



# In Her Arms

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**Category:** Romance, Lesbian Romance

**Description:** 30-year-old, androgynous free spirit Cameron Casey has NEVER had trouble catching a woman's eye – but she doesn't do commitment.

Cam's world is completely thrown when she's thrust into the role of personal assistant to Hollywood's sweetheart, Goldie Richards. But the real Goldie is nothing like the fantasy from Cam's childhood memories—she's demanding, sharp-tongued, and stubborn. Their connection is glaringly strong from the start, but feelings just mean complications, don't they? Cameron doesn't do love, and neither does Goldie—or so they think. But as emotions rise, both women are forced to face their deepest fears.

**Total Pages (Source):** 29

## CAMERON

The Indigo Lounge was packed wall-to-wall with vibrant people sipping cocktails, their eyes trained on the stage setup in the corner of the room. Open mic nights had always been a crowd pleaser, but the demand tonight had been nearly overwhelming. They were lucky the bar's order had come in on time, Cameron thought as she mixed a drink. Otherwise, they would have run short. Esme had only gotten more creative with the specials once the renovations had finished, and that meant getting more creative with the ingredients. This week was no different; Cameron was mixing something called "Cat Named Dog," a mule made with rhubarb soda named after the Norma Tanega song.

Where does she come up with this stuff? Cameron handed the drink to a customer with a smile. It was clearer than ever that Esme was the driving creative spirit behind the bar ever since she had handed over some of the more technical responsibilities to Nora. She was flourishing and finally able to spend her time whipping up drinks and food with the chefs and making sure the weekly lineup of events kept the community entertained.

Cameron had picked up far more shifts since the grand re-opening than she had over all the months before combined. Being busy was good for her, kept her mind occupied and allowed her to help her friends when they needed her. It didn't hurt that they had taken on extra staff and the newbies were being trained up. The Lounge may have expanded, but Cameron was grateful that the atmosphere hadn't changed. It was bigger and better, but the community had expanded instead of being replaced.

Cameron had begun recognizing new regulars, and she could always tell when it was somebody's first time there. They tended to have a wide-eyed excitement about them, taking in every little curated detail.

Esme carried a slab of cans behind Cameron while she kept mixing cocktails, the line at the bar gradually growing shorter. Once the performances started, they would have a minute of quiet. Looking around at the crowd as she mixed, Cameron spotted Holly and Deborah making their way through the crowd. She smiled and gestured for them to sit on the stools while she took care of the remaining orders. Esme appeared over her shoulder, greeted the two women, and then made her way over to the stage area to introduce the emcee for the evening.

“Hello, Indigo Lounge! How is everybody doing tonight? Everybody having a good time?”

The crowd roared back. Cameron thought Esme's smile was bright enough to power the building. Dressed in a pair of flowy linen pants and a silk shirt, Esme's hippie-chic, comfort-over-style philosophy was clearly working in her favor. She moved freely around the stage, and Cameron knew that if she called her over to the bar, she would be there in a flash. “I'm glad to hear it! I wanted to thank you all for coming tonight. We have an absolutely incredible lineup of talented artists waiting to perform for you all night. Who's looking forward to the show?”

Another roar from the crowd. Esme introduced the host of the show, a local drag king, and outlined some acts of the evening. A few major record labels were known to send talent agents around to the Lounge on open mic nights, and some people had even been offered contracts based on performances. It had become a big deal for the local lesbian music scene, which had only existed in scattered areas around L.A. before the Indigo Lounge had opened. The crowd was excited to see the performers, and the performers were excited to play to such a large—and potentially life-changing—crowd. It was a brilliant win-win. While the first act was setting up, the

noise died down to the point where Cameron could finally say hello to Deborah and Holly without having to shout.

“How are you two doing?” She leaned over the bar to give them each a one-armed hug.

“I’m doing pretty well. Got some work done today, but Deb’s been in meetings since about nine this morning, haven’t you, honey?” Holly swept her hair behind her shoulder and wrapped an arm around Deborah. Their shared affection was easy, free-flowing, and casual.

“I’ve been crawling up the walls, Cam. I’m sick of boardrooms and execs who don’t know their behinds from their elbows trying to make decisions about what happens with the moviestheywanted to buy! Honestly, don’t spend millions on a franchise then complain to me when you realize you don’t know what to do with it.”

Holly looked exasperated. “Could we get her a drink, Cam?”

“Absolutely, two seconds, Hol.”

Cameron chose a small bottle of mezcal, a strong Mexican spirit, from below the bar and reached back for a grapefruit soda and some golden glitter. Grabbing a glass and an ice cube, she poured the soda over the mezcal and stirred in the edible glitter. The drink shimmered as she handed it over.

“What’s this one called, then?” asked Deborah, smiling as she took a sip.

“Golden Paloma,” Cameron replied, laughing as Deborah’s lips puckered at the strong taste.

Deborah was interrupted by her phone buzzing in her pocket, and she sighed, giving

Holly a weary, apologetic look.

Holly only laughed, taking the drink from her and nodding toward the door with her head. Deborah reluctantly slouched toward the door.

Holly turned to Cameron again, sneaking a sip of the drink. “How are you doing?”

Cameron shrugged. “I’ve been doing alright, much busier since this place opened back up.”

“Is busy good? For you, I mean.”

“Busy keeps me from getting bored.”

“Ah, well, if you were ever bored, I know some lovely ladies around here who would be more than happy to keep you occupied.”

Cameron rolled her eyes as Holly laughed.

“Though fair warning, most of them have heard about you already.”

“Low blow, Holly!” Cameron raised her hands in mock frustration. The joke was fair game, even if it stung. “You got lucky with Deb; you really did. I just don’t think I’m built for something so...long-term. Not my fault people love to talk so much when things don’t go their way.”

Holly gave her a sideways look, and, okay, maybe it was justified, but Cameron had figured out what worked for her and what didn’t. Didn’t she deserve some credit?

“Long-term relationships may not be your thing, but you’ll show those girls the best night of their lives.”

“Ah,” Cam cut in. “No drinks for you tonight. That’s what you get for making fun of the bartender.”

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Holly's mouth dropped into an "o," and she gasped, placing one hand, palm up, melodramatically over her forehead. Cameron rolled her eyes again, smiling fondly despite herself.

Deborah appeared at the bar again, phone in hand, with a smile plastered onto her face. Cameron saw the look a mile away, but Holly was the one to point it out.

"Something's wrong. You have that...face on your face."

"What face? This is my normal face."

"No, it isn't. That's your crisis mode, everything-is-going-to-hell face you use when you need to ask for help."

"Am I that easy to read?"

"Yes," responded Cameron immediately. "Deb, what's going on? Is everything alright?"

Deborah took a second to inhale deeply before starting. In the back of her mind, Cameron made a note to make her a second Paloma; she seemed like she needed another stiff drink.

"So, this stays between the three of us..."

The two women nodded furiously, and Cameron was excited at the prospect of getting insider information, even if it was banal.

“I’m presuming I don’t need to explain to either of you who Goldie Richards is.”

The furious nodding turned into furious head-shaking. Of course they knew who Goldie Richards was. Everybody knew who Goldie Richards was. As one of the world’s best-known actresses, Richards had graced the cover of *Vogue France* when she was only nineteen years old. She had just won three Emmy awards and was favored to win the Best Supporting Actress award at the following year’s Oscars. You could stop ten different people on the street and ask them to name an actress, and they would all name her, no question. She was everywhere.

“She’s in L.A. filming the next season of *Paperweight*. Her assistant just walked off set, and the company doesn’t have anybody to replace him. Cam?”

“Yeah?” She hoped her expression remained neutral.

“You have experience doing PA work for me, and you’ve done similar work on top of that, right?”

Cameron nodded. Don’t get too excited.

“If I send your contact details over to the agency, would you be able to take over for the last few weeks of filming? I’ll have a contract written up for you, clear it with the union, and make sure you’re paid fairly. This can happen really, really quickly.”

This would be the opportunity of a lifetime; Cameron knew that. Working on such a high-profile set would give her the chance to network with people in the industry, and the experience would give her a boost for future jobs. It would be intimidating, sure, and she knew the hours would be long, but she would never get a chance like this again. There was only one thing...

“Deb, you already know I’d love to, but I’m gonna have to clear it with Ez first. This



place is really picking up, and I can't just ditch her."

"Who said my name?" asked Esme, having finally made her way back through the crowd. "Hi, honey! Hi, Deb! How are you two doing?"

The three women hugged and made excited small talk as Cameron cleaned some glasses, waiting for a moment she could slip in. She couldn't just leave Indigo Lounge, leave Esme knowing she was already overwhelmed. She had an obligation to stay, even if it wasn't contractual, because it was Esme. Fortunately, the situation seemed to resolve itself.

"Cam, I'm not sure if I'll be needing you around as much over the next few weeks," Esme said, turning to face her. "Nora's been interviewing for bar staff—mixologists, that's what she's been calling them. They'll be trained over the next while, but I'll be able to do that. Do you have other stuff you need to work on in the meantime?"

Cameron smiled. "I'm sure I'll have plenty to do. Deb needs a hand with something."

"Goldie Richards is in town!" Deborah added excitedly. "They need a new assistant for her on set."

So much for secrecy.

After her shift, Cameron returned home to her apartment at around 2 a.m., still buzzing with the energy from the Lounge and the excitement of the new job. She wandered aimlessly for a little while, too restless to sleep, rearranging the dishes in her kitchen cupboards and fluffing the pillows on her sofa. Eventually, she sat on the sofa and filled out the form that Deborah had sent to her on her phone. This wasn't the first time she had done a favor for Deborah like this; she seemed to be the first choice for any of her friends who needed stuff done—running social media accounts,

putting together IKEA furniture, arranging flowers. Over time, she had done lots of odd jobs and had become a bit of a Jack-of-all-trades. This wasn't the most unusual job, but it was absolutely the most high-profile.

Cameron thought, not for the first time, about Goldie Richards. Her iconic, voluminous blonde hair, golden brown eyes, her style dripping with both self-worth and net worth. She wore designer on the red carpet, had been a guest judge at film festivals all over the country, and held an obvious reverence for film as a medium. She carried herself with an air of sweetness, addressing fans and journalists with respect. She had a reputation as one of Hollywood's best, an absolute master of her craft with a degree from Julliard that she had earned with honors.

How do I know so much about her? Then she remembered her old habit of falling asleep with late-night talk shows playing in the background. Goldie had been a mainstay on talk television for years and always presented herself very well.

Goldie didn't have the traditional, soft-spoken voice of a movie star. She could be abrasive, her voice shifting between husky and lilting. The tabloids had a field day with her when she was younger, ripping her apart publicly for what they saw as the cardinal sin of having a personality while speaking. It never seemed to bother Goldie, and she had never taken it upon herself to change her voice, at least publicly. Though she had started out as a staple of raunchy comedies, she had expanded her range as she got older and gained more experience. She had talked extensively about not wanting to confine herself, always gracious but firm about wanting to grow beyond her image. The place she had carved for herself in the industry was impressive by any standard.

Cameron swore she wasn't obsessed, just good at absorbing and retaining information. She was constantly pulling in random bits of trivia, which she could then pull out in conversation to the surprise of her friends. Being generally chilled out didn't mean she was brain-dead, she would say, and they'd laugh and carry on. She

liked beingthere,and being there meant she was paying attention, whether she was saying something or not.

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The habit of having the television on while she slept wasn't really detrimental, but loud noises during sitcom reruns would wake her in the dead of night. She had kicked the habit as a result, but she decided a little indulgence tonight wouldn't hurt.

Pulling up a video of an interview segment from *Late Night Friday*, she found herself hypnotized by Goldie's smooth, assured voice. Cam played the interview as she wandered around getting ready to go to sleep, brushing her teeth, taking some medications, and getting into a comfortable pair of pajamas. She ended up falling asleep to another interview, lulled to sleep by that same voice while cocooned in blankets. As Cameron drifted off, she found herself hoping that Goldie would like her, in that juvenile way everybody does when meeting somebody for the first time. She had no idea just how interesting her first day of work would be.

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### GOLDIE

For the first time in three days, Goldie was finally alone. No being chased around by overbearing directors, no more avoiding public spaces for the sake of not drawing attention. She had managed to find a place where she could be by herself. The bright overhead lights of the hair-and-makeup trailer stung her eyes and the whole room smelled of hairspray, but here, she could have some peace and quiet before filming.

Adam, her useless assistant, had walked out. That was hardly surprising. Goldie wasn't going to lie to herself and say she had particularly high expectations for an assistant, but, honestly, just walking off the set was unprofessional. She had a high standard that he had known about going into the job—and for good reason. During a

busy filming schedule, every free minute counted for learning lines, rehearsing, filming, and—maybe most importantly—decompressing. She hadn't had much time to decompress, to drop out of character and just exist as herself, and that would only get worse now that she had to leave to get her own lunch. The vegetarian options at the caterer's table were awful, and the only restaurant nearby was constantly packed with people. She knew she would be swarmed with well-meaning people there. Here, she had some peace. It was early in the morning, about three hours before filming was due to begin that day, and about forty-five minutes before the hair and makeup crew would be arriving. A cedarwood-scented candle wafted through the air, masking the chemical smell of stage makeup and hairspray around Goldie. She allowed herself to relax, feeling tension melt away with deep breaths. She took a moment to think.

Who was Goldie Richards, really, when she was at home? She was a lot of things she couldn't be in public. Hell, the toned-down version of herself that had been carefully curated during some very expensive media training when she was younger had caused uproar. She had become extremely cautious as a result, only appearing on recorded interviews or live prestigious events instead of fan meet-ups or conventions. You were much less likely to be scouted by tabloid paparazzi at a prestigious film festival, after all.

In front of the camera? She was a good actress; she knew that much. You can only be humble about being good at your job for so long before assuming everybody else knows it, too, especially in an industry as reputation-obsessed as entertainment. Her reputation had built back up from her comedy days, and now she had a very positive public image, even if it had sprouted from the image she had when she was younger. She was a role model and, paradoxically, a reluctant sex symbol. Goldie Richards, blonde bombshell and comedic powerhouse, she was the entertainment, on and off set. She hadn't been able to shake that. Ever.

Except that was hopefully changing. As much as she loved the chick flicks and stoner comedies of her youth, she had not gotten into Juilliard only to play "push-up bra

model with good comedic delivery” every movie for the rest of her career, and she wasn’t getting any younger. Though she had gotten onto panels at competitions and was generally considered an expert in her field, her body of work didn’t quite reflect that. Television was a good change of pace for her. She had tested the waters the year before with a drama that had earned her three Emmys, but *Paperweight* would be the real challenge. A legal drama, her character was being introduced as a love interest for the protagonist, played by famed heartthrob Leon Addison. Goldie was intensely fond of Leon. They had taken the same college course and had remained firm friends in the decades since, keeping each other company. He knew she was a lesbian and was only one of a handful of people she could trust with the secret, and she quietly hoped he would be able to set her up on a date with somebody else who could understand the very delicate position she was in. She had given up on dating a long time ago, but she had not given up on romcoms. Couldn’t she dream a little?

Her contentment was shattered by a knock on the door of the trailer. It was probably the hair and makeup crew.

“Come in!” she called, trying to be as cheerful as possible.

After everything that had happened with Adam, word had spread, and she felt like people were avoiding her. As much as she tried not to let it get to her, she felt like was being treated like a ticking bomb already. She just wanted to be able to get on with her job, and she wouldn’t be able to do that if everybody avoided her. She heard the door handle click.

She did not recognize the woman who walked in. Clearly apprehensive, she had a tote bag slung over her shoulder. She was tall, probably about six feet, and her hair hung around her chin in a shaggy cut. She wasn’t wearing makeup, but the definition of her lips and her high cheekbones gave her an androgynous look. She carried a clipboard and was wearing a pair of 501 jeans, a pair of boots, and a pullover sweater underneath a canvas workwear jacket. She looked...practical.

She smiled at this stranger, hoping she wasn't being robbed or fired. She looked like a crew member, and the lanyard around her neck had what looked like a staff pass. Still, people had recreated them before. Better safe than sorry. "And who might you be?"

"I'm, uh, I'm Cameron Warner, ma'am. The agency sent me to replace Adam. I have a copy of your schedule for today here, and I can grab whatever you need."

Adam's replacement! Delightful. That was far too quick for her liking.

"Do they have a room full of replacement assistants they keep in cryogenic freeze until one of them gets sick of their job?" she asked.

Cameron forced a laugh, looking at Goldie up and down in a way she clearly thought was subtle enough that she wouldn't notice.

Poor thing. She didn't mean anything by it, of course, but it was too early in the morning for this.

"I'm afraid not. They've only got a few of us. We share a room full of bunk beds, and we all have the same name so they don't have to remember our faces."

"Well, it wouldn't surprise me in the least. The agency gets up to some weird tricks trying to keep their workers in line."

Cameron smiled and shifted, clearly uncomfortable.

She broke the silence. "Call me Goldie. Could you grab me some coffee? Black, two sugars."

"Sure thing, ma—Goldie." Cameron pulled a pen out from behind her ear and

scrawled Goldie's coffee order on her clipboard..

"You know where the craft services tent is?"

"Yes, I passed it on my way here. I'll be back in a little while."

"I won't be going anywhere." Goldie smiled and took a sip from her water bottle.

Cameron left the trailer without another word.

I'm going to get in trouble with this one. Cameron was exactly her type of woman, down to a tee, and if she wasn't careful, she was going to get distracted. She was androgynous, masculine in a way that felt fluid and strong behind the professional mask she put up. Between the physical and mental demands of her role and the short time left in filming, Goldie wouldn't have time to get particularly friendly with her anyway. That was probably for the best. No sense in making friends with somebody she would never see again, so she decided she'd keep it professional.

"Morning, Goldie!" called a voice from the doorway, and she turned to face the hair and makeup crew, who had arrived. "You're here early."



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They were already in their usual uniform: all-black outfit with an apron to keep brushes and other equipment organized, hair tied back into ponytails, full faces of makeup. There were three today: a redheaded woman and two brunettes. She recognized them all from previous days on set. They were talented women who were incredibly good at their jobs.

“What can I say, girls? Being early is the new being on time. Did you catch last night’s Love Island?”

She didn’t actually watch Love Island, but she also didn’t like men, and what the crew didn’t know wouldn’t hurt them. Besides, she liked the hair and makeup crew. They made her feel like a person instead of a ragdoll to throw around on set. As the redheaded woman, Jolene, began to pin up Goldie’s hair, she thought that the best workers on a film set were always the people just off to the side. It was all well and good being in front of the camera and getting paid—if you were getting paid, that is—but the thing about being the famous face was that...well, your face was famous. You really couldn’t go anywhere without being recognized, and everybody around you had to contend with the fact that you were going to get a little more attention than them. Crew on set tended to be levelheaded about it, and the costuming department in particular was the most fun at parties.

Hopefully, Cameron could join their ranks.

“I don’t think I’ve ever worked with somebody more arrogant, and I’ve worked with some truly awful people.”

Cameron sat at the Indigo Lounge’s bar while nursing a coffee. She was tired to the bone and had desperately needed a friend whose ear she could talk off. Cameron knew that when Indigo Lounge was open during the day, Esme didn’t mind the company. She especially didn’t mind the gossip.

Cameron let it loose. “She’s unbearably entitled, treats you like you’re a...a vending machine and that’s it! As if you’re not a whole person with thoughts and feelings and an entire day of work ahead of you. No, to her you’re a little flying monkey whose job it is to fetch coffee for her at all hours of the morning, which would be fine if she bothered to thank me or acknowledge me at all in a way that isn’t insulting. I don’t know if she’s capable of that. Absolutely ridiculous!”

“She sounds like an absolute nightmare! All of this after one day of work, and it sounded like a long day, bless you. Maybe she’s putting on a façade.”

Cameron lifted her elbows up as Esme sprayed natural citrus cleaning solution onto the bartop and wiped it with a rag. Her wedding ring shone. Cameron decided to try and change the subject.

“Nora really lets you use that natural stuff to clean the bar? I kinda thought she’d find a way to object to it.”

“First off, Nora may be my wife, but she does not ‘let me’ do anything because this is my bar, smartass.” She whipped the rag at Cameron as she laughed.

“Secondly, I don’t see any use in wasting perfectly good product. How many oranges do we go through a week, Cam?”

“Oh, easily half a dozen boxes at least.”

“Exactly! That’s a lot of peels to be throwing out, and I have a lot of countertops and tables that need cleaning. Now, I wouldn’t use this in the kitchen?—”

“Because Sasha would never allow it.”

“Because this stuff isn’t food-safe, excuse you! That, too, though. I listen to Sasha because she has the state-mandated food hygiene training, and I know she knows what she’s talking about. Nora, on the other hand?—”

“Nora is the absolute sweetest, and I would never badmouth her to my friends first thing in the morning. That’s what you were going to say, right, darling?” Nora came down the stairs in a blazer with a pair of chinos.

“Now, honey, I wasn’t badmouthing you! I was simply saying that I trust you on money issues—or I would have said that if you’d let me finish. Not my fault you’re such a sleepyhead joining us this late.” Esme pressed a kiss to Nora’s temple, smiling.

Nora smiled back, clearly enamored. Cameron sipped at her coffee as Nora turned to face her.

“How’d your first day at work go?” Nora asked.

Cameron shrugged, but Esme grimaced and shook her head.

“That bad, huh?” Cameron sighed, cradling the cup in her hands so she didn’t have to set it down on the clean counter. “She’s not like her public persona at all, and look, I know most of them aren’t, but the difference here is really stark.”

“She’s always come across as very easygoing in interviews, very funny,” Esme added, nodding emphatically.

“Yeah, well, maybe she’s that way when she’s getting paid to talk to you. She was actually really rude to me. If I’m being honest, she’s pretty abrasive and full-on demanding all day,” said Cameron.

And also weirdly flirty, but in a backhanded way.

She was certain that this wasn’t something Goldie would want made public, which made sense. She wasn’t out publicly and Cameron could respect that, but she had to be able to talk about it because it was the strangest part of the whole day. She felt like this confusion would keep her awake because she couldn’t deny that Goldie was drop-dead gorgeous. She hoped that she hadn’t come across as too starstruck, but the second she had entered the trailer, she had been taken aback. Goldie hadn’t been wearing any makeup, and her hair was tied up in a silk headscarf. The smell of the trailer had hit her, too, a strong woody-scented candle mixing with hairspray. That first impression was a striking image that would stick with her. Cameron shook her head lightly, remembering that she was supposed to be complaining.

“She made these jokes to me, about assistants with the company being like...grown in a lab? I think she sees the people she works with as disposable or something. Hell, she even called me by the same name as her old assistant once!”

“Cam, sweetie,” Nora said, pouring herself a glass of water, “I say this with all of the love in my heart, but rich people are insane and famous people are insane. I think being rich and famous does a certain amount of damage to the brain that scientists haven’t managed to figure out yet.”

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Esme nodded and Cameron gave Nora a sideways look as she sipped her coffee.

“What I’m saying is that you need to put up a little mental block in your head where you would normally get mad at people for saying stupid, out-of-touch things. Sure, you can get mad—please don’t repress yourself—but know that in a few weeks when this is all over, you’ll be able to move on with your life. Trust me, in twenty years time, you’ll be telling this story like it’s the funniest thing in the world.”

“I guess you’re right,” Cameron said. “Still, that won’t make right now any easier. She’s so demanding, but Deborah hooked me up and I wouldn’t let her down.”

“Oh, trust me, I know all about demanding clients. They’re all hiding something. A couple years ago, before I ever came to L.A., I was working on developing an ice hockey stadium,” Nora began and talked at length about planning permission and sponsorships.

Cameron loved her, she really did, but it was far too early for that kind of talk. Nora was very good at development, and she had in-depth knowledge of the industry that she assumed other people would pick up on automatically. It was too much jargon for a layperson to understand.

Instead, Cam took notice of the way Esme and Nora interacted. They were no longer newlyweds, and it seemed like time had just strengthened their relationship instead of pushing them apart. They were open and affectionate with each other, especially in the Lounge. Even on busy days, they would make affectionate eye contact across the room, the kind that held entire silent conversations in their own language. On quiet nights, you would see Nora at the bar having a drink with Esme while she cleaned

glasses, making small talk and smiling fondly. It was clear to anybody who saw them that their love was all-consuming. Now, Nora wrapped an arm around Esme's waist and gave her a kiss on the cheek while she talked.

Had Cameron ever been that openly affectionate with a partner? She thought back to her most recent relationship, which had lasted about a month. No, she realized, she really hadn't been at all. She thought back to the relationship before that, and, again, she found that she hadn't had any sort of PDA at all. Any affection between them had been kept private, out of public view, and the relationship had only lasted for a couple of weeks. The idea of a gesture of affection, however small, seemed alien to her. She had, for the most part, private, whirlwind, romantic, filthy flings. They had been mostly sex and pillow talk with no promises of the future or security, but they had meant something...hadn't they?

She had been on a handful of proper dates over the course of her life, and sure, while she hated stuffy, formal environments, she quietly wished for something more intense than a hookup after a night of dancing. There wasn't anything wrong with that, she reminded herself, but she genuinely didn't think she was built for anything longer than a few weeks. She knew she was...good—there was only so long you could deny that for—and Holly hadn't been wrong that night at the Lounge. She did have a little bit of a reputation. That part was certainly unintentional, though, and it had been a bit of a stain on her social life. The people who knew her well clearly knew her intentions, but the way this had been spread around meant that every so often she would see a group of women staring at her, turning to whisper to each other. It stung.

Esme and Nora were obviously completely and utterly in love with each other, and they made that love known in the smallest ways. The touch of a hand or an arm, silent help when the other was busy, fond smiles when they thought nobody was looking. Cameron had seen it all.

That was what she wanted.

This was a startling revelation to come to at eight in the morning, but it was probably as good a time as any, she thought. She wanted love. Not a hookup, not a whirlwind relationship that ended in heartbreak. Long-term, dedicated, till-death-do-us-part love. She wasn't sure she was built for it, which was terrifying, but she couldn't ignore it anymore. It would be difficult with people whispering about her, but she wanted to fight for it.

She turned back to Nora, who was still talking.

“Anyway, that’s the last time I agree to hold a press conference on an ice skating rink. Seriously, I can’t believe he came up with the idea, only to blame me!”

“It’s terrible. It really is,” Esme replied. “Cam, if she asks you to help organize a press conference on a rink?—”

“Say no, gotcha,” Cameron said, laughing. They led such interesting lives, and the stories never got old.

“So, what’s your plan for today, Cam?” asked Nora.

“I’m gonna head home for a few hours, maybe take a shower, and I’ll be back at the shoot this evening.” She downed the rest of her coffee, the sweet caramel flavor a welcome treat after an early start. Yesterday, she had finished work at two p.m. then called back in for a night shoot that had lasted until about five this morning. She had known Esme would be up early, so as the sun rose, she had walked to Indigo Lounge, knowing that when she knocked on the back door, she would be let in. Now, she had gotten all she needed.

Except for sleep. What she really needed was sleep.

“Cameron,” Nora said, “if for whatever reason the job isn’t for you, let us know when

you've put your notice in. We'll give you a few extra shifts here to make up the money."

"Nora, no?—"

"Cameron, I insist. If you need the money, we would be more than happy to look after you. You know that."

Cameron couldn't help but smile. Nora hadn't known her for as long as Esme had, but it was clear that they both really cared about her. It was sweet, knowing she had a chosen family she could turn to if she needed anything.

"Nora, I really appreciate the offer, I do, thank you. Money's not the issue actually."

"No, it is not," added Esme, looking at Nora with raised eyebrows. Nora raised her eyebrows back, before turning to Cameron.

"I'm mostly living off of a distant relative's inheritance. It's a funny story, actually, but I got most of the contents of her will, even though I'd never met her. I made my way out here to L.A. looking for something to do after I got sick of lazing around and wandered in here. Ez ended up sticking me behind the bar, and I've been helping her ever since. She pays me for the longer shifts, but honestly, I don't see this as a job so much as an excuse to help out."

"Charity bar work? I can't believe my ears," Nora said incredulously. Esme laughed.

"It's not charity!" Cameron insisted, knowing Esme would object. "I love it here, and even if I wasn't working the bar, I would probably be sitting in the corner or annoying Ruby while she's trying to write."

"Alright, I trust you." Nora seemed satisfied. "So you're telling me you're here for



the greater good of the L.A. lesbian scene?”

Esme laughed again, a snort that made Cameron laugh too.

“Again, I’m not sure I’d describe it that way but—you know what, sure. I’m a rich lesbian messiah. I’m sure saying that will do great things for my ego.”

## Page 6

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“Ah, hang on a second. I never said that.”

Cameron ended up staying for breakfast, eating a wonky croissant with Sasha while she took inventory for the day and ordered the stock for the week.

She went home once breakfast service ended at eleven, getting a good afternoon's sleep before her night shift began at seven. Night shoots tended to be indoors, at least, and away from the heat of the sun. Exterior shots took ages to film, with everybody on set working to make every shot as beautiful as possible. This meant that the end product would be exquisite, but it also meant that everybody not directly involved with cinematography had to stand around for a few hours. Goldie's ribbing hadn't slowed down. In fact, it had gotten more intense, and Cameron was understanding more and more why her last assistant had quit.

Thinking about it more, she supposed she could deal with Goldie for a few more weeks. The job would be for just over a month, the pay would be very good, and Cameron would be able to move on with her life after. Besides, there was no way Deborah could have actually known that Goldie would be this difficult to work with. Otherwise, there was no chance she would have sent Cam. Deborah looked after Cameron, and Cameron had looked after Deborah in return, helping her out when she needed it. Surely, she wouldn't have sent her in without warning if she had known. Would she?

“According to article B-6 of *Lewis v. Watson*, the law states that—no, that’s not it. According to article B-6 of *Lewis v. Woodhouse*—Woodhouse? Watson?” Goldie reluctantly looked back down at the script she had been handed that morning. “Wilson. Fuck, that’s it.”

She cleared her throat. She had been going over her new lines for a while now, and she was still amazed at the amount of technical detail involved. The series researchers really had their work cut out for them, though she also realized that several of the writers for the show actually had law qualifications in one way or another. Even though *Paperweight* was, on the surface, just another legal drama, the level of detail in the show had been unrivaled. Goldie had a period of about four months to prepare for filming, which she had expected for a role this big. What she didn’t expect was the sheer amount she had to research herself. A care package of several real legal case files—boxes and boxes worth of files—had shown up on her doorstep a few months before shooting. She would sit on her porch with a glass of iced tea and study the real cases that the cases in the show were based on. At the time, it felt a little tedious. Now, she was grateful that she had context for everything happening on screen. She was a firm believer that an actor’s performance was more believable if they had the same real-life understanding as their character would have. She was more than happy to do the reading.

It was a real labor of love by the cast and crew, and Goldie felt incredibly lucky to be a part of such an acclaimed show. The first season had won a slate of awards and had gotten incredible ratings, and one of the show’s producers had asked her personally to audition. Now, if she could just get her lines right so this episode’s director didn’t go on a power trip, that would be fantastic.

She set the script down on the table in her trailer, deciding to take a short break. The small window was open, allowing a cooling breeze to pass through the stifling heat. She was wearing a vintage robe, slippers cushioning her feet, her hair tied up in her favorite scarf. She wished she had some company, but most of her castmates were on

set filming, the hair and makeup crew were there with them, her agent was busy, and Cameron was off grabbing her lunch from a nearby restaurant.

Cameron. What was she going to do about Cameron?

The woman did everything that was asked of her quietly, efficiently, and without complaint. When she spoke to Goldie, she was respectful but casual, without being weirdly intense about her being famous. She didn't complain when Goldie made comments or jokes about her, which kind of ruined the fun, but honestly, if Goldie was in Cameron's position, she would be slow to talk back as well. She wanted to see if she would ever get comfortable enough with her to talk back at all or if she would just heel like a dog. Not that that image was unappealing, per se.

Cameron was very attractive. Her looks had stuck with Goldie since the day they had met. She had been a subject of daydreams, and she imagined Cameron finally fighting back against her jabs and hurriedly pinning her to the wall. Cameron was the kind of woman who would have ruined Goldie's life when she was younger. The kind of woman she would have obsessed over and gushed with friends about at a bar. If she were able to go to bars nowadays, she just might find a group of women to gush with. As it was, she had decided not to tell anybody about this particular attraction. Not only did it seem like an HR nightmare, but she knew if Cameron went to the press, Goldie was in a world of complications. Not that she thought Cameron would do that. Goldie would just deny it; it wouldn't be the first time.

If she was being honest, Cameron's approach to assistant work was boring. She had never seen her pull the 'do you know who I work for' card when something didn't happen, and she hadn't heard about her gossiping with anybody else on set. She had seen her talk to the catering staff a few times, sure, but other than them, Cameron seemed to be happy to keep to herself and only interact with Goldie when asked to do something. She didn't really like it. It wasn't interesting. It wasn't dramatic or scandalous or anything else she had become accustomed to in Hollywood. It was

boring. It was just Cameron, who she desperately wanted to get to know, being good at her job.

Speaking of Cameron, at that moment, she knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Goldie called, taking the script from the table and throwing it onto the bed. She got up to grab a bowl and fork from her tiny kitchen cabinets.

Cameron came through the door with her lunch in a brown paper bag with a green logo on the side. She was wearing a plain white t-shirt, a pair of black fabric shorts that ended just above the knee, and a pair of sneakers. It was warm outside, and a sheen of sweat covered her arms and face. She sighed when she shut the door, the aircon hitting her full force. Goldie tried to look away anywhere else but ended up staring at the paper bag.

Here’s the thing. She normally was not this bad. She was normally able to keep her composure around women she found attractive, a near superhuman level of cool, calm, and collected she had honed over the course of several years. Still, between the terrible shooting schedule, how few people she actually had to talk to, and her constant proximity to Cameron, Goldie was willing to admit that she was losing her mind.

“Thank you for grabbing that for me,” she said as she took the bag from Cameron. “Is it that hot outside?”

“Yeah, it really is. Can I get myself a glass of water?”

Cameron had never asked anything of Goldie before. This was a development. Minor, sure, but still a development. She hoped she didn’t sound as airy as she felt when she said, “Yeah, sure. Whatever you need.”

Goldie became very invested in carefully, meticulously opening her lunch, peeling off the sticker holding the bag closed and taking the box out. This was her favorite dish from this particular restaurant: a feta, spinach, and pear salad that always filled her up until dinner. She was never one to skip meals for filming—she found the idea counterproductive—but especially during a busy film schedule like this, she wanted to make sure she was as close to one hundred percent as possible. She may have been sleep deprived, but the last thing she needed was to be too hungry to do her job.

Cameron was an absolute godsend for Goldie.

Her last assistant, Adam, had proved to be a bigger problem than they had first assumed. Goldie admitted that her own personal sense of humor may have rubbed him the wrong way, causing him to walk, but when he was searched by security on his way out, they had found some of her things in his bag. They were returned immediately, and charges weren't pressed because he technically no longer worked for them. Goldie would never be sure if he stole because of her or because he had just wanted to do it anyway. It didn't make much of a difference, she supposed. She hadn't lost her job, anyhow.

As she emptied the salad from the box into her bowl, she looked up and realized that Cameron had sat down across the way from her, sipping from a tall glass of water like a lifeline. Her hair was messy, and Goldie noticed that freckles had appeared on her face from her exposure to the sun. Her skin gleamed with sweat from the intense heat, the white tank top clinging to her body.

Goldie had spent long enough trying to suppress her thoughts of Cameron. Sure, she had indulged a few, but one thing she wanted to really comprehend was if the attraction was even the slightest bit reciprocated.

“Cameron, can I ask you something?” She knew that her voice, expertly trained, would not betray her anxiety. Sometimes, very rarely, acting had transferable skills.

“Sure thing,” Cameron replied as she settled comfortably into the space across from Goldie. She had put the glass down and smoothed her hair out of her eyes. A flush had appeared on her cheeks, with soft patches of pink dotting the skin from her chest to the tips of her ears. Goldie tried very hard not to notice this as she spoke again.

“Why did you take on this job?”

Goldie had only intended for this to be the leading question. She would take whatever answer Cameron gave and twist it or pretend to misunderstand it, and based on how Cameron reacted, she could work from there. This was how she safeguarded herself. She tested people. She hadn’t tested Adam, and that had been a mistake. A mistake she couldn’t make again.

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It turned out that one question was all it would take for Cameron because she went quiet. Bingo.

“What? Oh, don’t get cagey on me now, Cameron. It’s only a question.”

“It’s a job. I’ve already signed the contract, and I’m doing the work. Is there something wrong?” Cameron questioned.

“Oh no, there’s nothing wrong. I just want to know. That was a last-minute gig, and I can’t believe they were able to replace Adam so quickly. How did you find out about it?”

Again, silence. Cameron was becoming increasingly difficult to read, her eyes sliding right off of Goldie. Whatever was outside the window had suddenly become very interesting.

“Oh, c’mon, you can tell me. Who will I tell it to? Clarissa? It would never leave the costume department; she’s got too much to do to care about incredibly juicy gossip like how my replacement assistant got hired.”

“I’m going to go take my break. I’ll be on set when you’re filming later. You can call me in an hour if you need anything. You don’t need to know about my personal life. I’m your assistant, and that’s that.”

“Cameron, don’t be like that. You’re hardly some random woman the studio plucked up off of the street. Not in those shoes. Can I not be curious? You’re different than the others.”



“I’ll see you later.” Cameron got up from the table and began making her way out.

Goldie realized that she had not gotten any useful information from the conversation at all. Nothing had come of it. Instead, her assistant was angry from being pushed.

“Don’t be such a little lapdog, Cameron. Argue with me! You haven’t got an ounce of?—”

The door shut behind her. Cameron was gone, and Goldie was laughing into her salad. She couldn’t cope well with guarded people. She wanted to know it all.

“She’s so stuck up,” she mused out loud. “I cannot believe her. I really can’t.”

Suddenly, she wasn’t hungry. Instead, she picked at her salad and got back to learning her lines.

5

## CAMERON

The coffee was terrible—burnt instant coffee with individually packaged creamer and sugar that collected at the bottom instead of actually dissolving. The smell stung her nose and she had burnt her tongue on the first sip, but Cameron could not simply bring herself to give a shit. She was getting no sleep and spent most of her waking hours fulfilling the every whim of a diva who treated her like a dancing monkey or an alien to be probed.

The set itself was dark, the lighting concentrated in the middle of the lot where the interior shots of a pivotal scene were being filmed. Goldie’s character and the protagonist were on their way to a trial, only for the power to die in their elevator. They had a tender conversation about why they wanted to practice law, and the

tension of the scene builds until they almost kiss, only for firefighters to open the emergency escape hatch at the top. It was a game-changing scene in the series, a really tense moment, and Cameron was mildly disappointed that she wasn't able to appreciate it properly. They had run through the scene about five times, with the director interrupting multiple rehearsals and filmed takes to tweak something about Goldie's delivery or appearance.

Cameron didn't have enough experience to know for sure, but she felt this was just bad directing. The whole point of a director is to direct, sure, but she felt that Goldie had enough experience to be trusted. Evidently, the director—a short man in a pair of khakis, a plain blazer, and Timberlands—didn't think so. He seemed to be one of those auteur types, known to non-entertainment people as control freaks. The scene was short enough that it really didn't warrant that much tweaking, but he was tweaking it anyway. Scratch that, it seemed like he was only tweaking Goldie. It seemed a little too one-sided.

Coffee, give me strength. When she got home tonight, she was going to stick on an old episode of *The L Word* and relax.

“Reset!” called the director in a grating voice. The crew moved lighting, cameras, and props back to their original positions while Goldie and Leon went to their characters' starting marks. The paper on Cameron's clipboard informed her that this shoot was supposed to be done in an hour, but the scene in front of her told her that she would be there for another two at least. She could go grab another coffee, maybe a pastry from the buffet outside, but she had said she was going to stay, and she was not one to go back on her word.

Still, she didn't want to wait for Goldie. She really didn't. The backhanded flirting had turned into backhanded digs, which had then turned into really strange questions. She had been too tired to deal with it that day, so she had strategically taken her lunch break at the exact moment Goldie became too much to deal with. She was positive

Goldie was doing it on purpose, but she couldn't fathom why.

"Why did you take this job?" Because you're such a problem child of a woman your agent had to call my friend to arrange a babysitter. Because my friend was so up to her eyeballs in stressful meetings from producing this show that I knew she needed help or she would go postal. Because it was a nice idea and seemed like the right thing to do. Have you ever done something solely because you thought it was the right thing to do, huh? And then got treated like shit along the way?

She couldn't afford to get angry, but at the same time, Goldie couldn't afford to lose another assistant. Her questions were only supposed to pick a fight, to see if she could draw out a reaction. But Cameron didn't want to fight. She wanted to go home and avoid drama.

She looked at the set again. Goldie was in a navy blue skirt suit with a pair of stockings that almost certainly cost more than Cam's own day's pay. Her white shirt was unbuttoned slightly, allowing Cameron to glimpse a sliver of pale collarbone. Her heels didn't make her much taller, but she walked differently in them, with an air of urgency. The thought made Cameron jolt a little bit.

Why was she paying so much attention to the way Goldie walked? Why did she drive her mad with her attitude but also feel so...addictive?

Look, she being one of the most beautiful women on the planet was common knowledge and generally accepted as fact. Even amongst straight women, her Instagram posts were passed around in group chats and stories to be admired. Her presence, most likely down to her PR training, was magnetic. She was irresistible in every sense of the word.

At least, irresistible to people who she hadn't called a lapdog for not rising to an argument. Cameron felt that her unique position meant that she found

Goldie...slightly resistible, at least.

She went to take another sip of her coffee, only to find that it was empty. She took the opportunity to go outside to the crafts services table, not interrupting the filming as she snuck away. Goldie could deal with it for a few minutes while she refueled.

The catering staff was some of the loveliest people she had ever worked with. She could have a regular conversation about how good the croissants were because they were gorgeous and made up about forty percent of her diet on set. A good croissant and cup of coffee was a lifeline for her. Still, once her time at the crafts services table was over, she knew she would have to sneak back on set and then stand to attention. She gathered her strength and made her way back, where Goldie was being tweaked by the director again. Cameron felt angry on her behalf.

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Let the woman do her damn job.

When the cast and crew reset, she decided to stay until the end of the scene since she realized she hadn't seen how it ended. With all the director's interruptions, they hadn't actually completed it until now.

Goldie was sitting on the floor of the mock elevator next to Leon, lit by a red emergency light above them. Their chemistry was incredible. They were friends off set as well, had been for years, and it showed. All the tabloid articles about how you "can't fake chemistry like that" that would come out in a few months' time were going to completely miss the mark.

Goldie reached over and gently, as though trying to not startle a wild animal, laid her hand on one of Leon's knees, and Cameron found herself shivering, as if it were her skin Goldie touched. He looked from her hand to her face, and the air between them seemed to crackle with tension. Goldie looked into his eyes with an expression that Cameron recognized. Her character's longing, desperation to be understood, was being channeled through that look she had seen on Goldie's face before. It was the same look Goldie gave her whenever she didn't rise to one of her jokes.

Leon leaned in, and Goldie's eyes flicked from his eyes to lips.

I wish she was looking at me like that.

Again, the director called cut.

Goldie's eyes had traveled past Leon's to the corner of the room where Cameron

stood, clipboard and coffee cup in hand. She was looking directly at her, and Cameron could feel the heat of her gaze.

Oh shit.

Goldie's gaze lingered for a few seconds before sliding off her as she got a hand up from Leon, ready to do another take.

Cameron felt like she was parked at a broken traffic light.

Mixed signals.

She didn't have time to think about what that look between them might mean, much less the nasty jokes, the prying questions.

She needed another cup of burnt, disgusting coffee, if only for the excuse to go outside. She felt like she was on fire and had no idea what was going on.

She didn't look back as she left, but Goldie's face was seared in her mind.

6

GOLDIE

The shoot ended at eleven that night. Goldie hadn't expected it to go on for as long as it had, and she felt like her knees were going to lock at any second. It wasn't like her trailer was too far from set. Still, she desperately wished for a golf cart and an Aperol Spritz so she could relax. Being ferried around on the back of a cart with a drink in hand would certainly be better than walking. Maybe she could sweep a handsome, butch stranger inside her trailer for a little well-earned stress relief.

She saw Cameron join her on the walk out of the corner of her eye. The company would be nice.

“Here. Grabbed you one of these before catering closed for the night.”

Cameron was holding a disposable cup, steam rising out of the hole in the lid. Goldie took it, taking the lid off, and realized that it was black tea with honey and lemon. This had become her usual on set. She didn’t think Cameron would have remembered, but then, it was her job after all.

“Thank you. You’re a sweetheart.” She took slow sips of the liquid gold.

Doing dozens of takes of a scene was hell on your throat, and her voice had become scratchy. Hours of repeating the same words and being micromanaged by the director meant that Goldie was fit for nowhere but bed. She felt bone-deep exhaustion overtake her and tried to fight it off with the tea. Cameron kept walking beside her.

“You gonna stay with me, eh?” she asked, swaying a little as she walked.

“My bag is in your trailer,” Cameron replied, not looking her directly in the face.

“Oh, right. You don’t mind hanging out with me for a little while? Are you afraid people will think something? I’ve seen your looks.”

“I do what I get paid to do, Goldie.”

“Everything is so professional with you. Honestly, would it kill you to loosen up a little? It might do you some good, actually.”

“Respectfully, Goldie, work isn’t a place where I would typically want to ‘loosen up.’ Besides, I’ve got a perfectly good apartment I can go home to.”

“Ahh, of course. God, I can’t wait to get back to living out of hotels. The views are so much nicer. You got anybody to come home to?”



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Silence.

“Come on, Cameron, it’s just me! You having any fun outside of work? A secret wife? Sexy cougar girlfriend? Seriously, I need some new goss. All I can think about is lines, lines, lines.”

“Goldie, I really don’t feel like having this conversation.”

“You never feel like talking! Honestly, I thought we were making progress. I want to get to know you. You might want more PA work after you’re finished here.”

“In six weeks, you’ll never see me again.”

“No way. In six weeks, we’ll be at the wrap party arranging to go out for drinks once I’m back from that press tour. I guarantee it. You’ll have a little voice in the back of your head going”—Goldie’s voice deepened in an imitation of Cameron—““Wow, Goldie was right. Having some fun and opening up to people instead of being stoic and obedient really changed my life for the better. She’s so smart and sexy; I can’t wait to go to the movies and drink cocktails on a rooftop with her.””

“You really have no idea what I’m like outside of work. Does that bother you?”

“Honestly, Cameron, it does! You have no discernable personality?—”

“Excuse you. I have plenty of personality.”

“Look at that, some life! Fucking finally. I was beginning to think I would never see

it.”

“Why are you like this, Goldie? Is this your sense of humor?”

“That’s a question people have been asking—I mean that exact phrasing—since the dawn of time. You see, it started when my mother?—”

Snap. Goldie felt one of her costume heels break under her and stumbled, falling to the ground in an inelegant mess of perfectly tailored suit and wild blonde hair, making a soft but indignant grunt. She went red.

She still had her tea in her hand, and, miraculously, it hadn’t spilled. On the ground, pantihose ripped at the knees, heel broken, hair like a nest on her head, she felt unbearably embarrassed. Still, keeping her mask up, she looked up at Cameron and took a sip.

Cameron, to her credit, had frozen. This was the first time she had actually not done something when Goldie needed help, and she was sure it wasn’t coming from a place of defiance or contempt, just shock. Sure enough, once the moment had passed, Cameron stooped. She went to place her hand in Cameron’s, but instead, Cameron’s hand slid down and gripped at her forearm.

Goldie had not needed to be picked up off of the ground—at least not in a literal sense—in several years. She had forgotten this was normal and didn’t remember until she was able to overcome the strong wave of...something that washed through her at Cameron’s touch. She grabbed Cameron’s forearm and allowed herself to be pulled to her feet. “Damn these fucking heels. I’ve felt wobbly all day. I’ve gotta tell costuming about this; otherwise, they’ll think I broke them on purpose.” She picked up the broken heel off of the ground and, taking the other shoe off, braced herself for the walk back to her trailer barefoot. Heels in one hand, nearly empty cup of tea in the other, she didn’t imagine she looked presentable. Cameron didn’t seem to care.

Goldie would have assumed she was nearly unflappable if she hadn't spent the past few weeks learning exactly how to push all her buttons.

She was desperate to peel back her layers and find out what was underneath.

The pavement was sharp against Goldie's bare feet, as pavement tended to be, and the general state of the set meant there were little bits of debris everywhere. She tried not to let it show on her face that this walk felt like the world's worst acupuncture appointment. She failed miserably. It was becoming more tiring and miserable by the second.

"Hang on, wait a second," she said as she bent to put one heel back on, preparing to hop. Suddenly, Cameron was right next to her, bending to pick her up.

"Hang on a second. What are you?—"

Swoop.

She was in Cameron's arms, her own arms looped over her shoulders and her chin pressed into her neck.

That was good. That was very good because her face was the same color as beetroot. She felt hot all over, a heat that flowed through her so intense she thought that in the cool night air she would let off steam.

It seemed like this was satisfying for Cameron. She had no way of knowing, of course, because she couldn't see Cameron's face, but Cameron was quiet to the point of stoicism on the walk back to the trailer. Goldie assumed that once they had arrived at the trailer she would be put down, but no. Instead, Cameron carried her bridal-style through the doorway, pushing the handle of the door down with her elbow. Goldie was too stunned to speak, making nothing but a squeaking noise as Cameron carried

her underneath the small doorway and threw her unceremoniously onto the bed, the now-empty cup flying out of her hand.

She was on fire. There was no other way of describing it. Still, she had no idea whether Cameron was doing it on purpose or not. Her shoes were...somewhere; she had let them go mid-air. When Cameron stooped down at the end of her bed, she presumed she would've picked them up.

If things went the way she was hoping they would go, this might be her last chance to get a word in edgeway.

“You seem particularly fond of throwing me around. You got some things you need to get out of your system, Cameron?” She put on her best sickly-sweet voice, poking fun in between shallow breaths. Cameron looked up from the foot of the bed.

She looked ravenous. Cheeks stained high with a pink flush, her hair messily pushed back out of her face, eyes locked onto Goldie's like they were the only thing in the room. Cameron tossed the empty cup over her shoulder.

“You could probably do with some stress relief yourself, Goldie.”

Goldie shivered. Cameron's voice was measured, audibly restrained, dripping with implication. She genuinely didn't have a witty comeback to that. “What?” asked Cameron, smiling. “Can't get it as good as you give?”

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Bait. At this stage, she would take anything.

“You haven’t given me much to take yet.”

Suddenly, Cameron leaped onto the bed, her breath heaving, and she was on all fours hovering above Goldie’s legs.

And with a voice as smooth as honey, she said, “You want something to take?”

A moment. A knife’s edge.

“Maybe I do.”

“Maybe I have something to give,” Cameron replied. Like a cat through the underbrush, she slowly climbed up the length of Goldie’s body, keeping her eyes on her face, which was contorted into a silent, desperate plea.

She was reaching her face now, her arms either side of her head, boxing her in without keeping her from moving. If she really, really wanted to, she could have shoved Cameron off her, sworn at her violently, and they would never have had to acknowledge it again.

She wouldn’t have been able to bear it, she realized. This was what she wanted. This was what she had wanted this entire time.

In the torturous moments right before Cameron leaned in to kiss her, she muttered, “I don’t think... This can’t be anything else.”

Goldie knew her lines, knew what to say to get what she needed.

“Who says I want anything else? You’re a pain in the ass. You’re a diva. You’re pushing my goddamn buttons all the time. But you are fucking hot.”

Cameron finally visibly relaxed and lowered to kiss her. Her lips were soft, her breath tasted strongly of coffee, and her hands stayed firmly planted either side of Goldie’s head. She couldn’t help it. She wanted Cameron to touch her. Taking the lead, she took one hand and placed it gently on the nape of Cameron’s neck, snaking the other one around to the small of her back. Cameron took the hint and gently lowered herself on one elbow, taking the other hand and placing it on Goldie’s hip. Goldie let out a small gasp.

Cameron’s smile shifted from hungry to smug, and she shot Goldie a grin before diving in to kiss her neck. The soft kisses she started with tickled, and Goldie laughed softly, but Cameron’s attention intensified. Goldie’s hand fisted in her hair, and she squeezed her thighs together.

“You need some attention, huh? Don’t you get enough already?” Cameron teased.

“Not the kind of attention you could give me,” Goldie responded.

“Oh, so you want my attention?” Cameron asked, gradually moving down Goldie’s body again. “That’s very interesting. Tell me more about that.”

“Well, if you must know, that first day when I said you were the exact type of woman who could distract me, I wasn’t joking. Okay, so I was joking around, but I did mean it—” Goldie was interrupted by Cameron skillfully whipping off her skirt. Her eyes widened, and she bit her bottom lip.

“You’re very eager, aren’t you?” Goldie asked.

“I am,” replied Cameron

Cameron’s honesty shouldn’t have shocked her. If nothing else, Cameron had proven herself to be honest...or at least willing to speak her mind. It was more the proximity that threw her off more than anything, with Cameron wanting to breach that previously closed gap. Goldie knew why, at least for carnal reasons, but felt a little spark of affection all the same. She wanted her.

Cameron had removed her underwear and tossed them near her skirt.

Gently, Cameron nudged Goldie’s knees apart with her hand. Goldie let out a breathy laugh. After the previous manhandling, she couldn’t believe that Cameron would be this gentle, could be this gentle. Cameron looked up at her, a silent question of consent.

Goldie knew the answer would be yes; at this stage, Cameron could have asked her to do many terrible things and she knew the answer would have been yes. She nodded. Cameron smiled and slowly pushed her tongue toward her swollen clit.

“You are so fucking wet,” Cameron breathed.

Goldie was so overstimulated she was already bucking and a little shaky, but as Cameron began to circle laps with her mouth, Goldie saw that her shaggy cropped hair, normally dashing, was falling into her eyes. She bundled her hands in Cameron’s hair, pushing it back off of her face and allowing for eye contact that burned directly into Goldie. She shivered again, both at the work of Cameron’s incredibly talented tongue and the satisfaction in her eyes. It was like the mere act of pleasing Goldie was enough to please Cameron. She arched against the bed, trying to stifle any indignant noises, but Cameron stopped and hovered, maintaining eye contact.

“I want to hear you. I want to hear how much you’re enjoying yourself.”

Goldie couldn’t do anything other than nod, trying to keep her breathing steady. She could feel her heartbeat thumping against her chest, speeding up as Cameron dipped down and flicked her tongue against her clitoris. Teasing her. Using all of her mouth to please her. This time, she didn’t stifle herself, and her reward was Cameron growing more and more intense, each moan and grunt an encouragement.

Goldie grew louder as the minutes passed, her back arching and flexing against the mattress. Cameron was making quick work of her, and she felt heat build in the pit of her stomach. It would have been a little humiliating if Cameron wasn’t literally at her beck and call. She wanted to be able to repay her; she wanted to worship her. This couldn’t be the last time. She hoped it wasn’t the last time.

Her fingers tangled in Cameron’s hair meant that she was able to keep a small sense of control, holding her tongue wherever she wanted it. Still, Cameron was the one doing all of the work, and it was working.



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“I want you to bend over now. Can you do that for me?” Cameron asked in an assertive tone which made Goldie’s head rush.

“Yes” was the only word she could summon the energy to respond with as she flipped over and got on all fours.

“I knew you would be purefilth,” Cameron said as she brought her body closer behind. Her hands softly stroked over Goldie’s thighs. Cameron rubbed her swollen wetness, teasing Goldie slowly. Gently, she pushed in two fingers, her breath louder, excited by the view. With fingers curled slightly, she began pushing deeper. Slipping in and out, faster and harder. Goldie pushed herself back against Cameron’s fingers. Wanting it. Wanting more. She wanted everything Cameron could give.

The pace quickened, and Goldie reached down and massaged her clit in time with the thrusts from Cameron.

Heat pooled in her stomach and thighs as she shook toward an intense finish. “Fuck!” Goldie panted as she came harder than she had in a very long time. She couldn’t have guessed when Cameron had first walked into her trailer that they would end up like this. She never expected to get this kind of reaction from her. But she liked it.

Goldie collapsed on the bed, her breath heavy and body like jelly. She could feel Cameron move away from behind her and get off the bed.

Goldie watched her walk through the doorway and return a few moments later with tissue and clean underwear, leaving them on the end of the bed.

“I need to get home.” Cameron leaned in the doorway, her expression neutral.

Goldie nodded in return, unsure of what exactly she could say. She was rusty, to say the least.

“I’ll see you tomorrow?” Cameron finished, before turning to leave.

“See you then,” Goldie replied, her voice breathy in a way she did not expect.

7

## CAMERON

Afew days passed, both working and non-working, the latter much rarer. On one of these non-working days, Cameron found herself sitting on the sofa in her living room. White-walled and sparsely decorated, she used the small apartment as a base of operations more than anything else. She was constantly worried about having to move on, an old habit from previous living situations. Now, it felt a little bit silly since she knew her housing was secure. Still, she thought, it didn’t hurt to be ready. Whenever she brought somebody home, she would normally tell them she was a minimalist, which she guessed was technically true. The sofa was a plush black leather three-seater, and Cameron could comfortably stretch her legs across it, her back supported by a cushion as she scrolled through the internet on her laptop.

She genuinely did not know what to do with herself. Outside of work, she had very little to do other than waste time, so she tried to waste time. She was nearly always too tired to go out, and in a way, it was really unusual that she hadn’t had sex in a while. Well, she hadn’t had sex in a while until Goldie.

Her mind filled with questions about what had happened, but she decided to just take it for what it was. Goldie was a star. An icon. She was drop-dead gorgeous and a total

pain in the ass. She could get whoever she wanted whenever she wanted, so Cameron knew it wouldn't mean anything to her, surely?

Cameron scrolled through a celebrity gossip forum, a development of her late-night talk show habit. She always felt a little guilty checking the forums, but the drama called to her with a siren's song of nosy information. She loved it.

Reading an anonymous confession about Goldie's co-star Leon, Cameron couldn't help but feel like she was becoming a little obsessed with Goldie's presence. Sure, she was contractually obligated to stay attached at her hip unless Goldie needed something or it was Cameron's day off, but she found herself thinking about the little glimpses of the actual Goldie she had gotten to know through cracks in what she now knew was a veneer of rudeness. Goldie's last assistant hadn't been able to deal with her attitude, and in all honesty, Cameron couldn't blame him. Then again, he had almost certainly never gone down on her. That probably made her a little biased.

At least Goldie wasn't as rude as some of the people on these websites, she thought. People were truly horrible about Goldie on some pages, even on pages that were supposedly about uplifting women in film. Her appearances, her prior roles, and the few parts of her personal life that were online were torn to shreds. People did not hold the same contempt for internationally beloved man-of-the-decade Leon. Women and men alike talked about how much they admired him, wanted to date and have sex with him, and respected his craft. She wished Goldie would get the same recognition. She deserved it.

She knew she had a very limited understanding of how fame worked. Sure, Cameron was popular—some might say infamous—but she wasn't having her every move scrutinized on social media or by gossip rags. Guiltily, she stopped reading, switching to another website. She was getting too close to Goldie to enjoy those kinds of things anymore.

She had been shocked when she first met Goldie, not by her ego or entitlement but by how abrasive she had been. Goldie's attitude toward her had been defensive, she had come to realize. Defending herself from Cameron and the threat she might have posed to her reputation. She thought for the first time that Goldie may have been trying to scare her off.

The idea cut her train of thought short. Goldie wasn't out, she knew that, and it didn't align with her public persona. It made sense that the isolation of that experience would lead to some...unusual methods of flagging.

Still, Cameron supposed, she had understood the signal.

As if on cue, her phone buzzed. She felt a warm affection spread through her when she read the caller ID and saw Esme's name. The photo was a selfie of the two of them taken years prior. Esme wanted to have an actual photo of her pop up instead of the little default gray icon. Cameron and Esme had spent about twenty minutes trying to take a photo that they both liked, and eventually they were laughing too hard to continue.

She answered the call. Esme was at the Lounge, and if the noise and general business of the background was any indication, it was busy. Cameron could hardly hear her when she said, "You around for a couple of hours tonight?"

She said a loud "yes," hoping Esme could hear her.

"Okay, fantastic! Can you be here at seven? Mia's home from tour and is doing a little set, but word has gotten out in whatever musical whisper networks there are in L.A. because we are swamped. The new kids are awesome, holding up for now, but I'm gonna need you here tonight."

She didn't need to ask twice. Cameron pulled on a sweater over her shirt and threw

on a pair of comfortable sneakers. Locking the door behind her, she set off for the Indigo Lounge, knowing she would probably not be returning home again until early that morning.

The walk to the Indigo Lounge was short and pleasant. The heat of the day had subsided and become more humid than anything else. She ended up taking her sweater off midway through the walk, alone with her thoughts without earbuds. She was looking forward to this. Whenever Mia was in town, people came in droves and the atmosphere was always electric. As she approached the Lounge, she could see people excitedly walking in groups, some wearing t-shirts with Mia's face on them.

By the time she arrived, Cameron nearly couldn't make it through the front door and had to squeeze her way through the crowd. When she made it to the bar, she saw the new workers were quite literally red in the face. They seemed grateful for the extra help, and together, the four of them managed to tend the bar at a reasonable pace until Mia arrived. Cameron couldn't see Mia get on stage, of course, with all of the people around, but she sure did hear her. The crowd was deafening and energized for Mia's set. This also left the bar mostly empty. She sent two of the bar workers on their breaks, knowing Esme would not only not mind but be relieved that they were getting some rest.

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Speaking of Esme, she appeared from around a corner and came over to Cameron, ducking behind the bar to give her a hug.

“Thank you so much for coming Cam. You really have no idea how much you’ve helped.”

“Anytime, Esme. I’ve missed being here.”

This was the satisfaction Cameron normally got out of work. Being able to tell, physically tell, when she had done her job and done it well. It helped that she had worked so many odd jobs in the past. Being a Jack-of-all-trades was incredibly useful, Cameron thought. Most skills, even half-learned, could prove to be useful in some capacity. She could see it on the regulars’ faces, too, they were happy to have her back again. This was community. This was satisfaction.

The evening went on, and finally, the last of the patrons exited the building.

“We haven’t had that kind of crowd in months,” Esme said, spraying down the countertop with a citrus-scented cleaner. Harper beamed with pride, leaning over to kiss Mia on the cheek.

“What can I say? She knows how to keep a crowd’s attention!” said Harper.

“It’s so good to be home after so much traveling. I love performing, but I also like being able to get some time off. Not that I wasn’t grateful for the company while traveling, baby, but I’m happy to be here.” Mia sighed.

Cameron was a little jealous. Mia was able to balance fame with a relationship that had initially started out as an illicit affair with her agent and had turned into a beautiful, long-term relationship. Meanwhile Cameron could barely find somebody to hold hands with. The open affection between them was adorable to her, but in a way that she understood to be just aesthetic. She wouldn't be comfortable being kissed on the cheek in public, even in front of her friends, without some serious exposure therapy.

She thought about what it might be like bringing Goldie to the Lounge. It felt a little bit like taking a girlfriend home to meet her parents the more she thought about it, but she supposed that the comparison wasn't out of the blue.

"How do you two manage to not like...kill each other? Sharing a space that small, I mean, that's gotta be tough, especially when there's that fear of being watched."

The two women laughed.

"It's been tough, absolutely. Especially near the beginning, if one person has a professional reputation to keep up." At this, Mia nudged Harper, who rolled her eyes fondly. "It can be difficult to agree on what the priorities are, especially when a person might put up a mask."

"Like being rude for no reason?" Cameron suggested.

She felt Esme look at her sideways but tried her best to ignore it. It was Harper who jumped in this time.

"Absolutely! People will refuse to cooperate professionally for the most stupid reasons, often just to protect their own ego. You know, I'll give you an example. The other day, Deb calls me and she's really fucking stressed. I ask her what's wrong, and she tells me that a lead actor on one of the shows she's producing had been so rude to

her assistant that he walked off set! Don't get me wrong, not exactly uncommon, but still. They had to hire a new person last minute. Yeah, I can't tell you who the actress is, but behind the scenes, she's said to have a real temper, super inconsiderate."

Cameron nodded along, pretending like this was celebrity gossip instead of her actual life experience. She wasn't surprised that people knew Goldie was like this. In an industry like entertainment, reputation was everything. Word traveled quickly.

Later that night, when Cameron arrived home, she called Deborah. Well, she tried to call Deborah. She didn't pick up the phone, so after two missed calls, Cameron decided to leave her a voicemail.

"Hey, Deb, it's Cam here. If you're around for a quick call during the week, let me know. I know you're busy, but there's something I want to talk to you about."

8

## GOLDIE

Case files were dense. Goldie had known this going into the project, sure, and she had spent three months preparing for the role and reading every legal document she got in the mail and then some. Still, it never failed to surprise her just how cryptic and complicated legal jargon could get. She had ended up buying a Latin-English dictionary so she could translate certain terms. "Become a star, they said. It'll be super glam, they said," she whispered to herself as she looked out the window.

Living in her trailer wasn't too bad. She had decorated it, bringing small items to set from her home up north in a small suitcase. She had insisted on having the bag with her on the flight, keeping it stashed next to her in first class as she traveled. The sideways look she had gotten from one of the flight attendants had been completely worth it.



In the suitcase were some antique and vintage pieces she had snatched up at various auctions and showrooms. Smaller things, like picture frames, glasses and—her personal favorite—a brass lighter dating from pre-WW2 Berlin. She had studied the gay history of the city extensively, fascinated by the nightlife and vibrant art that proliferated right before the war. She had lost track of the amount of times she had read *Christopher and His Kind*, and though she adored Liza Minelli in *Cabaret* as much as the next theatre geek, it didn't hold a candle to the source material. She had been in a production of *Cabaret* at fifteen, on stage caked in makeup, her feet squeezed into character shoes. She had the time of her life, and from then on knew that performing was the only thing she ever wanted to do. Four years later, she was on the cover of *Vogue*. After that, she was accepted into Julliard. In retrospect, that timeline was nearly unbelievable.

Right now, sitting in her trailer on set, she imagined what she would say to that blossoming performer in pan-stick foundation and a cheap bowler hat. Could she say that she had “made it?”

Career-wise, yes. She had been so successful in comedy that widening the scope of her projects was seen as revolutionary.

Personally?

She had very few friends, actual friends instead of people who just wanted to go to parties with her. She was seen by the public as a modern, liberated blonde bombshell, which in their minds just meant sex positive and willing to wear suits every so often.

Now, she used her money, privately, to get whatever she wanted, hence the vintage collection. It was a fascination and a good hobby for her to have. It kept her mind busy, and on the days when things were difficult, it helped. Things were getting more and more difficult on set, especially now that she and Cameron had...

She had gotten what she had wanted the entire time. She reminded herself this as she took the brass lighter, holding it to a candle that made the entire trailer smell of jasmine and oud. The wick of the candle crackled before falling into a silent burn. The heady, war, scent filled the room as Goldie thought deeply. Her case file lay on the table, abandoned in favor of daydreams and fantasy. Cameron was a very talented woman, that was for sure. She had the power of overtaking Goldie's mind.

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The weight of the lighter in her hand had Goldie itching for a cigarette. It was a bad habit, she knew, and years of PSAs about tobacco would have worked perfectly on her if she hadn't been offered one on her first set by a handsome butch working with the costume department.

She rose from her chair, feeling a sudden chill. The weather was warming up, but the irregular schedule meant she was tired most of the time. She went through to her bedroom, unhooking a large, fluffy robe from the back of the door. After tying the belt around herself, she returned to the kitchenette and sat on one of the small chairs at the table. She gently wrapped the soft, fuzzy fabric around her, grateful for the warmth it provided. Breathing deeply, she replayed what she had said to Cameron.

Who says I want anything else?

She hadn't felt...badabout lying. Not at the time, at least. If all Goldie could be to Cameron was a co-worker with benefits, well, that's all she had to be. She could be that for Cameron.

The issue was that she did not want to be just that for Cameron. Not at all. She was growing increasingly fond of her in a way that had her worried. Not only would they be parting soon, Goldie had started out so rudely that she didn't know where to go from there now that feelings had begun to develop. Sure, a schoolgirl crush on a crew member wasn't outside of Goldie's wheelhouse at all; even she could admit that. But this felt different. Cameron hadn't been turned off by her humor or her mean jabs. In fact, she seemed to find satisfaction in getting Goldie to drop the act.

That scared her. She was a lot of things, but she certainly didn't want to be a conquest

or a mountain to climb. As messy as the situation was, she wanted to be treated like a person. Cameron had been good at that since day one, not placating her or writing her off but instead listening. She removed herself when Goldie went too far, but she had still come back and worked with her in a way that felt civil.

Maybe I owe her an apology.

She hadn't had the time to apologize. Any time they were on set, they were with other people, and the second they got any sort of time alone together, they found themselves getting thoroughly distracted. She wanted to be able to sit down properly with Cameron and apologize for the way she had acted.

Cameron would probably tell her it was alright, that she understood, that she was just trying to defend herself on the off-chance she ended up being a pervert or a stalker. That didn't make up for what she had said or the way she had belittled her, and she tried to sit with that guilt.

She wanted whatever she had with Cameron to work while it lasted. Even if it didn't go as far as she hoped it would, she could look back at it in the future and remember how good it was.

This thought that was meant to reassure her ended up saddening her. She wasn't sure she would ever be able to have the public know she was a lesbian. She was at the point in her career where the people she worked with wouldn't care, and if they did, she had enough clout to simply stop working with them without compromising.

She was getting very tired of compromising. And even more tired of putting on a hard-faced bitch persona just to get through the day.

You're an ass, Goldie. A real ass.

CAMERON

“Cam, honey, I got your voicemail.” Deborah’s voice was warm and inviting as usual.

Cameron was standing outside of her apartment block, sheltered underneath an awning, the evening sky pink above her. She held her phone against her ear, and. Deborah had finally picked up the phone.

“Deb, look, as grateful as I am for the opportunity, I’m wondering if you dropped me into a proverbial shark cage here.”

She could hear Deborah sigh down the phone. This was going to be a long conversation. She tried again.

“Deb, why’d you recommend me if you knew she’d be so damn difficult?”

“Cam, I’m so sorry. Adam was the third person to walk out of working with her this year. She’s under contract with the studio and they don’t want any trouble from it, and because I’m executive producing the damn show, they decided to pass it off to me. I know you can handle complicated women. You can handle just about anything.”

“I understand that it had to have been a difficult thing to be shouldered with. You still passed it off to me, though.”

She was genuinely confused. As much as she had grown to appreciate Goldie’s presence, those first weeks had been unbearable. Cameron felt Deborah had a right to know what was going on.

Deborah stayed quiet. This wasn't like her at all. Normally, she would jump at the chance to let people in on her thought process—at least that's how Cameron had normally seen her. She could usually trust Deborah with these decisions.; otherwise, she wouldn't be open to giving her an extra hand.

In the beginning, it was Esme who had trusted Deborah. Over time that trust had extended, but now Cameron wasn't sure.

“Deb?”

“Cam, listen. Please don't ask me how, but I knew you would be a good fit.”

That took her by surprise.

Does she..?

“But how were you able to tell?” Cameron asked. She needed to know. The silence on the other end of the phone was charged.

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“Cam.”

“I’m being serious! She was horribly rude, demanding—jeez, you said three? Three other people have walked out? I don’t blame them, honestly.”

“You said was?” Deborah asked after a moment.

Now it was Cameron’s turn to sit in silence. She hadn’t realized just how much that little slip would reveal. She hadn’t even thought about it. She felt like that version of Goldie was a relic. Deborah, evidently, didn’t know that.

“She’s grown on me. I think I’ve gotten through to her, but it took ages. I’m telling you right now if I wasn’t used to this shit by now, I would have walked off too.”

“And you would have been right,” said Deborah, her voice understanding. She had the energy of a woman who had a weight taken off her shoulders.

Cameron felt bad about getting annoyed. Deborah was her friend, too, and she wouldn’t have asked Cameron if she knew she wasn’t able to handle it.

“I’m sorry for not warning you,” Deborah said, and through the tinny line of the phone speaker, Cameron could tell she meant it.

“I’m sorry for getting annoyed,” she replied. She was relieved more than anything else. She didn’t want a falling out with Deborah—or anybody else from the Indigo Lounge for that matter. They were family.

“So you’re not going to quit before your contract is up?”

“No, I’m happy to keep at it for the last few weeks.”

Her last few weeks with Goldie. She supposed she should at least pretend to be professional about it, but the truth was she was going to miss her, there was no way around it. In between the bickering (which had lessened) and the sex (which was incredible), she found herself growing fond of her. Knowing her usual lunch order, how she liked her tea, seeing some antiques she had brought from home—it all felt very intimate. Goldie had gotten to know her as well, like the frankly ridiculous story of how she got her inheritance and her life as a free-roaming wild woman before Esme caught her and stuck her behind the bar.

She wanted to bring Goldie to the Indigo Lounge. She wanted to buy her an Old Fashioned and dance with her and take her shopping. She wanted to lie on the beach with her, foster a puppy, introduce her to Esme and the others..

Fuck. She wanted to settle down.

That was an insane thought. She had barely known the woman for a month and had spent at least half of that time bitterly hating her guts.

She was pulled out of her thought spiral by Deborah. “Cam, is something going on?”

Well, there went any hope she had of being subtle. She had to figure out how much Deborah knew first before saying anything at all.

“Deb, what do you know?.”

“I’m not sure I can tell you,” Deborah said.



So she knows. She knew she had to choose her next words carefully.

“And if I already know?” Cameron had responded.

“Shit, she actually told you?” Deborah sounded like she had been blindsided.

“Yeah, she did. I think she...picked up on me. It’s not hard.” Cameron responded.

“Were you in your best lesbian attire?” Deborah seemed skeptical.

“No, first day in her trailer. But are you kidding?”

“Yeah, I get you.”

“Anyway, I wasn’t gonna stroll in with my carabiner on my belt loop. When did she tell you?” Cameron asked.

She was glad Deborah knew. She was glad it was Deborah instead of somebody else.

“An industry party a few years ago,” Deborah replied, and judging by the way her voice went quiet, Cameron could tell she was trying not to be overheard. “We were both pretty drunk, and I was out at the time; she wasn’t. She just kinda started talking, and before I knew it, we were at the bar together drinking whiskey and talking shit. That’s why I was so concerned when I got that call from Steve, her agent. I knew it was because she was in some deep shit.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

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It did make sense, the more Cameron thought about it. She would lose her shit, too, constantly being under a microscope. That was a lot of pressure.

“Thank you for picking up, Deb. I know you’re busy.”

“It’s more than fine. I owed you an explanation, and I’m sorry you didn’t get one sooner.”

“Thank you for the help, really. I’ll see you Saturday?”

“See you Saturday. I owe you a drink.”

“We can buy for each other. How about that?”

They said their goodbyes, and Cameron hung up the phone. Clarity felt incredible.

Knowing now that Deborah had seen her as a good fit because she had actually had been was unsurprising, looking back at it. Deborah had good instincts for these sorts of things. Cameron felt a little guilty for not trusting her, though she felt that her hesitation was justified.

The set was a twenty-minute walk from her apartment. Taking her earbuds from her pocket, Cameron decided she wanted some company for the walk. She chose a slower playlist, something to keep her grounded before work.

Goldie had become much more civil; she might even say friendly. Being co-workers with benefits was better than whatever their relationship had been before, and in a

rare turn of optimism, she hoped that they would at least be able to stay friends once filming finished. She was under no illusions. She knew full well that she wasn't built for relationships. She could appreciate what she had while it lasted, so she would. Maybe they would keep in touch.

The security guard on the gate was kind and had grown to recognize Cameron, waving her through with a smile. She took her earbuds out and thanked him, knowing the way to Goldie's trailer like the back of her hand. She had been showing up to work early for a while now, and she knew in the back of her mind that this wouldn't look suspicious. Still, she stayed vigilant, looking around to double-check she was alone before knocking.

Goldie was not as subtle. "Come in, baby!"

Cameron hoped the pet name wouldn't stick. It would only make things worse when they ended. Still, for now, wasn't she allowed to have a little fun?

"So, what have you in store for me today?" Goldie purred as she ran her fingers through her messy morning hair.

"I want you to take off everything and lay over there," Cameron ordered, pointing over to the bed.

"Your wish is my command." Goldie smiled, while she slowly slowly undressed herself.

Suddenly, Cameron didn't mind being her assistant at all.

As the project continued, Goldie found herself growing more and more comfortable on set. Having Cameron was helping too.

She was sleeping well, eating right, and even attended some online auctions where she picked up some nice stuff she was having shipped to her house. Most of all, she was grateful she didn't have to eat lunch by herself anymore. She ate forkfuls of salad while Cameron stood behind her, putting a bowl of something in the microwave. Sunlight streamed in through the small window, and they both had the night off.

"It's nice of you to stay for dinner tonight and even nicer that you made my favorite salad. Finally, I'm seeing the real you." Goldie didn't make eye contact as she spoke, avoiding Cameron's face altogether.

"Well, I just thought it'd be nice."

"That smells spicy," Goldie said after swallowing another forkful of lettuce.

Cameron brought the bowl to the table and opened a tiny packet of grated cheese and dumped it in. She mixed it as it melted. The smell of the spice made her eyes water slightly.

Goldie had heard about people adding weird toppings to instant ramen but had never actually seen somebody add cheese before. She was a creature of habit, somebody who took comfort in food always tasting, looking, and feeling the same. This was way outside her comfort zone, but as Cameron snapped a pair of wooden chopsticks apart, she reminded herself that since she wasn't eating it, she had no right to comment. She tried to not take too much notice of it. Cameron looked happy, and it was nice to see her happy.

"It is spicy, very spicy. Just the way I like it," Cameron replied, a giddy smile on her face. "I know the smell can be kinda strong?"

“Oh jeez, no, it’s fine. I’m surprised you haven’t started getting migraines from my scented candles, honestly/ I can’t be the only one allowed to make the trailer...smell.”

“That sounds kinda gross,” said Cameron, laughing.

“Yeah, it really does. I rescind my comment.”

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“Nuh-uh, not allowed. You’ve already said it.”

“Sorry, did you just fucking ‘nuh-uh’ me? You’re not seven.”

“How would you know? My gorgeous complexion, my sense of whimsy, I could easily be mistaken for a seven year old.”

“Whimsy? You, Cameron? Really? You’d make a tall, miserable seven year old.”

“I can’t believe you” Cameron blew on her bowl of noodles, taking some from the top and inelegantly slurping them. “I would make a fantastic child.”

They sat in silence for a minute, eating quietly. It was so silly. Not the conversation—although it had been—but their dynamic took a one-eighty turn. Sure, it killed Goldie in ways she didn’t want to think about, but it was nice to actually be able to talk to Cameron and get an answer out of her. Although, the more she thought about it...

“I still know basically nothing about you, other than that you’re good in bed and make nice food,” Goldie blurted out, the realization so jarring she had to say it out loud.

“Ditto,” said Cameron through a mouthful of noodles.

“Seriously! I know nothing about you. You like...live nearby? You’re gay? You have nice hair?”

“You’ve got interpersonal relations down to a fine art, Richards. I’ll give you that much.”

“Don’t you ‘Richards’ me, you...”

A moment passed.

“You don’t know my last name,” said Cameron.

“Fuck off,” Goldie replied, not meaning it in the slightest. It was true. Goldie didn’t know. She didn’t want to ask. Cameron looked very smug.

“Warner.”

“Huh?”

“My last name is Warner.”

“I’ll still call you Cameron, Cameron.”

“I appreciate it, Goldie-Goldie.”

“Can I tell you a secret, Cameron?”

“Go for it.”

“Goldie is my middle name. It’s not my legal name at all.”

Cameron’s face morphed to look like she had just found a fly in her noodles, and Goldie giggled like a schoolgirl.

“You just go by it for shits and giggles?”

“It was my aunt’s nickname when she was alive. Her name was Gloria, but everybody called her Goldie, even her mother. It made sense. I never met her, but it’s nice.”

“It is nice. What’s your actual name?”

“My actual name is, functionally, Goldie. I’ve been using it since elementary school. My legal first name is Rachel, but that’s just on my birth certificate.”

“Wow, that doesn’t suit you at all.”

“Yeah. Please don’t tell anyone. Somehow I’ve managed to keep it hush-hush all this time.”

“Don’t be silly. Of course I won’t tell anybody. Who would I tell?”



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“You surely have friends. You have that bar your friend owns, don’t you?”

Cameron looked happy Goldie had remembered something about her. The spicy sauce on the noodles had caused her lips to redden slightly. Goldie wanted to kiss her.

“Indigo Lounge? Yeah, Esme is a sweetheart, but she wouldn’t give a shit either way. Neither would my other friends.”

Goldie had never been to a gay bar, let alone one filled with women. She’d grown up on magazine covers and talk shows. No illicit drinks, no secretive touches in dark rooms while the bass thumped through the wall, no nothing. Her face was too recognizable.

“I’d like to come sometime.” Goldie figured she wouldn’t be overstepping by asking, but she wanted to give Cameron a way out. Judging by the way she’d brought it up, she figured it would be a nice thought, and Cameron smiled.

“You could come. We do open mic nights, drag shows... To be honest, I think you’d kill it at trivia night. Can we team up for trivia night? Three drink tickets per person for the winning team. I really don’t know how Ez and Nora afford it.”

“Nora?” Cameron hadn’t mentioned her before.

“Esme’s wife. It’s a bit of a long story.”

Goldie checked her watch. “We have time. So they’re married?”

“Only recently, actually,” said Cameron, and Goldie raised her eyebrows.

Cameron recounted the story of Esme and Nora meeting, fighting, making passionate love, only to fight again, and then having a tearful reunion. Goldie was absolutely enraptured. She had watched movies less entertaining, and as they ate, Cameron proved herself to be a very powerful storyteller. She had never met these women, only had a vague idea of what they were like, but despite that, she was taken in by the story of their grand romance. When Cameron moved on to their marriage, she found herself getting genuinely attached to these people she had never met. She could feel the love that Cameron had for these women, the appreciation for what they did.

This was all incredibly cute. It felt domestic in a way that none of their interactions had.

Goldie tried not to think too hard about that.

It was difficult enough to deny the feelings that she had for Cameron. Romantic feelings. A fondness she could barely name without habit kicking in and shutting her down. She wanted Cameron to stay. She wanted to stay with Cameron.

Right now, she realized that she had become so used to Cameron’s presence she felt like she would be missing a little bit of her life when she had to go without her. Only a few weeks ago, she had felt nothing but contempt for the woman. Now?

Now, it was staring her in the face, as sure as a bowl of spicy instant noodles. Cameron’s lips were red from the sauce, but as she smiled wide, Goldie didn’t find herself put off by the taste she knew she wouldn’t like. She desperately wanted to kiss her, in that way you do when you feel a magnetic pull toward someone.

Cameron, to her credit, had failed to notice Goldie’s internal crisis and was nearing

the end of Esme and Nora's story.

"So in the end, when they got married, they came to an agreement. Nora would handle the financial side of things while Ez ran the lounge itself. Their wedding was a whole other load of drama, of course, but it was a really beautiful ceremony."

"That sounds magical," Goldie said, and she meant it. Her voice was a little breathy. She hadn't meant to get so distracted by her defined features and deep eyes while Cameron was talking. "It feels like a romance movie."

"Absolutely!" Cameron replied, finishing off her dinner. "With the way they act around each other now, you'd never guess that they had spent so long at each other's throats."

"That sounds a little bit like us," Goldie said before her brain could stop her. It felt as though the thought hadn't even passed through her before it made itself known. Millions of years of evolution, the human brain growing more complex and nuanced over time, only for hers to stop working the second she saw a beautiful woman. Really, it was a little ridiculous.

Fortunately, Cameron deflected with a skill she could only be jealous of. "It sounds like every romance movie I've ever seen. I didn't think that kind of stuff could happen in real life, but then I've seen it with my own eyes."

"I'd happily watch that story as a movie, and I've already seen more than I can name." "You have a soft spot for them?" Cameron asked.

"I do. I don't care how stereotypical it is; I adore romances. Romcoms especially, though I'm not half as picky these days. Used to be all about period pieces, historical romances, all those kinds of films," Goldie said. "My mom lent me her copy of the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* series when I first moved away for work, and that's where

it really started.”

“So you had a gateway romance?” Cameron laughed, smiling wide.

Goldie hadn’t thought about it like that before. “Oh my God, I totally had a gateway romance; you’re right. I mean, my entire taste in romances was shaped by that series. Now, it’s less of a romance and more of an analysis of Regency-era society— Oh no, this must be so boring, sorry.” Goldie caught herself before she started ranting.

“What are you talking about? No, it’s not boring. Tell me all about it.”

Cameron looked a little taken aback at the idea she would find historical dating culture boring. Goldie felt her heart burst.

A little while later, after Goldie info-dumped about misinterpretations of Jane Austen’s work while Cameron nodded along graciously, the small table was cleared, save for a small woodsy-scented candle. She felt a little awkward. All Cameron had asked to do was stay for dinner, and now that dinner was over, Goldie wasn’t sure what to do. She didn’t want her to go. It felt like a really nice date.

It was Cameron who ended up prolonging the visit. “You know, out of all the stuff you’ve talked about today, I can’t believe you haven’t named a single gay romcom.”

*Source Creation Date: July 12, 2025, 2:35 pm*

That stopped Goldie right in her tracks. Surely I must have...

“Oh no. You’re right. I haven’t. To be honest, I wouldn’t know where to start!”

“You know, there’s a pretty sizeable number of lesbian romcoms out there.”

“Thelma and Louise does not count as a romcom.” Goldie was quick. Cameron looked a little taken aback. “I never said it did! I’m talking about, like, actual romcoms, not some bury-your-gays sad film bullshit. Happy lesbians! Kissing!” Cameron was evidently very passionate about this.

“Alright, I’ll bite,” Goldie said, and Cameron made a face. “Are there any happy lesbian romcoms you would recommend to a romcom fanatic?”

Twenty minutes later, they were sitting on Goldie’s bed side-by-side. Cameron had brought her laptop with her to work that day, so it was no surprise when she pulled it out and began typing frantically. She had found *Better Than Chocolate*, an extremely Canadian romcom, a few years after she first realized she was gay. It seemed to hold a special place in her memory, and as the opening credits began rolling, Goldie felt that she would have a similar attachment.

The lights in the room were low, and the vintage drapes Goldie had hung from the curtain rails added warmth to the white walls. It felt far more homey than it had a few weeks prior. As the film went on, Goldie noticed something interesting. During certain scenes, during most of the scenes actually, Cameron would mouth along to the dialogue.

She's seen this movie so many times she's memorized it.

The realization made her pause. This wasn't just a recommendation or watching a movie with a friend. Goldie felt like she had been let into a part of Cameron's life. She had lost track of how often Cameron had given her that familiar, suspiciously fond feeling that evening.

She had to say something after seeing the way Cameron smiled and mouthed along to her favorite jokes. There was no way she would be able to deal with it if she allowed Cameron to slip away out of her life. If Cameron rejected her, which was possible, Goldie would at least know for sure where she stood. This, though? The uncertainty? That was torture.

The physical space seemed to have a small tether; Cameron's hand, laying open on the bed cover at her side. It had drifted down a little while ago without Goldie noticing. She noticed now, though, and didn't know what to feel.

Goldie inched her hand toward Cameron's. Cameron didn't look away from the screen. Goldie brushed a finger against Cameron's. Again, Cameron didn't look away, but she had stopped mouthing along. In fact, she had gone completely still. It looked like she was afraid to move. But this was different from their usually quick, filthy sex.

Did she want this? Did she want more?

If she doesn't, she'll move away, Goldie reasoned. As slowly as she dared—as slowly as she could manage—she slipped her hand into Cameron's, and Cameron gave her a soft squeeze.

They stayed like that until the credits rolled.

## CAMERON

The final week of filming went smoothly, and there was a bittersweet, joyful atmosphere on set during the last day. The final scene slated to be shot was a climactic event where Goldie's character led the charge during a prosecution where every main character of the series was present. When the director called cut for the final time, it was like a dam had broken. There was cheering all around with crew members hugging and high-fiving. The director of the final episode, a woman Goldie said that she had worked with in the past, immediately ran to her to give her a hug. Leon, standing a few feet away, had allowed them to have a moment before joining in, giving Goldie a squeeze. Cameron, meanwhile, had been cajoled into a group hug, mostly consisting of sound techs and other assistants. They had gotten to know each other rather well over the last few weeks of filming, and Cameron knew she would miss their company. Everything about this job had grown on her, including her tolerance and fondness for Goldie. Film sets had a habit of forging close bonds; she had known that before starting, but she was really starting to feel it.

There was only one person she really wanted to hug. Goldie had been more nervous than usual about filming the last scene, with Cameron awkwardly stepping in for the other characters during a last-minute read-through. If nothing else, her silly character voices got to Goldie, and Cameron saw her laugh for the first time that week. It brought up something in her that she had been determined to shut down. She wasn't sure if it was working.

The resident star of the set was being downright hounded by well-wishers looking to congratulate her. Cameron figured it wouldn't be the best time to congratulate her properly for her hard work, especially in the very intimate way that she wanted to. Still, she knew she would get the opportunity to steal her away at the wrap party the following evening.

The collective star power of the Paperweight cast was nothing to sneeze at. Together, they had managed to book out The Orchid, one of the most high-class nightclubs in L.A., for the exclusive wrap party. Typically, patrons of the club were decked out in the finest clothes a reputation could buy, haute couture casual pieces that would make a costume designer cry. If that sounded like a contradiction, that's because it was: casual fancy clothes. Instead, the night of the wrap party, The Orchid was graced by a different clientele all together. Every cast and crew member who could make it—and quite a few of them could—were squeezed into the club, filling two floors and breaking away in groups into smaller rooms for bottle service.

The only thing that didn't change? The paparazzi. This was, after all, still their hunting ground. As Cameron walked up the red carpet (no expense had been spared,) a few stray camera bulbs flashed.

How does Goldie cope with this full time? she thought to herself, mindful of every step she made.

She had been worried about what to wear. In the end, she had called Mia the night before in a panic who, to her credit, didn't laugh at her too much. Instead, Cameron gave her a tour of her closet over video call, and Mia helped her pick an outfit suitable for a club frequented by rich heterosexuals that wouldn't raise too many eyebrows. All the same, walking down the carpet in a pair of old leather pants and a loose shirt, Cameron didn't feel like she was assimilating. The fact that the crew had been invited to the wrap party and that the party was being held here was an anomaly. By comparison, she knew that showing up in an outfit that actually made her feel comfortable wouldn't create much buzz.

The security guard checked her name against the list he held on a clipboard and, once she produced ID, smiled at her and swung the door open. She had been able to feel the bass from the DJ's set through the soles of her boots, and as the door opened, she was hit with a wave of sound. She stepped in, the air smokey and the lights low,



barring some spotlights illuminating the bar. She made her way over.

The bar staff, to their credit, were handling the giant crowds with grace. In fact, they seemed to enjoy chatting to patrons, laughing amongst each other as they mixed and poured drinks. Cameron got the distinct feeling that if she were somehow able to get into this club any other night of the week, she would feel downright tacky asking for a beer. Tonight, she was more than comfortable, laughing as she made conversation with other crew members. Sipping from a bottle, the tension melted off her shoulders. Having checked the weather forecast the night before, she knew it would be a good idea to skip bringing a jacket, and she wasn't regretting it now. The dance floor was packed wall-to-wall with sweating cast and crew members, mingling and dancing.

She hadn't spotted Goldie yet, and her eyes continuously scanned the room looking for her. She desperately wanted to see her and say hi. She had tried not to dwell on the fact that this would probably be her last time seeing Goldie. She knew Goldie would be off on another project and Cameron would be back in her own reality.

Cameron didn't know what to think. She knew exactly how she felt, as much as she had tried to deny it. She was fond of Goldie. She liked knowing she was nearby. She liked the smell of her, the taste of her, but also she liked the way she laughed at silly voice impressions and got all misty-eyed at a good love story. She knew exactly how she felt about Goldie, and up until a few nights ago had been convinced it was a one-way thing. Until she felt Goldie's hand push into hers. Until that same night ended with a soft kiss from her. No intense fucking. Just softness from what she thought might be the real Goldie. Or was she just lonely and leaning into the nearest warm body? The latter sounded more likely, and the more she thought about the mixed signals and possibilities, the more she wanted to run for the hills. Getting her emotions fucked with was not on her agenda for this year. But still, Cameron wanted to see her and say hello. She needed to.

Cameron moved from where she had been perched at the bar and walked rather

ungracefully toward one of the standing-height tables on the edge of the dance floor, trying and failing to not bump into anyone. She wanted to take in the atmosphere of the festivities. People had really begun to get into the dancing as the DJ pumped out a set of classic pop and dance. Everybody who wasn't at the bar was dancing or hovering on the edges of the dance floor, basking in the absurd joy of Leon Addison doing the Macarena with some of the catering workers. That was the thing. Tonight, Leon Addison was simply just some guy. It didn't matter how many Daytime or Primetime Emmys the man had or how many times he had been voted Man of the Year.

The song changed to something sultry and slow, an R&B track from the 90s that was met with raucous cheering. It was then that Cameron spotted Goldie.

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She glowed. There was no other way of describing it. Her hair shone under a halo of disco lights, her blonde hair done up into elaborate twists that looked like victory rolls. She beamed, her teeth framed by red lipstick and what was surely an eyeliner beauty mark. Her skin glittered, an open shirt revealing collarbones and cleavage. While her shirt was open, her pants were tight and high-waisted, accentuating her hips as she slowly danced, rolling her body in a way that made Cameron's mouth water. She looked like a million dollars. She looked like the best kind of trouble.

She made eye contact with Cameron after what felt like an eternity and her smile somehow widened, but as Goldie moved to walk toward her, an arm reached out and tapped her on the shoulder. Just like that, Goldie disappeared into the crowd of writhing bodies, and Cameron didn't even bother trying to go after her. The look on Goldie's face had told her everything she needed to know. She figured she wouldn't be long looking for her.

Cameron tried to play it cool as she leaned against one of the tables near the edge of the dance floor, but her mind was in overdrive. She had the image of Goldie's face in her mind, and it wasn't going anywhere—the warmth of her smile and the way her eyes lit up at the sight of her. It wasn't just the glow from the lights or the atmosphere in this place; it felt like so much more than that. So much.

She took another swig of her beer. The frosty liquid did next to nothing to cool the heat creeping up her neck.

Jesus, I need a shot.

But she stopped and reminded herself that being friendly was the name of Goldie's

game. She was a natural charmer. It didn't mean anything, surely. The handholding, the kissing...it was nothing to this woman. But the more she repeated that mantra, the hollower it sounded.

A minute ticked by. Then another. The music was banging, and Cameron could feel the beat in her bones. She watched as bodies pressed close together on the dance floor and the laughter of the cast and crew intermingled with the thumping bass. Regardless of her conflicting desires, her eyes kept searching. She was looking for that familiar flash of blonde hair and that sparkling grin.

Then, through the crowd, she saw Goldie again. She looked to be alone, without a care in the world, her hips swaying to the rhythm of the music. Her eyes locked onto Cameron's once more. This time, she didn't look away.

Cameron's heart thudded as Goldie began to weave her way through the crowd, her movements slow and deliberate.

God, she sure knows what she's doing. She's a powerhouse.

Cameron set down her bottle and did what she could to prepare herself mentally as Goldie drew closer. The woman's skin was glowing. She looked so alive, so vivacious...so irresistible.

Fuck me.

"Hey there, stranger," Goldie said, raising her voice so Cameron could hear her over the music.

Cameron tried to come up with a response. She was aiming for something witty, something cool...fucking anything. But her throat felt tight, and the words stubbornly decided to stay stuck in her throat. She settled for a nod and a smile and prayed it

didn't look half as awkward as she felt. Goldie was beyond stunning—and being in such proximity to her was not unlike flying too close to the sun.

“So, here you are! I was wondering if you'd make it,” Goldie said her voice teasing but her eyes soft. “I've been looking for you.”

“You—” Cameron cleared her throat and looked down at her cheap but stylish boots wondering why she hadn't made more of an effort to get dressed up. “You were? Really?”

Goldie's lips curved into a grin. “Of course. Why wouldn't I?”

Cameron shook her head, her heart pounding too hard to trust herself with words. Goldie took a step closer, the space between them almost non-existent by this point. Cameron could feel the heat of her body, smell the faint traces of perfume and a sweet, almost sweaty smell that smelled divine as far as she was concerned.

“You look great, by the way,” Goldie said, her gaze sweeping over Cameron's outfit. “Very...you.”

Cameron chuckled nervously. “Ha. I was just thinking the exact opposite. Thanks. I wasn't sure I'd fit in here.”

“You fit in just fine,” Goldie replied, licking her lips slowly and giving Cameron the once-over again. “You'd fit in anywhere. Besides, I'm glad you didn't try to blend in. I like you just the way you are.”

The words sent a shiver down Cameron's spine. She opened her mouth to say something, but Goldie was already reaching out, her hand brushing against Cameron's. The touch was light, almost tentative, but it was enough to send a jolt of electricity through Cameron's body.

Without thinking, Cameron grabbed Goldie's fingers and gave them a brief squeeze. Goldie didn't pull away. Instead, she leaned in closer, her lips hovering near Cameron's ear.

"Dance with me?" Goldie asked, her breath warm against Cameron's skin.

Cameron gulped and wondered why her mouth felt so goddamn dry.

Goldie is going to think I'm an idiot! Why have I lost the ability to speak?

She wasn't much of a dancer and would never usually bust a move in a place like this, surrounded by glamorous people who seemed to move with effortless grace. It just wasn't her bag. But when Goldie pulled her gently toward the dance floor, Cameron did nothing to stop her.

The music slowed to a sultry beat, the kind that made people move just that little bit closer to each other. Cameron hesitated for a moment, but Goldie's hands found her waist, and suddenly nothing else mattered. It was just the two of them, swaying together under the hot lights, their bodies pressed close.

Cameron could feel the heat radiating off Goldie and the softness of her hands as they moved from her waist to her shoulders. It was overwhelming in a way that made her head spin.

Goldie's eyes locked onto hers, and for a moment, everything else disappeared. The noise, the crowd, the flashing club lights—it all fell away, leaving just the two of them in this tiny, suspended moment.

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“Come with me,” Goldie said, her voice husky, bold, and leaving absolutely no room for argument.

Cameron followed without question, letting herself be pulled through the crowd as they weaved between their fellow partygoers. Goldie’s grip was firm. Cameron had no idea where they were going, but she didn’t care. All she could think about was the sensation of Goldie’s skin against hers and the way her body buzzed.

They passed through a hallway, the sound of the music muted slightly as they moved away from the main room. Goldie led them into a small private room. It was dark and intimate, with just enough light filtering in from the hallway to make out the shape of a couch pushed against one wall.

“Where’s the light switch?” Cameron muttered under her breath. “I can’t see a thing in here. ”

Cameron ran her hand along the wall, but Goldie wasn’t answering. Suddenly, she felt herself being pushed up against the wall. Goldie’s lips were on Cameron’s in an instant, desperate and hungry. Cameron gasped, her hands instinctively going to Goldie’s breasts and hips. She massaged the voluptuous handful of firm flesh, feeling Goldie’s nipples harden against her palms. As they continued to kiss harder, Cameron realized that Goldie tasted like champagne and lipstick. The mixture of flavors was sweet and intoxicating. Cameron melted into Goldie, losing herself in the kiss.

The room was so dark, but it didn’t matter. The beat of the music pulsed through the walls, providing a rhythm to their frantic kiss. Goldie’s hands were everywhere—gripping Cameron’s hips, her waist, tugging her closer until there was

no space left between them.

Cameron's breath got caught in her throat when Goldie's fingers tangled in her hair, tugging just hard enough to make her knees weak. She moaned into Goldie's mouth, her hands sliding down to cup the actress's crotch, pulling her impossibly closer.

"God, I've wanted this," Goldie murmured as she threw her head back. "I've wanted you. I'm wet every time I think about you."

Cameron felt a thrill rush through her at the words, her stomach flipping. She hadn't expected Goldie to be the one to make the first move, but now that they were here, in this smallroom, with Goldie's lips on hers and her hands roaming freely, it was all she could do to keep herself from losing control.

Christ! I can't come before we've even got started.

Goldie pulled back slightly, her eyes dark and hungry. "I need you, Cameron," she whispered, her voice barely audible over the muffled music. "Now."

Cameron didn't have to be asked twice. Her fingers worked quickly, slipping under the waistband of Goldie's high-waisted pants and sliding down until she found the heat between her thighs.

"I want to..." Goldie moaned, her head falling back against the wall as Cameron's fingers pressed against her, stroking her through the thin fabric of her panties. "Fuck," Goldie breathed, her hips grinding against Cameron's hand. "Don't stop."

Cameron didn't. She pushed Goldie's panties aside, her fingers sliding between her folds, finding her wet, her lips plump and hot. Goldie gasped, her body trembling as Cameron's fingers moved inside her, slow at first, then faster as Goldie's moans grew louder, drowning out the music.



Cameron leaned in, kissing her neck, her teeth grazing the sensitive skin as her fingers worked faster, deeper. Goldie's nails dug into Cameron's shoulders, and Cameron reveled in the sensation of Goldie about to come in her arms.

Goldie's moans grew louder, her hips bucking against Cameron's hand as she chased her release.

"Oh, Cameron! Cameron!" she yelled as juices poured out of her vagina, soaking Cameron's fingers. Cameron's thumb circled her clit, adding just the right amount of pressure, and within moments, Goldie was trembling, her body tensing as she came with a sharp scream, her fingers gripping Cameron's shoulders.

They stood there for a moment, Goldie's breath coming out in sharp rasps. Cameron pressed a soft kiss to her lips, her heart racing as she pulled her fingers away, sliding them out of Goldie's pants.

For a moment, they just stood there, staring into each other's eyes with wide grins on their faces.

"I'm sorry," Goldie said suddenly.

Cameron frowned. "Sorry...for what, exactly?"

"For how I acted when we first met," Goldie started to explain, her eyes downcast. "I was... I was a total asshole, and we both know it. I didn't mean to be. I just?—"

"Goldie—" Cameron started, but Goldie cut her off with a shake of her head.

"No, stop. Please let me say this," she insisted, taking Cameron's hands in hers. "I've never met anyone like you. Not a single person. Not in recent years, anyway. You treat me like a person, not some...some star. You've been so amazing with me, and

I've started to—" She hesitated and bit her lip. "I think I have feelings for you. Real feelings."

Cameron's mind started racing. It felt out of control. This was the moment she'd feared would come. She'd felt it too. Of course she had. But she hadn't wanted to acknowledge it, hadn't wanted to ruin the connection they had. Things seemed easier this way. She knew Goldie was intense, impulsive, a total diva Hollywood superstar. She knew Goldie would hurt her one day.

"Goldie, I," Cameron stammered as she felt her throat tighten. "I don't know if I can?—"

The fear of messing everything up overwhelmed her, and before she could think, she pulled away and turned her back on Goldie. The fear in her chest tightened like a vice, and all she could think about was how complicated things would get if they were to allow this to go any further.

There's just no way...

"Cameron, wait," she started, stepping toward her, but Cameron was already moving for the door.

It felt like every cell in her body was being flooded with panic.

*Source Creation Date: July 12, 2025, 2:35 pm*

“I’m sorry,” Cameron muttered, unable to look Goldie in the eye. “I just...I can’t.”

With that, she walked out of the room, the door clicking shut behind her. The noise of the club hit her full force as she stumbled back into the crowded hallway. She could barely think straight. She needed to get out of there—away from the crew, the stars, the fans, and most of all, away from Goldie. Anxiety, pressure, panic. All taking over her body one sensation after the other.

The bright lights of the club seemed too harsh now. Cameron pushed her way toward the fire exit, ignoring the familiar faces that were trying to grab her attention along the way. All she could focus on was the exit, the neon sign above the door glowing like a beacon in the distance. She needed air. She needed space. She needed out.

Finally, The Orchid was behind her, and she found herself in the dark parking lot, cool air hitting her skin. It felt like an electric shock. The chaos of Goldie and everything around that woman melted away and became quickly replaced by the hum of the city. For a moment, she just stood there, shivering, trying to steady herself.

What just happened?

Goldie had feelings for her—real, romantic feelings. And she had run from that?

She trotted down to the street below, down a urine-soaked staircase littered with trash.

As she stood on the curb, waiting for a cab to show up. She needed thinking space. She had never been good at facing her real feelings.

A cab pulled up, and Cameron yanked open the door, sliding inside and giving the driver her address. She slumped back against the seat, tears beginning to form and her head pounding from the stress of the situation, but just as the car began to pull away, she heard a muffled voice calling her name.

“Cam! Wait up!”

She turned to see Goldie running after her, her face frantic, eyes wide as she tottered down the sidewalk in four-inch heels. The flash of cameras went off as Goldie hurried toward the cab, calling Cameron’s name again, her voice rising above the noise.

Where the hell did the paparazzi come from?

Cameron felt so sorry at the sight of Goldie, but then fear gripped her again and she froze and leaned back in her seat. She couldn’t face this. Not now, not like this. She muttered an apology under her breath and told the driver to go.

The cab pulled away from the curb, and Cameron watched Goldie’s figure get smaller and smaller as she turned and looked through the back windshield, her heart sinking deeper with each passing second. Goldie was standing there in the middle of the street, surrounded by photographers who’d come out of nowhere. All Cameron could see was the hurt and confusion written across her face.

A part of her wanted to go back and explain, to tell Goldie that she felt the same way but was just too scared to admit it. She just couldn’t face it. Before she knew it, the cab had rounded the corner, and that was the end of that.

The drive back to her apartment went by in a blur, the city lights flashing past in a rainbow of color. Cameron’s mind was somewhere else entirely. She replayed Goldie’s confession over and over again in her head—the kiss, the way Goldie had

taken her hand.

Why did I run?

Her fear of vulnerability, of getting hurt, had taken over. But now, it felt like everything was slipping through her fingers.

By the time the cab pulled up outside her building, Cameron's eyes felt heavy and a pang of regret weighed on her heart. She paid the driver and stepped out into the night.

Had she ever really felt this way about anyone before? No was the long and short of it. Not with such depth, not with such rawness. And that was what scared her the most. Because falling for Goldie meant opening herself up to the possibility of getting hurt, and Cameron wasn't sure if she was ready for that. She never had been, so why would it have changed?

With a heavy sigh, Cameron unlocked her door and stepped inside. Her apartment felt lonely and quiet. She leaned against the door for a moment before making her way to the couch and collapsing onto the cushions.

Her phone buzzed in her pocket, and she pulled it out, half-expecting it to be a message from Goldie. But it wasn't. It was a notification from social media, her mentions lighting up with tags and comments. Her stomach twisted as she realized what it was: photos of Goldie outside the club standing on the street.

The paparazzi had caught it all. There was her name alongside Goldie's. All in black and white.

Fuck.

Cameron groaned, tossing her phone onto the coffee table and burying her face in her hands. This wasn't how things were supposed to go.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow, I'll make things right.

12

## GOLDIE

Goldie sat on the balcony of her luxurious hotel suite and watched as what was left of the sunset faded into the velvety dusk. She tightly gripped a tumbler of whiskey, the strong amber liquid swirling as she stared out. The cool air brushed against her. It felt like a relief after the sweltering heat of the day. She wore a Japanese silk robe, but it offered little comfort. She was on edge, and no amount of luxury fabric or strong liquor could do anything about it.

A whole week had passed since that night at The Orchid. The memory of Cameron running away and disappearing into the night still kept her up at night. She felt every emotion: pain, empathy, sadness, confusion, embarrassment. That moment—the abruptness of it—had felt like a punch straight to the gut. She couldn't understand what she'd done to deserve it. Goldie had never thought of herself as someone who could be left so utterly vulnerable, yet here she was drinking, not sleeping, fretting.

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The street below her hotel room looked like it had a life of its own. Cars honked and people rushed by, each absorbed in their own dramas and utterly unaware of who was watching them from above. She appreciated the anonymity of a hotel. It was a rare feeling for someone like her, but in places like this, she felt unknown, ignored, and free. The city was immense, yet it felt impossibly small from where she was standing. Tonight, she was just another woman looking down from a balcony, her face bare and hair wrapped in a towel.

As she sipped her drink, Goldie's thoughts drifted to stories she'd heard about Marilyn Monroe. How she could step out onto the streets and not be recognized until she chose to embody her star persona, turning on "Marilyn." Goldie wondered if she had that ability too. Did she have a switch? Was there a part of her that she could turn on and off? Could she remove herself from the glamorous, untouchable persona that everyone adored? And what would that actually look like?

Her phone buzzed on the table beside her, breaking the silence of her contemplation. It was a familiar sound, yet it filled her with dread. She glanced at the screen but quickly turned away. It wasn't Cameron. It never was. It was just reminders from her assistant, updates about the upcoming movie, and congratulatory messages from colleagues about her recent nominations. But not a word from Cameron.

Goldie took a deep breath. She thought about how they had clicked, how easily they had slipped into a rhythm when they had sex. Their first laugh, the way Cameron's eyes sparkled when they chatted, the warmth of her skin. The connection they had forged had gone, though. What they now had was like glass waiting to shatter.

"Why did I let her go?" Goldie muttered to herself, frustration bubbling beneath her

calm exterior. She was supposed to be strong, the confident actress who didn't need anyone. Yet, here she was, on the verge of tears.

"Come on, Goldie," she chided herself. "Get it together. You can do better than this." This was why she always avoided feelings. This was why she buried that part of herself deep down below.

The press had already started posting pictures online, questioning Goldie's new love affair. Maybe this was it. Maybe this was when her sexuality finally came to light.

Fuck it. She had no more energy to care. Even though she knew she should be proud of who she was, the industry made that feel impossible at times.

The door to her suite creaked open, and Steve stepped in. He looked smoking hot in a well-tailored suit, though his tie hung loosely around his neck, a sign of the long hours he'd been putting in.

"I thought I might find you out here," he said. He saw the glass of whiskey in Goldie's hand and moved to pour himself one. "The view is nice from up here, right? But what are you doing skulking?"

Goldie shrugged as she forced a smile. "Just enjoying the night air, I guess. It was a scorcher today."

Steve sat down next to her and took a deep breath. He held it for a second before releasing it with a long sigh. "I didn't come here to chit-chat about the weather, honey. You've been avoiding everyone. Not just the press because, hell, why wouldn't you? But your friends too. What's going on, chick?"

Goldie ran a hand through her hair. "It's too complicated to get into with you. I wouldn't even know where to start."



“You could try me. I might be your agent, but I am also a very good listener,” he encouraged, taking a sip from his glass.

Goldie rolled her eyes. “It’s Cameron. We... Things got out of hand. I guess I was thinking I could keep it casual, you know? But then it turned into something else, something more, and I didn’t know how to handle it. I don’t think she did either.”

Steve leaned in closer, curiosity getting the better of him. “What do you mean? Did something happen?”

“Sure. Yeah, something happened,” Goldie replied, her voice straining as she let out the words. “It was a week ago at the club. Everything just...exploded. I think I pushed her away. Or she pushed me away. I don’t know what happened. But now she won’t talk to me. I didn’t think I’d care this much, but I do. And I’m so upset, Steve. I don’t know what to do with myself.”

Steve nodded slowly as he absorbed her words. “You don’t do intimacy, do you?”

“Ha! That’s rich coming from you, Steve!” she snarked back at him.

“I’m just saying that you keep people at arm’s length. But now, you’re actually feeling something, aren’t you? This is different, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, it is,” Goldie admitted. “I didn’t realize how much I cared until she was gone. I thought I was having fun, but I can see it was deeper than that. I suppose I was scared. Scared of what it meant to let someone in. But I told her, and it didn’t go down well. At all.”

Steve smiled at her before continuing, his tone firm but gentle. “You know you’re allowed to be vulnerable, right? It doesn’t make you weak. It just makes you human.”

Goldie felt the tears welling in her eyes. She could hardly see Steve through her blurred vision, but she could feel his hand on her shoulder. “I just don’t know how to fix it. I tried calling her, texting, but nothing. It’s like she’s vanished.”

“No. She wouldn’t have gone anywhere.” Steve laughed. “She’s just gone into hiding. And if you care about her, you need to show it. Don’t wait for her to come to you, Goldie. Take charge.”

“Me? Take charge?” Goldie repeated, incredulous. “Do you have any idea how terrifying that sounds to me right now? I’m sure she won’t want to hear it.”

Steve leaned back into the sofa and crossed his arms across his chest. “You’ll deal. That’s what you do. But at least you’ll know you tried. Why are you choosing to be stuck in this limbo? You know it’s no good for you. This is not the Goldie I know. I’ve never seen you like this before.”

Goldie took a long sip of her whiskey, letting the warmth seep into her. “You really think I should just reach out? That’s what you’d do?”

“Yes,” he replied simply. “And don’t overthink it. Just let her know how you feel in no uncertain terms. Tell her you miss her. But don’t make it about you, babe. This has to be about her too. It’s how these things work. You can tell I have a subscription to Cosmo, right?”

“Yes. Everyone can tell you have a subscription to Cosmo.”

He was right, of course. She had always been so focused on her own fears and insecurities. But now, she knew that this was about more than just her.

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“I’ll think about it,” she finally said, though she could hear the uncertainty in her own voice.

“Good,” Steve replied, his tone lightening. “And hey, if it doesn’t work out, we’ll just find you a nice, secluded island where you can drink whiskey and brood in peace.”

Goldie chuckled softly, grateful for his attempt to lighten the mood. “Yeah, maybe you could get someone on that? I need a tropical paradise with no phones or internet. And just one bartender.”

“A hot bartender? Can I come too?” Steve joked, raising his glass.

“Sure. Just me and you.” She laughed, clinking her glass against his.

“Just promise me you’ll think about heading out to find her instead of sitting in here and moping. It’s weird and doesn’t suit you,” Steve said after a moment. “You deserve to be happy, Goldie. And this might be the person who helps you achieve that. Fuck what people might say. You being with a woman will be old news soon enough.”

Goldie nodded, though the thought of reaching out still filled her with dread. She had built walls around her heart for a reason, and those walls had always served her well in the past. But now, they felt different. In fact, they felt like a cage.

The evening stretched on. They both poured another glass of whiskey and sat in comfortable silence. Goldie’s mind wandered as she gazed at a million tiny stars flickering in the night sky. She thought about the barrage of interviews and events

awaiting her. She remembered the Indigo Lounge and the way Cameron's eyes lit up when she spoke about it.

"I'll be back for the press junket," Goldie said suddenly, breaking the quiet. "I should check out that bar she talked about. Maybe I'll find her there."

Steve raised an eyebrow. "Which one?"

"The Indigo Lounge," Goldie explained. "Cameron said it was special to her. I think it might be a great place to start."

"You go, girl," Steve encouraged. "But remember, it's not just about finding her. It's about facing up to your feelings too. You need to be ready to be totally honest with her. And hey, maybe consider that therapist I sent you the card for?"

Goldie could feel the weight of his words as he said them. "I will. I promise."

"Good," Steve said as a satisfied smile crossed his face. "You've got this, Goldie. Just take it one step at a time."

They continued to drink, and as the night deepened, Goldie felt a flicker of hope ignite in her chest. Maybe she could face this. Maybe she could take the leap and reach out to Cameron.

"I can't believe I'm saying this," she said, her voice lightening, "but I'm totally going to do it."

"Now that's the spirit, my Goldie!" Steve exclaimed, raising his glass in a mock toast. "Let's drink to bravery and second chances!"

Goldie felt a shift within herself as she laughed at Steve's antics—a tentative step

toward reclaiming the parts of her heart she had locked away.

“Thank you so much, Stevie,” she said sincerely. “You’ve saved my ass. You’re always saving my ass. Who knew you were basically a therapist too?”

“Not always. No, you’re right. Always,” he replied with a giggle. “Now, how about you go and get some rest? I’m going to make a few calls.”

“Yeah, I could use some sleep. Calls? At this time?” Goldie asked, rising from her seat.

“God, you people have no clue what we do,” Steve replied, shaking his head and giving her a wink.

As they stepped back into the suite, Goldie knew the path ahead wouldn’t be easy. But she knew she had to try.

13

## CAMERON

The inviting scent of spices filled the air at the Indigo Lounge. The kitchen was alive with the sound of chopping, sizzling, and chatter as Cameron, Esme, and Sasha gathered around a table strewn with notebooks, pens, and various culinary ingredients. They were deep in the throes of brainstorming new specials for the upcoming menu.

“I’m telling you, we need to name one of the drinks after Marsha P.,” Esme said, her eyes sparkling with enthusiasm. “She was iconic! Come on! Let’s be real. What would be a better name for a cocktail? It sounds so bold! And just the right thing to have before this spicy cannelloni deal we’ve got going on.”

Cameron smiled faintly, her mind only half involved in the conversation. “Marsha P. Sure. It would definitely bring the party vibe,” she said, jotting down the name.

“Totally,” Sasha chimed in, stirring a pot on the stove. “And we can make it a colorful, layered drink to represent the pride flag! I’m also thinking rainbow shots all the way—definitely a crowd-pleaser!”

“Perfect,” said Esme. “But we need a second drink to pair with it. What about a classic? Maybe something like The Lorde?”

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Cameron's smile faded as the debate swirled around her. While her friends passionately discussed the drink names, her thoughts drifted elsewhere. To Goldie.

"Earth to Cameron? Are you with us?" Sasha's voice cut through.

"Yeah, totally. Sorry. I was just thinking," Cameron replied, shaking her head as if trying to dispel the fog of her thoughts.

Esme leaned in, her expression softening. "You've been a bit off. You sure you're okay?"

"Honestly, I'm fine," Cameron insisted, knowing every word was a lie.

"Come on," Esme urged gently. "You're in safe hands. You know you can talk to us."

Cameron hesitated, glancing at her friends. They had always been her support system, but this was different. The emotions she carried felt too complex, too messy to share. Yet, as she looked into their concerned faces, she felt the urge to open up.

"It's just...I've been dealing with some stuff," Cameron finally admitted as she shuffled from one foot to another and stared down at the undone laces on one of her boots. "But I can't really talk about it."

"Why not? Is everything okay?" Sasha pressed.

"I... I'm... You know what I'm like, ladies," Cameron mumbled, the words tumbling

out in a rush. “There’s someone I’m involved with, but I can’t tell you who it is. It’s complicated.”

“Cameron,” Esme said softly, her tone encouraging. “Really? You mean, someone you like? Listen, whoever it is, we promise to keep it between us. You know we won’t say a word. Usually you love to tell us the gossip, so why is it a secret all of a sudden?”

The sincerity in Esme’s voice made Cameron feel slightly ashamed for not having spoken about it sooner. She took a deep breath, weighing her options.

“Promise?” she finally asked, her hands trembling slightly as she reached for her notebook.

“Promise!” Esme and Sasha replied in unison.

“I’m talking about someone I really like. But I’m terrified of messing it up.”

Sasha raised an eyebrow, intrigued. “You mean like a crush? But this never happens to you, Cam. You kiss and tell. You love and leave.”

“I know. But this time, it’s more than that. I sound crazy, don’t I?” Cameron replied, her cheeks flushing. “This person—this woman, obviously—is important to me. But I keep sabotaging things because I’m scared of how it could affect my life, my career, everything.”

Esme nodded, and Cameron could see it on her face that she understood. “That’s a pretty heavy burden to carry, sweetie. But you deserve your happy ever after too. Have you talked to her about it?”

“I don’t know how to,” Cameron said, shaking her head slowly. “What if she can’t



handle me? The real me. What if I ruin everything? I kinda freaked out and ran off.”

Sasha leaned in closer, her expression earnest. “But isn’t this the cycle you’ve been stuck in for years, Cam? You’re letting your anxieties control you. You can’t keep sleeping around forever, you know?”

“I know,” Cameron admitted, feeling the frustration bubbling beneath the surface. “But it’s hard. Every time I think about reaching out to her, I freeze. I don’t want to put myself out there and then wind up getting hurt. Or worse, hurting her.”

“Cameron,” Esme said gently, “you’ve already slept with her. And you’ve both grown from that, huh? Isn’t that worth something? That’s so not you. You’re changing—with her, for her.”

Cameron bit her lip as she contemplated Esme’s words. She knew her friends were right; the relationship had grown, and every moment they’d shared felt significant. Yet the fear of losing that connection was almost paralyzing.

“I just want to figure things out,” she said, conviction beginning to seep into her voice. “I want her back. I need to find a way to make it right, but I think I’ve probably fucked it up already.”

Sasha grinned. “Okay then. Let’s put the menus and cocktails to one side for now and turn our problem-solving skills to this situation you’ve got going. If you want to make some grand gesture, you know we’re the ones you need on board. That’s so our thing. We can help you fix this.”

“What do you have in mind?” Cameron asked.

“Something movie-worthy,” Sasha suggested, her eyes lighting up. “A public declaration! Think about it. How many romcoms have you seen where someone

makes a big scene to win back their love?”

Cameron rolled her eyes. “You mean like holding a boombox outside her window?”

“Now you’re talking!” Sasha exclaimed, her excitement becoming infectious. “Or a scavenger hunt where you’re the prize at the end. It could be totally cute!”

Esme laughed, shaking her head. “As much as I love the romcom idea, let’s get more personal. It does sound a little Hollywood cliché. What does she like? What are her passions? What’s meaningful to her?”

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Cameron took a moment to think about it. “Goldie loves the arts. She’s passionate about films and music. She mentioned wanting to start a community project for aspiring filmmakers. Maybe I could do something along those lines?”

“Oh. Goldie? Ah! I see! Oh wow! That makes sense now,” Esme said, her smile growing wider. “Okay then, I guess you could organize a film screening. Ah, sorry. I’m feeling a little starstruck.”

“I’m loving this,” Sasha added, bouncing in her seat. “Goldie Richards. Fuck me. I can’t believe you, Cam.”

“This is all so perfect!” Esme said. “Right! Let’s call Deborah and get her in on this plan. She can help you pull this off.”

“Deborah?” Cameron’s heart raced. “What’s she going to do? She’s gonna kill me.”

Esme grinned, pulling out her phone. “She’s got connections, and she’ll definitely want to help you make this special. Plus, if she’s in town for interviews, it’ll be easier to coordinate. She won’t mind; she’s got bigger things on her mind, like Holly!”

Before Cameron could voice her hesitation, Esme had dialed Deborah’s number and put her on speaker.

“Deborah! You there?” Esme said, her voice cheerful.

“Hey, Esme! What’s up?” Deborah’s voice crackled through the speaker, warm and inviting.

“Cameron has something important to share, and we need your help,” Esme replied, glancing at Cameron with a reassuring smile.

“Important? What’s going on?” Deborah asked, her curiosity piqued.

Cameron felt her stomach flip. “Um, well, I’ve been talking about someone special in my life. I can’t really go into detail, but?—”

“Someone special?” Deborah echoed, her tone teasing. “What’s this all about?”

Cameron’s cheeks burned as she listened to Deborah’s question. “Maybe…”

“Just spill, already!” Deborah said, almost shouting, her voice playful.

Cameron took a deep breath, steeling herself. “I’m talking about Goldie Richards.”

There was a pause on the other end of the line, and Cameron could hear the slight rustle of movement as Deborah processed the information. “Goldie? Wow. I’ve gotta say, Cam, she’s a handful, but she is gorgeous.”

“She sure is,” Cameron admitted, a smile coming to her lips. “But things are pretty complicated, and I think messed up. I want to make it up to her, but I don’t know what I’m doing. I’m not used to all this lovey-dovey stuff.”

“First of all,” Deborah said, her voice steady, “you really do need to own up to your feelings. That’s the first step. Does Esme think I can help you? You know I will if I can.”

“That would be amazing. Maybe we could get together, and you could help me work things out. I’d like to surprise her,” Cameron said, relief flooding her.

“Great! Let’s meet up when I’m in town,” Deborah suggested, her tone encouraging.

“I’d really appreciate that,” Cameron replied, feeling more excited than she had in some time.

Esme and Sasha exchanged glances, their smiles widening as the conversation continued.

As they hung up, Cameron felt a sense of clarity wash over her. She still wasn’t quite sure where she was going, but she knew she was going somewhere.

“Alright,” Cameron said, her voice steady. “I’m ready to make this happen.”

Sasha clapped her hands together. “That’s the spirit! Now, let’s get back to fine-tuning the cocktails. No more interruptions. Anyone else madly in love with someone they haven’t told or can we do some work now?”

14

## GOLDIE

Goldie perched on the edge of her seat backstage at the packed auditorium. The panel Q&A session was about to start, and the vibrant chatter of the audience was deafening. She glanced at her watch, wishing for just a moment of peace. She desperately needed some time on her own. But then the lights dimmed and the spotlight fell upon her.

Two of the people on the production team—Anya and Marco—were deep in conversation, sharing anecdotes from their time on set. Goldie forced a smile, trying to engage, but her mind was elsewhere. The laughter of her friends faded into a background noise as she felt a familiar pang of longing. She wished more than

anything that Cameron was here.

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“Goldie?” Anya’s voice broke through her thoughts. “You still with us? You seem a little...distant.”

Goldie forced a laugh. “Just thinking about how surreal this all is. It feels like we only finished shooting an hour ago, but now...”

“Come on, Goldie! You’re a star,” Marco interjected, nudging her playfully. “You know how all this goes.”

The compliment hung in the air, but Goldie didn’t feel like a star. She felt like a woman on the verge of a revelation, teetering on the edge of a decision that could change everything. The glitz and glam of Hollywood surrounded her, but all she wanted was some downtime with Cam.

As the moderator called for attention, Goldie took a deep breath, focusing on the questions being directed to her and her fellow cast members. She smiled and laughed when appropriate, but her mind drifted to the last few weeks—the distance, the silence. The shame of their last encounter at The Orchid weighed heavily on her. It was a night that had totally spiraled out of control, one that left her grappling with both regret and yearning.

When the Q&A finally concluded, the applause resonating in her ears felt muted. She slipped off stage, the adrenaline still coursing through her veins, yet she felt hollow without the woman she wanted most there beside her.

“Great job!” Steve said, clapping her on the back. “You sure know how to work a crowd.”

“Thanks, Steve,” she replied, forcing a smile.

“Got time for a bite to eat?” he asked, guiding her through the throng of fans and journalists. “You’re going to want to refuel after that.”

Goldie nodded absently. Would she ever be able to move past her last encounter with Cam? Could she not just get a grip and let go of the fear that had been wrapped around her heart since that night?

As they approached a nearby suite, Steve shot her a conspiratorial wink. “I’ve got a little surprise for you. You’ve got a visitor.”

The door swung open, and Goldie stepped inside, her entire body on high alert. Steve wasn’t one for surprises, so she couldn’t work out what he was up to. But instead of what she was expecting—a fan or some other actor—she was met with the sight of Cameron sitting casually against the desk, a huge bouquet of red roses in her hands.

“Cameron!” Goldie’s heart leaped into her throat. “What are you doing here?”

“Hi,” Cameron said softly with a tentative smile. “I tried to get into the Q&A, but they wouldn’t let me in without a press pass.” She held up the flowers, her cheeks flushed. “So, I brought these instead.”

Goldie took a step closer. She felt her pulse quickening as she searched her brain desperately for something to say. “They’re beautiful.”

Cameron’s eyes sparkled with sincerity, and Goldie’s heart swelled at the sight of her. “I wanted to apologize,” Cameron continued. “About the way I treated you back at The Orchid. I was scared. Well, that’s a bit of an understatement. But I’m sorry I didn’t handle it well.



Goldie gulped, feeling a knot of emotion in the pit of her stomach. “Did you think I wasn’t scared too?” she asked, looking nonplussed. “I was totally freaked out, Cameron. I didn’t know what I was doing. I didn’t know how to say what I...”

Cameron looked down, her fingers nervously fidgeting with the petals of the roses. “I was so worried about my own feelings I ignored yours. I realize now that I should have been more open with you.”

Goldie reached out to take Cameron’s hands in hers. She turned around to check Steve had left the room. He had. The coast was clear for her to ask her next question. “What are you feeling right now?”

“I love you, Goldie.” The words tumbled out before she could second-guess herself. “I haven’t been able to stop thinking about you. I just... I want to... I want to do something.”

The admission hung in the air between them. Goldie felt a rush of warmth wash over her, pushing back the shadows of self-doubt that had lingered since their last encounter. “You have no idea how long I’ve wanted to hear you say that.”

Cameron’s brows furrowed slightly. “Really?”

“Really,” Goldie replied, a smile breaking across her face. “I’ve been wrestling with my own feelings. This is all new to me. I thought if I just kept things professional, if I didn’t let myself get too close, it would be easier.”

“But it’s not easier, is it?” Cameron added. “It just feels like we’ve been avoiding what’s right in front of us. I’m sorry I was a total ass. I need to work on myself. I have huge commitment issues, but all I want is to change that and be with you.”

Goldie nodded as the tension of the last few weeks began to dissipate. “I don’t want

to hide anymore either,” she admitted. “I want to be open and honest with you. With everyone. Even the press. I want to be able to walk hand-in-hand with you out there in the world. I don’t want what we have to be a secret. I’ll support you, Cameron, for anything you need to do. But if you run off again, I’ll hunt you down and you’ll be sorry,” she teased.

Cameron furrowed her brow. “Seriously? That’s a big step. Are you sure? And I will never run again. I promise.”

“I’m so sure,” Goldie replied. “But I need to know that you’re comfortable with this too. I don’t want to put any pressure on you. None at all.”

“I’d love that, but I guess I’d need a little time to prepare,” Cameron confessed, her voice tinged with vulnerability and guilt. “How does two months sound before we go public?”

Goldie felt a surge of relief. “That sounds perfect,” she said, her heart lifting. “I just want us to be on the same page, okay?”

Cameron smiled as her shoulder dropped a little. “So, we’re doing this? We’re really doing this?”

Goldie nodded. “Yes, we are.”

They shared a moment of silence before Goldie leaned forward, closing the distance between them. Their lips met in a soft kiss, each of them pouring months of longing and uncertainty into that single moment.

When they finally pulled apart, Goldie couldn’t help but tease, “You totally just tried to Notting Hill me, didn’t you?”

Cameron laughed, the sound like music to Goldie’s ears. “Maybe a little,” she admitted. “But I meant every word.”

Goldie felt giddy. “Well, you certainly know how to make a grand gesture.”

“Just wait until you see what I have planned for our official debut,” Cameron teased, her eyes alight with mischief.

Goldie raised an eyebrow. “Oh? Now I’m really intrigued.”

But before they could delve deeper, Steve came back into the room and cleared his throat to get their attention. “Hey, lovebirds, dinner is waiting. There might be a few photographers still hanging around.”

Goldie exchanged a glance with Cameron, their shared excitement palpable. “Right, of course,” she said, reluctantly stepping back from the warmth of Cameron’s embrace.

“Let’s make tonight special,” Cameron said softly, her eyes still shimmering with promise.

Goldie nodded with enthusiasm as she followed Steve out of the suite and into the bustling hotel lobby.

Dinner was a flurry of laughter and drunken storytelling, her castmates sharing tales that made her forget the stresses of Hollywood, if only for a moment. Goldie felt a magnetic pull toward Cameron, who sat across the table from her.

“Goldie!” Anya called out, snapping her attention back to the group. “What’s next for you? Any big plans?”

Goldie exchanged a knowing glance with Cameron, who encouraged her with a smile. “Actually, I do,” she said, feeling emboldened. “I’m thinking about being more open about who I am—about my relationships, my life. It’s time for me to stop hiding.”

The table fell silent, eyes wide as her castmates absorbed her words. Marco broke the silence, grinning widely. “That’s fantastic! We’re all rooting for you! You’ll always have our support.”

“Absolutely!” Anya added, her enthusiasm infectious. “It takes guts to be real in this industry. And I know you, Goldie. You’ve got what it takes.”

Goldie felt a warmth spreading through her. It felt so good to know she had the support of her friends. “Thank you, all of you. It means more than you could ever know.” Her words were honest, but she really couldn’t express enough how much it meant to her.

Why did you hide yourself for so damn long?she thought as she traced her hand over

her hair.

After dinner, the group decided to head to a nearby bar for drinks. The atmosphere was buzzing. Goldie found herself in a whirlwind of conversations, but her focus kept drifting back to Cameron.

As the night progressed, Goldie leaned closer to Cameron, their knees brushing against each other. “Are you having fun here, honey?” she asked, genuinely wanting to know how Cameron felt about being out and about in public.

“Definitely,” Cameron replied, her voice low and intimate. “I’m still a little nervous, but being here with you makes it all worthwhile. It’s just all quite...surreal.”

Goldie’s heart swelled. “I’m so glad. I want you to feel comfortable, especially as we start to figure things out publicly. I know it can be scary, but things will get easier.”

“Honestly, I’m more excited than nervous,” Cameron admitted, her cheeks turning a light shade of pink. “The thought of finally being able to be with you without hiding is...well, it’s exhilarating.”

They shared a knowing look, the connection between them palpable. Goldie felt a surge of excitement flood her body. She leaned in closer, her voice barely above a whisper. “I want you so badly. Like, right now. Here and now. But let’s take it one step at a time. I want to enjoy this journey with you.”

“I totally agree,” Cameron said, her eyes sparkling. “I’m all in. We’ve got all of the time in the world.”

Goldie’s phone buzzed in her pocket. She glanced at the screen and saw a message from Steve. “I slipped away. I need some shuteye. Don’t forget we have that interview tomorrow morning. Early start!”

She groaned softly, feeling the sudden weight of responsibility. “I think we need to wrap it up for tonight. Big day tomorrow!”

“Let me walk you back,” Cameron offered, taking Goldie’s hand in hers before leading the way outside into the much cooler air.

Cameron turned to Goldie, a huge smile spreading across her face. “Do you realize how far we’ve come? From hiding our feelings to now walking along the street with all these people around, holding hands like this? From you being a total ass to me feeling all these feelings for you?” she laughed.

A grin spread across Goldie’s face as she glanced sideways at Cameron. “It’s wild, isn’t it? I mean, just a few weeks ago, I felt so trapped in my own head. Do you know what I mean? I can’t believe I was willing to hide myself for so long.”

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“I get it. Sure, totally,” Cameron replied, her grip tightening slightly. “But it feels different now. So real.”

“There’s no way I’m messing this up again,” Goldie said, feeling a sense of relief wash over her.

They stood there for a moment, the world around them fading away. Goldie leaned in closer, her heart pounding. “Cameron, I?—”

Before she could finish, Cameron leaned in, capturing Goldie’s lips in a soft, gentle kiss. Goldie melted into the embrace, feeling every worry and doubt slip away. Their lips pressed together felt like the most natural thing in the world.

When they pulled apart, Cameron looked into her eyes. “I’ll look after you, I promise.”

Hand in hand, they made their way back to Goldie’s hotel. For once, Goldie didn’t care about anything else. The only thing that mattered to her now was Cameron.

Once in her hotel room, Goldie leaned against the door, her heart still thudding. She hadn’t felt like this since being a teenager. The drunken, exhilarating rush of crushing hard on someone.

After a few minutes, she pulled out her phone and texted Cameron.

“Tonight was amazing. I can’t wait for our date.”

Within seconds, a reply came through.

“Me too. Sweet dreams, Goldie. Can’t wait to see you. I can’t wait to see what’s next for us.”

Goldie felt a warm rush as she read the message. She settled into bed, her mind racing with thoughts of what the future might hold. Tomorrow’s interview loomed, but for now, she was content to let herself drift off, wrapped in the knowledge that she and Cameron were finally on the same path.

## ONE YEAR LATER

One year later, Goldie and Cameron were expected on the steps of the Met Gala. They had become public figures, beloved for their authenticity and the love they so openly shared. They even made it into *DIV* magazine.

Tonight, they were official representatives of sapphic romance at the high-profile charity event, and they couldn’t be more proud of their journey.

Cameron paced the plush carpet of their hotel room, her heart racing as she glanced at the clock. “We’re going to be late,” she murmured. “Oh, my god...is Taylor Swift really going to be there? I don’t think I can handle it. What if she talks to us? No, I can’t deal. I’m still not used to this Hollywood scene.”

“Relax,” Goldie replied with a playful smile, her voice soothing. She was perched on the edge of the king-sized bed, meticulously adjusting the hem of her elegant dress. The soft fabric hugged her curves, accentuating her silhouette, and Cameron couldn’t help but admire her. “And stop it with the Swiftie stuff. I’ll get jealous.”

As the minutes ticked by, Goldie stood up and glided over to Cameron, who was fidgeting nervously with her hair. “Can I help you?” Goldie asked, moving behind



her. She gently took the comb from Cameron's hands and began to work through the tangles, her fingers grazing Cameron's neck and sending shivers down her spine.

"You look so fucking hot," Goldie whispered, her breath warm against Cameron's ear. Her fingers continued to weave through the strands deftly, eliciting a soft sigh from Cameron. "And this neck of yours... It's just begging for attention."

Cameron swallowed hard, feeling her skin flush under Goldie's teasing touch. "Stop," she said, though her voice lacked the bite she intended. The gentle caress was intoxicating, and she could feel the heat pooling in her core.

"And why would I do that?" Goldie teased, her fingers now lightly tracing along Cameron's collarbones, where the fabric of her shirt met her skin. "You look so gorgeous. I don't think I can stop."

Cameron met Goldie's gaze in the mirror, her heart racing at the intensity in Goldie's eyes. "You're such a distraction," she admitted, breathless.

Goldie chuckled softly, her fingers lingering just a moment longer before she stepped back, allowing Cameron a moment to breathe. But the moment was fleeting; the tension hung thick between them, electric and unyielding. Unable to resist, Cameron swiveled in her chair, their lips crashing together in a deep kiss.

It quickly escalated into exploration. Cameron's hands found their way to Goldie's hips, pulling her closer. Goldie responded with a harder kiss, her hands threading through Cameron's hair, tilting her head back, and sinking her tongue into Cameron's mouth.

Time seemed to lose all meaning as they lost themselves in each other, the room spinning around them. Goldie's hands roamed down Cameron's body, tracing the curves and angles, every touch igniting a fire deep within. When their kiss broke, both

gasping for air, Cameron stood and pushed Goldie back against the wall, the blood pumping through her veins with an urgent need.

“Goldie,” Cameron breathed, her voice low and sultry. “I can’t even think straight when you’re this close.”

“Then don’t think,” Goldie replied, her voice a sultry whisper. “I can think of so many better things to do.”

Moments later, Cameron found herself on the plush carpet, the soft fibers beneath her body contrasting sharply with the heat radiating from Goldie above her. Goldie slipped off her panties and straddled her, positioning her vulva above Cameron’s mouth.

“God, you’re beautiful,” Cameron gasped, her hands finding Goldie’s thighs, pulling her down closer, wanting to feel the depths of her folds with her lips and tongue. The weight of Goldie’s body on top of her face sent waves of pleasure coursing through her.

“Just for you,” Goldie said, her voice low and sultry, as she began to grind against Cameron’s mouth.

*Source Creation Date: July 12, 2025, 2:35 pm*

Cameron's fingers roamed over Goldie's back, feeling the smooth skin of her ass beneath her dress. She could sense the tension, the yearning, building within them. She wanted to consume this woman whole.

Cameron moved her hand down to her own clitoris and began to pleasure herself. Her excitement grew quickly. She could feel herself teetering on the edge, lost in the throes of passion. But then Goldie's phone rang, cutting through the haze of desire like a cold splash of water. They froze, breathing heavily.

"Seriously? It's Steve! Will the guy ever leave me alone? I swear he knows when we're in the swing of things. Maybe he has me tagged?" Goldie murmured, irritation flashing in hereyes. But the phone continued to ring, and with a reluctant sigh, she reached for it, still seated on Cameron's face, her scent enveloping Cameron in an intoxicating embrace.

"Hello?" Goldie answered, her voice a mixture of annoyance and amusement. "Yes, we'll be downstairs in ten minutes." She hung up the phone, looking down at Cameron with a smirk. "Looks like we're on a schedule."

"I can't believe you answered," Cameron teased, her breathless laughter contrasting with the urgency of the situation.

"I had to! It's the Met Gala. Steve isn't fucking around tonight. He's on edge. Big time." Goldie leaned down again, capturing Cameron's lips, their tongues dancing together, a fierce mingling of desires. But as Goldie began to grind against Cameron's mouth once more, the urgency quickly returned, their passion reigniting.

Cameron's hands moved instinctively, gripping Goldie's hips, guiding her movements, relishing the delicious friction. Their bodies worked in perfect harmony, creating a primal rhythm. Each movement brought them closer to the edge, a sweet release that felt inevitable.

"Goldie," Cameron gasped, her voice trembling with pleasure. "I need you to—" But before she could finish, Goldie's phone buzzed again.

Goldie groaned in frustration but couldn't suppress a mischievous smile. "Maybe they'll just give up," she teased, her breath heavy.

"Let's hope so," Cameron replied, torn between laughter and desire.

But Goldie couldn't resist. She leaned down, her body still positioned over Cameron, and their lips met again in a passionate clash. The world outside faded into insignificance as they lost themselves in the moment, the intensity of their connection surging.

"Touch yourself while you're looking at me," Goldie said, her brow beaded with sweat. "I want to watch your face as you come."

"Oh, Goldie, watch me... Watch me come for you. I'm so fucking wet," Cameron moaned, her breath quickening toward blissful climax.

Goldie pulled away, a wicked gleam in her eyes.

"Oh, god! You're beautiful. I'm going to come on your face. Lick me. Lick me now," she screamed as she moved herself back into a squatting position over Cameron. Cameron slipped her fingers into her vagina and circled her tongue around Goldie's clit.

"That's it! Keep going, keep going..." Goldie's body tensed and jerked as she felt a

wave of pleasure spread through every cell. She looked at Cameron, a charming smile on her face.

“Well, I suppose we really should finish getting ready,” Goldie said breathlessly, her tone teasing as she reluctantly moved off Cameron.

Cameron sat up, breathing heavily, her body still thrumming with desire. “You’re right,” she admitted, but the heat in her core wished to be satisfied again.

Cameron summoned the energy to wash her face in the bathroom. Splashing cold water on her flushed skin, the coolness felt heavenly against the lingering heat in her flesh.

When she emerged, Goldie was touching up her makeup in front of the large mirror, her focus intense as she applied a hint of lipstick. “Are you ready?” Goldie asked, glancing back at Cameron with a grin that made Cameron feel almost lightheaded.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Cameron replied, feeling her pulse quicken at the thought of heading out to such a huge event with Goldie.

As they stepped into the elevator, the anticipation hung heavy.

Goldie leaned against the wall, her gaze steady on Cameron. “You know, I’ve never been so happy as I am right now, with you,” she said, her voice low and sultry.

Cameron smiled, her heart soaring. “And I’ve never felt more ready to take on the world with you. I love you.”

“I love you too, always.” Goldie smiled as she gently squeezed Cameron’s hand.

“I wonder what’s next for us?” Cameron asked.

“Maybe kids and a house by the sea,” Goldie mused.

As they smiled, hand in hand, anything felt possible, but most of all, neither of them had felt love so strong, so pure, and so capable of achieving anything.