



Cherry Picker (The Comebacks)

Author: A.J. Truman

Category: LGBT+

Description: Bill

At the end of a long business conference, I'm eager to get home to my daughter. But a snowstorm strands me in Chicago for the night with my assistant Tate Cherry.

He's very cute and very off-limits, no matter how much he's flirting with me tonight. My willpower is put to the test though, when we're forced to share a hotel room.

Even more so when he makes me an offer I'm unable to refuse.

Tate

After two years of working under Bill Crandell, and fantasizing about being under him in other ways, fate is shining down on me. Tonight will finally be the night we consummate the unnerving tension crackling between us.

It's my last shot with Bill. I can't screw it up and develop real feelings for my boss. Not tonight.

Cherry Picker is a boss/employee, snowed in, forced proximity prequel novella to The Comebacks series, but can be read as a standalone.

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BILL

“It’s cancelled?” I ask Tate, even though I didn’t mishear him.

He nods yes.

“Is there another flight we can get on?”

He shakes his head no. Those gray, saucer-like eyes of his fill with disappointment.

“No flights are getting out tonight.”

“It’s just a little snow.” I gesture out the giant windows of the airport and sigh, my shoulders slumping with the unfortunate truth. It’s more than a little snow. It’s a full-on blizzard. The runway is barely visible from our terminal.

“Shit.” I sink into the last available chair in the first class airport lounge. At least we weren’t in the regular terminal, packed with throngs of angry people desperately trying to rebook. Not even the free drinks and snacks in the lounge can appease my frustration.

Tate sits in the chair next to mine. His eyebrows lift with hope. I don’t know how Tate always manages to remain so sunny, no matter the circumstance. “I rebooked us on a flight leaving first thing tomorrow at eight a.m.”

“There aren’t any flights taking off earlier?”

“The snow isn’t expected to stop until about three or four, so this is the earliest flight that hasn’t been cancelled. I also booked you a room at the Darmody for tonight.” Tate taps on his phone, and mine buzzes a second later with new flight and hotel reservations. “It’s a suite.”

I roll my head back and stare up at the ceiling. “Thank you, Tate. You are a godsend.”

I bite my tongue to avoid what I really want to say: You’re such a good assistant, I could kiss you! And even if you weren’t that good of an assistant, I’d still want to kiss you.

Having Tate as my executive assistant has been a saving grace since I got promoted two years ago. After ten years at the company, this is my first executive role. Our CEO selected me over other more experienced individuals, candidates with Fortune 500 companies and Ivy League schools on their resume. I don’t come from money. Far from it. I had to work twice as hard to be noticed.

It was Tate who made sure I got up to speed and didn’t miss a beat when I landed the position. There are people in the C-suite eager for me to fail so their golf buddies and fraternity brothers can get a crack at my job. To this day, Tate is always one step ahead of what I need; no request or problem is too tough.

The downside to Tate is that he’s devastatingly handsome and achingly sweet, and yet he’s the one guy I can’t take to bed. As I do regularly, I push these thoughts out of my head.

“How’s your drink?”

“Delicious.” Tate takes a sip of his tequila sunrise, the orange and red glow a far cry from the cold white weather surrounding us. It’s against company policy to use the

company credit card to purchase alcohol. After three hours in the lounge, I treated us both to cocktails on my own dime.

“I can’t believe this is happening. I truly don’t know what I would’ve done without you,” I say.

“You would’ve rebooked your flight and booked yourself a hotel no problem,” he says. “I’ve worked for some executives who were truly helpless. You are very self-sufficient, Bill. You know how to be in charge and take control.” He stares at me a beat too long, a loaded heat behind his eyes that makes my dick jump.

I look down at my glass, wondering if I misheard.

“I mean, you’re an executive. Of course you know how to be in charge.” He laughs off the charged moment.

“We should get the hell out of this airport,” I say, changing the subject for both of us. No way should I be drinking with a guy I find attractive who is totally off-limits. “Can you get us a ride?”

“Actually, how do you feel about public transportation? With the snow, the roads are a mess. The El runs from the airport straight to downtown, and our hotel is half a block from the stop. I figure it’ll be faster than trying to deal with cabs.”

“Smart guy,” I say, a common refrain when it comes to Tate. “You’ve thought of everything.”

“That’s why I’m here.” Tate blushes. Although he’s in his mid-thirties, he still has a boyish look to him with his clean-shaven face, pouty lips, and those moony eyes that perpetually radiate sweetness. Until a moment ago, when they were sparked with heat. Or so it seemed.

They make these cocktails really strong.

Tate chugs his. “Let’s go.”

What the hell. I chug mine, too.

* * *

I may be stuck in a blizzard, but at least I’m stuck in a blizzard in Chicago. Downtown Chicago comes into view from the elevated train we’re on, its mighty skyscrapers undaunted by the swirls of snow. Tate and I live in the quiet suburbs of New York state, too far from Manhattan to get this view.

Tate stares out the window, his beautiful mouth puckering in awe at the view.

“We’re finally getting to visit Chicago,” he says. “Every time we come here for MCI, it’s always outside the city.”

The Midwestern Convention for Insurers is held at a very nice, but very generic hotel in Schaumburg, a Chicago suburb with every chain store imaginable and not much else.

“Were there no hotels available tonight in Schaumburg or by the airport?” I hadn’t thought to ask why we were going into the heart of the city tonight. I don’t second-guess Tate much.

“The Darmody is El-accessible, and it’ll be easier to take the El back and forth to the airport rather than dealing with roads. Of downtown hotels, the Darmody had availability and is the closest to the train stop, which will minimize the time we’re hauling our luggage outside.”

“Good call.” Of course Tate has it covered.

You’re so good I could kiss you , I think again. But I won’t tell you where on your body I’d kiss you. Maybe chugging that drink was a bad idea.

“And the room I booked has a view of Michigan Avenue. Much better than staring at a strip mall. No offense to Schaumburg.” Tate puts his hand on my knee and gives me a wink that’s meant to be totally professional but causes a jolt of heat to hit my balls. And like his look in the airport, this one lasts for a second too long.

Unless I’m overthinking thanks to the strong cocktail.

I learned Tate was gay our first month working together when I spotted a pride flag bumper sticker on his car. And he knows I’m bisexual because I’ve had to alert him to blind dates I was set up on against my will. (Tate is in charge of my calendar.) And there was one time when he was fixing my personal computer, and I’d forgotten to ex out of a browser tab with a porn clip. A porn clip featuring an actor who looked a lot like Tate. He never said anything when he returned my computer, and the browser tab was still open.

Over two years working together, neither of us have crossed that line. Admittedly, it’s been tough at times for me. Tate is a fucking cutie. Tall and lean. He’s a fan of wearing button-down shirts and pants that seem a little too tight, but give a nice outline of his ass and chest. I’ve imagined picking him up and laying him out on my desk. That’s a bridge I would never cross, though. I couldn’t imagine doing this job without Tate at my side, no matter how in charge he thinks I am.

But is Tate trying to cross this bridge tonight?

The train inches closer to Chicago, glowing in the snow. I take out my phone and FaceTime my daughter Rowan. I was so distracted by the cancellation and change of

plans—and maybe Tate’s potential flirting—that I forgot to let her know what was going on.

“Hey, Ro!” I say when her bright smile pops on screen. She’s sitting on a kitchen chair and the noise of a party bustles around her.

“Hey Dad.” Each year she gets older, she says that with slightly less enthusiasm and more deadpan affect. Will she even acknowledge me when she turns twelve next year? “Where are you?”

“I’m on a train.” I give her a thumbs up. I’ve fully embraced my dorky dad side. Tate snickers at the sight.

“Shouldn’t you be on a plane?” Rowan asks, tucking a lock of her thick brown hair behind her ears. She takes after me in the looks department. Same thick hair, same skeptical look permanently on her face. I’m just grateful she doesn’t look too much like her mother so I don’t have to constantly be reminded of her.

“All flights are cancelled because of the snow,” I tell her. “I’m staying in Chicago tonight, but we’re flying out in the morning. So one more night with Uncle Tanner.”

My friend Tanner pops into the frame and waves hello. His gaggle of kids (he’s up to four!) peek out from the corners. Despite being a widower with a bevy of small children, he’s always upbeat and in a good mood. I don’t know how he does it.

“All right! One more sleepover with Rowan!” Tanner says in that hyped up way all parents need to use with kids.

A big head of shaggy blond hair pops into frame, belonging to our friend Hank. He kisses the screen, which is closer than I want to get to my friend.

“What are you doing there, Hank?”

“Tanner invited us over for a pizza party.” Hank leans back from the camera and points at his teenage son Brody who pushes up his thick glasses and waves hello. “Des is also here.”

Hank points the camera to the back of the kitchen where Des stands against the doorway in his very expensive-looking suit munching on some crust.

“Des is staying away from us because he doesn’t want kid germs,” Tanner says.

“Half the people around this table are coughing. I’m in the middle of closing a massive deal. I don’t want to get waylaid by the bubonic plague or whatever these kids are carrying,” he says.

Tanner, Hank, and I share an amused look. As three dads, we know getting sick from our kids is an inevitability of parenthood. That was why DayQuil was invented. I didn’t know how well I could function while under the weather until I had Rowan.

“Looks like a fun time,” I say, a twinge of jealousy that I’m not there. The four of us have been friends since we played together on our high school hockey team. I’m grateful to still have them in my life.

“Uncle Hank shoved a whole slice of pizza in his mouth,” Rowan says. Tate snorts a laugh.

“I’m proud of you, bud,” I say to Hank.

“Don’t encourage him,” Des yells from the back. “Just get your ass back here, Crandell.”

“Don’t say the A-word,” Tanner says.

“It’s not a bad word. It’s in the bible.” Des shrugs and finishes the last of his crust. He squirts hand sanitizer into his palm.

Tanner rolls his eyes and turns back to me. “Don’t worry, Bill. We’re doing great here. Get home safe.”

“Yeah, get home safe, Dad,” Rowan says.

“Have you been doing your homework?”

She rolls her eyes. “Of course.”

“How’d you do on the math quiz? We practiced all week for that one.” I make sure to leave the office by four-thirty every day so I’m home with Rowan for dinner and we hang out before her bedtime. Then I hop back online for a few hours. My childhood was a fucked-up mess, and I swore she wouldn’t have that experience. It’s also why I’ve avoided letting any of those forced blind dates progress to anything more serious. I refuse to take a chance and get into a bad relationship.

“Ninety-one. Is Tate with you?” she asks.

“Way to go!” I kick his foot to get his attention. “Rowan says hi.”

I turn the phone around, and a swell rises in my chest when I watch Tate’s face light up when he sees Rowan. His affection for my daughter only adds to his attractiveness.

“Hey girl! Have you watched the new season of Ocean City yet? I heard the episodes dropped yesterday,” he says.

“I’m on episode four. It’s so good!” Rowan squeals. I tried watching a few episodes of the teen soap, but I always fell asleep. Tate sends me recaps from a pop culture website so I know what Rowan is talking about.

“Don’t spoil anything for me,” Tate says.

I spin the phone back around. “Okay, sweetie. I’ll see you tomorrow. Get to sleep.”

She blows me a kiss, which I pretend to catch through the screen. It’s something we’ve done since she was little. I’m glad some things aren’t too lame for her.

“Bye everyone!” I yell, and I get an avalanche of goodbyes from high-pitched kids to a salute from Des.

“You have a great daughter,” Tate says.

“I agree. Thanks.” I tuck my phone into the front pocket of my coat. “Are you going to binge Ocean City tonight? I don’t have anything on the agenda, so the night is yours. But don’t stay up too late since we have a flight to catch.”

“I’ll wait on Ocean City until I get home. There’s something else I wanted to do tonight.” A hint of hesitation stifles his voice.

I want to ask him what the hell he has to do during a snowstorm, but he’s already back to looking out the window.

* * *

The Darmody used to be a men’s club half a century ago. Developers converted it into an upscale, boutique hotel, but kept lots of the old touches. The lobby has the feel of a cozy study with multiple fireplaces, leather couches, and overstuffed

bookshelves.

I relax in an upholstered armchair and stare out onto Michigan Avenue. The Bean is barely visible amid the snow, and further out, I see the blackness of Lake Michigan. Watching snow fall from the warmth of the inside is incredibly peaceful, especially after the arctic hell that blasted us when we finally got off the El.

Tate comes to my chair with a pained, worried expression, not unlike the one that broke the news about the cancelled flight.

“What is it now?” I ask.

“There was a glitch when I was booking online. I was in such a frenzy to get us rooms for tonight...” Tate rubs his forehead. I rarely see him panic. “My reservation didn’t go through. Only yours.”

“Oh. Does the hotel have another room for you?”

“They’re all booked. I’m going to check if there’s another hotel around here with a room.”

He sits on the couch opposite from me and hunches over his phone. “Shit. I can’t believe this,” he mutters to himself.

I put a calming hand on his shoulder. “Tate, you can stay in my room. It’s okay.”

“What? Bill, you need your sleep. I can keep searching.”

I take a deep breath, keeping my dick in line. “It’s fine. It’s one night. You’re already here.”

“Bill, I am so sorry about this. I don’t know what happened.”

“It’s a screwy night.” I wave it off, as I do the teasing thought of sharing a bed with Tate. We will put a wall of pillows between us. A thick wall of pillows. “It’s late. Let’s just get back to our room and get some sleep.”

“Right. We can sleep in shifts.”

I laugh and clap his back as he stands up. “We’ll be fine.”

It’s one night. I can withstand Tate for one night.

Unless he sleeps naked. Then I’m a goner.

* * *

Typically, executives are supposed to stay in regular-sized hotel rooms while away on business. Only the CEO and CFO are allowed to book suites for business travel.

But because of the last minute booking tonight, our only option was a suite. And what a suite it is. A huge bed, full living room and kitchen. The furniture is nicer than what I have at home. In the corner of the room is a mini office complete with a standing desk. In the bathroom is both a shower and a separate large bathtub. A panel of floor-to-ceiling windows stretch across the length of the room, giving us a view of a snowy Michigan Avenue and Millennium Park.

The digs are so swanky it’s motivation enough to get promoted to CEO in the future.

“Wow,” I say. Tate walks around the room speechless as shocked as I am. “This is nice.”

“Whatever you can’t get reimbursed, I will pay,” Tate says. “I mean it. This is my error.”

I stroll into the living room section of the room. I peek under the couch cushion and see a mattress. “This is a pull out. Perfect.”

I’m relieved we won’t have to share a bed, though the tingling in my balls feel otherwise.

“Great.” Tate checks it out, but holds off on opening it. “Thanks for rolling with everything tonight.”

“It’s fine, Tate.” I wish all errors were this sumptuous. I walk up to the windows and take in the view. Being up here looking down on the few people stuck trudging through the snow makes me feel like some king.

“I’ve never stayed in a room this nice. There’s something special about a really nice hotel room.” His eyes dart my way before looking back out on the snow.

I go to my luggage and grab my laptop. I sit on the bed and open it up. I’m craving the stability of work to avoid whatever I imagine is happening between us.

“I have a Zoom call with leadership in a little bit, but then after that, I’ll be done. If you’re hungry, we can order room service.”

“I’m not,” he says. He strips off his jacket and hangs it up, giving me a nice view of his tight-fitting wardrobe. I gulp back a heavy lump in my throat.

Tate taps on his phone. “I moved all of your morning meetings tomorrow. I assume we’ll go to the office straight from the airport when we land.”

“Good thinking. I’m going to turn in shortly after my call. I suggest you do, too. We have an early flight and then a full day at the office. I’m going to prep for this call in a little bit. Is there anything else you need from me?”

“Actually, there is something.” Tate speeds over to the bed, a nervous bounce in his step. He fixes those moony eyes on me. “I want you to have sex with me tonight.”

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TATE

My friends put things like “Visit Italy” and “Run a Marathon” on their bucket lists. On my bucket list?

Fuck my insanely hot boss.

It’s been on my list for two years, ever since I interviewed for an executive assistant position and sat across from Bill Crandell. Most of the executives I’ve worked for were really old, or in really bad shape, or just really awful human beings. Bill is none of those things.

He’s only about nine years older than me. Not “about.” I know when his birthday is. He’s eight years, seven months, and two days older than me. He makes forty-four look good.

He regularly hits the gym and keeps it tight. And now that he’s joining a recreational hockey league, he’ll have some sexy bruises, too. I haven’t even mentioned the team bonding exercise where we had to go ziplining, and I clocked his hulking package in his harness.

And lastly, Bill may be stern and serious, but he’s a good person. He knows the names of all the support staff and janitorial staff. He regularly meets with entry- and mid-level employees to provide mentorship. He is the only executive who puts his coffee cup in the communal dishwasher rather than leaving it in the sink. Nobody

wants to fuck an asshole.

Most importantly, he's a great dad. The way he lights up when someone so much as mentions Rowan melts me from the inside out. I don't know what happened with his ex-wife or his own parents. It's one of the few things about his life he keeps close to the vest. But whatever happened, it wasn't good, and he's making sure to be absolutely present for Rowan as much as possible.

I think anyone working for someone as sexy and all-around wonderful as Bill Crandell would want to fuck him, too. For two years, I've had fantasies about what he could do to me in his office. Those daydreams have only intensified in the past year when I found gay porn on his personal computer. It made those passing glances at my ass not something I was imagining in my head. (Which inspired me to wear an even tighter wardrobe) Once I figured out he was batting for my team, at least part-time, I started to believe I had a shot.

Of course, being a professional and a gay man, I'm an expert at suppressing my true feelings. I never let my lust for Bill meddle in my work. I never hinted at my attraction to him.

Until tonight.

Bill's eyes pop open. They're as dark as his neatly trimmed beard, and they pop against his light skin. "What did you just ask me, Tate?"

"I want to have sex with you, Bill." I push down the nerves crawling up my throat. I have to sound totally confident or else this will backfire. And I should be confident. I have nothing to lose.

I need to shoot my shot. It's now or never.

Bill stands up and walks as far away from me as the suite will allow. “You can’t—you can’t ask me that, Tate.”

I’m not used to seeing Bill this flustered. Even when he’s nervous or unsettled, he maintains an air of calm. He’s a man that knows how to stay in control. And all I want on this snowy evening is for him to control me.

“I think you want to,” I say.

His mouth hangs open, but he doesn’t respond. “Where is this coming from?”

My dick jumps. He didn’t say no.

“Shit...there wasn’t a mixup with booking the hotel reservation. You planned this.” He rakes a hand through his thick, luscious hair.

“I might have. I didn’t plan the blizzard or the flight cancellation, though. That was...” I want to say fate, but it doesn’t feel right. Fate is for romance, and I’m definitely not here for that. “That was luck.”

As I watched the snow fall at the airport and saw our flight get more and more delayed, the idea came together in my head. And what better place to live out my fantasy than in a gorgeous suite in downtown Chicago?

“How much did you drink at the airport lounge?”

“I had a few tequila sunrises. But it’s not the alcohol.”

He paces by the window. He seems more nervous than me, but it’s not the scared type of nervous. He’s not looking to the door and panicking. And frankly, if he really wanted out of here, he could easily pick me up and throw me against the wall and

leave.

I walk into the living room area. Close, but still giving him space. “Bill, I’m going to be honest with you. You’re the most attractive guy I’ve ever known. By a mile. You are so sexy, I’m shocked I’m able to get any work done.” I let out a laugh. The more I speak, the more emboldened I feel. “For two years, I’ve dreamed about getting fucked by you. About you pushing me to my knees and shoving your big cock in my mouth. About you throwing me on your desk and banging me into next Tuesday.”

My dick swells in my pants. Saying these fantasies aloud makes them ten times sexier. Bill’s eyes go wide. I notice that he’s standing behind the armchair, hiding his crotch from view.

“I’m not looking for love. I don’t have some creepy crush on you. This is just about sex. We could both use a good fucking.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Bill, I have access to your calendar. You barely go on dates, and when you do, you come to work the next morning completely unfazed. No goofy, distracted smile. No ‘I just got laid’ vibes.” As an executive assistant, it’s my job to know my boss. And I know with ninety-nine percent accuracy that it’s been a while since he’s gotten some.

“Cards on the table, my sex life isn’t great either,” I continue. My ex-boyfriend called me boring in bed. Really, he was the boring one. He only wanted me doggy style so he could watch porn while we had sex. Like others before him, he had no problem making me feel like shit and stepping on my heart, but Bill doesn’t need to know that. Tonight isn’t about hearts.

“I know you like checking out my ass. And I’ve seen the porn on your computer. I know you have a wild side, or at least wild fantasies.” I lick my lips, desperately

wanting to taste him. “We’re in a new place for one night. The rules don’t apply. Let’s fuck each other’s brains out.”

Bill doesn’t move, so I approach the armchair and put a relaxed hand on his thick forearm. I hold his gaze, something I tried to do earlier tonight. He’s not moving. He’s not running. His dark eyes narrow at me, but I know Bill well enough to know that isn’t always a bad thing.

He pulls me flush against him. His hard cock presses into my leg, the ultimate temptation. He tightens his grip on my arm, his biceps flexing under his dress shirt.

“This is deeply inappropriate,” he says in a low growl. “This is like twenty HR violations.”

“It won’t matter tomorrow,” I whisper.

He loosens his grip on my arm and lets his hands travel down my back, stopping just above my ass. The heat of his body makes me dizzy with want. I nudge myself closer against him, letting his cock poke me harder.

“I know you want to.” I get on my tiptoes, which allow his hands to make contact with my ass. I can feel the relief quiver in his muscular chest as he squeezes my cheeks. I nuzzle my nose against his well-groomed beard, the prickly stubbles sizzling on my skin.

“I’m going to make you come so hard. I can’t wait to get fucked by you.”

Sensing an opening, I drift my hand between us. It brushes against his cock. I reach out to give it a good grab and feel its girth when the familiar chimes of a Zoom call blare from his computer.

Bill steps back. He beelines to the bed to collect his computer.

“We can’t, Tate. We just can’t.” He sits on the bed and takes the biggest cleansing breath imaginable before joining the call.

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BILL

“Give me one second, everyone,” I say into my camera. Squares with five of my colleagues line my screen. I walk over to the standing desk in the corner of the suite and pray that the movement circulates blood from my groin.

I am hard as fuck thanks to Tate. What the hell was he thinking?

Well, he was thinking he wanted to fuck his boss, I say to myself.

And what did he mean by saying it wouldn't matter tomorrow?

The standing desk faces out the giant windows, my mind even more of a blizzard than what's outside. Michigan Avenue is awash in heavy flakes of snow. At least I don't have to make eye contact with Tate this way.

As I wave to all the executives on the call, I can't help fantasizing about how badly I want to fuck my assistant. Tate will give his opinion when needed. Usually notes on a Powerpoint presentation or what tie to wear in a meeting. He's never been this assertive, and absolutely never about...this.

His confidence, his directness, the way he licked his upper lip as if he were literally hungry for me. I want nothing more than to push him onto the bed and bury my dick inside him until sunup. I want to taste his skin and hear him scream my name as he comes.

How does Tate think we can keep working together after this?

“Bill, you there?” asks Randi, our Chief Technology Officer. She’s logged into the call from her home office, the wall behind her decorated with impressive degrees and a family portrait.

“Yeah, sorry. Here.”

“I heard you’re snowed in Chicago,” Edwin our CEO says. His hawk like features underscore how seriously he takes business. Even though it’s late, he’s still as wired to talk as he would be in the morning.

“I...yeah. We’re stuck here overnight.”

“Who are you with?” Edwin asks.

My body tingles with anticipation as I prepare to say his name. “Tate. My assistant.”

Tate, who I want on all fours, that perky ass in the air.

Tate. I want to growl that name in his ear as I make him strip for me.

But I can’t. Tate might be egging me on to cross that line, but I must hold firm. As firm as my cock.

“We’re coming back from MCI.” My voice is hoarse, choked with sudden desire that I can’t quench. Half the people on this call are eager to replace me. I can’t give them the ammunition of breaking the rules and fucking my assistant. Maybe if I were a straight guy and Tate were a woman, they’d call me the man. Being two guys doesn’t afford us the same reaction. I’ll bet the thought of gay sex at all icks out the people on this call.

“I’ll be back in the office tomorrow. We’ll be back in.” I risk looking away from the camera, knowing that the sight of my assistant could rev my engine all over again. Tate is no longer by the bed. I don’t see him in the living room behind me either. Did he leave?

I hate that I had to end things abruptly. I would’ve been gentler about saying no.

Shit. Maybe he’s upset that I turned him down. I didn’t want to. I had to. That’s what the C in C-suite stands for. Cockblocking.

“Make it back safe,” Edwin says. He peers past me. Edwin is a fiend for details. He notices everything. “Are you in a suite?”

“I—it was the only room they had left.”

“Nice,” says Noi, our Chief Investment Officer, in his thick Nigerian accent. Noi has very expensive taste. He’s probably wearing Gucci slippers right now.

“I see.” Edwin raises a curious eyebrow. A knot tightens in my stomach, hoping he doesn’t follow-up. I exhale as he shifts his attention elsewhere. “I know it’s late, but I wanted to hop on a quick call to go over some of the data we got back on Q4. This will give us a good idea of where we came in for the year as well as trends for the current fiscal year. I want us to review them with our teams tomorrow to maximize their impact. It’s almost February. Eight percent of the year is already over.”

Edwin’s a whiz with numbers. His brain is faster than any calculator. It’s great working for someone so bright, but also you better triple-check your numbers whenever you give a presentation to him.

An email with the report pops up in my inbox. I scan through the numbers and overall insights our data analytics team generated. I come up with insights of my own to

discuss on the call. Edwin can run his calls like a college lecture, a professor spontaneously calling on students to answer questions.

“Overall, we had a good year, but I’m seeing a lot of areas that could improve efficiency,” Edwin says. “Noi, what stands out to you?”

“Looking at our marketing spend, we’re underinvested in digital. I see a big opportunity to reach younger consumers on social media.” Noi talks a lot with his hands. It can be very distracting. “Our mascot Bree the Insurance Gal has a strong resonance with drivers under thirty-five. The social media chatter says she has quote-unquote ‘rizz,’ which means charisma. We need to create more content with her online to leverage that cool factor. I propose...”

Noi loves to hear himself talk, and seeing how he has Edwin’s rapt attention, he continues on. My gaze drifts from the screen to the windows. In the reflection, Tate stares back at me, his eyes dark and fixed. He stands off to the side, not visible on camera.

For my eyes only.

He loosens his tie and takes it off, lets it fall to the floor. He gives me a dirty, loaded smirk. No good ever came from a smirk like that.

My pants begin to tighten as my thickening cock fights for room in my boxers.

I watch in the reflection as Tate undoes his shirt, one slow button at a time. He smooths his hand across his chest, a chest I’ve long wondered about. It’s even better than my dreams. Creamy skin, ridges of lean muscle, a light dusting of hair around his flat stomach.

I readjust myself. My cock sticks straight out, begging to be let out.

“Bill, what kind of ROI are we seeing with our TV advertising?”

“TV. Right.” I’m careful not to um my way through. It’s a pet peeve of Edwin, something he regularly complains about with younger employees. Like many CEOs, he despises the generation he’s trying to sell his product to. “TV ratings are down, but those viewers are shifting to streaming, where we’re seeing good reach.”

“Why are we spending any money in TV at all?” Edwin wonders.

In the windows, Tate’s hand slips down his stomach to his belt, which he unbuckles, the clanging sound making my balls tingle with lust.

I should be the one undressing him.

“TV is still a powerful tool to reach our customers, especially live sports. We don’t want to throw that away,” I say as heat climbs up my neck.

Just when I think this torture will end, Tate slinks toward me, careful to stay out of frame. He must be an expert of staying out of Zoom calls from the times he’s had to sneak into my office while I was on one.

He stands in between the desk and the window, staring right at me with that smirk. He doesn’t move, and I can tell he’s waiting for me.

The ball is in my court.

“But is it worth the investment?” Edwin asks. “It’s a lot of money we’re spending on TV spots.”

“Maybe we should be working on courting female customers more,” says Randi.

“We can find them on social media,” says Noi.

I want to respond to Tate, to tell him to stay back, but Edwin’s response is more urgent. I can’t leave him waiting. I readjust myself again. Tate glances under the desk.

“We can do both. TV and social media. Maybe we do more targeted TV for next year. Perhaps pick one sporting event and do more branded integrations. And while social media is great, it can be fickle,” I tell the meeting. Good on me for being able to speak eloquently to our advertising needs while managing a massive woody.

Edwin nods. “I see your point. Let’s talk about this more when you’re back. Let’s move onto our cybersecurity concerns, Randi.”

My eyes shift above my computer, but Tate isn’t there. He’s vanished again. Just when I think he’s left for good, a warm hand grazes my crotch.

Tate is under the desk.

On his fucking knees.

His big eyes swirl with heat as they look up at me. My focus shifts from him to the screen and back again. I know what I need to do...but can I do it?

Fuck. Need burns too strong in my veins. I give him the slightest head nod, then I whip my head back to the Zoom call.

Randi and Edwin exchange barbs about who was to blame for a hacking threat we encountered last summer while Tate unzips my fly. My cock pulses against my boxers. Tate reaches in and strokes me over my underwear. It takes all of my willpower not to moan. From the chest up, I am Bill Crandell, Chief Marketing

Officer. And from the chest down, I am the horniest man on earth.

Randi tries to cover her ass by pinning it on the third party IT security company we contracted with at the time. Meanwhile, Tate unbuttons my pants. He pushes them and my boxers to my ankles. My cock feels amazing, out and free from the fabric restraints.

Tate's eyes light up at the sight of it. I want to stare down at him, but I can only take quick peeks. He gives it a soft stroke from the base to the tip, as if surveying how the hell he's going to fit it in his mouth.

You wanted it this bad. You're going to take every inch, buddy.

His tongue circles my bulbous cockhead, sending jolts of pleasure through my body. I don't know how the fuck I'm going to stay upright during this. Tate's pouty lips stretch as he fits my cock inside his mouth. The warmth of his tongue makes my balls draw up, but we gotta pace ourselves no matter how ready I am to come.

He wastes no time, immediately sinking my cock down his throat. He gets almost the entire thing in his mouth. I love the way he looks with a face full of me.

"Let's move on. The big question for this year is expansion. We've been able to be competitive against the big national auto insurance brands, but our market share is still in the single digits," Edwin says. "How can we grow sustainably? I still believe slow and steady wins the race."

The same could be said for Tate's dick sucking ability. His slow, steady sucks are on another level. They drag out the ecstasy of his wet mouth. He's a man who knows how to paint the tree. He seems to be getting as much enjoyment out of this as me, savoring my thick shaft, licking the pre-come off my pulsating tip.

“The business graveyard is littered with companies that expanded too soon without a plan.” Edwin tepees his hands. “Do you agree, Bill?”

“Yes,” I breathe out. Shit. Chest up CMO Bill needs to hold it together. “I mean, yes. I agree. We only get one chance to make a first impression.”

“Exactly,” he says.

Despite being very intelligent, the man eats up cliches like...well, like the way Tate is eating up my cock.

I catch our reflection in the window. Me standing confidently at my desk. Tate on his knees like a good boy giving my cock the attention it deserves. I feel on top of the world, a master of the universe, emboldened.

Keeping my upper body still, I slide a hand under the desk and push Tate’s head into my crotch, making him take all of me. With my other hand, I mute my speaker just in time for Tate to gag on my cock.

“Fuck yes,” Tate says.

I watch my camera, making sure I remain still as I push Tate down again, hitting the soft skin at the back of his throat. He erupts in another gag. Saliva drools around my dick.

I want to tell him what a good boy he’s being, but I can’t say a word, so I pat his head.

“We need to ramp up hiring if we want to expand. We’ll need to allocate some marketing resources for that, too,” Noi says. “Unless you think we could increase our budget, Edwin.”

Edwin nods. “We can discuss that in more depth at another date. It might make sense.”

“That’s amazing,” I say as Tate’s tongue drags down to my balls, aching for a release.

“Don’t get too excited just yet, Bill. We need to see what the budget would look like,” Noi tells me.

If the budget is anywhere near as good as Tate’s mouth, I’ll be a very excited camper.

Tate strokes my cock as he licks my balls, flooding me with pleasure. I rock the lower half of my body to get closer to him. His tongue is working more magic than Houdini. As Edwin questions Kelly, our Chief Sales Officer, I admire my fat cock in Tate’s pert, precious mouth. Tate winks at me. This guy is too much.

I always knew Tate was incredible, but this incredible? I am floored.

I grab the hotel notepad and pen and scribble a missive to my assistant. He’s used to getting notes from me while I’m on calls, usually in the form of Slack messages.

Tell me how much you love sucking my cock , I write while keeping my rapt focus on the call. To my colleagues, I am diligently taking notes. I rip off the piece of paper and slip it to Tate, who’s gone back to sucking on my cock.

I put my speaker on mute.

“I love sucking your fat cock. You’re bigger than I thought. You taste so good,” Tate yells, gasping for air as he takes my dick again.

Play with my balls , I scribble on another note and pass it down.

Tate's tongue swirls around each nut, sucking on one then the other, nuzzling his nose against them. He rubs his cheek against my hairy thighs like a cat marking its territory. He slaps my cock on his tongue.

Whose cock are you sucking? I scribble and pass down. I hit mute.

"I'm sucking my boss's amazing cock. Fuck!"

I sure hope these hotel walls are soundproofed.

I pat his head, this time grabbing a fistful of hair. I thrust my crotch so he deep throats me again. My desk shakes.

"You okay?" Edwin asks.

"Yeah, my leg hit the desk."

"You don't seem tired, but you're probably tired with all that traveling. We'll continue this conversation tomorrow. I'm excited about where things are going," Edwin says.

Me, too. Because we're not stopping with an epic blow job, no matter how badly I want to come. If Tate wants to get fucked by the boss, then he's going to get fucked by the boss.

"Night all." Edwin ends the call.

The screen goes black. I slam my laptop shut and step back from the desk. My cock hangs heavy between my legs.

Tate looks up at me with those spit-shined lips and big eyes, like a pet who knows it's

done wrong but is too lovable to be mad at.

I pull him up by the shirt into a hot, hungry kiss, our lips smashing together.

“Get on the bed,” I growl into his ear. I drag my teeth down his neck. “My turn.”

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4

TATE

Is it possible for a guy to make you come just by talking to you? Bill is certainly putting that theory to the test.

His commanding voice sets every nerve ending inside me at a full, raging wildfire. I don't waste another second and practically gallop to the bed. My mouth is still hot from his cock, which was even bigger than what I'd imagined. It hangs heavy between his legs as he approaches.

"I didn't say to sit on the bed." His voice is low and raspy, chocolate brown eyes half-mast.

I hop off the bed and stand up straight, like I'm in basic training.

He unbuttons his shirt and lets it fall to the floor. His tie stays on. I drink in his broad chest and arms, thick and corded with muscle. His dark chest hair is dotted with grays, just like his beard. His stomach has a faint outline of abs shaded with a line of hair down to his crotch.

Bill hits the gym in the mornings before the office, per his calendar. He calls it sacred time, not to be scheduled over unless it's an emergency or a request from Edwin. Thank the Lord for sacred time.

"Are you going to blink?" he asks with a smirk.

“Not a chance.” His body is all man, sexy in its imperfection. It’s a body with miles on it. I want to remember every line, every crease, because I won’t get this chance again.

Conversely, I’m a bit embarrassed by my figure. I feel like a boy compared to him. My gym time isn’t as sacred and typically consists of walking on the treadmill during a House Hunters marathon.

“Strip to your underwear,” he says. As a boss, Bill is great at giving direct, clear instructions. Those qualities carry over to the bedroom, too. Lucky for me. Each command makes my dick grow harder.

I shuck off my shirt and tie and drop my pants. My dick tents in my underwear, and there’s no way for me to cover it up. Had I known how this night was going to go, I would’ve worn sexier underwear than tighty-whities. Laundry day comes for us all.

My eyes flick to the windows and my reflection in them.

“Should we pull the curtains?”

Bill shakes his head no. “Don’t you want everyone to watch you get fucked by your boss? They already watched you suck my dick.”

I hadn’t thought of that, but it makes my skin tingle with desire. The windows are floor-to-ceiling. Anyone could’ve gotten a view of me on my knees. I’ve never been an exhibitionist, but this realization makes my pulse quicken and my pitched tent get even pitchier. I want everyone in Chicago to be jealous of me.

The streets and sidewalks are mostly empty because of the blizzard, but Bill and I can pretend there’s a whole crowd for us.

I'm two seconds away from either climbing Bill like a tree or getting on my knees and finishing what I started by the standing desk. The sight of his body frays at my patience. I want him on me or inside me so badly I may combust.

Bill gets up close. The rich scent of his cologne and the natural musk coming off his skin is intoxicating. He grabs my erection and gives it a squeeze, like he's shaking a hand.

"On the bed. On your hands and knees."

Never one to disobey my boss, I get right on it.

"Smart guy," he says.

Fuck. That's what he loves to call me after a job well done in the office. Here it takes on a darker, sexier tone that makes me putty in his hands.

Cool air seeps through the thin fabric of my underwear, hitting my crack.

Bill puts his face against my ass, his moan vibrating through me and tightening my core. He rubs his face around in there, up and down my crack and brushing against my hole. I am on fire, and I haven't even taken my underwear off.

My boss does that for me with a hard yank. My underwear bunches at my knees. I wish he'd ripped them off entirely. Bill probably wants to reserve some decorum.

"Can't wait to taste you, smart guy." He slaps my right cheek, then my left. I am speechless, left dead in a Bill-sized ditch, reduced to unleashing a grunt of approval into the comforter.

Bill spreads me open and spits on my hole. He flicks his tongue around my opening,

his hot breath melting me into a helpless puddle of need. He groans greedily, the prickles of his beard on my taint setting off every nerve ending of mine.

This is far and away the best rimjob I've ever received. Past boyfriends and hookups have either sped through this step. A quick spit and lick so they can get onto fucking. Or they acted like Tasmanian Devils down there, going so fast and wild that my ass is numb by the time they stick it in.

But Bill knows what the fuck he's doing. He takes it slow, measured. He's savoring me. Just when he starts to go fast, he pulls back, making me crave his touch.

He's toying with me. I like it.

I fist the comforter. The only word I can say is yes, and I moan it over and over.

I want him to fuck me so bad. But I also want him to keep eating me out with that miracle tongue. Should I be doing more besides moaning into the bed? As an assistant, I'm not used to my boss taking care of my needs. I wave my hand behind me and stroke his cheek, an absolutely pathetic attempt to pleasure Bill.

Bill gently moves it away. "You don't have to do anything but enjoy it. Consider this part of your annual bonus."

For Christmas last month, Bill got me a lovely scarf from Nordstrom. I much prefer this.

My body clenches with unbidden lust. My cock leaks pre-come down my leg. I desperately want to come, but we aren't even at the main course.

"Fuck me, Bill. I want to feel you stretching me open."

Throughout his epic rimming, he finds moments to massage my back and give my side a squeeze. As much as I proposed being his blow-up sex doll for a night, these sweet gestures let me know he's looking out for me.

With a sure hand, Bill flips me on my back. He downs my cock, his busy tongue lapping up my pre-come. An incredible blow job to chase that heaven-sent rimming? What did I do to deserve such a great lover? I want to send Bill a muffin basket or something in the morning.

His thumb rubs on my hole as he sucks my cock. My legs wobble on either side of him. I keep myself from thrusting my hips up so I don't blow my load. But Bill is surely pushing me toward the edge. He brushes my cock against his beard. That beard is its own sex toy at this point. He knows how to use it.

Bill drifts up, his large body covering mine as he flicks his tongue on my nipple, giving it a little bite. I hiss with lust. Every pore of me is on pins and needles.

And then he does the most unexpected thing of all. He kisses me. I get to experience that hot breath and miraculous tongue up close. Like when he was downstairs, it's a slow but firm kiss. He's savoring me again. In that moment, I want Bill in new ways. I want these kisses on a regular basis. I want to feel his arms around me when I wake up.

My crush on my boss has always been lust-focused. And sure, there's a lot about Bill to like besides his body. He's thoughtful, sweet, intelligent, wonderful with people. But entertaining romantic feelings for my boss was a line I never let myself cross. My history is a battlefield littered with corpses of toxic relationships that all started because I let myself fall for a guy. Why ruin this perfect night? I told Bill that all I wanted to do was fuck him. I have to stay true to my word.

But a guy can still enjoy a great kiss.

“Are you going to fuck me or what, Mr. Crandell?”

Bill’s face splits wide with the purest smile I’ve ever seen on him. If my heart were involved in this fuckfest tonight—which it’s not—it would be melting right now.

5

BILL

I can't get enough of Tate Cherry. I want to stay up all night indulging in his body, exploring every inch of him with my fingers, my tongue, and my dick.

Things with Tate and me are electric. I've never experienced this sexual chemistry with someone before. Maybe it's because Tate and I have a shorthand from working together. Or maybe I'm allowing myself to take something I've wanted for years, and it's even better than I thought.

I want to have hot sex with this man. I want to watch my cock disappear into his tight, puckered hole. But we're two men, so we need some help with that, help that I don't have on me.

"Shit. We need lube," I say. "Maybe the drugstore on the corner is open?"

The idea of getting dressed and walking into a blizzard right now sucks, but I'd do that to have sex with Tate.

"No need." He flings himself off the bed and runs to his suitcase. His pert ass is red from my hands and beard ravaging him. A moment later, he tosses me a bottle of lube and condoms.

"How much did you plan for tonight?" I ask.

He barks out a laugh, his cute eyes creasing at the corners. “I always bring these on business trips just in case. Other assistants I know have had to go out in the middle of the night to get their bosses condoms. I figured it’s easier to carry them with me and be prepared.”

“Smart guy.”

His eyes widen. I don’t think I can ever use that nickname in a professional context again.

“I’m so lucky you work for me.”

Tate smiles but something clouds his brightness for a moment. He hands over the supplies. I kiss the spot where his neck meets his shoulder. This is supposed to be a wild sex fantasy for him. I need to cool it with the sweet kisses, for both our sakes.

I slap his ass and drift a finger down his crack. “Is this everything you dreamed?”

“Better.”

I pick him up. Tate wraps his legs around me as I walk us over to the living room.

“We don’t need to be confined to a bed,” I say. I want to have him on every surface in here. Really get our money’s worth.

I lay Tate down on the couch. I roll the condom on my dick which is so hard and ready for action it might bust through the windows. Next, I lube up Tate’s hole. While it’d be nice to just use my tongue to get his opening slicked up, Astroglide is the vastly superior lubricant.

I push his legs to his chest and relish the sight of his pink, slicked up hole.

“Ready, smart guy?”

He nods exaggeratedly, as if the word yes wasn’t enough.

I see stars the second I slide into his ass. It’s tight and warm and stretching for my thick cock. He bites his lip. I can tell it’s a lot for him.

“You good?” I pull back some.

Tate exhales a big breath almost as if he’s doing a meditation. His body seems to settle underneath me. “Yeah. I’m good.”

The fire in his eyes tells me we have the green light. I thrust back inside him. Tate’s hole is like a gift from the gods. It feels amazing. Just as I did when rimming him, I hold myself back, despite the excitement tantalizing my bones. I want this to feel even better for him than it is for me. Tate deserves everything. He’s so fucking wonderful, he deserves for his fantasies to surpass expectations. It’s not about me. It’s about him. Although I’m enjoying myself plenty.

“Fuck me, Bill. Feels so good. Love you inside me.”

“I can’t wait to watch you come.”

His skin flushes with color. His nipples are two bullets set to shoot. I flick a thumb over each nub making Tate scream out louder. The sound of my cock pounding his ass fills the room.

“Play with yourself,” I tell him.

Tate strokes his stick straight cock. He bites his lip holding back his orgasm. I smooth a hand down the soft skin of his pale inner thigh.

“Give it to me. Want it so bad,” he whines.

“Yeah you do.”

I pull out and push two fingers inside him to feel how hot and clenched he is for me. Tate is letting me play him like an instrument. There’s a rhythm with him that I haven’t felt with other sexual partners. Most times, sex can be awkward as we try to figure out each other. But Tate and I are in sync from the beginning. Maybe it’s two years of working together, but there’s an instant comfort and trust that makes this that much more enjoyable.

I press my cock back inside him, waves of pleasure hitting me as I sink into his hole. I caress his cheek and kiss him again, traces of my bitter pre-come still on his tongue. Our eyes find each other. I don’t look away. I lock into this moment.

I’ve pushed down my feelings for Tate for too long. For one night only, for one great and glorious fuck, I let them come out. I imagine how great it can be to make him mine every single day. I promised myself I wouldn’t get into a relationship with anyone after the hell I grew up in and the way history repeated with my first marriage. But a guy can pretend.

Tate’s not the only one living out a fantasy tonight.

I hug his leg to my chest and fuck him harder. Tate yells out my name. It hangs on his lips like a prayer.

“You’re so beautiful, babe.”

His eyes somehow find a way to get even bigger and moonier.

“Make me come, Bill.”

I shake my head no. “We still have more of this suite to explore.”

“Huh?” He says, out of breath.

“You wanted a fantasy, smart guy. I’m going to give it to you.”

6

TATE

Before I can ask what he has in store for me, I'm being lifted off the couch. My legs straddle his waist. Bill's cock is still inside of me, impressively. Even more impressive is when he reaches down to grab the lube. He walks us over to the kitchen and pulls out. My body instantly craves him inside me again, like a part of myself is missing.

"Turn around and bend over the counter," Bill says. Sweat dampens the tips of his hair, glistens in his beard.

The suite's kitchen is small with minimal counter space and nicer appliances than in my apartment. My flaming skin hits the cool marble countertop. My ass tingles in the air, waiting for Bill. He spits on my hole and slaps my ass, commanding my body as he should.

He applies more lube to my opening before pressing inside. It's a new angle and new sensation. His cock lights up new pleasure centers. I feel him go deeper, fully taking over me.

"Yes. Fuck yes," I wail. My vocabulary is blinded by dick.

Bill massages my neck and back as he fucks me, same as he did on the couch. I don't know which feels better, his hands or his dick in my ass. The care and consideration touches me. Despite this being just sex, he's treating me with the same respect as he

does in the office. He's a good man.

A man I could love.

If I were a person who did love and relationships. Which I am not. Penetration, not romantication.

"You're so tight for me, smart guy."

Each time he calls me smart guy, my cock juts in approval.

"Are you talking about my ass or my shoulders?"

He bellows out a laugh. "Both."

He kisses down my back without losing pace of his thrusts. He thickness opens me up. I can tell it's getting harder for him to tease me with his controlled, teasing rhythm. He craves me as much as I crave him. His hairy thighs smack into my ass with each thrust.

Bill slaps my ass once, then twice, then three times. My skin burns from his touch in all the best ways. I never want this night to end. I actually envy women right now for their ability to have multiple, consecutive orgasms.

He lightly tugs at my hair. I arch my back to stand. He wraps an arm around me and kisses my neck. I catch us in the window reflection and get even more turned on by the glow of Bill's muscled body behind mine.

"Onto the bathroom," he purrs in my ear. He pulls out, leaving me empty. My pre-come has dripped onto the kitchen cabinet under the counter. I wipe it with my hand quickly. I don't want my hotel sex fantasy to make a cleaning person's life harder.

Bill interlocks our fingers as we walk to the bathroom. The walls and floor are black and white marble. It's a long rectangle. Two sinks sit on opposite ends. On one wall is the shower big enough for a whole family; the other is the bath, big enough for another whole family.

Where oh where will Bill fuck me?

To my surprise, he lays on the floor on top of a plush black bath rug. His cock sticks up like a rocket ready for blastoff.

"Sit on my cock."

I nod, so excited I can't form words. I straddle him, impaling myself on his length. I want to come so bad. I want to let go. It's delicious agony holding on. I bob up and down on his cock as he watches with rapt attention, his eyes aglow.

I throw my head back, letting the moment fully overtake me. There are few times in life when we get exactly what we want at the exact moment we want it. But here I am. The only downside is I can't do this with Bill every day.

He puts his hands behind his head, enjoying the break.

"I'm doing all the work," I say.

"You don't seem to mind."

A guttural groan blares out of me. I want to fucking cry everything is so perfect. I knew I loved cock before, but I really love it now. Bill's rough hands caress my thighs.

"I fucking want this so bad, Bill. I've wanted this for two years."

“Me, too, smart guy.”

He did? How long has this attraction burned between us? We could’ve been doing this for two whole years.

“Time to wrap it up,” Bill says. “I want to come thrusting inside you, holding you tight against my chest.”

Clear communication has never sounded so sexy. The man knows what he wants. I get off him. Once again, Bill takes my hand.

He takes me to the center of the room. The wall with the minibar and wet bar faces the windows. Bill pushes me against the wall and lifts my legs up to wrap around him. He finds my hole and plunges his cock inside. Anybody across the street could get a clear view of us.

In the reflection of the windows, I watch his ass clench as he thrusts into me. I dig my fingernails into his taut back as he grunts against me, each push bringing me closer to orgasm.

He looks up, and we lock eyes. It may be the most intense moment of this whole night. He holds my gaze. I can’t look away. I am powerless in his strong arms. His cock buries all the way inside me.

His name is on my lips, but I can’t speak. He kisses me, but I can’t kiss back. The climax surging through my system is so intense that all I can do is feel his heat on me.

“Come for me, smart guy,” he growls.

My cock rubs against his stomach, the hairs of his belly providing extra stimulation. I

go lightheaded as my whole body clenches, as it all becomes too much to contain. I bite his shoulder as I rush to the edge of release and shoot my load between us. A deep gasp escapes me, the orgasm so powerful it's as if my soul left my body for a moment.

Bill strokes my hair and gently rubs my neck bringing me back down to earth. His arms tighten around me, knowing I can't keep myself up.

"Come inside me," I whisper.

Bill grunts and shakes under me, his face red with heat, eyes a forest fire of need. Nobody has ever looked at me with such intensity, as if I'm staring directly at the sun. And then he gives two final pumps and groans as he fills his condom. He holds out his left arm to catch us as his legs go weak.

We're covered in sweat, and once I untangle from Bill, I begin to shiver. The seventy-degree temperature of the room feels like forty. Bill goes to the bathroom (allowing me to check out his ass once more) and comes back with towels for us. I lay it out on top of the bed, the lower half of my body still wobbly. The upper half is out of it, too.

I can honestly say I've never been fucked like that.

Bill pours us two glasses of water from the courtesy bottle. He sits next to me. His chest hair is matted down thanks to my sweaty self. I want to cuddle with him, continue to cocoon myself in his large, broad frame, but I'm not sure of the protocol here. I got to fuck my boss...now what? Do we go back to normal? Will I be sleeping on the pullout now that he's pulled out of me?

Silence takes over the room. Slipping into conversation post-sex is difficult for any pairing. It's ten times more excruciating now.

“So that happened.” I let out an awkward chuckle.

“Did it live up to your fantasy?” Bill says sarcastically, though I detect an earnest curiosity underneath.

“If this were a performance review, I’d give you a five out of five. Exceeded expectations.”

“Same. You get the max merit-based raise. You went above and beyond.” Bill cracks a big, beautiful smile, his teeth gleaming against his dark beard.

If only all performance reviews could be this enthralling.

“We both overdelivered on each other’s fantasies,” he says.

“Each other’s fantasies?” I cock an eyebrow, wondering if I misheard. “You fantasized about me?”

“Oh yeah. The tight pants you wear in the office didn’t help.” Bill falls back on the bed, and I fall with him. I rest my head on the soft underside of his bicep. “Fuck. How is this going to work tomorrow?”

“We’ll take the train to the airport, and when we land, I’ll call us an Uber.”

“Not that.” Bill waves his finger between us. “This.”

Right. It’ll be much tougher for me since I doubt I’ll be able to walk properly on top of acting properly.

He turns to face me, his eyes glistening with remnants of afterglow, sparkly flecks in the darkness. “When you...told me what you wanted to do tonight, you said it

wouldn't matter tomorrow. What did you mean?"

My stomach twists with the truth. I don't want to ruin this perfect night, but I also can't lie to Bill.

"Tomorrow I'm giving my two weeks notice. I'm quitting."

7

BILL

And I thought fucking Tate had already knocked all the wind out of me.

“You’re quitting?” I ask.

“I was planning on putting in my notice when we returned from the conference.”

Well that explains his boldness tonight. HR violations and weird dynamics with your boss are meaningless when you’re leaving the company.

“I didn’t want to tell you during MCI because you had so many important meetings and were negotiating that big partnership deal. And...it’s not an easy thing, quitting a job and a boss you like.”

This is business. It’s not personal. But when you’re lying naked with your assistant, how can you tell the difference? The idea of losing Tate stings hard.

“Where are you going? How much are they offering? I can beat it.” I don’t want to lose Tate. Not only because he’s a phenomenal assistant. How can I get through a day of work without seeing his sunny face in the office? How can I build trust and a shorthand with a brand new person?

“It’s not about money.” Tate turns on his side, props himself up on his elbow. “I’m going to be the EA for a CEO of this biotech startup that’s developing breakthrough

cancer treatments. They just raised a new round of funding based on some promising drug trials. I feel a calling to them.”

“Because of your grandmother,” I say.

“You remembered?”

“Of course. You told me when you asked for donations for that 5K you ran.”

“But that was one time over a year ago,” Tate says.

“And you have that picture of her on your desk, next to your stapler.” I love glancing at it whenever I pass his desk. It’s of him and his grandmother at his high school graduation, Tate smiling proudly in his pimply-faced glory, a boy who wants nothing more than to make his grandmother proud.

“How do you remember all of this?” Tate creases his forehead.

“Because it’s you,” I slip out, maybe the most intimate thing I’ve shared this evening. In the office, Tate doesn’t talk about his personal life much. He’s very professional. I gladly hoovered up whatever details he would share. I had a deep desire to know more about him.

He bites his lip and looks at the wall.

“You’re the boss. You’re not supposed to care about your assistant,” he says.

“I guess I’m not a good boss then.”

“You’re the best boss I’ve ever had.” He glides a hand across my chest. His eyes burrow into me.

I scoop him into a kiss. Our lips touch softly, and I savor the salty taste.

“I miss her everyday,” Tate says, his eyes getting glassy. He picks at a stray thread on the comforter. “My parents were between jobs a lot of the time, so she basically raised me. She was so proud when I graduated high school. Ridiculously proud. She kept a wallet-sized copy of that photo on my desk in her purse and loved showing it to people. I finally said to her one day, ‘Grandma, it’s just high school graduation. Literally everyone graduates high school.’ But she didn’t. She told me she had to drop out to work when her father died. She got married soon after. ‘When I see you in that cap and gown, I see you living the life I never got to.’ Cancer got her a year later. She didn’t get to see me graduate college. That would’ve blown her mind.”

I give his arm a squeeze, finding myself incredibly touched by the story. Tate has never opened up like this to me, and I want to be here for him in every way I can.

“My grandmother made the best pierogies from scratch. I have the recipe, but it never tastes the same. At least when I try, the kitchen smells like her, and I’ll close my eyes and picture her there.” A wistful smile flits on his pert lips. “She was taken too soon. Working at Seneca Bio is me trying to help all the other moms and grandmas out there in my own little way.”

“I get it. Home and auto insurance isn’t saving lives.” I kiss his shoulder, another intimate touch I can’t resist. Tate’s story about his grandma makes me want to hold him against me and tell him everything will be okay.

“She’d like you,” he says.

I beam with the compliment. I’ve never met the woman, but I hold her in very high regard.

Tate snorts a laugh. “A gay man gushing over his grandmother. Perfect post-coital

conversation. Yikes.”

“I like getting to know you.”

He drifts a finger down my chest as if doodling on me. “Can I ask you something?”

“Anything.”

“Are you close with your family? You never mention them. You don’t even have me send birthday gifts.”

The familiar anvil that sits on my chest returns at their mention. There’s a reason I avoid talking about my family, but a magic is in the air between us right now. There are no boundaries, only freedom.

“Well, my dad is dead. And my mom and I don’t talk.”

“I’m so sorry.”

“Both are kind of good things. My dad was an asshole growing up. He was angry and had a drinking problem. A bad combo. I bore the brunt of a lot of his anger. Mom acted like everything was normal. She wanted the world to know we were a happy family.”

Tate puts his hand to his chest. “Bill, I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay. Thank God I had hockey. It was the perfect outlet for my anger and a place where I could escape my folks. Dad got drunk one morning and fell down the stairs when I was away at college. My first reaction was relief.” I am still ashamed about feeling that, despite our tortured history. Why was I admitting it to Tate? Because Tate’s face was so open, I could tell him anything.

“Mom remarried a year later, and we lost touch. She moved to North Carolina with her new husband and stepkids, stopped calling. I think I was too much of a memory of my dad, and she wanted to leave that era of her life behind completely. And history fucking repeated itself when my ex-wife ditched Rowan and me.”

Fuck. I rub a hand over my face. This is why I don't like talking about these things. It sucks all the air out of the room. How did we go from talking about pierogies to my drunk dad and vanishing ex-wife?

“I'm sorry, Bill,” Tate says, his voice a light in my sudden cloud of darkness.

“I'm the one who's sorry. And you thought grandma was bad post-sex talk?” I sit up and continue rubbing my head. We were having this amazing night, and I went ahead and ruined things.

Tate massages my shoulder and kisses along my neck. “Thank you for sharing that with me.”

“That was the last piece of the puzzle. Now you can move on knowing the whole story about your boss.”

He wraps me in a hug, his pale arms a sharp contrast to my dark chest hair. His touch lights up my soul, a hand pulling me out of the momentary darkness.

“I see how you are with Rowan. I see how you are with everyone. You are kind and thoughtful. You haven't let the past destroy you. You are living the life your parents never got to.”

The words land deep in my heart, lifting the anvil. I hadn't thought of it that way. My whole life, I feel like I've been trying to escape my past as if it were some unbeatable monster. But maybe I stood up to it and broke the cycle.

I couldn't have been as successful in my CMO role without Tate by my side. He has an innate ability to help me bring out the best version of myself, and I'm realizing that doesn't end at the office. My heart tugs at the thought of losing him in my life.

"You're sure about leaving? Startups can be volatile," I say.

Tate nods yes. As scary as it is, he's being driven by a bigger purpose.

"I'm really going to miss you." A flash of fear blanches in me. Except for my daughter, I've never admitted that to anyone. I stayed tough so that I didn't need to miss anyone.

I glance at the floor, afraid of his reaction. Tate lifts my chin to face him and plants a tender kiss on my lips, one filled with years of history between us.

"The night isn't over yet," he says with a familiar smirk.

TATE

I have a glorious sleep. This is the most comfortable bed I've ever slept in, far superior to the Ikea setup in my apartment. And of course, being wrapped in Bill's arms doesn't hurt. Neither does getting poked by his cock throughout the night. Even when it's not fully hard, it still makes an impression, fitting itself against my crack. It takes all of my willpower, and the knowledge that we have to go into work today after our flight, to stop me from rubbing my ass against it and initiating another round of sex.

I'm already up when my phone alarm goes off at five. I've been up for an hour, laying in bed, savoring the feeling of cocooning in Bill.

And replaying the night over and over in my head. What was the most shocking part? Flat-out telling my boss I wanted to fuck him? Him actually saying yes? Engaging in the greatest sex of my life? Or was it after, when I embarrassingly spilled my guts to him about my grandmother?

I never get personal with guys I have sex with, but I was doing nothing but breaking rules when it came to Bill. This was supposed to be a one-time thing, a fantasy fulfilled, an improper sendoff before I leave the company. Sharing memories of pierogies wasn't part of last night's plan.

And then Bill had to share about his family and make me tumble completely in love with him. What he has overcome...how he could be so caring and generous and not

chewed up with bitterness...he is even more beautiful than I realized.

Perhaps I'm still coming down from the high of last night, but I kinda sorta wanna spend the rest of my life with this guy. Not like that will ever happen. In two weeks, we'll be out of each other's lives, reduced to recommendation blurbs on each other's LinkedIn accounts. I wanted a good fuck from my boss, and that's what I got. It's a fool's errand to want anything more.

I hop out of bed and get the room coffee maker started. Some caffeine will jolt sense into me. I also find my underwear somewhere on the floor and tug it on.

"What are you doing?" Bill asks, his sleepy morning voice extra raspy.

"Making coffee for us. We have to leave for the airport in thirty minutes." I check the clock on the wall. "I'm not sure if there's enough time for us to have breakfast downstairs, but there's a donut shop by the El. Also, Edwin sent over additional thoughts he had from the call last night. We can review on the train so we're prepped when we get to the office today." If I can force myself into EA mode, then I can ignore the personal feelings clogging my head.

I grab two full coffee cups and turn around. Bill has not moved from the bed. He wears an amused smile as he watches me. Then he pats my empty space in bed.

"Get back in here, smart guy."

"We have a train and a plane to catch."

"Then we'll be quick. Technically, we're still in fantasy mode until we leave the room."

I appreciate Bill's firm sense of logic. My cock stiffens.

“And take your underwear off,” he says.

I put the coffees down and climb back into the warm spot I left a few minutes ago. Bill caresses my cheek and gazes so intently into my eyes, it’s like he’s reaching into my soul. He cups my chin and his lips find mine in a delicate kiss. His tongue presses into my mouth and gently explores. Despite our time crunch, he’s taking his time. At least at first. Then he quickly turns ravenous, palming my cock as his kiss intensifies. My body fucking levitates from his touch. I thrust into his hand as my tongue thrusts into his mouth. My need for Bill has not subsided a bit since last night. I want him so badly I feel like I’m wasting away.

“We don’t have time to shower again, so I propose we sixty-nine and swallow to avoid the need for clean up,” I say.

“Good thinking.” He smiles against my lips.

I spin around into position, throwing off the comforter to reveal his cock. I’ve heard that dicks are bigger in the morning, and Bill is proof positive. His cock is more engorged, with a thicker girth. I lower my face until it disappears into my mouth.

His mouth finds my dick and gets to work, unleashing torrents of lust across my body. From my waist down, I’m in heaven. The harder he sucks me, the harder I suck him. I flick my tongue over his engorged head and sink down until he hits the back of my throat. I love how I have to stretch to fit him, whether downstairs or upstairs.

Bill moans against my dick, the vibrations pushing me closer to climax. Unlike last night, there is no savoring here. We are on the clock, and we’re horny. We both go to town on each other, sucking and stroking as if we can hear the seconds ticking down. Bill thrusts into my mouth, his pre-come hitting the roof. My body becomes weak with unrelenting desire between the heat of him inside me to the orgasm building in my balls.

I breathe in the musky smell of his crotch as I deep throat him as best I can in this position. Despite the time crunch and inherently awkward position of a sixty-nine, I have to say I'm giving great head. Bill writhes under my touch, his groans getting louder and more intense against my dick.

My legs shake, unable to hold back. "Bill," I cry out.

"Right there, too," he manages, his muscular legs also wobbling with the impending climax.

I deep throat him and grab his thighs as I explode into his mouth and feel his seed shoot into mine. We take a moment to lay there and catch our breaths.

"I've never been so grateful for a blizzard," he says.

* * *

On the train, we keep things strictly business. We go over important items for the day and Bill's to-do list. Outside, sunshine reflects off the snow, and the majestic buildings of Chicago gleam in the orange light. Our train goes over the river, sheets of broken ice over its surface. Bill FaceTimes with Rowan one more time, showing her the snowy Chicago skyline.

At the airport, I focus on navigating us through a busy security station to the gate. Bill is ensconced in his phone. Business stops for no one. With each terminal we pass, my heart sinks, knowing we're one step further away from our hotel suite and one step closer to the office. Maybe after I leave the company, we can grab coffee from time or time. But how will that go?

How's Edwin and do you still think about me riding your big, fat cock?

I don't know if it's possible to stay colleagues, and I don't know if I consider us friends. Bill will get a new EA, and soon I will be forgotten, a name from the past.

I slump into the uncomfortable chair at our gate. Since we're boarding in ten minutes, there's not enough time to go back to the airport lounge. It's for the best. The last thing I need is a morning cocktail.

"I'm definitely going to sleep on the plane," Bill says, tapping away on his phone.

"Same," I lie. I'm already missing him.

My phone buzzes, zapping me from my sad mood.

"I put something on your calendar," Bill says.

I open my work calendar, but there's no new meetings. I check the notification again and cock my head.

"You sent it to my personal calendar," I tell him. How does he even have access to my personal calendar?

"Yeah," is all he says back.

No problem. I can copy the information into a new meeting for my work calendar. When I open the calendar invite, my heart stops.

Bill Crandell sent you a calendar invitation:

February 14.

7 pm.

Have dinner with me?

I read and reread the invite as the breath returns to my lungs. Bill watches me with excited eyes.

“This...uh...what is this?” I mumble, my heart leaping into my throat.

“If you put in your two weeks notice today, then your last day at the company is February 13. Which means on February 14, which just so happens to be Valentine’s Day, I can take you on a date and tell you how much I like you without suffering any HR repercussions.”

I scan the calendar for February, and his math checks out. It doesn’t stop my mouth from gaping open.

“You want to have dinner with me? On a date?”

He nods yes.

“Even after I propositioned you for sex?”

He nods yes.

“And almost ruined your work call?”

He nods yes.

“And told you that I’m bad at making pierogies? I should let you know that I’m bad at all kinds of cooking.”

“Just kiss me, smart guy.”

I lean forward and indulge in a syrupy sweet kiss with my boss.

We board the plane holding hands, and despite not taking off yet, I already feel like I'm soaring above the clouds.

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Two weeks later

I pull back my stick and take my shot. Unlike when I asked Tate out for dinner, this shot misses terribly. The puck slides right past the goal. Hank, playing goalie, doesn't even need to hold out his stick to block it. He gives it a wave as it passes.

"Nice," Hank says to me. "I should bring a book to practice next time. Y'know, seeing as I don't have to work."

He cracks himself up, his helmet shaking with his jolly laughter.

"I've gotten plenty of shots on you this practice," I fire back. "Are you tending goal or running a 7-11?"

A few weeks ago, I had the crazy idea to get my old hockey teammates back together to play in a local recreational league. In high school, we were the Wolf Pack, an unstoppable force on the ice that won back-to-back championships. None of us have played competitively in over twenty years. But I found myself craving the ice and the team camaraderie.

When you're a teenager, it's easy to hang out with your friends all the time. Not as much when you're adults and there's full-time jobs and kids and spouses. Life gets away from you, days pass into years.

We're calling our team the Comebacks. And we're working like hell to live up to that name and show people that twenty years on, we still got it. Admittedly, hockey is a lot harder on the body at this age, even for someone like me who exercises regularly.

And finding the energy to practice after a long day of work is a herculean effort. But we're doing it. I get to spend time with my friends, which makes all the pain and exhaustion worth it. Des and Tanner, along with our fellow teammates Derek and Mitch, skate up to the goal. We started out as classmates, but the ice made us brothers.

"Hey, cut Bill some slack. We're all a little rusty," says Tanner, the sweetest guy who ever played the game.

"We're better than we were a month ago. My body isn't in total agony after practice anymore, just regular aches and pains," Hank adds, then turns to Mitch. "How are you feeling, Gramps?"

"Hanging in there." Mitch, who's our age but already a grandfather, is a man of few words and mostly grumbles.

Derek nods along and scratches at his thick beard. "We're getting our groove back."

"Can the groove come back faster? We have our first game in a few weeks," Des says.

The comment stings for all of us. Tonight's practice has been a little rough. Missed passes. Plays that need more coordination. Pucks that should've been caught before sailing into the goal.

"And speaking of things coming back, anyone hear from Griffin yet?" Des asks.

"He said no again," Tanner says with a sigh. "He doesn't play hockey anymore."

"None of us did, but now here we are." Hank shrugs his shoulders. "We need Griffdog back. He's the only original member of the Wolf Pack who's not here. Heck, Derek moved back from Alaska to join the team."

“I didn’t move back from Alaska for the team,” Derek says.

Hank pats his shoulder. “Buddy, I’m making an argument here. Just go with it.” Hank turns back to everyone, but focuses his attention on me. “Look, we need to get Griffin back on the team. We’re like Infinity Stones. You need all of us for the magic to happen.”

I don’t disagree with his logic. The guys nod along. Unfortunately, we can’t compel Griffin to get back on the ice, try as we might.

“I know the last time he played...it did not go well,” Hank says in the understatement of the year.

“It was awful,” Mitch says. We all shudder with the memory of Griffin’s last-ever hockey game senior year. I can still picture the splatter of blood on the ice, and it makes my stomach twist. Maybe Griffin could’ve been one of the greats of the sport; no one ever got the chance to find out.

“I don’t blame him for refusing to play again,” Derek says. “If that happened to me, I’d probably feel the same.”

“He has unfinished business on the ice,” Hank claims.

“He did seem the slightest bit intrigued when I mentioned it to him at the school pick up line,” Tanner says. “He’s still in good shape.”

“Is it unethical to offer him money?” Des wonders, scratching at his clean-shaven face.

“I could try seducing him,” Hank offers as he picks dinner from his teeth. “Though there is the risk of him falling hopelessly in love with me.”

“Right,” Des deadpans.

“Hey!” Hank objects. “I got a pair of zebra print underwear for my birthday. Maybe you can see me in them, if you play your cards right.”

“Look, we’re getting there,” I say, not wanting to go down the Griffin Harper rabbit hole again. (Or hear more about Hank’s underwear for that matter.) As the team captain, it’s my responsibility to keep up the team spirits. “Nobody thinks a bunch of fortysomething guys can become champions again. They think we’re all a bunch of beer guts and bad knees. We’re going to show them they’re wrong. We might be missing Griffin, but we can still make magic. We’re not called the Comebacks for nothing.”

I put my hand in the middle, a forceful move to bolster team unity. You’re either in or you’re out. Tanner is the first to put his hand in, followed by Mitch and Derek. I glance up at Hank and Des, two guys with the most opinions of anyone on the team.

“Come on, guys. We can’t do it without you,” I say.

“Don’t be dicks,” Tanner says, taking us all by surprise with the foul language. Since he has a bundle of little ones at home, he’s usually always keeping it G-rated. Hank and Des are taken aback and quickly shuttle their hands into the center.

“On three,” I say. “One, two, three...”

“Comebacks!” Our yell echoes through the empty rink.

I check the clock, and our time on the ice is up. Another team from the league, the Overbites, made up of a bunch of dentists, waits for us to vacate.

“Is it inappropriate to ask them about this crown I have?” Hank muses as we skate off the ice.

I forget about hockey for a moment when I spot Tate sitting on a bench outside the rink. I can look at this man all day.

“Good hustle out there,” he says.

“You were watching us practice?” I ask, worried that he saw me biff that last shot.

“No. It just seemed like something good to say.” Tate shrugs. I pull him into a kiss, letting his salty lips take me to paradise.

“Save it for the backseat of your car, Bill,” Des says with a wink. I give him the finger while remaining liplocked with my boyfriend, who I can now publicly say is my boyfriend.

The past two weeks have been incredible and also pure torture. Getting to be around Tate all day made me smile nonstop. Not being able to swoop him into a kiss whenever I wanted was rough. I tried to be as professional as possible. And I was, save for a quick fuck in the supply closet...and another quick fuck in my office...and the hinted to hookup in the backseat of my car which I never should've divulged to Des...and Tate sitting under my desk and blowing me during a marketing call. Twice. And of course all the dirty texts we sent back and forth.

So maybe we weren't the most exemplary employees, but it doesn't matter now because as of five p.m. yesterday, Tate is no longer my assistant.

“Ready for our date?” I gaze into his large eyes, like two rocks perfect for skipping across a pond.

“Oh yeah.” Tate steps back, probably so his cute outfit doesn't get soaked with my sweat. “You've done a great job at keeping it a secret.”

“See? I can schedule and plan things without the help of my trusty assistant.” I had

made different plans originally, but then remembered Tate has access to my calendar, where he saw the reservation. I quickly changed it and kept it on my personal calendar away from his eyes.

Tate spent two years anticipating my every move. I want to show him that I'm capable of fun surprises.

"You really have no idea where I'm taking you tonight?" I ask as we walk toward the locker room.

"He's taking you to Burger King," Hank yells as he walks by us.

"Hank, don't you have some zebra print underwear to put on?" I cock an eyebrow.

He smirks as he enters the locker room.

"Do I want to know what that's about?" Tate asks.

"You really don't." I silently curse Hank for putting an image in my head that will unfortunately never leave.

"I'm clueless. I've been trying to figure out where you made the new dinner reservation." Tate taps his chin. "I know the fancy restaurants you prefer. But you probably know that I know, so you're going in a different direction. Perhaps an Asian-leaning restaurant, since you're assuming I'm thinking of French or Italian food."

"You're way overthinking this."

"You're right, you're right. Wait, can I get one guess?" Tate stands on his tiptoes, the cuteness impossible to deny.

“One guess.”

“Oishi, the Japanese steakhouse on the water.”

I stop walking and clench my eyes shut.

“Fuck. I was right. Why did I want to guess?” He smacks his hand to his forehead.

“I’m not good at romance, Bill. I ruin the moment. You’re welcome to run in the opposite direction if you want.”

“I can’t believe you said Oishi.” I shake my head. “Because that’s one hundred percent...wrong!”

My roaring laughter bounces off the walls. I dab at tears pricking the corner of my eyes. A rush of victory overtakes me, not unlike when I used to win hockey games. The surprise is still alive.

Tate playfully narrows his eyes at me. “Go get changed.”

“Man, are you sure you were my assistant?”

He points to the locker room. “Go now. Before I buy a chastity belt off Amazon.”

I step into the locker room, but race right back out and swoop Tate into one more kiss. I can’t help myself. Having Tate in my life has opened my heart up and brought new levels of joy into my life that I didn’t think was possible for a guy like me. I thought I was destined to have the same luck in love as my parents. Looks like hockey isn’t the only place where I’m able to make a comeback.

There is no better feeling than Tate pressed against my body. “And for the record, you’re pretty damn good at this romance stuff, smart guy.”

The End

What happened with Griffin Harper to end his hockey career?

And what happens when he falls for the much younger captain of the Comebacks' arch rivals?

Find out in *Gross Misconduct*, Book 1 in the Comebacks series.

As a high school hockey star, I was on track for greatness. Until an opponent attacked me on the ice, leaving me half blind.

For the past twenty-seven years, I've avoided hockey and its painful memories. But when my old teammates get back together to play in a local recreational league, I realize it could be a chance to rewrite history.

The only person standing in my way is Jack Gross.

Hockey isn't complete without a rivalry, and ours comes courtesy of the Blades: they're younger, faster, and fronted by Jack, a former professional hockey player who hates my guts after a rooftop hookup gone wrong.

His cockiness and penchant for pranks make me hate him right back. But Jack has a special way of getting under my skin that makes me want to get into his pants. And well, I only have so much willpower.

As our teams get closer to a showdown on the ice, Jack begins shedding his armor of confidence. Despite getting to live the life I dreamed of, maybe Jack is as messed up as me.

The championship game could redeem the past for us both. But there can only be one winner. Will victory taste as sweet if it costs me Jack?

Gross Misconduct is a rivals to lovers, age gap, single dad romance with no cheating and an HEA. It is Book 1 in the Comebacks, a series about a friend group of single dads who were hockey all-stars in high school and looking to recapture the magic in their forties. Whether they win or lose, there's always a post-game beer.