer on the other side of the bed. She has an arm wrapped around Amory and is snuggled close to her. Amory freezes, not knowing what to do. She’s sure that Blake didn’t do this on purpose, but she wasn’t prepared for her to be a cuddler.

Amory used to be a cuddler, too. But she’s been out of practice, not having someone else in her bed since Natalie will do that to a person.

She just lays there, not sure if she should wake Blake or try to get her arm off from around her without waking her. She lays in bed trying to decide, but then Blake wakes up and looks at Amory with a smile.

“Good morning,” she says.

“Morning,” Amory says, but notices that Blake is still cuddling her. “Would you mind getting off of me?”

“Oh, sorry,” Blake says, but she doesn’t sound apologetic. She does, however, move her arm away from Amory.

“You’re a cuddler, huh?” Amory asks.

“A big one. Always have been. Whether I mean to or not. If there’s another person in bed with me, I gravitate toward them.”

“Good to know,” Amory quips.

“That’s not going to drive you back to the floor, is it?” Blake asks.

“No, it’s fine. Besides you were right; this bed is comfy.”

Blake gives her a wide smile. “I told you so!”

“Yeah, whatever,” Amory says, but she smiles back at Blake. “Let’s get up and make some beans.”

“Woo, chili,” Blake says, and Amory laughs and gets out of bed.

Blake follows behind her and the two of them work together to put the beans in a pot.

“Should we season them now or wait?” Blake asks.

“I always wait, but we can season them some now and finish them off later when we add the canned tomatoes,” Amory says.

“That sounds like a plan,” Blake says. She lets Amory season the beans, which Amory’s grateful for. Her mom might say that Amory can’t cook, but no one can complain that she doesn’t know what she’s doing when it comes to spices. Speaking of her mom, she hasn’t talked to her in a while and Amory thinks that she should update her of everything that’s been happening.

Amory: Mom. Things are going great

Amory: but you’re never gonna believe who I’m working with

Amory updates her mom about everything that’s happened since discovering that Blake is her cabin mate. She doesn’t tell her that they’re sharing a bed, though. It’s not like she doesn’t trust her mom or anything, but she’s worried her mom will think something else is going on. When it is absolutely, definitely, not.

Mom: That’s wild. Have you at least been enjoying work?

Amory: Yeah. It’s a little different than what I’m used to

Amory: But I think I’m getting the hang of things.

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Mom: Good. I believe in you. You've always been good at your job

Amory: Yeah, but I haven't had to deal with Blake in years

Mom: It sounds like you're handling it well

Amory smiles at that. She doesn't know if it's true, since being around Blake so much has brought up a lot of uncomfortable feelings, but at least her mom believes in her, and right now that's really what she needs.

6

BLAKE

Blake is unbelievably horny. She hasn't had sex since she left the US and she's really feeling it now. Blake has always had a strong libido, but it's never been a problem for her, she was always able to find someone pretty to fuck or she had somewhere private to masturbate.

Now, however, she has neither and she hasn't been able to get off since she landed over a week ago. She brought most of her toys with her, but she has nowhere to use them. She considered hiding out in the bathroom last night, but there's something about a bathroom that kills the mood and makes getting off difficult. Maybe it's the cold tile or the fear that Amory would be able to hear her moan from behind the thin walls, she doesn't know.

It's not like she can do anything about it right now, though. Blake is currently at

work, just very distracted, and it's killing her. She goes around to various patients, trying to help, but after each one she can't help but think how desperately she needs to get fucked.

Something about being around Amory all of the time is winding her right up.

She moves to another patient, administering an IV and prescribing some antibiotics. She tries to distract herself with her work and focus on the IV. After all, it's been a while since she's regularly stuck needles into patients' skin. The nurses at her clinic in the US were mainly the ones who did that, only requiring Blake's help on a rare occasion.

Now, Blake is doing things that she's rarely done since medical school and her residency—when she was at the bottom of the medical food chain. It's kind of refreshing in a way. Blake enjoys new things and getting out of her comfort zone or doing things that she hasn't done in a while.

At first, she was a little anxious and worried that she'd mess something up, but now she's getting the hang of things and has renewed confidence in her skills.

She moves from patient to patient and gets into a rhythm. For Blake, once she gets focused on her work, it's easy to shut her brain off. She works at a fast pace, not giving herself the time to think about anything other than work.

Back home, she would try to help her patients through what's going on by talking to them and cracking jokes, but here it's hard; she doesn't understand the language and a lot of her patients don't have a good grasp of English. It makes her curse language barriers. She learned a few phrases online before she got on the plane, but she definitely didn't have the time required to devote to learning a new language and it makes her feel helpless, especially when one of her patients, a young girl, starts crying, and there's nothing that Blake can do to comfort her.

Blake just tries her best to do her job and get her patient out of the clinic as soon as possible so that she can hopefully feel better and be surrounded by the comfort of her family.

At the end of the day, her and Amory walk out of the clinic together. The two of them have been getting along a lot better, and Blake isn't entirely sure why, but she's not about to complain about it. They are a lot closer, almost friendly, and Blake is very happy with that development. She still feels bad about what she did with Amory's girlfriend all of those years ago, but it seems like Amory has forgiven her for that and that's all she can ask for.

Blake walks into the cabin, holding the door open for Amory, and the two of them prepare supper, like usual. Blake and Amory make some small talk while they make pasta again. There's a lot of pasta here and after a long day of work, it's one of the easiest things to make, so they've eaten a lot of pasta, adding canned vegetables and meat to try to spice it up and make things differently.

There's not a lot of local food in their pantry, Blake has noticed, and assumes that whoever was in charge of grocery shopping stocked their pantry with more typical American foods. She can't complain too much; it has helped with some of the homesickness, though she does enjoy the local food at lunch. It's always a toss up at lunch at the clinic. It's either local food or really disappointing sandwiches.

Blake opens a can of spinach and mixes it in with the alfredo sauce that they're using for the pasta while Amory cooks chicken on a separate burner from the pasta. The goal is to have chicken spinach alfredo, and Blake is excited.

"I can't believe your mom thinks you can't cook," Blake says.

"I know," Amory says. "It's so annoying. I love my mom, but she still acts like I'm a teenager sometimes."

“That’s really frustrating,” Blake replies. She understands the pain of someone still thinking she’s a younger version of herself when she’s definitely changed.

“Yeah, it sucks,” Amory says, and then pauses. “I think I understand what you mean when you said that you’ve changed.”

Blake smiles at that. It’s nice to hear that from Amory. She was worried that her words didn’t get to her, but, she supposes, looking at how much better Amory has been treating her, they must have.

“Yeah, I have. And for what it’s worth, I am really sorry.”

“I know that now,” Amory says, “and it does help that I know you didn’t know she was my girlfriend.”

“It was still shitty,” Blake argues. “I knew she had a girlfriend and I still slept with her.”

“Yeah, but for the longest time I thought you had slept with her because she was my girlfriend. I thought you were trying to hurt me specifically.”

“No.” Blake shakes her head. “I didn’t know; I was just young and dumb. I didn’t want to hurt anyone, honestly.” Blake then sighs and shakes her head again. “But I still did hurt someone. I fucked up.”

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“Did you love her?” Amory asks, and Blake sighs again because it’s a complicated question. Actually, it’s not a complicated question. She knows the answer, she just doesn’t know how Amory is going to react to the honest answer.

“Yeah,” Blake says, deciding to bite the bullet and give Amory the honest answer.

Amory frowns. “Oh.”

“I’m sorry,” Blake says.

“It’s okay,” Amory tell her. “You know, I’m kind of glad you did. I don’t know why, but I’d rather know that you loved and cared for her than have the idea that she was just some random hookup.”

“We slept together for over a year,” Blake admits.

Amory takes in a sharp inhale of breath. “I did not know that.”

“I really am sorry,” Blake says again.

“I know,” Amory says, “and I guess it’s best that I find out. I was always kind of morbidly curious to know how long it was going on.” Amory pauses for a moment and Blake sits in awkward silence.

Amory’s beautiful delicate featured face and aqua eyes look sad and Blake feels guilty for causing her pain. Her hair is messy and escaping from its ponytail. Her grey tank top is tight and Blake can’t help but keep dropping her gaze to the outline of

Amory's full breasts. She can see the swell of fabric where her nipples are and she likes it.

"When did it end?" Amory asks.

"When you caught us in bed. I really did love her, and she kept telling me that she was going to leave her girlfriend the entire time we were together, but then you caught us, and I don't know..."

"I stopped talking to her," Amory says. "I kicked her out and everything. I never saw her again after that."

"I didn't know that. To be honest, I always assumed that you two made up or something."

"We definitely didn't," Amory says with a half-hearted laugh.

"Yeah, I know that now."

"So what did she say to you after I caught you?" Amory asks.

"She didn't say anything," Blake says. "After you caught us, she went running after you and I never heard from her again."

"What?!"

"Yeah, after she left, I tried texting and calling her, and she never responded. I didn't give up for weeks and I never heard anything from her. That's why I assumed you two got back together. She just completely ghosted me."

"That's so strange," Amory says and then frowns. "It sounds like she broke both of

our hearts.”

Blake frowns. She never really thought of it that way. She had always taken the blame on herself for what happened, telling herself how stupid she was for falling in love with a woman who had a girlfriend, but she never blamed Natalie. Now, she wonders why she didn’t. Natalie led her on for over a year, kept making promises to be with her, and Blake always made excuses for that.

“Shit!” Amory suddenly spins around to the stove. “I got distracted.”

“What do you mean?” Blake asks.

Amory points to the pan. “I think I burnt the chicken slightly,” she says.

“Shit.” Blake remembers that she was supposed to be watching the pasta.

She stirs it and notices how some pieces are burnt and stuck to the bottom of the pan.

“I think I got distracted, too,” she says.

Amory laughs and turns the heat off. “Well, at least it’s cooked, even if it’s a little over done.”

“That’s true,” Blake says with a laugh. They combine the pasta, sauce, and chicken and take it to the table to eat.

“It’s not bad,” Blake says as she chews her first bite.

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She realizes she likes to watch Amory's lips while she eats.

Full. Pink. Distracting.

"Maybe this is why my mom thinks I can't cook," Amory says.

Blake shakes her head. "Ignore that. Everyone makes mistakes, and I got distracted too."

"Yeah, but it was a good conversation."

"A much needed one," Blake agrees.

Amory sighs and then pauses for a moment. "I was going to propose to her."

"What?" Blake asks.

"Yeah," Amory says. "I even bought a ring, and I had planned out a nice time and spot to propose. It was going to be where we had our first date."

"Now I feel extra shitty," Blake groans.

"Don't," Amory says, "I'm starting to realize that you were also a victim in this, just like I was. You may have fucked up by sleeping with someone you knew had a girlfriend, but Natalie fucked up more by stringing us both along for a year. And you were in love. I think everyone has done something stupid in the name of love."

“Yeah,” Blake agrees, “it was certainly stupid.”

“Let me ask this,” Amory begins, “Did you know she was in a relationship when you first got together?”

Blake shakes her head. “No, we met on a dating website, and started hooking up and going on dates. I didn’t find out she had a girlfriend until we were months in.”

Amory nods her head. “Yeah,” she says, “I think you’re less of a horrible person for sleeping with Natalie than you thought, or even than I thought.”

Blake frowns, but it means a lot to hear that coming from Amory. Blake never truly forgave herself for what she did, but to hear that the person she’s wronged the most has forgiven her... Well, it means a lot to her.

Blake thinks to herself for a while, about the situation with Natalie. It was so fucked up in so many ways, and she should have broken it off with Natalie the moment she knew she had a girlfriend, but hindsight is twenty-twenty, and Blake didn’t, and she has to live with the guilt of that. But she also gets to live with how that experience changed her, how she has changed for the better and become more considerate of others.

She has also developed a greater appreciation for Amory, and she thinks from the smile on Amory’s face as she eats quietly, that she has done the same. Amory was hurt, but she’s not the same vindictive person she was when they knew each other. She told Blake she hated her at first, but she heard her out and changed her mind and found it in herself to forgive Blake. Blake is so grateful for that.

When supper is done, Blake quickly washes the dishes while Amory goes to her stuff and grabs her pack of cards.

“You want to play some poker again?” Amory asks, probably already knowing the answer. They’ve been playing poker almost every night after supper. Blake has actually gotten better at it even though she usually loses spectacularly.

“Of course,” Blake responds, drying her hands and walking over to the table.

“Awesome,” Amory says, and then gives Blake a look. “But we’re definitely not playing strip poker,” she adds.

Blake playfully groans, but she hadn’t jokingly asked to play strip poker tonight for a reason. As much as she loves to see Amory get all flustered, the idea of the other woman naked has her desperately horny all over again. This is miserable, Blake thinks, to not be able to have sex or masturbate. She has never been in this position before.

She has never been in a situation where she wasn’t able to find the privacy to masturbate, and she has never been in a situation with another queer woman who wasn’t down to fuck the moment Blake suggested it. Not that Blake would suggest it. Her relationship with Amory may be getting better, but she still feels like she’s standing on thin ice.

Amory deals the cards, and Blake checks her phone to see that Jenna texted her while she was preparing supper.

Jenna: Hey, how’s it going?

Blake: Bro, I’m so horny

Amory and Blake play for a while as Blake waits for Jenna to respond. She’s not even entirely sure what she’s hoping to get from Jenna, but when she does finally respond, Blake is a little disappointed.

Jenna: Well don't expect me to do anything about it.

Blake frowns at her phone and then texts Jenna back. She really needs something right now, and she might regret this, especially since she has no outlet for her sexual frustrations.

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Blake: Not even a picture?

Jenna: Fine

Blake feels like a straight man, asking for nudes, but when Jenna sends some, she feels conflicted more than anything. She's still horny, of course, but Jenna's nudes do nothing to serve her further, and she doesn't know why or how to feel about that. Normally Jenna sending pictures would make Blake lose her mind, but now they don't.

She tries not to think about it too hard as she looks at her phone, turning it away so that Amory can't see what she's looking at. She definitely doesn't want Amory to know any of this.

"Are you okay?" Amory asks, gesturing toward Blake's phone.

"I'm fine," Blake lies, trying to think of an excuse. "I'm just starting to get tired."

"Same, honestly," Amory says. "I was thinking about going to sleep early."

"That sounds like a good idea." And even though it's only eight PM, the two of them decide to get dressed for bed. Maybe sleep will help Blake forget about her horniness.

It doesn't.

Blake lies awake in the bed, listening to Amory's slow breaths as she sleeps. Her underwear is wet and uncomfortable. She doesn't know what to do about it.

As she lays in bed, she gets a terrible idea. Amory is asleep, and what Blake has noticed is that Amory is a deep sleeper. She never wakes up when Blake has to get up to use the bathroom in the middle of the night. She probably wouldn't notice if Blake decided to touch herself.

It's risky, though, and it's not ideal. Blake usually prefers to masturbate with toys, taking longer to get off when she doesn't. But there's no way Blake is going to be stupid enough to try to use her vibrator while in the same bed as another woman. Blake doesn't want Amory to know what she's going to do. As it is, being caught would be mortifying, and she's sure that Amory would not appreciate it at all.

Blake tests the waters by moving as far away from Amory as she can, and she puts a hand in her pants. Using her fingers is better anyway because if Amory were to wake up, she could just say that she was scratching herself. And as embarrassing as that would be, they've been living together and the two of them have gotten used to each other's weird and embarrassing habits and bodily functions.

She moves past the waistband of her pajama pants and pulls back the elastic of her underwear where she feels her pubic hair. She lightly touches her clit and begins to rub small circles around it. God that feels good. She's been pent up for days and she begins to move faster.

As she moves her finger, she begins to fade away from where she is, forgetting that she's currently sharing a bed with someone. The heat in her stomach grows, and she becomes increasingly needy.

She's incredibly wet, and the moisture gets on her fingers as she moves them. She wants fingers inside of her, wants a mouth on hers. It's been too long since she's made out with someone. Jenna was never one for long, hot kisses.

As she touches herself, she wonders about Amory, if she likes passionate make-out

sessions. She can't help herself; she wonders how Amory tastes and what she would look like squirming under Blake, moaning her name. The thought causes Blake to gasp as she touches herself harder, and she moves her other hand to her waistband.

She puts two fingers inside of herself and imagines Amory kissing her and sinking her teeth into Blake's neck. The image only serves to make her more desperate and Blake gasps quietly, before she remembers exactly where she is and who is in the bed beside her.

She sinks her teeth into her bottom lip and the pain feels good as she continues to touch herself, moving at a faster pace. She can't help the tiny moans that escape her lips, but she tries her best, biting harder, and she finds herself really wishing that it were Amory's teeth sinking into her lips.

This newfound fascination with Amory Paver is going to be the death of her. She can't deny that Amory has always been attractive, but Blake has definitely never thought about her while getting off before.

Blake moves faster, feeling herself growing closer, and she squirms slightly in the bed. For a moment she forgets herself and where she is, but when she remembers again, she tries to force herself to quiet down.

"Oh god," Blake murmurs to herself.

"What?" Amory responds and Blake freezes.

She looks over at Amory, who is staring at her, wide-eyed but sleepy.

"Oh my god," Amory says, and Blake blushes, taking her hands out of her pants.

"It's nothing," Blake says.

“Oh my god,” Amory repeats.

“I was just scratching myself.” Blake tries to lie, but she knows that Amory isn’t that stupid. She knows that she knows.

“Oh my god.”

“Look,” Blake says, freaking out, “I’m sorry. Just forget this happened.”

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“Forget this happened?” Amory says. “You were just getting off with me in the same bed as you while you were moaning my name.”

Blake’s brain goes blank at that. Moaning her name? She doesn’t remember that, but she definitely doesn’t think that Amory is lying. She blushes again and turns away from Amory. She buries her head in the pillow.

“Shut up,” Blake says, trying to deny everything. “No I wasn’t.”

“You definitely were,” Amory says, “don’t deny it.”

“I can deny it if I want to.”

“Look at me,” Amory says.

“Nope,” Blake says, shaking her head into the pillow. “I’m so good.”

“No, really,” Amory says, reaching over and grabbing Blake by the roots of her short hair. “Look at me.”

She grabs Blake’s hair and forces her to look at her, but at the rough grabbing of her hair, Blake moans and Amory just laughs. She looks completely shocked by what just happened and she lets go of Blake’s hair.

Blake complies to Amory’s demand and looks at her, crossing her arms around her chest and trying to avoid her eyes. This is so embarrassing. Blake doesn’t know what to do or feel. All she knows is that she feels humiliated and concerned. But, she

supposes, the good thing is that Amory doesn't seem to be angry with her.

She looks at Amory and notices that she's laughing. No, she seems to be enjoying Blake's humiliation.

"Did you even manage to come?" Amory asks, so matter-of-fact like this is nothing to her. But this is everything to Blake and she blushes again and shakes her head.

"How come?" Amory asks.

"Because you just woke up!" she exclaims incredulously.

"Well, you didn't seem to have a problem with it while I was asleep," Amory points out. "So don't let me being awake stop you."

"What?" Blake asks, thoroughly confused. Amory really doesn't seem to have a problem with this at all and that causes Blake's brain to stutter. Shouldn't she be upset?

Amory moves closer to Blake, so close that their lips are almost touching and Blake's breath hitches.

"Wh-what are you doing?" Blake stutters.

"I want to see you," Amory whispers, and Blake's brain just goes brrr.

"Huh?" Blake asks, not understanding, and that's when Amory does something that she definitely would have never expected. She kisses her. Blake gasps as she feels Amory's lips on hers. They're soft and the kiss is sweet and when Amory pulls away, Blake wants more.

Blake moves back to where Amory is and kisses her again. Their lips move together and Blake presses her lips hard against Amory's, tilting her head back against her pillow in the process.

Amory moans and Blake gasps against her. She wants to hear that sound again. Amory sounds so good when she moans, and Blake can feel herself growing wetter.

"Please?" Blake begs.

"Oh, poor thing," Amory teases. "Do you need more?"

"Yes," Blake begs.

7

AMORY

Amory can't believe she's doing this. She kisses Blake, biting her lip in the process. Blake moans and Amory moves so that she's on top of her.

Blake gasps when Amory's hips meet hers and Amory moans into Blake's lips. She wasn't horny last night when she fell asleep but after waking up to a show, she definitely is now, and there's nothing that turns her on more than moans. Blake definitely delivers on that front, gasping and moaning as she kisses her.

Amory bites Blake's lip again and Blake wraps an arm around her waist, pulling her closer. Amory gets the message and moves closer to Blake, putting her knee in between her legs. She almost laughs when Blake bucks her hips and grinds on her knee.

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Blake whimpers and Amory does laugh at that, thoroughly enjoying watching the normally composed Blake so needy and desperate.

Blake is still wearing her pajama pants, and so is Amory. Amory decides that she needs to fix that. The two of them are definitely way too clothed.

Amory takes her fingers and puts them in the waistband of Blake's pants. "You need to take these off," she says.

Blake blushes a little, but she's starting to get over the initial shock of Amory reciprocating her desires, and she smirks at Amory as she pulls them down, underwear and all.

"Come here, baby," Blake says, "let me undress you."

Now it's Amory's turn to blush, and she does, feeling her face heat up from embarrassment. It doesn't help that she's already hot with desire. But now Blake wants to see her naked, and she wants that more than anything right now, but the embarrassment doesn't stop.

Amory moves closer to Blake and gives her a kiss on the lips. It's sweet and short and within the next second, Amory is lying on her back on the bed with Blake on top of her. She has to admit that the switch in positions is hot, and she gasps at the sudden change.

Blake moves her hands to the hem of Amory's shirt, which Amory decides is definitely not fair considering Blake still has her shirt on. But she lets Blake pull her

shirt over her head and stare at her breasts.

“Fuck,” Blake says breathlessly, “You’re so hot.”

Amory smiles, basking in the attention. She reaches for Blake’s shirt, but Blake takes her hands and pins them above her head.

“Uh uh. Pants first, and then I’ll take off my shirt.”

Amory frowns but lifts her hips so that Blake can let go of her hands and relieve her of her pants and underwear. Amory is not entirely pleased by that. Even though the air feels good on her bare legs, she was enjoying being pinned down by Blake. That’s a new development. No one has ever pinned her down before and now she wants more of it.

However, there’s something that she wants a little more right now—Blake’s shirt on the floor.

Amory reaches for her shirt and helps Blake pull it over her head. Once she takes it off, Amory throws it onto the floor where it joins the rest of their clothes.

Amory stares at Blake’s tits. They’re full and round and her nipples are dark brown and erect, and she wants to grab at them, to pinch Blake’s nipples and learn what sounds she’ll make when she does.

Amory reaches a hand up and grabs Blake’s left breast, squeezing hard and Blake gasps. The gasp quickly turns into a moan when Amory pinches her nipple and Amory looks between Blake’s thighs to see that they’re slick.

Amory isn’t much better. She desperately wants Blake to fuck her, wants her fingers inside of her and maybe some vibrations or maybe Blake’s mouth on her clit.

“I, um,” Amory starts, a little embarrassed, “I brought a vibrator with me.”

Blake laughs. “There’s no need to be embarrassed,” she says. “I brought a whole collection of toys with me.”

Amory frowns in confusion. “So why didn’t you use them on yourself?”

“Because when I brought them, I wasn’t expecting to share a room or bed with anyone,” Blake says. “I mean, why haven’t you used yours?”

Amory is embarrassed at how she didn’t think of that. The desire must really be clouding her thoughts. “The same reason.”

“Exactly,” Blake says with a laugh. “Though if I’d known you were going to be okay with it, I definitely wouldn’t have held back.”

“I didn’t know I’d be okay with it, but it turns out I couldn’t help myself.”

Blake smirks at her. “Good to know,” she says. “So, your toy or mine?”

“Um,” Amory pauses for a second to think, not sure if she’s comfortable using Blake’s toys on her. “Mine.”

“Where is it?” Blake asks.

“The side pouch of my suitcase.”

Blake gets up and walks over to Amory’s suitcase. She unzips the side pouch and pulls out the pink rabbit vibrator.

Blake holds it up to where Amory can see. “This one?” she asks, turning it on and

Amory can hear the vibrations.

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“Yeah,” Amory says, still blushing.

Blake walks over to the bed and turns the vibrator off. Amory is a little confused and frowns at Blake.

“I’ll get to that in a minute,” Blake says. “I want to feel you first.”

Amory gasps at that and Blake climbs on top of her.

Blake spreads her fingers across Amory’s bare thighs and Amory gasps at Blake’s warm fingers. Her thighs are incredibly sensitive, and any touch there serves to turn her on. Her skin tingles and she bucks her hips slightly.

Blake laughs and moves her fingers closer to Amory’s pussy. She puts two fingers inside of her and gently spreads them around while Amory begs for more.

“Please,” Amory begs.

Blake feels so good inside of her.

“Patience, darling,” Blake says, using her other hand to rub Amory’s clit. She moves over her and plants a sweet kiss on her lips. Amory kisses back, harder and desperate for more. She wants a heavy make-out session.

One of Amory’s favorite things is kissing, making out, hot and desperate. She honestly sometimes prefers that to having fingers inside of her, but right now she’s definitely not complaining as Blake finger fucks her.

She does want more, though. The high speed of her vibrator is what she's relied on to get herself off for years and she doesn't even know if she can get off without it. She wonders, however, if she could come from Blake's skilled fingers and thinks that she probably could. She's forgotten what it's like to have sex with another woman. It's been too long.

Blake gives back to Amory what she wants, kissing her harder, and she gently bites her lip before trailing kisses down to her neck. Amory moans and bucks her hips, moaning louder when Blake's fingers hit her g-spot and she feels a jolt of pleasure throughout her entire body. Amory hasn't felt such a sensation in years.

"Do you want the vibrator now?" Blake asks, fucking her gently, biting into Amory's neck. She whispers into her ear, making her shiver.

Amory thinks for a moment and then shakes her head. "No, I want this, you... fucking me... faster please."

Blake grants her request and Amory shouts in pleasure. She takes a hand and covers her mouth. She hasn't made a sound like that in forever. Blake just laughs.

"It's okay, baby," she says, "I like your sounds."

Amory groans and then moans loudly as Blake hits her g-spot again. She feels it heavily throughout her body, and now she wants something more on her clit. The idea that she could come from Blake hitting that spot terrifies her, and her fingers aren't moving fast enough on her clit. Amory can barely find her g-spot on herself and she usually comes from clitoral stimulation, not fucking.

"Can you get one of your toys?" Amory asks.

"Sure baby," Blake says before shortly coming back to the bed with a large wand

vibrator, the kind Amory has always wanted but could never justify spending that much money on herself for a sex toy.

“Do you know how to use one of these?” Blake asks.

“I’m sure I can figure it out,” Amory says. She is a doctor, after all, how hard can a sex toy be?

And she does figure it out and gasps the moment the toy touches her clit. Blake laughs slightly, kissing her thighs and Amory gasps again. Her thighs are beyond sensitive, and her biggest turn on.

It suddenly only takes seconds, the intense vibrations on her clit and Blake’s skilled fingers fucking her G spot, and Amory comes screaming loudly in the cabin.

It is overwhelming and without doubt better than Amory can ever remember sex being.

When Amory’s orgasm subsides and her mind finally just about returns to her body, she feels Blake’s fingers slide out from inside her. Blake takes the toy from Amory’s limp hand and washes it in the bathroom. She then comes back to the bed and cuddles Amory while she gets herself off with the wand.

Amory wants to lend a hand, but Blake doesn’t invite her to and she is still kind of out of it after her own orgasm.

Before she has time to further contemplate it, Blake is moaning loudly and coming and it is the hottest thing Amory has ever seen. Blake’s head is tipped back and her eyes are closed. Her smooth brown skin has a wet sheen of sweat across it and it shimmers in the dark.

Her breasts rise and fall with her ragged breaths.

Fuck, why is she so hot?

They fall asleep tangled up together shortly after. They certainly didn't talk about it. Amory wanted to, but she couldn't find the words and Blake was so satisfied and sleepy, she couldn't find it in herself to break the spell, so when Blake opened her arm to let Amory nuzzle into her, she took the opportunity and it was only seconds later when Blake was snoring peacefully.

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Deep breaths of the sexy musky scent of Blake soon put Amory to sleep, too.

The next morning, Amory and Blake go to work, but Amory can't stop thinking about what happened last night. It doesn't help that she's a chronic overthinker and she can't believe that she did that. She slept with Blake Gold, for crying out loud, something that she would have never dreamed of happening. And not only did she enjoy it, but she wants to do it again.

This can't be happening. Not too long ago, she told Blake that she hated her and now she's fucking her? It doesn't make sense, but Amory kind of also doesn't care. She can't stop thinking about how Blake's lips felt against hers and how her fingers felt inside of her.

She also thinks about the time she and Blake have spent with each other, how she's started to really enjoy the other woman's company, and their conversation last night. She's going to be pretty upset when this trip ends, and she finds herself wanting to keep in touch with Blake when they go back to the US, but she's not sure how to bring it up. She wonders how Blake feels about all of this, and she's scared to ask.

She thinks that the two of them should definitely have a conversation about all of this, what they're doing fucking each other, but she's kind of scared to do that. What if Blake changes her mind and decides that having sex with Amory is just too weird for her? It is weird for Amory, too, but at the same time it's not.

She's having feelings toward Blake that she hasn't had in years, desires that she had forgotten she could have, so she just goes through the work day, overthinking and trying to decide how she should feel about Blake. Does she want to just be Africa

fuckbuddies with the other woman, or does she want something more substantial? Amory can't tell.

She continues her day like that, until lunch when she gets the chance to check her phone.

Blake: Can't wait to see you at the cabin later

Blake: I want to make you scream again

Amory feels a rush of desire flooding between her legs.

She looks at the texts and blushes. She then looks at Blake, who is staring at her from across the table, giving her a knowing look.

Amory looks away, but she can't deny the heat that she feels at the promise of a repeat of last night. At least she knows that Blake doesn't regret last night, especially if she wants to do it again.

Now, Amory just has to decide what she wants. It's weird for her. She definitely wants to have sex with Blake again—last night was one of the best sexual experiences she's had in years, but she's also nervous. She's never really been the type to enjoy or have a friends-with-benefits situation. She doesn't know if that's what she wants or if she wants a proper relationship with Blake.

She thinks about it and realizes that she doesn't hate the idea. They've been getting along really well lately, and she seems like a really sweet woman, even if their past history is less than ideal.

She goes back to work, but it's hard to focus. She manages, but barely, and at the end of the day, she's relieved to be able to meet Blake at the front doors.

The two of them walk back to the cabin and all Amory can think about is having Blake's lips on hers.

They get back to the cabin and Amory watches as Blake opens the door. She walks in behind her and immediately closes the door and then grabs Blake by the collar of her shirt.

"Whoa," Blake says, "moving a little fast, aren't we, darling?"

"Says the woman who said she was going to make me scream," Amory retorts.

Blake laughs. "Fair point." She kisses Amory.

It's rough and passionate and Amory wants more. Before long, the two of them are in a heavy make-out session, and Amory moans into Blake's mouth.

Blake pulls back and smiles at her.

"I love those sounds."

Amory blushes a little but smiles back.

"I want to hear you, too," Amory says. Blake is a little vocal in bed, which is good, but she's nowhere near on the same level as Amory. Which is a shame considering moans and dirty talk are some of Amory's biggest turn-ons.

"I'll try my best," Blake says, and Amory smiles at her before pouncing forward.

She grabs Blake's hair and pulls her head to the side before trailing kisses down her throat. Blake moans and squirms against her. Since both of them are professional, she has to be careful not to leave hickies, at least not where people can see them. Under

her clothes, however...

Amory paws at Blake's shirt.

"Off," she growls.

"So demanding," Blake says with a smile. But quick as lightening, Amory's back is pressed against the door to the cabin and her hands are forced to her sides by Blake's.

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“And what on Earth made you think that you’re in charge here, sweetheart?” Blake asks.

She squeezes Amory’s hands and leans in so close that Amory can feel her breath on hers. Then she kisses her, biting her lip so hard in the process that Amory can taste a slight twinge of blood on her tongue. She doesn’t mind, though, she likes it rough.

Amory’s brain goes silent, unable to think of anything except the gorgeous woman who stands in front of her, holding her captive beneath her strong arms. Has Blake always been this strong? Oh God.

Amory squirms a little, testing to see if she can break free, but she can’t, and Blake pushes her harder against the door.

“You’re not going anywhere, sweetheart,” Blake says, shaking her head at Amory. “Not until I say so.”

Amory lets out a high-pitched whimper and her legs shake slightly. She wants Blake to have her way with her, to fuck her, to make her feel as much pleasure as she did last night—more pleasure than she’s felt in years. But she also wants to fuck Blake, to know what she feels like under her fingers. It’s strange for Amory, in the past she didn’t usually bottom. And now she can’t decide what she wants more. It doesn’t seem to matter, though, because Blake is making those decisions for her.

Blake lets go of Amory’s hands but gives her a demanding look. A look that says don’t move. So Amory doesn’t. She just watches as Blake moves her hands to the buttons of her shirt and takes it off in front of Amory. Despite how desperately she

wants to be the one removing Blake's shirt, she can't deny that she definitely enjoys the view.

When Blake removes her bra, Amory can't express how much she wants to reach up and touch her breasts. It takes all of her willpower to remain as she is, stuck to the door and pinned there with Blake's eyes. Blake then removes her pants and underwear and stands in front of Amory, completely naked.

It seems unfair, how Blake is naked while Amory is fully clothed, but Amory trusts that Blake will soon fix that, and she does, reaching for the buttons on Amory's shirt.

She takes the buttons apart slowly, carefully, and Amory is so impatient that she wouldn't mind if Blake were to rip the shirt apart. It's not like she doesn't have others, after all. But no, Blake forces Amory to stand there as her legs shake and she whimpers, wanting her clothes removed as quickly as possible while Blake has other plans.

When Amory is finally as naked as Blake, the two of them stare at each other for a moment, taking in each other's bodies. It's different than last night, fucking in the dark. Now, Amory can see all of Blake and she really likes what she sees. Blake's body is taller than hers, lean and muscular with bigger breasts than Amory anticipated. Her pubic hair is dark and inviting. Her body has the grace and elegance of an athlete. She looks like a beautiful panther, waiting to pounce on its prey.

Amory doesn't reach forward to touch Blake like she wants to, but Blake has no such qualms. Blake reaches out and brushes her fingers across Amory's nipples, causing her to gasp and them to harden.

Blake takes one of them in her mouth and Amory almost falls to the ground at how good it feels. She's weak.

She lets Blake do what she wants but eventually standing still kills her too much to do it any longer. She raises her hands and puts them on Blake's breasts, playing with her nipples as she feels like she's drowning in sensations. Blake doesn't say anything, just laughs against her.

Soon, it all becomes too much and Amory starts to beg for more.

"Please," she says, "just fuck me."

Blake laughs. "You are an impatient pretty little thing, aren't you?" she says, and Amory doesn't know how to respond, so she just nods in affirmation and Blake laughs again.

"Okay, gorgeous, let's get you to the bed."

Blake takes Amory's hand and leads her to the bed where she pushes her on her back.

Amory falls to the bed and looks up at Blake. She looks like a shimmering bronzed goddess, hovering above her, with her short dark hair artfully messy around her face.

Amory gasps when Blake falls on top of her, pressing their bodies together, a thigh in between Amory's legs pressing into her clitoris and Amory bucks her hips to feel the pressure she so desperately desires.

Blake smiles at her and kisses her. Amory can't help but gasp at the kiss and the way Blake's breasts feel squished against hers.

Within a moment, Blake has moved so that her head is in between Amory's thighs, and she looks up at Amory.

Amory knows that she's probably soaking wet, but she can't find it in her to be

embarrassed, not when such a gorgeous woman is staring at her with those dreamy big brown eyes like she's the only person on the planet.

"I want to taste you, sweetheart," Blake says. "Is that okay?"

"Yes," Amory breathes out.

"Good girl," Blake says, and Amory can't deny how that affection has her heart skipping a beat.

Blake goes down on her, and Amory's thighs shake as she does so. In the next few minutes, she feels nothing but pure pleasure from Blake's licks and sucks as she devours her.

Amory feels heat building inside of her and when Blake's strong fingers push inside her and begin to fuck her, her orgasm floods through her body and it feels incredible. Amory doesn't know if she will ever come back down to earth.

When she comes, her entire body shakes and she swears she stops breathing for a moment. She looks over at Blake, whose face is glistening with her come. Blake smiles at Amory and Amory blushes, looking away.

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She pulls herself back to the present moment and reaches over to Blake and takes a soft breast in her hand.

“Let me help you,” Amory says.

“If you insist,” Blake says, moving up to kiss Amory, and Amory can taste herself on Blake’s tongue.

The two of them switch positions, and Amory finds herself at Blake’s feet.

“Do you want a vibrator?” she asks.

“Yes, please,” Blake says.

“Aw,” teases Amory, “Look at who’s being a good girl now.”

Blake growls at her and Amory’s heart stutters. “Watch your mouth,” Blake says.

Amory gets the wand vibrator that they used last night and hands it to Blake so that she can use it on herself while Amory fingers her, feeling how wet she is around her inner thighs before she puts two fingers inside of Blake.

It’s been a while since she’s done this, but even though she’s rusty, there are some skills you don’t forget. Her hands do get tired more than they used to, however, and she has to switch hands every now and then.

When Blake comes, she comes screaming, and Amory smiles at her in satisfaction,

proud that she could make her feel that way.

When they're done, the two of them cuddle up together and Amory wonders where this leaves them. She's never been the type to have one-night stands or do the whole, friends-with-benefits thing, but she doesn't know how Blake feels about this or what she wants, and Amory is kind of scared to ask. She doesn't want to ruin what they already have, or scare Blake away, but she definitely thinks that she wants something more substantial.

She thinks about dating Blake, and realizes that's something that she definitely wants, and she's excited, even if a large part of that terrifies her. She hasn't been in a proper relationship since Natalie, and she's scared that she doesn't know how to love again. She wonders if she can and thinks that she's definitely willing to face her fears and give it a go.

She realizes that she'd have to talk to Blake, though, and comes up with any excuse to avoid that for a while. Amory decides that she will have a conversation with the other woman at some point, but with her anxiety, it's best to wait a while and let things progress naturally for now, see how things go.

8

BLAKE

Blake wakes up in the morning with an arm wrapped around Amory and she smiles to herself, looking at the way the morning light hits Amory's lovely face. This is the first time that she has woken up to be able to watch Amory sleep. Normally Amory wakes before Blake.

Blake smiles at the sleeping Amory and cuddles closer, planting a kiss in her long honey colored hair. She could get used to this; loves the way she feels when she

wakes up in the morning to have Amory in her arms. Even when Amory wakes up first, she loves it because the other woman will often move closer to Blake, and that's all she wants—that sense of closeness, of belonging together.

Blake lies there for a while, simply content and thinking to herself. She wonders where this relationship leaves them. Blake wants something more substantial with Amory, but she doesn't know how Amory feels about that. She wonders if Amory would even want to date her or be in a relationship after they leave Zambia.

She wants her to—like really wants that. She wants to help Amory learn how to date and love again. And even though she knows she's part of the reason Amory doesn't, she wants to help her rebuild the trust she's lost in others.

Maybe Blake is a bit of a romantic. She's never thought of herself as one before, but being in Zambia with her old rival is starting to change those things for her. She often finds herself daydreaming about a future with Amory or imagining all of the dates they'll go on when they get back to the US.

She can show Amory her favorite restaurant and parks, and introduce Amory to her cat. She wonders if Amory is a cat person and remembers that Natalie would sometimes talk about the cat she shared with her girlfriend.

Blake coughs and that's what finally wakes Amory. She looks at Amory's deep blue-green eyes and smiles at her.

“Dammit,” Blake says, “I wasn't trying to wake you.”

“It's okay,” Amory replies, “I need to get up anyway. We both do.”

Blake groans. “Five more minutes.”

Amory laughs and sits up in the bed. “Come on, lazy bones,” she says, “we have work to do.”

“Fine, but just for the record, I’m not happy about it.”

“Oh, come on,” Amory chides, “you love your job.”

“Yes,” Blake agrees, “but I love being in your arms more.

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Amory rolls her eyes. “You’re such a romantic.”

“Maybe a little bit,” Blake says.

“Come on, babe,” Amory says, “let’s get up.”

Blake’s chest flutters a little as Amory stands up and walks over to the kitchen area. Since when did Amory start calling her babe?

“Are eggs okay for breakfast?” Amory asks. “Or do you want pancakes?”

“Um...” Blake tries to think while Amory is on the other side of the cabin. “Not gonna lie, I think pancakes sound great.”

“Damn,” Amory says. “I was kind of really wanting eggs.”

“Well, why can’t we have both?” Blake asks.

Amory laughs. “You’re so right. Both it is.” She grabs a couple of frying pans and opens the fridge. Blake stands up from the bed and walks over to join Amory in the kitchen area as she checks her phone.

Jenna: Hey, r u okay? I haven’t heard from you in a couple days

Blake ignores the text message for now. It’s true that she hasn’t been texting Jenna as much as usual, but she doesn’t know what to say to her. She doesn’t want to continue their strange little relationship, but she still likes Jenna as a friend, and she doesn’t

know how to keep her and still break off their sex arrangement. Then again, with Jenna it was always a no-strings-attached kind of thing, so maybe Blake is overthinking it.

Blake:I'm good, sorry. Also, I've kind of found someone.

Jenna:Found someone as in a fuck buddy or found someone as in found someone?

Blake:I don't know yet but I want it to be more than just sex

Jenna:oooo. Get it girl. I believe in you

Blake:Thanks, lol.

Jenna:No problem, just don't be a stranger, okay?

Blake:You got it

"Who are you texting?" Amory asks, frying some eggs while Blake periodically checks her phone as she makes pancake batter.

"A friend," Blake says. "Her name is Jenna."

"Cool."

"She's a doctor, too."

"Of course she is," Amory laughs. "You know, I can't remember the last time I had a friend who wasn't a doctor, a resident, or going to medical school with me. Probably college. Most of my friends then were English majors."

“Oh, that’s right,” Blake says, remembering details about Amory’s life from when they used to spend all of their time together. They may have been rivals, and always fighting and trying to sabotage one another, but Blake has a good memory. “I forgot you got your bachelor’s degree in English.”

“Yep,” Amory says.

“What made you choose that instead of something more traditional like pre-med?”

“Well, I didn’t know that I wanted to be a doctor when I was looking into colleges, and I’ve always liked writing. Which came in handy when I went to medical school. I’m really good at research papers.”

“I remember,” Blake admits. “I was always so jealous of you when they would use your papers as the class example. I hated it so much.”

Amory laughs. “You and everyone else. The number of snide comments I would get because of that was insane.”

Blake frowns, knowing that she was definitely one of those people. Sometimes she wishes she could go back in time and not be as horrible to Amory as she was. She wonders if Amory now feels the same.

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While Amory finishes the eggs, Blake takes the other frying pan and begins the pancakes.

When the food is done, the two of them eat and watch the sun rise. They have to wake up really early in the morning if they want to have time for breakfast before work, and it is important for them to eat beforehand. Working at the clinic takes a lot of energy and the food they have for lunch isn't nearly filling enough.

"Are you ready to go?" Amory asks when they finish washing the dishes.

"Yep," Blake says.

The two of them walk out together and walk to the clinic. Blake really wants to hold Amory's hand as the two of them walk, but she doesn't. She doesn't know what kind of relationship she has with Amory, and she also doesn't know how Amory feels about public displays of affection, even if it's just hand holding.

Blake decides that she's overthinking this too much, but in her defense, it's been a while since she's felt anything like this. Like Amory, she hasn't dated much, mostly having relationships primarily for sex like with Jenna. She also realizes that she should probably talk to Amory about what she wants out of their relationship or what all she's okay with. Blake doesn't know if Amory is okay with handholding, but she should definitely figure that out.

She is glad that Jenna seems to be okay with her wanting to pursue a relationship with someone else. Thinking back on it, she doesn't know why she was worried. She knew where their relationship stood, so she shouldn't have been worried.

Blake goes into the clinic with Amory and then they both get to work, going their separate ways.

Blake has gotten a lot better at her job since beginning to sleep with Amory. She's no longer insatiably horny, but she's also had more time to get used to the work. She's also learned how to comfort her patients without being able to speak their language. Blake isn't an overly smiley person, but she has learned that a smile goes a long way in communicating with a language barrier. That and her other facial expressions and body language are often used when speaking to her patients.

She gets a hug from one of them after she treats them. She smiles to them and hands them the prescription for antibiotics. Technically, they're not supposed to hug patients, but no one actually cares, especially when a patient is the one to initiate.

It's kind of like that in the US. She's gotten plenty of hugs from patients as a thank you or relief at good news. Blake kind of misses her clinic back home. She knew this would happen, that she'd get homesick, but she's grateful it's not too bad.

She remembers her first time traveling abroad for work, and how miserable she was at times. She loved it, and definitely loved the experience enough to do it again, but there were times when it felt unbearable. She thinks that Amory is starting to get that way a little bit.

Yesterday at supper, Amory kept talking about her mom and her work at home and all of her regular patients and how she worried about them and is excited to get back to see them when they're done in Zambia. Amory works in family medicine primarily with children, not at an urgent care like Blake does. And Blake knows that the bonds formed between a doctor and patient in family medicine are much more intense than in her work where she often doesn't see the same patient twice.

Blake felt bad for her last night and gave Amory a back massage, which soon

devolved into sex, but at least it seemed to do the job at keeping Amory distracted from her homesickness. Blake decides that she's going to try her best to keep Amory from getting overly stressed from being in a new location and tries to think about what all she can do for her given their limited resources. Maybe she can make a nice dessert tonight or something to cheer her up.

When Blake gets done with her work, she is ready to go before Amory as always, but she waits for her like usual. Blake loves it when Amory gets done and the two of them walk back to the cabin together. It's very domestic even if it started off as Blake wanting to apologize without words for what she did to Amory.

It's strange to Blake, knowing that she slept with Amory's girlfriend all of those years ago and now she's sleeping with Amory. It kind of hurts her brain if she thinks about it, so she tries not to. She does have to admit that she enjoys Amory more than she ever did Natalie, even if Amory is a little rusty.

Blake is also better at sex than back then, too. She was a lot less experienced all of those years ago, a lot younger and self concerned with her own pleasure. Now, however, she loves making Amory feel good.

When Amory finishes work, she walks over to where Blake is standing and Blake gives her a wide smile, noticing how exhausted Amory looks.

"Tired?" Blake asks.

Amory nods. "Yeah, and I got thrown up on earlier."

Blake grimaces. "Gross."

"Very," Amory says. "I'm lucky I always keep a spare set of clothes in my locker, but I threw away the old ones."

“I don’t blame you. How about we head over to the cabin and you can take a shower?”

Amory groans. “A shower sounds great,” she says, “I feel disgusting.”

The two of them walk back to the cabin together and when they’re almost there, Blake decides to bite the bullet and takes Amory’s hand in hers.

Amory doesn’t pull away like Blake was afraid of and instead, she squeezes Blake’s hand as they walk. Blake smiles to herself. This is exactly what she wanted, and it feels so good to get any affection from Amory. She wants to talk to her, to establish some sort of official relationship, but at the same time she’s nervous. She doesn’t want to scare her off.

When they get back to the cabin, the first thing Amory does is let go of Blake’s hand and walk inside to the shower. She leaves the bathroom door open and Blake looks over at it, tempted to walk in there with her.

Before she can decide to, however, Blake gets a phone call from Jenna.

“Hey, what’s up?” Blake answers the phone, concerned. Jenna doesn’t usually call her, preferring to text. She’s worried that something is wrong, especially since Jenna is the one house-sitting for her while she’s in Zambia.

“There’s a problem,” Jenna says.

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Blake feels her stomach drop and her mind immediately goes to the worst-case scenario, like someone broke in or Jenna got hurt. “What’s wrong?” she asks.

“There’s something wrong with your cat,” Jenna says.

“Millie?” Blake asks, and thinks to herself, That’s worse than a break in! “What’s wrong?”

“She keeps throwing up,” Jenna says. “I just got off the phone with the vet, but they can’t get her in until tomorrow morning.”

“Did she eat something wrong?” Blake asks. “Does she have any other symptoms?” Blake doesn’t really know why she’s asking other than concern. She’s not a vet. Anything other than humans become sick and she’s just as clueless as the rest of the world.

“No,” Jenna says, “and I have no clue why she’s throwing up. She was just fine yesterday, but when I came home from work today, she wasn’t.”

“Okay,” Blake says, not knowing what to do. She’s had Millie for five years, and she’s always been healthy. She should have a lot more life in her. Blake is worried that she’s dying or something, and it also doesn’t help that Blake is in a completely different country, with no way to get to Millie just out of the blue.

“I’m sorry,” Jenna says.

“It’s not your fault.”

“But I know how much she means to you,” Jenna says, “and I don’t know what’s wrong. I’m worried I did something.”

“I’m sure you didn’t do anything,” Blake assures her. “You’re good with animals and you know what to do. You’re going to the vet tomorrow, right?” she asks.

“Yeah,” Jenna says. “I rescheduled one of my appointments and I’m going there as soon as they open.”

Blake sighs in relief, grateful for Jenna, and grateful that she’s watching out for Mille. “Okay,” Blake says, “just keep me updated, okay?”

“I will,” Jenna says right as Amory walks out of the bathroom with a towel around her waist.

“Hi,” Amory greets with a smile and a wave. Blake looks at Amory and gives her a smile, but it’s sad and strained.

Amory frowns at the look on Blake’s face. “What’s wrong?” she asks.

Blake just shakes her head and turns her attention back to her phone call with Jenna. “Thank you,” she says, “and thanks for telling me.”

“Of course,” Jenna says, “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Blake says.

She ends the call and turns to Amory, who has a frown on her face.

“Who was that?” Amory asks.

“My friend,” Blake says, sitting on the bed. “It’s been a shit day for both of us now, I guess.”

Amory kind of ignores that for now, focusing on other details of the very short part of the conversation she has heard.

“Was she your girlfriend?” Amory asks.

“What? No. She’s just a friend.” Blake does decide that it’s time to come clean about her and Jenna’s previous relationship. After all, if Blake wants any longevity in her relationship with Amory, she should know.

“We did used to fuck some,” Blake says, “but—” I won’t anymore is what Blake wants to say, but she’s interrupted by Amory.

“What?!” Amory exclaims. “You mean to tell me you’ve been sleeping with me while someone else thinks you’re with them?”

“What? No,” Blake says, “it isn’t like that.” She wants to explain, to tell Amory that her and Jenna were just friends with benefits, and that she broke it off with Jenna, but Amory continues.

“She told you she loves you,” Amory says. “You said it back, for crying out loud.”

“Because we’re friends,” Blake says, “I tell all my friends that I love them.”

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“You haven’t changed,” Amory says, appearing to not have heard Blake at all. “You say you have, but you haven’t. You’re still just a cheater except now you made me cheat with you.”

“No I didn’t,” Blake says. “Neither of us are cheaters because she isn’t my girlfriend.”

But Amory doesn’t listen. Her face is red with anger, and she goes to her bag and grabs some clothes before she locks herself in the bathroom.

When she emerges, fully dressed with shoes and everything, Blake frowns.

“Amory, please,” Blake begs for her to listen, “let’s just talk. This is a huge misunderstanding,” she says, but Amory leaves the cabin, ignoring Blake behind her.

Blake doesn’t know what to do, so she talks to the only person she thinks might understand, she calls Jenna again.

Jenna picks up the phone, sounding a little confused. “Blake? What’s up?”

Blake can’t blame her confusion considering they just hung up moments ago, but she tries to explain to Jenna what is going on. “Something went wrong with Amory,” she says.

“What do you mean?” Jenna asks.

“She heard me and you on the phone,” Blake says, “she thinks we’re dating.”

“Wait, what?” Jenna asks in confusion and surprise. “Did you tell her that we’re not?”

“I tried to, but she wouldn’t listen. I don’t know what to do or why she would think that. All she heard was me tell you that I love you and she went berserk. I think I fucked up.”

“What do you mean?” Jenna asks.

“I mean, I betrayed her trust all of those years ago,” Blake says, “no wonder she thinks that I’m cheating on her now. I don’t exactly have the best track record with those things that she knows about.”

“Hold on,” Jenna says, “first of all, she’s a grown adult. You are not completely responsible for how she handles her issues. Yes, what you did was messed up, but she should know better than to jump to conclusions and assume stuff that flat out isn’t true. This isn’t all on you.”

“I feel like it is,” Blake says.

“It’s not,” Jenna says. “And I know that you care about this girl, so you need to find a way to make her listen to you.”

“I should have told her about you earlier,” Blake says.

“I mean, yeah, probably,” Jenna says, “but you can’t change that now. Now, you just need to try your best to fix whatever you need to.”

Blake sighs, but she’s scared. She doesn’t want to hurt Amory more, and she wonders if this is the universe’s way of telling her that she doesn’t deserve a relationship, not after what she’s done. Blake feels tears threatening her eyes. Losing Amory hurts so

much.

Amory deserves so much more than this.

What have I done?

9

AMORY

Amory paces around outside the cabin, not sure what to do. She doesn't want to go back inside and see Blake. Her heart is a sea of hurt right now and she's not sure what to do about it. Mostly she just feels stupid. She knew who Blake was, yet she let herself trust her, believe that she was a different person. But she now knows that's not true. Once a cheater, always a cheater.

She wants to cry, but she also wants to be strong. She doesn't want Blake to know that she cared, that she could see the two of them being something more. Now that dream has been shattered. She can't believe that Blake had someone else all along.

She thinks of Natalie, the betrayal that she felt when finding Blake in her bed. This time it isn't as intense, she didn't lose a partner of years to cheating, but it's still the same pain even if it's lesser. But it is compounded onto all of her other pain from the past. She doesn't know what to do with herself, so she keeps walking.

She makes another lap around the cabin and wonders what is wrong with Blake for her to be okay with doing things like this. She could maybe understand the last time with Natalie. She didn't know, and she was young and dumb, but now? Now Amory wonders if Blake was even telling the truth about Natalie. Did she really not know that Natalie was her girlfriend at the time? Or was she targeting Amory? Amory can't help but question everything Blake's ever said to her.

Amory wonders if Blake ever cared about her like Amory was starting to think she did, or was Amory just a convenient way for Blake to get laid?

In a way, this justifies the fear that Amory had about needing to talk to Blake about where their relationship stood. She never did get around to that conversation and now Amory thinks that's for the best, before she could get hurt any more.

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It's starting to get dark, and Amory knows that she should go inside the cabin soon, but she doesn't want to, doesn't want to find herself face to face with the woman who has broken her heart not once, but twice. This is almost as bad as the time when Amory was a teenager and got back with an ex-girlfriend. She was an idiot then and she's an idiot now.

She keeps berating herself for trusting Blake as she paces. Eventually she gives up on the self hatred and realizes that it's not her fault. She's a trusting person and she really wanted to trust Blake, wanted to love her. It's not her fault that Blake betrayed that trust. Now her anger is directed fully at Blake. How dare she? Does she not know what she did or does she just not care? Is she really that vindictive? What on Earth is wrong with that woman?

Amory gives up on her pacing and decides that she's going to go back into the cabin with her head held high. She's not going to let Blake know how hurt she is, just how much she hates the other woman. Right now, she wants to hurt Blake in the same way that she's hurting, but she doesn't know how and she also doesn't want to be that kind of a person, so she'll settle for ignoring her until it's time for their trip to end. Hopefully by then, this pain in her chest will have faded a little bit.

Before she can go into the cabin, her phone chimes a notification. Apparently, her mom knows when her daughter might need her.

Mom: How's everything going?

Amory: Not great

Mom: What happened sweetheart?

Amory: I got paired with a massive bitch

Mom: Blake? But you told me the two of you were finally getting along

Amory: Well I was wrong

Mom: What happened?

Amory pauses in front of the cabin door. She definitely doesn't want to tell her mom that she was sleeping with the enemy. Her mom barely knows what happened between her, Blake, and Natalie. All she told her was that Natalie cheated on her, not with who.

She does, however, know about their old rivalry from medical school and her residency. Amory spent who knows how many phone calls and text messages complaining about Blake Gold.

Amory: She hasn't changed like I thought she did

Mom: Oh honey, I'm sorry

Amory: It's fine, I just feel a little dumb and angry

Mom: It's not your fault for trusting someone, but be careful with anger

Mom: You don't want it to get in the way of your work

Amory knows that her mom is right, that being angry is only going to negatively affect her, especially if Blake doesn't care about what she did to her. But,

unfortunately for her, that's a lot easier said than done.

Amory has never really considered herself an angry person, but Blake has always had a way of getting under her skin. For as long as she has known Blake, she has made Amory feel things that she doesn't normally feel. All of this anger that she doesn't know what to do with makes her want to confide in her mom, even if she's not sure how her mom will react. She's worried that her mom will berate her or think that she's an idiot. Even though her mom has never done those things before, Amory's self hatred is getting in the way of her reasoning, and she's scared.

Amory: We were a little more than cabin mates

Mom: What do you mean?

Amory: Not at first, but after a while we started sleeping together

Amory: I wanted to date her

Mom: What happened?

Amory: She has someone else

Mom: Oh honey

Amory: I caught them on the phone together, Blake told her she loved her

Mom: Is that all?

Amory: Isn't that enough?

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Mom: Did she say she was her girlfriend?

Amory: She said they were sleeping together in the US

Mom: Call me

Amory calls her mom.

Her mom answers immediately. "Tell me everything," she says, so Amory does.

"Look, baby," her mom says, "I'm not going to tell you that Blake doesn't have a secret girlfriend, because I suppose it's possible that she does, but it sounds like you're thinking with a lot of anger right now and not your head."

"I don't know what else to think," Amory says, "Blake told me they were sleeping together."

"But they're not right now," Kara says. "I don't know, it just seems like something is off, like there's more than you know in this situation. Like if she was trying to cheat, why would she tell you about it?"

"I don't know," Amory says, "guilt?"

"It doesn't sound like that, honey," Kara says, "I think you two should sit down and talk about what's going on."

"I don't think I can right now," Amory says.

Kara sighs, but she doesn't try to convince her further. She doesn't really know what to say to her daughter or how to comfort her. "Just take care of yourself, okay?"

"Okay, Mom," Amory says, and she does feel a little calmer at talking to her mom. Maybe she is ready to talk to Blake.

However, when Amory walks into the cabin, her fury is reunited at seeing that there is food on the table.

"I made food," Blake says.

"I can see that," Amory retorts. She was outside for who knows how long, and all Blake could do is make food? It all just seems so heartless to Amory.

"There's some for you on the plate where you normally sit," Blake says.

"I'm not hungry," Amory says, and Blake frowns. Good, Amory thinks, let her be upset. At least it's over something as stupid as food, not someone lying to you and sleeping with you when they have someone waiting for them back home.

Amory goes over to the bed and takes off the cover and the pillow that she used on her first night here.

"What are you doing?" Blake asks.

"I'm not sleeping with you again," Amory states, "I'll stick to the floor."

"Can't we just talk about this?"

"There's nothing to talk about," Amory says.

“I think there is,” Blake says.

“Well I don’t care what you think,” Amory shoots back.

“It’s not what you think,” Blake says.

“Why don’t you just shut up?” Amory asks. She arranges the blanket and pillow onto the floor.

“I’m not going to shut up,” Blake says, “you’re upset and I care about you.”

That sets Amory off. “You have no right to care about me!” she yells at Blake, ignoring her hurt expression. “So why don’t you just shut the fuck up and leave me alone? You got what you wanted from me and now it’s over.”

Blake doesn’t respond, she just stands there, stunned. She then mumbles something under her breath, but it’s so quiet that Amory can’t hear her, and right now she doesn’t care.

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Amory cuddles up into her makeshift pallet and closes her eyes.

It's incredibly uncomfortable, especially after spending so much time getting used to the bed, but she refuses to bend or change her mind about sleeping on the floor. She keeps her eyes closed and hopes that eventually she'll be able to fall asleep, despite it only being supper time. She just wants to sleep and forget everything that's ever happened between her and Blake.

It doesn't work, unfortunately, and Amory stays up all night, thinking and in an uncomfortable position.

In the middle of the night, her stomach begins to growl. She ignores it at first, but after a while it becomes difficult to do. She looks over at the table, where her food still sits. Even though it's been hours, the stir fry still smells delicious. She wants some, so she stands up. She looks at the bed to make sure that Blake is still asleep. She is. Amory walks over to the table, trying her best to be quiet and not wake Blake.

She eats all of the food that is on her plate and is still almost hungry for more. But, she decides, she'll have to wait until the morning when she can have breakfast.

Amory quietly washes the dishes and puts them away. She knows that Blake will know what she did when she wakes up in the morning, but she can't bring herself to care, even if the idea of Blake gaining any kind of satisfaction from Amory eating her food pisses her off.

Amory walks back over to her little pallet and tries, once again, to fall asleep. And again, it doesn't work. She had hoped that with a belly full of food, it would be easier

to sleep, but that proves to not be the case. So Amory lies there, thinking about how much she hates Blake, until the sunrise.

Amory wants nothing more than to be home right now. She loves her job, and loves that she's helping people who really need it, but being around Blake is impossible and hurts her fragile heart.

She wants her mom and she feels like a little girl, wanting to go home to cry to momma. But her mom has always been there for her, always helped her when she's down. She needs that right now, needs the comfort.

Throughout the day, Amory tries to focus on her job, but it's hard. There's too much occupying her thoughts. Blake, her homesickness, Natalie, and the fact that she didn't get any sleep last night. All of those factors come together to create a storm of emotions and distractedness inside of Amory.

She's really lucky that the work is repetitive, that for the most case, she's treating the same disease over and over again. There are different levels of severity, sure, but for the most part it's very methodic. It helps keep her from making mistakes. It does not, however, keep her from overthinking. She swears, Blake's betrayal has thrown her into the stages of grief and now she's at sadness.

She wishes that she could find someone to treat her right, to not cheat on her or treat her like a side piece. She just wants something long-term, wholesome, and fulfilling. She wants someone she can trust. She can't trust Blake and doesn't know why she ever thought she could.

Their relationship has been rocky the entire time they've known each other, after all, and even though it seemed like things were getting better, that Blake truly had changed, she should have expected otherwise. It's her fault, really, and she can't help but feel ashamed of herself for wanting a relationship with a woman she should have

known couldn't be trusted or give her what she needs.

When it's time to go home for the day, Amory sees Blake standing near the doors, waiting for her, looking so beautiful and casually sexy with her short dark hair flopping over her face, but she can't deal with that. She doesn't want to. She shouldn't have to. Blake should know better than to act like she did nothing wrong or to continue their little rituals when Amory wants nothing to do with her.

Amory walks right past Blake, ignoring her and her attempts to greet Amory as she does so. When she gets back to the cabin, she opens her laptop and decides that if she's tired and can't seem to think of anything other than Blake, she might as well read in order to distract herself.

It doesn't help, however. All Amory has downloaded on her laptop are romance books, and those are definitely not the move right now. She groans to herself and closes her laptop, pacing around the cabin for a moment. Blake watches her, sitting on the bed, but she doesn't say anything and Amory's glad of that. She doesn't think that she could handle that right now. All she wants right now is to be alone and cry, but that's kind of impossible given their situation.

Amory decides that it's time to make supper, so she walks over to the kitchen area. Blake stands up, looking as though she wants to join her, and Amory looks over at Blake and glares at her. Blake immediately sits down again, looking dejected. She opens her mouth as if she's going to talk, but Amory glares at her again, and Blake closes her mouth.

Good, Amory thinks, she really doesn't want to know what Blake has to say right now. Her mom's words replay in her head, and she knows that they probably should have some sort of conversation, especially if they are going to live together for the rest of their time in Zambia, but Amory can't stand the thought of talking to Blake.

Her stomach ties in knots, and there's a sharp pain in her chest every time she looks at her; she can't imagine what she'll feel like if Blake tries to talk to her, if they try to have a conversation. In Amory's mind, Blake has already done the unforgivable, so there's no point in talking about it. Amory just wants to get through the rest of their trip in silence and with seeing Blake as little as possible.

Somehow, Amory feels more hatred toward Blake now than she did when they arrived. It's strange, she went from hating her, to forgiving her, to hating her again, and all of these emotions are like a roller coaster, giving Amory whiplash.

Amory makes supper, more pasta, except this time she pairs it with rice. She's been craving rice ever since last night and decides to make some even though she knows it probably won't be as good as Blake's, but she decides to try.

At first, while cooking, Amory is tempted to only cook enough for herself and leave Blake to fend for herself, but that just seems unnecessarily cruel. Amory hates the person she feels Blake has turned her into, someone cruel and wanting to hurt another person.

She supposes she never really got to hurt Blake enough for what she did with Natalie, and now that's all Amory wants, to make Blake feel the way she feels—heartbroken, betrayed and unbearably lonely. But Amory fights against that instinct to be outright cruel to Blake, and she makes enough food for both of them.

When she's done, she prepares two plates and leaves them on the table, but Blake doesn't come over to eat when Amory does, like she was half expecting. Instead, she waits until Amory goes to wash her plate to sit down at the table and eat. Amory decides that this is good, that Blake is following her plan to ignore her perfectly.

Amory doesn't really know what to do for entertainment now. She definitely doesn't feel like reading a book on her laptop, and she's absolutely not playing poker with

Blake like she has been. But, she decides, there are other games she can play with her cards.

She gets out her cards and decides that if she can't read to pass the time, she should play solitaire. So, she does, spending hours on the game and trying to numb her brain as much as possible. She ignores Blake as she moves around their cabin, and after a while, Amory gets tired, and goes to her little pallet. She falls into an uneasy sleep.

10

BLAKE

Blake feels like shit. She has a bad cough and she has been miserable for the last several days. Amory still isn't talking to her, and she doesn't know what to do. Or maybe she does know what to do and she's just scared.

She's pretty sure her cough is just from allergies, or, at least, she hopes that's the case. She doesn't know much about the allergy situation in Zambia, but the cough and congestion feels like allergies.

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But on top of that, Blake is hurt and she knows that Amory is hurt, too. But she didn't do what Amory thinks—she never cheated on anyone. She learned her lesson on that years ago, and she would never do that to Amory, especially not again. She thinks that maybe this is karma for what she did with Natalie all of those years ago, that despite how happy Amory has made her, she doesn't deserve happiness with her, after all.

Blake goes through the motions at work, doing her best to help her patients, but her heart's not in it. Her heart is stuck on Amory. She wonders what she can do to make her listen, to get her to understand that she's not a cheater anymore.

She doesn't know. She just doesn't know and that frustrates her. Any time she's tried to talk to Amory, it's gotten shut down. But maybe she hasn't been trying hard enough. It's hard, being accused of something you didn't do, and she doesn't know how to feel about it. All she really feels about it is frustration and guilt. This would have never happened had she not cheated with Natalie all of those years ago. Amory's trust wouldn't have been broken so badly that she sees things that aren't there.

Blake walks into another patient's area and freezes when she sees Dr. Paver behind the curtain, talking to the patient. She checks her chart, yeah, this was definitely her patient.

“Uh,” Blake says, confused, “what's going on?”

Amory gives her a dirty look. “I'm talking to my patient.”

“But this was my patient,” Blake says.

“What?” Amory asks, looking to where Blake is holding her chart. Amory walks over and grabs the chart, glancing at it before she looks at Blake in confusion. It’s refreshing to Blake, to see Amory look at her without hatred in her lovely aqua eyes. It doesn’t last long, however, and Amory’s gaze hardens when she hands the chart back to Blake.

Amory shrugs and walks back to the patient. “Take it up with the nurses,” she says, and Blake walks out from behind the curtain and does just that. She can’t help but think that this is the most Amory has spoken to her in days and her heart aches.

Yeah, apparently it was just a mix up with the charts. Blake is given a new patient and walks to a new patient area, where Amory isn’t around. She’s kind of upset about it, if she’s honest. She wants nothing more than to be around Amory and to see her at work.

Blake wonders what kind of a doctor she is now. She hasn’t known how she works since they were in residency together, and Blake wonders if Amory is still the hungry woman she once knew, who was always clamoring to find the next strange and rare disease in her patients. She hopes not. She also doubts it. She knows that Amory works in family medicine, a much more practical part of their field.

Blake thinks back to their past and how Amory used to be. It’s just not practical to practice medicine like that, and it never really worked in Amory’s favor anyway. She used to get into so much trouble for ordering unnecessary tests when she was a resident, it’s almost kind of funny. But she also used to have the best bedside manner, able to calm even the most terrified of patients, and Blake hopes she is still like that. From what little Blake saw of her working, that seems to be the case.

Blake always used to admire the way Amory had with patients, even if back then she

would have never admitted it. She would sometimes watch Amory, observe her and try to copy her interactions with patients. It was never as successful, but it was definitely better than Blake's sometimes brash bedside manner. Over the years, however, Blake has definitely gotten better with patients, and she wonders how much of that is due to her observations of Amory.

Blake continues through work and when it's time to leave, she gets done before Amory. Just like every day since their argument, Blake waits for Amory by the door, and Amory ignores her and walks right past her, determined and defiant. Blake sighs to herself, but she's not surprised. She just wants things to go back to the way they were, even if it doesn't seem like that will ever be the case.

Blake follows behind Amory as she walks to the cabin, not even looking behind her to see Blake. When she gets to the cabin, she opens the door and enters through, but lets the door fall to slam in Blake's face. Blake sighs to herself in front of the closed door. It's been like this every day for the last several days. Amory hates her and she hates herself for it. She should have ended things with Jenna properly before starting anything with Amory.

Blake walks into the cabin and sees that Amory is making supper. That's another change. The two don't cook together anymore. Amory keeps cooking by herself and the one time Blake tried to join and help her, Amory set down the frying pan and left the cabin in a huff.

Blake doesn't try to help anymore; she just sits on the bed and reads a book while Amory cooks. At least it's a good book.

Amory cooks by herself and Blake's stomach growls. When she's done, there's fried rice on the table, slightly burnt, but it still tastes good. She doesn't tell Blake when it's ready, just starts eating, but she doesn't complain or say anything when Blake grabs a plate and sits down at the table. Amory just looks down at her food the entire

time the two of them eat.

Blake frowns to herself and does the same thing, trying to focus on her food while the two of them eat. What she really wants to do is have a conversation with Amory, to make up and make everything better. She really needs to get over her nerves, her fear of making everything worse. After all, with how things are right now, Blake doesn't think things can get worse. There is still that little voice in her head that tells her otherwise, that comes up with all kinds of scenarios of Amory getting so angry that she does something brash like hit her.

Blake doesn't think she would ever do something like that, but she can't help the fear that has frozen her voice and pokes stabbing pains into her heart. She's also terrified of hurting Amory more, of not being believed, or of saying the wrong thing and making Amory think that she's done something worse than the cheating she was accused of.

When they're done eating, Amory goes back to her blanket pile and opens her laptop, hiding under the blankets with it. She acts like she's depressed, hiding out under the covers and not doing anything besides read and play on her laptop whenever she's not at work or cooking. Blake misses their games, and as selfish as it is, she hopes Amory does, too. Though she feels bad, seeing Amory so dejected and by herself.

Blake is incredibly lonely, and she wonders if Amory feels the same way. She goes back to the bed and sits down, not sure what to do. She supposes she should read again.

She tries to read, but is mostly unsuccessful, only getting a few pages done in over an hour. She can't stop thinking about Amory. The other woman invades her every thought and it's unbearable, especially when she can't do anything about it. She wants to kiss her again, to hold her, to at the very least talk to her.

She misses their games and their teasing and waking up next to her. She can hear Amory squirming around on the floor, trying to find a comfortable position.

“You know,” Blake says, trying an old trick, “this bed sure is really comfortable.”

“Go to hell,” Amory says, her voice muffled from under the blankets.

Blake coughs and doesn’t stop. It’s a nasty cough, and it doesn’t stop for a couple of seconds. When she’s done, she sighs. She really hopes she’s not getting sick.

“No,” Blake says, suddenly angry at Amory and all of her nonsense. “I’ve had to listen to you be angry at me, accuse me of being a cheater, which isn’t true, and now you’re going to listen to me and let me explain myself.”

“I don’t want to hear it,” Amory says.

“I don’t care,” Blake almost yells, upset and pissed off. “You’ve been doing all the talking and assuming, and you’re fucking wrong.”

“I’m not wrong,” Amory says.

Her ignorance and insistence pisses Blake off and she walks over to Amory’s blanket pile and pulls the cover off from over her head.

“Hey,” Amory objects, “what the hell?”

“No,” Blake says, “I’m sick and tired of your bullshit. You’re going to listen to me before you continue your bullshit. Then, if you still want to lay around in your ignorance, fine, but you’re gonna listen to me first.”

Amory growls and tries to pull the blanket away from Blake, but Blake holds strong and doesn’t let her.

“Stop it,” Blake demands, “just listen to me.”

Amory gives up on trying to take the blanket back and crosses her arms over her chest. She looks down at the ground and doesn’t say anything to Blake, but Blake takes it. She needs to talk to her, even if she’s acting like a brick wall.

“Look,” Blake says, “I’m sorry for what I did with Natalie.”

“Oh, are you?” Amory asks, sarcasm and anger dripping from her voice.

“Yes,” Blake says, “it’s clear that it messed you up, especially since you’re now accusing me of cheating on a girlfriend that I don’t have. But I didn’t cheat on anyone because I’m not dating anyone. I haven’t had a girlfriend in over a year, and I told

Jenna about you after things started with us, so it's not like she didn't know or wasn't okay with it."

Blake pauses for a moment and coughs again. She chalks it up to allergies. She doesn't know why else she would be coughing like this.

"Jenna and I are just friends," Blake continues. "We were doing a friends-with-benefits thing, but we ended that because of you. I should have ended it before starting things with you. I should have been more up front with you about it and I am sorry for that."

"I don't believe you," Amory says, her beautiful face still angry.

Blake sighs. "Of course you don't. Because you're so stubborn and stuck in your ways. You won't even believe the truth because that's what I'm telling you."

"How am I supposed to believe it's the truth," Amory says, "when you've lied to me and hurt me before?"

Blake doesn't know what to say, how to get it through to Amory that she's not lying or trying to hurt her. "I never really even lied to you in the past, either," Blake says. "What I did clearly hurt you, but I didn't lie. I didn't know you were dating Natalie and I told you everything I knew. You know that."

Amory frowns, but then she crosses her arms and huffs.

Blake just sighs and does the only thing she knows to do. She kisses Amory, bites her lip, and pushes her down on the floor, sitting on top of her.

"What the hell?" Amory asks.

“I haven’t felt this way about someone else in years,” Blake says, “haven’t cared for someone this much in forever. I really care about you, Amory, and I’m not lying to you. I’m telling you the truth because I’m hoping that you feel the same way as me.”

She looks Amory in the eyes and is surprised to see tears there, telling her not to give up hope.

“I—” Amory snuffles, “I care about you, too,” she admits, “but I can’t trust you. Not like this.”

Blake sighs and decides that there’s nothing left she can do. Amory’s trust was broken a long time ago, and there’s nothing Blake can do to fix it. Amory has to do that, and it doesn’t look like she’s ready.

“Okay,” Blake says with a sigh before she starts coughing again. She leans into her elbow to keep Amory from getting sprayed with her cough.

Amory sits up in alarm, almost knocking Blake to the floor.

“Are you okay?” she asks, alarmed and concerned.

In other circumstances, Blake would be comforted by her concern, but Amory’s made it clear that she’s not ready to forgive her, not for sleeping with Natalie or for sleeping with Jenna even though she’s changed and didn’t cheat.

“I’m fine,” Blake says.

“No, you’re not,” Amory argues. “You need to lie down. I’ll grab you some water.”

She leads Blake to the bed and goes to the kitchen where she grabs a bottle of water and takes it to Blake. She hands Blake the bottle with the cap already off.

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Blake drinks the water and it helps soothe her throat.

“I’m going to take a shower,” Blake says once she’s done with the water. Hopefully a shower will help her feel better.

“Okay,” Amory says, throwing away the plastic bottle before she goes back to her blanket on the floor.

Blake goes to the bathroom and turns on the water.

Blake: I tried to talk to her

Jenna: How did it go?

Blake: Not great

Blake: I think she still hates me

Jenna: I doubt she hates you

Jenna: She’s just hurt

Blake: I know, I just don’t know what else to do

Jenna: Would you like me to talk to her?

Blake: I don’t know if that would help

Jenna: It can't hurt

She has a point, Blake thinks, and so she gives Jenna Amory's phone number. Maybe Jenna talking to her will prove that Blake didn't cheat on her. But, then again, if Blake talking to her didn't sway her, she doesn't know what Jenna could possibly say that would help.

She wonders if she should just give up on her and accept that Amory hates her. As much as it kills her heart to think about giving up, she thinks that might be the best option for everyone. Amory is miserable and Blake should probably move on, but she doesn't know if that's even possible for her. She doesn't want to move on, she wants to find her happiness with Amory, but right now it doesn't seem like she's able to find anything but sadness with her.

I think I'm in love with her and I've fucked it all up.

11

AMORY

Amory is conflicted and concerned. Blake missed work today. She was coughing all morning and all throughout the night. But even then, it took Amory calling in for her to agree to miss work. Amory goes to work but worries about Blake at the cabin. It's strange. She knows that she's angry at Blake and doesn't trust her, but it's hard for her to not care about her. That's why this whole situation hurt her so much—because she cares about Blake, she has strong feelings for Blake even if she doesn't want to admit it now.

She does her job, checking her own symptoms as she does so. She doesn't have a cough or fever or anything out of the ordinary, so she must not have caught whatever Blake has. She hopes that it's just allergies, like Blake thinks, but she doubts it.

During lunch, she checks her phone and sees a text message from an unknown number.

Jenna: Hey, is this Amory?

Amory: Yes? Who is this?

Jenna: This is Jenna. I'm the person Blake was talking to the other day

Amory can't help but this she's about to get chewed out by this woman who is mad at her for sleeping with her partner, even though she didn't know Blake was seeing anyone.

Jenna: Blake gave me your number. She asked me to talk to you

What? That doesn't make sense. Why would Blake want this Jenna girl to talk to her? Why would Jenna agree? This doesn't make sense with everything that's been going on in Amory's head.

Amory: About what?

Jenna: I think you two had a massive misunderstanding. Blake isn't my girlfriend. The only thing we've ever been was fwbs

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Jenna: And she ended it as soon as things started with you

Amory: What?

Amory sighs to herself. This is what Blake told her last night, but she really didn't want to believe it. Part of her did, but it all seemed too easy. Now, however, it seems so difficult. Amory may have fucked up, but she doesn't want to admit that to herself. She starts to realize that it was easier for her to believe that Blake never changed than it was for her to admit that she cared about her, that she cares about her, that she might be falling in love with her.

Jenna: Yeah, we were never together. I really don't want a relationship

Jenna: We just used sex to blow off steam. It was never serious

Amory doesn't know how to feel or what to think about this. She feels partially like she owes Blake an apology, but she's so stubborn, she kind of doesn't want to give one. That's so messed up, and she knows it. She definitely owes Blake an apology, if Blake will even forgive her.

Jenna: And Blake told me that she missed work. Is she okay?

Amory: I don't know.

Amory: I'm going to make some soup when I get home. Hopefully it'll help.

Jenna: If it gets worse, you might need to force her to get checked out. She's too

stubborn to do it on her own.

Isn't that the truth. How on Earth did the two most stubborn people in the world end up in a cabin together? And more than that, how did the two most stubborn people in the world end up having sex and caring for one another? Amory feels like she owes Blake an apology, but she doesn't know how to give one. She was never any good at giving apologies.

Amory: I will. I'll check in on her later

Jenna: And Amory

Jenna: Blake told me what she did with your old girlfriend, and I'm not saying that you should forgive her, but I know that she'd never do that to you again

Amory frowns at the text message. She's beginning to feel like a real dick. She just assumed that Blake was cheating, and even though she had in the past, she assumed without any proof. She also didn't listen to her when she tried to explain the situation. It's taken another person getting involved for her to finally see reason. How many more people have to talk to her before she grows up and realizes that Blake really isn't the same person she knew all of those years ago?

When Amory is done with work, she walks to the cabin alone. If she's being honest with herself, she misses walking home with Blake. That time when Blake held her hand, before everything blew up, made her stomach tingle and she wanted more. If she can get over herself, she could see her and Blake creating something long term, maybe creating a life together.

Amory truly does want that, but she's scared. She's convinced that Blake is going to do something to ruin it. She thought that she did do something to ruin it, thought that she cheated again. Now that she truly knows the truth, she's still scared, but she's

also upset with herself. She never even really gave Blake a chance. She let old hurts get in the way of a potential happiness.

Amory was so terrified that Blake would do something to ruin their relationship, she realizes, that she was the one to ruin it. She supposes they're even now, but that doesn't help relieve the massive guilt Amory feels at how she treated Blake. She was so wrong.

She knows that now, but doesn't know what to do about that, how to make it up to Blake. She walks into the cabin to see all the lights off and Blake sitting up in bed in a coughing fit. She looks miserable, her face is red, and Amory is pretty sure that she's running a fever.

"Okay," Amory says, "that's it, you're going to the clinic."

"I'm fine," Blake says.

"You are not fine," Amory protests, "you're clearly sick. You need to get treated for whatever's going on."

Blake groans and lays back on the bed before she's immediately sitting up again and coughing. Amory doesn't get closer to her, doesn't want to catch whatever Blake has, so she waits for her to finish coughing before she moves forward.

"You can't live like this," Amory reasons. "It hasn't gotten any better, just worse."

"I'll be fine," Blake says.

"You're a doctor for crying out loud! You know that's not how it works."

"It's just allergies," Blake protests.

“If it’s just allergies, then you have nothing to worry about,” Amory says. “They’ll just test you for diseases and infection and if it’s nothing, then you can go back to being miserable, but it doesn't look like just allergies.”

Blake doesn’t respond, just groans.

“Come on,” Amory says, “don’t you want to go back to work?”

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“I can go back to work tomorrow,” Blake states.

“Not like that, you won’t,” Amory responds. “You don’t want to get your patients any sicker, do you?”

That gets Blake to listen, just like Amory knew it would.

“No,” Blake says.

“And do you want to get me sick?” Amory asks. She knows she’s playing dirty, guilt tripping Blake into seeking treatment, but if Blake won’t go to the clinic for her own health, Amory is prepared to do whatever it takes.

“Jenna texted me today,” Amory says.

That causes Blake to look at her, excitement and worry in her sick eyes. “And what did she say?”

“If you go to the clinic, I’ll tell you when we’re done,” Amory says.

Blake frowns and narrows her eyes before she groans. “Fine,” she says, “just let me get dressed, first.”

“Well I wasn’t planning on taking you there in your pajamas,” Amory says.

“Shut up.”

Amory laughs. She's missed this, missed talking to Blake like a friend. She's missed feeling like she's allowed to care about her, and she's missed annoying her while still knowing that Blake isn't truly annoyed and that the two truly care for one another.

This is a lot for Amory to take in. She has tried so hard to pretend that she's nothing but angry at Blake, that she doesn't and has never cared for her. It isn't true, but it was easier. Now, however, there's nothing easy about this. Her laugh turns into a quick frown, and she berates herself for what she's done. How could Blake ever forgive her?

She waits for Blake to get dressed, fiddling with her fingers by the door as Blake goes to the bathroom and gets ready. Amory can hear Blake coughing from here, and she's sure that her cough has gotten much worse. She's worried about her, and she decides to update Blake's friend about what's going on, to give herself something else to think about.

Amory: I'm taking Blake to the clinic. She's not feeling any better

Jenna: Okay. Keep me updated

Amory: Will do

Amory then decides to text her mom. Her mom has always been a comfort. Maybe she'll know what to do.

Amory: I'm so confused.

Mom: What's wrong?

Amory: Apparently Blake didn't cheat on this other girl like I thought

Amory: They were just friends with benefits, but not dating

Mom: And didn't Blake tell you they were sleeping together

Amory: Yeah

That's how this whole mess started, Blake telling her about Jenna, leading to Amory thinking that Blake was cheating on the other girl when she wasn't. She realizes that her mom was right during their phone call, that there was more to the story than Amory was seeing.

Mom: Then you two should talk about it

Mom: Do you forgive her?

Amory: I want to

Mom: Then you should apologize

Amory: But that's so hard

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Mom: I know. I really wish it wasn't, but I know

Mom: You inherited my stubbornness, that's for sure

Mom: You know, that's part of why your father and I broke up

Mom: I was too stubborn to forgive him for even the slightest mistakes. And it all became too much and it's been one of my biggest regrets. I had so much anger for him, and I hate to see that anger in you

Mom: If you love her, you should let it go. It's not worth it

Amory: I know, I'm just scared

Mom: It's okay to be scared, but it's not okay to lose on happiness because of it

Amory frowns to herself. She knows that her mom doesn't like to talk about her father, doesn't like to talk about their messy breakup. Amory's mom must think that this is serious in order for her to bring up Amory's father, for her to bring up her own mistakes in the relationship.

It is serious, Amory supposes, she's letting herself lose out on happiness over a years-old grudge. Something that didn't even turn out to be the way she thought it to be. She realizes she has a habit of assuming bad things about Blake.

She assumed that Blake slept with Natalie on purpose to get at her, but Blake didn't even learn that Amory was dating Natalie until they got caught. And she was in love

with her, doing stupid things out of love. Amory supposes that she's also doing stupid things out of love. Hating Blake because she was scared was definitely a stupid thing.

And Amory assumed that Blake and Jenna were dating and that Blake was cheating on Jenna with Amory. But now she knows that isn't the case. She knows that Jenna and Blake were never dating.

Amory feels like a huge idiot. She feels like a complete ass. She should know to never assume, but that didn't stop her, and now she's living in the aftermath of assumptions made from a broken heart, a heart too scared to admit that she cares for Blake.

When Blake is finished getting dressed, Amory leads her to the clinic, keeping a hand on her arm while she coughs almost the entire way.

"Yeah," Blake says, when they're close to the clinic, coughing again, "maybe I am sick."

Amory gives her a look. "No kidding."

They get to the clinic and Amory helps Blake check in and then the two of them wait in the waiting area. Amory notices that a couple of the nurses are looking at them in concern, but she ignores them.

One walks over and Amory gives her a smile while Blake coughs hard next to her.

"Hi," she says, and Amory doesn't remember her name, but her name tag reads Jamie.

"Hi," Amory says.

“Is she sick?” Jamie asks, pointing to Blake.

“Yeah,” Amory says, “I mean, she keeps saying it’s allergies, but I highly doubt it.”

Jamie nods. “It definitely is better to get checked out,” she says. “Since you’re both doctors, I’ll talk to the nurses and see if we can get you seen sooner.”

“Thank you,” Amory says.

“You don’t need to,” Blake says, “I’m fine to wait.”

“Well, the sooner you get taken care of, the sooner you can get back to work,” Jamie reasons. “And we need as many hands as possible right now.”

“Okay,” Blake says, “that makes sense.”

Jamie leaves and she’s true to her word. Blake is seen within ten minutes. The other doctor draws some blood and does a ton of tests to see what Blake has. After a while, a doctor comes in the room with the test results. Blake has the flu and a chest infection.

Amory is a little surprised since she hasn’t gotten any patients with the flu that she knows of, but she’s also grateful that it’s not something more serious.

The doctors prescribe Blake some medicine to help with the symptoms and the chest infection, but since the flu is a virus, there’s not much else they can prescribe besides bed rest and lots of fluids.

Amory helps Blake back to the cabin and lays her on the bed.

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“So what did Jenna say to you?” Blake asks when she’s in bed, in between coughs.

“You were right, and I’m sorry,” Amory says. “She told me that you weren’t cheating on her. I should have listened to you.”

“Yeah,” Blake says, “but I understand why you didn’t believe me. I’ve hurt you before. It’s hard to believe that people have changed, especially when they’ve hurt you before.”

“Yeah,” Amory says with a frown, “but I still should have listened. I should have given you a chance.”

“Well you gave me a chance at first, and you’re giving me a chance, now. That’s all I could ask for.”

“And for what it’s worth,” Blake says, “I am really sorry for what happened with Natalie.”

“I know,” Amory says, knowing how much guilt Blake has for that. It wasn’t even entirely her fault and she keeps apologizing. “And I forgive you.”

“Then all is good, right? Does this mean we’re all good?”

“Yes,” Amory says with a laugh. “We’re all good.” Amory wonders how Blake could forgive her so easily, when she couldn’t forgive Blake for something she didn’t even do.

“Good,” Blake says, “because I think I’m falling in love with you.”

Amory feels a hot flush running through her body. It is exactly what she needed to hear, but she feels terrified. She takes a deep breath and takes Blake’s hand and looks into her beautiful dark brown eyes.

“I think I’m falling in love with you, too.”

Blake smiles and squeezes her hand before she breaks out into another coughing fit. “And I’d tell you to come over here and give me another kiss, but I don’t want to get you sick.”

Amory laughs and leans in to give Blake a kiss on her forehead.

“I’ll take that,” Blake says.

A week later, and Blake is all better. She goes back to work with Amory and the two of them go back to their old routine, walking back to the cabin together and cooking supper in the evenings.

They’ll be leaving Zambia in a few weeks and Amory is worried about what this means for their relationship. They have yet to even have a talk about the future. If Amory is honest with herself, she really thinks Blake is the one. She feels happier with Blake than she has ever been.

She’s understandably a little nervous. It has been years since she’s been in a relationship, after all, and her chosen partner is Blake Gold of all people. It doesn’t help that she still feels the guilt from assuming that Blake was cheating on her. She doesn’t want to mess up what they have.

She wants to talk about it with Blake but doesn’t know how to bring up the topic.

Why couldn't Blake just do it? Ugh. She hates being anxious. She's normally overly confident and not scared of anything but being around Blake has her heart acting all funky and her gut twisting in places.

Amory picks at her food while the two of them eat. They made chili again, and it's so good. It's also an easy meal, so they've had it a few times since coming to Zambia. It's a good thing that chili is one of their favorite foods or Amory can imagine that it would get old quickly. Just like there's an abundance of rice and pasta in their pantry and Amory has run out of new and interesting ways to make rice, and she likes fried rice. They've also had to learn how to cook maize and have been having it with almost every meal.

They even put it in the chili, but it tastes good with the beans, and Amory can hardly tell the difference.

"So," Amory starts and pauses. Blake looks at her expectedly and Amory looks down at her food. Curse her nerves. This should be easy, the next obvious step in a developing relationship.

"What?" Blake asks as if she's oblivious to Amory's internal distress.

"We need to talk," Amory says, hoping that Blake will understand what she wants.

"What do you mean?" Blake asks, and Amory is growing frustrated and anxious.

"Um," Amory tries again. "What are we?" she blurts out.

"What do you mean?" Blake asks, confused. "Like, aren't we doctors?"

Amory groans and turns her attention to her food, shoving a forkful in her mouth. She swallows and takes a deep breath. "No," she says, and then cringes, "I mean, yes, but

that's not what I'm asking." She takes a moment to pause for breath and tries to summon some of her doctorly courage before she looks up at Blake again.

"I mean," she says, "do you want us to be together, like properly, when we get back home?"

Blake's eyes light up and she vigorously nods her head, looking like a bobble head.

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“Yes, of course,” she says. “I honestly thought we were already together, like properly.”

“You did?” Amory asks.

“Yeah,” Blake says.

Amory breathes a sigh of relief to know that Blake is on the same page as her. She laughs a little bit to herself to think that Blake was maybe also too anxious to have a conversation about what things were between them. Amory smiles at Blake and then asks the next part of her question.

“What will happen when we get home?” she asks. “How will we make it work?”

Blake pauses for a moment and looks at Amory. “Babe, I love you. I want to make this work. I want us to date properly in a way we haven’t so far. I want us to make a future together.”

“Okay,” Amory says and smiles with relief. “Good, because I want to be with you for a long time and.... um.. I love you, too.” Now that that’s settled, the nerves in Amory’s stomach go away, and now she’s just left with butterflies in her stomach from the ‘I love yous’.

I love her.

As long as there’s no more drama or stupid assumptions, Amory can see her and Blake being together for a long time, building a life together. She wonders what a life

with Blake would be like. Maybe they can get a cat together. Blake already has a cat, maybe Blake's cat can become their cat.

She wants so badly for this to be her happy ever after. She also knows that she needs to work on herself, she needs to work through her issues with Blake and her trust issues with dating in general. Maybe she should see a therapist or something. She hasn't seen a therapist since she was in college, and she's a little scared to go to therapy—it doesn't fit her put together doctor look—but for Blake she'll do anything to ensure that the two of them get their chance at forever.

The next day, after work, Amory greets Blake by the door and does something she's never done before. She gives Blake a kiss. It's in front of all the nurses and patients in the waiting room.

It's a short kiss, and it's likely that no one except the receptionist, who smiles at them, has noticed, but Amory has never really been into public displays of affection, so this is a big deal to her.

Blake smiles widely at her, eyes lighting up and everything, and she puts an arm across Amory's waist.

"Are you ready to head back to the cabin?" she asks.

"Definitely," Amory says, her stomach growling slightly. She smiles at Blake.

She also wants a little more than just food from Blake and is excited to test out all of Blake's toys throughout the rest of their stay in Zambia. She brought a lot, and sometimes Amory wonders why, but she's definitely not complaining.

They walk to the cabin, holding hands and walking close together. When they get there, Blake opens the door and lets Amory walk inside in front of her. As soon as

they're both inside, Blake closes the door behind her, grabs Amory by the back of her shirt, and pushes her against the wall. She presses a kiss to Amory's lips, and Amory bites back.

Blake laughs. "I've missed this," she says.

"Me too," Amory says. Even though the two of them made up over a week ago, they haven't had the chance to have sex or share more than chaste kisses. Not with how sick Blake was or how tired both of them were last night.

Blake kisses Amory again and presses their bodies close together. She runs a hand under Amory's shirt and grabs a breast under her bra. She then takes her hand back and works on unbuttoning Amory's shirt.

She moves slowly and Amory groans, begging her to just hurry up already.

"Patience, sweetheart," Blake says.

Amory groans again, "I'm all out of patience."

Blake laughs and finishes unbuttoning her shirt. She takes it off and tugs at Amory's bra strap, before reaching around her back and unclasping it.

She takes the clothes and throws them across the room, leaving Amory completely topless and Blake reaches forward, taking one of Amory's nipples in her mouth.

Amory gasps and moans. She leans forward slightly, encouraging Blake, and Blake laughs before she moves on to the other nipple.

While she sucks on Amory's nipple, Blake moves her hands to Amory's pants and unbuttons them. She lets go of the nipple and tugs the pants off, underwear and all.

Amory is completely naked while Blake is fully clothed and it's not fair. Amory reaches toward Blake's shirt, aiming to take it off, but Blake just moves away.

"Uh uh, sweetheart," she says. "You first."

Amory groans in frustration, but that stops when Blake puts two fingers inside of her and she moans, struggling to remain standing, especially when Blake finds her g-spot with ease. Blake has long, strong fingers, and they feel like heaven inside of her.

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“Oh, God,” Amory says, legs shaking as Blake fucks her and Blake laughs.

“Do you want to move to the bed?” she asks.

Amory nods, despite not wanting Blake’s fingers out of her.

“Okay, baby girl,” Blake says and pulls her hand away. She helps lead Amory to the bed and lays her down before she goes back to what she was doing.

Blake fucks her harder and faster and Amory feels herself squirting for Blake’s fingers. Once, twice, thrice. The bed is getting wet, but neither of them care.

Blake pulls her fingers out and steps away and Amory looks up in desperation.

I need to come...

“Please..”

Blake smiles at her, “Patience, baby, patience.”

Blake is slipping out of her pants and stepping into the strap on harness. It is black leather and looks as sexy as all hell on her.

She slides the dildo into it and tightens the straps. The dildo looks thick, black and amazing.

Amory opens her legs wide as she beckons Blake to her.

“Please, uh.... I need you to fuck me... I can’t wait to feel it inside of me...”

Amory realizes she has never actually been fucked with a strap on, but right now she wants nothing more in the world.

“Turn over,” Blake says, her voice husky and sexier than ever.

Amory’s eyes widen at the request. She doesn’t usually turn over during sex. Hell, its been so long since she even had sex before Blake.

But she knows she wants this so much she will do anything for it.

So, she flips herself over to lie on her belly on the bed.

She feels Blake’s hands on her hips suddenly pulling her ass up and towards her and then she’s on her hands and knees with her ass positioned at the edge of the bed. She feels wide open and vulnerable and more turned on than she ever has before.

She feels Blake’s fingers run down the crack of her ass, teasing her anus, trailing through her wetness, finding her clitoris. Her entire body shivers at each and every intimate touch.

Oh my god.

She hears herself moan loudly. This was something she had never before known she wanted, but she felt absolutely consumed with wanting.

Blake teased her further with her fingers.

“I’m going to fuck you, baby. I’m going to fuck you so good so you come so hard for me and squirt all over.”

Amory thought she might completely combust at any moment.

She felt Blake's hands on her hips again and the sudden touch of Blake's silicon dick at her vulva.

She let every exquisite second of pleasure as Blake guided it inside her. She felt the sweet pain/pleasure as her body stretched to accommodate the thick dildo.

Blake pulled her slowly back onto it.

"You are going to take all of me inside you, baby. All the way." Amory heard her own gasps as she felt the slap of Blake's pelvis against her own.

Fuck, it feels so good.

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“You like that, baby?”

“Yeah.. oh god, Blake. Fuck me. Please, fuck me.”

She heard Blake’s laugh. She clearly didn’t need asking twice. Amory felt the grip tighten on her hips as Blake began to fuck her. First, long slow and deep. And then harder and faster, Amory’s body jolting with each thrust, she felt her breasts sway.

She heard her moans, her screams, more and more out of control. She has to raise her hand to her mouth and bite in in order to keep screams from leaving her lips.

That doesn’t last long, however, because Blake takes her hand out of her mouth.

“No,” Blake says, still fucking Amory, “I want to hear you.”

“I’m worried I’ll be too loud,” Amory says.

“I don’t care,” Blake says, moving faster and Amory moans loudly.

Amory feels her orgasm beginning to build deep within her. Suddenly she feels Blake’s thumb teasing at her anus and she has never felt more turned on in all of her life.

“Is this ok, baby?”

“Um... I want to.. I never have before..” Amory manages to speak between moans.

She feels the thumb pressing into her, opening her up and pushing inside of her. It feels more incredible than anything she has ever done sexually. She pushes her ass back. She wants more and Blake obliges.

It must be Blake's fingers now entering her ass, pushing long and deep while the dildo is still inside her pussy. She feels the fingers scissoring inside her and stretching her.

"Oh god, I'm so close," she gasps.

"Touch your clit," Blake says. "Come for me, baby."

Amory reaches her right hand under her body to her clitoris. She feels her body is lost to her.

She pushes her fingers against her clit hard and with two slippery swipes of her clit and Blake's fingers and cock so deep inside her, her orgasm floods through her again and again like nothing she has ever experienced.

"Oh god, oh god, oh god..." Amory can't do anything except come and come and come again. She feels her own wetness running down the inside of her thighs.

"Good girl, that's it, come for me. Fuck... yes.... come for me...."

She collapses face down on the bed and is just about aware of Blake sliding slowly out of her as her head spins in pleasure. She had never imagined sex could be that good.

Seconds later, she feels Blake on top of her, Blake's breasts pushing into her back, Blake's lips at her ear.

“You are so fucking hot. You are incredible,” she whispers.

She feels Blake's wetness against her ass as Blake pins her down and grinds her clitoris into the curve of Amory's ass.

Blake is using her body to get herself off and Amory likes it.

She pushes her ass up to meet Blake's needy grinds. It feels like only seconds later that Blake's moans are louder and faster and her grinding harder as she comes loudly holding tightly onto Amory.

Amory smiles to herself, her face buried in the blanket.

“I love you...” she murmurs as she feels Blake collapse onto her back.

“I love you, too,” Blake gasps in exhaustion.

“Let's live happily ever after,” Amory says, and it feels entirely possible to her, suddenly.

“There is nothing I want more,” Blake whispers in her ear and kisses her neck. “I want forever with you.”

EPILOGUE

Blake walks into another patient's room at the urgent care. She just has to deliver the news that this patient has strep throat. It's pretty easy, and she prescribes antibiotics for him. He's an older man and doesn't seem surprised by the news.

"I told that nurse it was strep," he says, "and she still made me take all these tests. I hate the flu test, and I knew I didn't need it."

Blake laughs. "That's kind of her job."

"Well it's nonsense," he argues.

Blake just shakes her head and goes over to her computer. "Well," she says, "at least we made sure you didn't have anything else."

"I suppose so," he says, and then crosses his arms. "Still annoying, though."

Blake laughs again and types some on her computer. "Okay," she says, "so I just sent your prescription to your pharmacy, so you should be good to go."

"Great, thank you," the man says and then leaves. Blake stays in the room and sighs to herself.

It's been over a year, but Blake misses her time in Zambia. Just like all of her other trips abroad, she thinks about it often. Zambia was special, however; it's where she reconciled and found the love of her life. She misses all the time that she had in the

cabin with Amory, she misses being so close to her all the time. Now, Amory works at a different clinic across town and she leaves for work in the morning before Blake even wakes up.

She doesn't know how she does it and manages to keep her sanity, but she supposes that Amory is just a morning person. For Blake, waking up at eight in the morning is still too much for her. She should have gotten used to it years ago, but just because she should have done something doesn't mean that she has.

Blake rubs her tired eyes before she leaves the room and goes back to work. There's another patient in the next room that she needs to see who has come in about a UTI, so Blake goes there to treat that.

She still misses Amory while she works. The sort of silver lining to their differing work schedules, though, is that Amory gets off before Blake, and when Blake does finally get off work, she sees Amory sitting in the waiting room, reading a magazine. Amory is as beautiful as ever. Her lovely honey blonde ponytail looks freshly washed and her beautiful face is deep in concentration. Blake walks over to where Amory is sitting and puts a hand on her head.

Amory looks up and gives Blake a wide smile, putting the magazine down.

"Are you ready to go?" Amory asks.

"Yep," Blake says, giving her a soft smile in return.

The two of them walk out of the doctor's office and head to Amory's car. Blake usually takes the bus to work in the morning so that the two of them can drive home together in the evening when she's done with work.

As they walk through the parking lot together, Blake notices that Amory is fiddling

with the ring on her finger. It's new and she expects that she will continue to play with it until she gets used to the feeling.

Blake doesn't have a ring because she was the one to propose, but she supposes that when she gets a wedding band, she'll be the same as Amory at first.

Blake moves closer to Amory and takes her hand in her own, squeezing lightly. Amory's hand is warm and Blake smiles at her as they walk.

Blake plays with the ring on her finger, so glad that she gets to call this woman her fiancée.

When they get to Amory's white SUV, Blake lets go of her hand so that she can get into the driver's seat and Blake opens the door to the passenger's. Amory turns on the car, but before she can start driving, Blake reaches over, grabs her by the hair, and kisses her.

"Okay," Blake says, when she's done kissing her fiancée, "we can go now."

Amory laughs and then reaches over to Blake, planting a firm kiss on her lips before she starts to back out of her parking spot.

"Okay," she says, laughing.

They head home and Blake looks out the window, a little anxious. Amory is a good driver, with all the caution of a doctor, but it still doesn't help the fact that Blake always gets a little nervous when someone else is driving. She tenses a little bit at every turn and every time another driver gets just a little too close to them. She doesn't say anything, however, and they get home without incident.

When Blake opens the door, she immediately sees Millie on the couch, lounging

lazily. Blake smiles at her cat, grateful that she has been acclimating well to their new house. They only moved in here three months ago, and her cat had a hard time with the adjustment at first. Now, Millie seems to be doing great. She meows when she sees Blake and Amory enter and jumps off the couch and to the food bowl that sits in their kitchen.

Amory laughs and grabs the cat food from the designated cat cabinet. At the sound of the food bag ruffling, their kitten, Scrabbles, comes running into the kitchen. Unlike Mille, Scrabbles is a scrawny little thing. According to the animal shelter, she was the runt of her litter, but Blake and Amory are hoping that with some love and lots of food she'll fatten up. They've only had her for a month and she's already filled out a lot.

Blake reaches down toward Scrabbles and scoops her up, petting her while Amory fills the cat food and water bowl. When the bowl is filled, she lets the kitten down so that she can eat her fill. Amory and Blake stand in the kitchen for a moment, watching their cats.

Amory turns to Blake. "Have you gotten your flu shot yet?" she asks.

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Blake laughs. “Yes,” she says, “I got it done during my lunch break.”

“Good,” Amory says, hugging Blake.

Two flu seasons have passed since returning from Zambia, and each time Amory has hounded Blake about making sure that she gets her shot. Even though when she got the flu that one time it was out of the flu season.

She hasn’t gotten the flu again since, though, so she can’t complain too much. Besides, it’s kind of cute to see Amory care about her that much. Blake smiles to herself.

Blake pets Millie as she eats and Amory pets Scrabbles. Blake smiles at Amory and falls more in love with her. It feels like she falls more in love with her each day, just watching her. She’s adorable, and Blake loves her.

“Come on,” Blake suggests, “let’s change out of our work clothes.” While Blake may make it a point to dress as professional as possible for work, the moment she’s home, she prefers sweatpants and pajamas.

“Are you wanting to get changed,” Amory teases, “or are you just looking for an excuse to see me naked?”

“I mean,” Blake teases back, “that is definitely a plus.”

Amory laughs and walks to the bedroom, Blake trailing behind her.

The two of them get undressed, but before Amory can open their dresser to get redressed, Blake walks over to where she is standing. She wraps her arms around Amory's waist and inches a hand toward her underwear.

"You should take these off," Blake says.

Amory laughs and turns around, facing Blake. "And you should be less horny."

"That's never going to happen," Blake says.

Amory laughs and gives an overdramatic sigh. "I know," she says, looking Blake up and down. She bites her lip. "And, I mean, I can't say much."

Blake laughs and steps out of her own underwear. Amory follows suit

"God," Blake says, "you're so hot."

Amory laughs, but she blushes as Blake stares her down. And she blushes harder when Blake gently runs her fingers down her chest and belly and to her wet pussy.

Amory struggles to stay standing when Blake pushes two fingers inside of her and she moans.

Blake laughs and finger fucks her partner for a few minutes until Amory's legs begin to shake so violently that she's worried she'll collapse.

Blake removes her fingers and looks around their top dresser drawer for her wand vibrator. When she takes it out, Amory's eyes light up in excitement, and Blake pushes Amory onto the bed. Amory lies flat on her back and Blake hovers over her, holding the vibrator in her hand. She kisses Amory on the forehead before she moves toward her lips.

The two of them make out for a few minutes, Blake allowing Amory to recover for a moment while she gets heated up again.

Blake turns on the vibrator and runs it across Amory's inner thighs, teasing her. Amory gasps and moans and Blake loves how sensitive she is. She loves hearing the way Amory gasps anytime Blake touches her thighs. And she especially loves the way Amory nearly screams when Blake finally touches the vibrator to her clit.

"Oh god," Amory gasps and moans. "Please," she says, reaching toward Blake's hands and trying to push the vibrator down harder. It's not enough and she needs more.

Blake laughs, loving how desperate she makes the other woman. "No. Patience, sweetheart, just enjoy it."

Amory groans, definitely not being a patient person, especially when Blake is torturing her.

Blake decides not to torture her any further and she climbs herself on top of Amory, carefully adjusting her position so she is straddling Amory and the wand and her own clitoris can feel the wand while the weight of her body presses the vibrating wand down tightly against Amory's clitoris.

"Ahhhhh," Amory moans loudly and Blake knows she has it exactly right. It feels exquisite on her own clitoris and she can see from Amory's reaction that it is just the same for her.

Blake grinds herself against it, with every press giving more and more pleasure to them both.

She enjoys nothing more than feeling and seeing Amory writhing in ecstasy beneath

her.

“Oh fuck, I’m so close...” Amory says.

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“Come with me,” Blake says and grinds down harder to take her own orgasm, hoping it will bring Amory’s at the same time.

Blake feels her whole body tighten as her orgasm crashes through her and she cries out loudly. She feels herself gush and she knows it will flood down over Amory’s pussy.

Seconds later she feels Amory orgasm beneath her, as beautifully loud as Amory always is and she smiles to herself.

Their sexual connection is just like the rest of their connection. Perfect.

When the two of them are done having sex and showered, they walk back to the kitchen, wearing pajamas, and Blake walks to the cabinet. She ruffles around until she finds some hot cocoa mix. She puts a kettle full of water on the stove and starts to boil it.

“Is pizza okay for supper tonight?” Blake asks Amory. One of Blake’s favorite things about being back in the US is that they don’t have to cook supper every single night. It’s okay to be lazy sometimes and order pizza.

“That sounds wonderful,” Amory answers. “Do you want to watch a movie or something?”

“Perfect,” Blake says, and it does sound perfect. It sounds like a perfect way to unwind at the end of a long workday, pizza and a movie. Blake is lucky, she doesn’t work tomorrow, but she’s bummed because Amory does. Blake’s day off work is a

Wednesday, while Amory has the weekends off.

Blake is trying really hard to get off work for at least one day on the weekend, but working in urgent care, it's a hard time to get off, and she doesn't know if she'll be able to. But she really wants to so that she can spend more time with Amory. She's hoping that if she works at this urgent care a little longer, she'll gain seniority and be able to get the time that she wants off.

The water is soon boiled and Blake makes cocoa for the two of them, pouring it into mugs and bringing them into the living room.

Amory picks a movie and lets it start while the two of them wait for the pizza. They get about thirty minutes into the movie when there's a knock on the door and Amory pauses the movie so that she can open the door and get the pizza.

Amory comes inside after paying and puts the pizza on the coffee table. Blake's phone buzzes with a new text.

Jenna:Do you want to hang out tomorrow? We can go out to lunch or something. I have some big news to tell you

"Hey, Jenna wants to hang out tomorrow to talk about something."

"Oh," Amory says, "did she tell you what she wanted to talk about?"

"No, only that it's big news."

"You should go if you want," Amory says, "it is your day off, after all, and you two haven't hung out in a while."

It's true. Blake tries to hang out with Jenna often, but after moving into their new house, they have been a little preoccupied with unpacking and making sure that their

space is perfect for them.

“Okay,” Blake says, giving Amory a kiss on the cheek.

Blake: Yeah, I can hang out tomorrow

Blake: When and where do you want to meet?

Jenna: I can pick you up from your place. Does twelve work?

Blake: Sounds perfect

It also sounds like Blake will be able to sleep in tomorrow. She’s able to get up and dress fairly quickly, so she doesn’t need to set an alarm until eleven thirty.

Blake is really glad that Amory isn’t jealous of her friendship with Jenna. She was a little worried at first, especially with what happened in Zambia with Amory thinking Blake was cheating on Jenna. Blake didn’t know how Amory would react to Blake staying friends with someone she used to fuck. But it seems like Amory has been able to work through her fears of Blake cheating, and Blake is so grateful for that.

As much as she loves Amory, Jenna has been her best friend for years and Blake can’t imagine giving up that friendship. But, no, Amory seems to love that Blake has a friend, and she gets along with Jenna great, too, which is wonderful to Blake.

Blake smiles at her wonderful girlfriend, not really paying much attention to the rest of the movie as it plays. She leans forward and kisses Amory on the lips, distracting both of them from the ending of the movie. They make out and Blake puts a hand down Amory’s pajama pants.

Amory laughs. “You’re always horny, aren’t you?”

Blake laughs back. “You should know that the answer to that is yes.”

Amory kisses Blake again, biting her lip as she touches her. She moans into Blake’s mouth.

“I can’t wait for the rest of forever with you,” she says.