



Daddy (Men of Club Triskelion #6)

Author: J.L. Quick

Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Jorge

I've always been the life of the party. At least, that's what I want people to think. But what no one knows is that underneath all the confidence and frivolous one-night stands, I'm looking for something real. Something deep. Someone who gets me.

Put up for bid in a bachelor auction, I'm in awe of the two men fighting over me. But it's the familiar voice calling over them that shocks me—Rory McLaughlin. Older, quiet, more experience and—let's face it—everything I've been too afraid to admit I want. But when his audacious bid rings through the room, I can't lie to myself anymore.

This might be just another meaningless fling or it could be the beginning of everything I've been hoping for: the Daddy—and the Evans—I've always wanted.

Rory

My life is a constant dance with danger—riddled with bullets, flirting with death at every turn. But when it comes to the men I choose, I'm careful. I've kept the men in my life buried in secrecy, shielding them from the chaos that surrounds me. But I'm tired of the hollow encounters and empty connections.

I've been watching Jorge from the shadows for years, unable to let him know how badly I've wanted him. Tonight, when I see him on that auction block, I know one thing for certain—I can't let anyone else have him. Not after all this time. The bidding war is fierce, but I'm not backing down. I need him. He will be mine.

Total Pages (Source): 20

CHAPTER ONE

JORGE

“And then he introduced me to his taxidermied chihuahuas. Yes, you heard me right, chihuahuas. Two of them.”

Taking another generous sip of rosé, I finish off the last of my glass. I reach for the near-empty second bottle as Layla’s laugh echoes across the terrace. We’ve been out here for hours, drinking as I tell her about the nightmare of a date I had last night. An evening that tows a fine line between an episode of *Dateline* and *Sex Sent Me to the ER*.

“I thought you would’ve learned your lesson by now.” She laughs. “Stay off that damn app.”

“Listen, sweetie. You met your gorgeous-as-fuck husband on”—I air quote—“that damn app. I’m not willing to give up on it yet. Eventually, one of these men has to be normal.”

Readjusting her legs on my lap, Layla stares back at me with a look that I know all too well. One that has gotten my ass in trouble more times than I can count. “Spit it out.” I give her a knowing look and let out a heavy sigh.

“So...” She pauses to take another sip of her wine. “I have something to ask you.”

I stare at her blankly, waiting for her to divulge what she wants, but she gazes back at

me with uncharacteristic hesitancy. I toss my hands up and shrug, urging her to continue.

“It’s a little weird,” she confesses, scrunching up her face adorably.

“Yes. I accept. I will let you and Tristan reverse Indecent Proposal me. I don’t even need the million dollars.”

Her cackle echoes through the air as she swats my arm. “Stop! You know damn well that’s not what I was going to ask.”

“He shared you once. It was worth a shot.” I smirk with a shrug.

“Shared me once,” she corrects. “And that was one time. Besides, I love you, sweetie, but we both know I’d be the third wheel in that little fantasy you’re having.”

“Fine.” I sigh, feigning utter disappointment. “What is it that you were going to ask?”

“We’re putting together a bachelor auction at the club. For charity. And I was hoping you would let me sign you up as one of the bachelors.”

I shove her legs from my lap and abruptly stand from the couch. Crossing my arms, I glare down her and huff, “You think my dating life is so pathetic that you need to parade me around like a piece of fresh meat in front of a room full of rich men?—”

“Oh my God, Jorge,” she interrupts, her face drenched in dread. “I didn’t mean it like that. I’m so sor—” Unable to hold my faux-serious demeanor, I choke on the chuckle I’m trying to hold down and bust out in hysterics. “You’re such a fucking asshole.”

“Maybe,” I struggle to speak between laughs. “But you should’ve seen your fucking face.”

“Still an asshole,” Layla brats, rolling her eyes and reaching for the bottle of rosé to refill her glass.

“Bitch, why are you even asking me? Rich kinky men? Of course, I’ll do it. Sign. Me. The. Fuck. Up.”

“I should’ve known you’d say that.” Layla shakes her head and takes a sip of wine.

“I mean, why not?” I shrug. “It’s not like I’m doing anything— or anyone —else. And I don’t mind showing off a little. I’ve got plenty to flaunt, after all.”

“Don’t get too cocky,” she teases as I obnoxiously flex my bicep.

“I can’t help it. It’s part of the charm.” I grin, and we both burst into laughter.

“You’re going to owe me one though... just in case I wind up with some guy who wants to lick peanut butter from between my toes or other weird shit.” I chuckle while also seriously hoping that isn’t what’s in my future. “A bottle of tequila. A good bottle of tequila. I’m going to need the good shit, Layla.”

“Got it. One bottle of bottom-shelf tequila and no men with a peanut butter and foot fetish.” She beams, setting her glass on the table with a soft thud. “Maybe you’ll actually meet a decent guy. Or at least one who introduces you to his dead pets before he sleeps with you.”

I can’t help but laugh—my dating life is a buffet of disasters sprinkled with orgasms. Yet, there’s a part of me that wonders if she’s right. Because whatever it is that I’m doing isn’t working, and we both know that I’m seeking something deeper—something real. Something that looks like what Layla has been lucky enough to find.

Rubbing my hands over her bare legs, which are draped over my lap again, I shake my head. The things I would do for this woman... And a chance at finding love. "I'm still going to need that tequila, though."

CHAPTER TWO

RORY

No one wants a battered and worn-out old man like me. It's what I tell myself every time Quinn brings up this damn auction. I know she has the best of intentions and wants me to be happy. But that's not always how life works. Not my life, anyway.

Standing in Quinn and Declan's living room, I stare mindlessly out the floor-to-ceiling windows, over the near-uninterrupted view of the beach behind their house. The late afternoon sun shines on the waves, tinting them orange as they crash against the shoreline.

I take a seat on the large, dark leather couch, and it creaks a little as I settle into it—every inch of my body sinking deep into the soft cushions. My hands dangle between my knees, and I rest my elbows on them. I hunch over and stare at the floor while I wait for her to return with the glass of Jameson she insists I need.

“You're not old,” she retorts with determination, returning from the kitchen. “You're a few measly months older than Declan. And I don't know if you've picked up on it, but I kind of can't get enough of him. Besides, I know for a fact that there are plenty of men who would pay big money for a silvering fox like you.” She winks and gestures to my hair—the gray starting to creep in at my temples.

I run a hand over my jaw, feeling the tiny strands of silver that have slowly taken over the once burnt-orange of my beard. Glancing up, I find my reflection in windows—and it's nearly unrecognizable. The face before me belongs to an old

man—too many years, too many stories... too many scars. I'm not the same man I was when I started working for this family . Quinn frowns like she can read my thoughts, her face softening as she looks at my face—over the subtle lines around my eyes and the scars I've earned.

“You're still quite attractive, Rory,” she whispers compassionately. “I've seen the way men—and women—look at you.”

I run my hand across my chest, feeling the old bullet scars hidden beneath my shirt. “That's because they don't actually see me,” I confide. The two healed wounds beneath my fingers are ones I think about most—because they barely missed my heart—but I have five more scattered across my body to match.

Her lips purse, and her eyes—tinged with guilt—well with tears. “You know...” Her voice cracks, and she takes a second to find her composure. “I'll never be able to thank you enough for what you did that day.” Her eyes drift around the room to Fiona reading to her little sister, Kira, and then to Declan roughhousing on the floor with Little Rory. Naming her son after me was already far too much of a thank you for doing my job. “All of this... It's because of you.”

Quinn's words hit harder than I expect. I swallow hard, trying to push away the lump in my throat as she wraps her arms around me. She squeezes me tightly when I return her embrace. “Hey! Hands off my wife,” Declan teasingly gruffs. I'm probably the only person who can put his hands on Quinn without getting the piss beat out of me. At least, I think...

Meeting Declan's gaze, I insist, “Trust me. I am the last man in her life you ever need to worry about.”

Chuckling softly, Quinn pulls back with her fingers lingering over the scars covering my heart.

“I know you really want me to do this,” I acknowledge, placing my hand on hers.
“But I’m not ready for that.”

I’m not ready for anyone to see me like this.

Living in this brutal world, I’ve always kept my relationships relatively casual and my partners in the dark about what I do for work . It was safer for them. And for me .

After being left for dead, my level of casualness increased drastically—nothing but fleeting one-night stands with men who are significantly more interested in me removing my pants than my shirt. Men who don’t stick around long enough—or care—to see the years of abuse my body has endured or the dark void that lies beneath these scars.

“Okay.” Quinn lightly taps my chest and pulls back with a gentle nod. She gets it. Because she gets me . With all the time we’ve spent together and all that we’ve gone through, she’s like a sister to me. Hell, the Evans brothers and their wives are the only semblance of family I’ve ever had. Why they took in a stray like me, I’ll never understand.

I return her nod, silently giving my appreciation for not forcing this on me.

“I won’t push it anymore. Just know... it’s only because I want you to be happy. You deserve it. You have such a good heart, Rory. Someone out there deserves to see it other than me and my kids.”

The words hit like a bullet, too quick to dodge. And they stick with me, like the scars I’m trying so desperately to hide. Knowing all the horrible things that her husband, his brothers, and I do, I can’t understand how she can say that with a straight face.

She might be right.

She probably is .

These Evans women always are.

CHAPTER THREE

RORY

The club is crowded—interest from the members in this auction has been so much more than any of us expected. The chatter of the crowd and clinking of glasses is loud, but it's overshadowed by Tristan's exuberant voice billowing through the speakers as he auctions off man after man, raising ungodly amounts of money for Our Lady of Grace.

I'm here tonight because Quinn begged me to come for support, but I'd rather be anywhere else right now. Preferably at home, on my couch, watching ESPN and drinking a beer. Instead, I'm stuck in a tuxedo that feels more like a costume than apparel and sitting at the bar beside Declan while I nurse a glass of whiskey.

I take another sip from my glass and glance around the bar. Out of the corner of my eye, I spot Conor leaning against the back wall, an annoyed scowl painted on his face. His expression screams, 'How did I get roped into this shit?' It's because he's a sucker for Layla. I can't blame him for hating every second of it. Happy doesn't begin to describe how I feel about Quinn not guilt-tripping me into being one of tonight's bachelors. I'd rather get fucking shot again.

My eyes wander the room again and I see him... Jorge. He's on the other side of the lounge, not far from Conor, where Layla is staging the bachelors. Fuck, he looks good. His tuxedo fits him perfectly, accentuating his broad shoulders. But it's the way it's molded to his frame—hugging him in all the right places—outlining the muscles he's hiding that causes my breath to catch.

“I didn’t realize Jorge was actually doing the auction,” I mutter, more to myself than to Declan, but he hears me anyway. I don’t know why I’m commenting or why I care. It’s not like Jorge is mine. Or would want to be. He’s well out of my league—young, confident, charming, and able to get any guy he wants. What would he want with an old guy like me ? Yet, I’ve spent years watching him from afar—keeping my distance and pining in silence for someone who’s way too good for me.

Declan follows my gaze, his lips curling into a knowing smirk. “Yeah, he is. Layla said he was the easiest to convince. He practically jumped at the opportunity to be one of tonight’s bachelors.”

I take another sip of the watered-down whiskey swirling in my glass, letting the burn distract me from the sudden knot in my stomach. My eyes dart back to Jorge, and for a second, I forget to breathe. He always looks good, but tonight... That damn tuxedo was made for him. The dark fabric contrasts so perfectly with his olive skin while accentuating the sparkle in his cognac eyes. He’s impossible not to stare at.

Always the outgoing social butterfly, he’s talking to a couple of the other bachelors waiting. The guy standing next to him laughs at something Jorge says, and for a second, I feel a pang in my gut. Jealousy. A level that I didn’t even know I was capable of. My eyes narrow when Jorge laughs in return, his lips curling in that mischievous way that makes him so... irresistible.

“Are you planning to bid?” Declan asks quietly, pulling me from my thoughts.

“No,” I answer quickly, a reactionary response.

Raising a brow, his gaze flicks between me and Jorge like he can read my thoughts. “Are you sure?” No, I’m not. Unable to pull my attention from Jorge, I shake my head in answer to Declan’s question.

It's ridiculous. A terrible idea. I have no business bidding on a gorgeous man nearly fifteen years my junior. Besides, even if I won... I'd never have the nerve to do any of the things I've spent countless nights fantasizing about. He's far too perfect to put myself out there like that... To consider letting him see me... To risk the possibility of watching his face show how appalled he is.

I need something to cool this anxious fire burning in my veins. As I swallow the last of the whiskey, I draw the remnants of an ice cube into my mouth. Angrily chomping on it, I try to distract myself from the fact that Jorge could be won by any of these men. He dates plenty, and I know it—but I've never had to see it before. And knowing that will change tonight makes me feel like I'm suffocating.

I glance back at Jorge—my chest tightening again—and I know I can't watch this unfold.

No one else can have him.

CHAPTER FOUR

JORGE

In all the years I've been here, I've never seen the club quite like this. Well, maybe the night Finn hunted Cat... The entire place is buzzing with excitement, and everyone is dressed to the nines. Especially the men. All of them in well-tailored tuxedos with perfectly coiffed hair—even Rory. It's a far cry from his normal appearance, but it suits him.

Standing beside Layla, I feel both out of place and in my element. Of course, the wine she's been sneaking me all night has kept my nerves at bay. Well, it was... Having to go after watching Conor sell for far more than anyone else this evening has my stomach suddenly fluttering with nerves.

Breathe, Jorge.

Running my hand through my hair, I smooth it back. Trying to soothe my anxiety.

"You're next," Layla chirps, stepping before me.

I force a smile and mutter, "Okay..."

Adjusting my bow tie, she stares up at me and curiously tilts her head. "Why do you look so nervous all of a sudden?"

A nervous chuckle rattles from me before I answer. "Oh, I don't. Something about

following a half-million-dollar bid makes you worry you're gonna go for the price of a happy-hour beer."

She lightly slaps my arm and rolls her eyes, laughing. "Please. You're hot as hell, sweetie. You've had men checking you out all night."

"They might be looking, but that doesn't mean they'll actually buy." I shoot her a dry smile. "I'll probably be tonight's bargain bin option."

Like the poor disheartened guy slinking off the stage for two thousand dollars.

"You're not the bargain bin, sweetie. Trust me." She places a soft kiss at the corner of my mouth as Tristan announces my name, calling me to the stage. I take a step and a sting radiates across my ass. "Go get 'em, tiger."

Shaking my head at her, I can't help but chuckle as I walk toward the stage. When I step onto the podium, I immediately feel the burn of all eyes on me—my nerves quickly morphing into a curious excitement.

"Jorge is a fun, charismatic guy with sharp wit and a bit of a bratty streak." Tristan's voice booms through the speakers as he winks at me. I roll my eyes and pretend to flip my hair over my shoulder, only proving his statement. "He needs a little taming, but I'm sure one of you is the right man for the challenge."

The bidding starts, and it's a blur—two hands shooting up almost at once. One is a man about my age—at most in his early thirties—fit, handsome, with a rugged jawline and searing green eyes. The other is an older man with silver hair and a well-maintained beard. He oozes sophistication and experience, and the look in his soft brown eyes tells me he knows exactly what he wants.

The number climbs fast, raising thousands of dollars with every fling of a paddle into

the air. The two of them literally fighting with each other to win me. My mind wanders, pondering how each of them would like to collect their winnings. How very differently I imagine that for each of them.

“Seventy-five thousand,” a deep and familiar voice shouts from across the room. It takes me a second to register it as I scan the crowd in the direction it came from. When I do, I nearly freeze.

Rory McLaughlin.

I blink, hardly believing that it could actually be him. He’s nearly fifteen years older than me. The few times I’ve noticed his eyes on me, they appear to be filled with disdain or annoyance. Yet, I’ve spent way too many nights fantasizing about what I’d like that broody bodyguard to do to me.

Why is he bidding?

My heart is pounding, and my tuxedo suddenly feels tight and suffocating. The silver-haired man bids again, and Rory stares at me with sheer determination. Lifting his hand to garner Tristan’s attention, he shouts, “One hundred thousand.”

This isn’t like the other two men. This is personal. My mind spirals, and I’m unsure of what’s happening—or how to feel about it—I stare back at him in disbelief.

“Sold!” Tristan announces, pointing toward Rory, who is walking through the crowd to claim his winnings. The entire room erupts into applause, but all I can hear is the thundering of my heart echoing in my ears.

I stand at the edge of the stage, frozen, and trying to comprehend what the fuck just happened.

CHAPTER FIVE

RORY

The realization hits me in waves as I lead Jorge down the viewing hallway toward one of the private rooms reserved for tonight's auction participants. Every step I take feels heavier than the last. After all these years, he's finally mine.

Ambient light casts shadows on the walls as we enter the dimly lit, quiet room. Jorge's normal ease and confidence has faded slightly, replaced with a more rigid posture as I gesture for him to step into the room before me. I close the door behind us, and he shifts awkwardly, fidgeting with his tuxedo sleeve nervously. The air in the room is thick as it fills with silence.

Jorge's eyes momentarily meet mine before abruptly looking away. "Thank you," he whispers, his voice low and a little shaky. "I can pay you back. Eventually."

Caught off guard, my brows furrow as my face scrunches in confusion. "Pay me back?" I repeat, not quite understanding what he means.

His hands twitching at his sides, Jorge seems to grow more uncomfortable by the second. "Yeah... you know... for bidding on me. Making me look good, so I didn't go for a couple thousand like the guy before me."

I can't help but laugh softly to myself, shaking my head. My bid wasn't some charity case—a one-off transaction to keep him from being embarrassed. It's far more than that. "That's not why I bid on you," I confess. My voice is steady, but it carries an

underlying tension that I can't mask from him.

I take a few steps, closing the distance between us as my gaze rakes over his body—not hiding my appreciation of him in the slightest. He's remarkable. This close, there's no hiding the defined muscular frame bulging beneath his expensive tuxedo. His prominent pecs push at the lapels as his breaths grow more rapid while I take him in. The soft light spills over his rich bronze skin, the shadows accentuating his rough jawline and defined cheekbones. But it's his eyes I can't pull away from. His deep chocolate pools are wide and filled with confusion, curiosity, and maybe even a tinge of... interest?

He swallows hard, and his Adam's apple bobs in his throat as his lips part like he's struggling to find the words to say what's on his mind. Words I don't give him the chance to find. "It's not why I bid on you at all," I repeat, more firmly and purposefully. "Now, be a good boy and let me see what I bought."

His breath catches, and there's a brief moment of stillness between us—both of us waiting to see if he's going to follow my instruction. He shifts his weight slightly and raises his hands to the front of his jacket. With slow, deliberate fingers, he works to undo each button.

He finally slips the jacket from his shoulders, and my eyes trace the outline of his chest—his starched white shirt clinging to the taut muscles beneath it. Without breaking eye contact, he carefully tosses the jacket to the nearby bed as he swallows nervously again.

"Go on," I hoarsely whisper, coaxing him. "Keep going."

His eyes flicker—a fleeting mixture of hesitation and desire—as he inhales sharply. He fists the shirt, slowly pulling it free from his waistband. It rises just high enough to provide a glimpse at the strong lines covering his stomach. The sight causes my

breath to catch and my cock to twitch.

“That’s it,” I murmur my praise. Jorge removes the shirt and haphazardly tosses it toward the jacket. His chest rises and falls heavily, and I can barely pull my eyes from him. He’s impeccable. Absolutely perfect.

I step close to him. So close that my tuxedo jacket brushes against his bare skin and my nostrils are flooded with the complex earthy and floral blend of his cologne. Damn, he smells good. “Is it true?” I ask, enjoying his scent. “What Tristan said about you? Do you need a Daddy with a firm hand to keep you in line?”

“Yes,” he answers hesitantly.

With my lips a breath from his ear, I whisper, “On your knees.”

He doesn’t hesitate to comply, quickly dropping to the floor before me. I look down at him and appreciate the way his deep brown eyes look while he stares up my body. Brushing the back of my hand along his cheek, I exhale, “You look so good on your knees for Daddy.”

CHAPTER SIX

JORGE

“So? How was it?” Layla asks with eager curiosity.

The sun pours over her terrace, casting a warm glow across the space as I sit back in my seat. I take a sip of my caramel-flavored iced coffee, which does little to dull the heat still lingering in my chest from last night. Which is only rekindling with her question. I’ve never been shy about sharing my sexual escapades. Especially not with Layla. She knows my history—every sordid fling and disappointing encounter. But last night wasn’t like any of those. Not even close. And I don’t know how to explain it to her.

After setting my glass on the table between us, I run a hand through my hair and try to find the words I’m seeking. “It... It wasn’t like that.”

“You mean... You didn’t?” Layla leans forward with a surprised expression—because I’m man whore—and props her elbows on the table. “You didn’t fuck him? Now I’m fucking intrigued.”

I chuckle softly, a grin spreading across my face. “I would have,” I confess. Fuck, would I have. He could’ve asked anything of me and I would’ve done it without hesitation. “I mean, it’s Rory. And just... He’s not like what I expected... at all.”

Looking like she’s about to die from the suspense, she cocks a brow and insists. “Details. Seriously. All of them. What happened?”

I'm still trying to figure that out myself.

"So..." I begin, taking a deep breath and stammer through my word vomit. "When we got into the room, I thought he'd bid on me just to be nice. So, I didn't look bad after Conor. I thought he was being sweet. But that wasn't it. He actually bought me. He wanted me. Once I knew he actually wanted me, I figured it would be like any other one-night stand. A little flirting. Some awkward fumbling. A little foreplay and then we'd just get down to it. But it wasn't like that."

Layla hangs on my every word, practically vibrating in anticipation as I walk her through what happened next—removing my clothes and dropping to my knees. She bites her bottom lip, clearly expecting me to finally spill the juicy details.

"He just stood there. So fucking intense," I continue, my voice low as I recall the moment so vividly I can practically feel Rory looming over me. "Then he gripped my jaw—like, really firmly—and forced me to stare into his eyes. I swear it felt like time froze and he was staring into my soul."

Goosebumps prickle down my spine at the thought, and I rub my hand reminiscently over the stubble on my jaw where he'd tightly held it last night. "His thumb dragged over my lower lip and he said something like, 'As much as I want to... Not tonight. If you want my cock to pass over these soft lips of yours, you're going to be a good boy for me and learn to be patient. When you show me you can do that, I'll collect my winnings.'"

Layla gasps, her mouth hanging open in shock. "He just left?"

"Yup." I nod. "He just... left. With me shirtless and on my knees with my cock so hard it was ready to tear through my dress slacks. I mean, who does that? Seriously, sweetie... I was so fucking hard, I had to... relieve myself , twice , before I could even think about walking out of that room."

“Gross, Jorge.” Layla laughs, sitting back in her seat and taking a long sip of her own iced coffee.

“What?” I toss my hands up and shrug. “Was I just supposed to walk through the club with it tucked into my waistband like I’m back in junior high?”

“Boys don’t actually do that.” Layla sighs. Like she’s ever had a penis with a brain of its own.

“Every single time I saw Bradley Harper, captain of the football team,” I sincerely insist. “Listen, at fourteen, we have zero control of that thing.”

She laughs, slightly disturbed at my confession, and settles back into her seat. “So, now what? You just sit here and wait for him to decide you’re being a good boy—which you aren’t capable of—so he can fuck you?”

“I guess?” I shake my head. “I don’t know.”

Part of me wants to just call it quits and forget he has been added to my list of strange sexual encounters—the hot one and the weirdo one. But he got under my skin, and I can’t stop thinking about the short time we spent in that room. I’ve never been treated like that before.

And fuck, did I ever like it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RORY

It's been two weeks since the auction, and every damn one of those days has felt like an eternity. An eternity watching and waiting for Jorge to be a good boy... My good boy. To show me he wants this. I've kept my distance, only seeing him in passing—until tonight.

Quinn was adamant I didn't miss an Evans family dinner two weeks in a row. I was hoping that the chaotic event would keep my mind off things, but all my focus is on the man seated down the table from me. There is an undeniable tension between us—me unable to pull my eyes from him and him unwilling to look at me. He's avoiding me. I know why. And if I'm being honest with myself, I expected it.

Dinner carries on, the rest of the family oblivious to the unease and discomfort between the two of us. My thoughts drown out the vibrant conversation around the table, like I'm hearing everything through a thick fog. Finn laughs about something—loud and obnoxious, pulling me from my thoughts. I take a long gulp of my whiskey, hoping it'll help to quiet the noises in my head and help me get through this meal.

“How did your date go with the pilot last night?” I hear a snippet of Layla and Jorge's conversation. Freezing mid-sip, the glass hovers just below my lips, and I tighten my grip around it. My jealous glare is focused on Jorge, and I can't stop the flush of heat creeping up my neck. He glances in my direction, and his expression quickly shifts. Fidgeting in his seat, he tries to stow his expression before excusing himself from the

table.

Without thinking, I push my chair back and follow him into the house. I trail down the hallway behind him, toward the guest bathroom. He steps inside, and before he has a chance to close the door, I follow him in and shut us both inside.

His eyes widen with surprise as I stalk toward each of his retreating steps. My voice deep and laced with disapproval, I gruff, “I thought I told you to be a good boy.”

Jorge’s breath hitches slightly, and I can practically see his pulse pounding in his neck. His mouth gapes, and he hesitates. “What are you doing?”

I don’t answer. Instead, I stalk toward him until he is stuck between me and the sink vanity. I take a deep breath, the tightness in my chest growing. What the hell am I doing? I am far more controlled than this. But everything about Jorge chips at my resolve.

“Good boys don’t disobey Daddy,” I quietly scold, slowly speaking each word for emphasis.

Staring back at me with defiance, he huffs, “Maybe I’m not a good boy.”

You will be.

Gripping his shoulder, I spin him around and roughly bend him over the ledge of the counter. My growing cock presses against his firm ass, and I bend over him and brush my lips to the back of his ear. “Bad boys get punished.”

His eyes blow wide as I stand and push my left hand into his back to keep him pinned to the counter. I swing my right fast and hard, my hand landing on his ass before he has a chance to protest. Warmth radiates across my palm as he lets out a pained yelp.

I connect with his denim-covered ass again and again, wishing desperately that I could see the handprints I'm leaving on his beautiful brown skin.

"I don't want to hurt you, Jorge," I softly whisper the words, rubbing my palm over the ass cheek that took every correcting strike. "I just need you to understand... When I told you to be a good boy, I meant it."

Sliding my hand up his back, I lace my fingers through his dark hair and fist it just hard enough to pull him upright. "I expect better. I demand it. You will learn to be a good boy," I exhale, the soft stubble of my beard sliding along the length of his neck as I fight against my urge to press my lips to it. To taste him. Our eyes meet in the mirror, both sets staring back at me full of an aching need.

A need neither of us will be quenching tonight.

Tearing myself from his body, I adjust my rock-hard cock and storm out of the bathroom before I'm unable to stop myself from giving in to what I actually want.

What we both actually want.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JORGE

I can't stop thinking about Rory and what happened in Declan and Quinn's guest bathroom. Eight days and I can still feel him pressed against me, the burn of his hand radiating against my ass with every spank. Or how goosebumps prickled along the length of my spine at the words playing on repeat in my thoughts. You will learn to be a good boy. Those words and that searing gaze making it quite clear what he wanted from me.

My thumbs haven't swiped right in over a week. Hell, I haven't even opened a single dating app. For some incomprehensible reason, I'm compelled to give him what he's asking for. No... what he's demanding. The control he's asking for is something I've never experienced. At least not first-hand. And after watching it unfold with my friends for years, I can't deny my curiosity.

Rory has been wandering around the club tonight, not once looking in my direction. I've been trying to focus on work to keep myself from following him. Serving drinks and chatting mindlessly with customers, but he's still at the forefront of my thoughts.

I head into the backroom to grab a bottle of Tullamore Dew and Patron to restock the bar. A bottle in each hand, I turn around and gasp—nearly dropping the liquor when I find Rory inches from me. I stare at him with my heart in my throat. His knuckle drags along my jaw, igniting a fire under my skin as he asks, “Have you been a good boy for me? Or do I need to remind you what happens when you don't listen?”

Heated flush creeps up my neck, and I struggle to inhale. “Y... yes. I’ve been a good boy,” I breathlessly stutter.

“Good boy.” A proud smile pulls at one corner of his mouth. He pulls a piece of paper from the breast pocket of his jacket and holds it for a moment before dipping into the front pocket of my pants. His fingers dust against my upper thigh as he deposits the paper, and my cock twitches as though it’s trying to jump into his hand.

He walks away without saying another word. My hands shaking and my heart hammering, I rush from the stockroom, only to watch him quickly disappear into the crowd. I roughly drop both the bottles onto the back bar and note out of my pocket, struggling to unfold it with my trembling fingers.

Your shift ends at 11.

I expect you by 11:30.

152 W 49th St #5A

My brain cannot comprehending the reality before me, and I stare at his scratchy writing for way longer than necessary. It’s happening...

I go through the remainder of my shift, barely aware of the conversations being had around me. Every bit of my attention is on the clock behind the bar—anxiously counting down the minutes until I leave.

9:47

10:12

10:38

10:46

10:51

10:57

I'm pulling on my jacket by the time it clicks to 11:00 p.m. Heading outside, I flag down a cab and provide the address Rory left me. I pull up to the building a few minutes later, and it's nothing like the places the others live. It's a nondescript building without a doorman. I walk up the steps two at a time and press the buzzer for 5A. Without a word through the intercom, the door clicks open, and I step into the small lobby. My fingers tap nervously against my thigh as I ride the elevator to the fifth floor.

I lift my hand to knock on the door, only to find it ajar. I press it open and tentatively step inside. His apartment is very different from what I imagined. It's simple and small but well-designed. Natural wood beams run the length of the otherwise white ceiling. The walls are a mixture of white and natural brick, matching the minimalist decor. I walk further into the room and run my hands over the arm of the avocado-green tuxedo couch, gazing at the books scattered across the coffee table. The space feels warm and cozy, but it still has a distinctly masculine feel.

It's silent, though, and for a moment I wonder if I've walked into the wrong apartment. "You're early." Rory breaks the silence, startling me. I spin around to find him leaning his shoulder against the wall of the hallway. He's dressed casually—less formal than I've ever seen him—in loose jeans and a fitted black T-shirt. He looks good. "Good boy. I like that."

Unsure of what to say, I nod. I'm never at a loss for words, but around him I constantly find myself speechless and struggling to breathe through the heaviness of the air in the apartment. This feels nothing like the kind of attraction I'm used to. This

is raw. Different.

CHAPTER NINE

JORGE

Rory takes a deliberate step toward me in silence. He takes another, and my eyes are drawn to the silky black fabric in his hand, swinging with each subsequent step. My heart beats a little faster as he approaches, and it nearly jumps from my chest when he steps close and puts his hands on me. They dust over my shoulders and slowly down my back to my waist, gripping me firmly and pulling me into his warm, firm body. He exhales, the breath blowing over my cheek, and the tension in the air crackles.

Before I have a second to think, his lips are on mine. Soft and tender, a tentative brush of his mouth against mine. My lips part, and he eagerly takes the invitation, pressing his tongue between them. Our tongues touch, and the kiss grows more urgent. Needy with years of ignored desire. I respond without thought, pressing my body tighter against him as heat flares inside me.

He pulls at my shirt, and the cotton slides up my back as he gathers it in his fist. Both of us breathless, we break our kiss for him to pull it over my head. When he tosses, it to the floor, he exhales, “On your knees.” Unlike last time, I hesitate for a second and watch a disapproving scowl spread over Rory’s face. “Do you need a reminder of what happens when you don’t listen?”

I gulp, distinctly remembering the feel of his large, rough hand repeatedly landing on my ass. Holding his gaze, I timidly shake my head as I gladly take my place on my knees before him. He cups my jaw—reminiscent of that night in the club—and forces my gaze up to his. “I didn’t hear you.”

“Yes,” I blurt.

His grip tightening, he firmly asks, “Yes, what?”

“Yes, Daddy.” The words fall from my lips. Hearing them causes an unfamiliar rush, and my skin tingles with excitement. As he walks around me, he drags the silk in his hand over my shoulder and across my chest. He gathers it in both hands and slips it over my eyes, gingerly knotting it at the back of my head.

With the blindfold in place, my heart thumps so hard that it echoes in my ears, drowning out the sound of his shoes on the hardwood floor. His hand slides along my cheek, and he drags his thumb along my lower lip. I needily dart for it with my tongue, and Rory presses it into my mouth. He massages the rough pad over my tongue as I lightly suck on it. “It isn’t my thumb you want in your mouth, is it?”

Unable to answer with his digit pressed against my tongue, I shake my head. Pulling his saliva-covered thumb from my mouth, he spreads the wetness over my lips as he instructs, “Ask nicely and tell me what you want.”

“Please, Daddy,” I beg, with so much need that I barely recognize my voice. “Can I suck your cock?”

He runs a hand over my shoulder and over the swell of my tricep, lifting my arm as he continues down. With one hand over mine, he presses my palm to the front of his jeans—against the rigid outline of his hard length tenting the denim. I wrap my hand around his girth and slide it over every thick inch. “Good boys can always have Daddy’s cock.”

Licking my lips, I fumble through my blindness, grasping the front of his pants to undo the button and lower the zipper. Finally managing to do both, I tug at his waistband with feral urgency. “Patience.” Rory wraps his hands over mine and helps

me leisurely pull them down his thighs. “We’re not in a rush.”

Heeding to his request, I slowly slide my hands along his muscular bare thighs as I make my way toward his cock. My fingers brush along a trimmed tuft of hair, and I wrap them around his base. Using my hand as a guide, I lean forward and lick the underside of his shaft from the base to the tip. Swirling my tongue around it, I wrap my lips around him as a guttural moan rattles from him.

I work my mouth over him, using my hand to fist him until I’m ready to take him deeper. His fingers lace into my hair and lightly hold the back of my head, and he groans as I repeatedly slide him over my tongue. Every sound coming from him only fuels me to take him deeper as my cock presses painfully against my zipper.

“My good boy gets so hard from sucking my cock,” he growls, pressing lightly into my mouth. “Undo your pants so I can watch you stroke yourself as I take your throat.”

I pop the button of my jeans and groan as I undo the zipper, providing myself a bit of reprieve. Following Rory’s instructions, I reach into my boxer briefs and pull out my rigid cock, stroking myself from base to tip. I slide my precum along my shaft as Rory presses over my tongue. He doesn’t fuck my throat, though. Instead, he glides over my tongue unhurriedly—repeatedly savoring the feel of every inch he makes me swallow.

With him in my throat and my hand sliding over my cock, I’m in fucking heaven. I slide my hand along his thigh and up his bare stomach. My fingers run over the ridges and divots of his abs. Reaching his chest, I brush against a divot of stiff skin, and my hand is roughly pulled from him. His voice filled with displeasure, he gruffs, “You didn’t ask to touch.”

CHAPTER TEN

RORY

I press into Jorge's throat again, holding myself deep but struggling to stay in the moment—unable to shake the feel of his fingers brushing over one of the scars I usually keep hidden beneath my shirt. I foolishly removed it, thinking the blindfold would protect me. He can't see you...

When I pull my cock from his mouth, Jorge sucks in a deep breath as I help him to his feet. My hands slide down his chest as I kneel to rid him of his remaining clothes. He kicks at his shoes, removing them so I can pull his pants over his feet. "You're fucking breathtaking," I exhale, taking in his remarkable frame. "Every inch of you is perfect." I lightly drag my fingertips up the length of his hard cock and emphasize, "Every inch."

Teasingly fisting him, I guide him onto the couch. His knees rest on the cushions, and his chest leans over the arm. Reverently, I rub my hand over the swell of his perfectly toned ass. Shoving my pants lower and climbing on behind him, I kiss along the invisible trail left by my hand. Finally, I make my way closer to the tight hole I've fantasized about claiming for years. "Does my good boy like having his asshole licked?"

"Yes!" Jorge breathlessly exclaims, arching his back and pressing himself toward me. I don't hesitate to give him what he wants. Pressing my face against his ass, I run the tip of my tongue along the puckered skin of his hole, and he releases the sweetest fucking whimper. I lick and tease until he's panting, and his ass quivers against my

tongue .

Grabbing the lube from the end table, I slather a generous amount over my cock. I rub the excess lube between his cheeks, massaging it over the relaxed hole and pressing it into him with my finger. With my slick tip pressed against him, I still for a moment. “I’ll go slow. I don’t want to hurt you,” I promise, knowing from experience I’m more than some men can handle.

I press my thick head into him, both of us groaning as I stretch him. “You’re doing so good for me,” I praise, running my hand along the length of his spine as I ease deeper until I’m buried in him to the hilt. And it’s better than I imagined. “You let me know when you’re ready for more.”

A sputtered exhale spills over his lips, and he gives a quiet nod for a response. I pull back and thrust back into him at a painfully slow pace. He fists the couch cushions and buries his face in them as I repeat the motion. I’m about to stop when he groans, “Oh, God! You feel so good.”

I take him steadily, letting him adjust to me. He pushes back to meet my thrusts, and I move a little faster. “Fist that big cock while I fuck your tight ass,” I demand. Perching himself on his forearm, he does exactly as he’s told. “You’re going to go right to the edge, and then you’re gonna stop like a good fucking boy.”

He fucks his hand as I thrust into him slow and deep. “Fuck...” he exhales, slowing his pace, his ass quivering around my cock as fights the urge to come. Squeezing me so tightly that I’m left fighting my own urges.

“Such a good boy.” I bend over him, kissing across his shoulders and toward his neck. “Do it again.”

I edge him over and over—bringing him to the brink until he’s a sweaty mess beneath

me. And every second of it is fucking amazing. Gripping his hips, I pick up my pace—taking him hard and fast. “Don’t stop this time,” I order, quickly losing my breath and watching his ass jiggle as my hips slam against it.

He’s right on the precipice—mere thrusts away from coming. “Don’t you dare come,” I grit through my clenched jaw. I fuck him without abandon, trying desperately to catch up and pushing him closer to his release. “You don’t come without Daddy’s permission.”

His whole body clenches, and he grips the arm of the couch, still fisting himself and struggling not to come. “Please let me come, Daddy!” he gasps, struggling to get the words out. I fist his muscular hips and slam into him. His face contorted in agony, he cries out, “Please, Daddy!”

“Yes,” I grunt. “Come for me.” His body relaxes for a split second, tightening again as his orgasm assaults every muscle in his body. Crying out as cum spills over his hand, he clenches around me like a vise. And I’m done. I shoot my release into him with a roar that echoes around my apartment.

“Fuck,” I breathlessly exhale, pulling myself from his ass. After climbing from the couch, I tuck my cock back into my pants and grab my shirt from the floor. I pull it over my head and kneel before the arm of the couch, where Jorge’s exhausted body is slumped over it. “You are fucking incredible.” I press my lips to his as I slip the blindfold from his face. “I’ll be right back. I need to get a cloth to clean you up.”

Even though I’m gone only a moment, Jorge is asleep by the time I return with a damp cloth and a glass of water. He stirs slightly but doesn’t wake as I wipe the cum from his hand or when I clean the mess I made of him. I sit beside him and pull him into my lap, covering us with the blanket from the back of the couch. Staring down at him in the dimly lit living room, I run my fingers through his hair as he sleeps.

I'm so fucked...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JORGE

When I wake, I stretch and feel a slight ache in nearly all my muscles—a reminder that last night was real, even if it did feel like a dream.

A really good fucking dream.

Blinking to adjust to the sun shining into the room, I notice my clothes are folded neatly on the coffee table. The man folded my boxer briefs. Who does that? I lift my head and find myself staring directly at a cloudy white splatter staining his otherwise pristine couch. Oh, fuck! Did I actually come on his couch?

Grabbing my shirt, I hastily pull it over my head and scramble to put on my pants, my fingers fumbling in a hurry. I'm used to mornings like this—leaving quickly before the awkward goodbyes or 'how are you this morning' conversations. Or in this case, a 'sorry I came on your couch' conversation. It's easiest for one-night stands—no need for explanations of regrets.

Hopping across the room as I make my way to the door, I pull on my shoe. I undo the deadbolt and wrap my hand around the knob. "Sneaking out?" Rory's deep voice startles me, and I freeze. My hand still on the partially turned knob, I glance over my shoulder to find him standing in the hallway with a calm, calculated expression.

This isn't in my playbook. Unsure what to say, I scramble, trying to think up an excuse to leave—any excuse—but my mind is completely blank. Dumbfounded, I

glance between him and the door and stammer, “Um... I... I just thought....”

He stares at me with his piercing blue eyes as he closes the distance between us. His fingers slide along my jaw, tilting my head slightly to meet his gaze. “You thought wrong,” he whispers, pressing his lips to mine. It’s soft and tender—yet enough to make my heart race. “I’d like to see you again tonight. Here. Same time.”

Surprised by his request, I hesitate for a moment then blurt, “I have work until two. I can’t?—”

“You’ll be off at eleven,” he insists with confidence. “I’ll make sure of it.”

I want to argue. Tell him he doesn’t have the right to change my schedule. That it’s presumptuous as fuck to assume I want to see him again. But I can’t. The way he speaks—his commanding confidence—I’m pretty sure he could ask me to do anything. Not that he’s asking.

He cups my jaw and places another kiss against my lips. Pulling back, his lips dust against my ear as he whispers, “Then it’s settled. I’ll see you tonight.”

After stepping into the elevator, I swipe open my phone to find several missed texts from Layla.

LAYLA

Where did you run off to?

Hello?

Is this a Benson & Stabler or Reid & Morgan matter?

Seriously Jorge. It's 2am. Are you okay?

Not serial killed or SVU'ed. I'm alive.

Thank God! Where the hell have you been?

Rory's

Shut the fuck up!

No, don't. Tell me!

I laugh to myself as I dial her number to give her every sordid detail. It rings once before she answers, "You slut! Tell me everything."

Fuck, I love her.

"First, I know he isn't actually an Evans... but fuck, from the waist down, you'd swear they're all related."

She cackles into the phone so loudly that it reverberates off the metal walls of the elevator as I reach the ground floor.

* * *

I spent most of the morning on the phone with Layla. After giving her a play-by-play commentary that rivals ESPN, we talked about me actually seeing him again. It's been a while— a long while— since I've been on more than one date with the same man, especially two nights in a row. Although, technically, last night was more of a booty call than a date.

Our conversation and heading to his place are the only things I can think about during my shortened shift. I glance at the clock— 10:42 p.m.— and pull out my phone .

Is this a good idea?

Do I really want to be FWB or start a situationship with him?

What if it goes south? And then I still have to see him all the time?

LAYLA

And what if it doesn't?

Or...what if it's more than that for him?

You mean, like he actually wants to date me?

OMG. Is that so horrible?

Horrible? No. Terrifying? Abso-fucking-lutely.

By the time I reach Rory's, I'm an antsy ball of anxiety and nerves. I knock on his door and feel like I'm about to burst as I wait for him to answer. He opens the door and greets me with a tender smile—a sharp contrast to his otherwise gruff demeanor. “Right on time.” He reaches out, and his fingers brush along my arm as he ushers me into the apartment. “Good boy.”

Those two little words have me ready to fall to my knees for him again.

And I'm fucked.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RORY

My eyes flick to the clock on the wall, and I check the time again before glancing back to the door. Jorge should be here any minute now. He's been here every night this past week, and every night, I can't wait for him to arrive.

I've spent years keeping men—and any semblance of a relationship—at arm's length. It's how I've survived, separating my personal life from my chaotic one. But Jorge... he doesn't fit into the neat little boxes I've constructed. He lives neck deep in my chaos, knowing full well the things I do for the Evans family.

And while I could try to deny it, this isn't a repeating casual, no-strings encounter. This is so much more. I want to be around him. With him. And while the sex is nothing short of amazing, it's the moments after that I long for when he isn't here. His laugh and sharp wit. The way he talks about life like it's a story being written one chapter at a time. Connecting with him like I've never connected with another man—deeply. Even the quiet moments—curled up together in bed—feel significant.

A gentle knock at the door interrupts my thoughts. Standing from the couch, I make my way over and pull it open. Jorge's face lights up when he sees me, his lips lifting slightly as a smile spreads across his face. He steps inside with confidence, and before I can say anything, his lips are on mine. Returning his kiss and matching his urgency, I use our bodies to close the door.

It slams with a thud as we land against it. With our bodies pinned together, I can feel

his heart thumping against mine. My hands wander his body as my lips aggressively trail along the length of his neck. Kissing below his ear, I whisper, “How’s my good boy?”

Grinding against me, his chest heaving, he answers. “Good. More than good now.”

Tearing his shirt from his body as I drag him toward the couch, I tease, “Did you miss your Daddy?”

“Yes...” he pants, his fingers fumbling to undo my belt as I unzip his pants. Slipping my fingers beneath the waistband of his boxers, I wrap my hand around his cock and slide up and down. His mouth gapes, and a breathy gasp blows over his lips. Fuck, I love that sound.

“I need to be inside you,” I groan, fisting him with one hand and working my pants over my hips with the other. Struggling to focus as I continue to stroke him from balls to tip, Jorge grabs the lube from the table and hastily slathers it over my length. As eager as I am, he shoves his pants to his knees and bends at the waist. “Such a needy boy,” I jest, throwing my shirt out of the way and carefully pressing myself inside him.

I slip into him with ease, his tight ass quickly growing accustomed to my size. “Fuck... I love the feel of you,” he groans, rocking his hips to take more of me.

Staying buried deep inside him, I move us to the couch with him on my lap. He kicks a foot free from his pants and plants his feet on the edge of the couch by my knees. Pressing his back against my chest, he works his hips and slides himself over my cock. “Fuck, mo rúnsearc . I love how you take my cock.” I spit in my hand and reach around his body for his cock. Sliding my slick hand along his length, I wrap the other lightly around his throat.

His head falls back as I stroke him, lolling on my shoulder as he rides me harder. Turning my head to breathe in the earthy smell of his shampoo, I crash against his lips. My tongue aggressively pushes between them, plundering his mouth and swallowing the sweet sounds he's breathing into me.

"Are you trying to make me come?" I gravelly whisper against his cheek.

"Yes." Jorge bounces vigorously over my cock. He feels so fucking good that I bite my lip to distract myself from my sudden overwhelming need to come. "I want to feel your cock throbbing as I come," he pants. "Filling me with cum."

Losing any resolve I have, I savagely slam into him from below and vigorously fist his cock. It takes only moments for Jorge to come, shooting ribbons across his stomach as I spill into him. Leaning against my chest, Jorge struggles to catch his breath—tiny, delighted whimpers spewing from him as I continue to leisurely stroke his thick, beautiful cock.

"I can't get enough of you." I pepper the words against the side of his neck with a trail of kisses.

My cock softening, Jorge slides from my lap. Grabbing my pants from around my knees, I pull them up my thighs as I stand. "You don't have to do that," Jorge mutters, gripping my hand. "I want to feel your skin on mine when I climb into bed with you."

He'd feel differently if he actually saw me.

"I'd rather not shuffle to the bedroom with them wrapped around my ankles," I jest with a smirk, trying to mask my discomfort.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JORGE

ABOUT A WEEK LATER

I wake up to another empty bed. The cold sheets brush against my skin as I slowly sit up, and the familiar ache in my chest tightens. The first few nights we were together—the blindfolds and half-undressed sex—were fun and exciting. But it's become a pattern. No matter how close I think we're getting to one another, I can't ignore the facts. After two weeks of sleeping here every night, I still don't know what Rory actually looks like naked. I also have no idea what it's like to fall asleep with my head on his bare chest or wake up in his arms. I don't even know what it's like to wake up with him in the bed with me.

I take a deep breath and try to tamp down my emotions as I climb out from underneath the comforter and quickly dress before looking for Rory. Stepping into the hall, I hear the faint sound of running water from the kitchen and the distinct clink of a mug against the granite counter.

Following the sound, I make my way into the kitchen and find him standing by the counter, his back to me as he stares into his cup of coffee, deep in thought. As though I have no control over my tongue, I frustratingly blurt, "Why aren't you ever in bed when I wake up?"

With his back to me, he lifts his cup and takes a slow sip before turning around. His jaw is clenched, and it's clear I've hit a nerve.

“Is it the same reason you’re always half-dressed or I’m blindfolded every time we have sex?” I ask, my tone harsher than intended. Apparently, I’ve been harboring these feelings a little longer than I should have. Rory doesn’t answer, and it only causes my annoyance to grow. “If I’m just a fun place for you to stick your cock, just tell me. And I’ll just stop spending the night and letting myself think this is more than it actually is.”

His face reddens, and his jaw twitches from clenching it so tightly. “Don’t talk like that,” he barks.

“Then show me I’m wrong.” My voice cracks. “I want to see you, Rory. To feel you. I can’t keep pretending this is going somewhere when you won’t even let me in.”

I wait, expecting him to say something— anything . He sets his mug on the counter with a sharp clink. When he looks up at me, his face is a series of hard lines and pained, cold blue eyes. “Well, I don’t,” he exhales, his tone somehow harsher than his words. “I don’t want you to see me. I don’t want you to feel me.”

His words hit like a punch to the gut, and I stagger backward, almost losing my balance. I know he’s guarded—he has been since I met him. But this... This feels like he’s building a wall between us, brick by brick, to shut me out.

I try to fight it, but I can’t stop the tears from welling in my eyes or the lump growing in my throat. This—whatever we are—isn’t what I thought it was. What I wanted it to be. He doesn’t want me .

“What I’ve given you is all I can offer,” he confesses. His posture tense, he stands on the other side of the room, waiting for me to respond. But I can’t... “If that’s not enough...” His words trail off, leaving the ultimatum hanging between us. I can be okay with being a fuck toy that stays overnight. Or I can go.

I tentatively walk forward and, with shaking fingers, lift my phone from the counter. “Okay,” I mutter, barely a whisper, realizing I can’t accept being less than I deserve. Closing my eyes, I turn on my heel and walk from the kitchen. My chest constricts with every step I take. By the time I leave the apartment, I’m nearly suffocating.

I hope he’ll— no, I need him to— chase after me. I need him to chase after me. But he doesn’t. He doesn’t call after me. He doesn’t follow. There are no hurried footsteps to keep me from walking out of his life.

Tears blur my vision as I enter the elevator. Leaning against the cool metal, I watch the doors close—to the elevator and our relationship. My heart shatters, and tears stream down my face over losing someone who was never actually mine.

I don’t even know how I make it to the street. Or how I wind up on the sidewalk with my back pressed to his building. The blur of the city before me, I sob uncontrollably as I dial Layla’s number. She picks up on the second ring, and I try to get myself together enough to speak, but I just cry into the phone.

“Jorge? Sweetie?” Instantly recognizing my pain, her tone is thick with concern. “What’s wrong?”

“Rory...” I choke, barely coherent. “It... It’s over.”

Layla sucks in a sharp breath and exhales, “Oh, sweetie, no... Where are you? I’m on my way.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RORY

It's been six days since Jorge walked out of my apartment, and I'm still trying to go more than five minutes without thinking about him. I should've followed him. Stopped him. I should have done anything.

I should reach out and try to fix this, but every time I pick up the phone, something holds me back. I'm too proud. Too stubborn. Too fucking scared. I've been running from real connections for so long that when it finally happened, I acted like a fucking twat.

Even tonight, I'm fucking idiot. I've passed on family dinner, and I'm sitting on a fucking stakeout for Ivan's thieves-in-law, Vlad, so I can avoid Jorge. It's easier to hide in my car, where I can pretend everything is fine, than to face him. Resting against the steering wheel, the buzzing of my phone pulls me from my thoughts, my heart skipping a beat when I see his name on the screen.

JORGE

Can we talk?

Swiping it open, I'm mid-response when two sheriffs' cars pull up outside the police station as a swarm of officers line the doorway. Closing out my text to Jorge, I pull up Conor.

They're moving him now.

CONOR

Follow them

We have to know where they're taking him

Keep me posted, we can't be more than five minutes from you

I drop my location to Conor's phone and follow the police cruisers, ensuring I keep a safe distance so I'm not spotted. They pull to a stop, and I maintain my speed, driving past them and parking further down the block. In my rearview, I watch them take Vlad inside and set up a police perimeter. They know someone is coming for him.

Swiping my thumb over my phone, I call Conor. He answers immediately, and I share, "I'm parked down the block. They're walking him in now. Single-family home. Looks like they're setting up cops at the front and back. This is going to be a fucking blood bath."

"Are you up for this?" he asks, and I realize that I haven't been masking my personal turmoil nearly as well as I thought.

"Fuck you," I spit. "I wouldn't be loading an extra mag right now if I weren't. Why don't you kids get your asses here already?"

Finn teases, "How the fuck did we all agree to add a second Declan to this family?"

Drawing my best impersonation of Declan, I gruff, "Don't be a fucking twat, Finn."

When I see their headlights turning onto the street, I hang up the call. I watch from

down the street as Conor and Ivan deal with the two cops at the front of the house. Finn and I join them as they're stowing the bodies in the back of the police car.

Following behind Ivan, we're inside within seconds. Bullets fly and drywall dust peppers my clothes. A plain-clothed cop steps around the corner, and I fire a round into him before he has a chance to react. He crumples to the floor as we move deeper into the house.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

My ears ring from the shots, nearly drowning out Finn's cry. "Fuck! Con!" Rounding the corner, I look down to find Finn kneeling in a rapidly growing pool of Conor's blood. So much fucking blood. I freeze for a second, my mind drifting to the SUV—blood pumping from my chest so viciously that I could feel its warmth pooling in the seat beneath me.

Not Conor... At least not today.

Being the stubborn ass that he is, he tries to push himself from the floor, but he's already too weak. Bending, I pull his arm around my neck as Finn does the same. Ivan grabs his legs, and the three of us carry him down the hall.

Struggling to carry his heavy ass, I breathlessly grit, "If my old ass can make it, so can you."

Your life is worth living. You have two beautiful women who love you and a family that would be distraught if you died.

We shove him into the back of Finn's Bronco, and I shut that hatch after Finn climbs in with him. Sliding behind the wheel, I listen to Conor's pained cries and gurgles as I race toward the club. Ivan calls Tristan to let him know we're on our way.

As I weave through traffic, my mind races between Conor and thoughts of how easily that could've been me again. How fleeting life is. And how fucking stupid I am for letting one of the only good things in my life walk out of it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

JORGE

Faking an emergency, we force the last of the members from the club. The place is filled with an unsettling silence, the only sounds coming from the bustle of Tristan, Liam, and the doctor setting up a makeshift surgical suite in one of the viewing rooms.

While my thoughts should be on Conor and hoping that he's okay, they keep drifting to one thing. One person. Rory. Assuming he'd be there, I picked up an extra shift as an excuse to miss family dinner—only to have Layla text me and let me know he didn't show either. Both of us are apparently trying to avoid the other. In my gut, I know he was there with Conor and Finn. And I can't shake the worry that something happened to him too.

A commotion at the back of the club grows substantially louder, and I realize they're here with Conor. I hesitantly walk toward the viewing hall, stopping in my tracks when Finn and Rory step from into the hall from the room. Rory's clothes are soaked in blood, and splatters of the dried crimson liquid mar his face—matching the crusted, dried blood staining his hands. He looks like he's been through hell.

His eyes meet mine, and my stomach drops. He looks exhausted, like he's struggling to hold it all together. Struggling not to lose it over Conor. The pain in his eyes is so deep that it pangs in my chest. I want to reach out and hug him—but he isn't mine to comfort. He doesn't want me to save him. Doesn't want to know that I think I love him.

I can't be here.

Backing away from the hall, I walk toward the empty bar to grab my jacket and find a teary-eyed Layla sitting on a barstool. I wrap my arms around her and pull her petite body against mine. "I'm really sorry," I mutter, my throat tight. "I know I should stay. For you. For Conor. But I can't."

She squeezes me tightly, her embrace providing a small bit of comfort. Placing a chaste kiss on my lips, she struggles to maintain her composure. "It's okay," she whispers. "I know. I'll be okay. And Elena and Vic will understand."

I nod, swallowing the lump in my throat. My voice thick with gratitude for her understanding, I whisper, "Thank you." After slipping from her embrace, I walk toward the door, pausing briefly to glance over my shoulder for one final look at Rory.

The walk home is a blur—my mind reeling about everything. My heart is breaking over how broken and distant Rory looked. Closing my apartment door, I drop my things in the entryway and collapse onto the couch as a loud thud on the door echoes through my apartment.

"Wrong apartment," I shout, knowing that everyone in my life is currently at Club Triskelion. The obnoxious knocker pounds on the door again, and I push myself from the couch. Yanking open the door, I grunt, "I said, wrong apart—" I choke on my own words when I see Rory in the hallway, still covered in the dark scarlet stains of Conor's blood.

I contemplate slamming the door in his face—shutting him out the way he did me. But I can't. He looks so weary and dejected that the other part of me—the part that still cares far too much—wants to pull him inside to make sure he's okay.

Rory's eyes meet mine, and any chance I had of shoving him away is gone. "I wasn't sure you'd open the door," he confesses quietly. He stares at me like he has something more to say, and I wait for what feels like an eternity. "You said you wanted to talk."

"Now?" I exclaim. "With you... like that? "

"I'm fine, mo rúnsearc ," he insists, though his demeanor and the exhaustion in his tone tell a different story. "I've been a fucking idiot. I don't want to lose you, Jorge."

My heart stops, and for a second, I can't breathe. I don't know how to respond. How to believe that he's going to just tear down all the walls he's built and let me in.

"Please," he adds. "I'm sorry. I want you in my life. I need you."

Without thinking, I take a step forward and wrap my arms around his neck. His arms snake around my waist, and he pulls me into him—so tightly there isn't room for air between us.

"I'm so sorry, mo rúnsearc."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

RORY

The moment Jorge's body touches mine, a warm comfort washes over me—a calmness I only ever feel when I'm with him.

"I am so sorry," I whisper against the side of his neck. "But I know my words aren't enough. I was a fucking asshole, and I don't deserve a second chance."

"I don't forgive you." His voice sounds pained as he loosens his hold on me and steps back from our embrace. My heart breaks a little when he looks up at me; the hurt in his eyes is unmistakable. "Words are great," he gruffly announces. "But actions speak a whole lot louder than words."

Staring back at him, I swallow hard and nod. He's right.

"You're a fucking mess." He lets out a heavy sigh and steps to the side of the doorway, letting me enter. "You can't stand in my hallway or wander around the city covered in Conor's blood."

I glance down my body and take in my appearance for the first time. As soon as I saw Jorge's face at the club, I stormed after him so quickly, I didn't stop to think. Conor's blood has soaked through my shirt and stains my hands like a pair of gloves.

"Fuck," I mumble, accepting Jorge's gesture to come inside. Stepping through the threshold, I find myself in the tiny kitchen, which occupies one wall of his living

room. His apartment is... quaint. It's compact but so inviting. A bright yellow couch and a mismatched orange armchair—both appearing to be secondhand or vintage—adorn the small space. Photos and artwork are hung haphazardly—yet intriguingly—across a dark teal accent wall. It's bright and lively—just like Jorge.

Jorge leads me down the short hallway. I glance through the open doorway to my left into his bedroom. It's equally as colorful as the living room, but in an understated and calming array of colors. "This one." Jorge draws my attention to the door on my right, pushing it open and revealing a bathroom that is just big enough to be functional.

He turns on the shower, and the pipes in the old building creak for a second before spraying water over the tiles. The warm steam creates a fog in the air, quickly heating the room. Reaching around me, Jorge pulls a fresh towel from the shelf and hangs it next to the shower. When he turns to leave, he flatly insists, "I'll go find some clothes... leave you to get cleaned up."

Actions speak louder than words...

Struggling to find the courage, I want to give him what he's asking for. I want to show him that I can tear down my walls—even a little—and let him in, just as he begged me to do. It's the only way to convince him of the sincerity of my apology. He has one foot out the door—metaphorically and physically. And I worry that if he steps into that hallway, I'll lose him forever. My lips part, and before I can think better of it, I blurt, "Stay."

It's one word, but it carries everything I'm feeling.

Stay... Don't leave... I need you... I want you... I'm sorry... I can let you in... Because... I love you.

Jorge hesitates, his hand on the doorframe and his chin falling to his chest. Not releasing his hold on the jamb, he turns just enough to meet my gaze, and I find his rich brown eyes clouded with the beginnings of tears. His throat bobs, and he nods without saying anything.

I close my eyes as he leans against the wall, my chest tightening with nerves. This it is... This is when I show Jorge that I'm as broken on the outside as I am on the inside. Composing myself with slow, deep breaths, I slowly undo the buttons on my blood-stained shirt. I'm unable to bring myself to open my eyes and see him as I struggle through trembling fingers to unfasten the final button.

Dropping the shirt to the floor, I stand in front of him, completely exposed. The scars marring my torso—deep, jagged reminders of the horrible things I've done—are on display for him. I can't bring myself to open my eyes because I'm scared of his reaction. An old man... battered and damaged inside and out... Why would he want me?

He sucks in a sharp breath and exhales, "Oh... Rory." I flinch at the pain in his voice. Pity. Shame and vulnerability creep in, and I suddenly wish I hadn't let my shirt fall to the floor.

"God, you're beautiful..." His words cause me to freeze in place. I'm dumbfounded by them; they prevent me from retreating back into myself. How can he see that? How can he look at me and say that?

"You can't mean that." I shake my head and denounce his words. Needing to see his face, I force my eyes open. His gaze follows the trail of scars running along my chest, his eyes filled with admiration.

Jorge steps closer and gently, yet deliberately, places his hands on my shoulders. They're warm and grounding, matching the way he looks back at me. "You don't

have to understand,” he says softly. “You’re beautiful, Rory. All of you. Not in spite of what has happened to you—and your body—or the life you’ve led, but because of it.”

My chest heaves, but I feel like I can’t catch my breath. His hand slides from my shoulder and down my chest, his fingertips tracing my scars like they’re a map toward my heart, flattening his palm over the racing beat. “They aren’t just your wrongs, Rory. They also tell the story of the good you’ve done and your will to live. Your story, it’s beautiful...”

Jorge doesn’t pity me. He sees me. And that’s more than I expected—far more than I ever thought I deserved.

Without saying another word, he pulls his shirt over his head. His fingers work to undo my pants. I undo his and push them over his hips as he does the same with mine. We both step out of our pants and into the hot water of the shower.

Standing chest to chest, our lips dusting against one another’s, the rust-colored water swirls around our feet and down the drain as the blood washes from my body. The steady spray washes away my sins of the evening and takes with them any hesitation of letting Jorge get too close.

“I missed you, mo rúnsearc .”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JORGE

Still damp from the shower, Rory leads me, hand in hand, to my bedroom. Glancing over his shoulder, his gaze flicks down my body as we make our way to the bed. He sits on the edge of it and pulls me over his thighs until I'm straddling him. Sliding his hands up my back, he ignites a fire in me as he pulls me against his chest.

His lips dust my collarbone and up my neck in a trail of feathery kisses, his damp beard leaving a wet trail in its wake. Clutching myself tighter to him, I press my lips to his bare shoulder. I match his light touch and kiss toward his mouth. With my lips gently pressed to his jaw, I confess, "I missed you, Daddy." He pulls back and cups my face as he stares at me, weighing the validity of my words. "So much."

Rory crashes his lips against mine—needy, yet still tender. His tongue presses into my mouth and teasingly intertwines with mine. Each of us playfully fight for control as our tongues wrestle. He shifts his weight, turning abruptly, and I gasp when I find myself on my back with Rory lying between my thighs.

He slides down my body, his lips and tongue licking and sucking as they travel from my chest to my navel. He glides from the tip of my cock to the base; then he licks his way back to the head. Wrapping his soft pink lips around it, he sucks me into his mouth. His skilled tongue flicks against the ridge and swirls around the tip with nearly every bob of his head.

Fuck... he's good at this .

Taking me sensually in his mouth, he rubs his saliva-coated fingers against my ass. They circle the hole, massaging it until I'm writhing against him for more. Rory presses a fingertip into me, teasingly thrusting barely a knuckle deep. And it's fucking torture. He adds a second, both barely penetrating me. I groan with need, trying to take in more of him. A dark chuckle rattles from him, vibrating around my cock in his mouth.

"Such a needy boy," he taunts, the words tingle against my tip still resting on his lips. "I'd let you show me how needy... but you need to tell me where you keep the lube."

We both laugh at the sudden break in mood. I roll onto my stomach and stretch across the bed. Rory kisses along my hip and a ticklish spot on my side as I dig into the nightstand. I find it and victoriously pull it out. He takes it from me and slathers a generous amount over his length as I position myself on all fours for him to take me.

"Come here, mo rúnsearc ," he gently commands, pulling me toward him. "I want to stare into your gorgeous chocolate eyes." I hesitate for a moment at the foreignness of his ask, and he grabs my hand, urging me to obey.

I lift my leg and slide over his thighs, only to be pulled higher the second my knee reaches the bed. He presses the tip of his cock into my ass and stares into my eyes. Cupping my face with one hand and pressing on my hip to slide me over him, he continues, "I want to watch them as you sink over my cock."

A breathy moan rattles from him as he lifts his hips to meet my ass. He fills me, and I echo him with an airy grunt. My face distorts in pleasure, and I press my cock into his palm as I swirl my hips and leisurely ride his thick length. "And that..." Rory rubs his hand along my jaw, dragging it along my neck and over my pec. My chest shakes, rattling as I struggle to breathe through the pleasure of his touch. "Watching pure ecstasy on your face."

I plant my hands on his chest—my fingers resting over the wounds he was afraid to show me—and my stare is completely fixated on the oceanic-blue pools gazing back at me. “I love the feel of your eyes on me.” Flexing my hands, I splay my fingers over his chest and kneed at the firm muscles I’m taking purchase on. “I fucking love feeling you inside me.”

He rolls us, quickly pinning me to the mattress beneath him as he buries himself deep in my ass. My knees against his sides, and my hands roaming over the flexing muscles of his back, he undulates his hips and presses his lips to mine. “Good,” he exhales, lifting his hips and driving every inch of his cock into me. “Because... you’re going to feel me... all fucking night.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

RORY

The faint light of dawn filters through the blinds, casting soft, golden streaks across the floor and wall. Jorge's head is resting on my chest—his face nestled against my scarred skin, covering the bullet wounds. His breathing is slow and steady, and he looks so peaceful and content. I've shared a bed with him plenty of times, but I've never seen him quite like this.

I can't pull my eyes from his messy, tousled locks, the occasional flutter of his long, thick lashes, or the gentle rise and fall of his chest. Even with the soft snore vibrating from him—the reason I'm awake—he's the most beautiful man I've ever seen.

Jorge stirs, a gentle groan rattling from him as he lifts his head. Trying to focus through the haze of sleep, he blinks up at me. His voice is thick with drowsiness as he mutters, "Were you watching me sleep?"

"No," I exaggerate my answer, unable to fight the smirk that pulls at my lips. "I was lying here wondering how such an ungodly sound could come from such a gorgeous man."

Jorge blinks in confusion, not quite awake enough to follow my insinuation. "What?"

I chuckle softly and run my hand along the rippled muscles of his back. "Has no one ever told you that you snore before?"

He sits up straight and rubs the sleep from his eyes, staring down at me like I've grown a second head. "I do not!" he exclaims defensively.

"Yes. You do," I tease, unable to hold my chuckle. "I swear to God, it's like a little freight train running through the room."

Flopping onto the pillow with theatrics, he gruffly snarks, "I do not snore. I was probably just dreaming."

"Nope." I shake my head, rolling toward him and sliding my hand along his chest. "You definitely snore. Loudly."

Jorge grumbles as he pushes himself out of the bed. "I'm going to take a shower."

I grab his wrist and tug him back before he can slip from beneath the sheets. "You're not going anywhere." I deepen my tone and drag him across the bed. I pull him close and press my body against his. "I'm not done with you yet."

"You can't keep me hostage in this bed..."

Wrapping my hand around his cock, I stroke it lightly and enjoy the feeling of him growing hard in my palm. "Stockholm syndrome already?" I jest when he thrusts his hips toward my hand.

"I can't," Jorge timidly protests, biting his lip as I rub my thumb along the ridge of his tip.

"Are you sore?" I ask—knowing the answer—and continuing to run my fist along his length. We went two long, occasionally vigorous rounds last night. Even with lube and prep, I'm not surprised he's hesitant this morning. "I don't need to fuck your ass to make you come, but I'll stop if you want me to. Do you want me to stop?"

Jorge slips his hand beneath the sheets, sliding along my stomach until he finds my semi-hard cock. “Is that a yes or a no?” I tease, and he tightens his hold, fisting me faster.

“No, Daddy,” Jorge exhales.

Pressing my cock against his, I wrap my hand around us both. We both work our hips, rubbing our lengths together as I stroke us. He meets my need, adding his hand to encircle us fully. Tightening the grip, he matches my rhythm and thrusts into our hands. Precum drips onto my hand, and I rub it over us, easing how we slip against each other.

My balls constrict, and I know my release is quickly approaching. I focus on Jorge’s sensitive tip, trying desperately to get him to come before me. His mouth gapes, and his back arches, pressing him harder against me—and I know he’s so fucking close.

“That’s it.” I lick along the side of his neck. “Be Daddy’s good boy and come for me. Come all over us.”

“Yes... Yes...” he pants, teetering on the edge. Gripping my chest, he grunts, “Oh... yes!”

Ribbons of cum shoot from his twitching cock, spraying our stomachs and my hand. I smear it over us, using his release as lube for the final violent pumps of my cock into our hands. “Fuck!” I grit, my toes curling as I add my release to the cum smearing between us.

Jorge melts into his pillow, both of us lying in complete—euphoric—silence. The only sounds in the room are our labored breathing and the faint buzz of the city outside his apartment.

Staring at me from his pillow with soft, vulnerable eyes, Jorge whispers, “Thank you for coming last night.”

My heart flutters, and I can’t help but smile. We have shit to work through— I have shit to work through— if we’re really going to make a go at this. But if I learned anything last night, it’s that both of us are willing to try. “Thank you... for letting me in.” I lift my hand and reach over to brush a piece of hair from his forehead. His face scrunches—a look of curiosity that morphs into disgust.

“Did... did you just ruin this moment by rubbing cum across my face?”

I pause, looking at his face and then down at my sticky hand. And a raucous laugh billows from me. “Maybe you should have that shower now. Maybe we both should.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

JORGE

A COUPLE MONTHS LATER

The cool evening air nips at my skin as I settle deeper into Layla's couch. She is curled up against me under a blanket—the two of us sharing a bottle of rosé as the sun sets and the city's lights begin to shine.

I take a slow sip of wine, savoring the smoothness as we talk about everything and nothing all at once. Tristan steps onto the terrace, shaking his head as he approaches us. “I see I’ve been replaced tonight, mo chuisle ,” he playfully teases Layla.

She looks up at him, her eyes glimmering with affection. “I did love him first,” she brats, a sincere smile slowly replacing her smirk. “But my nights always belong to you.”

Gently gripping her throat, he tilts her face and leans down to press a firm kiss against her hips. Tristan pulls back, his lips still curled in a teasing smile. “Just the one bottle tonight,” he instructs, a gruff sincerity taking over his playful tone. “I have plans for my night.”

“I bet you do,” I mutter under my breath, chuckling. Hearing my comment, Tristan grins wider but doesn't say anything more. He places a soft kiss on Layla's forehead and heads back inside.

Layla nuzzles back against me, and I whisper, “Your ass is in so much trouble.”

“I know,” she chirps. The two of them couldn’t be more perfect for each other. She loves to push his buttons, and he lives to put her back in her place when she does. “What was it you were about to tell me?”

I flex my fingers around the stemless glass in my hand. “Rory’s asked me to move in with him,” I share.

Her eyes go wide, and her lips part slightly in surprise. “Really? That’s... big! Did you say yes?”

I bite my lower lip and stare back at her uncomfortably as I mumble, “I didn’t tell him anything.” I’m on the fence, terrified at making such a giant step but also feeling like it’s the right decision. “It’s too soon, right?”

Layla laughs softly. “Don’t ask me. I moved in with Tristan about a week after we met.” She’s not wrong. Her relationship with Tristan was a whirlwind—all of it so fast, but it was right for them.

“Yeah, but you two are different,” I point out. “The two of you were practically all in from the moment he poured whiskey down your dress.”

“And the two of you aren’t?” She lifts her chin, and I find her staring up at me with a serious expression. “Blind men could see the way the two of you look at each other... That man loves the hell out of you, and you can’t deny that or what you feel for him.”

She isn’t wrong. Fuck, she’s never wrong when it comes to my love life. Rory has opened up so much in the past couple of months. I know more about him than anyone in my life.

Except my first love... Layla .

“It’s okay if you’re a little worried.” Layla’s tone is soft and comforting. “Giving someone your heart and your future is a little scary. But don’t let this keep you from being happy. Because the two of you deserve to be happy.”

Hugging her, I press my lips to the top of her head. “Thank you.”

When I pull my phone from my pocket, I swipe my fingers over the screen to pull up my text messages from Rory. My eyes are immediately drawn to the last two he sent.

RORY

I love you.

I’ll be home by 9. You should come over after Layla’s.

Home .

The first night I went there—my heart pounding—I remember how warm and cozy his place felt. I’ve always felt comfortable there, and it’s... home .

Yes...

I’ll move in with you.

“Done,” I inform Layla, putting my phone on the table. “I said, yes.”

“I know.” She smirks, snuggling into me tightly. “You couldn’t have said no if you tried. The two of you were meant to be together.”

CHAPTER TWENTY

RORY

We fall onto the mattress—panting, sweating, and satiated—with the sheets tangled around. We curl together, tangling our limbs, as we both try futilely to catch our breath. Jorge’s exhale blows across my chest as I pull him against me.

His heavy breaths slow, and he grows more still as I hold him in our dimly moonlit bedroom. Having him here day and night has been nothing short of incredible. Being with him brings me comfort—peace. But I want more. The simple thought passes over my lips—almost involuntarily—at just above a whisper. “I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“Me, too.” Jorge’s response is slow and sleepy, but there’s warmth and love behind it.

Tightening my embrace, I pull him closer. “No... That’s not...” I stammer, trying to get my words right. Trying to make this special and memorable. “That’s not what I mean, mo rúnsearc. I’m trying to... apparently very poorly... to ask you to marry me.”

The room falls silent, and Jorge moves slightly in my arms. His face slides along my chest, and I feel his eyes on me. Glancing down, I find them wide with surprise. He blinks blankly as though he’s still trying to comprehend my words.

“Marry you?” he asks, his voice ticking up an octave.

I laugh, trying to hide my nerves with humor. “Is the thought of marrying me that appalling?”

“No...” Jorge laughs with me. “It’s just... I didn’t expect...” I know he didn’t. For as much as I was afraid to let him in, I’ve been ready to propose to him for months. And I did already... fucking poorly that time, too, because he thought I was asking him to move in with me. I mean, I was—as my husband.

Climbing off the bed, I place one knee on the hardwood floor. He shifts to look at me, and the moonlight washes over his face. The way he’s looking at me is enough to make me forget my own name, much less why I’m kneeling on the floor. Reaching across the bed, I gently take his hand into mine. My thumb brushes tenderly over his knuckles as I hold his gaze.

“Jorge Rivera”—I swallow the lump in the throat—“will you marry me?”

Waiting for his response feels like an eternity, but it all melts away when he rolls toward me. His face inches from mine; he cups my cheek and grazes his thumb over it. With soft but sure words, he exclaims, “Yes. Yes, Rory McLaughlin! I will marry you.”

I pull him toward me and, cupping his face, I press my lips to his. Our embrace feels like a promise. A promise of forever and a lifetime of growing old together. We’re both breathless when we finally pull apart.

My heart races as I press my lips to his forehead and whisper, “Your lips... They’re the last I’ll ever kiss.”

Jorge’s hand slides around the back of my head and pulls me toward his mouth for another kiss. “Then you better make sure you like them.” I crash against his mouth without an ounce of hesitation. Claiming his mouth, I stand from the floor and climb onto the bed with him.

Our hands and mouths roam each other's bodies until I grow hard again. Climbing between his thighs, I settle against his ass. My forearms press into the mattress beside his head, and I lean over him and stare into his dark eyes. Holding his gaze as I tenderly press into him again, I promise, "The last man I'll ever fuck." Languidly thrusting into him with long, deep strokes, I run my fingers through his hair. "But most importantly," I whisper, dusting my lips over his. "The last man I'll ever love."

The only man I'll ever love.

"I love you," Jorge whispers, sliding his hand along my chest and over my heart.

My lips dusting over the stubble on his jaw, I vow, "And I'll spend the rest of my life making sure you never regret it."

Stilling deep inside him, I kiss him softly as I pull him tight, feeling his heart pounding against my chest—matching the racing rhythm of my own.

This is going to be my forever.

Jorge is going to be my forever.