



Cookies and Cream

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Description: Layla Russell is finally ready to date after a nasty breakup. She downloads a dating app, hopeful to find a match. When she agrees to meet her potential matches in a local bar, Taters and Beer, Layla gets more than what she bargains for when she bumps into someone she'd never thought she'd see again. Simon Tate owns Taters and Beer; he also works as a bartender, and when it comes to women, he has seen and done it all. If flirting was a professional sport, he would be the MVP of all time. When the sexy woman he'd never thought he'd see again comes into his bar, he knows his life is about to change forever.

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ONE

TROUBLE FOR ONE NIGHT

SIMON

“Are you sure you’re not drunk? I don’t take advantage of women.”

The beautiful woman in front of me doesn’t look drunk or act drunk, but we are in Vegas, so people tend to get a little wild. And although I expected Vegas to be crazy, I didn’t anticipate a dual bachelor and bachelorette party to be so much fun. I’m an old-school guy, where the women go out and do girly shit like wear sashes and crowns and play games, and men go to strip clubs.

However, having a bunch of people meet up to party in another city isn’t as bad as it initially sounded to me. Especially when you have a group of grown-ass people willing to have fun and let loose.

I especially love that my best friend Zane and his fiancé decided to have their joint party out of town because I finally had a reason to take a mini vacation and have some fun, drink a little, and chase some tail.

Speaking of which. The woman in front of me has one of the nicest asses I have ever seen, but when she stumbles slightly I frown.

“Again, are you good?” I ask again, grabbing her arm to steady her.

It might be those high ass heels and not the alcohol that has her teetering, but I want to be sure.

“I’m not drunk. It’s these damned stilettos. Are you drunk?” She sassily kicks off the shoes, looks me up and down, and bites her lip.

Damn, this woman is sexy! Her voice is like a siren’s call because the sound has my dick rock hard.

“No, I’m good. Since we’ve established that we’re both sober, how about you tell me your name,” I state with a cocked eyebrow.

She gave me some bullshit club name, but for some reason I want to know her real name. Besides, I have no problem with one-night stands, but I still like to get the woman’s name. Even if I may not remember it later. I mean, I’m not a creep, but I am a hound. I love women, and women love me. I make no apologies or excuses.

“I told you to call me Cookie. Now, are you going to fuck me like you promised, or should I get my rose?”

She licks her lips as her brown gaze rakes over my body from head to toe. I can’t help but grin at how bold she’s being. I watched her from the time I spotted her at the club. She was turning down advances left and right. I thought she was shy until I flirted with her, and she returned the gesture.

“Baby, there is no way I’m letting you use a vibrator when you got the real thing right here.” I spread my arms wide and give her a wink.

She chuckles as I slowly walk toward her. I unbutton my shirt and slide it off my shoulders. I step out of my boots and unbuckle my belt and let it hang loose because I want her hands on me in the worst way.

“Do you need some help with that?” She meets me halfway and pulls the belt from the loops of my jeans. I smile down at her when she unbuttons and unzips my pants.

Cookie definitely doesn’t look like the usual women that I bring home. Not that I have a specific type. But I’m an owner of a bar, Taters and Beer, and the barflies that usually come my way don’t have the sophistication or the worldliness that Cookie exudes.

I can tell she’s a woman that’s about her business, and tonight she’s about me. I usually like to get down to the nitty gritty with my ladies, but I have the urge to take it slow with Cookie. Even though she’s made it clear that this is a one-night thing. I still want to savor her like a feast put in front of a starving man.

Cookie’s small hands reach inside my jeans and grip my dick. She drops to her knees and softly tugs my shaft while looking up at me through her long lashes. “Ohhh, I knew you gave big dick energy. Umm.”

“I got a feeling you’re gonna be trouble. Sssss,” I hiss out when her grip gets firmer, and she moves her hand faster.

“Trouble for one night isn’t bad, right?”

Before I can answer, her hot mouth is wrapped around my dick. She sucks it down until it hits the back of her throat.

“Fuck! That feels... shit!” I growl and start to pump my hips.

She takes my cock out of her mouth and licks the tip. “Umm. Yes, fuck my mouth. I want you to do all the nasty shit you threatened.”

“You sure about that? Cause I make promises, not threats.”

“I’m sure I can handle you,” Cookie purrs.

“That my dear, sounds like a challenge.” I cock my eyebrow at the sexy woman on her knees in front of me, but she simply smiles with twinkling eyes.

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I glide my fingers down the perfect brown skin of her cheek and over her swollen wet lips. Cookie sucks my finger into her mouth, and I grunt. I slide us both down to the floor.

“It’s my turn to taste you.”

I push the tight skirt up around her hips and marvel at the sight in front of me. Cookie’s naked flesh is moist and waiting.

“No panties, huh? What a very naughty girl you are.”

I stick out my tongue and flatten it against her dewy flesh. The taste of vanilla and woman explodes inside my mouth. I lick and taste every inch of her pussy. The moans of pleasure coming from the depths of her soul encourages me to continue my feasting.

“Oh my God. Hell yes!” Cookie screams out as her fingers find their way into my hair.

“Ummm hmmm. You taste like heaven,” I mumble into the soft petals of her lower lips.

When she grips my long hair around her tiny hands and shoves my face into her pussy, I know she’s feeling the ecstasy I wanted her to.

I promised her a nice nasty time and I intend to make good on that promise. She was a challenge that I can’t wait to tame.

“I need you to fuck me. Now!” Cookie is riding my face like a cowgirl at a rodeo while she demands that I fuck her.

I’m not sure how she wants me to fuck her when she has my head in a death grip. But I’ll do the best that I can. I focus on the sexy woman’s clit, firming my tongue as her cries get louder and louder. I want to make sure Cookie is nice and wet because I know I won’t be able to go slow.

“I’m cumming! Shit! Yes, baby!”

Her juices flow onto my tongue, and I lap them up. I’m already obsessed with the sweet taste of her. I know why her name is Cookie because that’s exactly what she tastes like... a sweet treat!

TWO

DATING ADVICE

LAYLA

“I can’t believe you talked me into signing up for this dating site. Lord, I have sunk to an all-time low,” I whine to my best friend.

“Messy Mandy swears by this site. I think that’s how she met her man. But I don’t remember. You know she likes to tell everybody’s business but her own.” Tasha smirks.

I have to agree. I love me some Messy Mandy. She always has the good scoop, and she’s crazy, but I hate when my best friend gets ideas from her. Nothing good can come from taking advice from a gossip column.

“Yeah, well, I’m sure Mandy is luckier than I am when it comes to love. I swear I’m cursed or something.” I heavily exhale my frustration.

I swear, ever since that one-night stand, I’ve been hit with dating duds left and right. I thought I needed to let loose and let go. I needed to throw caution to the wind and get back into the swing of things after my break-up with Vincent.

And boy, did I ever get to swing. That man had me twisted and turned every which way. It’s been six months, and I still can’t get him out of my head. Not to mention, I haven’t had sex since then. And I keep comparing the men I meet to him.

“Are you listening to me, Layla? You know you’re not cursed just because that idiot Vincent wouldn’t know a good thing if it hit him in his wide-ass head. You are a catch, and a good guy will come along when you least expect it. That’s why you have to put yourself out there.”

“You’re absolutely right, Tash. I know not to let the doubts sneak in on me. Seeing Vincent for the asshole he was is the best thing that could’ve happened to me. I had time to work on myself, and now I’m ready for love. Real love.”

“Good, now I read that you need to be celibate to keep a clear head when dating.” Tasha nods like she just said the most profound thing in existence.

“That won’t be an issue, believe me,” I sadly mumble.

“Head up, buttercup. You got it goin on. Oh, speaking of going... there’s this bar I heard about that has the best French fries in Texas.” Tasha rubs her flat belly and smacks her lips.

“Girl! How do you stay so skinny? We are literally eating lunch right now, and you’re already talking about more food.” I shake my head.

“I have a fast metabolism. Besides, you only live once. And I want to enjoy my food and my man while I’m here on this big ball called earth.”

“Hey, I can’t argue with that.”

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“Why don’t you swipe on that dating app and meet some potential hotties tonight? You can get some food and some potential dick,” Tasha cackles.

I laugh along with her. My friend is crazy as hell, but she might be right. Lord knows I could use a break when it comes to dating. I’m open and ready for love.

“I can’t believe you talked me into coming to this place and then bailed,” I say into my cell as I park my Escalade in one of the few open parking spots at Taters and Beer.

Tasha waited until the last minute to tell me that her boyfriend, Neill, surprised her with a romantic night out. I don’t blame my bestie one little bit for ditching me, but I just wished she would’ve told me sooner.

For all of my big talk at lunch, I’m nervous as hell now that I’m here. I’m a grown woman, and I have plenty of experience with dating, but it’s been years since I felt a real connection with anyone. Not counting my one-night stand with the stranger who rocked my world.

I don’t even know the man’s name, but the memory of everything he did to me is imprinted on my body. I was on an adventure and ready to own my sexuality as a thirty-six-year-old newly single woman. I don’t have to be confined to societal norms. I can have a one-night stand!

“My bad, Laylay. I promise to make it up to you. But remember our talk, go in there

and have a great time. Don't take any shit, and if you don't feel the connection with the guy, keep it movin'. You don't owe anybody anything... got it?" Tasha has that no-nonsense tone, and I know not even try to disagree with her when she's like this.

"Okay, okay. I will go in here and do my best to make a love connection. And if these guys are duds, I will send them on their way because I am woman, hear me roar."

Tasha chuckles, "You're such a smart-ass. But I love you anyway. Have fun, be safe... and try to get some cream for that cookie of yours."

My shocked laughter echoes through the line as I disconnect the call. If nothing else, my best friend is crazy as hell, but I love her.

"Okay, Layla. Have fun. You are living your best life, and you are worthy of being loved," I say as I flip the visor down and check my make-up. I reapply my lipstick and make a kissing face in the mirror. I take a deep breath and get out. I'm glad I didn't actually have to swipe to get any of my matches here tonight because, apparently, there's some sort of mixer going on. I would bet my left tit that Tasha already knew that.

I hop out of my car and adjust my outfit. I wanted to go sexy but casual, so I wore a pair of high-waisted, wide-legged pants with a loose crop top. My entire belly isn't actually showing but the little bit of skin makes me feel sexy. I have my hair up in a top knot with curly tendrils hanging on each side of my face.

I slick my hair up with my hand, grab my clutch, and close and lock the door. I put my shoulders back and stride into the loud, crowded bar.

Right away, I spot a few cute guys I wouldn't mind getting to know. Okay, so this might not be as bad as I thought. However, as soon as the thought fluttered across my mind, an unexpected sight blurred my optimism.

“Cookie? What the hell are you doing here?”

Right... he doesn't know my name. I gave him my club name, Cookie.

“Ummm.”

THREE

FRIEND OF A FRIEND

SIMON

“Cookie? What the hell are you doing here?” My surprise is evident in my voice, and I'm happy to see her at first.

I didn't think I would ever see the woman again. I'd never seen her before in my life until we met in Vegas. I honestly don't know much about the beauty. I don't know her last name, where she's from, what she does... nothing.

And I didn't get a chance to ask her the morning after our tryst because she vanished without saying goodbye. The crazy thing I was in her room. Now, normally that would've been the ideal situation for me. I've had my fair share of one-nighters, and getting rid of them the next day can be a complete hassle. But I wanted to wake up to Cookie. I was looking forward to it.

“Ummm.” Cookie looks everywhere but at me.

Her brows are bunched in the middle, and she's biting her bottom lip. I can tell that the last person she was expecting to see was me.

“So, you aren't from Vegas.” I look at her waiting for an answer.

“No. I never said that. I was there celebrating my friend.”

I nod, putting things together. Dontae and Zane celebrated at a Vegas club, but they didn't rent the place out or anything. There were hundreds of people from everywhere. I just assumed Cookie was from there because she seemed so familiar with the strip. I guess that's what I get for assuming.

“You know Dontae Michaels? Or were you celebrating someone else?” I question.

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Not that it matters, but if this woman is in my circle of friends, then our one night just got a little more complicated.

“Yeah. Well, my best friend knows Dontae. I was a plus one at the bachelorette, so wait... you know Dontae and Zane?” Cookie’s eyes go wide, and she shakes her head.

“Zane is my best friend.” I run my hands through my long hair and blow out a breath.

“Okay, this isn’t a big deal. We’re two grown people who had a good night, and that’s it. We don’t even have to bring it up again. We can forget that it ever happened.” She nods her head with a shaky smile on her face.

I frown at her words. The last thing I want to do is forget about what happened in Vegas. That night was incredible. That woman rocked my world like she played in the Rolling Stones. I have no idea where she got the sexual agility from. We flipped and twirled all over that damned hotel room. I have never put a woman in that many positions in my thirty-eight years of life. It was like we were reenacting the Kama Sutra.

“What if I don’t want to forget, Cookie.” I take a step closer, getting in her personal space.

“I left Cookie back in Vegas, and so should you.”

The woman I’ve been having fantasies about turns and hurries away without looking back. Her hips sway in the tight pants she has on, and I have to adjust my instant

hard-on.

How the hell can she just walk away from me like that? Again!

I've been trying my hardest to let go of the woman who obviously wants our one-night stand to stay that way, but fuck, I can't! I don't know what it is about her that has me feeling unhinged. After she left me at the bar, I couldn't concentrate on shit. The women were trying to get my attention, but I couldn't even give them the flirtatious banter that I'm known for.

Taters and beer isn't just a bar; we cater to women. If the women are here, then the men will follow. It was a brilliant idea that keeps my bar in the black and me in the panties of any woman I want, except for Cookie.

"What's up with you, dude? You've been moping around here for a week. Not that I'm complaining because all the panties are being thrown my way," Freddie says while wiping down the bar.

"Just a lot of shit on my mind. No worries, I'll get back to normal, taking all the panties for myself." I grin at my most trusted bartender and friend.

Freddie chuckles as he continues to set up for happy hour. I know I have to get my shit together by tonight because Thursdays are one of our busiest days. We call it ladies' night because this is the place for book club meetups, after yoga sessions, and good ole' I need a drink before I go home to my crazy family. Because of that, I started doing drink specials on Thursday, and BAM! More customers.

"Damn! I knew I should've kept my mouth shut. I should've left your ass brooding in the corner for one more night. I could've gone home with more tips and ass." Freddie

shakes his head in mock anger then his face splits into a wide grin.

“I’m sure you will go home with plenty of both, no matter what mood I’m in.” I chuckle and walk toward the back office.

All of my staff are hustling to get ready for the rush that tonight will bring, and I smile to myself. My dad would be proud of the business he left me. We put a lot of work in this place as a family, and I’m glad that it’s doing so well. The first couple of years after I took over were a struggle, but I finally got my head on straight and my shit together.

Sammy, the cook, is shouting out directions to the kitchen staff, and they are quickly buzzing around like worker bees. I throw my hand up, and Sammy gives me a nod without stopping his hollering. My hostess Sal is wiping off the menus, and we nod at each other as I pass.

My bar may not be a five-star Michelin restaurant, and we might only serve bar food, but our food is some of the best the great state of Texas has to offer. If I do say so myself.

After about thirty minutes of finishing payroll, I get a text from my best friend, Zane.

Zane: My baby and her girls are stopping by Taters tonight. Reserve them a booth for me. I’ll owe you one.

Me: It’s my busiest night so you’ll owe me more than one asshole.

I can’t help but wonder if Cookie will be with Dontae tonight. Even though she said, she was a friend of a friend. I still want to see her.

FOUR

MUST BE FATE

LAYLA

“I can’t believe I let you talk me into this,” I grumble as I unlatch my seatbelt of Tasha’s passenger seat.

“Whatever, you can mumble and huff all you want to. But you made me promise to stay on your ass about dating. So, here I am doing my best friend duties,” Tasha sasses.

I roll my eyes, but she’s right. I know I get so caught up in romanticizing everything that I become too afraid to actually go on a date. I want to be in love again. Even though I got my heart shattered into a million tiny pieces, but I’m still optimistic about finding love. The problem is I know my expectations are high, and I keep getting disappointed. It’s an endless loop that I can’t seem to get out of.

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“I know, I know. But I told you what happened the last time I came here.”

I didn't even get to meet the guys I swiped right on when I came to Taters and Beer the last time because I ran away from my Vegas one-night stand like my ass was set on fire. I had no idea what to do or how to behave once I came face to face with the gorgeous stranger again.

I didn't think I would ever see him again. Cream. That's what I called the man with creamy skin and a dick that wouldn't quit. And it was fitting that he called me Cookie. Cookies and Cream.

Besides, I had to call him something since I didn't get his name. And even though I did that on purpose, in hindsight, I wish I had asked him more questions.

“So you saw a guy that you let slap it up, flip it, and rub it down like he was a member of Bell Biv DeVoe. Who cares. You're a grown-ass woman. Let your freak flag fly, girl! Anyway, what are the chances of him being here tonight.”

“That's true. It's ladies' night, after all. I'm sure I'll never see him again.” I let out a deep exhale.

“I don't understand why you're running from good dick anyway. You know that shit is hard to find. Like, why, sis?” Tasha abruptly stops before we get to the door of the bar and flips her long braids over her shoulder. Her brown eyes bore into me, waiting for an answer.

I shrug, “I don't know. I just want something more. And you know the old saying...

you can't meet your soulmate in the club."

"Tuh. That's that silly shit that will keep your vagina covered in cobwebs and dust. You can meet your soulmate anywhere. Even in Vegas. You might want to keep that in mind." Tasha turns on her heel and struts inside, and I follow behind her.

As soon as we get inside, Dontae waves her hand to signal us, and we wave back. We make our way to the booth, and I'm glad Dontae got here early because, once again, this place is crowded.

"Hey, chicas! Glad ya'll could make it," Dontae greets us as she stands and hugs us.

Dontae's friend Anita gives a wave and a smile, and I smile and scoot into the booth beside Tasha.

"Thanks for inviting me again. It's been a long work week, and we still have one more day to go. I needed a drink," I say, relaxing against the booth.

"What can I get you ladies to start?" The deep voice sends chills straight to my vagina.

I look up and almost swallow my damn tongue. How can one man look and sound so damned fine? And he works here?

"Hey, Simon! We must be VIP if we have the owner serving us." Dontae stands again and gives Simona a hug.

"Owner?" My eyes bug out of my head at the information.

"Well, hello again, Cookie." Simon smiles at me.

The way his smile lights up his entire face should be illegal. He makes my panties wet with just one look, and I feel a flush of desire come over me. Damn, I should not be this horny.

“Who the hell is Cookie?” Anita looks around the table with a twinkle in her eye.

I like Anita, but the woman is one of the nosiest people I have ever encountered. She loves some good hot tea and loves to pour it even more.

“She’s, Cookie.” Simon points at me, his smile widening.

All eyes swing to me and I want the ground to open and swallow me whole. Laaawwwd, what did I do to deserve this? Oh, right, debauchery in Vegas.

“No, she’s Layla,” Dontae says, looking between Simon and me.

“Is this the Vegas?” Tasha asks as she looks Simon up and down. “Noooooice. Go ahead, friend. I am not mad.”

“Jesus, take the wheel,” I groan, looking up at the ceiling.

“Vegas? Ya’ll met in Vegas? When did this happen? And where was I?” Dontae mischievously questions.

Anita is rubbing her hands together, ready for the juice. Dontae is smiling like a cat that just ate the canary, and Tasha is still drooling over Simon. From the outside looking in the scene would be funny as hell, but since the attention is on me, I don’t feel an ounce of humor.

“Listen, ladies... what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Right, Simon.” I look at him with pleading eyes.

I was just trying to get my groove back. I needed a little ego boost after Vincent cheated on me with some random chick off of social media, and my confidence took a major hit. We were together for four years, and I thought he was happy. Hell, I thought I was happy. But the connection I had with Simon, I never had that with Vincent. And I can admit it scared the shit out of me.

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“Apparently, what happens in Vegas ends up sitting at a booth in your bar, Layla.” Simon cocks an eyebrow at me, and I sigh.

“Maybe, we need to have a conversation.” I scoot out of the booth and grab Simon by the hand.

Maybe, it was fate that had me walking into my one-night stand’s business. And who am I to question fate?

FIVE

STRINGS ATTACHED

SIMON

“Maybe, we need to have a conversation,” Layla says as she stands up.

She grabs my hand and pulls me in the direction of the door. I stop her and lead her to my office instead. There’s no way I’ll be outside of my bar having this conversation. By the look of exasperation on Layla’s beautiful diamond-shaped face, it’s probably not something I want to hear. The smile is wiped off my face because the only expression I want to see her make is one of total ecstasy.

I open the door to my office, and Layla goes inside. I follow her closely and close the door behind me. She turns around, and I can’t help but get as close to her as possible.

“Wh- wh- what are you doing?” Layla gasps. Her brown eyes aren’t wide with

surprise but heavy-lidded with lust.

I lick my lips at the familiar look on her face. She's so fucking sexy.

"I'm not doing anything." I grin at her.

"You're in my personal space." Layla's eyes roam over my body. When she bites her lip, I know she definitely wants me in her space.

"Do you want me to move out of your... personal space?" My stern voice isn't at all like my usual laid back tone, and Layla notices because she instantly frowns.

"I want to know why you're being such an a-hole."

Layla's eyes never lose that lusty sheen that's shining through them, even though her words are sharp. She just called me an asshole, but my dick turns hard anyway.

"I'm not being ana-hole," I repeat with a chuckle. "I just want to know why you left me high and dry in Vegas, and then every time I turn around, you're at my bar."

"Because—"

I step forward, and Layla steps back. Her ass is on the edge of my desk, and I have to restrain myself from swiping everything to the floor and fucking her right here and now.

"Because what, Cookie?"

I walk between her legs and lean forward, placing my hands on either side of her hips. Layla's sweet scent surrounds me, and I get lost in her eyes. How did I ever agree to a one-time thing with this beauty?

“I didn’t leave you high and dry. We agreed, no strings.” Layla licks her lips before continuing, “I didn’t know you owned this place. I swear I’m not a stalker or anything. I had no idea that you even lived in Dallas.”

“No worries, Cookie—”

“You can stop calling me that now.” Layla looks at my lips, and she licks hers again.

“But I like calling you, Cookie. It reminds me of your sweetness.” I lean in and put my nose at the crook of her neck and inhale.

So fucking sweet!

“Simon,” Layla sighs, and her hands go to my hair like they did in Vegas.

I stick my tongue out and lick the side of her neck. Layla whimpers, and the sound is like music to my ears. I wrap my arm around her waist and pull her flush to my body. Fuck she feels so good in my arms.

“I’m going to let you go enjoy your friends instead of fucking you on my desk. But please believe Ms. Layla, I’m not done with you.” I slowly back up, giving her space to move.

“But what about ‘what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas?’ I thought we agreed,” Layla says. She searches my face with inquisitive brown eyes, but I’m not about to give her an easy way out.

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I know I agreed to our wham bam, thank you, ma'am, in Vegas, but fuck all that. I change my mind. I want Layla in my life. I want to get to know her and spend time with her outside of the bedroom.

“I did agree. Now, I’m disagreeing. We’re in Dallas, not Vegas. We can start over new if you want to, but we will start over.”

“You’re kinda pushy, huh?” Layla smirks.

“Ehhh. I’m just firm in what I want.”

“And you want me?” Layla sounds surprised for some reason.

Instantly a frown covers my face because who the fuck wouldn’t want her? A fool, that’s who!

“If you’re not sure about anything else in this world, be sure that I fucking want you!”

I pull Layla to me again, kissing her like my life depended on it. Her sweet taste explodes on my tongue, and I can’t believe I haven’t seen her in six months. I tried my damndest to put the memory of our night together out of my mind.

However, no matter how hard I tried, Cookie or Layla kept popping into the forefront of my mind. Now that she’s back in my life, I take it as a sign that she should stay there.

“Umm. Wow. Okay, I—” Layla stammers over her words with a longing in her eyes

that I didn't notice before.

"There's no need to think too hard about this. It is what it is. Let me take you back to the girls."

I kiss the inside of her wrist and her lips. I grab her hand and open the door. Layla doesn't protest as she silently follows behind me. I think I shocked her into compliance.

We're still holding hands when I escort her to the booth, where the ladies are watching us intently. I kiss Layla on her forehead and nod at Layla's friends.

"Dinner and drinks on me tonight, ladies. Layla, don't leave without seeing me first."

"O-okay. Um, thanks for dinner," Layla says shyly, batting her long lashes.

I can't resist leaning down and kissing her lips softly. It takes everything in me not to deepen this kiss. But I know if I do that, I'll take her beautiful ass back to my office and finish what we started.

"You're so welcome, Cookie. Enjoy, ladies." I give a little salute to the table of ladies who are watching us like we're the latest blockbuster.

I smile and walk away, whistling with a lot more pep in my step than I had when the day started. I can't believe I ever thought I could go without strings attached to a woman like Layla. There will definitely be strings attached, so help me, God!

SIX

SEXY STRANGER

LAYLA

“Okay, spill it.” Tasha turns and points to me. I can tell by her no-nonsense tone that she will take nothing less than the entire truth.

“Ummm.” I look across the table at Dontae and Anita to help me out. But both of them are expectantly staring in my direction. They are sipping their drinks like Kermit, waiting on the latest tea.

“Girl, you might as well tell us what’s up. Not that we don’t know already. That man looked like he was ready to rip your clothes off and do you right here on the table,” Anita says, suggestively shimmying her shoulders.

“I mean! That was hot, Layla. That must’ve been some fire night in Vegas. Because I have never seen Simon be so enamored by a woman before,” Dontae adds, watching Simon as he mingles with the steady growing crowd.

“Okay, so listen. I’m not the kiss-and-tell type, but that man right there is going to be the death of me. Chiiiile,” I respond, fanning myself.

I’m not the type of woman to go into detail about my sexual trysts with anyone, not even Tasha. We joke and play all day, but I don’t believe in spilling the beans about how bad or how good anything is. Well, maybe how bad it is because who in the hell wants terrible sex?

“He looks like he is ready to gobble you up and swallow you whole,” Tasha says, wiggling her brows.

“I thought he was going to try for a minute there. The way he dragged me to his office.” I stare in the direction that Simon walks off, even though he’s no longer in sight.

I know this is the start of something new, and I've told myself for over a year that I'm ready. And with the intensity of the connection between Simon and me, I can wholeheartedly admit that I am ready to take the plunge with this man!

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“I’m glad you didn’t leave without saying goodbye,” Simon whispers the words in my ear, and I shiver.

This man’s deep voice has drawn out the heat in my lower parts since the first time he began to flirt with me six months ago in Vegas.

“You look like you need a drink.” The sultry voice comes from behind me, and I’m almost afraid to turn around.

I can smell his cologne, and it’s giving “Teakwood Bath and Body” and spice. He sounds good. He smells good. What’s the probability that he looks good too? I turn and glance over my shoulder, hoping that I lock eyes with a troll. I know that sounds crazy, but it will be much easier to turn down ugly. Hell, I’ve been dodging red flags and bad decisions all damn night. But with every sip I take, it’s getting harder to tell the difference between a good time and a hard time.

“I have a drink already,” I respond before I get a good look at the man.

Holy shit! This guy is fine as hell! I wasn’t expecting him to look that damned good. But I guess with him smelling and sounding like a wet dream, I should’ve known he would look like one too. He’s around six foot four with a muscular build, and even though he’s tall, he’s stocky. I love a stocky man! He’s got deep chocolate brown eyes, plump pink lips, and medium-length chestnut brown hair. His face is covered in stubble that gives him a devil-may-care look that is just right for a wild night in Vegas.

“Well then, how about I stand here and wait for you to finish that drink, and I’ll buy you another one.”

“That’s awfully gentlemanly of you. I didn’t think there were many of those left in the world. Especially in a place like sin city.” I bat my eyelashes and sip my drink.

He gives me a cocky smile and moves so close to me that I can feel the heat from his body. I have to keep myself from moving even closer and rubbing my body against his like a feline in heat. I have never wanted to act so out of character in my life. And we haven’t even had a full conversation. I don’t even know this man’s name. Although that’s probably a good thing, no names means no attachments.

“I can be a gentleman. Hell, I can be anything you want me to be.” He licks his lips suggestively and moves even closer.

Our bodies are touching now, with his arm pressed up against me. I have the urge to tell him to wrap it around me and squeeze. But I’ve had enough drinks to be somewhat bold, but not enough that I’m drunk and careless.

“Oh yeah? You can be anything I want?” I turn to fully face him.

I want to know if this man is serious. If he could be my “get back on the horse” Vegas tryst. It’s been five and half months since Vincent and I broke up, and my best friend insisted that I come to Vegas with her to celebrate a friend’s bachelorette party. Tasha made all the sense in the world when she pulled out all the pros on getting my feet wet in Vegas. Not actually my feet, but I got the gist.

“Anything.” His chocolate eyes rake over my body, and the look makes me feel like the sexiest woman on the planet.

“You’re not a gigolo, are you?” I whisper because if this fine ass man is working, I

don't want to stop his bag. But I damn sure won't be contributing to it.

"No, I am not a hooker," he chuckles, humor lighting up his face.

"Okay. M-me either. I just wanted to get that out of the way."

"Oo-kay, that's not usually how I start a conversation." He chuckles once more, and I relax a little.

"Come on, let's dance." I sit my drink down on the nearest surface and pull the gorgeous specimen out on the dance floor.

They are playin some sultry grind pop song. I've never heard it, but it seems to be a favorite because the floor is packed with bodies all of a sudden. My dance partner is pushed up against me, and we join in the hip swaying.

I'm not surprised when he's able to keep up with me. His hips grind into mine on beat, and before long, we're grooving with the rest of the partygoers.

"Are you hungry?" He asks out of the blue.

"Uh, no? Why? Are you?"

"I'm hungry for you. Would you let me taste you?"

I fidget and bite my bottom lip. I am not a one-night stand kinda girl. What if he's a serial killer? I take a deep breath and make a decision that I hope I don't regret. I send off a text to Tasha where I'm going and turn to the handsome stranger.

"Let's go. My hotel room is right upstairs."

The gorgeous smile that breaks out on his face instantly pushes all regret to the back of my mind. Sexiest stranger ever!

SEVEN

WORTH IT

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SIMON

“I’m glad you didn’t leave without saying goodbye,” I whisper in Layla’s ear, and she shivers.

There are so many things I want to do to this woman. But first things first. I need to get to know her better. Hell, I’m thirty-eight years old. One-night stands and random hook-ups with strangers should’ve been well in my past. And now that I’ve met Layla, hopefully, they will be.

There is something about the beautiful curvaceous petite woman that has held my attention from the very moment I laid eyes on her. Our initial connection was sexual, but I can feel it in my bones that it’s more than just lust between us.

“I told you I wouldn’t leave. Besides, you sorta demanded that I stay,” she says as she turns and looks at me.

Layla’s gaze sweeps over me from head to toe, and she smiles seductively. Her lustful thoughts are written all over her gorgeous face, and the look alone is almost enough to deter me from my original plan of not taking her to my office and fucking her silly. But I shake my head and get back on track.

“You gotta stop lookin’ at me like that, sugar. Or you’re gonna find yourself in a world of hurt.”

“Hmmm. My bad. The last thing I wanna do is be... hurt.” Layla’s eyes flicker, and I can see the sincerity in them.

I know she's trying to be light and flirtatious, but the worry shows on her face, and it gives me the feeling that she's been hurt before. And the last thing I want to do is hurt such a beautiful woman. I don't know much about Layla especially who might have mistreated her, but I want to get to know her.

"I want to take you out on a date. Are you busy on Saturday afternoon? That is if you don't have to work or anything," I say, stepping into Layla's personal space.

I can't help myself. I have an urge to be close to her when we're in the same room. It was an exercise in my willpower to stay busy, so I wouldn't look like a fucking stalker staring at her from across the bar.

"No, I'm not working or anything. But, you wanna go on a date?" Layla's eyes search mine for a second before the confusion that was covering her face turns into delight.

"Really?"

"Of course. I would ask about Saturday night, but I have to run the bar. I don't want to leave my staff short-handed," I explain.

"No, I totally understand. I wouldn't want you to leave them short-handed either."

"Great, so it's settled. I'll pick you up on Saturday around eleven. I don't have to be here until around eight."

"Then, I guess it's a date!" Layla brightly beams.

"Let me walk you to your car, and we can exchange info."

"Okay."

"Freddie! I'll be right back!" I holler over the lingering crowd and the semi-loud

music.

“Alrighty, boss!” Freddie throws up his hand and continues to flirt with a woman.

I chuckle and grab Layla’s hand leading her out of Taters and into the parking lot. I have a day to plan an afternoon date for a woman I know nothing about. I’m excited, but for the first time in forever, I’m nervous as hell. I hope I don’t fuck this up!

I had no earthly idea what to do for my afternoon date, but Google is everyone’s friend. The only problem was there were a million and one “afternoon date ideas.” My brain was about to explode from all of the shit that I had to scroll through. There were balloon rides, carnivals, rock climbing, hell, there were even skydiving excursions.

I didn’t want to do too much in the few hours I had, so I kept it simple, and I hope like heck that Layla enjoys herself.

I pull up to Layla’s townhome, kill the engine to my Ford F-150, and hop out. The neighborhood is nice, and she doesn’t live far from me. It only took me fifteen minutes to get here, and in Dallas traffic, that’s a win.

I ring the doorbell, and after a few beats, the door swings open. Layla is standing there looking like a fresh-faced teeny-bopper, and I smile.

“I didn’t know what to wear, but it looks like I was right on the money,” Layla chuckles.

I notice how she’s dressed and look down at myself, and I start to laugh. We are both wearing light blue jeans, white t-shirts, and chucks.

However, Layla's chucks are pink, and mine are the classic black, but it goes to show how much we have in common without even realizing it.

"Wow, I didn't know we were going to coo-ordinate," I say the classic line from the movie Boomerang, and Layla bursts out laughing.

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“You are so crazy. Did you need to use the restroom or anything?” Layla asks, pulling the door open so I can come in.

“No, I’m good.” I walk into the spacious home and close the door behind me.

Before Layla can walk off, I grab her hand and swing her around. She gasps but wraps her arms around me. I tighten my arms around her and kiss her on her neck.

“Now, that’s more like it.” I step away from her and clear my throat.

I am a grown-ass man. I should not be popping a boner from one little hug. For fucks sake!

“I just need to grab my purse and my cell, and I’ll be ready. You sure you don’t want anything to drink?” Layla asks as she gathers her things.

I can tell she has the sweet southern woman thing down. My mama would be proud.

“Naw, sweetie. Thanks, though.”

“Okay. So, what are we doing today?” Layla excitedly asks as she leads the way back to her front door.

“You’ll see.”

After she sets her alarm and locks the door, I lead her to my truck and open her door. She slides in with a sweet thank you, and once again, I know that I made the right

decision when I asked her out. We might be doing this dating thing backwards, but I can feel it in my gut that Layla is worth it.

EIGHT

HOPELESS ROMANTIC

LAYLA

We pull up to the music festival at Clyde Warren Park, and I already know it's going to be the perfect date.

We walk hand in hand to a spot not too far from the stage, and Simon places the blanket down that he carried from his truck. I wondered what the duffle bag was for, but I smiled when he pulled out a small charcuterie board wrapped in plastic and two chilled cokes. He thought of everything.

"There are food trucks around if you want something besides this. Oh! I almost forgot." Simon pulls out a small umbrella and sits it beside the blanket. "In case the sun gets too hot."

"You really thought of everything. I'm impressed." I sit down on the blanket and pat the spot beside me.

Simon, the cheeky devil he is, sits behind me and pulls me between his legs. I lean back against his chest, and the comfort level with us is off the charts. He has seen all of my lady bits, no point in playing the coy card.

"So, Layla Russell. What do you do for a living?" Simon asks, then reaches for a piece of cheese and pops it in my mouth.

I chew the food before answering, “Well, Mr. Tate, I’m a data analyst at Care Center Inc. over on Alpha Street in Dallas.”

“Oh yeah, I know where that is. How long have you been there?”

“Seven years. It pays the bills, but it’s not my passion or anything,” I honestly answer.

Crunching numbers and running reports isn’t something I could ever see myself “loving.” Still, the medical insurance is good, and my salary is top-notch. I guess that’s why I haven’t actually thought about leaving before.

“You know, I always wanted to own a bar. My bar specifically. My dad owned it before me, and it was a place where we grew to learn more about each other. We worked closely together, and his passion became mine. But I would never want to do something just because it pays the bills. You know what I’m sayin’?”

“Yeah, I hear you. But some of us are worker bees. We don’t have the opportunity to live out our dreams,” I respond, looking over my shoulder to see Simon’s handsome face.

“Sometimes, you have to make your own opportunities, Cookie.” Simon leans down and softly kisses my lips.

“I guess fear can get in the way.” I shrug, looking away.

I can’t believe I just admitted that, but I’m finding Simon is easy to talk to. And although I can feel how strongly he feels about being passionate about your work, I can sense he’s not being judgmental.

“Fear can definitely get in the way of a lot of things, and that’s why we can’t let it

rule over us. That's why I'm so glad you agreed to come out with me today. Our meeting was unconventional, but I really want to get to know you better, Layla."

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I damn near melt in a puddle of goo right on the spot at Simon's sweet words. I promised Tasha and myself that I would be open to love again. Before my ex shattered my heart with his bullshit, I was a hopeless romantic. But now, I'm just hopeless. Well, I was. I think Simon just made the romance flower blossom again.

"I really want to get to know you too."

We kiss once more before continuing to eat and enjoy the music. I haven't been this relaxed in I don't know how long.

I've been on a few dates since my wild night in Vegas, but I could never get that feeling back that I had with Simon. It was an instant attraction to him that I couldn't replicate with anyone else, no matter how hard I tried. I didn't even know his name, for goodness sakes, but it was like we'd known each other for years when we came together.

Simon is right. I can't let fear rule my life.

After a few bands have played, and the sun was high in the sky, we decided to go to where the food trucks were parked. We devoured that charcuterie board, and I'm a woman who needs sustenance, so our trek was inevitable.

"They have the deep-fried lasagna roll like at the fair!" I know my eyes are round and gleeful.

I love deep-fried everything! It's one of the only reasons I go to the fair anymore.

“I never took you for a greasy food type of chick.”

“Whaaat? I’m a country girl born and raised in Texas. I’m offended that you would say such a thing. Hell, I’m surprised that charcuterie wasn’t deep-fried,” I say with a straight face.

Simon busts out laughing and throws his arm around my shoulders. He leads the way to the Baked, Fried, and laid to the Sidefood truck and orders us the special treats I can’t wait to sink my teeth into.

We laugh, eat, and talk until the sun is low in the sky. It was the best first date I’ve ever had, and I didn’t want it to end. I promised myself I would be open, but I can feel the hopeless romantic bubbling up inside of me, and I don’t know if I want to stop it.

When Simon escorts me to my door, I get butterflies in my stomach for some unknown reason. Simon has been very affectionate all day long, shoot, since I’ve met him. We can’t keep our hands off each other, so it’s not like we will kiss for the first time. But there’s something about how he kisses and touches me that has me full of nervous excitement.

“I had an absolute ball today, Simon. Thank you so much,” I sigh, leaning against my door.

Simon cages me in, placing his hands on both sides of my shoulders. His dark brown eyes twinkle in the dusk of the day, and he smiles, showing straight white teeth. Simon is the type of guy who wears his emotions proudly. He hasn’t thrown me any smirks or sly gestures. He always gives me a full-blown smile. I appreciate that about him.

“Layla, it was an absolute pleasure. And as much as I don’t want to leave you right

now, I need to get to the bar before Freddie burns the place down.”

“Freddie is your bartender, right?” I ask, confused. “How would he burn anything?”

“If you knew Freddie, you wouldn’t have to ask.” Simon shakes his head with a chuckle, running his fingers through his glossy brown hair.

“Okay, well, we definitely don’t want your place to burn down.” I raise up on tiptoes and kiss his lips.

Simon moans and deepens the kiss. Before I know it, we are fully making out on the front porch of my townhome. I don’t know my neighbors, but we are about to give them a show, and I don’t even care.

What is this man doing to me?

NINE

ADMIRER PROBLEM

SIMON

It’s been two months since our first date, and Layla and I have been going strong. We see each other almost every day, and she practically lives at my house on the weekends. I never thought I’d want a woman in my space, and I know it may be cliché, but there’s no other person in this world that I want in my space more than Layla. If she wouldn’t think I was a crazy person, I’d try to move her ass in right now. But I know that even though Layla is a hopeless romantic, she would definitely run for the hills if I even suggested she move in with me.

“Heeey, Freddie!” Layla sings, coming into the bar.

“Welcome to Taters, Laylay.” Freddie winks.

I scowl at the two of them flirting, “I told you about flirting with my woman, Freddie. Don’t make me fire you.”

Freddie raises his hands up with a sly smile on his face, “I was just welcoming our most valued customer.”

“Whatever, slick. You just keep those winks to yourself, and we won’t have any problems.”

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“Lighten up, babe. You know Freddie flirts with everybody,” Layla giggles. She kisses my cheek and smiles.

“Hey now! Why I gotta be a flirt? You should see your old man in act—”

I throw a glare at Freddie before he can finish his sentence. He starts to whistle and walks off to do his job.

“What did he mean? I should see...”

I kiss Layla on her lips before she can finish her question. The last thing I want to do is go down the slippery slope of my whoreish past. Hell, there are still barflies that come in here wanting a repeat of what I gave them. Of course, I always explain I’m off the market, and not once have I even wanted to stray. But some of these women are ruthless. I think they want me even more now that I’m in a relationship than when I was single. The shit is bananas.

“Why don’t you take your sexy ass to the booth, and I’ll get you a drink. Zane and Dontae should be here any minute now.” I kiss her once more and tap her on the ass.

Layla squints her eyes at me but shakes her head and walks off.

I know my lady has some issues with trusting men since her last slimeball ex-boyfriend cheated on her. We agreed we were too old to be playing games and telling lies. I don’t want that kind of life anyway. I didn’t even live like that when I was single. I might’ve been a horny fucker, but I’ve never been a liar or a cheater.

A few minutes later, I see one of my most aggressive pursuers. The issue with Erin is I have never slept with her. I've seen her type of crazy before, and I could tell she was insane at first glance. I stayed ten feet away from that mess on legs, and I will continue to do so. Especially after I figured out she was following me.

"Hi, Si. I didn't know you were working tonight." Erin sits on the barstool directly in front of me and bats her eyelashes, and touches my hand as I wipe down the bar.

"Uh-huh. What can I get you?" I can't keep the snark out of my voice if I tried, which I didn't.

The worse I treat her, the more of a challenge she thinks I am, and she chases me harder. So, I decided to give her a monotone and no emotion. But every now and then, I can't help the sarcasm that slips out. It's just a part of my personality when dealing with people like her.

"I don't know, what do you suggest? You know I'll take whatever you give me," Erin suggestively giggles, flipping her hair over her shoulder.

As usual, Erin is wearing a tight, low-cut dress that leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination. Her blonde hair is "Texas big," and her make-up is done to perfection. She looks like the stereotypical twenty-something barfly. She's a pretty girl, and I never see her leaving with a bunch of different guys, not that that matters. But I just can't understand why she wastes her time trying to chat me up when I told her I wasn't interested from the start.

She's barely twenty-two, still in college, and a chatterbox. Three things I have zero interest in whatsoever. I might be a former manwhore, but I was never a cradle robber. Twenty-two is entirely too young for my thirty-eight-year-old ass.

"You want the usual or..." I look at Erin expectantly, wanting this interaction to end.

I know she's going to keep flirting and asking when we can go out on a date. I'm not sure why she even chose me to be infatuated with. I'm not even nice to her.

"Umm, like I said... I'll take whatever you want to give me." Erin licks her lips and again places her hand on mine.

I keep my face blank and move my hand away. If I show her any emotion, her crazy eyes will go wild, and she'll start talking about our future again. The first time she did that, the shit totally freaked me out.

I pop the top on a corona, place a lime inside and slide it her way. I don't have the patience to play mixologist with Erin today.

"Thanks. You know I'm free whenever you get off work. We can go anywhere you wanna go and do anything you wanna do."

"I'm busy with my girlfriend."

"Girlfriend? Since when do you have a girlfriend?"

Before Erin can continue with her twenty thousand questions that are none of her business, my best friend, Zane, and his fiancé comes in. I'm glad to see my buddy finally get his happy ending. And since it was at his bachelor party that I met Layla, I can't be salty about Zane's new love life.

"Hey, Si! What's up, man?"

"What's up, Z? Good to see you, man. Hey, Tae!" I come from around the bar and give my best friend a dap and his fiancé, Tae, a hug.

"Hey, Si." Tae smiles, returning my hug.

As much as the women come here to get together, I hardly ever see Zane. If it weren't for Cookie and Tae, we wouldn't be getting together now.

"Cookie is waiting at the usual booth," I say to Tae, and she gives me a smile and a nod before walking off.

"It's busy in here tonight, man. And I see you have an admirer." Zane tilts his head at Erin, and I shake mine.

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Erin is staring in our direction, and she's not even trying to hide the fact that she's eavesdropping. I just don't understand why she's so dead set on us being together. Shit is weird.

"I only care about one admirer," I say as my woman walks up and gives Zane a side hug, but she gives me a full on make-out session kiss.

"Damn, baby! Not that I'm complaining, but what was that for?" I question, looking at Layla with lustful eyes.

"Gotta mark my territory." Layla winks at me, slaps my ass, and walks back to the booth.

Zane and I both bust out laughing at her, and when I look back at Erin, she's frowning with her arms crossed over her chest, watching Layla.

My little admirer might be a problem.

TEN

TAKE ME HOME

LAYLA

I wouldn't normally put on such a public display of affection, especially since I don't want to impede on Simon's ability to make money. I see how he maneuvers around Taters and Beer. He's charismatic, charming, and an all-around flirt. And even

though it's only been two months, I trust Simon. And although he could win the gold if flirting was an Olympic sport, he wouldn't betray me.

Simon is one of the most honest people I have ever met in my life. We both decided that we would be open with one another, and if we ever felt that we were losing interest, we would go our separate ways. I know that can be easier said than done, but I have to learn to trust again. I can't hold Simon accountable for my ex's mistakes.

However, with all that being said, I might trust Simon, but I don't trust these women. They don't care if he has a girlfriend, and they make it known.

Like little Ms. Sunshine sitting at the bar. I'm surprised she's even old enough to drink. But I see she's old enough to keep touching what doesn't belong to her. I can tell when Simon is uncomfortable because he's such an easygoing person, so I noticed when his relaxed demeanor turned tense, and his face became blank.

I don't normally feel the need to save Simon from the advances of his customers, but the way the chic was watching him made me wonder if he had a stalker. Simon and I have talked about everything under the sun, and although we didn't disclose numbers, I know he slept with a lot of women. And more than a few were what he calls barflies.

I'm not judging Simon's past or his sexual exploits, but I can't say I love the fact that a few of these women know what my man looks like naked. And damn, is it a sight to behold.

After I kissed the hell out of Si and slapped him on his ass for good measure, I sauntered my ass back to our regular booth and slid in. Tae is staring at me with a smirk on her beautiful face.

"What?" I ask, trying not to laugh. I know Tae is about to say something crazy.

I'm pretty sure Anita has rubbed off on her because they both say whatever comes to their minds without a second thought.

"You know what... I see you staking your claim on that prime rib." Tae cracks up laughing, and I join in.

"You see these thirsty broads in here. I had to make my presence known." I shrug, still giggling.

"Hey, I get it. I work with this one heffah who always wants to question everything about me, including why my name is Dontae. She calls herself having a thing for Z. You should've seen her face when I showed up with this big ass rock on my hand," Tae says, flashing her gorgeous ring, and we giggle again.

"I bet she was pissed." I lean forward to better hear the story when Tae nods her head.

"Girl, yes! I thought her ass was actually going to turn green she was so jealous. But the best part is anytime she says anything to me, Zane checks her ass. I'm glad I work in HR, or I'm sure she would've pulled a Karen somehow, playing the victim and crying about something."

I shake my head at the craziness of people. If somebody doesn't want you, then hating on the woman in his life isn't going to make him want you, either.

"Well, at least I'm not alone in my pettiness. I usually don't say anything, but it's something about how Ms. Thing is watching Simon. I don't like it."

"Pfft, you should've seen the way she was watching you," Tae says.

"What—" Before I can ask what Tae means, I feel a kiss on my cheek.

The smell of his spicy cologne and the feel of his plump lips against my skin gives me butterflies in my belly.

“What are you two over here giggling about?” Zane asks, sliding into the booth beside Tae.

“Oh, just telling Layla about Helen.” Tae rolls her eyes.

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“We’re here for a good time, Junior. The last person I wanna talk about is that busybody.” Zane throws his arm around Tae and nuzzles her neck.

The two of them are so freaking cute that I would be jealous if I didn’t have my own gorgeous man beside me.

I steal a glimpse of Simon, who is looking exceptionally delicious tonight. His tight black t-shirt with the Taters and Beer logo might look plain on an ordinary man, but on Simon, it looks like he had it tailor-made. The shirt shows off his thick biceps and tapers down to plaster against his six-pack abs. And don’t get me started on those fitted jeans he has on. I never would’ve guessed I liked a man with cake, but um, um, um. Whew, chiiild all that ass in those jeans.

“What time is the band supposed to start?” Tae asks, changing the subject of her jealous coworker.

“They’ll be starting in fifteen. I know you guys will love them.”

We chat and laugh, and before long, the band is playing, and the place is more packed than ever. The four of us make our way to the dance floor, and we all laugh, dance, and enjoy the good music.

Before long, Simon is grinding into me, and I can’t help but get hot. The man does something to me without hardly trying.

“If you keep dancing like that, I’m gonna think you wanna take me home.” I grind my ass into Simon’s crotch, and I can feel him growing in those jeans.

“Promise. Cause I really need to take you home tonight.”

“Baby, just say the word. I’ll let you take me anywhere.”

ELEVEN

ROUND TWO

SIMON

“You look so fucking beautiful. I’ve been waiting to get you alone the entire night,” I say before kissing down Layla’s neck.

I feel the sigh when she exhales. Being with Layla is one of the most relaxing moments in my day. Although it’s only been a few months, Cookie has become my peace. We just get each other. I knew from the moment I saw her she would be mine.

“That’s funny because I’ve been waiting all night for you to get me alone.” Layla turns in my arms and gives me a kiss.

Layla sucks my bottom lip into her mouth and nips it tenderly. I loudly moan, grab Layla by her waist and push her up against the wall.

“Mmm, Cookie wants it rough tonight, huh?” I growl, nipping her lip in return.

It’s Layla’s turn to moan. It’s a sound that I will never grow tired of hearing. I don’t know when I got addicted to her pleasure, but I won’t be seeking any rehab for it.

I grab both of her hands and place them above her head. I easily pin her to the wall with my body as I devour her lips. I love kissing this woman!

Layla wiggles and squirms until I feel she's right where I want her to be. She gasps when I grind my cock into her. I dip my knees, so my dick lines up with her core, and I push upwards.

"Fuuuuck! Stop teasing me," Layla whines, grinding her hips as much as I will allow her.

"You want me to stop, Cookie? I will if you ask nicely." I stop moving, looking deeply into Layla's blazing brown eyes.

"Don't play with me, Simon. You know I don't want you to stop..."

"Good!" I let go of her hands and wrap her legs around my waist.

I carry her up the stairs and into my bedroom. I drop her on my bed, and Layla bounces slightly. I crawl on top of her, kissing and feeling every inch of her that I can. The heat coming from her body has me tearing our clothes off in a frenzy.

Once I get us completely naked, I pull a condom from the nightstand and slip it on. I push into heaven with a loud groan. Every time I sink into Layla, it feels like the first time.

Layla's tight walls hug my dick just right. I start to slowly move, giving her inch by inch so she can feel every hard ridge and vein in my cock.

"Ummm. You feel so damn good!" Layla begins to move underneath me.

Our rhythm starts out as a slow grind, but when I start to feel Layla's wetness through the latex, I know she's good and ready to take this pounding.

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I begin to move my hips faster and faster until I'm drilling her into the bed just the way she likes it. Layla is clawing my back and screaming the walls down, and I love every second of it.

"Take this dick, Cookie. Don't you fucking run from me." I scoot up as Layla scoots back, almost dislodging me from her body.

"Wait! Baby... hold on!" Layla keeps trying to get away, but I pin her down.

"Nah. You talked that shit. Now you better throw that pussy on me like I like," I growl, pulling us into a seated position.

Layla is on top of me, but I don't relinquish control. I pull her up and down my dick until she stops trying to run. When she begins to bounce and groan, I know I'm hitting her spot. Layla wraps her arms around my neck and really starts to move.

Before long, I take over again and begin to thrust my hips upward. I hold her still, so she has to take all I'm giving, and she does. Her legs begin to shake, and her breathing becomes shallow.

"Yeah, baby. Let that shit out," I moan in her ear.

As soon as the words are out of my mouth, Layla screams her release. I continue to pump my hips through her climax. I follow her over the cliff, filling the condom with streams and streams of cum.

"Fuck! Every. Single. Damned. Time." I pull out of her slowly and collapse to the

side, throwing my arm around Layla.

“I swear you are trying to murder this cookie,” Layla sighs and wraps her leg over mine.

I chuckle, “I was only giving you what you requested. You know I aim to please.”

We cuddle for a few minutes before I get up to remove the condom. I wash my hands and grab a towel to clean Layla up.

“Here, baby. Turn over.”

Layla groans but stays on her stomach, breathing heavily with her eyes still tightly closed.

“You are so dramatic. We only went one round. I know you’re not that damned tired.” I swat her ass, and she moans before turning over and opening her legs.

“You throw that big dick around and then think I’m supposed to hop up for another round? Boy, no! I am not twenty. I need recovery time.”

“My poor baby, did I put it on you like I promised?”

“Mmcht.” Layla sucks her teeth, but she keeps her legs open, so I can clean her up.

I slowly rub the towel between Layla’s legs until the cleaning turns into something else completely. Her hips start to thrust, and I replace the towel with my tongue. Layla’s little sighs become gasps, and I begin to French kiss her pussy like I do her mouth.

“Okay, you’ve convinced me to go another round.” Layla runs her nails through my

hair, scratching my scalp just the way I like it.

I kiss my way up her belly and hover my mouth over hers. Layla sticks her tongue out to taste my lips. I smile when she hums her approval. We both know how sweet she is. I deepen the kiss, and we go for round two.

TWELVE

DESSERT

LAYLA

These past few months have been the most romantic I've ever experienced. I never would've guessed a Simon would be such a sweetheart. Yeah, he puts on this big flirt façade, but he really is the sweetest guy I've ever dated.

"Baby, do you want red or white wine with dinner?" Simon asks over his shoulder.

"I don't know? What do you suggest? You're the professional here. I'm just along for the ride." I flirt, wiggling my eyebrows.

Simon smiles and then bites his lip. He saunters toward me and leans down, and softly kisses me. If there's one thing about Simon, he doesn't give a good god damn where we are. If he wants to show affection, then he will. He doesn't give a shit if we are alone or in a room full of people. Simon will kiss me like he's ready to strip my clothes off. At first, I was a little uncomfortable with his displays because nobody I dated in the past showed me that kind of attention. But now, I can't get enough of it. His kisses are like a drug I need to survive.

"If you say ride like that again, I'm going to make you sit on it in my pickup in the parking lot." He nips my lips again, and I smirk.

I hope he doesn't think that's a threat. Cause it sounds like a good time to me.

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“Lala? Is that you?”

That voice calling me that nickname is something I didn’t think I’d ever hear again. I’m not sure why because even though we broke up, I knew Vincent still lived in Dallas.

I turn to the side and see my ex is entirely too close for my liking. I instinctively take a step toward Simon. And like the protector he is, he wraps his arms around me.

Vincent looks the same. His dark blond hair is long on the top and short on the sides, showing off his angular clean-shaven face. The blue of his eyes are bright, and his tanned skin is highlighted by the green Polo he’s wearing. Vincent is cute, but I know his attractiveness decreases with each word that flies out of his mouth.

“Hey, Vince.” My voice is as bland as his mama’s potato salad, and I know he noticed my lack of emotional response.

I know to keep myself in check when dealing with my ex because he loves to bring out my emotions. He’s the definition of a gaslighter. I will never give him the satisfaction of garnering any reaction out of me ever again. Good or bad, I will be a straight robot on his ass.

“Are you going to introduce me to your friend?”

I frown before I can stop myself, but when Simon tightens his hold and pulls me into his side, I know he’s caught on to who this is and why I’m uncomfortable.

“No,” I reply.

Simon and I have talked extensively about our past traumas. I was a people pleaser because I was afraid of being a failure. I stayed at jobs, in relationships, and generally took bullshit from people because I didn’t want to be viewed as the “bad guy.”

It wasn’t the first time I’d been told this, but it was the first time I decided to do something about it. Being reckless in Vegas when I met Simon wasn’t just about me getting my groove back. It was me rebelling against being a people pleaser. I was trying to prove to myself that I didn’t have to live up to societal norms. It wasn’t the smartest thing I’ve ever done, but I understand myself enough now to admit why I did it. And even though it turned out great, in this day and age, I could’ve ended up trafficked or dead. I know better, so I’ll do better.

“What do you mean, no?” Vincent chuckles, looking between Simon and me as if I told a joke.

I know he can’t believe I told him no. I probably never said the word to him in the entirety of our relationship.

“I mean, you look kinda slow, but I’m pretty sure you understand what no means.” Simon steps slightly in front of me.

I’ve seen Simon get physical when kicking some rowdy drunks out of his bar and once when he had to break up a fight. Simon is not a small man at six-four and a good two-twenty of ripped muscle. He can definitely hold his own. Vincent is tall, but where Simon is stocky, Vincent is lanky and slim. And although Vincent can talk shit with the best of them, I have never seen him throw a punch in his life.

If I were to guess, his mother probably fought most of his battles for him. She definitely did enough fighting on his behalf in our relationship.

“Who the fuck are you?” Vincent asks.

“I’m her man. Who the fuck else would I be? You are slow.” Simon shakes his head with mock sadness.

He’s such a smart-ass. I don’t laugh because I’m sure it would make this situation worse, but I cough to cover my chuckle.

“Her man? Lala, can we talk? I’ve tried texting and calling, but I guess you didn’t get my messages.”

“I didn’t get either because I blocked your number.”

I think Simon is right. Vincent does act a little touched.

“Why would you do that? I know I made some mistakes, but come on now. It’s been long enough.”

“Man, get the fuck outta here. I know damned well you ain’t that bold to ask my woman for a second chance while I’m standing here. I will bust you in your motherfucking mouth.” Simon steps forward, but I tug his arm, so he doesn’t pummel this idiot in the middle of Kroger.

Vincent’s face is red, and he backs up, “Lala? Are you gonna let this guy talk to me like that?”

What a pussy! He wants me to fight his battles even though we’re not together.

“Boy, what? I haven’t seen or talked to you in over a year... thank God. But what makes you think I owe you anything? This is the weirdest, most unnecessary conversation I have ever had in my life. Simon, I want white wine. Can we go,

please?” I turn around, ignoring my blubbering ex, and look at my boyfriend expectantly.

“Yes, ma’am.” Simon salutes and grabs a bottle of white wine. “You know I love it when you’re sassy. That shit turns me on.”

“Everything turns you on, silly.” I kiss Simon’s lips. “Thank you for being you.”

“I can only be me, Cookie. So does that thank you mean after I cook dinner, you will be dessert?”

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All I can do is giggle at my horny boyfriend. But we both know I'm down to be dessert.

THIRTEEN

A LONG NIGHT

SIMON

The bar has been busy all night, not that I'm complaining. Busy equates to more money, and the point of being an entrepreneur is making money for yourself. The band we have performing has its own following, and they brought a huge crowd. I will definitely book them in the future.

The night has been great, except my sweetheart had to work late. Layla has been stressed at her job lately, and she's decided that leaving would be the best thing. The problem is, like most people, she wants another job before she leaves, but she doesn't know what she wants to do. I just want her to be happy no matter what she decides to do.

When I hear somebody calling my name over the cheers of the crowd and band, I turn around. Erin is smiling from ear to ear as she wildly waves. It's been a few weeks since I've seen Erin in here. I thought she finally gave up, but with the way she's looking now, I doubt it.

"Hey, Erin. What can I get, cha?" I ask as I push the tap to finish pouring two beers and hand them to another customer.

“How about a Heineken and an order of loaded French fries.”

I nod, give her the drink, and put her order of fries in for the kitchen. I stay busy, but every once in a while, I can feel someone staring at me. Whenever I look, it's Erin there smiling. I ignore her until her fries come out, and I give them to her. I head to the opposite end of the bar to switch places with Freddie.

I eventually lose track of Erin's watchful gaze, and not long after, I see that she's nowhere to be found. I don't think about her again until Freddie comes over once it slows down at the bar.

“Where did stalker Barbie go? She didn't pay her check.”

“What? Shit. Oh well, at least it will give me a reason to ban her. Her staring is starting to creep me out a little.”

“A little? Man, listen, make sure you keep an eye on your pet rabbit because she looks like the type that will boil him in a pot.”

“Man, what the hell are you talking about?” I look at Freddie like he's crazy. Because he is!

“Dude! You've never seen that movie, Fatal Attraction? You need to see that shit. I'm pretty sure you're getting an up close and personal account of it, though. Cause that chick's elevator don't go all the way to the top floor.”

“I forgot about that damned movie.” I shake my head because Freddie is right. Erin's eyes were looking particularly crazed today. I don't normally call people crazy, but I have a reason when it comes to Erin.

When she first started coming around, I thought she was harmless. I would flirt

because I flirt with everybody. It's a part of my charm. However, Erin took it as a hint that I wanted more. She started popping up wherever I was. I would see her everywhere; the gym, gas station, and grocery store. I started to get suspicious, so I had one of the bartenders check her id so I could find out her address. She lived on the other side of town, nowhere near me or the bar, for that matter.

When I caught her outside of my house, I confronted her. She claimed to be at her friend's house, after that I only saw her when she came into the bar. But that doesn't mean she wasn't still following me, I just didn't catch her again. I thought she'd found someone else to be infatuated with, even though she would still come to the bar and make crazy comments, like asking when we would go on a date or get married. I just assumed she was socially awkward. After all, I never saw her with anybody, not even friends.

"Hey, grab Sal if you need some help. I'm going to call Layla," I holler at Freddie.

"Tell Laylay I said heeey!" Freddie calls after me. I throw a scowl over my shoulder and keep walking toward my office.

I'm already dialing Layla when I open my office door. However, I don't know if she picks up the call or not because I damned near drop the phone when I see Erin lying across my desk naked as the day she was born.

"What the hell are you doing in here? Where are your clothes!" I am yelling, and I never yell.

I freeze my steps before I can get completely inside of my office. Although I instinctively want to find a blanket and throw it over her, I don't want to get any closer to Erin.

"Who cares where my clothes are. You have a sexy ass naked woman waiting for

you.”

Erin sits up and spreads her legs to show off her vagina. I turn my head and start backing up. I want no parts of this foolishness. This chick has gone too far. I’m gonna have to get a restraining order on her ass.

“I care! I need you to get dressed and get out of my bar. Now!” I raise my voice even louder.

“I’ll run out of here screaming that you raped me. Unless you...”

“What the fuck! You think you can blackmail me into fucking you?” I run my fingers through my hair. “This bitch really is Glen Close reincarnated, and Glen Close ain’t even dead,” I mumble.

“I’ll kill you! You can’t treat me like this! I will kill you!” Erin screams, but she doesn’t get off the desk.

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“Babe? Baby? Simon! What the hell is going on over there? Is someone trying to kill you?” I hear Layla’s voice, and I forgot I was still holding my phone.

I raise the phone to my ear and continue to back up. There’s no way I’m getting anywhere near that lunatic. Erin can claim whatever she wants to. I have cameras all over this place, including in my office. I’m a small business that deals in cash, and we can be the target of thieves if we’re not careful. Having insurance, cameras, and even bouncers on busy nights keeps my business in the black and off the news.

“Where do you think you’re going? You can’t keep rejecting me, Simon!” Erin screeches, grabbing a pair of scissors and hopping off the desk.

Before she can make it to me, I slam the door in her face and hold the knob so she can’t get out.

“Cookie, I’m gonna need you to call the police. I need to hang up so I can use both my hands to hold the door.”

I let my phone clatter to the floor, so I can hold the door. Erin is beating on the door and screaming at the top of her lungs.

“Freddie! Sal! Sammy! Somebody! Fuck!” I yell out, hoping somebody will hear me over the loud music.

Finally, Sammy comes out of the kitchen, frowning. When he sees me holding the door, he rushes over.

“What the hell is going on?”

“Call the police!”

Sammy’s eyes go wide, and he nods before he hustles back inside the kitchen to call for help.

It took about ten minutes for the cops to show up because they already patrol the neighborhood because of all of the restaurants and bars in the area. And even though Erin stopped yelling, I didn’t let go of the door knob until the cops showed up.

Of course, it wasn’t as cut and dry as them arresting Erin when they got there because of her lies. She actually told them I locked her inside my office because she wouldn’t have sex with me. She had gotten redressed before they got there. With her tears and all-American looks, they believed her stories until I volunteered to show them the surveillance video.

The police were placing Erin in handcuffs when Layla pulled into the parking lot. She jumped out of the SUV and rushed to me. Layla flung her arms around my neck and kissed me.

“Are you alright? What the hell is happening?”

“Why are you acting like she had a gun or something. She tried to attack him with her vagina. I think he’ll live.” Sal rolls her eyes and walks back into the bar.

“Wait! What? So, she wasn’t trying to kill you?” Layla asks, confused.

“It’s a long story. Let’s get a drink, and I’ll tell you all about it.”

FOURTEEN

COOKIES AND CREAM

LAYLA

The story that Simon told me about his stalker was crazy! I realized he had several admirers whenever I was at the bar, but my baby is charismatic and a flirt. However, I had no idea he had stalkers. We always joked about it, but an actual crazy chick threatening to kill him was insane. Who in the hell gets buck-naked in a bar? Anybody could've walked in that office. Who does that?

When the slow music starts to play, I'm brought out of my thoughts, and I stand with the rest of the audience. I turn to face the cathedral doors, and I am in awe when Tae walks through with her father. She makes a beautiful bride, but I can't help but glance back at the man standing as a groomsman for his best friend. Simon looks like a whole meal in his light grey suit.

I have seen Simon in everything from jeans to shorts, but when he wears a suit... whew, baybay! I want to drool at the vision he makes. I hope I don't get struck down from the impure thoughts running through my mind in this church. I had to cross myself and ask the good Lord for forgiveness.

When Tae makes it to Zane, we all face the front and have a seat. Simon is intently staring at me, and I can feel myself blush. Our eyes stay connected even while the couple exchange vows.

Simon and I continue to look at each other until it's time for Maddox, the best man and Zane's twin, to hand the groom the rings. The ceremony is short and sweet, and in a blink of an eye, Mr. and Mrs. Reid are jumping the broom. Everyone cheers while they make their way down the aisle. You can feel the genuine joy in the air for the two of them.

Once we make it to the reception venue, it's all party and fun. The bachelorette party didn't have shit on the wedding reception. I have worked up a thirst since we've danced to almost every song. I had to finally take a break and go to the bar for a drink while Simon and the guys are outside smoking a celebratory cigar.

"Oh, girl! I see you and Simon are cutting up tonight!" Tasha bumps my hip with hers.

I laugh at my crazy best friend because we have been burning up the dance floor tonight. It reminds me of when we were in Vegas.

"If there is one thing me and Simon can do, it's movetogether." I gyrate my hips in a circular motion and stick out my tongue.

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Tasha doubles over in laughter, “Laylay, you are crazy, girl.”

The DJ plays one of our college jams, and we make our way back to the dance floor. We are joined by a few of the bridesmaids and other wedding guests as we back that thang up and get low. The drinks are flowing, and everyone is having a ball.

Ten minutes later, we are still dancing when I feel a familiar body press against mine. I can feel the bulge pressing into me, and I know we won’t be here for much longer.

“Your ass looks glorious in this dress, Cookie. You up for a little cream?” Simon’s deep voice always turns me on, especially when he’s being freaky.

“We have to wait for Tae and Zane to leave.” I’m playing coy because if Simon pulled me off this dance floor, I would go willingly.

“They’re not leaving until tomorrow. That’s why we’re staying at the hotel. We’re going out with them after this and having brunch tomorrow before they leave.” Simon turns me around so I’m facing him, and gives me his version of a pout.

“Don’t give me that face,” I sigh, knowing I can’t keep playing hard to get much longer.

“Come on, Cookie. I’ll be quick. We’ll be back down here before anybody even notices we’re missing.” Simon completes his plea with a sensual kiss on my lips.

“Dammit. You’re never quick... thank God. Okay, let’s go while everyone is distracted.”

“That’s my girl! I’ll make sure to lick all your sweetness as a reward.”

“Nasty self. I love you.”

“I love you too, baby.”

Simon grabs my hand, and we sneak out of the reception. To go mix his cream with my cookie, and I can’t wait!

THE END.