



Dumping the Puck (Men of Havoc #4)

Author: J. Hutchison

Category: Sport

Description: Wren Kaydell

I ran away from my wedding with the groom's brother, and my best friend.

He whisked me away on a dream honeymoon, managing to plan it all in mere hours, and shielded me from the fallout once again.

Like always, he risked everything to be there for me. That's just the kind of friend he is.

But when feelings start to get too real, we're faced with crossing a boundary we've never crossed. Crossing it will irrevocably change everything we've ever known and there won't be any going back.

Will we both be able to admit our true feelings for each other?

Kayce Bicknelle

I just cleaned up my bad boy reputation with the media, so knocking my brother out at the altar on his wedding day wasn't my best move. Neither was running away for a week at the start of pre-season with his bride.

A suspension pushes my patience to the edge along with my teammates. Testing my cleaned up image at every turn.

With no room for failure, I need to win both my team and the love of my life over. Not coming out on top isn't an option.

Will we get our own version of a happily ever after or will the clock run out?

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Watching the love of my life get engaged to my brother is ranking in the top five worst days of my life.

Probably second only to the day I watched my brother shoot his shot, and make it. Wren has been in our lives since she and Cameron were in Kindergarten, and I was in first grade. She and I were inseparable. Sure, my brother would tag along, but Wren was my best friend from the day her family moved in down the dirt road from our farm.

My brother and I have never gotten along. His whole life he's been the epitome of an entitled golden child. His charm tricks any girl he wants, only he cheats on any of his girlfriends that last more than a week. And I'm pretty sure he only asked Wren out to get under my skin. So the fact that now he's proposing, is a bunch of bullshit.

The only reason I haven't stepped in to beat the shit out of him is because, as far as I know, he's kept his dick to himself.

I stand leaning on the rock wall in the park where he just proposed to my girl. My heart feels like it's trying to claw its way out of my chest. Cringing, I try to find a way out as Cameron comes toward me. I'm only here for his engagement because my mother asked me to be here, to show a united family front to the rest of the world. She only wants the photos for her social media. We both know that Cameron is the only son they actually care about. But really, I'm here for Wren. Pretending to be the most supportive best friend ever.

"Brother. I won, huh?" He slaps me on the back.

“Won what?” I take a long sip of the beer in my hand.

“The girl obviously. I got her, not you.” He snickers, leaning his back on the wall next to me.

My fists clench, and I remind myself I can’t punch my own brother here in public. I just got out of the tabloids for being the angry bad boy at the urging of my coach and the PR guy for my team. Punching my brother definitely takes me a few steps back.

“Is that why you proposed? So you could win ? You’ve been dating her for six years just so I couldn’t?” My lips curl into a snarl. He better fucking think about his answer wisely.

Except he doesn’t answer, he just walks away after smirking at me and beelining it to the bar he hired for this event, where he casually excuses himself past the leggy blonde by touching the small of her back. A gesture that seems too familiar for her to be a stranger.

Goddammit.

Wren is standing with a group of their friends, showing off her engagement ring. But her smile...it isn’t real.

Her real smile lights up her whole face, causing the golden specks in her hazel eyes to sparkle. Her nose scrunches up, and it’s so big it reaches the apples of her cheeks. Accompanied by an infectious belly laugh that gets everyone around her to laugh too.

This one though, it’s polite. A closed lip smile that shows the demure attitude she’s taken on since Cameron got a promotion and trained her to be restrained and quiet. I refer to it as her Stepford wife training, but only in my own head. Sit quietly, look pretty, and turn a blind eye to the cheating.

She looks up catching a glimpse of me, and I get a small peek at the woman I once knew.

After excusing herself from the group she starts to make her way over to me.

“Can you believe it Johnny? I’m engaged! And we’re going to be a real, actual family!” She launches herself at me.

I wrap my arms around her in a hug. “Yea, June. You are. But you’ve always been my family.”

Daddy gave us our nicknames when we were in high school. He loved Johnny Cash. And when we were spending every minute of our time together, he dubbed us Johnny and June.

The day he died, he pulled me aside, sending my brother and mother out of the room. He told me, “ That girl is your true June, son. Don’t you let her go without tellin’ her how you feel. ”

He made me promise. But the problem is, Cameron overheard him. He was jealous and pissed that I had just gotten scouted by the Havoc. A week later he and Wren were going on a date. Now six years later, they’re engaged.

He never could stand that Daddy and I were as close as we were, while he was closer to Mama. And when Mama remarried a wealthy guy in finance, I was officially forced out of the family unless I was needed for an appearance.

“You’re gonna walk me down the aisle, right?”

Wren’s family disowned her the minute she turned eighteen and they could legally choose to not be parents anymore. Forcing her to move in with her grandparents.

Unfortunately, Papaw passed away a couple of years ago.

“Absolutely, you know I’m always here for you.” I choke out. “Anything you need. You’re the little sister I never had.”

The words taste bitter on my tongue. It’s a lie I started spinning with her the day she moved in with Cameron. And every time I tell it, I hate myself a little bit more for choosing to keep the peace and let her be with Cameron, respecting her choice.

She kisses me on the cheek in thanks, bouncing off to find my brother.

Chugging the rest of my beer, I stalk off to find someone I can bury my dick in for the night, trying to erase my feelings for Wren. A little like an alcoholic searching for the answers in the bottom of a bottle.

It never works, though.

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1 year later

Lord. How could I be this fucking stupid?

I knew the kind of man Cameron Bicknelle was when he asked me out. But I stupidly thought that by accepting a date with Cameron, his brother Kayce would tell me not to go, that he's been secretly in love with me all this time, like I was with him.

That never happened.

Cameron however, wooed me. Wined and dined me for months. I never saw him with another girl, and he convinced me that him being a playboy was just the active rumor mill. It worked. I fell in love with him. Or so I thought.

And today, on my wedding day, I regret everything. All of it.

Because his mistress showed up at my hotel last night. With photos, text messages, emails, gifts. And now I have it all, sitting with it in my bridal suite. None of my bridesmaids know a thing and I won't tell them. Because he slowly got me to leave my true friends behind. His friends were better, smarter, funnier.

And I let him do it.

The only person I have here for me is Kayce Bicknelle, his brother. And the true love of my life I never got over.

I'm surrounded by Cameron's friend's wives. All of them in the perfect blush pink

dresses, fawning over me as I sit in the cupcake dress, staring blankly at the mirror. Not one of them has noticed my tears. And I've heard their whispers behind my back, even on my wedding day.

The only thing holding me together is knowing what's going to happen when the wedding march starts to play, and my last bridesmaid is in place.

"Girls! We will be walking in two minutes! Time to line up!" The all too chipper wedding planner that Cameron's mother hired comes in to gather us up.

I don't move.

"Come on, honey! No one can get married without the bride!" She directs at me, telling a joke like she's on a stand-up comedy tour. She's only encouraged by the girls' snickering.

"I just need a moment. Could you please send Kayce in?" I stand up, walking over to look out the window at the beach spread out before me.

I hate the beach. I hate sand, the ocean terrifies me, and it's so sticky-hot all the time.

"If you need him." She purses her lips, clearly disagreeing with me.

As soon as I'm alone the tears start to flow freely. The dress feels too tight, too heavy, and too fucking much. Like it's all of a sudden suffocating me.

"June?" Kayce peeks through the door.

"Get...it..off...me..." I sob out between gasping breaths, clawing at the dress that I can't seem to get off.

He runs over to me, grabbing me by my shoulders. “Hey, hey. Look at me.”

I stop and do as he says, looking up at him.

“Breathe with me, June. Breathe.” He takes a deep breath in and says, “In.” He lets it out. “Out.”

We repeat the exercise two or three times until my breathing returns to normal.

“Good, you’re good. What is going on?” He’s clearly confused as I’ve never told him anything negative about my relationship with Cameron. In fact, we steer clear of any conversations regarding Cameron.

“I can’t. I can’t do this. I can’t marry Cameron.” My voice increases in pitch again.

“Hey, hey, whatever it is, we’ll get through it.” He pulls me into his arms and holds me tight. “I promise, I’ll do whatever I can.”

“Please, just get it off.” I hop back and forth on my tiptoes, trying and desperately failing to get this damn dress off me.

He obliges me and spins me around to pull down the zipper. I let it fall from my body and jump out of it as soon as I can. Standing back and looking at the pile of tulle on the floor like it might come back to suffocate me once again.

I’m not even aware that I’m standing in front of Kayce in the white lace bra and underwear set that I got from my bridal shower.

I don’t notice until I catch the way he’s staring at me.

“Johnny, can you do me a favor and then after I promise I will tell you everything.” I

sob into my hands, the jogging in place, hopping from one foot to the other hasn't stopped. The nervous energy needs somewhere to go.

"Anything for you, June."

"I need you to buy me time, go out there with the girls, convince them to start and then follow them down without me, up to your brother. Tell him that I know, and then turn these on." I hold out the remote for the TVs for him.

I convinced the wedding planner that I had a special surprise for Cameron. And in a way I do, but it's not the one she's thinking of.

"June, I -"

"Please." I rush toward him, grabbing his hands in mine and squeeze them tight. "I'll meet you in your truck after and tell you whatever you want to know as long as you get me far away from here."

He nods, dropping the keys in my hand and walking away to where the girls are gathered in the lobby as I watch through a sliver of an opening in the door.

I can finally let out a breath of relief when the music starts for the girls to walk down the aisle. I throw on the leggings and tee that I had on this morning, grab my purse and run out of the bridal suite, straight to the Silverado that will be my safe haven.

I probably owe it to Cameron and his parents to have this conversation with them face to face, and probably not publicly, but the closer I got to walking down that ugly ass green carpet to him, the more my stomach turned. So I took the coward's way out. I sent Kayce to handle my mess for me. Exploiting the fact that he's always there for me.

God, I'm just as bad as Cameron. Using people to my own advantage.

I approach Kayce's black Silverado, parked near the back of the parking lot. I smash the button to unlock it about six times just to be sure it'll be ready for me.

When the familiar click sounds and the door pops open, I hop in like my ass is on fire and slam the door shut. The panicked feeling is coming back. Panic that someone is going to come out here and find me to drag me back inside and force me to marry Cameron.

I press myself back into the seat, trying to blend in. Then I wait for what feels like an eternity.

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Somehow the wedding planner is convinced easily that Wren wants the videos to play as she's walking down the aisle. Whatever Wren told her earlier has her swooning like Cameron and Wren are some sort of freaking princess movie all the girls like to watch.

The bridesmaids go first, walking slowly down the aisle with fake smiles plastered on their faces. I know for a fact that half of them have fucked my brother while married to their husbands, his friends .

Once the last one is in place the doors open to me, alone.

All eyes are trained on me. Waiting for me to speak. Which I am not prepared for.

“Wren has a surprise for her groom. She wants it to play while she walks down the aisle.” I announce robotically to a room full of people I can't fucking stand.

I follow the same path as the bridesmaids, stopping at Cameron.

“She knows.”

I turn on the televisions as the slideshow presentation starts with a video of Cameron and another girl.

“Why won't you marry me instead, Cammy? Aren't I prettier than her?” The woman in the video coos at my brother.

His response is just what I expect.

“You know why. I have to marry her. I can’t let Kayce win something else he wants. He’s already a fucking professional hockey player. But I got the love of his life. Besides, I’ve put almost seven years of training into her. She’s the perfect wife to cook my bosses dinner and not bitch. But you’re fun, perfect for me after she falls asleep in that miserable house.” He nuzzles into her neck as she giggles and leans into him like that’s the best compliment she’s ever heard.

Anger boils beneath my skin as the slideshow continues with photos. Nudes. Dick pics. Sex videos. Text messages. Documenting their entire relationship back to before the engagement.

On instinct I punch him. Hard, and my fist connects with his nose. Right where I want. The blood starts flowing and sprays onto the crisp white button down I’m wearing. He crumples to the floor at my feet. I stand tall, and step over his body retracing my steps back down the aisle and straight out of the venue to my truck where Wren awaits me. I don’t give a shit who is trying to stop me.

My step-father is chasing after me screaming my name. But I don’t stop. Not until I get to Wren.

Getting in my truck, I slam the door on my step-father and stick my hand out to Wren for the keys, without looking at her I feel the keys touch my palm.

I start the truck and peel out of the parking lot leaving rubber marks on the spot where my truck was once parked. A permanent memory of what happened in there.

Staring straight out the windshield, trying to simmer the anger before I talk to her. Trying to reconcile the fact that I just knocked my brother out cold in front of everyone on his wedding day and walked out with his blood on my shirt.

The tabloids are going to love that.

“Johnny,” her meek voice sounds to my right.

I don’t answer. I just put my hand out with my palm up. She puts hers in mine and doesn’t push me to talk just yet.

I drive until I hit the highway, heading back to Houston, and find a rest area to stop at when the anger has subsided just a fraction.

Parking in the first available spot I turn to Wren, silent tears run down her cheeks. “How long?”

“How long what?”

“How long have you known he’s been doing this to you?” I lift the center console off the seat to turn and face her, pulling her toward me until our knees touch.

“I mean. I’ve been ignoring the signs for a while. But actual proof? Last night. She was waiting outside my hotel room for me. She had all that proof on a thumb drive. She knew I’d leave him. Do you know who she is?” She rests her head on my shoulder.

“Yeah, June. I do.”

“Who the fuck does this to their best friend? And their brother? Did you hear what he said about you? I was always just a game to him.” She cries into her hands. “What was the chaos that you left behind?”

“I punched him, he passed out and I stepped over him to leave. I didn’t stop to listen to anyone.”

She reaches out to touch the spots of blood sprayed on my shirt. “How hard did you

punch him?”

“Hard enough.”

She gulps loudly. “Oh, God, what did I do?”

“What you had to do. I’m sure our phones are blowing up. This is your call. What we do next is totally up to you.”

She pulls out her phone, flashing the screen to me with all of her notifications. “I want to get far away.”

“What about your honeymoon? It’s only a week but we could get away for a minute, let things calm down here.”

“We?” For the first time today, she flashes me a small smile.

“I’m here for you. If I have to go on vacation and sip cocktails with you, I’ll take one for the team. For you.”

Her laughter fills the truck. A true, genuine laugh, although it’s short lived.

“Okay. Let’s go.” She sombers again. “He can fuck his girlfriend, and we’re going on vacation on his dime.”

Silently, I pull the truck back onto the highway, heading to the malls.

I don’t have clothes for a week-long vacation, and I’m ninety percent sure she doesn’t have anything in that small bag she always carries around with her.

“Is it true?” she whispers from the passenger seat.

“What?”

“What he said in the video, he got the love of your life?”

I look over at her briefly, seeing the vulnerability in her eyes. “Do you want the truth?”

“Yes. No. Maybe not yet.” She sighs.

I reach over to squeeze her thigh. “You tell me when you’re ready.”

She doesn’t say anything, she just goes back to watching the scenery pass by out the window as we cruise down the highway toward Houston.

I let her stay in silence until we pull into the parking lot of the mall. I can’t imagine what is going through her mind right now. Cameron is an ass, but she must have loved him, or still loves him. The thought makes my stomach sour.

“What are we doing here?” She sits up straighter looking around.

“Well I don’t have clothes for a vacation. Do you?”

“I didn’t get that far in my plan, I guess.” She shrugs, not making eye contact. A sure sign she’s embarrassed.

“Didn’t think so.” I wink at her, trying to get her to feel comfortable again.

I hop out of the truck, changing my blood stained shirt for a Havoc tee I have in the back. I go around to her side of the truck. She knows when she’s with me she doesn’t open a door. Ever.

Pulling her door open she slides out, lacing her fingers with mine as we walk across the hot pavement. Heat radiates up our legs in the Texas heat.

“So. Where are we going on this honeymoon?”

She huffs out a breath and rolls her eyes. “Fucking Jamaica. How cliché is he? He had one job and it was to book our dream honeymoon.”

“Ok. Well that could be fun. What kind of excursions did he book?” I push for more information.

“None. He wanted to relax with a beer after the stress of planning the wedding.” Another eye roll as we push through the doors. “Like he made even one choice.”

“You hate sitting around. It makes you fidgety and you feel like you’re going to crawl out of your skin, and his plan was to make you sit on a beach all day?” He’s such a fucking dick.

“Guess so. Better buy some bikinis.”

“Nope. Not going to Jamaica. I’ve got this covered, I’ll fix it. You’ll get the honeymoon of your dreams, June.”

She veers into a store and I follow while texting my assistant.

Me: I need your help.

Charley: Aren’t you supposed to be at a wedding?

Me: Got called off. You free to help or what?

Charley: Touchy, touchy, boss. At the risk of not losing my job tonight, I'm here to help.

Me: Here's a link to a Pinterest board. No budget. Make it happen, please?

Charley: Uh, My Dream Honeymoon? You leaving out some details of this called off wedding?

Me: A lot. Let's just say my brother is an asshole to be nice, and Wren deserves her dream honeymoon after dealing with him.

Charley: Oh this is for Wren? You could have led with that.

Me: Just let me know when flights are booked. We're in Houston. I want to leave as soon as possible.

Charley: hand salute emoji

I shove my phone back into my pocket, rejoining Wren on her quest to find clothes for a mystery vacation.

"So I don't need bikinis? Can you tell me where we're going, or what weather to pack for?"

"Summer. Maybe some cooler nights too." I finger a barely there bikini, and decide to push my luck. "A few of these too," I say, pulling it off the rack winking at her.

"Kayce!" Her cheeks blush red as she rips the scraps out of my hand. "I couldn't be caught in public wearing this. What will people say?"

I pull her close to me, whispering into the shell of her ear. "That I'm the luckiest

bastard alive.”

She shivers at my proximity, but pulls away from me instead of leaning in.

We stare at each other, the tension radiating off me. I’ve always been careful not to get too close when she was with Cameron. All our flirty touches stopped the moment she went on a date with him. Now that I’m free to have that back, I’m taking advantage.

She breaks contact first, reaching past me for a flowy summer dress, “Would this be good?”

“Absolutely.” I don’t look. I don’t break my gaze on her. But I see the flowing lavender material in my peripheral.

I don’t care what it is, she’ll look fucking stunning in it. She always does.

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While checking out with my own luggage and clothes, my phone vibrates in my pocket. Pulling it out, I see Charley's name flash across the screen.

"Hey Charley, tell me some good news."

"I just want to say, I deserve a raise. A good one. Also, you better call Hamlin, you're supposed to be back in a few days and I'm assuming you won't be," she reprimands me.

Shit. I didn't think ahead this far. I'm in deep shit with Coach for disappearing an entire week of pre-season games. He'll be my next call.

"I'll handle it. Tell me the good news that means you deserve a raise."

"I got you booked on a private jet, leaving in an hour—"

"A private jet? Jesus Charley, when I said no budget, I meant commercial airline no budget, not private jet no budget." I scrub my hands over my face, this is going to fucking cost me.

"Listen, are you going to interrupt me every time I answer you? You said no budget, make it happen . I made shit happen."

"Sorry, Charley."

"As I was saying, the jet is leaving in an hour, the original passengers bailed so since they have already paid most of it, my friend is willing to do this for the same cost as

the commercial flights. I booked you a private villa, at Suite Principessina, you'll have a private balcony and sea access. Very romantic. I'll email you the itinerary that I planned for you. Now say, Thank you, Charley. You're the best assistant I'll ever have and you get a big fat bonus for dealing with Hamlin and last minute travel. ”

“I'll deal with Hamlin, just tell him that you haven't heard from me.” I purposefully don't repeat after her to get under her skin. Even though she is the best assistant I've ever had.

“You're a dick. Check your email, and don't get your brother's ex-fiancee pregnant. Keep it wrapped.” She ends the phone call without any other words to me.

If I hadn't met Wren as a kid, I'd probably have screwed up my working relationship with Charley. She's one of a kind, and holds her own against the other players she works for on the team, especially when we get a new rookie who thinks their shit doesn't stink because they got into the NHL.

Waiting for Wren to complete her selections, I motion to her that I'm stepping out to make a phone call.

Dread takes over. I'm about to lie to Coach. I fucking hate that. I don't want to lie to him.

“Hamlin.” He answers like he works on Wall Street instead of knowing that it's me because he has my damn number saved.

“Coach. It's Kayce.”

“Yup. I know who y'are. Don't know what ya want or why you're interrupting my evening.”

“Sorry. I have a family emergency. I’m going to need to miss a few more days.” I blurt out quickly.

“How many? I can give ya one or two days but you need to be back for the pre-season games. I can’t fight the big wigs on that.” I can hear the stress creeping into his voice.

“I need a week.”

“No. Nope. Can’t do it —”

“Coach. Please. It’s an emergency. I can’t leave.”

He sighs so loud I have to pull the phone away from my ear. “Fine. But you’ll be back in one week. And you better have a good fucking reason to be putting me in this position with Terry.”

“Thanks Coach. I really appreciate it. Enjoy the rest of your evening.”

He mumbles about not being able to enjoy it when I fucked it up as he ends the call.

I let out a sigh of relief. Now I just need to spin a lie about this family emergency that isn’t me going on a honeymoon to the Amalfi Coast with my brother’s ex-fiancée.

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I walk out of the store to find Kayce standing by the fountain, his hand on his hip and his head thrown back in what looks like frustration while talking to someone on the phone.

Suddenly it dawns on me that he's in the pre-season. He has games and practices all this week that he couldn't miss and that's why he only took three days for the wedding.

I'm so fucking selfish. How did I not think about this?

I walk over to him slowly, giving him time to finish the conversation he's having. When he spots me he gives me a megawatt smile like I light up his world.

He slides his phone back in his pocket as I approach him and he takes the bags from my hands.

"Ready for this surprise honeymoon, bride?"

"Ugh." I groan at the word, reminding me that I should be enjoying my first dance with my husband right about now.

"Too soon?" He places his hand on the small of my back ushering me toward the truck.

"Definitely too soon." I hop into the truck door being held open for me and heave all our bags into the back as Kayce hands them to me.

Once he's in the truck and we're both buckled, driving to the airport, I ask again to see if he'll crack. "So now can I know where we are going?"

"Nope. You'll know when we land. I'm not ruining the surprise. Charley worked hard and she'd murder me."

"I'm so glad Charley was able to get the reservations changed. I was worried that you guys would have trouble with everything being in his name. But I guess you're brothers so you could pretend to be him."

"Yeah. It's good," he responds despondently.

He passes the airport.

"Where are we going?" I ask as he keeps driving.

"The hangar."

"Um, this is where private jets fly out of?" I stare out my window trying to reconcile with the fact that he's turning into the private jet hangars.

He doesn't answer me, just parks next to one of the buildings.

Panic settles in. Cameron is going to lose his shit. This is way too much money on his card. Oh, my God. What did I do?

My breaths come out in heavy quick panicked puffs. My chest heaving. I feel like I did in my wedding dress, that suffocating feeling is creeping back in.

I'm swung out of the passenger's seat and into Kayce's hard chest. "Breathe with me, June."

I listen, breathing in when I feel his chest rise, and out when it falls back.

When my breaths return to normal, and the panic starts to subside, Kayce looks at me with his brow furrowed in worry. “Tell me what caused that.”

“Cameron. He’s going to be so pissed. This was so much more money than Jamaica. I know he didn’t splurge on our honeymoon. And then I just left, I’m going to have to deal with these consequences and so much more and —”

“I paid for it. Not Cameron.” He cuts me off.

“What?”

“The honeymoon we’re taking. Charley was able to do it so easily because it’s my money. Not Cameron’s.”

“Why would you do that? This is so much money! And you have pre-season games! You need to go back to work.” My thoughts spiral.

“My games are my concern. It’s taken care of and you don’t need to worry about it. Also, it’s my money, I can spend it how I like. And I want to spend it on you.” He kisses the tip of my nose, pulling me out of the truck, and grabbing our luggage.

I take a deep breath, readying myself for this trip. If I thought I had put my love for Kayce in the rear view, I was wrong. Being taken care of by him was bad enough, but that sweet kiss to the tip of my nose, that did me in. And I shouldn’t be feeling anything for another man when my wedding reception is happening.

Not to mention how complicated my love is for him. Up until last night I thought it had been unrequited. Unless you count the sisterly love he’s been pushing.

God, that sounds surreal. I'm taking a private jet to go on a honeymoon with Kayce Bicknelle. Too bad it's on the heels of being a runaway bride.

I make the mistake of looking at my phone as I walk into the hangar before shutting it off for a week.

Cameron: What the actual fuck is wrong with you?

Cameron: You think you can just run out on me after getting my brother to fucking humiliate me like that?

Cameron: You have another fucking thing coming, bitch. Count your goddamn days.

Cathy Bicknelle: Sweetheart, this really is unbecoming of you to do this to Cameron. Just come on back, and we'll forget everything.

I can't keep reading these messages. I shut off my phone and throw it in the bottom of my purse to be forgotten about until I step foot back in Texas.

"Welcome Mr. and Mrs. Bicknelle. It's a pleasure to fly you this evening to the Amalfi Coast in Italy. My name is Alan. Our flight time is about twelve hours. The jet has a bedroom at the back if you'd like to sleep, and four seats. If you need anything please let Lucy know. She will be happy to assist you."

The two stand off to the side and show us the stairs to board the jet.

Holy shit. This jet is nicer than most houses.

I drop my bag on the seat, and turn to yell at Kayce for spending this kind of money. But when I turn, I'm faced with the hard lines of his chest. He grips my elbows to keep me from topping backwards.

“Easy there.” His deep voice and touch sends shivers down my spine and I’m squeezing my thighs together.

Fucking hell, Wren. Get yourself together.

When my wits come back to me I can finally remember why I was turning around in the first place. “The Amalfi Coast? Are you serious? How much money did this cost because I’m definitely sending you at least half. And if you don’t answer me, I’m calling Charley.”

“I don’t want half. And Charley will not tell you anything. She works for me.”

I narrow my eyes. Of course he’s right. Charley would never tell me especially if he tells her not to. Ugh.

We take our seats next to each other and get settled in.

“Mr. Bicknelle, your food has arrived. We will be departing in about ten minutes.” Alan brings in boxes of food and my stomach rumbles. I haven’t eaten since breakfast this morning.

Kayce takes our food and nods in response.

Handing me a takeout box he gives me a small smile and I rip it open, inhaling the heavenly scent that takes over.

“Oh, my God, you ordered me Burger Chan! I love you!” I place a quick kiss to his cheek and when I realize what I’ve done, my cheeks heat.

He doesn’t bring attention to my action and we settle into a comfortable silence as we eat and take off.

How the hell am I going to survive this just being his best friend?

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

I could die this morning, and be the happiest son of a bitch on the planet. When my eyes opened, I was tangled with Wren in the small bed on the jet. Her legs wrapped around mine, her arm thrown across my chest, and her hair tickling my face. Of course this isn't how we started the night. She made it a point to stay as far to the edge as she could when we decided to settle in for some sleep. And when she had to wear my tee to sleep in, fuck me. I've never seen anything sexier than her in the plain black tee I bought at the store before we left.

"Sir, I hate to wake you but we'll be landing in about forty-five minutes." Lucy gently taps my shoulder, letting me know.

"Thank you," I grumble out in my sleepy haze.

I push her long blonde waves off my cheek, and gather it in my hand to move off her own face. The temptation of having her hair wrapped around my fist, to just tug it gently to get her face toward mine, has my cock painfully hard first thing this morning. Instead of following through with my fantasy, I gently stroke her cheek.

"June, it's time to get up." One eye half pops open. "We'll be landing soon." Her other eye pops open. "We have about forty minutes until we land."

Once it dawns on her that we're in bed together she moves quickly, bumping my cock with her thigh, muttering something about this being a dream. The contact catches her attention, drawing her eyes to my lap.

"Jesus." Her eyes pop wide at the tent in the sheet. I know I'm well above average and this is the typical reaction. But he twitches at the thought of Wren Kaydell ogling

his size. “That’s...your...holy moly the genes aren’t the same.”

She continues muttering to herself as she climbs over me to get off the bed, connecting her pussy to my cock with very little fabric between us. Her sharp intake of breath lets me know that she’s just as affected by the contact as me.

“Oh, my God! I’m so sorry. I just need to...” She finally climbs over me, placing her two feet on the floor. “There we go. Sorry. I’m going to just go, uh, go. I’m going.” She scurries off to the bathroom with her clothes from last night, cheeks redder than the cherries we used to steal from old man Red’s farm.

Rolling over was the wrong move, because after her little morning chaos, my dick is screaming for some form of release. I swing my legs over the edge of the bed and scrub my hands down my face, then adjust myself before leaning over to dig around in my bag for something other than my tux I wore onto the plane last night.

Wren emerges from the bathroom, her cheeks still red from our encounter. I don’t make things any better when I stand and he’s at full mast tenting my boxer briefs, garnering her full attention with a slack jaw as I walk past her.

“Take a picture, June. It’ll last longer.”

A pair of socks comes hurtling at my head as I walk to the bathroom, making me chuckle before closing the door. The space is small but I pull my boxers down to my thighs, bracing myself with one hand on the wall as I palm my cock in the other. After twelve hours of constantly being this close to Wren, the pain is unbearable and I need release.

I conjure up images of Wren over the years as I stroke myself, gripping myself tighter the closer I get to the familiar tingle creeping up my spine. The last image I bring up in my mind is her perfect ass on display in my tee this morning. I’m so close cum is

dripping from my head.

“Kayce?” Wren calls me from outside the bathroom door.

Her sweet voice sends me over the edge as I growl my release, spilling into the small sink in front of me. “Fuckkkkkk.”

As I ride out the orgasm I hear her small feet pad away from the door, no doubt she knows what she just heard. Not like this plane has much sound proofing.

I clean up and change into a pair of joggers with another plain tee before leaving this small room to face the music with Wren. I’m not ashamed of what happened, but this is the first time she’s been witness. At least she doesn’t know it’s her face I fantasize about.

I’m bent over putting my stuff away in my bag when she comes up behind me and clears her throat.

I stand and turn to face her, “I didn’t know you were such a voyeur, June.”

“I don’t even know what that means.” She crosses her arms over her chest.

“It’s someone who gets off watching other people.” I wink.

“I wasn’t watching! I didn’t—” She huffs out a breath when I start laughing. “I just wanted to tell you that the flight attendant brought some muffins.”

She spins around on her heel and goes about five feet away to her seat where she begins unwrapping a muffin, picking at small pieces. Her leg shakes a mile a minute, the tell tale sign she’s embarrassed or pissed off.

I plop in the seat across the aisle from her, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine.” She says curtly. “It’s good to know my pussy barely touching you can have that effect.” She looks over at me with a broad smile on her face and I burst out laughing.

She scowls at me, her eyebrows furrowed and her lips pressed into a thin line which only pushes me to laugh more.

She was a virgin when she started dating Cameron. And the thought that she hasn’t learned anything from him about pleasure pisses me off as much as the thought of my brother touching Wren for the first time. That thought sobers me quickly.

When I reach for a muffin, she turns to look out the window, not making eye contact with me.

“June, I’m sorry. Really. I shouldn’t have teased you. I know you don’t like talking about sex. Or anything related to it.” I pinch her side.

We get an aerial view of the coast as we fly in, And it’s absolutely breathtaking. Watching Wren lean closer to the window, before just sliding over to the window seat makes my heart speed up. Knowing that I’m the one who can make her happy, give her the dream vacation she’s been planning since we were kids puffs my chest out with pride.

Shortly after, the plane jolts as we land. Once we pull up the hangar we are met with a black car to bring us to our villa. I looked up the listing that Charley sent me last night as I laid in bed trying to keep my hands to myself. It’s literally described as a private love nest. Charley is pushing hard.

Besides Viktor Karlsen, my teammate, she’s the only one who knows how I feel

about Wren. I should have known she'd take this chance to push me into telling her how I feel. She was all for me stopping the wedding and confessing my love for her mid- ceremony. I denied that request. If Wren felt the same way, I'd know.

"Ciao, welcome to Italy!" Our driver greets us, then takes our luggage to load into the car.

The ride to the villa is quiet, Wren's face is pressed against the window, taking in the scenery surrounding us. The narrow roads are giving me more of a panic attack than appreciation but this is for her, not me.

The car stops outside the most gorgeous hotel I've ever seen. It's on the cliff overlooking the sea. The view is stunning now that I'm not in a car speeding down narrow roads with drop-offs.

"You're all checked in Signore Bicknelle. Here are your keys, you are in Suite Principessina. Follow this hall and it's the fourth door on the left." He nods, dropping two keys in my hand.

"Grazie."

He walks back to the car and drives off, leaving me with Wren.

"Are you ready to see your room for the week?"

"Hell yeah!"

I reach out my hand for her luggage, but instead she laces her fingers with mine and I'm not about to argue with her. So, we walk hand in hand to our room.

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Holy shit. This room is beyond anything I could have ever imagined. The king sized bed sits in the middle of the bedroom, with a velvet chaise by the large windows overlooking the ocean. Walking over to the windows, I run my fingers over the soft fabric. The window leads me to a view that is better than any picture I've ever seen of the Amalfi Coast.

The private patio is what every girl dreams of when they think of a romantic vacation to Italy. The wrought iron fencing is wrapped in vines, and dotted with roses.

Kayce drops the bags down on the bed behind me, bringing me back to the room.

"Kayce, this place is..." I gesture around us. "It's too much."

"Does it match your Pinterest board?" he asks, moving past me to drop his new toiletries bag in the bathroom.

"My Pinterest board? That's how you planned this? How did you know I had that? I don't think anyone else even follows me there." If this man spent the time finding my dream honeymoon and planning it, I'm melting right here. Charley may have booked it, but he set it in motion.

He just shrugs, like this is no big deal. But my heart is beating faster at his thoughtfulness. I need to catch my breath so I walk away to unpack my luggage while he does the same. As I'm laying my new clothes out, sorting them into organized piles to quiet my anxiety, I slowly notice one small problem with this room.

There's only one bed.

Shit, shit, shit.

“Uhh, Kayce,” I call out.

“Yeah?”

“Did you know there was only one bed?”

He rolls his eyes, subtly enough I shouldn't have noticed. But at this moment I feel so aware with every move his body makes.

“I guess there is. I'll just sleep on the...” He looks around the room. “Whatever that thing is.” He points to the chaise.

I can't help the bubble of laughter that comes up. “On the chaise? The thing that is less than half your size? Are you going to kneel on the ground just to fit your head on the pillow?”

He stares at the offending piece of furniture for another moment before looking back at the bed. “You're right. I think we could share the bed. What if I promise not to touch you? Even if you beg.”

I nearly choke, “If I beg?”

He winks at me. “I'm going to go take a shower. Try not to do any more spying, June.”

My eyes widen, “Maybe you shouldn't be doing...that...again.” I gesture at his cock.

“Aww, I'm so glad you're thinking about me like that, June. Enjoy your time alone. Maybe you should try it.” Another wink in my direction before he shuts the door.

Is it hot in here?

I collapse on the bed on my back with my arms spread wide, not caring that I'm wrinkling all my clothes. Something that would have driven Cameron insane. I was never allowed to go out in public looking anything less than perfect. Even if it was for a late night ice cream run, or out to get gas. I had to be in a full face of makeup and fully dressed.

Laying here, my eyes start to close, the stress of the last twenty-four hours is finally hitting me, hard. Then I hear Kayce's soap hit the floor, jolting me upright.

Great. Now I'm imagining Kayce soaped up and naked. This doesn't bode well for me not begging him to touch me. I've never been so happy to hear the water shut off because now I know that he's going to be putting clothes back on his body.

What I wasn't prepared for was his scent to infiltrate the whole room. It's a scent that's been home to me for years, a source of comfort. I inhale the leather and wood as he walks out in a pair of khaki shorts with the army green tee I picked out for him. He looks like sex on a stick and I'm for sure staring. Yup. Definitely staring. Stop staring at the man, Wren! I blink a few times, bringing my eyes up to his.

"I'm next!" I practically shriek before grabbing my own clothes and running into the bathroom without making eye contact with him.

What is your problem?

You'd think I'd never met this man until today. That I'd never seen him before the way his body is affecting mine. But I've never had to sleep in the same bed as him, and I've never caught him jacking off after spending the night with me. Was he even thinking of me? Was he thinking of someone else? Oh, God, is he dating anyone? I've been so wrapped up in wedding planning I haven't been as present in his life as I

should have been lately, not that we discuss our dating lives too much.

But then Cameron said that I was the love of Kayce's life, and when I asked him about it he asked me if I wanted the truth. That wasn't a no... No. I need to stop this spiral. I can't jump from one Bicknelle brother to the other.

Even if his cock was perfectly outlined in the joggers he was wearing this morning. Even if his cock was pressing into me this morning and made me realize that I'd probably get hurt riding him.

I turn on the hot spray of the shower and step in. No more spiraling, and no more thoughts about his cock. He's here as my friend, and swore he wouldn't touch me, even if I beg him for it.

That reminder is the douse of cold water I needed to stop my train of thoughts and focus on my shower.

The shower was everything I need to refocus and be normal when I go back out there to him. Until I realize I forgot my panties in my suitcase. Fuck.

Sure in theory it sounds easy to just run out there and grab my panties and come back in to put them on. But then he'll see me grabbing them. And what if he thinks I'm taking too long in the bathroom? What if he thinks I'm having...bathroom issues? That would be absolutely mortifying.

I take a deep breath, and open the door in my towel. In all my debating I forgot that I might actually need to put the damn dress on. Oh well. Too late now, you idiot.

I march out of the bathroom with all the confidence of a Victoria's Secret angel, grab my panties, and turn around to find Kayce slack-jaw, lounging on the chaise, thumbing through a pamphlet. I toss a smile his way like the angel I am, and strut

right back in the bathroom before letting out the breath I was holding.

This is going to be a long week.

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Seeing Wren in the tiniest towel known to mankind was something I was one hundred percent not prepared for. Watching her strut across the room in said tiny towel like she's some kind of damn supermodel walking a runway was also not on my bingo card.

My dick instantly springs to life seeing her. Her perfectly round ass cheeks poking out from under the towel, and when she bends over further, giving me a glorious view of her bare pussy. Fuck. The sexiest thing is the pink on her cheeks. She had no intention of giving me that view, but she was too far into her show to stop right then. As long as I've known Wren, she's been shy about her body. Never wanting to show even the tiniest bit of cleavage. But she also never backs down when facing embarrassment. She just owns it, and pretends it was all part of her plan.

Once the bathroom door clicks shut, I need to get out of here. I can't be just lounging there like some earth-shattering moment didn't just happen. I jump off the chair and find my way out to the private patio. I think a moment of peace alone is just what we both need. The sexual tension between us is nothing like it's ever been. I can't figure out what's different this time. Other than that damn video where Cameron said she was the love of my life.

She didn't even want to know if what my brother said was true, which tells me she doesn't feel the same way. She chose Cameron. I'm just her best friend who's always been there for her and will always be there for her. I don't need to mix that up with sex.

No matter how badly I want to.

I lean on the fence overlooking the ocean, taking in a deep breath of the salty air.

Get it together. It's Wren. The same Wren she's always been. That show was purely accidental. Keep your hands, and dick, to yourself.

"Hey." Wren's soft voice comes from inside.

"Hey. Want to go grab some dinner?" I don't want to do this awkward small talk, or draw attention to something that she's bound to be embarrassed about.

"Yeah, that would be great. I'm starving. Did you have a place in mind?" She steps through the french doors and my breath is taken away.

She's in a light yellow floral sundress. There is nothing that's sexier than a woman in a sundress.

"Uh, I..." I stammer, staring at her. "I think there's a few cafes and piazzas around here. We could just go out for a walk and explore."

"Okay, uh...about earlier..."

"It's fine." I kiss her forehead. "Not the first one I've seen, probably not the last." I cringe inwardly as I pass her to go back inside and get my shoes. Why did you say that idiot? Way to make things worse.

She waits by the door for me, looking at the ground and not at me.

I approach her and tip her chin to look at me. "I'm sorry that was a dick thing to say." I need to break this tension between us. "It's a pretty great pussy if that makes you feel any better." I give her a lopsided grin.

“Kayce!” She slaps my shoulder, walking out the door. “We both know I didn’t mean to do that! It’s mortifying enough to know it happened, I don’t need you to comment on it.”

“Do you want to see my dick? Would that make it even? I’m not embarrassed by it, but you show me yours, I show you mine and all...”

The red creeps up her neck, “Ohmygod, no. Please keep your dick inside your pants.”

“If you insist.” She’s giggling at my joke, so mission accomplished. “What are you in the mood for?”

“Pasta, obviously.”

I swing by the desk in the lobby to ask them in very broken Italian where the best food is for a quick bite to eat. He shows me a website on his computer with the map and directs me to a cafe just a couple streets over.

“Okay, ready to go?” I place my hand on the small of her back leading her out of the lobby.

We stroll down the narrow winding streets, taking in our surroundings of the cliffs, the ocean, and old architecture. Our shoulders bumping into each other, and pinky fingers grazing the other’s hand. Something we’ve never had an issue doing was holding hands, ever since the fifth grade when it was weird to hold a girl’s hand. I’ve never shied away from holding Wren’s.

“This is it right here.” I point to the small cafe.

The smells that are coming out the open door are enticing us in. We take a seat by the window.

“I can already tell this place is going to be perfect,” she says, grinning over her menu.

She spends a few minutes looking at her menu, scrunching her nose every so often.

“Do you need help?” I place my own menu down.

“I think I know what two things are... I might just point and let him surprise me.”
She sets her menu down as the waiter approaches.

I order the frutti di mare with clams for both of us and tell him the best I can in Italian to ignore Wren’s order because both things she pointed to I know she won’t like. They have veal and she vehemently refuses to eat a baby cow.

She orders her meal that she won’t be getting, and looks at me proud of herself for getting through that with the waiter and successfully completing her first task in Italy. I will not be telling her that I ordered something different for her that I know she will like.

When the food arrives she wiggles a little happy dance in her seat. “Oh! I didn’t know we ordered the same thing!”

I smile. “It sounded good so I ordered it, too.”

“It looks so yummy.” She digs in, putting the fresh pasta in her mouth. A moan escapes her and I want to stand to adjust myself from that one small sound.

Unfortunately for me she doesn’t stop making noises the entire time she eats. By the time our meals are done I’m about to burst through the zipper of my shorts.

I pay the bill, and lace my hand with hers as we leave, walking down the street to explore some more.

“Want to get gelato with me?” she asks sweetly, stopping in front of the gelateria.

“Of course I do.”

We wait in line and both order the limoncello flavor. Once we get our gelato we head down to the beachside to eat by the water.

We sit on one of the rocks, our thighs touching, tempting me to want more of her body touching mine.

“Did you ever think we’d be here?”

“Where, June?”

“Here. In Italy. Together. Me a runaway bride from your brother. The only thing that sounds right about this is you saving me. You’re always there for me.” She looks down, trying to hide her sadness from me.

“And I always will be. No matter what.” I bump her with my shoulder and we finish our gelato in silence.

Ending the night overlooking the ocean with her head resting on my shoulder probably looks like we’re the happy couple on our honeymoon, but it’s something I know I’ll never truly have.

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Day 1: Ravello

Hey Boss, Figured you might be a little tired after your first night in Italy, IYKYK.
Winking emoji

So today you're going to visit the Villa Cimbrone to take Wren to see the gardens. Then you can go to Piazza Duomo to explore the local markets, she will love that. Then you can cook dinner together with your ingredients. I'm setting you up for success here, don't fuck it up.

To say last night was awkward was an understatement.

My little inadvertent show after my shower was mostly forgotten until bedtime. When it came time to share the bed.

Coming out from the bathroom, I climb into one side of the bed. Getting comfortable under the blankets.

I hype myself up, ready to settle in for a night in the sheets with Kayce Bicknelle, without touching him. Repeating over and over to myself that he's my best friend, and the same Kayce he's always been.

All of a sudden in the last twenty-four hours he seems to be more, and the sexual tension, holy crap.

At that thought he exits the bathroom and I can see the outline of his thick thighs encased in boxer briefs, and his muscled biceps being strangled by the sleeves of that

tee. While the darkness stops me from seeing all of him in his glory, it doesn't stop me from drooling.

Holy Moses. When did he get this hot?

He climbs into the other side of the bed, gingerly, trying not to allow himself to touch me in the slightest.

"I'm sorry Charley only booked us a one bed room."

"Oh it's fine," I squeak out.

"I promise I won't get close to you. I'll stay over here on my side."

"Kayce, it's fine. I don't think you have cooties or anythin'."

The exact opposite actually. I want him to touch me. I want his hands on every square inch of my skin.

He sighs and hunkers down for the night so I roll over and curl up in a tight ball, settling in for a long night of no sleep.

Now, I've been laying here, since sunrise. Wide awake and on high alert to avoid another plane incident. But his leg is across mine, and his arm is thrown over my chest. Somehow in the middle of the night we were like magnets to each other. Our bodies call to each other even though our brains repel the idea.

I know he's stirring because his dick is poking me in the thigh, and the feel of it has me thinking about him touching me again.

I squeeze my thighs together at the thought.

“Good morning,” he mumbles through his sleepy haze.

I gulp at the sound of his raspy deep voice. “Good morning. How’d you sleep?”

His arm tightens around my chest, “So good. How about you?” He pulls himself up on the pillows, dragging his cock across my leg.

“Uhh. Good.”

“Is this going to be a problem? I can sleep on the couch. I swear it’s fine.”

“Let’s have vacation sex.” I slap my hand over my mouth, surprised by myself and the words I just spit it out.

He laughs. “Vacation sex?”

“You know what, I didn’t mean that. I don’t know where it even came from . That’s so crazy of an idea,” I ramble.

He reaches out, running his finger under my chin pulling my face to his. “But you said it, and the way your body reacted to my cock dragging across your skin, tells me you did mean it. So, be honest. Do you want vacation sex?”

I don’t answer right away, pausing to think about how to answer.

While I’m thinking his hand slides down my thigh, and back up my inner thigh. My traitorous body reacts by dropping my thighs open just enough for his hand to barely reach me. He stops just before grazing my panty line.

“I need an answer right now. If I keep going, I won’t stop, June.”

My brain is scrambled. All I want is for him to touch me. “Yes. Touch me, Johnny.”

A growl from his lips registers right as he grips my hips and pulls me over his lap. Straddling him I can feel how much he wants this too. Like a teenager who's never been with a man before, I grind into him with too many layers of clothes between us.

He grips my face with both hands, pulling me down to him and taking my lips with his in a needy, demanding kiss. My palms rest on his chest between our bodies.

As the kiss deepens, his hands roam down to my silky tank and shorts set. He slips his hand under the hem of the tank and slides it up over my head. His lips leave mine and suck on my nipple on each breast, leaving behind hardened peaks from his warm mouth.

I lean back, and repeat his motions sliding my hands up under his shirt. He sits up a little for me to pull it over his head.

Right there on his chest, staring back at me, are the words You're the nearest thing to heaven.

One of our favorite Johnny Cash songs.

I freeze. Staring at the words etched over his heart.

“Johnny.”

“It's for you,” he breathes out.

I reach down, tracing the words with my fingers lightly. The first time Kayce ever held me in his arms was to this song. We danced together in the field under the starlight. I contemplated telling him that night how I felt. But his dad was in the

hospital and everything just didn't feel right. Everything but being in his arms.

Fuck. What am I doing? I'm about to ruin everything with the most important man in my life.

"I can't do this." I hop off him and run into the bathroom.

Slamming the door shut, I throw myself against the counter, staring in the mirror as my bare chest heaves up and down. How could I be this stupid to risk everything with Kayce? He has a goddamn tattoo for me.

My mind is spiraling back to what Cameron said on that video. That he took the girl Kayce loves. I start to run through every conversation I've had with Kayce. How he started to pull back from me when I moved in with Cameron.

Holy shit . Does Kayce actually love me?

If that's true, I can't do vacation sex with him. I can't rush into this decision. I can't risk ruining whatever this is with him before it can even start. Because I am not in a place to start anything with anyone.

Taking a deep breath, I splash some cold water on my face. I wanted to get ready, but then realize that all of my clothes are in the room with Kayce.

I suck it up and poke my head out of the bathroom, when I see Kayce sitting on the end of the bed, I brace myself to walk out into the room.

I walk gingerly to my side of the dresser, opening drawers and pulling out clothes.

"I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have blurted that out. You weren't ready for it. I just didn't want you to think it was meant for someone else. It was a lose, lose for me. But I

shouldn't have dumped that on you."

He doesn't look at me, he's still fidgeting with some invisible string in his lap.

"So what Cam said, it's true then?"

He nods his head. Not giving me an answer out loud.

I walk over and stand in front of him between his legs, placing a soft kiss to his forehead. "It's okay, Johnny. I just need a minute to process everything, ya know?"

Again a silent nod of acknowledgement.

I extricate myself from him, and go back to the bathroom, closing the door to give both of us the space we need right now.

Leaning against the door, allowing myself to sink to the floor, all the emotions are flooding through me at once. Kayce has the song I listen to in the dark of night, giving me comfort as it reminds me of him, tattooed on his chest. He feels the same way I do. Cameron knew all this time. My chest feels like it's constricting.

Slowly getting up, I turn on the water as hot as I can get it, and soak a washcloth to lay over my face. Deeply inhaling the steam helps me calm my nerves.

I just have to hope that this doesn't ruin our day at Villa Cimbrone.

Roaming around the gardens at Villa Cimbrone is nothing short of magical. It's everything I ever dreamed Italy would be. Kayce is putting on a brave face for me today after this morning. But I know everything is weighing on his mind.

How could it not be when we're strolling through beautiful gardens hand in hand. It's

the most romantic vacation that could be for two people in love. If only those two people hadn't fought it for years, and still refuse to talk about everything admitted less than five hours ago.

We stop at an arch overlooking the ocean. "Take a picture with me, Johnny."

I pull him into me by wrapping my arm around his waist. He leans into me and places his head in the frame of the photo so we can still see the view behind us. I snap a photo or two and then he leans down to kiss me on the cheek as I take the next photo. My shocked face is now forever frozen in this photo, but the next one shows the pure joy on my face at the fact that this man loves me.

Something I've wanted my whole life is now a possibility. But what will people think if I jump from Cameron's bed to Kayce's? And do I even care?

I pocket my phone and spin in his arms, pulling him to me and popping a leg. Every girl who's ever watched The Princess Diaries knows that the leg pop is a telling sign of true love.

"What was that for?" he asks when he pulls back.

"It just felt right."

"So are we going to talk about this morning? Or just kiss?" He lets me go, but keeps my hand laced in his.

"Can we just agree to go with what feels right for the trip? I don't want to ruin things by talking about them, and I don't want to ruin things by not talking about them. I just want to be happy this week. Is that selfish?" I rest my head on his arm as we walk.

He kisses the top of my head once again. “Anything you want, June. We’ll just be.”

Taking this step feels big. It feels big to admit that I want to be happy with him. The serious feelings and admissions can wait until we get back and deal with the fallout from walking out on Cameron.

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Day 2: Private Boat Tours and Grotta Azzurra

Just in case you couldn't close the deal last night with the romantic setting and cooking together that I set up, I figured I'd give you a day to be half-naked with her. And if you don't grow some balls and tell her how you feel by the end of this, I'm gonna be pissed.

Go to Il noleggio barche di Rocco, ask for Rocco. Tell him your name, and sign something for him. He will bring you around on a private tour to the caves and beaches as well as the Grotta Azzurra, Blue Grotto.

Fucking Charley.

If only she knew how well her little itinerary was working. And after Wren's declaration to just be on this trip, spending a whole day watching her in the tiny bikini she's currently sporting is making it really hard to not pull her into one of these caves and take her like, well, a caveman.

"How cool is this?!" she calls out from the shoreline we just pulled up to. "The view is just stunning! Have you ever seen anything so beautiful?"

I saunter up behind her, wrapping my arms around her middle, "I've never seen anything so beautiful."

Her body reacts to my breath on her skin and the pebbles take over every inch of exposed skin, which is a lot.

Her chosen reaction is a contrast to the way her body reacts unwillingly to me. “I meant the actual view, Kayce. Not me.”

“Well my view is you, and I’ve never seen anything more stunning.” She turns to face me with a raised brow. “What? You told me to just be. This is me, just being me with the most beautiful woman on this beach.”

She rolls her eyes, “I’m not going to survive this trip. Besides, you’re definitely lying. Look at that woman over there, she’s fucking gorgeous, the epitome of an Italian model.”

I look to where she’s pointing, and while objectively, yes, that woman is stunning, She’s nothing in comparison to Wren.

“I guess I just prefer blondes from small town Texas who are vacationing in Italy with their best friend, possibly friends-with-benefits. Possibly more?” I waggle my eyebrows at her but she’s saved from answering when Rocco approaches us with a blanket and picnic basket.

“Signore Bicknelle, il tuo pranzo.” He hands me the basket.

I peek inside and figure that il pranzo means lunch.

“Grazie.” I nod my head.

He walks back to the boat where he’s stayed the last few grottos leaving us to explore alone.

“Are you ready to eat?”

“Is that even a question? Of course I’m ready to eat!” She takes a seat on the blanket

that I've laid out for us on the sand. We set up the charcuterie style lunch with mozzarella, bruschetta, soppressata, prosciutto, and a various mixing of breads, cheeses, and olives in silence, listening to the small waves crashing on shore.

I pick out a piece of mozzarella and hold it out for Wren to eat. She takes it gently with her teeth, her lips wrapping around my fingers as she pulls away. My dick goes hard as her blush covers her chest.

She chooses a rose made of soppressata and holds it out to me. I place my lips around her fingers, curling my tongue around her to pull the rose from her. The blush deepens on her chest and neck.

We continue back and forth feeding each other, the sexual tension building until our moment is broken by another boat approaching.

"Want to swim?" I whisper in her ear.

She nods, and I stand reaching out to pull her up with me. I pull her tight to my chest, tipping her face toward mine with a finger under her chin. "Just so you're ready, when we get back to the hotel, I'm going to kiss you. Then I'm going to strip you of this bikini, and slide my fingers into your pussy to see how wet you are for me. Then I'm going to finally let myself feel you for the first time. Something I've been craving for a long, long time, June."

She sucks in a breath. I feel the muscles in her core clench at the thought. I drop a chaste kiss to her forehead and run off to the ocean.

The boat ride back is tense. I've spent the whole day finding small ways to touch her, turn her on, and fluster her. She's sitting across from me in silence, clenching her thighs together and I can't wipe the smile off my face.

“What’s the matter, June? Are you ready to get back and go to bed? Or maybe sit on the balcony?”

She glares at me and I just chuckle.

Rocco drops us off back at the boat rental. I toss him whatever money I have in my pocket for a tip and thank him profusely for such a fun day. Wren waits for me at the entrance to the marina.

“I thought you’d changed your mind, you took so long,” she teases.

“You can only hope.” I wink at her before lacing our hands together and pulling her up the hill to our hotel. I didn’t take into account having to walk back up after all my teasing. Trekking uphill with a hard on isn’t the most comfortable situation.

She laughs at me as I hurry, pulling her with me. But she won’t be laughing when I get her behind closed doors.

As soon as the door shuts behind me, I pull her flush against my chest. Her eyes widen at the sudden proximity.

“I told you what would happen, June.”

“I kind of thought you were kidding.”

“I’d never kid about craving you. So this is your last chance.” I push us toward the bed. “Is this something you want?”

“God, yes,” she breathes out.

Wrapping my hand around the back of her neck I pull her mouth to mine, frantic to

taste her lips. Laying her down on the bed I hover my body over hers as we back up to the headboard. Reaching behind her neck I pull the tie free on her bathing suit, releasing her breasts. I peel down the small triangles of fabric and palm each breast before sucking her nipple into my mouth.

A moan escapes her perfect lips. “Kayce.”

Hearing my name tumble out on a moan nearly has me coming before I even get to fully touch her. It’s a wet dream I’ve had since I knew what those were, coming to reality.

I reach between our bodies, releasing the ties on either side of her hips to open her to me. Sliding two fingers through her pussy I can feel the warm wet heat ready to greet me.

“I knew you’d be wet for me, June.”

“Touch me, Johnny. Please. Touch me.”

She writhes underneath me, waiting for me to do more, desperate for more.

I place another kiss on her lips before crawling down her body. Getting to take in her body in its entirety, knowing that it’s here for my taking is something that I never in my wildest dreams thought was possible.

I reach up to keep her breasts in my hands while I nudge her thighs open with my nose. I don’t hesitate to dive in, feasting on her pussy and eliciting the sexiest screams from her. I nip at her clit and then run my tongue over to smooth the sting. She starts to pulse and I know she’s close. But I’ll be damned if the first time I make her come I can’t feel it with my own dick.

I stand abruptly, ripping my board shorts down my body and jumping back on the bed. I'm about to slam into her when I remember that we have no condoms. I never thought this was a possibility, so I wasn't prepared for it.

"What the actual fuck are you waiting for?" she whines.

"I...uh...well...I don't have any condoms," I admit.

"Are you clean? I had a check up right before the wedding and hadn't touched Cam in weeks before that, thank God. And I have an IUD."

"Nothing has ever sounded sexier. I'm clean if you trust me." I lightly trace the soft skin of her neck with my nose.

Her hips buck up to meet mine. "I'll always trust you implicitly, Johnny."

Her breathless moans break me. I notch my cock, ready to slide in.

I go slow, letting her adjust to my size. Feeling how tight she is, I know she isn't ready for me to just slam into her.

"Oh shit. Shit. Shit," she hisses through gritted teeth.

I pull out, thinking that I'm hurting her and she whimpers when I do.

"Are you okay? Am I hurting you?"

"No! Please, fill me up. I need to feel you," she pleads.

I am not one to argue with a woman seeking her pleasure so I slide back in again, watching her take me inch by inch until I'm fully seated in her. I continue to watch as

I start to move, taking in the sight of her stretching tight around my cock.

“Fuck. Why is that so sexy to watch you watching us?”

I look up to see her staring at me with her bottom lip caught between her teeth.

“You want to watch too? You want to see us connected? My cock stretching you to the max as I slide in and out?”

She gently nods her head and I don’t need anything more than that. I scoop her up off the bed and bring her over to the chaise lounge by the windows and the full length mirror. Placing her feet on the floor I instruct her to bend over with her hands on the back of the lounge. I grip her hips, pulling her back to meet my cock.

“Watch us in the mirror, June. See how sexy it is.”

I grip my cock, tugging it a few times before lining up to slide back into her. I slip my tip into her, pulsing it back and forth, teasing her. Only this time I’m watching her face twist with pleasure while she watches me.

“You respond so well to my cock.” Slowly I slip farther into her, relishing the feel of the slick, tight heat. Her breasts are dangling as she leans over with her ass backed up into my pelvis. I watch as they bounce with each thrust. I need to start running hockey stats through my head so I can keep from coming too soon.

My hands roam from her hips around her sides to her breasts. I tweak her nipples in between my fingers, making her buck back into me further, connecting us even deeper.

“I’m so fucking close, Kayce. So fucking close, harder please.”

“You want it hard and fast, baby?”

“Yes,” she cries out.

I pull all the way out, leaving just my tip notched in. Then I slam in hard and fast, over and over, moving from her nipples to her clit. My movements are erratic as I try to hold off the tingling in my balls.

Her pussy starts pulsing around me, milking me for everything I’m worth.

“Oh, God, oh fuck. Yes, Kayce, yes!”

She screams out her orgasm and I let myself go, spilling my own orgasm into her. We both stare at our connected bodies, orgasming together in the mirror. This is hands down the best fucking sex I’ve ever had.

I’m fucking done. There is no way I can let her go back to Texas as just a friend, and give all this up. Nope. Never happening.

I collapse onto her back, kissing her neck, and sucking her earlobe between my lips before nipping at the soft skin behind her ear.

I can feel my orgasm, mixed with hers, starting to drip down her thighs.

“You are so fucking perfect, June.” I scoop her up in my arms, bringing her back to the bed before disappearing to get a warm cloth for her.

When I return, she’s laying spent on the bed like a starfish. A smile permanently etched on her lips.

Placing my knee on the bed, it dips under my weight. I gently wipe our pleasure from

her legs, cleaning her off the best I can.

“I’ve never...had...an orgasm... like that.” She bursts out between her breathless heaving.

I place a kiss on her lips, tossing the towel to the side before crawling into bed alongside her. I pull her close to me, wanting to feel how good she feels next to me, tucked in perfectly to my side. Just like I’ve always dreamed of.

Her breaths even out, and she snores lightly in my arms.

“I love you, June. You’re my heaven.”

I make the admission knowing she won’t hear me. I need to voice it, but she’s not ready to hear it.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Day 3: Cooking Class

Go to the hotel restaurant, you will be taking a cooking class with Chef Ricci. You'll be making your own pasta al limone with scialatielli pasta, and your choice of seafood, fresh mozzarella, and then the signature dessert of the Amalfi Coast — delizia al limone, lemon delight.

You will then be served this dish, if you don't fuck it up, for dinner on your private terrace overlooking the sea with chilled limoncello.

It's fine. Everything is fine. I repeat for maybe the hundredth time today.

I'm only slightly freaking out that I had sex with Kayce Bicknelle last night. The man that I've had spicy dreams about for most of my adult life. The brother of my ex-fiancé.

Ugh, what did I do?

"You can stop overthinking it, June." Kayce interrupts my thoughts as we walk to the restaurant on the hotel's site.

"What? No! I am not overthinking," I answer too quickly.

"Sure." He chuckles. "I'm just saying there's no need to overthink. We're just being , remember?" He nudges me with his shoulder before lacing his hand with mine.

"Buongiorno, Benvenuto!" We're greeted as soon as we step into the restaurant. "I'm

Capocuoco Ricci, and I am thrilled to teach you how to make our signature dish, pasta al limone!”

He gestures us back to the kitchen where we see a table full of ingredients. Flour, milk, fresh parmigiano, olive oil, basil, butter, and lemons fill the space in the cutest little Italian pottery dishes. I make a mental note to ask Kayce if we can go to the markets one day and find some. I wonder if they can ship to Texas. Or if we’re taking the private jet home and I can have them shipped to the hangar?

“Today, you get to make your own pasta. All the ingredients are here.” He slides the flour, milk, basil, and parmigiano to us. “I will make it first, showing you, then you can make it on your own together.” He smiles at us as he starts to pour flour out.

Both of us watch, captivated, as his hands move seamlessly with the food and tools. When he finishes we are set on our own and he walks away giving us our space to create and have time together.

Our first step is to chop the fresh basil leaves. Kayce grabs a knife, holding the basil how capocuoco showed us. His biceps bulge in the tee as he chops.

“You can stop drooling, June.” A smirk is on his face, but he only watches me from the corner of his eye.

“I wasn’t.” I start with my own basil, ignoring him. He chuckles next to me.

Once our basil is chopped, I grab the flour and measure out how much I need, and how much Kayce will need. I lean over into his space to pour out his measurement on the table, grazing his arm with mine.

He repeats the gesture with the milk, only he purposely grazes my breast as he reaches over me making me suck in a breath.

As I roll the mound of flour into the milk, mixing it, I bump his hip with mine, trying to throw off his concentration. Even though we aren't speaking, or even touching, the tension is so high between us. Before I mix my hands fully in the pasta mixture I grab the chopped up basil, sprinkling some into Kayce's pile after mine.

He reaches out, gripping my wrist and pulling me to him. He wraps his arms around me and grabs my ass cheeks to pull me to him, taking my mouth with his.

The chef clears his throat bringing us back to the present, and reminding us that we aren't in fact alone. When I turn back around, Kayce laughs that sexy, deep laugh. Only it's not as sexy when it's directed at me.

"What is so dang funny?"

"You have two perfect white handprints on your black dress," he says through laughter.

I turn to see if I can see my own ass and of course, he's right there are two prints right on my cheeks.

"Kayce! You better get this off!" I stick my ass out at him for him to wipe away. But then he holds up his hands to show that he still has flour on his hands, so I'm stuck with two white handprints on me. "Ugh. You're the worst!" I flick some flour at him in retaliation.

But again, a throat clears letting us know that this is unacceptable in his kitchen. And I don't want to be disrespectful so I turn back to cooking.

Under the watchful eye of Capocuoco Ricci we hang our pasta to dry while he shows us how to fill cannolis before we cook the pasta. The sweetened ricotta filled dessert is one of my favorites. My mouth is watering and I want to eat dessert before dinner.

“You are very good at this.” The chef nods at me and my technique.

His praise makes me blush. Compliments are something I’m wholly uncomfortable with, having never received many in my lifetime, and even less with Cameron. I don’t know how to handle these situations. Criticism, however, is what I know. My comfort blanket.

Whether it’s on purpose to draw attention away from me or not, the tip from Kayce’s pastry bag shoots out across the table. He does not get a compliment. And when I look at his cannolis I can see why. His look like a gorilla filled them with two left thumbs. Each pastry shell is covered in splotches of cream, as well as the plate and table. The sight has a giggle bubbling up.

“Okay, I think maybe you should stick to the cooking, yeah?” Capocuoco Ricci takes the pastry bag from Kayce’s hands, setting it off to the side along with his cannolis.

We move back to the table where we started making pasta that has magically been cleaned and hot plates with pans have been placed there instead.

This time, we follow the chef’s steps, adding pats of butter first, followed by sliced garlic, and olive oil. Once that’s browned we add in our pasta, followed by parmigiano, and then it’s pulled from the heat to add a bit of lemon juice and zest.

“Excellent! Please go have a seat, and we will serve you your final dish. Once you are done, you may go back to your room and we will deliver your desserts and chilled limoncello.” He points us to a small table by the window overlooking the garden.

“This is so romantic. Imagine if we were here for our real honeymoon?” I ask wistfully as I stare out at the blooming gardens.

“I think it’s perfect, just being here with you.” Kayce reaches across the table to take

my hands in his.

We're interrupted by a waiter bringing us our food.

"Grazie."

We eat in silence for a few moments, and I'm truly shocked that I made this dish. It's so delicious, and it wasn't hard at all. I'm excited to add this to my menu back home. Although, I'm sure that food just generally tastes better in Italy.

"Want to try it? I think he gave me the one you made." Kayce holds out his fork with a swirl of pasta on it.

"No way they switched it. This one is delicious too." I hold out my own for him, and we both feed each other like a scene from *Lady and the Tramp*. Minus the noodle kiss in the middle of the table.

I moan. His is better than mine.

"Okay, you're in charge of making this every week for me." I reach my fork over to get more pasta off his plate when he switches our plates. "What'd you do that for?"

"You like mine better?" I nod my head. "Then you get mine. Because fuck if it doesn't do something for me knowing that you like my food."

I'm not going to argue with that so I slide my dish the rest of the way across the table and happily eat my dinner.

"So, speaking of when we're back, what is your plan?" he asks.

"My plan?" I raise a brow.

“Yeah, you had a condo with Cameron. I can’t imagine he’s going to make any of that easy for you.”

My face drops. He definitely isn’t going to make any of that easy. And where the hell do I go when I get home?

“Hey, hey, don’t cry. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have ruined the night by bringing that up. You can always stay with me. I’ll take care of you, June.”

I sniffle back the tears, nodding my head. “I guess I hadn’t thought about that. And now I feel a little reckless. I just ran away without a plan.”

“Nope. It’s on me. I shouldn’t have asked you that right now. We still have so many days to enjoy ourselves before you even need to think about it.”

I nod again, shoving pasta in my mouth to keep the tears at bay.

I don’t trust myself to speak without letting the dam go on my sobs.

Chilled limoncello and our desserts were waiting on a room service cart when we got back to our room. We took everything out to the patio so we can enjoy a night out under the stars.

I dig into my *delizia al limone* first, the signature dessert of the Amalfi Coast. Moaning as the sponge cake dissolves on my tongue.

I scoop some more cake onto the spoon, delivering it to Kayce’s lips, and watching as his lips wrap around the spoon and his tongue darts out to catch the crumb falling. Why is it so sexy to watch him eat?

“Mmm. I don’t know what’s better: my amazing cannolis or this.”

“Definitely your cannolis,” I answer, chuckling. We both lean back in our chairs, letting the quiet night wash over us.

Sitting under the stars reminds me of the nights we shared in high school when we’d sneak out to the fields together to watch for comets or meteors. We’d play truth or dare and sneak some of Mr. Bicknelle’s beer.

“You remember sitting out in the fields under the stars?” I reminisce.

“Hell yeah, truth or dare was always my favorite. I used to wish you’d dare me to kiss you, but you never did.” A big smile takes over his face.

“Really?”

“Yeah, of course. My crush started long before then.” He reaches out to take another sip of limoncello.

I stand, walking over and straddling Kayce’s lap. I bring my lips a breath away from his. “I dare you to kiss me, Johnny.”

His lips take mine as his hands grip my hips, holding me in place. The kiss is desperate, needy. Years of pent up feelings are being thrown into this kiss. And suddenly it feels like too much, like it’s going to suffocate me.

I pull back breathless. His eyebrows furrow as he takes me in.

“I don’t think the dare would have gone like that back then.” I laugh trying to lighten the mood.

“You know, I’m still waiting for you to skinny dip. I dared you, and you never did it, so technically you owe me.”

I throw my head back laughing. “I think there’s a statute of limitations on dares.”

“Well how about I dare you to skinny dip right now.” His eyes darken with heat.

I won’t respond, no, I have a much better idea. I slide off his lap, standing between him and the pool. I slip the straps of my dress off my shoulders one at a time. As it pools at my feet, he sits upright in the chair, raptured by my movements. It gives me a confidence boost that I need in this moment after the heavy kiss.

Reaching back, I unhook my bra, and shrug it off, letting it pool at my feet along with the dress. Now I’m down to just my panties. Kayce is practically drooling as he watches. I pause to take in his face. Something I want to commit to memory for when we’re home and this fantasy is over.

I turn to face the pool, continuing on with my striptease while I secretly try to keep my tears at bay. I bend over, popping my ass out for him while I pull the panties down my legs by hooking them in my thumbs. I snap back up, stepping out and walking toward the pool. I hear his chair scrape across the patio and know he’s coming.

Fuck, where are these emotions coming from?

The tears sting the back of my eyes. Thinking about all the time wasted, our time coming to an end, and all of this bringing up feelings about how I just up and left his brother, I’m struggling and need to put on a brave face.

I take a deep breath and begin my descent into the infinity pool. Determined not to ruin our night.

Only he doesn’t join me. His ringtone blares from the room, breaking any kind of moment we were having.

“Shit.” I turn to see him, running his hands over his face. “That’s Charley’s ringtone. She wouldn’t call me if it wasn’t an emergency right now. I’m so sorry. Don’t move!”

He rushes into the room, taking the call. I feel like I can breathe for a minute and get myself under control before he comes back.

I walk over to the edge of the pool, overlooking the sea under the moonlight. I rest my arms on the edge, and lay my chin on my forearms.

How did I let myself get here? I got engaged to a man I didn’t love, for what? Because I was settling, knowing, Kayce, the man I do love didn’t want me? But now, I’m not so sure that’s true. And it makes me so angry that Cameron did know, that he let us waste so many fucking years. That he’s so damn selfish he’d even propose, trapping me in a loveless marriage.

I’m angry with myself too. For letting myself be treated that way. After high school, I vowed to not let anyone treat me the way my parents did, that I’d never end up with someone like my father, and I did just that. I became my mother.

I’m so fucking weak, I don’t deserve Kayce. I ruined anything we could have had years ago because I was too chickenshit to just tell him that I love him. I wanted him to fight for me, to want me. But I never stopped to think he might want the same.

Footsteps sound behind me, followed by the sound of a zipper, and clothes hitting the patio. Then he enters the water and starts to wade over behind me.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

My phone rings from inside the room.

Fucking Charley. Why the hell is she calling me now? She knows where I am. The thought slams me all at once as blood is directed, very slowly, back to my brain. Shit. It must be an emergency.

I apologize to Wren, running into the room, wanting to get this damn phone call over and done with so I can return to the naked beauty in the pool, and find out why the hell she's crying during a striptease. And why she's attempting to hide it.

Grabbing my phone, I swipe at the screen to answer.

"This is better be a fucking emergency, Charley."

"That depends, do you think Hamlin being called into the big wig's office after there were rumblings that you blew the team off for a fun-in-the-sun vacation not a family emergency, that your very loyal assistant wants to prepare you for. Do you consider that crucial to your day?"

I rub my hand through my hair. Fuck. That is an actual emergency. "Why are there rumblings?"

"Fucking Becky is why. She saw a post from Wren on social media that she tagged with the location. Apparently your arm is in it. So it's not something they can confirm. But, Becky caused enough shit." She sounds exasperated and I know she's been working all day to make me not look like a piece of shit.

“When are the rookies going to give her up?” Becky latches on to each new rookie every season and causes a shit storm of drama every time.

“Not fucking soon enough. Anyways, I just wanted you to hear it from me. Hamlin came out pissed off. Like really pissed off. Make sure you aren’t in any photos. Please.”

“Will try, and Charley? Book a spa day, on me.”

“Already did, boss. But now I’m glad I don’t have to ask forgiveness and remind you of the shit storm you created for me.”

“Thanks, Charley. You’re the best.”

“I know.” With that she hangs up on me.

Goddamn Becky and her big fucking mouth. She’ll say whatever she can to make people look bad. I check my texts and see a few from the guys, but I only check the one from Viktor.

Viktor: Where the fuck are you, brother? Hamlin is pissed. Are you on vacation? I thought Wren left Cam at the wedding? Call me. ASAP.

Shit. Viktor wouldn’t overreact. I’ll need to call Coach the second I get home. Or maybe even from the airport. For now I need to let it go, and figure out what the hell is going on with the switch in mood from Wren.

Stripping out of my clothes, I walk into the pool and wade over to her. Wrapping my arms around her middle, I gently drop a kiss to her neck before spinning her in my arms to face me.

I'm not surprised when I see tears reflecting off her face in the moonlight. "Oh, June. What happened? What's wrong?"

She drops her forehead to my chest, letting the tears fall. I stand with her, letting her cry in my arms.

When she doesn't stop, I lift her into my arms and carry her to the bed, cuddling up and soaking the sheets. At this point, I don't care. I just want to be here for her.

Eventually the tears stop, and her breath evens out. It fucking breaks my heart that she just cried herself to sleep in my arms. I could fucking kill Cameron.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Day 4: Path of the Gods

Just in case you aren't getting much cardio, I wanted you to be in tip-top shape for when you get back to sit on the bench because your ass is definitely in trouble. But today, you're going to hike the Path of the Gods in Positano.

Go to the front desk. I had backpacks and water bottles delivered for you.

You better be making her breathless, not just me. Love you, Boss!

My eyes feel gritty and puffy as I peel them open in the morning sun. Did I really fall asleep crying on Kayce like I've lost my mind? Maybe I have. Maybe I'm trying too hard to just move on and be back to normal life like Cam never existed. It's clearly too much for me.

I roll over to face Kayce, and find myself with an empty pillow.

Good job Wren, you really did it now. You chased away the one guy who's always been there for you.

Before I can spiral into an anxiety ridden mess, the door pops open and Kayce walks in with two backpacks and two water bottles.

"Good morning, beautiful." He is so cheery, and it does not match my mood.

"Why do you have water bottles and backpacks?"

“Charley. She thinks she’s funny. I need to stay in shape, apparently my time in Italy is risking my physique. So she says we’re hiking the Path of the Gods today.” He looks at me, taking in my appearance. “But if you’re not up for it, we can spend the day in bed, or by the pool, or just lounging by the sea.”

“Please hold.” I sit up in bed, grabbing my phone that was somehow charging on the table next to me.

I search the trail, and it looks gorgeous. Am I going to let my shitty mood ruin the day?

“Nope. Let’s do it.” I smile up at him. “Sunshine can never make anyone sad.”

He rewards me with a grin and I throw the sheet back to head into the bathroom to get ready.

Seeing myself in the mirror is a jump scare. Getting hair wet with chlorinated pool water and then falling asleep crying does not do good things. I try to finger comb the nest on top of my head before giving up and starting the shower.

Maybe a buttload of conditioner will help. With one last grimace in the mirror, I step into the hot spray.

I emerge from the bathroom half an hour later feeling like a new woman. My eyes are still a little puffy, but my hair is tamed, and at least my eyes aren’t red rimmed anymore.

“Hey. I ran down to the restaurant and grabbed us some coffee, and some lunch stuff for the hike.” Kayce proudly shows off his haul and I don’t miss a chocolate bar. The one thing that can make me feel better in any situation.

“You’re God-sent.” I reach out, taking the coffee to fill my soul with life. I take a tentative sip, testing the temperature with my upper lip. The coffee is made to perfection, just how I like it. “It’s absolute perfection. Thank you so much.”

He stares at me with his lips pursed, like he’s wanting to say something but is keeping it to himself instead. “Okay, ready to go? I ordered us a ride and it should be here soon.”

“Yeah, sounds great.” I slip on my sneakers, grateful that I had the forethought to wear them when I decided to run away from my own wedding.

Kayce’s hand on the small of my back feels like it’s going to burn through my clothes with the guilt of my reaction I’m still holding onto from last night.

I take a deep breath, and keep moving forward, sipping my coffee to see if he’ll say whatever is on his mind. If not, I might have to be the one to break the silence.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

We're an hour into the hike, and I regret every single moment of it. I didn't think about the fact that the entire time going uphill, Wren's ass would be squarely in my face. Taunting me.

After last night, I see how wrong I was to accept her just be attitude. I should have known better. That she would need more time to get over everything that happened, and I feel like a piece of shit that I don't know just how far the hurt goes for her, and I need to take the time to figure that out before I let her use me.

I haven't missed how quiet she is today either, she's always the chatterbox and I'm the quiet one. This reversal is unnerving.

We round a corner and the view is breathtaking. Both of us pause off to the side of the trail, sipping water and taking in everything around us.

"Take a picture with me." Her voice breaks the silence, and she walks up to me with her phone out.

She tucks herself in under my arm and I take the phone, holding it out in front of us. I need to lean down so that I can get her and the view in the photo.

She looks up at me when I still have the phone out, and I snap one more photo of the two of us looking at each other. I can see the emotion in her eyes, and I know mine reflect the same.

Pulling her down to the bench without ever breaking eye contact, we both start to speak at the same time.

“You first.” She gives me a tight smile.

“June. I know you’re upset about something from last night. And I think it’s because of me. I pushed you too far. I didn’t respect your grief from all that happened. And I should have known that you weren’t ready. That your speech about just being was all a bravado act.” I hold her hands in mine and watch as a new batch of tears springs to her eyes.

“No. It’s not your fault. You were nothing but perfect, and gave me what I was asking for. I don’t know why it all hit me last night. It isn’t even sadness for Cameron. I realized really quickly that I didn’t love him. It was settling for what I thought my next option was, not what I wanted. And that’s what the grief is for. It’s for missing out on what I really want.” She lays her head on my chest and I can feel the tears soaking through.

“What is it that you want? What will make you happy?” My heart pounds with anticipation.

The nerves that I didn’t know were simmering about how she feels are front and center right now.

She looks up again, anticipation fills me about what she’s going to say. Part of me is preparing for the hurt, the other part is filled with hope.

But she doesn’t say anything. She leans forward, gripping my face in her hands and kissing me. All the emotion that she isn’t ready to say is in this kiss.

When I have the urge to pull her onto my lap, I break off the kiss instead.

“June.” I rest my forehead on hers. “If you want what I think you want, and what I want, we can’t do this right now. It’s not time. You aren’t ready. And I want you to

be one hundred percent about me. I can't survive being the rebound. I want to be the one you choose."

She nods silently, tears streaming down her face. I swipe at her cheek with the pad of my thumb. My heart hurts. To have to be the one to say we can't be together, it's like a sucker punch. But to have the future that I want with her, waiting is necessary. I've already waited this long, but it's me she wants in the end. That gives me enough strength to wait longer.

"One day, June. One day it'll fall into place and be our time." I kiss her forehead, and stand back up, pulling her with me. "Come on. No more tears. We're in Italy, and we're going to enjoy the hell out of it."

Another silent nod, but she follows me, not letting go of my hand. It's time for me to protect her, and not cause more damage.

The hike was quiet, the tension only lifted marginally. Her hand is still laced in mine, holding tight. While I made the decision to not move on the physical aspect of our relationship, our emotional connection was always strong. We've been best friends since we were six and seven and now we have a new layer to us.

I need to do something to bring a smile back to her face.

As we are walking back to the hotel, I spot a little market in one of the squares with a booth of pottery. The little dishes look just like the ones that Chef had yesterday and she loved so much.

"Do you want to go find some pottery to bring home?" I point in the direction of the booth with the older lady sitting, painting a bowl.

"Ohmygosh! Yes!" She hops up and down, pulling me in the direction of the booth.

Her eyes are immediately drawn to the platters and vases with an intricate cobalt blue design dotted with lemons.

“This is so adorable! And perfect for the Amalfi Coast.” She turns a vase over in her hands, showing it to me.

“It’s perfect.”

She holds the vase out to me, and picks up the matching platter. And then a set of matching bowls. Then a set of small egg cups.

I chuckle at her enthusiasm. “You don’t even like hard boiled eggs.”

“But you do.” She places the platter in my other hand, along with the bowls.

“I inhale them. I don’t need a small little cup to hold a one bite egg.”

She holds two of the small egg cups next to her face, and turns on the sad eyes. “But look how cute they are.”

I put all of our goods down on the table near the old lady. Then I remove the egg cups from her hands, and place them back on the table. “You, nor I, need egg cups. How about a coffee mug? Or dishes to match your bowls?”

I distract her, moving her down the table as she notices what I’m pointing out to her. It works, and she abandons the egg cups.

I carry her haul over to the woman. “Quanto per tutto questo?” I ask, pulling out my wallet.

She gives a number that is much more than I was thinking, but making Wren smile is

worth every penny. Handing over money, she packages up the pottery into a crate. And it's then that I'm so thankful for the private jet home, because I have no idea how we'd make it back with crates full of pottery.

When she finishes, she looks at me, and I look at her. Me and this old woman who doesn't speak English, and me with limited Italian. In the middle is a crate that weighs more than I can carry back to the hotel.

Out of nowhere she knocks on a window and a teenage boy emerges.

"Where you stay?" he asks me in a thick Italian accent.

"Villa Principessa," I answer.

"Your name?"

"Kayce Bicknelle."

"I deliver." He places the crate on the back of his moped and takes off.

The old Nonna looks at me with a broad smile, and then toddles back to her seat to finish the painting.

I grasp Wren's hand again and we start back on the same path as the moped back to our hotel.

"Are you happy with your purchases?"

"Yes!" I look down at the ear to ear grin on her face, and my own smile spreads. This is exactly what we needed.

We walk in silence for a bit before she speaks first. “Johnny, what do we do now?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, we’re kind of on a pause. But I’m a mess and I don’t know what we’re doing. I don’t even have a place to live when we get back to Texas, and—”

“Hey, stop. My offer for you to stay with me wasn’t hinging on whether or not we were sleeping together. I want to help you. You have a place to stay, and it’s with me. I’ll hire movers to get your stuff from Cameron’s. You won’t have to see him. And I don’t know what’s going to happen with us, but we’re going to figure it out, together. When we’re ready.”

“Okay,” she chokes out while trying to hold back tears.

This is going to take longer than I thought to get her back to the carefree Wren I know. Cameron’s Stepford wife training has her more down than I even thought.

Day 5: Vineyard Tour

Wren loves going to the different vineyards around Houston. I found one of her favorite wines in Amalfi, so today you're touring the vineyard on a private tour, and then you'll have a private tasting with the owners. They're pretty big hockey fans being from Sweden originally, so play nice and sign some shit. And yes, I already mailed them each your jersey for you to sign.

"OHMYGOD!" The car pulls down a long winding driveway that boasts a sign at the beginning, for my favorite wine. "Kayce! How did you find this place? They don't do tours, I've looked online so many times."

"They're from Sweden, so they're big hockey fans. Charley might have sweet talked them with some signed jerseys." He shrugs like it isn't a big deal.

But it is. The owners are Swedish billionaires who faced a huge scandal. They basically tucked tail and ran to Italy where they opened the vineyard. They tried to keep their identity quiet, but as Kayce knows, the press has a way of digging shit up. But they've never opened their vineyard to the public and even their vendors have a strong NDA and background check. So the tabloids say.

The car pulls to a stop in front of the most gorgeous home. A home isn't even the right word. This place looks like a whole hotel with the vines climbing up the stone front, and an ornate wooden door standing proud in the center of a circular brick patio to enter through.

"Holy shit." A whisper escapes my lips as I take in the property through the windows

of the car.

Kayce exits first, rounding the car to get me out, right as the front door opens.

“Signore Bicknelle, welcome, welcome!” A tall, slender man, Mr. Andersberg, greets us with open arms. A petite blonde slips under his arm and wraps around his side.

“Mr. Andersberg.” Kayce walks us over to the couple, and if it weren’t for his hand on the small of my back I don’t think my feet would be moving on their own. The men reach their hands out for a tight handshake. “You have a lovely home.”

Mr. Andersberg laughs. “You are a humble man I see. Most would see my vineyard, and home is very far down on the list of descriptors.”

A genuine smirk graces Kayce’s face. His own family home isn’t anything to balk at. Neither is his house in Houston. Most single guys get a condo, or in Viktor and Calliope’s instance, they have a penthouse. But since Kayce is originally from Houston, he bought a home and spread roots of his own.

His house is a three thousand foot brick home in a quiet gated subdivision, situated on ten acres of his own land. He spared no expense in the home either, with marble and gold matte fixtures. I’m envious of his home. If I’m being honest with myself, I’ve always envisioned myself and our children greeting him when he comes home in that house at the end of the day. That I would be the one to make it a home for him. It was a daydream I let run wild on the hard days.

“Hall?, I’m Clara Andersberg.” She reaches out to loop her arm with mine, pulling me into their home. “I am so excited to host you today! It’s been so long.” The last part of her sentence trails off on a whisper. “Lars is just so happy to have a true hockey player here today!”

“I’m just so honored to be here! Your wines are some of my favorites.”

“Oh, lovely! I am always so happy when our wines bring joy to others. This vineyard is my baby and I enjoy sharing it with the world.”

The men join us in the kitchen, where a charcuterie board is laid out with finger sandwiches and petit fours.

“Will you join us for some lunch before we show you the vineyards?” She looks so hopeful that I couldn’t say no even if I wanted to.

“We’d love to.” Kayce’s hand finds my back once again. It’s become a comfort to know that he’s with me and has my back, literally and figuratively.

Mrs. Andersberg begins filling our plates and explaining everything she’s made for us. Meanwhile, Mr. Andersberg opens their new rosé that’s been released here in Europe but not brought to the United States yet. My mouth is already watering.

I take a tentative sip once I’m seated. Holding the wine in my mouth, swishing as I’ve been taught at the wineries.

“Oh we have a true sommelier in our presence.” Mr. Andersberg jokes.

“Wine is one of her favorite things. She and my assistant visit all the local wineries back home.” Kayce winks at me. “Rosé and pinot grigio are her favorite. A merlot with a steak.”

My cheeks heat at how well he knows me. Cameron still buys me Sauvignon Blanc. My least favorite wine. The guilt creeps back in at how much time I’ve let myself waste with Cameron because I was immature and wanted Kayce to fight for me instead of putting on my big girl britches to tell him how I feel.

“Well then, I’m anticipating your thoughts on our new product.”

I nod, taking another, larger, sip.

After a leisurely lunch, we are ready to stroll the vineyard. Clara and I have become fast friends. She’s down to earth and so kind. You’d never know she was a billionaire if you weren’t standing in her mansion.

The vineyard is massive at two hundred acres. It’s much larger than the smaller local wineries I’ve toured back in Texas. Seeing the vines full of plump grapes ready for harvest with the Italian sun shining down on us, this couldn’t be a better day.

“Would you like to help harvest grapes?” She holds baskets out to Kayce and I. We both take them and nod excitedly.

“Okay, you watch first, then you do yourself, yeah?”

I nod, watching her intently as she uses the small clippers to clip a bunch of grapes off the vine.

“I got it. I’m ready to help.” She smiles, handing me my own pair of small clippers. Kayce and I walk a little further down the aisle together. I pick a spot ripe with purple bunches. Kayce stands directly behind me, reaching over my head to clip the top bunches. His closeness has my whole body on alert. I’m enveloped by his smell of leather and wood. A scent that brings me back home. His biceps bulge as he clips, and drops the bunches into his basket atop the ladder.

“Distracted, June?”

I subtly reach up to my lips to make sure I wasn’t really drooling. “No. I’m just...”
Shit. I have no clue how to get out of being caught.

“It’s okay, you can look. You just can’t touch.” He never once stops cutting, but I feel his gaze on me out of the corner of his eye. “I love to look, and from up here, the view is just stunning.”

I gulp as his cock presses into my back, whether he did it on purpose or he was just reaching higher, I’ll never know. But now I only feel his gaze on my cleavage.

“I love that you wore pink to match your dress.”

I swat at his chest. “You are such a perv!”

“Says the woman who was distracted by biceps.”

“At least I didn’t pick a spot just so I could stare down someone’s shirt!”

I return to harvesting grapes. I have two bunches to his thirty. And I don’t want to look bad in front of the Andersbergs.

Today was an absolute dream. We had so much fun in the vineyard, and then getting to see the vats, and bottling process, ending with my favorite part, the tasting room. We were able to taste test their new wines for The Vinalies, a wine competition in France. If I were the judge, I’d give them winning medals across the board.

Clara and I ended the evening sipping wine on their back porch together while the men went to Lars’ study for a cigar and brandy. I don’t know if I was more star struck by them, or them with Kayce. Either way, we ended the evening exchanging numbers, and following each other on social media. So I’ll take it. I’m absolutely in love with Clara. None of the rumors match the woman I’ve met today.

I hope they take Kayce up on his offer to host them in Houston for a game.

“You’re awfully quiet over there.” Kayce slides over next to me in the hot tub, pulling my legs into his lap and rubbing his knuckles into the soles of my feet.

“Oh, God.” I groan. “That feels so good.”

He pauses, fidgeting in his seat with each moan. He lets out a deep sigh before continuing with his massage.

“So we only have two days left in Italy. I’m going to text Charley to set up movers to get your things out of the condo with Cameron. Is that okay with you?”

“You don’t think I should do it myself?”

“I think you can do whatever you want. You don’t owe that asshole a thing you don’t want to give him.”

“I think I need to face him at some point. But I’m not ready yet. You can have her hire them.” I concede to his offer.

“I’ll text her before we go to bed. You know she won’t mind telling Cam off.”

I laugh at his statement. I’ve gotten close to Charley over the years that she’s worked for Kayce. She’s a feisty woman who can hold her own in a man’s world. And never once feels guilty for anything she does.

I relax into the back of the seat in the hot tub while Kayce massages my other foot. This is true bliss.

My eyes begin to drift closed as we sit, taking in the comfortable silence between us.

Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Day 6: The Amalfi Cathedral

It's your last day. Enjoy a slow day together, and if you haven't sealed the deal yet, you're a lost cause and my services were wasted. If you fail, I'm switching to work for Viktor. At least he has some game off the ice.

Also, Hamlin saw the tabloid photos of you two in Italy. So. When you get back, call him immediately. He's fucking pissed. Also, the article is pretty fucking bad. I linked it.

I click the link that Charley sent me last night. This is not how I wanted to start our final day in Italy.

Photos of Kayce

Rumors have been swirling about the Bicknelle family after Wren Kaydell ran out of her wedding to Cameron Bicknelle. There's long been rumors about Kayce and Wren having a history that no one wants to admit to. But lately, Bicknelle has been notably absent from the Havoc's stadium during the pre-season. But where has he been? It appears he's vacationing with his brother's runaway bride on the Amalfi Coast of Italy. Will we see him at the next pre-season game or will he be absent yet again? Could this be the end of Kayce Bicknelle's reign with the Houston Havoc?

Fuck. This is so bad. Coach has every right to be pissed. I peek over at Wren, still sleeping soundly. I slip out of the bed and out to the patio, calculating the time it would be in Texas. He should still be in his office, it's just the afternoon in Texas, so he won't be preparing for the game yet.

I suck in a deep breath, and smash Hamlin's name before I can chicken out.

"Bicknelle. You better have a good fucking reason why I'm looking at photos of you in fucking Italy instead of you being in my damn rink."

He doesn't even greet me. Fuck again.

"Coach. It's a lot. There's more to it than you think."

"So start explaining."

"My brother is a grade A douchebag. He was cheating on Wren, and the woman showed up at her hotel room the night before the wedding. She left him at the ceremony. Ran right out of the venue and to my truck. I didn't know what else to do, so I took her away when she asked me to." I blurt it all out quickly.

"You could have just fucking taken her back to your house, you didn't have to screw me in the process."

"I know Coach. I'm so fucking sorry. I know I fucked up. But I promise I'll be back in two days and I'll be there for the next game." I plead with him to forgive me for this stunt.

"Listen. I like to think I'm a good guy, an understanding coach, but this stunt...you really screwed me with my hands tied here, Kayce. The rumors in the local papers that we let you go are swirling double time, and I can't stop that train. I have a meeting with the big wigs in half an hour. I'll do what I can but you're probably definitely going to end up with a suspension of some kind. I can't do much on that front. They won't go for it." He sighs, and I know it pisses him off that I put him in this spot, and that he's going to have to bench me.

“I’m sorry. I know I’ve put you in a tight spot. But I’ll accept any consequence you have to give me.”

“Yeah. I’ll call you after the meeting. Answer your damn phone, will ya?”

“I can do that. Turning the volume up now.”

He sighs again, “I’ll call you.”

Then he hangs up. The click of the line is the loudest one I’ve ever heard. My job is actually in the balance, and it relies heavily on my relationship with Cade Hamlin, and his relationship and trust with the big wigs of the team.

Two hours pass before my phone rings again.

I see Cade’s number flashing on the screen.

“Hey, Coach.”

“I did what I could Bicknelle.” He spits out. “But it’s a ten game.”

“Ten games!” What the fuck? “Coach, we haven’t seen a ten game in a long time. Why are they coming down so hard?”

“Hard? Bicknelle you’re in breach of contract. They could let you go over this shit. You should be grateful that’s all you got. Fuck. You think I want to lose you for the first ten games of the fucking season? This sucks. You think Sanders can win games like you can? He just joined us. He doesn’t mesh with the team on ice like you do. But we all have to accept what happened and move the fuck on. So enjoy the fuck out of your last day because it’s going to have to pull you through the next two weeks.”

He hangs up before he lets me respond.

“Fucckkkk!” I punch the stone exterior wall of the hotel and pain radiates through my hand and up my arm.

“Kayce?” Wren’s soft voice comes from the doorway. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I’m fucking great.” I spit back at her. It’s not her fault, but I’m fucking pissed. I knew it was coming. It wasn’t a shock but hearing it, and having it be real is something different than knowing it’s a possibility.

“Was that Cade?” She takes a tentative step toward me.

“Yeah. I got a ten game suspension.”

“Ten games? Why so many?” She takes my hand in hers, and walks me back into the room and into the bathroom, turning on the cold water.

“Technically they could have released me. I’m in breach of my contract.” I hiss as my hand hits the cold water.

“You’re a dumbass.”

“For what? Punching the wall or blowing off pre-season?”

“Both. I’m not worth it. The pain, or losing your career.”

I pull her to me, lifting her face to mine with my finger. “Don’t ever say that again, Wren Kaydell. You are worth everything to me.”

A tight smile appears, not the genuine one I usually get. I know she’s feeling guilty

about my suspension, and I berate myself for letting her see my anger. She didn't need that.

I wrap my arms around her. "I'm sorry. You didn't deserve seeing me get angry like that."

"It's my fault."

"Never. It's never your fault, June." I crash my lips to hers in a needy kiss. Tangling our tongues in apology.

She wraps her legs around my waist and I push her against the wall in the bathroom. My cock is screaming for attention, to feel her wrapped around me. And that's how I know it's time to pull back.

A whimper falls from her lips when I do. "Why'd you stop?"

"I told you I wouldn't. I want you to figure it all out without the physical being a factor. I want you to want me. Not just my cock."

She drops one more quick kiss to my lips. "Okay. Time." She gives me a wobbly smile, showing that she's conflicted on all her emotions and needs time too.

She slides down my body. Leaving my arms empty, and it feels like my heart. She slinks out of the bathroom, I'm left alone to clean up my mess.

I stick my hand back under the water, letting the sting radiate so I can remember how it feels to be so fucking stupid.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

We got home yesterday. The jet lag is kicking my ass, but Kayce just left for the stadium, and now I'm faced with a whole lot of boxes from Cameron's. My phone is blowing up now that I've taken it off airplane mode from the week.

Messages from Cameron, Mrs. Bicknelle, and all of our so-called friends. Every single one of them berating me for leaving Cameron at the altar and the optics of the whole situation.

After twenty-four hours, I already miss the blissful bubble that Kayce created for me in Italy.

My phone rings for the third time this morning and I finally answer. They won't stop until I do.

"Cathy," I greet Mrs. Bicknelle.

It's still odd to me that she never changed her name when she got married again. She claims it's because she wanted the same name as her boys, but I think she wanted the notoriety that comes with the Bicknelle name here in Houston.

"Wren Kaydell." She is seething on the phone. "How could you do that to Cameron? After everything he's done for you!"

"I didn't do anything to him, Cathy. All I did was leave him, but not before he stepped out on me first. I was loyal to him, and he didn't award me the same respect."

She scoffs at me, "You know how these men are. You've seen the world they're in.

But they take care of you, and you turn a blind eye to their...indiscretions. It's how things work and you know it."

"It's not how things are going to work in my marriage, with all due respect."

"You know, dear, that Kayce is worse. He's got them all over the country, and you won't get monogamy from him either. So you might as well leave and come back to Cameron. Actually he's already on his way to Kayce's which is where I assume you're staying."

"It's not like that, Cathy. Kayce has always been there for me. Every time I needed him. And for the record, Kayce would never cheat on me or any woman. Tell Cameron to stay away from me."

I hang up the phone, ready to throw it at the fucking wall. How, the fuck, dare she.

With rage coursing through me, the jetlag is pushed aside and I'm ready to tackle these boxes when the doorbell rings.

I stomp my way down the stairs, fling open the door, and scream, "What the fuck could you possibly want from me?"

"Woah, killer." Charley stands on the stoop with a bag of food from my favorite restaurant in her hands. "I come in peace, and with food. Don't shoot."

"Ugh. I'm so sorry. Cathy just called, and she said Cameron was going to come here. I just assumed that you were him." I open the door wider, allowing Charley to come in.

"Absolutely not. I won't allow it." She pulls out her phone and walks into the other room while I take the food to the kitchen to plate up.

I can only hear bits and pieces of the conversation from Charley's end but it sounds like she's on the phone with the security office.

She approaches me with a grin on her face. "There. All set. He's been banned from entering the subdivision. And his mother."

"Has anyone ever told you that you're the best damn friend around?"

She snickers, "And the best fucking assistant around. Now tell me all about Italy." She takes a spot at the island where I've put her lunch and I stand across from her to regale her with my tales of Italy.

"But did you have sex with him? I mean I set it up perfectly. Every romantic thing from your pinterest board, the mood was set!"

My cheeks heat. "I knew it! I'm a fucking magic match maker. I knew you loved him too."

"We only had sex once. Then I cried like an idiot and he hasn't touched me since. I ruined it." I start to tear up again.

"Stop. Why did you cry?"

"The guilt."

"Over that douchebag? No way. He doesn't deserve the guilt." Her eyebrows furrow.

"No, not over Cameron. Over Kayce. And a little Cameron, but more about me with him than him alone. I let myself waste so much time, and lost so much of myself along the way all because I was young and dumb and wanted Kayce to fight for me. In the end we just lost so much time together. What if I'm not what he wants?"

She slides her stool over to the corner and takes my hand with hers. “Oh hun, no way. You’re all he wants, all he’s ever wanted. In all the time I’ve known that man, the only thing he’s ever wanted was you.”

“That kind of makes it worse. What if I can’t live up to who he has built up in his mind? That’s terrifying. He’s my best friend, my ride or die, the one and only person who is consistently there for me.” She puts her hands on her hips at that.

“Listen. Absolutely not. I’m going to ignore the self-deprecating comments in that rant, but Kayce Bicknelle knows exactly who you are. Every nook and cranny of you, and he loves you just as you are. Got me?”

I nod silently at her instructions. Logically I know this. But the irrational and emotional part of me is afraid of the unknown with Kayce. I never want him to feel about me how I feel about Cameron.

We finish lunch while she tells me stories about the newest rookies. I think she views them as prey in her cat and mouse game. She loves to mess with them. She told me how she had one convinced he had to call Cade Hamlin every night to say goodnight precisely at eight p.m. Needless to say Cade was not impressed when he continually interrupted time with his new woman. The rookie now knows that he doesn’t have to call Cade, and not to trust Charley.

“At least I gave him the blow job of his life to make up for it.” She shrugs.

“Isn’t that against the rules?”

“Eh. You think Kayce is going to fire me for blowing a rookie? I work for him, not the Havocs. Besides, the rookie has a nice cock. I’m looking forward to seeing what it can do.”

I choke on my raspberry lemonade. “Jesus, Charley.”

She throws her head back laughing at me. Before I can berate her for being so crass she’s cleaning up and urging me to start going through the tower of boxes in the living room. The thought is already exhausting me.

“Where am I supposed to start?”

“Oh, may I make a suggestion?” I eye her suspiciously. She has that glint in her eye that screams trouble but I nod. She walks over to a box, and presents it to me. “Open it. It’s my personal favorite.”

Grabbing the scissors and ripping open the box, I find a lighter on top of Cameron’s clothes.

“His clothes?” Charley’s lost her touch.

“Not just his clothes. His favorite Gucci suit, Dolce and Gabana suit, and the cherry on top, his Armani.”

“And the light—” I stop when it dawns on me. She begins jumping up and down clapping as she realizes that I’ve caught on. “You want me to burn these? These cost more than my whole apartment together!”

“So! Fuck him. Live a little, my girl, live a little.”

I stare at the suits, and then the lighter. Remembering how he wore this Armani suit the night of our rehearsal dinner. Mere hours before his mistress blew up our entire world.

“Well. It might be therapeutic. Right?”

“Yes! Let’s go! I already got the burn permit.” She’s already running out the door before I can question her.

This is nothing but a reminder to not piss her off, and I suddenly feel bad for that rookie. Burn by Usher starts playing on the speakers around Kayce’s home in surround sound.

Damn her.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Walking through the doors of the rink I'm hit with the familiar scent of ice and sweaty grown men. My stomach rolls at the thought of seeing my teammates and Coach.

I trudge toward the locker room, hoping I'm the first one here. I need a minute to see Coach before anyone else. I'm sure the rumor mill is flying. Charley filled me in on a few of them but I'm sure there's more between the guys in the locker room.

"Where the actual fuck have you been?" Viktor calls out before I even see him.

"It's a long fucking story. One that we might need beer to get through." I drop my bag next to him to unpack into my locker before heading out to find Coach.

"Yea well, give me the short version. You have about five minutes before someone else walks in."

Running my hand through my hair, I sit next to him on the bench. "Wren left Cam at the altar. Actually, she never even made it down the aisle. He cheated. I punched him out cold. And I ran away with Wren. To Italy."

"You've really been in fucking Italy on vacation?" He doesn't look sympathetic to me. In fact he looks fucking pissed.

"What was I supposed to do?"

He stands, pacing back and forth. "I don't know, send her to Italy with Charley, bring her back to your house, anything that didn't put you or us in a shitty position with the

owners or Coach. Hamlin swore I was lying the first four days that I didn't know where you were. I showed him my fucking phone to get him off my back. We've been dealing with his shit in warm-ups and workouts all week because of you."

"What the fuck, man? Really? You honestly think that you wouldn't have done the same for Calliope? You expect me to believe that you would just leave her and go on like nothing happened, work as usual?"

We both stare at each other. We both know what his answer is.

"Bicknelle. My office. Now." Coach stands at the entrance to the locker room, waiting for me.

I look between him and Viktor. They have the same expression, flared nostrils, and red face. I know I fucked up, but damn, I can't even have my best friend on my side? Viktor steps out of my way as I pass by him.

I follow Cade silently back to his office with my head down, like a kid getting in trouble with the principal.

He opens the office door, and steps to the side for me to go in ahead of him. I take a seat on the couch by the windows that overlook the ice. I've been in here a time or two to hang out, talk strategy, but I've never been afraid to be here, to hear what he has to say when he chews my ass out like he's done to so many others before me.

He silently takes the seat across from me. Staring at me the whole time, but not speaking.

He leans forward on his knees. The staring is making me fidget. I can't stand the silence stretching between us.

“Coach—”

He holds his hands up, stopping me from speaking.

My heart is racing, and my palms are getting sweaty. More than a few beats pass before he finally speaks.

“You screwed me. You screwed your team.” His even tone is terrifying. I was expecting screaming. “You have a lot of making up to do to the people of this organization. After a lot of anger at you, I was kindly reminded by a wise woman, that if it were her, I’d have burnt the whole world to the ground instead of just taking off for a week. So. You have a pass. A small pass. And only from me. You owe those guys a lot more than you owe me. You left your team high and dry in the pre-season and now the beginning of the season.”

“I know. I do. I owe everyone a huge apology. But, Coach, you gotta understand. I couldn’t just leave her. She just had his mistress show up with a thumb drive full of videos, photos, and conversations that just blew up her whole life.” I shake my downed head, “I couldn’t do that to her. I couldn’t be like everyone else in her life and abandon her.”

“I get it. I do. But, the owners, they don’t. And they want heads to roll. The only, and I mean only saving grace for you, is that no videos went viral of you knocking your brother on his ass. I had to put my own neck out for you here. You’re lucky as fuck to have the ten game suspension instead of being released.”

He’s still staring at me. This conversation is so reminiscent of when I got in trouble with Dad. The disappointment stings more than the anger. Cade is closer to our age than normal coaches, but he’s well respected among the guys and it burns to be the one pissing him off.

“I’m really fucking sorry, Cade. I hate it. But I understand it.”

“The guys are pissed. They’re going to freeze you out. But I think you know that based on Viktor’s reaction.” I nod my head. “Okay, go. I have work to do and you have workouts. Be prepared to have your ass handed to you.”

I stand and silently leave his office.

Walking back into the locker room a hushed silence falls. All eyes are on me, and quite a few pissed off stances greet me.

“I get it. And I’m sorry. I’ll make it up to you all. I promise.”

Grunts fill the space. Some push past me to go to the training rooms. Some stand and stare to see if I have more in me. But Viktor and Joaquin shake their heads and walk out without a word. The reception is chilly at best.

I take a deep breath and grab my shit to change for workouts. At least I already know the trainers have the memo to kill me in training today.

Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

We've been home for four days. And each day Kayce has come home beat down and sad. The guys are pissed at him, and the trainers are pushing him. It's psychological warfare over there. And I only know because I had to ask Charley. He won't utter one word about it to me.

After Charley spilled to me all that was happening I decided to make this night all about him. I'm making his favorite dinner of cubed steak with mashed potatoes, and peach cobbler for dessert. I've got the hot tub all set up for him to slip in and relax.

The front door clicks as I take the cobbler out of the oven. Then the telltale sound of his bag hitting the marble floor, followed by his shoes.

"Hey, handsome." I rush over to the front door after dropping the cobbler on the hot plates. "Welcome home."

"I'm going to shower." He looks me up and down, pausing at the apron. "I'm not Cameron you know. I don't need you to take care of me."

"I know you don't need me to. I want to." I pout. His grouchiness isn't what I was expecting. "Go take a shower. I'll plate dinner." I change my pout into a big fake smile to keep the tears at his reaction away.

"June." He calls out to me but I don't stop. I keep walking back to the kitchen and don't turn around until I hear his footsteps going up the stairs.

I suck in a deep breath. What the hell set him off? This isn't the first time I've cooked for him. Why did he react that way?

Instead of dwelling on the feelings of inadequacy, I chalk it up to what's happening at the stadium and plate up his meal. I'm lighting the last candle on the table when he comes back down.

He pulls me to his chest, and hugs me tight. "June, I'm so sorry." He kisses me on the forehead. "Seeing you in that apron, thinking you need to make things better just made me think of how Cameron treated you, and then here I am doing the same shit he did. You deserve better, you deserve my best. Not the crappy version of me coming home these days."

Ah. That's the problem. "Johnny, you listen to me and you listen good; you are nothing like Cameron. You put it all on the line for me, and the least I can do to repay you for everything you've done for me is to cook your favorite meal and give you a massage before letting you soak in the hot tub. So shush up, and sit down."

I pull out his chair, and walk off to grab his plate.

"Yes ma'am." I return with our plates, and he's standing behind my chair instead of sitting down. "You didn't think I wasn't going to pull out your chair for you, did you?"

I roll my eyes. Now his southern manners find his soul. I place the plates on the table and take my seat next to him.

"We have another game tomorrow. It's the third one I'll have to sit in the suite for and then we travel. So I'll be in the suite watching another game I could make a difference in. I guess I'm just extra annoyed with the whole thing. I know I deserve it, but it still sucks." He looks at me. "And that is not a dig at you. I'd do it all over again."

"I'm so sorry. I wish I could go back in time and have more sense to make you stop. I

wouldn't have gotten on the plane with you if I'd known, or even stopped to think about you instead of me."

"I would have thrown you over my shoulder and put you on the plane anyway. There would have been no point in fighting it." He smiles.

Why does it turn me on to think about that?

"When are you leaving? I have a wedding this weekend." I'm actually excited for this wedding. It'll be my first day back on the job as a wedding photographer. I'm sure I gave the wedding vendor world enough gossip for a week and hopefully I'm long forgotten by this weekend.

"We leave Friday night. I won't be home for about a week, or a little longer. We're going on the northwest road trip." He shovels another large bite into his mouth and moans when the buttery mashed potatoes hit his taste buds.

"Oh. I didn't realize you were going so far away."

"Don't worry. Charley is staying in Texas, and the guards know that Mom and Cameron aren't allowed here."

"I wasn't worried. What are they going to do? Call and harass me? They already do that." I shake my head. I don't know how they still have numbers to call me from, I've blocked so many over the last few days.

"They're still calling you?"

"Of course they are. Little Cameron got embarrassed by the natural consequences of his own actions. Not to mention the black eyes from your punch will be long lasting. I'm sure he's spun some bullshit story to cover that up." I chuckle a little at the photo

Charley sent from social media earlier.

Cameron looks like shit. And he deserves every bit of bad karma coming his way.

“Charley sent me a photo earlier. I can’t believe how swollen his face is still. I didn’t even hit him that hard.” He returns to the table with his second helping of food.

“You did knock him out. He was unconscious at the altar. In front of hundreds of his friends and colleagues.”

My friend who works security at the venue, sent me a copy of the video before he deleted it from the servers. I’ve never laughed so hard as I did when I saw Cameron’s face as it dawned on him what was playing on the monitors. But the moment Kayce heard what he said about us, about how he feels about me, that is forever etched in my brain. I’m surprised that Cameron didn’t need an ambulance to get out of there.

“He deserves every fucking bruise.” Kayce’s brows furrow and his face scrunches up.

“He does, and you’re my knight in shining armor.” I kiss the top of his head as I walk by with my plate.

He follows me into the kitchen with his own plate and drops them in the sink before he turns on the water to start washing dishes as I load them in.

“It’s true, June. What he said.”

I gulp at his confession, and turn to look at him. I knew it deep down since Italy, but to hear it, to have him confirm. I can’t talk myself out of it anymore.

“I think I knew. I was just afraid to believe it.”

He stops me with soapy hands on my hips as I drop another dish in the sink. “I love you, June. With everything in me. I’ve always loved you. You’re the nearest thing to heaven, and I don’t want to let you go. But, I need to know you feel the same. When you’re ready. Not now.”

“Johnny—” He puts his finger on my lips.

“Nope. I said when you’re ready. I didn’t tell you so I could hear it back. I said it because it’s what you need to hear. You needed that from me. Now, what I need is that massage. Whaddya say?”

I nod my head with unshed tears brimming at the edge. Of course he’s only thinking of me. He’s always only thinking of me.

But what he isn’t ready to hear, is that I’ve loved him since we were kids, and I never stopped.

Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

This is fucking bullshit. Sitting up here in the suite with the other scratches is really grating on my nerves. They're acting like they're fucking better than me because I'm up here on suspension instead of down there with my team where I belong. The only thing worse than their attitudes is the still cold reception from the guys on the team. Viktor and Joaquin are over it. We had it out. I let them yell at me and get out the anger they were holding. Then we were good. But the rest of the team isn't won over so easily. I'm still paying my penance with them. And it probably won't be paid back until I get back on the ice.

This is my fifth game that I've had to sit out and I have two more road games when we return. Then only three home games and I'll be back on the ice where I belong.

Getting home to Wren will lift my mood too. We've talked every day but it's not the same as going home to her. Even if she's sleeping in a different bed than mine, even if she isn't mine yet, I love having her to come home to. It's the best part of my day.

The final buzzer sounds, and I'm thankful as fuck. My shoulders release an ounce of the tension I'm holding as I stand and make my way to the locker room.

These were the worst games of my entire hockey career. Having to be away from home, and sitting in some fucking suite watching my team play without me really got Cade's point across. I never want to be suspended again and will do anything I can to avoid it. Hopefully Wren doesn't plan on being a runaway bride again. Especially because I'm hoping the next time she's going down the aisle it's to meet me at the other end.

Trudging through the garage, I quietly open the door. I don't know if Wren is

working or not and I don't want to interrupt her.

I slip through the garage door quietly, dropping my bag in the laundry room for later. Right now I want to sink into my oversized couch and not move for the next twenty-four hours. And sulk about my suspension for another three games. I'm missing the first game against the Ice Men this week and I'm fucking pissed. They're our biggest rival and the first game of the series is my last suspension game. At least I won't miss the whole series with them and can show them who's best in the next game against them.

I'm already dreaming of watching a Marvel marathon in the corner of my sectional. But when I get in my living room I find Wren snuggled up in the corner with her hair piled on top of her head, and her glasses on while she works on her laptop.

"Oh, hey! I didn't even hear you come in." She pats the spot next to her and lifts the blanket for me to join.

I slide in next to her, pressing my body against hers. "I wasn't sure if you were working. Or if you'd be on a call. So I wanted to make sure that I was quiet when I came in." I drop a kiss to her forehead.

"You don't have to be quiet in your own house. If I have a call I go to my co-op space, or I set up a desk in my bedroom. I wouldn't want you to tiptoe around your own house." She turns her computer to face me. "I'm just working on editing the wedding from last weekend."

The couple on the screen look blissfully happy, looking into each other's eyes, it seems like they're mid-laugh.

"That picture is stunning. No wonder you're in high demand."

The blush creeps up her cheeks at my compliment. “It’s just luck really.”

“No, it’s talent. And hard work.” She shrugs like she’s not one of the best wedding photographers in Houston and goes back to something she calls culling. Where she picks the photos she’s going to edit for the clients. “What are we watching?”

“You can change it. It’s just on for sound.” I stare at her, knowing that she’s just saying that because she doesn’t want to inconvenience me by making me watch something. “Ok fine, it’s the new season of The Bachelor. It started a few weeks ago. I just haven’t had time to catch up.”

“What is that? A dating show?”

She looks sheepish at me catching her watching this. “Yes.”

I settle in next to her, resting my head on her shoulder while she works and watch this show with her.

I thought I would be able to fall asleep to this show easily, but I was wrong. We’re three episodes in and I’m fully invested.

“What is he doing? She’s the meanest one there is in the house and he’s taking her side?” I ask in outrage.

She giggles next to me. “It’s because the producers want him to keep the drama on the show. She’ll get kicked out in hometowns or before the final two.”

“Are you serious?” I pull out my phone to look up spoilers.

“What are you doing Kayce Bicknelle?” She grabs my phone from my hands right as I click on the link to see who wins. “We do not look up spoilers.”

“But I need to know who wins.” She stares at me with a raised brow. “Fine. I won’t look up spoilers. But can I order dinner?”

Her stomach grumbles on command. “Oh, yeah, I didn’t realize how late it’d gotten.” We both look around the room and notice the darkening light. “Sorry, when I edit I kind of get lost in it and forget about time passing. I had plans to make dinner for you.”

“I appreciate it, but you’re on a roll. We are going to order dinner, you’re going to keep going, and we’re not stopping this show until I get to the end.”

She hands me my phone back, “Oh no. I have created a monster. Did you know there are like twenty seasons?”

“Fantastic. We’re watching them all. How’s Chinese?”

Licking her lips she responds, “Yes, please!”

“Coming right up.”

I walk away into the kitchen to refill our water bottles and place the order, then turn on some lights since it’ll be dark and I don’t want her to strain her eyes more than she already is with editing.

The food arrives within twenty minutes and we set up on the couch to eat.

“What did you get?” She peeks over my arm to investigate.

“Beef and broccoli with chicken teriyaki skewers.” She pops a piece of crab rangoon in her mouth, teasing me with my favorite food.

“No carbs, huh?”

As she brings another piece to her lips, I lean in to steal it right before. Wrapping my lips around her fingers. I watch as a pink blush spreads quickly from her chest, and up her neck.

“Delicious.”

She gulps hard. Now that I’ve had her, it’s almost impossible to keep from wanting more. Even though it’s my own fault.

Picking up another piece, I turn to her and offer it up. She matches my energy, leaning forward and wrapping her lips around my fingers. And curling her tongue around my finger while keeping eye contact with me.

“Be careful, June. My strength to stay away from you is hanging on by a thread,” I warn.

She places her food on the table in front of us, then takes mine and places it next to hers. She tosses the blanket off her lap, and straddles me.

“And what if I don’t want you to?”

“June.”

“I’m ready, Johnny. It was never about him. It was about how stupid and selfish I was for wanting you to fight for me and wasting all these years I could have had with you. I’m not wasting anymore. I love you, and I don’t want to breathe one more second without you.”

I pull her lips to mine. This kiss is passionate, full of emotion and need. “Do you

know how long I've wanted to hear those words from you?"

"I'll say them everyday."

Flipping her on her back, I cover her body. "You better." I begin trailing kisses from behind her ear, and down her throat. Nipping at the soft skin that elicits the moans I crave from her, I reach between us and undo the many buttons on her shorts. I move them down her legs, just enough to reach in and find her soaking wet already.

My cock twitches knowing that I'm the reason she's already so close to the edge. I sit up, pulling them all the way down her legs and toss them off to the side. Then I pull her up to me so I can shed her shirt, but I find her bare underneath.

Fuck. If I'd known she had no bra on, my willpower would have snapped a lot earlier. Like when my hand was resting on her creamy thigh and had thoughts of moving north, but I was trying to be a gentleman.

"Johnny, stop thinking about it, and touch me."

"Oh, I plan to. I'm just trying to decide where to start." I stare at her naked body, taking in the entire expanse of Italian sunkissed skin that's at my disposal.

She reaches between her thighs, running her fingers around her clit. "Right here, Johnny. I need you here."

"Happily, darlin'." I slide my hands under her ass and pull her up to my face, tossing her legs over my shoulders.

My feast waits for me, glistening and ready. I dart my tongue out, licking her top to bottom. Her body pebbles at the feel of my tongue. The physical reactions from her are my favorite. Knowing that I can please her.

I kiss my way to her clit, nipping and sucking it into my mouth. Her hips buck up, melding my mouth closer to her.

“Oh, God, Kayce, yes!” Her moans fill the space, taking over whatever date is happening on the TV right now.

Using my tongue, I trace circles around her clit, until I can feel her trembling underneath my touch. Her legs are shaking on my shoulders and I nip at her clit one last time, knowing that I’m about to send her over the edge.

Her legs tense, squeezing me with her thighs as the orgasm shakes through her body, making her tremble in my arms and under my tongue.

“Oh...my...God...” she pants out between breaths. “You...naked...now.”

I stand, obliging with her request. Giving her a striptease as she watches breathless and boneless from the couch.

With one hand I wrap the end of my belt around my fist and pull it out. I don’t miss the way her eyes widen, and her thighs clench. “You like that, June?”

She gulps, nodding her head. I undo my pants while walking over to her, my cock bulging out.

“Close your eyes.” She lays back on the couch with her eyes closed.

When she’s settled, I drag the end of my belt down her throat, lightly grazing her skin, then circle each breast and hardened nipple with the tip of the leather. The belt traces a path down her taut stomach to her pussy. I stop just before dipping between her thighs and go down her legs instead. She releases a held breath when I reach her knees, and I lift the belt off her body. Her eyes spring open.

“Uh-uh, darlin’. Closed.” I pull my shirt over my head, twisting it into a blindfold. I lean down kissing her. “Can I blindfold you so you don’t peek? Do you trust me to take care of you?”

Her mouth drops open. “Yes.”

I wrap my shirt around her eyes, tying it gently behind her head before laying her back down. Her legs are already fidgeting in place. I pick up the belt, holding it in my hand and go back to tracing a path on her body. Only this time I let it dip down between her opened legs, grazing her sensitive clit.

“Oh, shit. That feels so good, Johnny.”

I continue to graze her clit and add my mouth around her hardened peaks, sucking each of them into my mouth, nipping them with my teeth. Her body thrashes beneath me. Standing, I take in her body, desperate for another release.

“Don’t you dare come. You’ll wait for me to say so.” I kneel between her legs as she whimpers at my command.

Using the end of the belt in my fingers, I lightly slap it against her pussy.

“Fuckkkk,” she hisses out. With my other hand, I run it up her body, grazing each inch of skin until I reach her throat, squeezing lightly at the base of her throat.

“You’ll tell me if it’s too much, June. Tell me if I’m too much.”

She nods, and squeaks out, “It’s so fucking perfect.”

“Good girl. I’m going to fuck you now, but know that even when it’s rough, I love you. I love how you feel around my cock, and my tongue. I love how responsive you

are to my touch.”

Using the belt, I slap her pussy one more time before standing to shed my jeans and boxers. Once I’m naked and ready, I flip her over onto her knees, resting her hands on the back of the couch.

I position myself behind her, pulling her hips toward me. Using the belt, I lightly slap her ass. Twice on each ass cheek. She sucks in a breath. Leaning down, I place my mouth over her clit, licking up to her entrance.

“You taste so fucking good, I can’t get enough of you.”

Gripping her hips, I notch myself before slamming into her. A growl escapes my lips, she feels even fucking better than she did the first time.

“Hold on tight, June.” I watch as her grip on the back of the couch turns her knuckles white.

I slam into her over and over again. The sound of skin slapping on skin, and her screams fill the room. Watching my cock glide in and out of her dripping pussy has me ready to come already. I bite my lip, trying to keep myself from blowing it too soon.

“Johnny, please. I’m so... I need to come. Now.”

That makes two of us, darlin’. “No.”

She whimpers in response and I go faster, harder. Her pussy is clenching around my cock, squeezing me with all her will. I lean down, biting her ass cheek, and she screams out.

“Goddammit,” I scream out. The tingle flows down my spine, “Come for me, now, June. Now!”

“Yes! Kayce! Oh, my God, fuck me!” she screams out, her pussy spasming around my cock as I slowly move in and out. My own orgasm follows behind hers as I spill into her, watching our orgasms drip down her thighs.

The caveman in me is thrilled to see this. Thrilled to see us mingled together. And in this moment, I can’t wait until I get to see her round with our baby that I’ve put there.

Shit. Who knew I had a breeding kink? Not me.

When her body stops trembling against mine, I pull out, kiss her back and neck. “Stay here. I’ll be right back. Trust me, June.”

I know that Cameron never took care of her, and there doesn’t seem to have been much trust between them either, not as intimately as there is with us. I walk into the kitchen getting a towel and wetting it with warm water.

I return to find her still on her knees, gripping the back of the couch with her makeshift blindfold still on. Showing me how much she trusts me.

I take the towel and swipe at her thighs, cleaning her up. Her body bucks at the intrusion of the warm cloth on her skin. Once she’s clean, I wipe myself.

I remove my tee, and pull her back into my lap, cradling her.

“Kayce, that was—”

“If that was too much, you tell me. I didn’t mean to get so... rough,” I rush out. Suddenly worried that it was too much for her to handle.

“I’ve never been fucked like that, and it was perfect. I loved every second. Where did you learn to—”

“I didn’t. I’ve never been that uninhibited. I only reacted to your cues and it was so fucking good, June. Only with you. Always you.”

She wraps her arms around my neck, pulling me in to kiss her. I never knew that sex could be so much more than just sex. Making her happy and satisfied was the only thing I wanted to think about. I could have come from her sounds alone.

We’re perfect together. Everything I’ve ever dreamt of.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

We're sitting eating our reheated Chinese food, and rewatching the Bachelor episode that we missed. And I'm still trying to squeeze my thighs together from thinking about what just happened.

Since my confession he hasn't let go of me. He's been finding any small way to have his body touching mine.

"I can't believe you got me hooked on this show," he says through a mouthful of food.

"Hey, I told you that you could change the channel. You're the one who got cozy and snuggled in under my blanket and got hooked." I take another piece of chicken from his plate and he steals another one of my crab rangoons.

I blush at the sight of the crab rangoons that started everything earlier. Who knew crab would be an aphrodisiac?

When we finish, he clears all the plates and cleans up the food while I pick up the living room and shut off the TV. It's late but I don't want the night to end with him.

He sees me standing awkwardly in the kitchen by the stairs.

"What would you say to a sleepover in my bed? I've been sleeping like shit without you. I don't have anyone's ice cold toes to cool me down in the middle of the night." He slides up next to me, pulling my body to his.

He took the words right out of my mind. "I think that sounds like an excellent plan." I

smirk up at him.

He scoops me up and throws me over his shoulder. Squealing, I slap at his back. “I didn’t realize that this meant I got all the caveman treatment.”

“Oh darlin’, what I have in mind is all caveman for tonight.”

The timbre of his voice has my thighs squeezing together with his promises.

I can’t fucking wait.

It feels so good to be waking up again with Kayce’s body sprawled over mine. I learned pretty quickly in Italy that no matter how he falls asleep, he will end up with his limbs across me. And missing the weight since we got home has been wreaking havoc on my sleep.

“Mmmm, why are you awake?” he mumbles through the haze of sleep.

“It’s like ten in the morning, Johnny.” He pulls me tighter to him.

“But it’s so comfortable.”

His alarm system goes off in the room, forcing him to get up and look at his phone.

“Who the fuck is that?” He scrutinizes his phone.

I freeze. I hope it’s not his mother or Cameron. “Is it—”

“No. I don’t know who it is. But security let them in. Maybe it’s just the new lawn guy.”

We both roll out of the bed and throw clothes on. I trudge down to the coffee maker, while he goes to open the front door before they can get there.

“Can I help you?”

“I’m looking for Kayce Bicknelle and Wren Kaydell.” I walk over to the front door upon hearing my name.

“I’m Kayce.”

“And you’re Ms. Kaydell?”

I nod.

“You’ve been served.” He sticks two envelopes out to each of us, and we take them.

“The fuck?” Kayce slams the door in the guy’s face and rips into his envelope, taking out the papers.

I’m standing frozen to my spot. I knew I should have left here. I knew I shouldn’t have put Kayce in the middle of all this. I know these papers are from Mrs. Bicknelle and Cameron. Who else would be suing the both of us?

“That fucking asshole. I can’t believe he’s doing this shit.” He’s already pulling out his phone, and calling someone.

“Charley. I need my lawyer at my house. Now.” A pause. “Goddammit, Charley it’s not the fucking time. My lawyer. Now.” He hangs up.

“It’s not Charley’s fault.” I say meekly.

“Jesus, I fucking know. I’m sorry. I’ll apologize to her later. Right now we need to tackle this. What does yours say?”

I hand him my unopened envelope. He rips into it the same as he did his. Only this time he throws his head back in laughter.

“A fucking defamation lawsuit. And destruction of property. Like you’d ever be destructive. And it isn’t defamation if it’s true, and came from his own fucking mouth.” He slams down the papers and looks at me.

But my face is probably as white as the paper those lawsuits are written on. Because I did destroy his property. Three very expensive suits to be exact.

“Wren.” He’s scrutinizing my face now with raised brows. “What did you do?”

“Well. Charley did all the packing. And when you went back to work she came over to help me unpack. And right before she got here, your mom had called me. And I was real pissed. So when she handed me a box of his suits with a lighter on top, I just agreed. And then she played Burn by Usher on the speakers and...”

“Wren. You didn’t.”

“I did. I’m so fucking sorry.” The dam on my tears breaks and I sob into my hands right here in the kitchen.

He pulls out his phone again.

“Charley.” A pause. “I know, I’m sorry. But listen, when you went to Cameron’s...” Another pause. “Yes this is precisely what that’s about.” Pause. “Are you absolutely fucking sure?” Pause. “No. I’m not doubting your crazy. Trust me I fucking know firsthand how insane you can be.” Pause. “Yes. I also know you’ve never been

caught.” Pause. “Fine. If you’re sure. Lawyer?” Pause. “Great. Are you coming too?” Pause. “See you soon.”

He looks at me, pulling me to him, letting my tears soak through his shirt. “Charley and the lawyer are on their way. She said he has no cameras inside, and he wasn’t home so he has no proof of the suits being taken. It’s a he said, she said. I’ll offer him the money just to make him shut up. The rest of it, he has no leg to stand on. It’ll be fine.”

“I’m so sorry. I never should have listened to Charley.”

He laughs, “Well, that is definitely true. I don’t think that girl ever has a good idea. And her latest bad choice is that fucking rookie taking my spot.”

I let out a wail. “Something else I fucked up!”

“That is not what I meant! Come on now, you know I don’t take any shit. If I thought any of this was your fault you know damn well I’d have told you, and I wouldn’t have done it.” He hugs me tightly, squeezing the sadness out of me.

He moves us to the couch where he pulls me onto his lap and just lets me cry on his chest until Charley and the lawyer show up.

I’m numb. I don’t want to deal with this.

But I have to.

Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Wren and I sit across from Charley and Martin, my lawyer. He reads over the paperwork while we all sit in silence. At least Charley has the nerve to look sheepish over what she suggested, and instigated Wren to do with Cameron's designer suits.

“Well. This honestly looks like a lot of bullshit, blowing smoke up your ass and trying to scare you into some kind of settlement. Not really sure why he wants the money, but it is what it is. If this has to go to court, we'll win. As for the property destruction...” He looks around the table at the three of us.

“They just got messed up with Wren's stuff. We hired packers and they took them by mistake. They'll be returned to him when we can have a supervised drop-off.” Both Charley and Wren snap their heads in my direction. Because they know damn well that those suits are ashes in my fire pit.

“Perfect. As long as that's taken care of then this defamation is going to get thrown out. Neither of you said anything. The video came from his own lips. And you aren't the ones who recorded it, he can sue his mistress for that. Now, I'll respond to this, and we'll see what they respond with. In the meantime, no contact please. I'm going to do some digging into their financials to see why they're coming after you for so much money. They clearly don't need it, so what is the motive?”

He stands and we all follow suit, but only I follow him to the door. “Thanks so much for coming out to the house, Martin. I didn't trust that they wouldn't be waiting to attack when we left. You know what happened last time. I'm willing to bet that's the same problem they're facing now. But this is a lot more money than they wanted before.”

“A hell of a lot more. I’ll dig into it, see what I can find. You know your stepfather doesn’t hide his tracks well and there’s always a casino worker we can throw a couple hundred at for information.” He shakes my hand and steps out.

Sighing, I rub my hands through my hair. Replacing those suits is going to be a job for Charley today.

“Kayce...” Charley calls me tentatively.

“Wren, do you know exactly what suits were ruined?”

She nods.

“You and Charley need to go find those exact suits and buy them again.” I hand them my credit card. “And then rip the tags off, have them dry cleaned so that we have the receipt from today after we spoke to the lawyer. Got it?”

They both answer at the same time.

“Got it,” from Charley.

And from Wren, “I can’t let you pay for those suits, Johnny. They are worth so much money. It was an expensive mistake.”

“Girl. Shut up and take his credit card. There is no other way out of that. So it’s either you get sued for destruction of property or we take this card and go buy those suits. What’s it going to be?”

I can see the tears brimming in Wren’s eyes. “June, it’s fine. Take the card. Buy the suits, and it’s done. I know they’re up to something and this is the only bone I’m throwing him. Besides, I’m probably the one who bought the originals anyway.” I

close my eyes thinking of the last time they tried to shake me down for money. “I’ve got to get to the stadium for another night of sitting in the suite with those asshats.” I kiss Wren on the forehead and run upstairs to shower and grab my suit.

I can’t wait for tonight.

I’m not sure how I’ve survived these last three games of suspension, but I’m finally on the last game. My mood since the lawsuit has been shit. I’m trying really hard to not let it affect my mood with Wren, but it’s fucking hard to put on a happy face for her.

Martin called me this morning and said he talked to some guys, and it looks like my fucking stepfather is in trouble again with the casino. Last time it was a hundred thousand, but who knows how much it is this time. Martin is going to work on getting a number at how deep they are in the hole. Just what I needed tonight.

Add to all this the fucking young kid was up my ass last night and he’s been ramping up. None of the guys had my back either. Not even Viktor, he just stood by and agreed with what the team was saying.

“Bicknelle,” Coach calls me into his office before the game starts.

“Yeah, Coach.”

“This is your last suspension game. I heard what happened last night with the young guns. They’re just trying to get under your skin because they think they’re going to get a chance. Don’t let them. We need you back.”

“I’ll try. They’re really big fucking pricks and it’s like someone is telling them every fucking button to push to piss me off.” I press my lips into a thin line. I don’t know who it is, but it’s gotta be someone on the team who knows me.

“Well just do me a favor and keep your shit together. I need you tomorrow night. We need you for the Ice Men. You know they play dirty and Sanders isn’t ready for them.”

“Will do, Coach.”

He nods and I know that I’m dismissed. I take the cue and leave, heading to the suite, mentally preparing myself to keep my shit together tonight.

When I arrive at the suite, I’m thankfully the only one here.

It doesn’t last long though. Within a few minutes the guys arrive, laughing together like they’re on the fucking team instead of the hopeful fill-ins with shit attitudes. Don’t get me wrong, I have nothing against kids coming into the league, just these two are assholes. There’s a reason they haven’t been called up yet for more than a game or two. They’re jerks to everyone and don’t understand the meaning of having a team. They just want to be the big shots, making all the play themselves.

I roll my eyes and groan to myself.

“You’re still here, Bicknelle?”

“Last game. Tomorrow I’ll be on the ice.” Unlike you two.

“You sure about that?” They both laugh at their dumbass joke and I know for sure they’re trying to goad me into a fight.

It’s the third period and Denver is playing fucking dirty as expected. What is worse is the fucking idiots next to me criticizing my teammates. Every play, every move, every penalty, they have something to fucking say. Their attitude is probably a big reason why they’re still in the minors.

I can see Viktor getting pissed at the dirty plays. I know his body language on the ice as well as mine. He's got three guys on him, blocking him from doing anything. He finally gets a chance at the puck and high-hits the guy in front of him, causing a massive fight to break out on the ice.

"Karlsen is a fucking idiot." One guy scoffs.

"At least he's on the ice." I mumble quietly to myself.

"Oh yeah? I don't see you out there either. Maybe Karlsen will be up here next week, and pretty soon we'll both be in your spots, because you two can't get your shit together long enough to play a game this season."

I press my lips together and take a deep breath. Do not react, do not react.

"Nothing to say now?"

"Nope." I stare straight ahead at the shit show that is happening on the ice with my team.

I can't believe I'm not down there. I want to be fighting with my team. I clench my fists together. Getting more pissed each passing second the refs are fighting to get control on the ice.

I listen to these idiots make their comments the rest of the game before I flee to the locker room as soon as that final buzzer sounds. I just want to be with my team. To have their backs when they get off the ice.

The team files in, throwing their gear and living in pissed off silence. It was a tough loss, and the other team played extra dirty with our rookie.

Viktor spots me sitting on the bench in front of our lockers.

“Hey. Tough game,” I say quietly so only he hears.

“Yeah, it was fucking tough. Especially without you.” He all but spits at me.

“I’ll be back tomorrow. We’ll win, and they won’t get the chance to play dirty like they did tonight.”

“Yeah.” He walks away without another word to the showers.

Sanders comes over to me. “Fuck man, are they always that bad?”

“Denver sucks. Their coaching encourages it. There’s rumors that he pays them per penalty. No one’s ever confirmed it, but based on how they play I’d believe it.” I stand, feeling awkward in the locker room for the first time. Sanders is the only one even looking at me.

“Would’ve been nice to have you out there tonight, Bicknelle.” Joaquin walks by us on the way to the showers, his eyes narrow as he talks to me.

“I’m back tomorrow.” He rolls his eyes in response.

“Fuck,” I mumble under my breath.

“Yeah, they’re pretty pissed at you.” Sanders shrugs his shoulders. “I tried my hardest, man. I did. But damn. You’re big shoes to fill.”

“You did great. No one expected you to be me. I’ve been on this team for almost ten years, along with most of the guys. We have a comfort on the ice that you’ll learn. It becomes a dance that you just get really good at.”

“Thanks man, I’m grateful to have you as a mentor.” He slaps me on the shoulder and heads off to the showers himself. He passes Viktor on the way out.

“You doing press?” Viktor asks me as he pulls a shirt on.

“No. I’m going to let Sanders do it. He deserves the time after how he played tonight and held his own against them.”

“He’s good. But, you better be back tomorrow, because I’d rather have you and Sanders than Sanders and that asshole that got called up.” I hand him the suit jacket next to me on the bench.

“Don’t get me started on those assholes. I’ve just had to spend the last ten games listening to their fucking bullshit and not punching them.” I roll my eyes at the memory.

This makes him laugh and breaks some of the tension simmering between us.

“Bring Wren tomorrow. Calliope and Aksel will be here. Might as well tell Charley to come too while you’re at it.”

“I’m sure they’re both together at my house right now so I’ll check with them when I get home.”

He nods and walks away to the press rooms. At least he’s not still mad at me. That’s my favorite thing about Viktor. He might be pissed, but he doesn’t hold grudges against people, except the Ice Men. I don’t know if he’ll ever tell anyone the true story behind his trade from them to the Havoc.

Now that I’ve talked to the guys and made up with at least Viktor, it’s time to go home to Wren.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

The Havoc stadium is electric. After last night's loss all the fans are here and ready to cheer on the guys for a win. Plus I get baby snuggles from sweet Aksel.

"Girl. Are you seriously wearing Sanders' jersey?" Calliope eyes Charley.

Charley is notorious for having a fun time and not double dipping . But something about this rookie has her undone.

"Shut up. Can we not make it a thing?" She sighs and rolls her eyes before taking a sip of her beer.

"Oh it's a thing." I chuckle.

"Like you're one to talk Ms. Number Nineteen, Bicknelle." This time I swear her eyes roll so far back she must be looking at her brain.

"Hey, I'm not trying to hide shit. I will tell anyone who wants to hear that I love Kayce Bicknelle. Should I..." I stand, placing a foot on the seat.

Charley grabs my arm, pulling me down. "Absolutely not! We are not drawing any more attention to us. Fuck we already look like Goddamn puck bunnies in their jerseys."

"Technically the jersey is also my last name. So I'm not a puck bunny. You however, kind of seem like one." Calliope laughs, making that last comment to get under Charley's skin. "Are you going to wait for him after the game too?"

“Oh yes! Are we all going to The Penalty Shot?” I clap my hands together. I’ve always wanted to hang out with the guys there, but Cameron’s friends always met us after the game and I was forced to sit with them and be the demure fiancée for him.

“Oh, my God. Are you two trying to fucking kill me? Is it not enough that I’m here to watch him with you people?” She sulks into her seat, curling into herself to block the shirt she’s wearing.

“She’s so dramatic isn’t she, Aksel?” I rub my nose against his and his little giggles fill the air around us. “Ugh, why is that the best noise in the whole world?”

“It really is. It’s addicting. I just want to make him laugh all day.” Calliope smiles brightly. Motherhood truly is her calling. “But I also might like a trip to The Penalty Shot after. I already texted my mom to meet me and grab Aksel.”

“Yes! It’s so happening, Charley.” I nudge her shoulder with mine.

“Great,” she whispers in a mocking tone.

The lights dim, and the entrance music plays for the players. It’s time for the game to start.

“Starting center for the Houston Havoc, Kaaayce Bicknelllllllle” The announcer calls him to the ice.

Once all the players are out, and the national anthem has been sung, it’s finally time for some hockey. The referee's whistle blows, the puck drops, and Kayce grabs it first, tearing down the ice with it. The stadium is filled with the sounds of slapping sticks, and players hitting the boards. Our heads move side to side as we all follow the plays moving from end to end of the rink.

Fuck . Kayce wasn't wrong. This team sucks. They're so mean and I don't even understand everything I'm watching. Despite all the time I spent with him in the rink during high school. I spent more time with my camera taking photos of the team than I did learning the game. And definitely more time analyzing every photo of Kayce's face that ended up in my editing software, I could make a photo book of just Kayce's hockey career and probably make millions. But those shots are precious to me. A moment that only I was allowed to know, I want to be selfish and keep that just for me.

Kayce and Viktor find a breakaway and they're both racing down the ice. Calliope grips at my arm resting on the armrest next to her, and Charley is leaning with her arms on her knees, fully entranced in the game. At the last second, Viktor passes the puck to Kayce and since the goalie was expecting the puck to come from the right, his left was open, and the puck went gliding right in.

The three of us jump up, arms pumping in the air as we scream with the crowd. Even little baby Aksel is clapping with us. With the score one to zero, the Ice Men come back to the center ready to fight harder than they have been before.

The rest of the game passed with a lot of nail biting, but Kayce came back to the game ready to play and win. He was able to score two more goals, with Viktor scoring one. This brought the final score four to three with mere seconds left in the period.

Now we truly have a reason to celebrate at The Penalty Shot.

The girls and I wait for the crowd to clear before we walk Calliope to the entrance to meet her mom, and after too many kisses goodbye, she finally lets Aksel go home.

"Come on girl, the real show is about to start. Charley is going to get her man in the family room." I wink at Calliope, and don't miss the groan from Charley.

“Seriously? Why the fuck is she here?” Charley asks as we enter the family waiting area.

“Who?” I look around for someone familiar, but don’t see anyone.

“Becky.” Calliope nods her head in the direction of a petite blonde wearing a barely there jean skirt, cowboy boots, and a Sanders jersey.

“Oh shit. She’s trying to get your man, Char.” I laugh.

“Let her fucking try.” A fire shines in her eyes that I haven’t seen all night. It seems another girl trying to move in on her territory has her forgetting that she didn’t even want to wear his jersey in the first place.

Charley pulls Calliope and I up in front of Becky, positioning herself directly in front of her, and piles her long waves on top of her head in a messy bun so that Sanders’ name is displayed proudly.

A scoff sounds from behind us, but I ignore it because the guys are finally coming out of the locker room. Viktor comes straight to Calliope, and Sanders catches his eye on Charley. You can tell the moment he finds her, because his eyes light up and a goofy grin spreads across his face. He beelines it for her, completely missing Becky behind us. He pulls Charley into his arms, kissing her deeply in front of everyone. Catcalls sound from the rest of the team as everyone parts and naturally circles around the two of them.

He finally lets her go and she looks right at me. “Did that bitch leave?”

Calliope and I look around the room and I spot Becky walking out at a fast clip, her fake cowboy boots clicking on the floor as she goes.

“Yup. Sure did.”

“Good.” Then she turns to Sanders and swats at his chest. “Who the fuck said you could kiss me in public?”

“You’re wearing my name, sweet thing.” He winks at her and I swear I see her knees buckle.

She’s got it bad. And I can’t wait to see the fall.

“Where’s Kayce?” I ask Viktor.

“He’s doing press with Craig. He’ll be out in a minute.”

I nod. “You guys can go to The Penalty Shot, we’ll meet you there.”

“Tell Craig to come. I doubt he’ll leave Claire at home, but it’s worth a shot.”

Claire couldn’t come tonight. Their baby girl has just started walking and bringing a mobile toddler to a hockey rink where she puts everything in her mouth is not a great idea.

They all leave me standing alone in the room except for a few smaller press members hoping for a quick informal interview with the straggling players. And if Charley thinks that I miss her sliding her hand into Sanders’ pocket to hold his hand, she has another thing coming. They are so fucking cute and I can’t wait to bust her balls.

I pull out my phone real quick and snap a photo of them.

Me : Don’t think for one second you’re fooling me. photo of hand holding

I smile to myself at the thought of Charley finding a happily ever after with a rookie when she's sworn off hockey players.

I open my emails to respond to a few brides while I wait. My inquiries have had a little uptick since the tabloids posted Kayce and I's photo in Italy. I won't complain about the extra work. Especially not since I have to pay Kayce back for the three suits.

Ugh. Why did I listen to Charley?

"Hey, June." Kayce saunters over to me. Dropping a kiss to the top of my head.

"Hey! What a good game!" Craig follows behind him. "Oh! I'm supposed to invite you out to The Penalty Shot!"

"I go where you go, June." Kayce answers me.

"I've got a massage therapist coming to the house after the baby goes to bed. Booked a couples massage for me and Claire. She deserves it after we were gone for so long and she was on her own with the teething baby. I kind of owe her."

"Ugh. Okay, that's so sweet. You definitely get a pass this time."

"Let's hope the wife thinks so." He waves us off before heading out of the stadium.

"So, The Penalty Shot, huh?" Kayce guides me with his hand on the small of my back. "You know who usually shows up there after a game."

"Who?"

He stops dead in his tracks and stares at me. "Cameron?" He says it like he's

questioning why I don't know this.

If I'm honest, I don't know why I don't know this either. "He goes to The Penalty Shot?"

"Wren..." He looks down at me, pulling me closer. "You didn't know?"

I shake my head. Why was I so fucking blind and stupid with him? I think that my only answer is, I couldn't have Kayce so I didn't care to know what was going on. Especially because deep down I knew if I looked hard, I'd find an answer I didn't like.

"Well. If he chooses to be there after everything, then we'll deal with it." I stand tall, even if I don't want to ever face Cameron again.

"We can leave whenever you want if he's there, you don't owe him anything or any time."

I nod and walk out the doors with him at my back. He's always got me, no matter what.

Entering The Penalty Shot I'm hit with the strong odor of stale beer and Cameron, sitting front and center when you walk in the door. I know immediately that he's here for a reason. He came here in hopes to see Kayce.

As soon as he sees us, that evil smirk takes over his face and he walks toward us, cutting us off before we can get to the safety of the tables that the other players have taken up residence at.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't my big bro slummin' it with my sloppy seconds." He licks his lips, a sure sign that he thinks he's caught us. Like the rabbit in his traps, he

thinks he's got us caught.

"Come on, June." Kayce whispers in my ear and tries to move me over to the tables around Cameron.

Cameron slaps his hand on Kayce's shoulder, he's clearly drunk. "Hey man, I said somethin' to ya, you better answer me."

Kayce's hands leave my hips and I look back to see his fists balled at his side. Viktor and Sanders are at his side in a second and I feel like I'm going to fall over from how fast they blow past me to have his back.

"Stay the fuck away from me," Kayce roars.

"That's fucking rich considering you let that bitch steal from me and I haven't even tried to come get my things." Cameron laughs. He is being such a jackass.

Kayce lunges forward, but Viktor pulls him back. Stopping him from beating the shit out of his brother and getting another suspension.

"Leave us alone, Cameron. She wants nothing to do with you and honestly neither do I. I'm done with all of you."

Sanders is pulling Cameron away, back to his friends that are completely useless.

"I hope she's fucking worth it, brother. You're going to lose everything and be left with just her when I'm done suing your ass." That laugh is grating on my nerves and I'm about to punch him, because I have nothing to lose.

"She's always fucking worth it, jackass. I'd give everything I have for her, and you're just pissed you fumbled her."

Sanders yells at his friends, “Get him the fuck out of here and don’t let him come back.”

He warned me, but I didn’t know what to expect until the moment I saw that damn smirk on his face.

I sulk back to the tables where Charley and Calliope are waiting for me while the guys go grab some beers at the bar.

“Oh, my God. Girl. What the fuck was he thinking? Confronting y’all here? He’s got balls.” Charley rolls her eyes. “I mean not as big as mine, but they’re there.”

“He was shitfaced. He never would have had those balls sober.”

“Okay, but can we talk about Kayce confessing how worth it you are?” Calliope gushes. “It’s so fucking sexy when they claim you publicly.”

“I’m such an idiot for wasting so much time. I don’t want to waste more with him. All Cameron is doing is taking time away from us.”

“When will that whole thing be done?” Charley asks. “I haven’t seen an appointment come across our boy’s calendar.”

“I don’t know. They were waiting for a mediation date before actually going through to the court. I think Martin is working on something, but I don’t know what it is. I overheard him talking to Kayce about last time. ”

“Oooh. Right.” Charley suddenly finds the bowl of popcorn very interesting.

“Charley. Spill it.”

She shoves a handful of popcorn in her mouth and shrugs. “Not my place. Sorry.”

The guys return with a bucket of beers for the table.

“Not your place for what?” Kayce asks Charley.

“Nothing.” I quickly answer for her. I don’t want him to think I was eavesdropping.

He eyes me suspiciously but doesn’t push us to answer.

Calliope comes in with a topic change to save me. “Have y’all ever noticed how many girls point and giggle at just the thought of being in the same room with y’all. Even though we all exist. Right here with you.”

The guys look around and notice a handful of girls staring.

“Oooh, how about a drinking game, girls? Every time a girl looks and giggles we take a sip, and every time a girl comes up to them to slip their number, we take a shot.” Of course Charley makes it a drinking game.

“We’re going to be falling over in ten minutes.” I laugh.

“Okay, go to that table. We have drinks to drink and girl-talk to be had.” Charley shoos the boys away to another table.

They all grumble, but Viktor kisses Calliope on the forehead and they follow directions to leave us be.

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We take our seats away from the girls, and I'm not impressed that they sent us away. I was looking forward to spending time with Wren, even if it is in a packed bar.

"I need to know what ass I just kicked out of this bar." Sanders finally asks.

He just joined the team last winter when he was traded from Miami after just one full season on their team. I don't know why they even drafted him, they never played him. He's going to be a great player. Havoc is lucky to have him.

"My brother." His eyes go wide. "Obviously there's some bad blood."

"Yeah, like he was Wren's fiancé. Cheated on her, and Kayce knocked him out at the wedding then ran away with his girl."

I glare at Viktor. "Thanks for that recap."

"You're welcome." He takes a swig of his beer, smiling at his little recap like my life is his favorite show.

"Shit. That's a lot. And he's suing you?"

"It's bullshit, but it's annoying enough to piss me off and stress Wren out." I throw back my beer.

It's been about an hour and the girls have stayed true to their game, enough so that the bartender caught on and just has shots lined up ready for them.

I watch as another girl approaches the table with her two friends. I shake my head as Sanders adds the napkin to the growing pile on the table and then peek back at Wren.

“If we don’t stop them soon, they’re going to end up in the emergency room with alcohol poisoning.” I point over my shoulder at the girls.

The three of them are huddled together, staring at the last round of shots that was just delivered.

“Yup. Okay, time to end this mess.” Sanders pushes back and we both follow him.

Walking over to Wren, nuzzling into her neck, I whisper into her ear. “Are you ready to go home?”

“You gonna tie me up again?” she slurs.

“I didn’t tie you up, darlin’. I blindfolded you.”

“Ooh. I want both.” She falls back into me.

“Okay little minx. Let’s get you home and then we can talk about it.”

She stands, and immediately topples over. I reach out to catch her before she hits the floor. Charley does the same.

“Shit. Where does she live?” Sanders asks as he holds up my assistant.

“You brought her out and don’t even know where she lives?” I raise a brow.

“I mean,” he flounders for an answer. “It’s not like she ever invited me over. We’re a little more...casual.”

“You’re a fucking ass. You hurt her and I will come for you.” I threaten, ineffectively as Wren is trying to kiss my neck.

“Hey man, none of this is my choice. She’s a fucking pain in my ass. But I can’t stay away.”

“Yea. That’s how we all ended up here.” Viktor laughs, scooping Calliope into his arms to carry her back to the stadium’s garage.

Sanders and I look at each other, nod, and do the same with Wren and Charley. It’s much more effective than making their feet work at a pace that wouldn’t get us home before sunrise.

The three of us pile the girls into our cars. I give Sanders permission to bring Charley back to his house if he keeps his hands to himself, and I trust him. She needs a little push to give in and let someone take care of her. I know the real Charley. The one who cried on my couch for two days when her high-school sweetheart left her to take a promotion in California and didn’t so much as ask her to come.

Wren already has the music going in my truck and is belting out her favorite Dixie Chicks song, Cowboy Take Me Away.

That song is the whole reason Daddy and I planted an entire section of bluebonnets when I was fourteen. I wanted to let her lay on that pillow of bluebonnets while we watched the stars. I thought I was doing everything I could to let her know how I felt about her.

She serenades me the entire ride home, each song getting worse than the last. As we pull into the garage she’s attempting to rap Big Poppa by Notorious B.I.G.

“Okay, Biggie, let’s get you inside.” I unbuckle her seatbelt and rush around to the

other side to grab her.

She giggles at my nickname. “I’m pretty good at rappin’ Johnny. You better watch out, I’ll be more famous than you!” She boops me on the nose like I’m some adorable Labrador puppy.

“Yeah, I’d love to see that happen, June.” I deposit her in my bed, and head off to find her pajamas and Advil.

When I return, she’s passed out like a starfish with her limbs going in every direction.

Sighing, I get her into her pajamas and curl her up on one side of the bed, tucking her in and leaving the Advil next to her with some water on the table.

Even passed out asleep with her hair covering her face, she’s still the most gorgeous woman I’ve ever seen.

Wren is not having a great time this morning. She’s taken the Advil and drank the water, but she’s cursing Charley.

I came down to make her some peppermint tea and a greasy breakfast sandwich. The two things I swear by for a hangover.

My phone buzzes on the counter, it’s Martin.

“Kayce Bicknelle,” I answer.

“Kayce, It’s Martin. I’ve got an answer for you.”

I’ve always liked Martin’s inability for small talk. He gets right to the point and doesn’t mince words.

“Hopefully a good one. I want this mediation to be done and to over. Then, I want a no-contact order for them.”

“It’s great news for you, not so much for them. Gary placed a pretty sizable bet on the first in season Havoc’s game. He bet on them winning, but a prop bet on you specifically. So when you got suspended, he lost the bet. They’re about to lose everything, Kayce. At least what’s left. He’s been gambling pretty heavily the last year and they don’t have much left to lose. The amount they’re suing you for is the exact amount they need to keep the house.”

An idea pops in my head. I run it by Martin, and he’s excited to bring this forward to them at mediation. Two more days and I’ll have my answer. Along with a no-contact order.

The anger of seeing Cameron has dissipated. I’ve grieved my dream for a long time when Daddy died and I knew I wouldn’t get a thing from Mom. Now it’s back within my reach.

I load up the tray with Wren’s breakfast and tea to bring up to her in bed, where, if you ask her, she’s currently dying and I should be planning her funeral.

“Hey, June, you ready for the hangover cure?”

She just groans into the pillow.

“It’ll help, I promise.” I place the tray down on the nightstand next to her. She rolls slowly as I sit down on the edge. “I’ll feed you.”

“That might actually entice me to function. Can we be lazy and watch TV all day since you don’t have a game?” She sits up and I fluff the pillow behind her head.

“I do have to be at the rink for game review with Coach and the team for a couple of hours, but I can make Charley come over?”

“No. Fuck Charley. This is her fault.” She pouts.

Laughing, I pick up the sandwich to feed her, but she takes it from my hands and shoves a large bite in her mouth.

“Thisissogood,” she mumbles over another bite.

“So I got a call from Martin.” Her eyes widen. “It’s good news. We have a plan for mediation and everything will work out for us. I promise.”

I know she’s harboring a lot of guilt over the whole lawsuit. Especially burning the suits, but luckily we were able to find duplicates to dry clean, so we will bring them with us to mediation. I could give a shit less about buying suits, because I’m about to gain so much more.

“Are you sure? I’m so sorry I dragged you into this mess. I’ll never be able to repay you or fix it.” She slowly puts her food down on the plate looking up at me.

Leaning in to kiss her on the forehead, “I’m sure, June. So sure.”

She gives me a weak smile in response and I settle in on my side against the pillows next to her. “Are we watching The Bachelor?”

“You know I won’t say no .” She watches the TV over the lip of her tea cup, taking small sips of the peppermint tea.

I stare at her and I can’t help, but think that I’m about to get everything I’ve ever dreamed of.

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Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 3:07 am

Smoothing my dress in the mirror with my sweaty palms isn't helping to calm my nerves about mediation today. Kayce isn't worried one bit, but he also won't tell me what it is he has up his sleeve. I don't know how he's going to take on Cameron and Cathy and win.

Especially Cathy.

"Ready, darlin'?"

"No." I stare at him in the mirror.

"It'll be fine. Have I ever lied to you?" He raises a brow.

"Never," I admit, turning to face him.

I slide into his arms, resting my head against his chest. "I hate that we have to see them. I hate that I'm self-conscious about being with you in front of them and worried about what they'll think. I never cheated on him. Settled? Yes. Cheated? No."

"I know, June. But what they think doesn't matter. And I can promise you that none of this is even about you or the wedding. It's about me and they just used you as a pawn in their game to get to me." He kisses the top of my head before letting go, lacing his hand in mine to the car.

The drive over to Martin's office is tense. My clammy hand rests under his strong, warm, and dry hand. The building that Martin's office is in is a high rise glass

building that is intimidating before you even get in.

“I never knew Martin was such a big shot.” I stare up at the building.

“Did you think I’d have some small town lawyer who handles divorces?” He laughs and I know he’s joking but I guess I never thought about his need for a lawyer.

We take the elevator up to the twentieth floor. When we step off the elevator Martin’s law firm logo greets us in gold letters taking up most of the height of the wall.

A beautiful brunette in a tight pencil skirt, the epitome of a secretary in every movie, greets us. “Mr. Bicknelle, Ms. Kaydell, I’ll take you to the mediation room. Mr. Baker is waiting for you.”

We follow her along the corridors of glass windows and glass offices. Each conference room is encircled by walls of glass, showcasing the beauty of the Houston skyline in the distance.

“Kayce. Wren.” Martin stands from the large table, kissing me on the cheek and shaking Kayce’s hand.

“Hey Martin. Sorry we’re early. I wanted to have the advantage.” Kayce pulls out a chair for me, facing the door we just came in.

“Of course. We always want the home advantage, right?” Martin winks and takes the seat he was in before we got here, next to me.

I’m in the middle of Kayce and Martin, and it makes me feel safe, but doesn’t stop me from jumping when the buzzer on the phone goes off.

“Mr. Baker, Cameron Bicknelle is here with his lawyer and party.”

“Thank you, please send them back.”

He looks at us. “Are you ready for the show?” His smile is gleeful. I relax a bit at the thought that he is so calm going into this meeting.

The four of them walk down the hall with the secretary and I wasn’t expecting to see Gary with them. He was never around, always out at the bar or the casinos playing poker.

Cameron looks smug as he eyes the three suits that Kayce hung on a shelf on the back wall.

“Nice to see you, brother,” he says like he didn’t just say what he did two nights ago to us.

“Mr. Bicknelle. Please have a seat.” Martin doesn’t rise to greet them, but instead waves his hand at the open seats across the table. Once they’re all seated he finally addresses them. “I just want to start this meeting with some honesty. You know this is going to get thrown out, and the only thing your client is leaving here with today are the suits that accidentally got packed by the movers, correct?”

Cameron scoffs at the suit comment and honestly I would too. We all know that’s bullshit.

“Absolutely not. Your clients owe mine substantial amounts of money for a wedding that they paid for and the defamation of Mr. Bicknelle.”

“I think we need to get this defamation straight right now, Mr. Aiken, my client can and will countersue for a public humiliation suit based on your client’s behavior and misconduct.”

Cameron's lawyer scrunches his nose up in disgust. "Public humiliation? The only public humiliation was done to my client when Ms. Kaydell decided to put those photos on a video in front of his business colleagues."

Martin opens a folder and pulls out photo after photo after photo of Cameron with different women, all dated during our time together. "Considering that my client was required to host dinner parties for all these women who knew of Mr. Bicknelle's misgivings I'd say that's public humiliation."

The other lawyer leans over to whisper to Cameron and when they turn back to the table, Cameron's eyes narrow at me.

"Fine. We can settle there to remove the defamation, but there is the matter of the cost of the wedding. That was a substantial amount along with the time that Mr. Bicknelle took to plan."

This time I scoff. He didn't plan shit.

"Right. About that. I do have some interesting discoveries." Martin presses a button on the speaker. "Abby, can you please bring me the file that was delivered this morning for Mr. Bicknelle's case?"

"Yes, sir."

Not more than thirty seconds later Abby enters the room holding a file. She places it in Martin's hand and silently walks back out. Cameron doesn't even have the decency to keep his eyes to himself in a mediation with lawyers. I roll my eyes so hard I swear I see my brain.

Martin pulls out the first piece of paper and slides it across the table. "This is a bet that Gary made on Kayce Bicknelle and the Houston Havoc. If you'll notice the

amount he bet, and the fact that he lost.” He slides another across the table. “And this shows the total amount that your client’s mother owes in order to keep her home due to this bet and other gambling. If you’ll note it’s eerily similar to the amount of the wedding costs that your client is seeking.”

Kayce places his hand on my thigh under the table, giving me a little squeeze.

“Are you insinuating that my client is lying in order to get enough money from your client to keep his mother’s home?” The lawyer’s eyes narrow at Martin, while Cathy’s eyes widen in shock.

“Oh, I’m not insinuating it. I’m declaring it. I know for a fact this is what’s happening as my client bailed them out a few years ago when the gambling debt got to be too much. So my client has a proposal for you.”

Martin winks at Kayce and slides one last paper across the table.

Cameron and his lawyer each lean over the proposal, staring at what is being offered. But me, I’m reeling that this isn’t the first time Kayce has dealt with this and that they’ve been in financial trouble before. I knew he liked the casinos, but to lose this much money?

I try to read what the proposal says from across the table, but it’s in tiny lawyer contract print so it’s not happening.

Martin notices me trying to read it and slides a copy over to me. As I begin reading, my mouth drops open.

Kayce is offering a massive amount of money to buy the farm from his mother. More than they’re asking for in the lawsuit and probably more than market value. He’s also asking them for a no contact provision.

Martin speaks suddenly, interrupting my thoughts about the contract. “As you can see, this is more than a fair offer. Your clients can be out of debt and still have enough money to buy a modest home here in Houston. And all your clients have to agree to, in addition, is a no contact provision. Including Wren Kaydell.”

“I will need to speak to my client about this, privately, if you don’t mind.”

“Of course. We’ll step into the hall. Give a little knock on the window when you’re ready.” Martin smiles, gesturing for us to follow past him out into the hallway.

I follow robotically. How is this real? How is all of this mess that I helped to create just going to go away like that? And Kayce gets the farm back? My brain can’t keep up fast enough to wrap around the idea and all the information I just learned about Cameron and Cathy.

“Are you okay, June?” Kayce asks.

“I...he...they... No.” I shake my head in disbelief.

“I know it’s a lot, but it’s not the first time Mom has needed money from me to cover their expenses. Cameron never helps. Since the last time they had to sign a paper stating that they understood this was the last time I was helping with money, they needed a new way to get to me. When the wedding went down, it was perfect timing. His last bet was on the first in-season Havoc game and since I was suspended they blame me for his loss and you by association. They knew if they sued you, I’d fight.” He explains in hushed tones in the hallway.

“It’ll work. Look at your mother.” Martin nods discreetly in the direction of Cathy.

She looks like she just won the lottery and Cameron is shaking his head, but Cameron won’t say no to her and risk not being the golden child in her eyes. She funded a lot

of his lifestyle and I'd assume that this deal is putting an end to that. I watch Cameron take a deep breath and then his lawyer turns to knock on the window.

"Show time." Martin smirks and opens the door for us.

We take the same seats we were in prior.

"Do you have any questions about the deal?" Martin asks.

"No. My clients are ready to sign."

"Great!" Martin slides three pens across the table. "Once everything is signed we will get the paper drawn up for the sale of the farm."

"How long until we get the money?" Cathy asks, happily signing and returning the paper and pen to Martin.

"I already have the contracts drawn up. We can stop by my real estate lawyer's office and I'd say as fast as the wire takes to send."

She is giddy. I don't think I've ever seen Cathy smile so big. Cameron, on the other hand, looks like a kid who dropped his ice cream on the ground. His pout is threatening to break the professional demeanor he's been attempting since he realized he wasn't going to win this war.

Kayce and I sign the copy of the contract, and then Abby reappears, taking all the paperwork and returning with copies for everyone in nice neat folders emboldened with Martin's logo.

Martin and the other lawyer shake hands before they all leave the room. It's just Kayce, Martin and I left around the gigantic table.

“What just happened?” I whisper.

“Everything, June. Everything just happened. Me and you, we’re going to get our happily ever after. Together.” He stands from the chair pulling me up and swinging me around. "And I get Daddy's farm back."

Together is the only word that sounds in my head and really the only one that matters

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It's taken three weeks but the farm is officially in my name, and I've given my mother a month to find a new house. After that month they will owe me rent. I think I'm being more than fair. Cameron hasn't reached out, he took his suits and hasn't looked back at me or Wren, which, I'm thankful for.

As for Wren, she's already returning to herself. She's happier and killing it in her photography. I'm so proud of her.

Tonight is the first game she's been able to make since the mediation, and I can't wait to see her wearing my number against the glass again. With everything behind us it feels different than last time she came.

Even the sex is different. She is so much more explorative than the stepford wife I first got in Italy. She and Charley went to a sex store and she came home with bondage ropes and a guide to bondage book with positions already circled by her. I don't know if my jaw or pants dropped faster that night.

"Bicknelle! Get your fucking head in the game. I told you to go out on the ice twice." Cade slaps my helmet to get my attention.

"Sorry, Coach." I run to the door, waiting for Sanders to get off the ice.

"Don't fucking sorry me. Just get out there and win this goddamn game. They're too close and I'm sick of it."

Sanders passes me and I slap him on the shoulder, I'm ready to be done so I can get back to Wren, and so that we can win our tenth game in a row and keep this winning

streak going.

I fly down the ice to where Viktor is struggling to get an open spot. He spots my movements and slaps the puck toward me. I grab it, but Denver steals it almost immediately. Joaquin flies down the ice with two other players on him. Viktor and I make eye contact and he nods because he knows the play I'm thinking of. He races over to the player with the puck like he's going to take it and gets the remaining guys on him. Right before he gets to the puck he spins and takes off in the other direction like he got it, and I swoop in with no defense around to steal the puck.

There's about four seconds left on the clock and we need to get this goal to avoid overtime. I've got the puck and I'm flying down the ice. There are three guys coming at me and I need to dump the puck, so I shoot it to my left knowing Viktor will be there. I'm slammed into the glass by a Denver player and don't even know if the puck made it or if we're going into overtime.

Then I hear the goal buzzer. The player on top of me releases me and I see Joaquin standing near the goalie with his arms in the air.

We all rush over to him, celebrating his winning goal. All of us grabbing onto him and jumping on the ice for our tenth win. The rest of the team rushes out to the ice to join in, including Coach. This is a big deal to have this many games in a winning streak and we're all stoked.

Press conferences lasted a little longer than usual with all the excitement. When we get out everyone seems to be gone except a few of the guys. Cade left as soon as conferences were over to meet Maren for a reservation for her birthday, and that gives me an idea. Something that will make Wren excited.

I sneak out the side door of the locker room and stealthily slide down the shadows of the hallway.

“Psst. June.” I whisper to her, but she’s standing with Charley.

She looks around, not seeing me in the shadows, so I reach out and grab her arm, pulling her toward me.

Charley catches me, and loudly announces, “Oh, someone’s getting rink sex.”

“Am I?” Wren looks at me with a wide grin.

“Yeah, June. You are.” I toss her over my shoulder and take off running before Charley or anyone else can see where I’m going.

“Why is this so sexy?” she asks, her ass bouncing in my face.

I spank her and she’s already moaning. Who knew my girl had this adventurous side that sex in public would have her ready to come before it even starts?

I test Cade’s door and it hasn’t been locked yet by the janitorial staff. I slip inside and shut the door behind me, the room is lit by the lights from the ice.

“Kayce. Is this Cade’s office?” she whispers with a mischievous glint in her eyes as she catches the floor to ceiling windows overlooking the rink.

“Sure is. Now strip those pants off, but leave the jersey. I want to see my number and name while I fuck you.” I wink at her, undoing my suit pants.

She undoes her pants in record time, but I’m pushing up against her body faster. Blocking her in with her back against the wall of windows as she’s wriggling out of her jeans.

Once she gets her legs free I pull her up my body, her legs wrapping around my

waist. She reaches between us, pulling my cock free of my boxers.

I lift her body up, notching at her pussy, ready to slam her down. “You’re so wet for me already, June. Have you been waiting for me to fuck you the whole time you watched me?”

“Yes,” she answers breathlessly.

Growling, I quickly drop her down on my cock, hitting the back of her, making her jump.

“Oh God, that hurts so fucking good.” She splays her palms behind her, bracing on the window.

I slam into her again, dragging her pussy down against my skin. Her legs shake as the orgasm builds.

I pull out of her and place her on the floor, she whimpers in response.

“I want to see my last name on you while you come apart in my arms. Turn around.” I flip her around so she’s looking out at the ice, and she braces herself when I pull her hips back toward me.

I notch myself once again and slam into her, reaching around and rubbing her clit between my thumb and forefinger.

“Oh shit, this is...” she moans out, “so much better.”

Her body shivers as I pinch her clit at the same time I slam my cock into her.

Just then we’re also interrupted by the door opening followed by a woman giggling.

“Fuck, Char. I thought you said they were having rink sex.”

Both Wren and I whip our heads in the direction of the voices, but I’m too far gone to stop fucking her.

“Oh shit.” Charley giggles at Sanders. “I thought so too. Should we join?”

“No!” I yell out.

But Charley pushes Sanders down on the couch, straddling him.

“Johnny...don’t...stop...so...close.” Wren pants.

I wouldn’t even if I could. I’m so fucking close I’ve been holding off for her. “Goddammit. You two are sick fucks.”

I keep working at Wren’s clit and I can feel her body tensing, she’s so fucking close to coming apart for me. We hear the unmistakable sound of zippers, and Charley moaning from behind us.

Wren pushes back into my lap, bringing me deeper and gripping my cock with a vice grip. “Why the fuck do I like this?” she whispers to me.

“Did I hear my girl say she likes this?” Charley calls out.

I look back to find Sanders sucking on her peaked nipples.

“Unfortunately, yes you did.” I groan.

Charley gets up and immediately runs over to the window. “I knew you were a freak like me, girl. You just had to dump that stifling asshole.”

“Can we not do this right now?” I say through gritted teeth.

Sanders comes over to join Charley. “Shall we join, sweet thing?”

“Yes!” Charley assumes the same position as Wren, and I watch Sanders free his own cock.

“Goddammit. I fucking hate you two so much.” I should have paid more attention and locked the door instead of being blinded by visions of slamming into Wren.

Unfortunately this isn’t the first time I’ve seen Sanders’ cock. There may have been a time when he first joined us that we went to a team pool party, after Wren’s engagement, where Sanders and I shared two girls. I was, however, completely shitfaced that night.

If it’s possible Wren’s pussy squeezes me tighter. I use my free hand to roam up her back and under my jersey to tweak her nipples, just as Sanders is doing. We’re mimicking the same movements and both women are reacting with moans.

“Shit, Johnny. Harder. Faster.” I do as Wren says and grip her hips to slam into her.

She watches Charley and Sanders as she finally lets go, her orgasm ricocheting through her body. Charley follows, and then me. The moans that fill the room sound like some depraved sex club once Sanders finishes too. The four of us are leaning on the windows, completely spent, catching our breath.

Charley breaks the silence first. “So when are we going to do this again?”

“You can’t touch Kayce. But I’m down for another go.” Wren shocks the shit out of me.

I look at Sanders, “You touch her, I will fucking rip off each of your fingers one by one.”

He holds up his hands. “Hey, I’m good just touching my wife. I don’t need anyone else.”

My jaw drops, Wren’s eyes widen, and Charley stands up stick straight looking at us like a deer in headlights.

“Your what?” I gasp out.

“This is awkward now. We gotta go.” Charley pulls her pants up, and grabs Sanders’ hand running out of the office with his suit still around his ankles as he struggles to pull up his boxers with his other hand.

When the door slams I look at Wren, “What the actual fuck just happened?”

She giggles. “I don’t know, but I want more.” She reaches over, cupping my balls in her hand.

“Who knew that being watched would get you excited?” I shake my head.

We get dressed in silence as my head is reeling from the fact that Charley and Sanders are married.

“Think they’ll come over? Or you think she’s too scared we know her secret?” Wren asks when we leave Cade’s office.

“She might need a day or two, June. Hell, I might need a day or two.”

“Damn.” She giggles, and follows me into the locker room to grab my things.

I can't wait to get home and have her all to myself. She's full of surprises when I thought I knew everything there was to know about her.

Coach: Listen, to whichever of you sick fucks decided to use my office instead of your own bedroom, there are way too many handprints for me to even want to know what happened on my windows. My door will now have a camera pointed right at it and you will be punished. **STOP FUCKING IN MY OFFICE!** Seriously, the amount of times I find shit in my office is sick. There is something wrong with you all.

Two months. That's how long it took my mother to get out of the farmhouse and my contractor to renovate. Now it's Christmas and I get to be here, celebrating, with Wren. We're hosting a team holiday party today. The only ones missing are Sanders and Charley.

They've been suspiciously quiet about their marriage and now they're in Montana to visit with his family for the holiday. As far as I know, we're the only ones who know and they both refuse to talk about it.

Wren is flitting around the kitchen, getting food plated and put out. I walk by stealing some pastry puff thing with meat and cheese. I forget what it's called, but I was threatened not to touch anything.

Clearly I don't listen well. I'm fucking starving.

"Hey! I told you not to touch anything." She points her wooden spoon at me and I'm transported back to her Grandmother's kitchen when we were children getting in trouble for stealing cookies.

I reach over and pull her to me, gripping her ass in my hands. "I can't touch anything?"

“Kayce Bicknelle. I’m cooking for your teammates and Coach. I am off limits.” She pushes me away from her, swatting my arm with her spoon. “At least until they leave. Or maybe while they’re here.” She winks at me.

Fucking Christ this woman is going to kill me.

The doorbell rings and I open it to find the whole team piling off the team bus with their spouses and children.

Fuck it feels good to be back on the farm and have my family around us for the holiday.

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Fifteen seconds remain on the clock. Calliope, Charley and I are holding hands so tight that both of mine went numb during the beginning of the third period. We are in game seven of the Stanley Cup Final and it's tied. Boston has been playing hard and both are really good teams, but clearly we're rooting for our guys to bring the cup home.

Viktor has the puck and we're down to nine seconds. He's on the Havoc's goal line and needs to get down to Boston's before someone can steal and slap the puck at Craig.

He gets to center ice and sends the puck flying to Joaquin, but Boston steals it as soon as he gets two feet down the ice. In comes Kayce, flying in from the side and taking the puck back. He glides as fast as he can, his legs pumping out to his sides as he flies with the puck toward the goal.

He lines up and shoots the puck. The three of us stop breathing until we finally hear the buzzer and see the red flashing light indicating that Kayce got the goal.

All of the Havoc's stadium is on their feet screaming. The boys pulled it off with one second remaining on the clock.

The girls and I are on our feet, jumping up and down, screaming for them. With tears streaming down our faces, we rush to the glass to watch the Cup ceremony.

Once all the celebrations are done the girls and I go over to The Penalty Shot to wait for them to walk over.

The owners already have the bar decked out for their win. They must have had it waiting for them to win. It makes me smile that so many people in Houston were rooting for them. They put in so much hard work throughout the season to get here, and it's so much more than anyone realizes.

We grab a bottle of champagne and grab a table with Claire and Jolie. They got separated from us in the craziness of leaving.

"Holy shit! That was insane." Claire exclaims.

"I know. I've never seen a line to get into The Penalty Shot." Calliope nods her head over to the window where we can see a line wrapping around the block.

"They're about to make months worth of income in one night. I'm glad they're being supported." I look out once again as another hoard of people join the end of the line.

It'll be a couple of hours before the guys get here, but I'm glad to see the support for them. I know they'll make sure to talk to everyone they can.

"There's my girl!" Kayce is running through The Penalty Shot over to me.

He picks me up out of the chair and pulls me tight to him. Charley stands, handing something to him and then he's on one knee.

"Holy shit," I whisper.

"Wren Kaydell." He looks at me with the biggest smile on his face. "Winning the Stanley Cup tonight wouldn't have been what it was without you cheering me on in the stands."

"Johnny."

“Having you in my life is everything I ever imagined it to be and more.” He grasps my left hand in his. “Will you marry me and be my wife?”

Everyone around is so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Which in a bar after the Stanley Cup is a feat.

“Kayce Bicknelle, I’d love nothing more than to call you my husband. Yes, I’ll be your wife!” I jump on him and he easily catches me one handed, swinging me around.

He places me on the ground and slips the ring on my finger. The whole team surrounds us, making one big group hug. The cheers from the fans are deafening and flashes fill the dark space.

Calliope pulls me away from Kayce, “Ah! The next Havoc Honey!”

“A what?” I laugh at her.

“Havoc Honey. That’s what I call all the wives!” She’s so happy I don’t comment on the cheesiness. “Sanders, when’re you going to make our girl Charley here a Havoc Honey?”

Sanders’ face goes tight, and Charley’s a bright red.

“I don’t know, Calliope. Why don’t you ask her?”

He walks off and I feel like my head is bouncing between the two trying to read her expression. I see tears spring to her eyes and I know there’s trouble in paradise.

Kayce whisks me off my feet once again and leans down to whisper down my ear. “I can’t wait to celebrate later.”

He's immediately pulled away by the guys for a drink and mingling with the fans.

I watch as my new reality really sinks in. These people are my new family, and watching Kayce happily move around the crowd, pointing at me because he's proud to have me by his side.

I don't know how I got so lucky, but I've never been happier that I took a chance and ruined everything I thought would be my future. Because the future I have now is so much brighter.