



Getting Off

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Category: Romance

Description: Getting off can be a whole lot of fun...until it all comes crashing down.

Dylan Pierce is all about speed and adrenaline.

Hes looking to go pro with off-road racing, driving trophy trucks hard and fast.

Hes good, and he knows it.

But when he rolls his truck, he winds up in the ER with a minor injury...and a major hard-on for the beautiful—and aloof—Dr.

Brooklyn Foster.

As if shes not distracting enough, the powerful—and hot-as-hell—Lucas Fox enters the picture, and Dylan finds himself spoiled for choice.

Only Dylan doesnt want to choose.

Lucas gets what he wants, no matter what.

And what he wants is Brooklyn Foster.

But when the brazen Dylan Pierce swaggers into a formal affair in jeans and racing boots, things get interesting fast.

Lucas decides he wants both of them.

And hes determined to have them.

But when Brooklyns career is threatened, hes faced with one of the most difficult choices of his life: do as shes begged and stay the hell out of it, or go behind her back and use his money and influence to help her.

Either way, he risks losing her.

And Lucas doesnt like to lose.

Doctor Brooklyn Foster lives for her work.

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Today was one of those days at the hospital. A day that kept Dr. Brooklyn Foster running, too busy to slow down and eat more than a quick protein and greens shake and drink a cup of coffee before she rushed back into it.

She hurried through the hospital corridors between the elevator from the neurology clinic and the emergency room on the ground floor.

She'd been asked to consult on a patient in the ER.

Luckily, the coffee was kicking in. At this point in the day, her eyelids felt as though they were made of sandpaper.

But being a doctor meant helping people even when you were on the brink of exhaustion.

Besides, neurology was her passion, and she couldn't imagine doing anything else.

"Excuse me, Dr. Foster?"

Brooklyn put on the brakes and managed to avoid running down the hospital's chief of staff, Dr. Harvey Gibson. The thin, gray-haired chief of staff was watching her with an intensity she always found unsettling. Worse, Dr. Gibson was standing next to someone she immediately recognized.

Lucas Fox.

Mr. Lucas Fox had far too many good things going for him.

Not only was he excessively rich, but he looked like leading-man material, which she found unnecessarily distracting.

It didn't help that he was dressed in a custom-tailored Italian suit, and she'd always liked how men looked in suits.

Lucas was over six feet tall, with broad shoulders and a narrow waist, and worst of all, artfully tousled black hair and the kind of dark eyes that melted you from the inside out.

Brooklyn plastered a smile on her face. "Hello, Dr. Gibson. Mr. Fox, it's good to see you again. Sorry to be rushing through the halls, but I'm on my way to the ER to evaluate a patient—"

"You have uncanny timing," Dr. Gibson said with a smile that didn't touch his eyes. "I was just speaking with Mr. Fox about your proposal for the new head trauma center here at North Las Vegas Medical Center."

It was clear the chief of staff intended for her to stop and chat, leaving her patient to wait. She kept her face neutral, careful to show no impatience.

It was no secret to Brooklyn that Dr. Gibson wasn't her biggest fan. He'd referred to her as the "Funless Ice Queen" behind her back on more than one occasion. As if she needed to apologize for her drive to be the best. It was all the more reason to do her utmost to kill him with kindness.

"I'm happy to hear that," Brooklyn said, giving Lucas Fox a smile that felt a bit plastic on her face.

"An advanced head trauma center with access to the latest diagnostic equipment and cutting-edge treatments would be a real boon for the community, both in Las Vegas

and for the entire state. We could be the premier center in Nevada for treatment, research, and prevention of traumatic brain injuries from vehicle accidents, sports-related concussions, and so on.”

Lucas Fox smiled back at her. Unlike hers, it was a charming smile. And unlike Dr. Gibson, this smile actually warmed those brown eyes. So much so, that her heart began beating faster.

No, no. That was simply an after-effect of rushing down the hallway. She really needed to get back in the gym, but she’d been so busy with work lately...

“You sound very dedicated, Dr. Foster,” Lucas said in a baritone as dark and rich as her morning coffee.

Lucas Fox was a huge philanthropist. He regularly donated money to charities and organizations all over Las Vegas.

The man was on everyone’s invitation list, frequently showed up in the media, and even had politicians courting his favor.

He was a favorite at parties and fundraising events, especially with women.

They were all trying to catch Las Vegas’s most eligible bachelor.

Not that she had researched him and his history while searching for funding for her own department’s needs. Nope. Not at all. But she certainly couldn’t judge anyone trying to get their hooks into this man.

The chief of staff was watching her like a hawk as if waiting for her to beg Lucas to whip out his checkbook. When she only stood there awkwardly, Dr. Gibson chuckled and put a hand on Lucas Fox’s elbow.

“Dr. Foster is a candidate to run the new center,” Dr. Gibson said.

“She is all-business, highly passionate about her specialty, and she broke the mold when it comes to female physicians here at North Las Vegas Medical Center. Of course, the neurologist who is chosen to head up this new trauma unit will not only need to be brilliant in his or her field but also a stellar liaison with the Las Vegas community.”

Lucas Fox’s smile lost most of its warmth and became a bit wry, as though he knew very well what Dr. Gibson was driving at. Money. The hospital needed money for the new center, and Fox had it.

Brooklyn struggled to come up with something to say.

She never knew what to make of Lucas Fox.

He made her uncomfortable, mostly because he was everything a wealthy playboy should be.

Handsome, rich, adored by all, and definitely not dumb as a box of rocks.

If she were honest, the man was so sexy that he sent Brooklyn’s blood pressure and heart rate skyrocketing into the red zone.

Which only made her feel ten times more awkward.

And made her dislike him even more.

The problem was simple. She always felt ridiculous trying to liaise, as Dr. Gibson called it.

She probably should've been a veterinarian.

But her twin brother had suffered a traumatic brain injury, so it was no mystery why she'd gone into medicine in general and neurology in particular.

Brooklyn had discovered at an early age just how important it was to not only understand head trauma but to share that knowledge and educate the world.

To her, that was always more important than fundraising.

The money side of things had always been a necessary evil.

"You were speaking earlier about a neurologist over in Tahoe named Beaumont," Lucas Fox prompted Gibson before glancing at Brooklyn and giving her another charming smile.

Too charming. He must practice them in front of the mirror.

"But it seems like Dr. Foster would be a logical choice for the position. After all, she's already established here at the hospital. "

Brooklyn had to grudgingly give the guy points. He'd just spoken up for her despite the fact that she couldn't even smile at him without feeling like a robot pretending to be human.

"Oh, but Dr. Beaumont is a second-generation neurologist," Gibson quickly asserted. "Dr. Beaumont has excellent political and business connections as well. I know I speak highly of him, but it's well-deserved. His father and I were at medical school together. Neurology is in Dr. Beaumont's blood."

Gibson literally steered Fox away from Brooklyn as though he'd forgotten she was

standing there talking with them. Lucas Fox held her gaze and nodded to her as he passed by, and Brooklyn felt ridiculous and annoyed.

She really didn't appreciate Dr. Gibson dragging her into his glad-handing and then ditching her, all while talking up her competition.

Still, she should've said something more intelligent and flashy and charming to Lucas Fox.

No doubt she'd come across exactly like the funless ice queen Gibson accused her of being.

After taking a deep breath, Brooklyn resumed her trek for the ER.

It was time to focus on the job again and forget about Dr. Gibson and really forget about Lucas Fox.

So what if she'd once again felt like the nerdy science girl she'd been all through school?

She had work to do, and patients who needed her.

Lucas Fox didn't matter.

* * *

Dylan Pierce hated hospitals. He had zero patience for weakness in himself. When he fell down, he picked himself up off the ground, dusted his ass off, and tried again.

So being in the ER right now? Yeah, it was a real pain in his ass, even though the real ache was in his head.

Unfortunately for him, the rules at the Las Vegas Off-Road Racing Club required a medical professional to sign off on an exam form when you wrecked a vehicle.

Not just your average off-road wreck either.

The bad ones that ended with something broken and a trip to the ER for a brace or a cast or something dramatic.

That was why Dylan found himself in the little curtained cubicle in the North Las Vegas Medical Center ER. Sure, he'd hurt his wrist a little and maybe smacked his head a bit. Yeah, he had a headache, but he'd been wearing a helmet. He was sure he was fine.

He got up from the examination bed for what felt like the millionth time and went to the sink. He peered at himself in the warped mirror on the cabinet door. He was kind of a mess. But that wasn't unusual. If he didn't have a few scrapes and bruises, it meant he wasn't trying hard enough.

Dylan's six-foot frame was broad-shouldered and appeared even more so with his racing gear on.

He'd shed his helmet at least. That was something.

His boots were leaving dirt prints on the pristine white tile, and his face was smudged with dirt and engine grease.

His brown hair looked a few shades darker, thanks to the sweat.

Sweat and engine grease streaked his face and made him look like he was wearing some kind of makeup.

He snorted. That was kinda amusing, seeing as Dylan didn't even do dress slacks or button-down shirts, let alone makeup.

A blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman wearing scrubs and a white coat ducked around the curtain. "Hello, Mr.—" She paused as she glanced through the charts she held. "Mr. Pierce, is it?"

Was this the doctor? Hmm. She was pretty enough—not that it mattered, but he wouldn't complain either.

He grinned at her. Usually, his grin got some response, either from the guys or the gals—he went for both equally. That was how he was wired.

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But this doctor only watched him with those blue eyes like a librarian watching for misbehavior between the stacks. His grin had no effect.

He decided he liked the challenge. He wanted to make her smile.

She looked like she needed it. Hell, she looked tired.

Everything about her was pale. Light blue scrubs, a white jacket that came down past her hips and was carefully buttoned up the front, porcelain skin from too much time indoors.

She had a stethoscope around her elegant neck.

A neck that was on full display thanks to her tightly contained hair, tortured into a bun.

“Call me Dylan,” he said. “I’m just waiting for someone to sign off on this so I can roll out of here.” He lifted his left wrist, which was currently swathed in an ace bandage with a stiff brace on it.

The doctor—she still hadn’t introduced herself—raised one pale brow. She reminded him of one of those ballet dancers that were so delicate that a guy like Dylan was afraid he’d break her in half. But she definitely had fire in those blue eyes. He got the feeling she wasn’t someone to mess with.

Which only made him want to mess with her even more.

The doctor looked at the wrist brace. She met his eyes again. “Mr. Pierce, I hardly think your wrist is what’s keeping you here in our care. You had a head injury as well.”

“You mean it’s bad that I’m seeing two beautiful women in front of me right now?”

Her eyes narrowed with concern. “Are you seeing double, Mr. Pierce?”

He grinned at her again. “No, that was me flirting. I don’t think I caught your name, doctor.”

Her brow furrowed. She looked adorable when she was flustered. “I’m Dr. Foster.”

“Doctor...” Dylan said coaxingly. “You have a first name, right?”

Oh, that had ruffled her feathers. She straightened until Dylan could’ve sworn he heard her spine crack. Those blue eyes flashed fire.

“My given name is irrelevant to this medical evaluation, Mr. Pierce. I’m here to inform you that you have a concussion.

” She pulled out a pair of glasses from a pocket as she moved past him.

She tapped a few keys on the keyboard on the computer cart and pulled up one of those crazy looking brain scan things with all of the colors.

“You can see it right here. Swelling and activity indicative of a mild concussion.” She whipped out a penlight and began waving it in front of his eyes.

“Do you have any spots in your vision, vertigo, or any kind of dizziness?”

“Only when you entered the room, Doctor Beautiful.”

She stared at him. He gave her the widest grin he could.

The compliment was hands-down stupid and cheesy beyond belief, but he noticed her lips twitch as if she were fighting a smile at his sheer obnoxious gall. Good. He wanted to make her smile. He’d happily make a fool of himself for that.

Maybe that way she’d sign off on his release so he could get back behind the wheel.

“You can’t charm me with silly compliments, Mr. Pierce,” she said, arching an eyebrow at him...but she was smiling now. It was a genuine smile, and it made her look stunning. “I’m not letting you escape just because you give me puppy dog eyes, either.”

He snorted, playing put-out, but he was happy she was warming up a little. Her smile was good progress.

She turned away to read something on the computer screen. Probably so she could hide from his overwhelming charm. Who could blame her?

But about that, he was wrong. The old ego had gotten a little out of hand. Dr. Foster was staring intently at the screen and frowning again, her smile gone. “It says here you were in a car accident.”

“A car accident? It was way more awesome than that.”

She looked at him as if he was crazy. Or had messed up his brain.

“I’m an off-road racer,” he continued proudly. “I was coming around a curve and took a steep bank too fast.” He shrugged. “It happens. But when I hit the brakes, the

truck spun out and flipped.”

He felt a jolt of adrenaline as he remembered the truck tumbling over and over down the hill until he’d come to a stop upside down, the truck flipped onto its roof. What a rush! As crashes went, it was a nine point two.

“Okay,” she said carefully. “So you flipped your truck. No other vehicles were involved?”

“Just myself. No other vehicles got so much as a dent. We’re strict on that.

On those trials, the trucks are spaced so that it’s near impossible to pass each other out there on the track.

And if there’s a serious wreck, all racers are stopped.

So if you’ll sign me off, I can get back out there tomorrow. ”

Holy cow, the look on her face! Her jaw was slack; her eyes were wide. He suddenly realized that those blue eyes hiding behind her glasses were incredibly alluring. Or maybe it was the way she was looking at him. It wasn’t really horror. No. It was something else. She was fascinated.

“You have a concussion, Mr. Pierce,” she said slowly as if he were intoxicated and was having trouble understanding. “Do you truly believe you’re ready to be back on the track?”

Dylan gave a dismissive wave of his good hand. “Hell, yeah. This is nothing. I sprained my wrist a little. The club medic wasn’t sure if it was broken or not, that’s why he sent me here.”

That was a bit of a dodge on his part. He needed the exam form to clear him so he could get back out there. But it was always best to paint a rosy picture. Positive thinking and all that.

Something flashed behind her eyes. It was not amusement. “Did your club medic think to check you over for a concussion?”

“Sure.” Dylan frowned. “That’s why I’m not buying that I have one worth worrying about. Donnie says I don’t. So, if you can just give me an overpriced aspirin or something, I’ll be on my way.”

“I don’t think so, Mr. Pierce.” She looked concerned. “Your wrist has a minor sprain. You probably don’t even need that brace. But you cannot hop in another one of those dangerous trucks and jostle your brain around. You must be careful while you heal. You need to take a week and rest.”

“A week ?” God, that was an eternity not to be behind the wheel and churning through the dirt.

“At least a week. You’ll probably notice your focus isn’t as sharp as it was, and your reflexes might be off. In this dangerous hobby you’re describing, I would think that your reflexes are of paramount importance.”

Paramount importance? Who talked that way? Dylan blinked at her and wondered if this was the time to tell her whatever and walk out. He could do that, right? Just had to sign some papers and walk out on his own two feet. He was a grown man, after all.

But he couldn’t drive at the club until he had a doctor sign off on him, so he was screwed if he got all high and mighty and flounced out of here.

He rubbed his temple, sighing. The headache had started not long after the wreck.

Still, that kind of thing went away soon enough on its own. It certainly didn't take a week.

"You have a headache, don't you?" She made a gentle, chiding noise.

Dr. Foster gently drew his hand away from his temple and lightly used the pad of her thumb to pull at his eyelids. Her hands were soft and cool. She smelled good too. Some kind of perfume or soap. Her touch was soothing.

That was an odd sort of thought. Perhaps he'd smacked his head harder than he'd thought...like this doctor kept insisting.

"Mr. Pierce, while I respect the passion you obviously have for your sport, I'm going to have to strongly recommend that you take some time to rest."

"You know what they say." He gave her a cocky grin. "I can rest when I'm dead."

She pursed her lips and gazed directly into his eyes. "Not even remotely funny, Mr. Pierce."

"Dylan . If you're gonna ground me, you can at least use my first name." He grinned at her. "Besides, it was a little funny."

"No, Dylan. It was the opposite of funny." But she was smiling a little again, so that was a win.

"I know nobody likes to be grounded, but I'd hate to see you back in my care with a more serious traumatic brain injury.

I imagine you've had several concussions in your life, since you seem like the type.

It makes you more susceptible. Do you always wear a helmet? ”

“Yeah. It’s club rules. Hey, I’m crazy, but not that crazy.”

She smirked. Her lips were really full. And kissable. He wasn’t entirely sure why he was thinking about that right now. Who got horny at a hospital?

“I’m glad to hear that, at least,” she said. “But helmets don’t always prevent concussions. We don’t know all the causes of a concussion and can’t design a perfect helmet to prevent all possible injury scenarios.”

She was still touching him. Her fingers rested lightly on his right temple, and Dylan wondered why she hadn’t dropped her hand. Except, he didn’t really want her to drop her hand. He liked the way it felt.

How long had it been since Dylan had been with a woman?

He couldn’t remember exactly, and that had nothing to do with hitting his head.

Hell, he loved a naked man as much as he loved a naked woman, but in the past couple years, he’d simply drifted toward men.

They were far less complicated. Dylan didn’t have time for complications when he was about to turn pro.

That said, there was definitely something about a woman...

This woman, for example.

“Are you single?” Dylan asked her suddenly.

She dropped her hand and drew back. "I can't imagine what that has to do with your health, Mr. Pierce."

"I have a concussion, remember? It gives me the right to ask crazy questions." Despite his attempt at a quick recovery, Dylan felt stupid.

That question had been as subtle as a train wreck.

Nice job. Besides, why did he care whether Doctor Beautiful was single or not?

He couldn't see her riding motocross or climbing behind the wheel of an off-roader. Why would he chase her?

"You're certainly a handful," she said but didn't answer his question. "That's doctor slang for a 'problem patient.'"

He laughed. "See? You aren't as uptight and stuffy as the rest of the doctors around here."

She actually flinched a little at his words. He felt a spike of concern. He'd said the wrong thing that time. No smile for him.

He reached out and touched her hand. "Hey. Sorry if I was out of line there." Then he grinned. "I have a concussion."

She laughed. "So that's going to be your excuse from here on out, is it?"

"You got it, doc. You have a great smile too. I'm saying that strictly as your patient, so don't get any ideas," he warned. "Now, what do you do for fun?" He rubbed his chin. "Let me guess. You golf. You doctor types always golf."

“What’s wrong with golfing?”

“Spoken like a true golfer.”

“I don’t golf!”

“Rock climbing?”

“Do I look insane to you?”

No, but she did look beautiful. He couldn’t deny that. “So you’re afraid to get scraped up?”

“You have a very unique view of the world, Mr. Pierce,” she said archly. “Do I look like I want to not only risk my life but risk an injury that might render me incapable of doing the job I spent hundreds of thousands of dollars educating myself to do?”

Dylan only laughed. “Fair point. But did you ever do anything physical?”

“Dance.”

“Ha! I knew it!”

She glared at him. “What are you talking about?”

“You look like a dancer.” Dylan did not bother to hide his appreciative grin.

“What does that mean?”

Hell, if she demanded he go into detail. “Long legs, narrow hips, nice, tight...”

“What? Ass?”

“Is that the medical term?” he asked. “I wasn’t sure.”

He knew he’d probably gone over the line on that one. But he wanted her to know that he found her attractive, even if she shot him down. He wanted to compliment her.

She only stared at him evenly as if she couldn’t quite wrap her head around him. “It’s impressive you can admire my posterior given the fact that I’m wearing scrubs and a long doctor’s jacket.”

“You caught me,” he admitted. “I’m only guessing based on how attractive I find the rest of you.

” That one didn’t land either. He was off his game.

She was looking at him as if she had his number now.

He chose to head in another direction. “So, can you sign my form releasing me? I promise to pack my head in ice and whatever else you want.”

“I will happily sign your release form...after a follow-up appointment.”

“What? So you are gonna ground me after all.” All that charm, wasted. Not only had he wrecked his truck, he’d struck out with the sexy doctor too.

She looked far too smug. “Mr. Pierce, please contact my office in a week for a follow-up appointment. A nurse will give you the information. The ER physician on duty will be in shortly to finish with your wrist and to release you.”

Dylan opened his mouth to make another quip about getting her personal phone

number but thought better of it. She did look tired, and he'd pushed it far enough. He'd made her smile, so mission accomplished. Yeah, it sucked that he'd been grounded, but at least he'd get to see her again.

He gave her a little salute. "Yes, ma'am. Until we meet again."

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Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:25 am

Lucas Fox had attended so many cocktail parties, charity events, and fundraisers that he could probably do them in his sleep by now. There was an air of sameness to them once the glitz and the glamour wore off.

This hospital benefit was nothing new. It was yet another cocktail party hosted on the Las Vegas Country Club's Grand Terrace.

The place was as fancy and posh as one would expect.

High ceilings. Chandeliers. Huge windows.

Fancy decor. But he'd heard a thousand string quartets in his life.

He'd eaten metric tons of hors d'oeuvres.

He'd had enough small talk and chit chat about the stock market, boats, golf, or horse racing to last him the rest of his time on the planet.

He'd given away a fortune to good causes, and would probably give away another fortune before he died.

Right now, he was holding a glass of champagne and listening to a politician try to coax him into a campaign contribution. He was barely listening to the man. The truth was far simpler. He was looking around for Doctor Brooklyn Foster. She was the main reason he'd come here tonight.

He didn't see her yet. That was a problem. He was used to getting what he wanted,

and he wanted to talk with her without Gibson, the unctuous chief of staff, around to get in the way.

Lucas almost hadn't come at all. After a second reminder from Courtney, one of his personal assistants, he'd pondered whether to have her send his regrets.

He'd had work to do and hadn't been in the mood for a bunch of hospital administrators and healthcare professionals doting on him as if he were royalty, all while hoping to score another few million in donations.

He didn't mind giving to good causes, though. He actually enjoyed it. He felt like he was making a difference in the world by supporting people who were actually making a difference.

Like Doctor Brooklyn Foster.

Ever since he'd seen her earlier in the week, he hadn't been able to stop thinking about her. She kept popping into his mind at the oddest times, distracting him.

He recognized drive and determination when he saw it. She had it in spades. He could look in her eyes and see her dedication to her field. She would be a strong contender for the brain trauma center they were fundraising to build.

So why couldn't he get her out of his mind? She wasn't the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. He had plenty of beautiful women and even a few men throwing themselves at him throughout his life. No, it wasn't beauty that held his attention for long.

If anything, she struck him as a bit cold, a little aloof. She had clearly tried to do the PR, schmoozing game when he'd last seen her at the hospital, but she wasn't very good at it. Strangely enough, he liked that she wasn't good at it.

Still, it annoyed him that he seemed to be so caught on her lately.

What kind of fool married a doctor? They were never around, working long hours that rivaled his back when he'd been making his first million.

They came home exhausted. Probably too exhausted for sex.

That might be a pretty damn selfish thought, but if you were going to marry someone, you needed to be on the same page when it came to intimacy.

Of course, he was only guessing about all of that. Maybe all kinds of hot sex went on at the hospital behind closed doors, like a kinky soap opera filled with gorgeous doctors and staff.

But he seriously doubted it.

Outside the country club, the sky was just beginning to turn from brilliant blue to twilight purple. Soon the fiery sunset colors would spread across the sky. Desert sunsets couldn't be beaten. He'd been around the world and the only thing that came close was an ocean sunset.

"—and that's why I'll be running for Congress," the man next to him was saying. "I hope my campaign can count on your support, Mr. Fox."

"Hmm? Oh. I'm sure I'll support someone." He smiled and nodded and strode toward the food, not wanting to reveal that he hadn't heard a word the politician had said. He was certain he hadn't missed much. In his cynical opinion, politicians were all the same, no matter what party they belonged to.

As he walked, he smiled and shook hands and hid the fact that he was still searching for Dr. Foster. Brooklyn Foster was supposed to be here tonight. It was the primary

reason he'd chosen to attend instead of simply sending a check. Not finding her was starting to irritate him.

Two of his personal assistants had been fussing over him earlier before this event.

Adam had chastised him mildly for not having a date.

For not being true to the wealthy playboy image that kept his face in the media.

Meanwhile, Courtney kept encouraging him, also mildly, to find a nice girl and settle down.

Even though Courtney was twenty-five, she sounded like a grandmother sometimes.

He didn't know what his two protective personal assistants would say if he told them he was on the hunt for Dr. Brooklyn Foster, a woman who always stared at him as if he'd just farted in her presence.

He couldn't tell if she hated him because he was rich, or if she hated him because of that damned playboy image.

Lucas ran a hand through his black hair, growing more annoyed and trying to hide it.

Maybe she hated him because she believed his life amounted to nothing more than a rich man throwing his money at problems. It was hard to deny that accusation if that's how she felt.

He wouldn't apologize for being successful.

Money solved problems. It was as simple as that.

Look at him. He had a condo in the most prestigious area of the city boasting excellent views of the strip.

His closet was packed with custom-tailored clothing he'd purchased after sailing to Italy for exactly that reason.

He drove a Bugatti. He rode in a limo when he wished.

He owned a yacht. He owned a private jet and homes in Aspen and Florida.

It was a life of luxury that would've made anyone happy.

Except that for all of Lucas's luxury living, he was still absolutely alone.

No matter how many dates he went on with eligible young women, he could not imagine settling down with anyone he'd met.

They were nice enough, pretty, talented, many of them charming and intelligent.

But none of them had managed to steal his heart.

Lucas took another glass of champagne, greeted a few people he knew in passing, and drifted toward the main ballroom, wondering if he was his own worst enemy. At least when it came to love.

He valued hard work and dedication. He wanted someone who understood that drive and had it themselves.

He didn't care if it turned out to be a woman or a man.

He was simply searching for someone who could respect and enjoy dedication to

their work and yet cut loose and have fun when the time was right.

Lucas seriously doubted Dr. Brooklyn Foster was that woman.

But either way, she had gotten under his skin, for better or for worse. Especially earlier in the week, when she hadn't given a damn that he'd defended her to Gibson, the chief of staff at the hospital. She wanted the top slot, so she should at least appreciate a good word from him. But she hadn't.

Dr. Foster was abysmal at networking. That much was very clear. He had no patience for incompetence. If she couldn't do what it took to win the director position for the trauma center, then he wouldn't be pulling any strings for her.

Then again, he would see what he had to see tonight, wouldn't he? If she ever showed up.

And then he finally spotted her. She was lingering in the ballroom toward the far wall, clutching a champagne flute and looking as if she'd rather be anywhere else in the world but here.

A slow smile spread across his face. She looked surprisingly good in a dress.

It was a black cocktail dress, so she wasn't exactly taking a risk there, but the dress complimented her lithe frame.

She had an elegant body, slender and smooth, with her blonde hair done up in a French braid and a simple gold necklace around her graceful neck.

Small breasts, a narrow waist, but long legs in heels. He'd always been a leg man.

He took a big sip of champagne and decided to watch her for a little while before

moving in. She clearly didn't want to be here, but would she adapt and succeed? Or would she let him get away without charming a nice, fat donation out of him for her hospital?

Tonight was going to be interesting.

Brooklyn hated parties. Or at least she hated these kinds of parties. They were pretentious and completely not fun. No matter how much she smiled and nodded and did her best to mingle, she simply couldn't feel natural and at ease.

This was the worst part about the politics of hospitals.

She smiled and nodded and asked the polite questions that were expected at these kinds of events.

The chief of staff considered this as much a part of her work as making a diagnosis and coming up with treatment plans.

She preferred research, healing people, and making a difference in the lives of her patients.

But Dr. Gibson believed strategic schmoozing was vital to hospital funding, and Brooklyn was absolutely determined to master this art to the best of her abilities.

She had to if she wanted to be chosen to run the new trauma center.

A friend of hers had once jokingly suggested that Brooklyn's brain was defective when it came to loathing these kinds of social situations. She knew that wasn't the case. She had studied scans of her own brain. She would know if there were any problems. This was just how she was wired.

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Perhaps some psychologist would say this was what happened to the twin who was left behind.

A sense of disconnection, an inability to master the social art of chit-chat, a focus and drive at work that might even seem mildly obsessive.

But Brooklyn wasn't in the psychology field.

She had no interest in speculating on human behavioral patterns. She wanted concrete facts.

And the only fact she knew for certain was that she hated ballroom fundraising benefits.

She sipped her champagne and tried not to look awkward. She'd rushed here after her shift, only having time to grab this cocktail dress and throw on some jewelry that was far outshone by the diamonds and gold draped on every wealthy woman around her. She felt lucky her hair had cooperated.

"Ah, Dr. Foster!" Dr. Harvey Gibson ambushed her, smiling like a snake.

She'd been doing her best to avoid the chief of staff all night.

"So good to see you here this evening. Have you met Donald Holland yet? Donald, let me introduce you to Brooklyn Foster. She's an up-and-coming neurologist at the hospital."

Brooklyn accepted the sweaty hand of the elderly Mr. Holland and shook hands with his painted wife as well.

She smiled. She nodded. She listened. She nodded some more.

She listened to Dr. Gibson tell stories about his children and how they'd gone to prep school with the Holland children.

How wonderful. They were all one big happy family.

Brooklyn filed as much of this information into her memory as possible so she would remember to ask about the couple's children the next time they met.

This was all part of the process of getting local wealthy Vegas patrons to donate money to the hospital.

It was how the world worked. Brooklyn wished it was otherwise.

To her, it felt wrong to pander to these big wigs just to get the money to be able to provide vital health services for the community.

But there was a lot of money in Vegas, and they needed to get their share in order to survive.

When the Hollands finally took their leave, Dr. Gibson turned on her, his face set in a scowl.

“If this trauma center is going to become a reality, you're going to have to be far more charming and convince our donors to contribute the money to fund it. Smile more. Use what advantages God gave you.”

She stared at him, shocked by the bluntness of his words. She knew she should be furious, but right now, she couldn't think of a word to say.

"You're upset," Dr. Gibson continued, eyeing her. "I can tell that much. I suppose it is a good time to inform you that I've put in my vote against you for the head position in this endeavor. I simply don't believe you have what it takes."

Brooklyn was floored by his words. He'd never been supportive, and he was always making vaguely sexist comments that HR would've railed him for...if he hadn't been the chief of staff. But to put a vote against her was a serious matter.

"Dr. Gibson, I'm absolutely qualified for this position," she said carefully. "I've been training for this for over ten years. I've given hours and hours of volunteer time to dealing with head trauma in our emergency room. This center will make a huge, positive impact on the community."

"You're right. It will make a huge impact, and I know a good neurosurgeon in Tahoe who will fit the bill perfectly. And there is Dr. Beaumont, of course. Another strong candidate." Dr. Gibson's smile turned glacial. "Both men understand the nuances of raising money and pleasing big donors."

Brooklyn bit the inside of her cheek to keep the words she wanted to say inside her mouth. Those words pounded on her skull until she felt as if she might be sick. But she couldn't say any of the things she wanted to shout at this vile man who outranked her.

"Of course, sir," she said with a smile frozen on her face. "Whatever you think is best for the community and the hospital."

"I'm pleased you understand."

“But I’m not withdrawing my candidacy,” she continued. “Even if I’m not your favorite. The board of directors might feel differently.”

“I suppose we will see.” After a cold smile, he left her, sliding off into the crowd to find a new wealthy donor whose ass he could kiss.

She was left standing there devastated and reeling from the conversation. Her luck did not improve as she headed toward the food. It was time to stuff her face and forget about Dr. Asshole.

The first person she ran into was Lucas Fox.

Lucas Fox with his raven’s wing black hair and deep, dark eyes.

She already felt her skin heating, and she prayed she wasn’t blushing.

This man was irritatingly handsome. Being rich and handsome seemed like too much of a good thing for any male. No wonder she couldn’t stand him.

“Dr. Foster,” he said smoothly, flashing a half-smile at her. His tall, athletic build seemed perfect for the tuxedo he was wearing.

“Hello, Mr. Fox. It’s so good to see you here this evening. I hope you’re enjoying yourself.”

“I’ve heard less stilted greetings from robots,” he said, his grin widening.

He tilted his head to one side and gazed at her in a way that made Brooklyn feel as if he could see right into her brain and read every thought.

It was always like that with Lucas Fox. He always seemed to be one step ahead of

everyone around him.

“I’ve never heard anyone struggle so hard to sound polite. ”

“Of course, it’s a struggle to be polite to you,” she snapped. Then she realized what she’d said and had to stop herself from covering her mouth in shock. Not good. “I mean...since you told me I’m worse than a robot. What kind of gentleman says that to a lady?”

He laughed. It was rich laughter that seemed to thrum inside her and make her tummy tighten.

“You’re not a lady,” he said smoothly. “You’re a doctor. It’s better.”

She glared at him. Remember, he’s rich, and we need him to donate... Dr. Gibson will kill me if I make him mad.

Keeping that in mind, she looked him in the eye and calmly said, “It’s not ‘better’ if I have to waste all my time sucking up to overconfident, rich jerks instead of healing people.”

His smile was different this time. Sympathetic? No, that couldn’t be right. Admiring? No...

God, had she really just blurted that out to him? She wasn’t even slightly drunk. She had zero excuses. Flustered, she downed the rest of her champagne in a gulp.

He gestured to one of the tables packed with alcohol and appetizers. “Your champagne is empty. Will you join me in another drink? If we both have to suffer through this, good champagne might help.”

Brooklyn felt suspicious. Was he making fun of her? But how could she refuse? Especially after her last comment. “Of course, that would be lovely. Thank you.”

He signaled over one of the servers carrying a tray filled with fresh champagne glasses. He took two and handed her one with a friendly enough smile.

Brooklyn still didn’t know what to think. She’d always suspected that Mr. Playboy Lucas couldn’t have cared less about her as a doctor or as a person. That his easy charm was simply the facade he showed to everyone, especially women.

That suspicion had always put her off. She’d never really warmed to him.

He was too perfect. Brooklyn had always wondered if he was one of those rich men who believed everyone should pander to him as though he were royalty about to bestow some royal title and, of course, an annuity.

After all, that was the reason Brooklyn hadn’t already walked away from him, despite her awkwardness and despite blurting out exactly the wrong things.

Lucas Fox was rich, and the hospital needed money for the trauma center.

Fox tilted his head to one side and sipped from his flute of champagne. “I’m surprised a neurologist would drink. Aren’t you going to tell me about the evils of alcohol and the effects it has on the brain?”

“Have I taken a sip yet?” Brooklyn asked coldly.

He was definitely mocking her. She didn’t appreciate it, and she wanted him to know.

All of that charm and he’d tricked her. Trapped her on purpose.

Using neurology against her. She set the glass back down on the refreshment table. “I was merely trying to be polite.”

His grin widened even more, his eyes flashing with humor. “I watched you finish off one glass already.”

“Everything in moderation,” she said primly.

His dark eyes danced, and he shoved careless fingers through his dark hair. The bastard looked as though he stood in front of the mirror, styled his hair, and then messed it up on purpose to look sexy or something. Not that Brooklyn was noticing that he was sexy. She didn’t like him.

“What fun is that?” he chided. To her surprise, he set his own glass on the table. “If the lady isn’t drinking, then I won’t either.”

“I thought you said I was a doctor, not a lady?”

He swept into a little half-bow, mischief still in his eyes. “What can I say? I was mistaken. You excel at both.”

Brooklyn opened her mouth to shoot back a sarcastic reply. Then she closed it again. Oh, this guy was smooth. So smooth, he was dangerous.

She needed to regain the initiative, and she knew exactly the way to do it. “Thank you for the compliment. And thank you for your extremely generous donation to our excellent cause. I’m sure your name will be first and foremost on the commemorative plaque.”

He blinked at her. “I haven’t committed to any donation yet.”

She gave him a coy smile. “I have every confidence that a gentleman such as yourself will do the right thing. I’ve heard plenty of examples of your generosity. I can’t imagine I’d end up disappointed.”

He raised his elegant brows before chuckling. “You’re right. How could I disappoint you? You’ve provided such an excellent diversion tonight.”

She didn’t know what she’d expected him to do when she’d flat out asked for money in a manner so blunt and bold that Dr. Gibson probably would’ve had a stroke. Not that strokes were a laughing matter, but still...

Brooklyn tried to pull together an acceptable reply. But before she could speak, she heard someone shouting.

They both turned in the direction of the calls. She frowned, seeing a man charging his way through the crowds as people glared at him in shock and outrage.

“Hey! Doctor Beautiful! It’s good to see you!”

It was Dylan Pierce. The man she’d examined in the ER several days ago. She hadn’t forgotten about him or his obnoxious attempts to make her smile. He had succeeded at the time, but now she definitely wasn’t smiling.

This is a disaster.

She reached for her champagne glass once again.

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Dylan Pierce had no problem in social situations. He was gregarious by nature. Hell, everybody enjoyed his company. Sort of. And maybe not at first, now that he thought about it. But then again, you couldn't please everybody.

He thought it was appropriate.

As for all the uptight people in their tuxes and cocktail dresses? Well, Dylan had put on his best boots. They should be glad for that. He kept these clean for special occasions.

He'd been to the Las Vegas Country Club once or twice for other events.

Not many, but a few. He'd never seen it quite like this, though.

It looked like someone had invited every wealthy person in the city over the age of sixty-five.

Well, with the exception being some of the female attendees.

There were an awful lot of young ladies hanging on the arms of men old enough to be their grandfathers.

But hey. If you had the money, you were bound to get the hot chicks, right?

Dylan swept a glass of champagne off a server's tray, swung past the buffet table, and reached for some kind of appetizer that looked vaguely edible.

A lot of this stuff was just weird-looking paste smeared on a cracker. What kind of party was complete without hot wings and nachos?

He threw back the glass of champagne and reached for another.

Then he resumed his search for his new physician.

It didn't take long to spot her. Dr. Foster— Brooklyn Foster—had donned a black cocktail dress for the occasion, and the dress transformed her.

It really clung to her long, lithe body. She looked elegant and graceful.

His doctor was talking with some guy in a tux.

Dylan's eyes narrowed as he looked the dude over.

Huh. Competition. Although he was sexy competition, Dylan couldn't lie.

The guy looked expensive. Fancy tux. Diamond cufflinks glittering in the chandelier lights.

Dark hair. Handsome. Maybe even as handsome as Dylan, and that was saying something.

Popping another little sausage-filled thingy in his mouth, Dylan sauntered deliberately in the direction of Dr. Brooklyn. He reminded himself to be nice. He wasn't going to get her to sign the medical form all folded up and stuffed in his pocket unless he was nice.

"There's the woman of the hour," Dylan shouted with his widest, most welcoming smile possible. Rich and fancy people stepped aside from him, glaring and muttering

and making outraged noises. He kept right on walking, his eyes locked on Brooklyn Foster. “Hey! Doctor Beautiful! It’s good to see you!”

Her eyes went comically wide when she saw him. She looked irritated. Or maybe horrified. It could go either way.

She turned and snatched up a champagne glass and downed it. The tux guy standing next to her eyed him with a mix of confusion and amusement.

Dylan strolled right up to them both. This should be exciting.

The doctor glared at him with blue eyes as cold as ice. “I’m terribly sorry, Mr. Pierce. I didn’t realize you were on the guest list for this evening. However, I’m actually on the list. And not under the name Doctor Beautiful .”

“Well then, Dr. Brooklyn . It’s good to see you.” He grinned. “See? Found out your first name. Like Sherlock Holmes.”

Brooklyn Foster’s male companion was fighting a grin. Dylan could see that easily enough. At least the guy seemed to have a sense of humor.

“Would you like to introduce me to your friend?” the tuxedo guy said. He had one of those smooth narrator voices, like voice-overs for movie trailers.

Once again, Dylan sized up his competition.

The guy looked like he belonged in a board room with his fancy suit and pinchy-looking shoes.

His black hair was on the longer side, probably tended to by stylists being paid thousands for a haircut.

Although, the more Dylan looked at the guy, the more curious he became.

Dylan didn't usually have trouble getting his first impressions spot on.

Even though this guy looked like a stuffed shirt who wouldn't know fun if he had the word tattooed on his ass, Dylan's gut told him differently.

Maybe it was something about those dark eyes.

Dylan thrust out his hand. "Dylan Pierce."

The dark-haired man smiled. A genuine smile. He shook Dylan's hand. Good grip too. "I'm Lucas Fox."

Brooklyn Foster cleared her throat. She did not look pleased. "If introductions are over, perhaps you could tell me what you're doing here, Mr. Pierce."

"Call me Dylan." He pulled the folded release form out his back pocket and held it up. "I brought the release form for you to sign." He glanced around the ballroom, frowning. "Does anybody have a pen? I forgot to bring one."

"I thought we discussed this," Dr. Foster said in icy tones. "You would make an appointment. That's how we do things in a society."

"Yeah, I forgot. Must be amnesia." He grinned at her.

She glared at him. "Everyone's ignorance to the contrary, amnesia is not funny."

Beside her, Lucas Fox chuckled. "Come on, Doctor Beautiful. It's a little funny."

Dylan broke out in a wide grin. Hell, maybe he liked this guy after all.

He knew how to push Brooklyn's buttons. Dylan had no idea who this guy was, but that didn't really matter.

He always had one question for pretty much everyone he met who seemed the least bit interesting. "So, what do you drive?"

"Tonight, I'm in the Bugatti." The guy made it seem as if he had a garage full of vehicles.

"Anything you can drive in the mud?"

Lucas Fox's brow knitted in confusion. "Mud?"

"Yeah. Any off-road vehicles in that garage of yours? Something that can stand some dirt, dust, and dings? Those fancy cars sure won't.

"He'd never had much fascination with expensive sports cars.

They went fast, sure, but they were plastic.

Like driving around on a plastic rocket.

If you so much as bumped something, you were going to total the damn thing.

"Dylan races trucks," Doctor Brooklyn explained. "He crashed one. I met him in the ER."

Lucas looked concerned as he met Dylan's gaze. "Are you all right?"

"No," Brooklyn cut in. "He's clearly not. I'm thinking he needs immediate hospitalization. I can't think of any other reason he'd crash this fundraiser for my

signature instead of waiting for the appointment .”

Dylan laughed. He glanced at Lucas. “Doc says I had a concussion, but I’m back to one-hundred percent. So I wanted to put in some track time tomorrow morning. I called the hospital, learned she would be at this posh party, and decided to roll on over and see if she’d sign off on the release forms.”

He held out the paper hopefully even though he still didn’t have a pen.

But damn if Brooklyn didn’t look beautiful in makeup and a dress.

It was hard to be a gentleman and not openly admire her.

He didn’t want to make her uncomfortable.

Not like his stiffening cock was starting to make him a little uncomfortable.

Lucas Fox was watching him closely. The guy must see him as competition for Brooklyn. Jealous too. Not that Dylan could blame him.

“Off-roading,” Lucas said musingly.

“Yeah. Trophy trucks. Racing. Jumps. Power slides. The whole deal. Around here, the desert is perfect.”

“You must do a lot of walking back through the desert when they break down,” Lucas quipped with a challenging look.

“Well, if you’ve got zero mechanical sense, I suppose that’s a problem,” Dylan shot back. This guy was pretty damned arrogant. Or maybe Dylan had hurt his feelings by ripping on overpriced supercars. “But driving hard is the best way to feel alive.”

“And driving a hundred plus miles per hour across the salt flats in a precision machine like a Bugatti doesn’t qualify?”

Brooklyn cleared her throat. “I can barely breathe with all the macho over here, gentlemen.”

Dylan ignored that one. He knew she didn’t mean it. And he certainly wasn’t a gentleman. As for what Lucas had said, Dylan knew a lot of guys who raced out on the salt flats. Who was he to rag on their good times? “Have you tried that in your Bugatti?”

Lucas Fox hesitated before giving a wry shake of his head. “Never made the time. Not yet.”

“You should definitely try it out. For me, it’s more about racing something I’ve built from the ground up. Testing it. Pushing the limits. But when I take a club vehicle out, it’s no less fun. And racing? Hell, only sex gets your heart pumping faster.”

Brooklyn choked on her sip of champagne, but Lucas only grinned. “How hazardous is off-road racing?”

“It’s safer than skydiving,” Dylan said, not knowing if that was exactly true.

“So says the man who was just in the ER,” Brooklyn quipped, raising an eyebrow at him. When she moved, Dylan caught the scent of her perfume. Something flowery and delicate that seemed to suit her. “How is your wrist, by the way?”

He held up his arm. “Good as new.” He moved it around. It still ached a tiny bit, but it was nothing. “See? So, can you sign me off? I’ll love you forever.”

She snorted. “Let’s get one thing clear. I’m not signing anything until I give you a

formal follow-up exam. Am I being clear?”

Dammit. That wasn't what he wanted to hear. But she looked fierce and determined, so he guessed his considerable charm wasn't going to work on her.

He sighed and shrugged. “It was worth a try. I know you're eager to give me a full physical.”

She glared at him as if she might hit him with a chair if any chairs had been around. He gave her his sweetest smile. She stared at him. Lucas watched them both with interest, grinning the whole time.

Finally, Brooklyn Foster broke out laughing.

She closed her eyes and shook her head. “You are the most obnoxious man I've ever met.

Or maybe the second most obnoxious. Either way, I should have you tossed out of here for saying those kinds of things.

No one talks like that these days. You're lucky I have a sense of humor,” she scolded.

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“I, for one, am glad he brought out that sense of humor,” Lucas said. “It has been an interesting and delightful conversation.”

A fancy way of saying it, but hell, Dylan would take it.

He found himself reluctant to get tossed out of here.

He was having fun. And Brooklyn was quite stunning.

And yeah, Lucas wasn't half bad either. Was he mistaken, or was there a bit more than casual interest in the guy's dark eyes when he looked at Brooklyn and looked at Dylan?

Wishful thinking? Maybe, but Dylan was eager to find out.

Lucas was watching him intently. “Tell me a little more about what you do.”

Dylan wasn't going to pass up a chance to talk about one of the things he loved most in life. “I'm an amateur racer. I'm close to the point where I can turn pro.”

“A pro racer, huh? I think one of my companies sponsors a few of those or maybe racing teams. I have no idea if it's off-road or stock cars or what. I'd have to check.”

“You should come out to the off-road club sometime,” Dylan urged.

He could see Dr. Brooklyn from the corner of his eye, staring at them as if they'd both lost their minds.

“We have a driving school. It’s a hell of a lot of fun.

We’ve got tourists out there doing laps in dune buggies.

You haven’t lived until you’ve rolled something you’re driving. And you can pay by the lap.”

Lucas Fox began to smile. “You know, I think I might enjoy that.”

Dr. Brooklyn’s derisive snort drew their attention. She held up a hand and took an actual physical step back from the conversation. “Oh, don’t let the neurologist rain on your parades. You two go ahead and make plans to indulge your adrenaline rushes. I’ll be busy patching you up in the aftermath.”

“Don’t worry,” Dylan said easily. “You’re invited too, Doc. I wouldn’t forget my favorite physician in the world, now would I?”

Brooklyn was going to throttle them both. She might have if she hadn’t taken an oath to do no harm.

She wanted to turn on her heel and march away and leave the boys to their adrenaline-fueled babbling. But she didn’t.

Why? Maybe she was determined to stand her ground. Both men seemed to have reached some unspoken agreement that she was the killjoy here. That she didn’t know how to have a bit of fun.

So they thought they had her number, did they? The two of them had no idea who Brooklyn Foster really was.

“Thank you for the invitation,” she told Dylan, keeping her tone formal.

Formal was best, because she found the energetic man rather likable, despite herself.

Likable...even attractive. And that was dangerous territory.

Especially standing next to two gorgeous men.

It was a wonder she could speak without getting tongue-tied.

“I’ll keep it in mind if I ever feel the desire to leave the roads and go roaming in the desert.

That said, I’ll be happy to give you a thorough exam at the time it is actually scheduled.

And now...since you crashed the party, maybe you should go before there’s trouble.”

Dylan gave a careless glance around the ballroom. Throughout their conversation, the three of them had been getting looks from the rest of the guests. She was mortified...and irritated about it too—but not irritated at Dylan. Or Lucas. Not this time.

Because these stuffy, stick-up-their-asses snobs should mind their own business in her humblest of humble opinions.

“I don’t see any bouncers headed this way yet,” Dylan said. “I’d hate to be the first one to leave. I’m the life of this party.”

Lucas flashed that half-smile, his eyes twinkling. She swore Lucas Fox delighted in encouraging Dylan’s worst behavior.

She would never admit it, but part of her found Dylan's expressions, his vibrant personality, fascinating.

There was something utterly devil may care about the man.

As if he could not be bothered to feel fear or apprehension or anything else that a normal person might experience when confronted with his own mortality—or awkward social situations.

Didn't he worry about getting hurt or being killed for heaven's sake?

Lucas glanced at her. "I say, let him stay for the fundraiser. He sounds healthy to me. Then again, I'm not a doctor."

She eyed Lucas coldly. "That's right. You're not a doctor." She turned her ire on Dylan again. "Are you having any dizziness, nausea, or difficulty focusing?"

"Nothing like that. No headache, either." Dylan looked almost boyishly hopeful.

"How about insomnia or ringing in your ears? Any irritability?"

"Do I seem fucking irritable?"

She stared at him, and so did Lucas. Then Dylan broke up laughing.

"The looks on your faces. Priceless," Dylan teased. "But seriously. No irritability. I'm fine. I feel totally normal."

"Without examining you, I can only make assumptions." This man was such a pain in her ass. So how did he manage to be more endearing than obnoxious? "But since the initial concussion was mild, there's a high chance you're fine."

Dylan grinned and pumped his fist. “ Yes !”

“But I’m not officially signing off on you yet. So you still won’t be able to race for your club.”

That deflated him some. A dose of caution would do this man a lot of good. And yet she couldn’t help but admire his zest for life. He was so...so... likable. And good-looking in a very raw, unpolished, very male way. Too much testosterone. Too much courage. But still...

Brooklyn shook her head. She didn’t want to think about how attracted she was to either of these men. It would be wise to forget about men in general and just go on about her daily life.

Although...she hadn’t felt awkward once since Dylan had burst in here, making a scene. That didn’t make sense, because Dylan had disrupted the entire event and had these glitterati and stuffy old snobs whispering to each other behind their hands.

How amazing was that?

Lucas couldn’t recall the last time he’d enjoyed a conversation so thoroughly.

And it wasn’t only Dylan Pierce either. Or maybe it was.

Dylan had somehow managed to annoy Brooklyn without driving her off.

He’d somehow made her open up a little. Or connect a little.

He wasn’t sure how to describe it exactly.

She was still formal, but she’d warmed to them. Perhaps she felt more comfortable

now.

Her attitude toward Dylan—at least what he picked up from her—was interesting. It was as if she admired him in spite of her determination to disapprove of everything he did.

As for him, he liked the other guy. True, they'd had a bit of a rocky start, doing a little posturing and the back and forth about sports cars and off-road vehicles.

But the guy was his type of male. Lucas never fooled around with men from his “social class,” whatever the hell that was supposed to mean these days.

He wasn't drawn to artists or creative types either.

He didn't like melodrama with men. But Dylan was the type of guy that drew his eye.

Full of life. Fearless. Direct. Simple. Had a sense of humor and a bit of cockiness to him. Someone who wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. Someone who knew how to live life on a gut level, all nerve-endings and excitement.

Lucas wanted to see how this played out. And to think, he'd expected tonight to be boring beyond belief.

It had turned out to be anything but boring.

Suddenly, Dylan's handsome face lit up. “I've got the perfect idea.”

“What is it?” Brooklyn asked.

Was that dread on her face? How amusing. That only made Lucas more eager to hear this perfect idea.

“You’ll love it,” Dylan continued. “Let’s ditch this boring scene. I’ll take you out to the club, Dr. Brooklyn. You can get behind the wheel and take something out for a spin. That way, you’ll know exactly what it is that I do when I’m out on a regular run. After that, you can sign my form.”

“Are you completely out of your mind?” Dr. Brooklyn looked so horrified by the idea that Lucas had to fight back laughter. “You want me to drive one of your off-road trucks over a dirt track with a patient beside me? A patient who was injured rolling one of those trucks over?”

Dylan’s grin was nearly ear to ear. “It sounds even more awesome when you say it.”

“Absolutely not.”

“It’s better than this stuffy shindig. Did you see the food? Nothing has cheese.”

Lucas chuckled. “He has you there. On both counts.”

Brooklyn shot him a look of annoyance. Dylan’s raw enthusiasm touched something inside Lucas.

Dylan Pierce seemed like one of those rare individuals who had a simple and powerful love of life, excitement, and challenge.

That love permeated every facet of his personality until there was no room for the petty and frustrating everyday issues that most people drowned in.

Dylan nodded. “That settles it. I win. So let’s go.”

Dr. Foster reached out and snagged Dylan’s arm before he could march off. “No way, Dylan. I’m not going to let you get behind the wheel just because I’m in the vehicle.

That's unethical. And I've never driven a truck before. It's an accident waiting to happen."

Dylan seemed nonplussed. "Okay. No jumps. We'll head into the desert.

" He glanced at Lucas, and his eyes lit up again.

"Another perfect idea just hit me. We'll let Lucas pop his off-road cherry.

That way, you both get a chance to see what I'm talking about.

You can't knock it until you try it, right? "

"Now you want Mr. Fox to drive in the desert?" This seemed to throw her for a loop.

"But...it's dark out!"

"That's part of the fun. The trucks have all kinds of lights for night racing."

Lucas felt a jolt of real excitement. The first he'd felt in days. He was surprised by Dylan's offer to include him in this outing, but he found himself grateful.

"I'm in," he said.

"So you're encouraging this," Brooklyn snapped.

He shrugged. "Chances like this don't come along often. Something new and exciting. You have to take them when they come, or you'll miss out on something that could be life-changing."

"Spare me your motivational-poster platitudes," she griped.

That made him smile. He liked it when she wasn't so coldly professional, even when she was pissed. "Think about it. I can't imagine what it's like to be out in the desert with nothing but the lights on the truck and the stars overhead and all that open space."

"See?" Dylan was so excited that he looped his arm over Lucas's shoulders. Lucas felt a thrill run from that point of contact all through his body. "Lucas gets it. Just come and try it, Dr. Brooklyn. I want to show you a good time. Don't judge a book until you've read it and all of that stuff."

"Oh, I see. Instead, I have to risk my life joining a live-action, low-budget movie remake of the book before I can judge it?" Dr. Foster was now glowering at both of them. Strange, but it actually made her appear even more beautiful. Maybe it was how her eyes flashed with emotion.

"Come on, Dr. Foster," Lucas chided gently. She wanted to go. At least he was ninety percent positive she did. The woman couldn't possibly be all business all the time. "You want funding for a trauma center? Then come with us and have some fun."

Her mouth dropped open in shock. "That's...that's blackmail !"

"No, it's encouragement." He gave her his most charming smile.

"I was already going to fund the trauma center. But we both know you need to score some points with Harvey Gibson, and if you prove you can loosen up enough to enjoy yourself and have fun, I'll tell him you're the only reason he's getting the funding.

It should make you an even better candidate for that top position. "

Lucas felt a niggling doubt about pushing on her like this.

He knew she was qualified for the position, but he kept getting the sense from Dr. Gibson that the man was opposed to her getting it.

But money could pull a lot of strings. She would thank him later.

Besides, he was going to donate the money whether she went with them or not.

This would simply make the whole situation more satisfying.

And if she hated it, she could pin the blame on him.

She eyed him, but he had trouble reading her expression. “I don’t need your help with Gibson, thank you very much. But fine. I’ll go. It’s crazy, but I’ll go.”

“Yes!” Dylan pumped a fist.

“I’m only doing this because I do have an open mind. I want you both to realize that I’m not against people living their lives and doing things that they enjoy. I only think they need to be more conscientious about it. That’s all.”

Lucas bit back a smile. After all, he had won. Again. “Admirable.”

She glared at him as if reading his mind. “And if I get hurt, I’m suing you, Lucas Fox.”

He chuckled. God, she had some fire once you got past that wall of ice she’d built around herself. “You wouldn’t be the first.”

“Great!” Dylan said and grabbed hold of Dr. Foster’s arm. He towed both her and Lucas toward the exit. “Now that we all agree on who to sue, it’s time to have some real fun!”

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Brooklyn knew she had lost her mind.

There was no other reason for her to be at a racing club on the edge of Vegas, holding the racing outfit and the gear Dylan had given her.

Dylan actually tweaked her nose. She was so surprised by the friendly gesture that she didn't even protest. "Wrong sport, sweetheart. This is off-road racing. And yeah. Everyone wears the gear. It's for safety reasons. Which I know you'll appreciate."

He had her there. She had been concerned about safety from the get-go.

"Besides," he continued, "you don't want to be wandering the desert at night in that sexy dress."

She barely had the chance to register that he'd called her dress sexy. Instead, she was focused on imagining wandering the desert at night, lost and alone.

Before she could announce, again, that this was crazy and she was crazy for being here, Lucas Fox appeared. He walked from the other side of the bank of lockers with the top half of his padded suit hanging around his waist. His broad, muscular chest was bare.

Brooklyn forced herself to look down at the suit she was holding in her hands. She didn't want to be caught staring at Fox, no matter how stunning his physique was.

His perfect body annoyed her even more. The guy was some fancy financier.

He probably spent hours in a chair behind a desk.

How in the world did his body look that great under his expensive suits?

Every groove was cut from marble. His skin was tanned and warm, and there was a light dusting of dark hair that started below his navel before arrowing down to—well, to other things that Brooklyn was doing her best not to think about.

Dylan was already dressed in his black protective racing suit. He made a low sound of approval as he looked over at Fox.

“Lookin’ good, man,” he said with an appreciative grin. “You lift, don’t you?”

Lucas met his eyes and gave a nonchalant shrug. “I hire the best personal trainers money can buy.”

“Lucky bastard,” Dylan replied with a laugh. He examined the suit. “That should be a decent fit. You’re just a little taller than I am, but we’re in the same weight class.”

It was impossible not to peek at them as Dylan helped Fox to pull the top portion of his suit up over his arms. Brooklyn couldn’t help but notice as Dylan’s hand slid over Fox’s very sexy-looking ass.

What the hell was that? Was he testing how the suit fit?

Lucas noticed it too. Her mouth went dry as they locked eyes.

For a moment, Brooklyn would’ve sworn it was as if she hadn’t been in the room at all.

They were so close to one another. Just a few inches between them.

Brooklyn bit her lip and tried not to think about how sexy they looked.

She was irritated that her traitorous mind was painting horribly inappropriate images of the two of them.

Thoughts of Dylan reaching out and grabbing Lucas by the back of the head before their mouths met in a passionate kiss.

Kiss? Brooklyn swallowed the lump that had appeared in her throat. She had lost her damned mind. Dylan Pierce seemed like enough of a hetero adrenaline junkie to take her fantasy as an insult if she ever dared mention it. Which she wouldn't.

Maybe this was similar to the thing where football players slapped each other's asses. Yes. That was definitely it.

"It is a good fit." Lucas's voice was low and rougher than usual. "Thanks for this opportunity, Dylan. I'll be honest. I doubt I would've tried this on my own. I didn't even realize I might be interested."

Dylan's slow smile made Brooklyn's belly give a little flutter. There was no doubt that, in their minds, she wasn't even in the room right now. They were in their own world, and she felt a bit... What? Jealous?

Now that was crazy.

Brooklyn stared at the one-piece jumper suit in her hands and tried to puzzle out why she should care what they thought. Lucas Fox was a renowned playboy. He dated supermodels and actresses. But maybe he was bisexual too. And she didn't know anything about Dylan.

Or maybe this was all just in her imagination.

The urge to do something completely outrageous hit her hard.

It wasn't an impulse she was used to. It certainly wasn't something she'd ever given in to in the past. She wasn't even tipsy, but she felt her skin heating, her heart pounding, and her growing breath short.

So much of their attention had been on her all evening that she was surprised to discover she'd come to...

come to like it. Now that they were focused on each other, she felt left out.

If Lucas wanted to walk around half-naked, well, two could play at that game. Everyone around her at work and in her life believed Brooklyn Foster was no fun. That she was a stick in the mud. That she didn't have a wild bone in her body.

Well, she might be careful and professional, but she could be wild too.

Determination filled her. She kicked off her heels. Then Brooklyn put her feet into the suit and drew it up to her waist right there in the coed locker room.

She didn't look at Dylan and Lucas. She wanted them to think she didn't give a damn if they were watching or not, even though the opposite was true. She wanted to rattle them as badly as they had rattled her.

She anchored the suit at her waist and lifted her black cocktail dress up and over her head. Without a word, she gently draped the dress over the bench beside her before pulling the rest of the suit up over her arms and wriggling a bit to get the rest of her inside the damn thing.

Lucas's heart skipped a few beats the instant he realized Brooklyn Foster had stripped off her dress without a single care for who might be watching.

He had a perfect view of her graceful body from the waist up, and his brain and his cock liked what he was seeing.

She had a flat stomach, pale skin, and the strapless bra was the only thing covering her small but pert breasts.

Beside him, Dylan let out an animal-like groan of need.

Yes. He could certainly agree with that sound. The ache of lust that clenched right at his groin was impossible to deny.

They were both watching her as she shrugged into the rest of the one-piece protective suit. She was outwardly ignoring them, but he understood enough about women to know that she was definitely looking for a reaction. He started to grin. It seemed his little doctor had a bold side after all.

He loved it.

“I think I’m going to need more room in the crotch of this suit,” Dylan murmured.

Lucas agreed wholeheartedly. Dylan was standing so close to him that he could smell the fresh scent of cedarwood and the outdoors on the other man.

His desire spiraled even higher. First at the sight of the lovely Brooklyn Foster. Then by having Dylan so close. And that pat on the ass. That hadn’t been any accident either. Dylan was testing him.

Tonight could turn out to be one in a million.

Lucas could feel his heart thudding away, the blood rushing in his veins, and his cock thickening. The sexual tension in the room had gone from zero to a hundred, all

because Brooklyn decided to push the envelope. She had surprised them both.

He liked surprises. Always had.

The sound of Brooklyn zipping her suit shook him out of his lust-filled daze. It had been a while since anyone had stunned him like that and his desire had hit him so forcefully.

A slow smile crossed Dylan's face. He didn't say anything. He just handed Lucas a pair of driving boots. Lucas took the boots and realized that his hands were shaking a little. Enough that he felt amused by the power of his own reaction to these two people.

He hadn't seen this coming. But that was the best part about life, wasn't it? It was always throwing you surprises.

"All right," Brooklyn announced as if she wasn't aware they'd both been gaping at her. "I think I've got this right. How about the boots? Anything special I should know?"

"It's not surgical wear, Doc," Dylan drawled with amusement. "Just put your feet in and let's go."

It didn't take long to finish getting geared up. He was surprised to find himself this excited for tonight. If anyone had told him this morning that he'd be suiting up to go driving in the Vegas desert tonight, he would've told them to go get medical help. Yet, here he was.

The three of them emerged from the locker room into the clubhouse proper. Lucas had been surprised by the lack of cars in the lot after the three of them had driven here. Inside, the place was empty.

He didn't know what he'd expected. A night watchman, maybe? "Is nobody else here tonight?"

"The club is usually closed on Friday nights unless there's a race or a Saturday time trial," Dylan explained.

"Believe it or not, I'm a manager here, and I live on site.

I have permission to use the tracks and equipment.

But since I'm not cleared"—he shot a wry look at Brooklyn—"to race the club vehicles. We'll go out in one of my own. "

"Your own?" Brooklyn's voice was trying hard to stay nonchalant, but there was an undercurrent of uncertainty in it. "Is it safe?"

"Better than safe," Dylan said, even though that really didn't make sense to Lucas. How could something be better than safe? "Don't worry. Bubba will get us around in fine style."

"Bubba?" Brooklyn's skepticism was plain as day. Despite her bold move in the locker room, she looked like she was having second thoughts now.

Lucas definitely didn't want that. He was learning all kinds of intriguing things about the doctor tonight.

He smiled reassuringly and touched her arm. "Let's check it out before we panic. 'Better than safe' is a high recommendation."

She actually laughed and nodded. He felt good. Crisis averted.

For now.

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They headed out the front doors of the clubhouse and into a cold desert night.

Lucas paused and tipped his head back to stare at the clear night sky.

The desert was always so much cooler at night.

As soon as the sun left and the heat leached from the ground into the atmosphere, the temperature started to drop in the dry air.

It was always like this. A clear blanket of velvet black studded with a million diamond-like stars stretched overhead.

The beauty of this star-filled view was unsurpassed by anything else Lucas had ever seen in his life.

The yard lights at the club were bright, but they were swallowed up by the sheer darkness of the empty land around the buildings. Lucas followed Brooklyn and Dylan to the edge of the gravel parking area where a large, square-shaped vehicle sat by itself.

“This is Bubba,” Dylan said fondly as he opened the driver’s door and stepped up. The vehicle was so tall that he nearly had to fold himself in half to lean in and start the motor. Then he turned to Lucas. “Can you handle a stick?”

“Like a pro,” Lucas said, keeping his tone offhand even though his blood was rushing in his veins. “What is this? A Bronco?”

“Yeah. Seventy-eight.” Dylan nodded enthusiastically as he took hold of Brooklyn’s hand and led her around to the passenger door.

“I rebuilt it a few years ago. Put a four-sixty under the hood and some good swamper tires on it. Upgraded the steering, suspension, and brakes too. It’s a beast and ugly as sin, but damn is it fun! ”

Brooklyn gave a little huff of effort as she heaved herself into the passenger seat.

As Lucas climbed behind the driver’s wheel, he realized there was a bench seat in the front of the vehicle.

A full roll cage inside provided protection from rollover, and a huge bar was attached to the dashboard for passengers to hold tight.

“It’s a good thing you’ve got that dancer’s flexibility,” Dylan told Brooklyn as he climbed into the passenger seat and effectively nudged her into the middle. “You’re going to have to keep your legs out of his way when he shifts.”

Dylan handed out the helmets, and they all began to strap into the cab of the monstrous, rumbling vehicle.

It was all Lucas could do not to laugh with excitement as he gripped the leather-wrapped steering wheel.

This was the same feeling he had when he was driving the Veyron and a straight stretch of highway opened in front of him.

It was hard not to stomp the pedal down and see if he could break two-hundred miles per hour.

Right now, he was ready and eager to go. He wanted to prove something to Dylan.

And he wanted to rattle the mysterious Doctor Brooklyn Foster as much as she'd rattled him when she'd so casually stripped off that sexy black dress.

He grinned and revved the engine. The night was waiting for him.

Dylan was having the time of his life right now. Hell, he'd crashed that stuffy party on a whim, hoping to see Doctor Beautiful again, and look how things had turned out. He was in his baby with Brooklyn pressed up against him and Lucas at the wheel, looking as eager to be off as a drag racer.

Raw excitement buzzed in the air. To him, this was living. Not uptight parties where the food sucked but cost an arm and a leg and the music could put you to sleep.

The moment the three of them had shared in the locker room wasn't far from Dylan's mind either. Lucas Fox was sexy in a commanding, dignified way that made Dylan want to either conquer him or kneel down and suck his cock. He wasn't quite sure which one he'd choose.

And Brooklyn Foster? Damn. She'd had him hard and straight as a rear axle with her unexpected little strip show.

The whole time she'd been acting innocent too, as if she didn't know or care what affect she was having on both of them.

She might've been begging for their attention right then, but hell, he wasn't going to complain. She'd surprised him, and he loved it.

Speaking of which, at the moment, Dr. Brooklyn was so filled with apprehension and excitement that she didn't seem to know what to do with herself. But he had a few

ideas, didn't he?

"Now," Dylan told Lucas. "Just ease the clutch out. It's a real simple setup.

Nothing complicated. The hubs are already locked, but you'll need to use the four-wheel-drive out in the desert runs.

We haven't had rain lately, so there won't be mud.

But we're going to do some rock crawling, and it'll be easier if you use the four-wheel drive. "

"Got it." Lucas put the clutch in and skillfully eased the truck into gear. Lucas didn't seem to be a guy who backed down from a challenge. Maybe he was one of those rich dudes who actually earned their fortune instead of inheriting it.

His skill with a clutch was a relief for Dylan. Then again, this was a guy who raced around in a Bugatti and probably had a hundred other cars to choose from at his mansion or palace or whatever. He was bound to have a manual transmission in that collection somewhere.

Lucas eased Bubba out of the parking area toward the track entrance. Dylan pointed out the lights. Lucas reached for the switch to flip on the KC lights on the bar across the roof. The same switch flipped on the panel of lights attached to the steel grille in front of the headlights too.

"Oh, my word!" Brooklyn gasped as the brilliance flooded the desert in front of them. "I bet you can see this thing from space!"

Dylan grinned. "We're glowing like an angel. You having fun yet, beautiful? Or do we have to go faster?"

“Not too fast!” she said, but she was laughing too. Not a stiff laugh, either. A real one. The sheer difference in the sound was enough to make Dylan even more determined to get what he wanted.

He always chased after what he wanted. Whether it was a truck or a racing title or a certain track record. Life was too short not to go after what really mattered and give it one hundred percent effort.

And in Dylan’s world right now, he wanted nothing more than to have both Lucas Fox and Brooklyn Foster sharing his bed. Hell, it was a crazy fantasy. He knew it. But damn if it didn’t seem like the hottest possibility he’d ever dreamed up.

He wanted both of them. At the same time. The three of them sharing the sort of intense passion that much of the mundane world never was lucky enough to experience. It was going to be hot and heavy, and he would enjoy every second of it.

And if he had his way, so would they.

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If Brooklyn gripped the “oh shit” handle any harder, she was likely to rip it off. She’d never been so terrified and exhilarated before in her life.

She should never have come. This was crazy. But she couldn’t help but give a whoop of pure joy as the truck hit some air. Not too much—a couple of feet at most—but when they slammed down again and kept right on racing, her heart was pounding fit to burst.

It was as if she’d been removed from this kind of raw, visceral living for so long that when she suddenly found herself immersed in it once again, her mind and body didn’t know what to do with the flood of sensory information. It was overload, and she loved every single second of it.

“That’s it,” Dylan urged. They had moved off a dirt track into a jouncy area with more pits and rocks and slopes. “Just ease the tranny back into second. That should get us up over this section. You should be able to feel the way the tires grab in the steering.”

He was talking to Lucas, but that didn’t matter. Brooklyn loved the sound of Dylan’s voice as he gave instructions. He never got upset. Everything was always fine. Just fine. And for some reason, the certainty in his tone soothed her fears in ways she hadn’t known possible.

She should’ve been more terrified, yelling for them to take her back to the clubhouse. Her mind realized this. But instead, she was so excited she was nearly breathless.

The view through the windshield changed as Lucas steered the truck up a rocky

slope.

The landscape was filled with hills, dunes, and craggy plateaus that rose out of nowhere in the darkness.

The rocks gradually took shape, each bit of road unfolding only as quickly as the truck's lights could reach it.

Lucas's hands were clenched on the steering wheel as he piloted them over rocks that shouldn't have been navigable.

As much as Brooklyn hated to admit it, she admired his guts.

He remained perfectly at ease no matter what suddenly appeared in front of them.

With a few instructions from Dylan, Lucas fearlessly took on any challenge.

It was something Brooklyn could not help but wonder at.

This rich, distractingly handsome bastard who'd made her last week hell by continually lingering in her mind didn't hesitate to charge out there and live .

"Damn!" Lucas said. "Look at the size of that. Do I go around?"

"Nah." Dylan had a huge grin on his face. "Hug the left side on this one. Straddle it. Go up on the bank. We'll be fine."

The vehicle lurched as they entered what appeared to be an enormous washout area.

The tire tracks suddenly seemed to disappear into two cavernous ruts pitted with rocks.

Lucas smoothly guided the truck to the left of the obstacle.

The huge tires seemed glued to the terrain as the Bronco crawled up onto the left bank with its right side tires perched between the ruts.

Brooklyn's perspective shifted violently as the whole truck went up on two wheels.

She gave an involuntary squeak as Lucas hit the accelerator to increase their momentum.

The Bronco plugged its way up and through.

Her body was pressed against Dylan's firm body.

There was absolutely no trying to stay in her spot with all the jostling, despite the harnesses.

She'd given up on the idea of personal space twenty minutes ago.

There wasn't much room in the cab for three adults, especially with two of them being men.

The guys didn't seem to mind. But now the only thing keeping her from tumbling into Dylan's lap was her five-point harness.

"Hello, there, Doc," Dylan said in a low voice filled with good-natured humor. "If I'd known this was all it would take to get you to fall for me, I'd have had Bubba up on two wheels an hour ago."

Brooklyn didn't know whether to laugh or hit him. "I'm sorry. I can't— oof !"

She bounced into Lucas this time as the Bronco rocked on its springs. Lucas's body was as firm as it had looked. She could attest to that.

"Sorry about that," Lucas called over the dull roar of the engine. "Are we taking this hill?"

"Yep. There's a crazy awesome view from the top of the plateau," Dylan explained. "Just keep to this trail. It gets super steep at the top. You'll need first gear for the last push. Don't give it too much at once though."

"Got it." Lucas's concentration seemed to intensify as he kept going.

Dylan put a hand on Brooklyn's thigh. "Doing okay there, Brooklyn?"

She didn't even care that they were all apparently on a first-name basis now.

It seemed ridiculous to use last names or titles in the middle of the desert at night on this crazy ride.

They were in what amounted to a crash cage and were racing through rough terrain, but she felt safe without really understanding why.

Was it because she was with these two men?

"I'm great!" She gave him an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Both Dylan and Lucas laughed but not at her. She liked their laughs. They were different, but right now, they shared the same love of life and thrill of living as she felt.

"Look at that!" Lucas's voice was filled with taut excitement splashed with a good bit

of awe. “I go up and over?”

“Hell, yeah. Go for it,” Dylan nearly shouted as he gripped the bar on the front of the vehicle.

Brooklyn followed suit, her eyes going wide at the steep grade of the upward slope they were about to tackle.

It was nothing but stark shadows and brilliantly lit dirt that seemed to rise out of nowhere straight in front of them.

She felt Lucas’s hand near her knees as he downshifted and hit the gas.

The engine roared, and they lurched up the steep grade as though Lucas were determined to launch them over the top like a rocket.

For a second, they were flying. Brooklyn’s belly gave a tumble as she gasped.

Adrenaline poured into her bloodstream, and she felt so very alive in ways she had not experienced since childhood—since Colin, her brother.

She gave a whoop of joy as they hit the top of the plateau hard, and the lighted path seemed to shudder and bounce all over.

The truck careened to a stop in a torrential cloud of dust that plumed all around them.

“Yes! That was freaking awesome!” Lucas shouted as he hit the top of the steering wheel with excitement. He turned to look at Brooklyn. “Did you see that?”

“How could I miss it?” She was laughing now. She couldn’t help it. You would’ve thought that Lucas had discovered a way to fly. He looked nothing like the cool and

reserved billionaire in his tailored suits and perfect ties. Excitement made his dark eyes seem to blaze in the reflected lights.

“Pull off the road a bit,” Dylan urged. “We’ll shut the lights off and get out and have a look at the view. It’s amazing.”

Lucas eased the truck back into gear and pulled off the path. Then he shut off the engine and the lights. Dylan opened the passenger door and hopped down. Dust billowed from beneath the heels of his boots.

Brooklyn scooted to the edge of the seat and stared down at the rather long drop between her and the ground. She’d forgotten her mountain climbing gear.

“Here you go, sweetheart.” Dylan reached up and took her hands. “I’m not going to let you fall.”

She reached out and put her gloved hands in his and let him ease her down from the big truck. His strength was incredible. When her boots thudded on the ground, she hardly noticed the impact. She was too busy staring up at the man still holding her so gently in his arms.

Dylan let go of her only long enough to gently unfasten the chin strap of her helmet. “Here. Let me help you with that thing.”

It was like having her face squished through a padded tube as he pulled the helmet over her head and set it back on the seat inside the truck. Her hair was a disaster. She could feel it. But Dylan didn’t seem to notice or mind. He reached down and tucked a tangled, stray lock behind her ear.

“You steady on your feet then?” His voice was a low rumble.

Brooklyn wanted to nod or say something or at least seem nonchalant.

But she suddenly felt ten kinds of shy and wasn't sure why.

This was not a big deal. It shouldn't have been a big deal at all.

She could've been lecturing him on the reasons this reckless activity should be banned by the health and safety board, but she didn't say a word.

Because the ride had been beyond fun and something totally new and exciting for her.

She had no regrets, and that in itself was strange.

"Come and look at this!" Lucas called from around the front of the Bronco. "The view is amazing."

Dylan pulled off his own helmet and grinned down at her. "Told ya."

She didn't miss that he took her hand to lead her over the uneven, rock-strewn ground. Brooklyn also didn't miss the fact that she didn't want him to let go.

Lucas didn't mind that Brooklyn and Dylan were taking forever to come around from their side of the Bronco.

He'd ditched his helmet in the driver's seat.

Now he lifted his face to the cool breeze blowing across the top of the plateau.

In the distance, he could see the brilliant lights of the Vegas strip lighting up the night.

It was always so incredible to see the Las Vegas lights from this distance.

The way they seemed to suddenly burst out of an otherwise empty, black landscape never stopped being stunning.

Lucas half turned and spotted Dylan leading Brooklyn by the hand from behind the Bronco. It was surprising, but he didn't feel jealous. Not since they'd shared that moment together admiring the pretty doctor in the changing room.

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Besides, for the last couple of hours, they'd been rock crawling and bouncing all over the desert landscape in a lifted, four-wheel-drive truck, and Dr. Brooklyn Foster had impressed him.

A lot. Not a word of warning or complaint from her.

She'd enjoyed herself. He was sure of it.

He'd felt the excitement in her as she'd sat beside him.

And those whoops? That definitely wasn't fear.

It was simple. If she'd really been afraid or even as uptight as she sometimes seemed when she was wearing her long white doctor's coat, she never would've come with them in the first place. The fact that she had come along meant something.

He was determined to discover exactly what.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Dylan murmured the words as he and Brooklyn stopped beside Lucas. "Sometimes I come up here just to look at this. It's so peaceful. A good place to think."

Lucas didn't tell them that you could see the same stunning views from his high-rise condo.

This was different. It was special. Being out in the desert in the middle of the night under a perfect sky.

Sharing that experience with a beautiful woman who was full of surprises.

And sharing it with a man generous enough to bring them here in his own vehicle just because he loved doing this and wanted to include them.

That kind of thing wasn't for sale at any price.

"It's hard to believe the city can be this beautiful," Brooklyn whispered. She hadn't let go of Dylan's hand.

Lucas wasn't sure why he was so aware of this, aware of her.

The way her blonde hair had come free of its braid to stir in the breeze, messy now but somehow just as stunning.

The way her face seemed to reflect the starlight above even as the neon lights were reflected in her blue eyes.

She was a fascinating woman. He needed more of her.

Moving closer, Lucas felt his gloved hand brush against her free hand. When she didn't pull away, he gently took her hand in his.

"This city always felt like a double-edged sword to me," Dylan mused, speaking almost to himself.

This was a contemplative side that Dylan hadn't shown yet.

Like Brooklyn, the man was full of surprises.

"Some people come here, enjoy themselves, and go back to their regular lives. Others

let it destroy them. Sometimes when I'm up here, I think this city is beautiful...

and terrible." He shrugged. "Or maybe it's all simpler than I think.

As my mother used to say, everything in moderation. "

Lucas chuckled. "A wise woman."

"Yeah, she was great." Dylan rubbed his chin, still looking thoughtful.

"Hell, I'm guilty of dancing on the line between excess and moderation.

" Dylan didn't sound all that worried about it either.

"But man, for the last few years I've been grinding it out hard.

Trying to reach a point where I have enough sponsors to turn pro.

I've missed times like this. Times when things slow down. When I remember what life's all about."

"What's life all about?" Brooklyn asked, her voice gentle.

Dylan grinned. "Fun. Love. Friendship. Challenge. Family." He shrugged. "How the hell should I know? I'm not a philosopher or a poet. I jump trucks fifteen feet in the air."

"I'll sponsor you," Lucas said quietly.

Dylan turned and gaped at him. "Seriously?"

“Yes.” He was a capital investor. He put money into all kinds of things that other people didn’t believe would pay off.

Most times he won. Sometimes he lost. But this time?

He had never been surer of the right decision.

His wide-ranging financial portfolio included sponsorships for other sports and racing teams. Why not Dylan?

“I... Hell, I don’t know what to say.” Dylan ran a hand through his short hair. For the first time since Lucas had met him, the guy seemed thrown utterly off-balance.

Lucas looked at him over the top of Brooklyn’s head. “Call it gut instinct. You’re confident in tense, dicey situations. You keep your cool and your focus even when riding shotgun. That says a lot about your personality. You’re going to be a good pro racer.”

Dylan’s expression was clear even in the dim starlit world atop that plateau. He looked as if Lucas had handed him the moon. “Damn. Brooklyn, I need you to pinch me. I could be in a coma and dreaming.”

She reached over and pinched Dylan. On the ass. He yelped and burst out laughing, while she flashed him a naughty grin completely unlike her. “You’re not dreaming.”

“No, I’m pretty sure I am. Out here with two great people like you? Sponsored so I can finally turn pro?” He shook his head in awe. “Even I don’t get that lucky.”

Lucas felt a smile pulling at the corners of his mouth. He loved helping people. Especially when you could see it would make a difference. This was a good development. A worthy investment. Different from supporting Brooklyn and the

trauma center, but good all the same.

Brooklyn was watching him with those large blue eyes. “You’re a generous man.”

The praise was simple. But coming from her, it meant something.

“Well, folks,” Dylan finally clapped his hands together to get their attention, the noise muffled by his gloves. “Let’s head on back, shall we? It will be after midnight by the time we get back.”

Lucas grinned when Brooklyn let out another whoop. She was the first one to turn eagerly toward the vehicle as though she couldn’t wait for the return leg of their night journey.

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Dylan was already settled in the passenger seat when Lucas cranked Bubba's motor.

Instead of the smooth turn over and low, familiar rumble he'd been expecting, the starter chugged along, and the engine coughed once before sputtering and quitting altogether.

To his credit, Lucas turned the key to off instead of potentially draining the battery, trying to start a motor that obviously wasn't going to run.

"What happened?" Brooklyn's voice sounded low and tense. "Are we stranded out here? Is something broken?"

Dylan gently put a hand on her knee and eased his helmet back off.

This time, he wedged the helmet into the cargo area of the Bronco behind the bench seat.

He had tools back there too, but it wasn't easy to work on an engine in the middle of the night when you couldn't turn any lights on for fear of running the battery down.

But this wasn't a cause for panic. It was colder in the desert at night, but no one would freeze to death or starve or be eaten by coyotes.

"Pop the hood," Dylan called to Lucas before climbing out.

Lucas obliged and got out of the Bronco. The two of them met around the front of the hood. Dylan reached up to release the hood catch. Of course, the Bronco had a six-

inch lift kit, which didn't exactly make it easy to work on.

"You carry a step stool in this thing?" Lucas teased.

Dylan chuckled. This he could appreciate. A guy who could keep his shirt on in an emergency and didn't run around like his hair was on fire. "Actually, yeah. I do. It's in the back. But we're not going to need it."

"No?"

"You feel the heat boiling off this thing?" Dylan almost cursed his own carelessness. "I should've thought about that when we got to the top of the plateau. We were rock crawling and the engine got really hot."

"Hot enough to boil gasoline?" Lucas guessed.

Dylan nodded. "Yup. I can't be sure without really digging in, but it's my best guess for now. I'm not going to try and tear the thing apart up here in the middle of the night."

"Good call." Lucas turned and looked at the view. "I'm guessing there's no cell service way out here."

"Nope. Nothing."

"At least we've got a nice camping spot, eh?"

"Camping?" Brooklyn said from a few yards away.

She was standing there with her cell phone in her hand.

She kept lifting it up as though she was convinced she could get a signal that way.

Dylan could've told her that was fruitless—they were a long way from any cell tower—but she probably needed to see that for herself. He smirked to himself. Doctors.

“Are we stranded?” Brooklyn asked tersely. “Can’t we call search and rescue?”

“That would be overkill,” Dylan told her gently.

He walked toward her, keeping his voice reassuring.

“We’re on club property, but decently far in the desert.

The club will be open tomorrow, with people racing the courses.

Hell, the maintenance crew always takes at least one run a day to check for debris and road issues.

They’ll find us if we haven’t gotten underway by then. ”

“By then?” Even in the darkness her blue eyes were huge and round. “What do you mean? Do you mean you can fix this?”

“Of course.” Dylan tried not to be insulted. “I’ve got an emergency tool kit in the back along with plenty of gear to get us through the night out here.”

“Oh, God.” Brooklyn sucked in a deep breath and put both hands atop her head as though she were panicking.

Then she turned to Lucas, her expression desperate.

“Lucas, you’re rich. Don’t you have a security team on standby or something?

Bodyguards? You know, for safety? Or a personal helicopter?

Or maybe your own dedicated satellite we can use to call someone? ”

Lucas looked highly amused, but there was also compassion in his tone. “Sorry, Doc. Nothing like that. But we’ll both be here for you.”

“Why do you say that? Am I in danger?” She glanced around at the darkness. “Are there wild animals?”

Dylan put a comforting hand on her shoulder. “Nothing that would mess with us.”

He threw a glance at Lucas. Lucas nodded to him, understanding in his eyes.

The guy might be rich, but he was nothing like Dylan expected.

Yeah, he wanted to fuck Lucas as badly as he wanted to screw Brooklyn.

But honestly, he really liked the guy too.

And her. Not that he’d set this up to happen so he could get laid.

God, he hoped she didn’t get that idea in her head.

Lucas approached her too. “Brooklyn, I know it might seem crazy, but the best thing to do is to just settle in, stay warm, and wait. At least until the vapor lock is over and the engine cools, or there’s some light for Dylan to work, in case something else is wrong.

There are three of us. And if there are a few blankets in the back of the Bronco, we'll be fine. ”

“This is the desert,” Brooklyn said as if she didn't get why they weren't panicking.

Dylan gave her a gentle squeeze. “Yeah. But we're not far from the club. And Las Vegas is kinda hard to miss. We're not gonna wander in the wilderness for forty years.”

That seemed to reassure her somewhat. Her eyes were grateful. “It sounds like you've had this happen before...”

“Actually, I have. Twice. Once I busted a lower control arm on a rock.”

“What was the other time?” she pressed.

“Ah.” Dylan rubbed the back of his neck.

He should've kept his big mouth shut. “Welllll... The other time I wanted to get a guy alone out here. He was a racer from Utah. Cute as hell, gay, but not really out of the closet. I took him out here. We had a few beers. We spent the night out here because we were screwing around and the battery died.” He paused, remembering.

That had been four or five years ago. “We were together for a year before I beat him in a race and he dumped my ass.”

Lucas laughed, but Brooklyn was watching him like a hawk. “Is that what you're doing tonight?”

He smirked. “It is suspicious, isn't it? Especially after that story?” He glanced at Lucas. “Back me up here, brother. The engine's really down.”

Lucas was very solemn. “I swear to you, Brooklyn, that Dylan’s not stranding us in the desert so he can seduce us. The engine’s dead. For now, we’re stuck.”

She nodded slowly, her eyes still on Dylan. “Are you gay?”

He winked at her. At least that story had taken her mind off their immediate problem and her panic. “Nah. I go both ways. Men and women? I love ’em both.”

Now Lucas was watching him as intensely as Brooklyn. He felt like he was under a microscope. But then again, he liked attention.

“Okay,” Brooklyn finally said. “I trust you.”

He felt honored by her trust. The feeling was powerful too. Deeper and stronger than really made sense for how long they’d known each other.

He grinned at her. “Thanks, Doc. But believe me, we’re as set up as we can be.

We have a vehicle for shelter, plenty of water, some protein bars, and blankets.

It’s going to be fine. It’s not like we’re out here where nobody will ever find us.

” He reached for Brooklyn and pulled her into his embrace.

He guessed it was a statement about how upset she was that she didn’t pull away.

Or knee him in the balls. A second later, Lucas surprised him by wrapping his arms around the both of them too.

The three of them embraced beneath the huge starlit sky.

“Brooklyn, it’s going to be fine. I promise,” Dylan murmured into the delicate curve of her ear. “And what a bonus, we have a doctor with us.”

“That is so unfair,” Brooklyn muttered. “Put all the pressure on me when I have no medical supplies or staff on hand.”

“Dr. Foster,” Lucas said in a gravely serious tone of voice underscored by a wry sense of humor.

“I have the utmost faith in whatever skills you have in your bare hands. Shall we make a pact between the three of us to never hold you medically liable for any permanent injuries resulting from this less-than-ideal situation? After all, you were basically a hostage.”

She smiled. That was a good start, but Dylan wanted a little more.

“Remember, Doc. If anything goes wrong, we get to sue Lucas and take all his money and boats and whatever else rich folk blow their wad on.”

Now Brooklyn laughed. That beautiful sound told him that everything was going to be all right.

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Brooklyn told herself to remain calm. Things would be okay.

Dylan and Lucas were right. It wasn't as if they were alone in the Gobi Desert hundreds of miles from civilization.

If they didn't have cell coverage and the truck was broken, they didn't have a lot of options open to them.

They could either stay here until light or they could walk in the desert in the darkness.

She would rather not do that.

The strange thing was, she did feel calm. Or far calmer than she had at first. Of course, it might've been because she was in a three-way embrace that felt far more wonderful than she should've been comfortable with. That helped.

But she also believed what Dylan and Lucas had told her.

Oddly enough, she believed Dylan even more because he'd admitted to draining a battery trying to get laid with a guy he liked.

She didn't know whether that was because his story seemed like such a stupid guy thing to do, or because he was open enough to admit that he was bisexual to them both.

Dylan headed for the back of the Bronco. "The supplies are back here. But if you give me a second, I'll make a little nest for the three of us. It shouldn't be difficult. I've

got padding.”

“Come on, Brooklyn,” Lucas urged. “Let’s go see the five-star accommodations.” He paused dramatically. “I should warn you. I’m used to the best.”

She giggled. Listen to her. One of the best neurologists in the state, and she was giggling.

Dylan was already in the back of the Bronco.

As Brooklyn headed for the tailgate, she realized there was no way she could jump up inside the thing.

But she didn’t need to worry. Before she could even mention her problem, Lucas put his hands gently on either side of her waist and effortlessly lifted her up to sit on the tailgate.

“Sorry, that was rather presumptuous of me,” Lucas told her with a smile. “I’m not trying to take liberties. I promise.”

Brooklyn felt a crazy spike in her heart rate as she stared at him from this new vantage point. “I don’t mind. I wanted to say… Well, I admire the way you’ve handled the entire night.”

“Thank you. That means a lot to me. I feel the same way about you. You’ve earned my respect, Dr. Foster.”

She felt her cheeks heating at the unexpected praise. She didn’t know what else to say, so she only sat there staring at him, her heart beating fast.

Lucas looked thoughtful for a moment before he nodded to the cargo area. “Do you

need anything else before you head in there?”

“Oh, you mean I should find a cactus and pee behind it?” Brooklyn found herself grinning in spite of things. “Maybe I should. I don’t want to be that annoying chick that waits until everyone gets settled and then announces that she has to go.”

Lucas was grinning back. His eyes seemed to dance in the starlight. He really was a handsome bastard. They both were. Some people might say Brooklyn had won the jackpot being stranded out here with the two of them.

Lucas put his hands on her waist and lifted her back down to the ground. She liked the way his hands felt on her waist.

She felt silly and strangely exposed as she hustled off to do her business—but not too far, because she didn’t want to get lost or anything crazy.

Nothing like trying to peel out of that stupid bodysuit to pee behind scrub brush in the desert.

It had been so long since she’d done anything like this—not even camping.

And yet, she felt strangely alive. This was so different from her usual world of the hospital and patients and seminars.

She didn’t know if that was good or bad, but it was definitely different.

It all felt like something she would’ve done when she was a kid. Back before she’d lost her brother. The thought of him made her feel a little sad and wistful.

Lucas was still waiting when Brooklyn got back to the Bronco. “Ready?”

She nodded. Her throat felt thick. There were so many memories bouncing around inside her head. Lucas lifted her once again onto the tailgate. Brooklyn turned and crawled into the cargo area.

Dylan was already there, reclining in what seemed to be a far too comfortable position against some gear bags. He patted the space in the center of the small square space. “You get the middle, sweetheart.”

Brooklyn bit her lip and thought about the moment of obvious sexual awareness that Dylan and Lucas had shared inside the locker room. And Dylan’s admission that he was bi. “Are you sure you don’t want to be in the middle?”

Dylan laughed, obviously taking her meaning. “I would, but this way it’s less likely you’ll end up squished against the wheel well.”

As soon as Lucas was inside the Bronco, Dylan fastened what looked to be a nylon curtain of sorts to the back of the Bronco’s cargo area. It created something that resembled a tent flap.

“I’m willing to bet,” Lucas said after a moment or two of comfortable silence had passed, “this is Brooklyn’s first time camping.”

Brooklyn smiled in the darkness and realized she was proud to be able to argue the opposite. “You lose. I did a lot of camping out when I was young.”

“Is that right?” Dylan’s interest was plain in his tone. “I thought you were a dancer.”

“I did dance. Ballet, tap, modern dance, I dabbled in all of it, but I really liked being outside too.”

“Where was this?”

“Wyoming. Not far from Jackson.” It was funny how confessions in the dark felt so much easier. “I...I had a twin. Colin and I were forever finding someplace to camp out. We’d take the quads out with tents and food for the weekend. Just the two of us.”

Dylan took her hand in his. Brooklyn suddenly wished they weren’t wearing these stupid suits. “How long ago was that?”

“Colin died when we were fourteen.” How could it be so easy to say that right now when she normally couldn’t talk about it at all? Brooklyn swallowed the lump in her throat. “He was the cautious one. I was the one who never thought about consequences.”

There was a rustle, and Brooklyn realized that Lucas had turned in her direction. He gently stroked her hair, the backs of his fingers brushing her face. The gesture wasn’t sexual. It was an offer of comfort. “I can’t even imagine how something like that would change your life.”

Brooklyn thought about the rest. About what had happened. “I made a bad decision. Colin paid the price.”

“Head trauma,” Dylan guessed. “Is that where your passion for treating brain injuries came from?”

“We weren’t wearing helmets. He came off the quad and hit his head.

” Brooklyn remembered the entire thing as though it had happened yesterday.

“Everything was normal. He was fine. We didn’t want our parents to be pissed.

So we didn’t tell anyone. And then two days later, he got the flu. At least, that’s what we thought.”

Brooklyn would never forget that morning.

The morning she woke up and found her twin dead.

“He died in the night. I could tell you right now exactly how and why it happened in every diagnostic detail, but back then, I didn’t know.

I woke up, and he was gone. He used to get up first. He was so much more responsible than I was.

And that morning, I woke up late and couldn’t figure out why he hadn’t gotten me up.

I was even mad at him because we were going to be late for school.”

Now Dylan turned in the darkness. They were both cupping her between their big bodies.

Their warmth touched her on so many levels.

For the first time in a long while, Brooklyn didn’t feel alone.

They were stranded in the desert, and she had opened her heart, and she was not afraid.

She lay there in the darkness in the back of a Bronco and felt as though she were exactly where and when she needed to be.

They held her. She didn’t say anything else. She finally drifted off to sleep, and her dreams were sweet.

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Lucas Fox groaned and stretched as he woke.

There was no confusion about where he was.

He had absolute perfect recall of every second of the previous night.

So much felt like it had changed since the fundraiser.

Dylan had said he wanted to try restarting the Bronco once the engine and gasoline cooled and the vapor lock was gone, but Brooklyn had fallen asleep. They hadn't wanted to wake her.

The interior of the Bronco was warming in the morning sun.

He could feel the brilliant morning sunlight on his boots where they hung just past the flap slanted against the tailgate.

There was still a bite lingering in the air, though.

He felt it on his cheeks and nose. Then he gradually became aware of something pressed up against him.

It was Brooklyn. Lucas found himself staring at her curled up like a contented kitten. He tried to reconcile everything he'd learned about this fascinating woman in the last twenty-four hours. The cool, clinically minded doctor wasn't the ice queen people claimed she was.

Unable to resist, Lucas gently moved his hand to touch her tangled blonde hair. She was so beautiful. Right now, she seemed so unguarded and genuine. No carefully controlled words and expressions or professional detachment.

It was strange. Lucas could actually see himself settling down with an intelligent, motivated woman like her.

As impossible as it should have seemed, he liked the idea.

There were depths to this woman—this person —that Lucas didn't believe they had even skimmed.

But he wanted to. That surprised him more than a little.

A sound from outside the Bronco drew his attention, and Lucas realized Dylan was gone. He was probably outside taking a leak or stretching his legs.

Lucas tried not to disturb Brooklyn as he eased himself out the back of the Bronco.

She was still resting on her side with her hands tucked beneath her face like an innocent angel.

He grinned to himself as he dropped down, his boots thudding on the sand.

He felt grimy and achy after sleeping in this gear all night, but the fresh air felt wonderful.

A low laugh drew Lucas's attention toward the plateau's edge where they had admired the view of the Vegas lights last night. Dylan was standing there with a broad grin on his face.

“I saw you contorting yourself to climb out without waking her. That’s what I looked like thirty minutes ago, trying to get out of there without waking either of you.”

It was weird. Lucas felt out of his element, and yet he loved every second of it. Maybe having anything and everything money could buy only made you value the things it couldn’t purchase. The core things that mattered in an unpredictable life.

He wandered off to take a leak. He took a moment to appreciate the pain in the ass it must’ve been for poor Brooklyn to manage it last night in her racing suit. Women really got the short end of the stick when it came to convenience.

By the time Lucas got back to the vehicle, Dylan had a stepstool on the ground in front of the open hood. He peered into the engine compartment of the huge lifted truck.

Lucas joined Dylan at the front fender and wished he knew more about mechanical things or had more experience fixing them. When something broke, he paid people to fix it or had it replaced. He knew some basics about engines, the same as anyone who loved cars. But practical experience? Not so much.

“Well, it’s what I thought,” Dylan said.

His words were somewhat muffled since he was basically talking at the engine as he leaned in.

“Vapor lock. It’s fine now. A good cold night cooled off the gasoline in the lines.

It certainly won’t be boiling anymore. But I might have to inject some gas directly into the carburetor since it went bone dry during the process. ”

“Sounds like a good plan.”

Dylan hopped off the step stool and reached for a rag to wipe his bare hands. His grin was hard to read. Was he laughing at Lucas?

But he only reached out and cuffed Lucas on his shoulder. “You have no idea what I’m talking about, do you?”

“Hypothetically, I do.” He grinned. “I get the concepts. But don’t let me stop you from showing me up and impressing me. I like a man who knows what he’s doing with his hands.”

Dylan tossed the rag onto the fender, his blood racing, his heart beating faster as he locked eyes with Lucas. The ache of desire throbbed low in his groin, urging him on. Dylan’s instincts told him this was the moment. He couldn’t let it slip past.

As handsome and sexy as the other man was right now, in that gear and with his hair all sleep-tousled, he looked nothing like the tux-wearing rich guy from the night before. He seemed real now. A man. A friend. And as Dylan walked toward him, he knew he meant to make him a lover too.

He didn’t waste time on words. He was face to face with Lucas. He leaned in slowly, still staring into the other man’s eyes as he laid claim to those lips.

The kiss was hot and heavy and everything Dylan hoped it would be.

The taste of Lucas was spicy and unfamiliar.

It was exciting. Blood rushed to Dylan’s groin, and he reveled in the feel of his cock pressing against the front of his suit.

He moved in closer, sliding his arms around Lucas and loving that Lucas did the same with him.

They grappled for control, tongues sliding in and out of each other's mouths as they struggled to get as close as possible.

The kiss finally ended, leaving both of them breathing raggedly.

Damn, the man could kiss. He couldn't imagine what it would be like to share this man's bed.

To share it with Brooklyn, because there was no way in hell he was letting Doctor Beautiful out of his life.

Not after she'd trusted him. That trust really meant something to Dylan. He would prove himself worthy of it.

But as for Lucas? Hell, Dylan knew he was going to have to share the lead.

As much as he wanted to fuck Lucas until he hit that sweet spot, to experience the power of making the man come hard, he was willing to give control to Lucas when he wanted it.

That give and take was going to be interesting.

A challenge. But he was always up for a challenge.

And Brooklyn would be a challenge too.

Before he could say anything, Dylan heard Brooklyn emerging from the Bronco. He let go of Lucas with a smile. He didn't want their lovely lady feeling jealous.

Although if it led to her peeling off that suit and showing that graceful body again, he might just change his mind very quickly.

Brooklyn was ready to go. It was morning. She'd slept far better than she'd expected. She hadn't even woken once.

She stretched with a groan, loving the warm sun on her face.

They needed to get to fixing the truck or walking to the club before the day got too hot.

She opened one of the breakfast bars Dylan had stashed in the back.

She usually didn't eat a big meal first thing in the morning.

Coffee was more her thing. Lots of coffee.

Right now, she was definitely feeling the lack of coffee.

She walked around the truck and spotted Dylan and Lucas standing very close to each other. They both were looking her way. But she had the feeling she had missed something...

The truck's hood was open, and a step stool was on the ground.

"So?" She looked from the guys to the truck back to the guys. "Are we stranded? Has anyone spotted a rescue crew yet? Do I need to fix this thing myself?"

Dylan laughed. "I don't doubt for a second that you could do it if you tried, Doc. But good morning. It's good to see your pretty face."

She resisted the urge to mess with her hair. She didn't need a mirror to know it was a disaster. A shower would be a blessing. And coffee. And a change of clothes. And coffee.

But being called pretty? She did like that.

Lucas was smiling at her too, his dark eyes warm. “Dylan’s fixing Bubba. We should be on our way to coffee in no time.”

A man after her own heart. She watched as Dylan swaggered over to the driver’s door and leaned inside. He fiddled with something, and suddenly the engine roared to life.

She did a spontaneous dance of triumph. They weren’t going to die alone in the desert, eaten by vultures. Not that she’d believed they would. Or maybe her logical brain hadn’t believed it, but she’d still been a little worried...

“So what was wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing but basic chemistry.” Dylan left the engine idling and came over to Brooklyn.

He slipped an arm around her waist. It felt so natural and friendly that she didn’t feel even a tiny bit uncomfortable.

In fact, she liked it when he touched her.

“Vapor lock’s when the vehicle gets so hot that the gasoline boils in the lines before it gets to the carburetor.

Once everything cools down, the engine will usually start right up.

In this case, I didn’t even have to put any fuel in the carburetor to get the process rolling.

Bubba just started right up like a beast.” He smiled down at her and had the audacity

to tap her nose.

“And to answer that question you’re not asking, yes.

We probably could’ve been out of here a few hours ago. But I was sleeping and so were you.”

Brooklyn opened her mouth to say something, but no words came out.

His green eyes were mesmerizing. He looked so puckish.

Good God, that was a word she could safely say about him and one she’d never considered using in casual conversation.

Yet, it totally applied. The guy was incorrigible, and she loved it. He was also fun.

She desperately needed fun in her life.

“Shall we head back?” Lucas prompted from her other side.

“Yeah,” she said, grinning at them, “but I’m driving.”

She didn’t pause long enough to give herself time to rethink how wise this was. She felt as if her fourteen-year-old self had suddenly taken over. The girl who used to ride fast and hard, loving the speed and the wind in her hair.

Both men looked stunned.

“Are you okay with a clutch?” Dylan asked.

Brooklyn didn’t bother to answer. She used the step to climb into the driver’s seat and

turned around to grab her helmet. “You’d better get the back closed, or I’m going to scatter your makeshift tent all over this desert!”

Now they were grinning, but they did as she ordered. Good.

Brooklyn felt like a million bucks as the engine rumbled away. No. She felt alive . That’s what this was. Reckless, maybe. Excited, definitely. She didn’t care. For the first time in so long, she felt alive, and she loved every second of it.

The men piled into Bubba. Brooklyn felt for the clutch and put the truck in gear.

Thank God her legs were long. She needed every inch of them to shove that clutch to the floor with her boot.

But once the truck was in gear, she was good to go.

It was like riding a bike. And she was so ready to enjoy every second of this.

“Well now,” Lucas said from the passenger seat. Dylan was in the middle, pressed up against her side. “I’m excited to see what kind of skills Dr. Brooklyn really has.”

“Better hold on tight, boys,” Brooklyn urged as she headed straight for the spot where the trail plunged over the other side of the plateau before heading down to the flats below. “It’s going to be a rough ride!”

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Bubba the Bronco went roaring down the homestretch between the flats and the club yards trailing a plume of dust at least a hundred yards long. A dune buggy and a side by side raced with them, nipping at their heels.

Lucas gripped the “oh shit” handle anchored to the dashboard and tried to decide why he couldn’t stop grinning.

Not that Dylan was much better off. He’d been letting out huge whoops of excitement for the last two hundred yards or so that only seemed to egg their driver on.

A driver who had left any semblance of the reserved neurologist behind on top of that desert plateau.

The main club buildings were in sight. Brooklyn finally slowed to the fifteen miles per hour demanded by the parking yard signs. A couple of the other racers were standing around filming them on their phone cameras, and others were cheering her on.

She skillfully maneuvered the dust-covered Bubba back into his parking spot in reverse. Then she pulled off her helmet and sat there behind the wheel with a serene expression on her face. Her hair was tousled, her cheeks were pink, and those blue eyes were no longer the least bit icy.

“Damn, woman!” Dylan said. “That kicked ass. I should be asking you to join my off-road racing team. You can borrow Bubba anytime you want. He definitely likes you.”

Brooklyn grinned at him. “Maybe I’ll just buy my own off-road machine and kick your ass.”

“Doc, you can kick my ass whenever you want.”

She laughed and shook her head. “You’re something else. You know that?”

“Guess I’ve suspected that for a long time,” Dylan said, his face turning solemn. “It’s good other people are finally starting to figure out how amazing it is to be me.”

Lucas left them to their banter and hopped out of the truck. He pulled off his helmet and ran a hand through his sweaty hair. He hadn’t felt this dirty in years. The thought of a hot shower seemed like pure heaven right now.

Brooklyn seemed to feel the same way. She walked around the front of the truck. When she slapped at her racing uniform, a cloud of dust filled the air. One of the other racers was still filming her with his camera phone as a few of the racers headed into the club.

“You were amazing out there!” the guy shouted. “How did that feel?”

She pumped her fist and shouted, “It felt fucking awesome!”

The male racers all laughed and cheered before heading inside. Brooklyn looked absolutely tickled pink by their enthusiasm and acceptance. Even with her hair a wild mess, she was stunning. And right now, he found her absolutely endearing and completely beautiful.

“Dirty is a new look for you,” he said with a grin.

She snorted. “You look filthy too, Mr. Fox. Except I’m the one looking filthy on

camera.”

“Hey, let’s not get too formal. I’m saying I like it. Dirty is good.”

Brooklyn met his eyes. He felt heat stir between them.

She really did have gorgeous eyes. Everything about her was beautiful.

Special. Amazing. His opinion of her was so different than it had been only a week ago.

Hell, different than it had been at the fundraiser.

He’d known she was driven, skilled, dedicated, and all of that, but he’d seen a completely new side of her. And he loved it.

Dylan pulled off his helmet and headed toward the clubhouse. “Damn, I need a shower. Anyone else feeling a little grimy?”

“We were just talking about that.” Brooklyn made a low sound in her throat and touched a tangled lock of her blonde hair. “I’m pretty sure this is turning to dreads as we speak.”

“Tell you what,” Dylan said. “Let’s skip the clubhouse and hit my cabin instead.”

“You live out here? In the middle of nowhere?”

“Hell, yeah. I love the desert. Besides, I’m a club manager. I mentioned yesterday that I live on site. When I’m not racing, I’m out here every second of every day doing something. It’s easier for me to live here.”

“So, you would’ve been the one called out to rescue someone trapped out on the course last night if it hadn’t been you already out there?”

“Exactly. I think... Wait, can you say that again?”

They headed into the club to get their clothes and left after Dylan talked a little with one of the employees and some of the racers.

Back outside, Dylan led them away from the clubhouse toward a low-slung cedar building behind the yard.

He lengthened his stride up the front walk and reached for the screen door of the little “cabin.”

Lucas hadn’t forgotten their kiss earlier.

With his green eyes sparkling and his swaggering gait, Dylan was so full of life that Lucas couldn’t help but admire that fierce joie de vivre .

He’d never been this attracted to his previous male lovers.

But it wasn’t just Dylan either. Brooklyn might’ve stolen a piece of his heart last night when she’d trusted them enough to open up about the loss of her brother.

He’d been deeply touched by that. He knew it couldn’t have been easy.

He wanted her. He wanted Dylan. But maybe this was another effect of Dylan’s zest for living, for experience, for fun and excitement.

Maybe you never had to choose between two equally great things.

Perhaps you could have everything that life had to offer and more if you were only brave enough to ask for it.

Wasn't that exactly what Lucas wanted? The best of everything? And in his mind, that meant Brooklyn and Dylan. He wouldn't settle for anything less.

"This place is cute," Brooklyn said as she stepped into the snug dwelling. "You've even got a fireplace."

"Cute?" Dylan said, smirking. He set his helmet aside and was already stripping out of his suit right there in the foyer. "I like to call it rustic. It sounds manlier."

She laughed. "Guys are all the same."

"There's nothing the same about the two of us, beautiful," Lucas told her, his voice solemn as he met her gaze. "We're two in a million."

Dylan joined in right on cue, passion in his eyes as he looked at Brooklyn. "And to us, you're worth far more than that, Doc."

Lucas's need for her, for the both of them, had deepened into an ache that couldn't be denied. The ache was in his groin, and it was in his chest. He knew he could satisfy the ache in his groin easily enough. He'd been doing it all his life with plenty of other women and men.

But the ache in his chest? He suspected that ache could only be satisfied by having these two people belonging to him.

As he would belong to them.

Brooklyn opened her full lips to say something, but they were both distracted by

Dylan, who was busily stripping down.

This room wasn't really a foyer exactly.

It was more of a mudroom, complete with benches and hooks for just this purpose.

As Dylan peeled off his gear and his muscular chest came into view, Lucas found himself doing the same and stripping down.

Brooklyn was watching them both with wide eyes.

He bit back a grin. He wanted to give her a show, the way his naughty doctor had stirred his cock yesterday with her brazen change in the club locker room.

"The best thing about this cabin," Dylan told Brooklyn in a casual tone of voice, "is the shower. The original caretaker was into DIY projects. He went to town on the bathroom."

Brooklyn bit her lip uncertainly. "It's going to take a lot of hot water to handle three showers in a row."

Dylan kicked off his boots and stepped out of his suit. He was wearing nothing but a pair of fitted boxer briefs made of some smooth fabric that hugged his perfect ass.

Lucas felt desire tightening inside him.

Seeing Dylan half-naked was almost too much.

Especially after that kiss they'd shared.

Forget the gasoline in the fuel lines. Right now, Lucas felt like his blood might boil in

his veins, and his heart was pounding so hard he could feel the pulse in his neck.

He turned to Brooklyn. She was watching Dylan, her lips parted, her pretty blue eyes a little dazed with lust. He loved it. He loved the sight of her aroused. He could feel himself getting hard just imagining what it would be like to kiss her.

He lost the last bit of his iron control. Watching her, wanting her, was too much. She was too beautiful. He moved to her side. She turned and blinked up at him. Her head tilted. Her eyes were wide and heated with desire.

Lucas took a cue from Dylan and didn't say a word.

No fancy words of love. No dirty talk. He simply drew her into his embrace, slowly, watching her with an intensity that wouldn't let him miss an instant.

If she had drawn back from him or frowned or shown the slightest hint that she didn't want this, he would've backed off immediately.

But she didn't. She sipped in a little gasp of air, but her lips parted even more. She closed her eyes as he moved in for the kiss, her body melting against his.

Her lips were sweet and full. The kiss was all the heaven he had hoped for. He deepened the kiss even more, pulling her tighter against him. Letting her feel the steel shaft of his cock. Letting her know how aroused he was. Because of her. Because of Dylan.

She moaned against him. He loved the sound—a mix of contentment and need that drew an answering groan from him.

The kiss finally ended. They slowly drew back. He opened his eyes to see her beautiful face. She smiled up at him. He could feel her heart pounding in her chest.

Dylan was watching them. He didn't say anything either, but a glance at his groin showed the clear outline of his hard cock jutting against the fabric of his boxers.

When Brooklyn looked that way too, she drew in another quick breath.

The sexual tension between the three of them electrified the air.

"Damn, you two," Dylan said, his voice husky with need. "That was fucking hot." Then he gave them a dirty grin. "What I meant to say before losing my ability to speak while watching you two go at it was that the shower can fit three easily."

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Lucas felt Brooklyn trembling against him. But it wasn't fear. It was desire. "Three of us...?"

He leaned down and kissed her ear and whispered. "We both want you, Brooklyn. More than anything. Let us make you feel like a goddess."

Her breathing was unsteady, and she clutched him tightly, but she did manage to nod. That was all the encouragement either of them needed.

Lucas drew back a little. Enough to kick off his boots and finish stripping out of his gear. She watched him as she'd watched Dylan, her big eyes shining with desire too hot to be put into words.

Once Lucas was down to his boxers, his cock straining against the fabric, he glanced Dylan's way. "I think she likes what she sees."

Dylan met his gaze. "Damn right. Now help me coax our little hellion out of her suit. I haven't been able to get her sweet body out of my mind."

Brooklyn licked her lips and watched as Dylan slowly unzipped the front of her suit.

Lucas gently tugged the sleeves down over her arms and began to peel the thick fabric away from her damp skin.

Right now, he was so turned on that he didn't miss the smells of perfumes, the fake scents and floral nonsense.

Brooklyn was real to the core and all the more stunning for it.

“So beautiful,” Dylan whispered before he cupped her face in his hands and took her mouth in a deep, intoxicating kiss.

Her moan of surrender sent a rush of blood straight to Lucas’s groin. He’d never been so turned on so quickly in his life.

Lifting her right hand to his lips, Lucas kissed her palm and then began kissing his way up her arms toward the center of her body.

He took up position behind her and gently lifted her hair away from her neck.

Even as Dylan made love to her mouth, Lucas kissed her shoulders and her spine.

He gently unfastened her bra, and she gave a little whimper as the straps fell down her arms.

The two of them stripped her naked with a precision that made it seem as though they’d been a team forever.

Cupping her breasts from behind, Lucas gently thumbed her nipples into tight little points just before Dylan’s mouth left her lips and began to suck lightly at her breasts. The sensation of Dylan’s tongue rasping over Lucas’s fingers was erotic beyond endurance.

Lucas’s cock was pushing at his underwear, and he could not resist the urge to press it against Brooklyn’s soft backside.

He wanted her. He wanted Dylan. Nothing else in life would satisfy him.

Dylan knew he had to move fast. If he didn't, they were going to wind up fucking right here in the mudroom, and that wasn't what he had in mind at all.

He forced himself to let go of Brooklyn's delightful breasts. Reaching for Lucas, Dylan kissed him over Brooklyn's shoulder and felt her watching every second with utter fascination. Then Dylan pulled away and looked at them both.

"Let's get in the shower. The three of us. I don't care how long this lasts. An hour. A year. A decade. Right now, I want to see you both wet."

He heard Brooklyn's breathless laugh as he led the way through his cabin toward the master bathroom.

His bedroom was a bit of a disaster, but at least the bed was clear.

The sheets were rumpled, but he'd washed them a day ago.

And yeah, there were jeans and clothing dumped on the floor, but hell, sometimes you missed when you kicked them at the hamper.

Dylan didn't care about the mess. He only cared about getting these two under the hot water with him.

He hadn't been exaggerating about the master bath either.

The place looked like it should be in some five-star hotel—complete overkill for the rest of the cabin, but he wasn't complaining.

The shower was a walk-in style shower. It had a ten by twelve area of space with marble, built-in benches, and showerheads lining all four sides.

Even Lucas looked like he approved. And that was coming from the rich guy.

“Oh, God,” Brooklyn whispered as she followed him inside the cool interior. There were skylights to provide natural light. Throwing her head back, she stared up at the ceiling. “It’s beautiful.”

“No, baby.” Dylan noticed that she’d peeled off her panties somewhere on the way to the bedroom. Her pubic thatch was just a narrow, sexy strip of dark blonde hair trimmed down until it was no more than an invitation. “ You are beautiful. We’re the luckiest bastards in this city.”

“And that’s saying something,” Lucas said roughly as he wrapped his arms around Brooklyn and took her mouth in another passionate kiss.

Dylan turned on the water, the spray and mist starting out a little bit cold and quickly warming. He watched the water bead on his lovers’ bodies as it soaked their hair. Black and blonde, the perfect contrast.

Brooklyn’s hair darkened beneath the water and stretched down her sleek back.

Dylan had to make himself leave just long enough to hurry into the bedroom and grab the box of condoms from his nightstand.

He had no doubt they were going to need a bunch of them.

As an afterthought, he grabbed the lube as well.

By the time Dylan got back inside the shower, the steam was rising toward the exhaust fans near the skylights, and Brooklyn was on her knees before Lucas with his cock between her lips.

Dylan groaned as he watched. He nearly dropped his handful of fun accessories as he watched her bob her head enthusiastically to let Lucas's cock slide in and out of her mouth.

The groan that slipped out of his mouth was pure lust. He was never going to forget that sexy sight.

Now he was eager to join the fun.

Setting the condoms and lube aside, Dylan entered the shower and knelt beside Brooklyn.

She turned to look at him with surprise, but her blue eyes grew wide when he ducked beneath Lucas and used his tongue to stroke Lucas's sac.

The low moan of pleasure from Lucas told Dylan he had it just right.

Lucas buried his fingers in Dylan's wet hair as well as Brooklyn's.

She didn't remain surprised for long. She whimpered and squirmed as she began sucking even harder at Lucas's cock. Wondering just how much she liked the sight of him sucking Lucas's balls, Dylan slipped his hand between her splayed legs and teased his fingers into her wet pussy.

Brooklyn moaned. The low, erotic noise made Dylan's cock jerk and throb. She shuddered against his hand as he gently fondled her silky wet folds. She wasn't just wet. She was soaking, and he knew it wouldn't take much more to bring her release.

He loved the sight of her lost in passion. He wanted more of it. Dylan let the pad of his finger stroke her clit with quick flicks that sent her rising toward her first climax. The first of many in Dylan's mind.

She drew back from Lucas's cock as her orgasm took her. She cried out and shuddered around him, grabbing his hand with both of hers and holding it still as she trembled there, eyes closed, water running down her lean body.

He could not wait to see just how hot Dr. Brooklyn was when she really let loose.

When she had ridden out the most intense waves of pleasure, Dylan rose and kissed Lucas's flat stomach.

"Have a seat on the bench," he told Lucas. "Our pretty doctor needs a cock in her pussy. Don't you, sweetheart?"

She half opened her eyes, a slow smile on her lips. She was still breathing hard.

He gave her some time to recover as Lucas sat his perfect body on the bench. Dylan reached for a condom and ripped the package open with his teeth.

His hands were trembling as he sheathed Lucas's thick erection in latex.

He could feel Brooklyn watching them with hungry eyes.

There was no doubt that she loved every second of seeing Dylan and Lucas touching.

When Dylan took her hand and gently positioned her over Lucas, he could see the barely restrained desire in both of them.

That passion only heated his blood all the more.

"You ready?" he whispered in her ear, his words barely above the sound of the water.

She could only nod.

With one hand, Dylan gripped Lucas's thick shaft. With the other, he eased her down.

"That's it," Dylan murmured as he helped her lower herself on the thick shaft that Lucas offered. "Does it feel good, sweetheart?"

"God, yes !" She moaned and began to rock and grind herself against Lucas.

Dylan knelt between Lucas's legs. His lover was already holding Brooklyn's narrow waist with his hands to guide her rhythm, but Dylan wanted her to come without triggering Lucas's orgasm. Not yet. Not when Dylan needed to be inside him so badly.

Wedging his shoulders between their tangled legs, Dylan unerringly found her clit with his fingers.

He was very careful because he knew she'd be sensitive.

But he reveled in the sensation, feeling the intimate place at which their bodies were joined.

Feeling the sexy slide of cock into pussy as Brooklyn took everything Lucas had to give her.

Dylan let his lips toy lightly with her breasts, nipping her sensitive flesh and driving her even higher toward climax.

Her body was slick with water, and her pussy was drenched in her juices.

She gasped, the sound echoing off the tile walls as she came with all of the ferocity of a wild thing bent on satisfaction.

Brooklyn was reeling from a second mind-blowing orgasm so close to the first. The pleasure was overwhelming.

She was high on desire and sex and satisfaction.

Right now, she was so fiercely happy that she'd taken this chance that she couldn't even speak even if she'd the breath to try.

She wanted this. This intimacy. This love.

She felt so absolutely, relentlessly alive for the first time in so very long.

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The sight of Lucas and Dylan kissing had been enough to make her near crazy with lust. Pleasuring Lucas with Dylan had been an incredible experience.

Now she had one man's hand on her pussy and another's cock buried deep inside her, and she was spoiled.

Completely spoiled. Nothing else would ever compare.

As she ground her body sinuously against Lucas's, riding out the pulsing tremors of her orgasm, she felt more aware of herself as a woman than she ever had before.

Dylan stood and gently cupped her face in his hands. "Would you like to watch me fuck Lucas?"

The suggestion painted hot, erotic images in Brooklyn's mind.

She did want that. She'd already come twice.

Now she wanted to take a breather and watch them enjoy each other in the hot mist of water surrounding them.

She planted her feet on the tile and stood on shaky legs.

Lucas's thick cock, still rock hard, slipped free of her pussy, and she felt a vague sense of loss to not have him inside her anymore.

But Dylan's cock bobbed before her. His erection was huge. She reached for him,

gently stroking the velvet-soft skin stretched taut around his shaft. He groaned at the contact.

Lucas stood behind Brooklyn and gently kissed her neck. His lips were a pleasurable tickle, his breath whispering in her ear. “I know you said you wanted to watch, love. But can you take any more? I’m already missing that sweet pussy.”

The heaviness of Lucas’s cock brushed against her backside.

Brooklyn’s mind spun in so many directions.

She thought of how many incredible ways they could enjoy one another.

Having them both at the same time, one in her pussy, one in her ass.

Watching them fuck each other. Sucking one of them as the other man took her hard and fast.

“You can have me any way you want, Lucas,” Brooklyn whispered hoarsely. At this moment, she belonged only to them. “You both can.”

She eased herself down on the clean marble tiles, stretching sinuously because she knew they were watching her move.

She felt sexy and desirable as the water flowed around her body and the water-warmed tiles kissed her back.

She didn’t know how much more of this she could take, but like driving the truck this morning, she was going to give it every bit of her heart.

Lucas was almost shaking with need—his heart slamming, his cock throbbing—as he

watched Brooklyn surrender so completely. There was no hesitation in her as she spread her thighs in invitation. She let her hand gently slide across her mound as her fingers toyed with her folds.

“Baby, you are fucking breathtaking,” Dylan growled, voice rough with need. “Later today, I’m going to fuck that pussy so hard I’ll stamp my name on it. Is that clear?”

Brooklyn turned her head to look up at him with a wicked smile. “Oh my, Mr. Pierce,” she said, her voice breathy. “Such dirty talk.” Her eyes flashed. “I’m all yours. I told you both. Any way you want.”

That invitation was music to Lucas’s ears. He knelt between her legs and let his aching cock hover deliciously close to her body but not touching her. Not yet. The water was like a shallow river around them. There was something so incredibly erotic about that. The water. The three of them.

He braced his hands on either side of Brooklyn’s body and lowered his mouth to hers. She tangled her hands in his hair and met his tongue with hers.

The feel of her mouth was so intoxicating that Lucas almost didn’t notice when Dylan’s hands spread his ass cheeks.

There was only pleasure when his lover began to work a cool gel lubricant into the tightly puckered ring of muscle.

Lucas moaned at the contact, groaning against her lips.

Brooklyn sucked his tongue, and Lucas hungrily devoured her mouth.

Lucas slid the tip of his cock down her slit until he was at the right angle.

Then he eased his hips forward, his cock entering her warm sheath.

He groaned in pleasure as he sank deep into her.

Behind him, Dylan pushed his finger into Lucas's entrance to begin stretching him in preparation for his cock.

"God, you're tight," Dylan said roughly. "You're going to be so good. Do you feel this? This right here, Lucas. This is going to make you come so hard."

The words were like a whisper in his mind.

Lucas felt the pressure of Dylan's fingers gently sliding past a spot deep inside his body that made him want to grunt and spill his seed right then and there.

The friction was driving him crazy with need.

Then Dylan's hand retreated to be replaced by his cock.

The pressure was intense. Then Brooklyn dug her nails into Lucas's shoulders, and he thrust reflexively into her. The feel of her dampened the urge to lose control and surrender to his climax. Lucas regained control, exhaled and relaxed.

That relaxation allowed Dylan's erection to slide deeply into him. The three of them were joined, and Lucas felt as if he were full to bursting with desire and pleasure.

He focused again on Brooklyn, on the challenge of making her climax one more time and leaving her utterly sated and exhausted. It was a struggle to keep control of his need to climax, but he fought against the nearly overwhelming buildup of pleasure.

Dylan's cock made it harder for Lucas to keep control as he began to pound against

Lucas's ass.

The intensity and friction rose higher and higher.

Brooklyn began to pant and moan, eyes closed, wet hair splayed around her.

She was close. Her pussy grew deliciously tight, her body clamping down hard just before she gifted Lucas with the hottest orgasm he'd ever felt in a woman.

It was too much. Lucas lost the battle for control. He shoved his cock deep into Brooklyn and spilled every drop of what he had to give.

He felt Dylan deep inside his ass. The muscles in his anal passage clenched and released, the undulating waves feeling not unlike what he knew Brooklyn was experiencing right now.

The fullness of the moment seemed to stretch on forever, even though it was only a second or two. Then Dylan gently pulled his cock free of Lucas's hole. The three of them sprawled on the floor of Dylan's shower in the mist and steam as though they would never rise again.

"See?" Dylan said hoarsely, wiping water out of his eyes. "There's still hot water. What did I tell you?"

Brooklyn giggled. The sound was beautiful, and Lucas reached out to take her hand in his.

They were all sated and lazy as they got to their feet again and slowly began to lather each other up with soap and wash themselves clean. It was tender. Their motions were gentle and caring. It was intimacy on a different level, but in his mind, no less powerful.

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Two weeks later...

Hands down, this had been the wildest couple of weeks of Dylan's life.

Every moment Brooklyn wasn't at the hospital or Dylan wasn't on the track or Lucas wasn't in some boardroom playing with investments, the three of them were together.

They'd gone to classy restaurants. Brooklyn had even managed to get him into a damn tux.

They'd gone to shows on the strip. They went to a movie where Lucas rented the entire theater just for them.

Meanwhile, Dylan had been teaching both of them the finer tricks of off-road racing.

Last weekend, they'd spent even more time at the club and his cabin.

The other racers had accepted Lucas, but they really took to Brooklyn. She was a club favorite.

Horny bastards , Dylan thought with a smirk as he was lying there on his bed. They're lucky I'm not a jealous man .

But he had to admit, he had a lot for others to be jealous of. He turned his head and watched as a naked and beautiful Brooklyn rolled from her back to her belly and gave a languid stretch.

“I can safely say I’ve never used up an entire box of condoms in one weekend,” she said with one of those naughty grins he adored. “That’s a personal best.”

Dylan was sure that if she kept moving with that incredible dancer's grace, he was going to have to start digging to find more condoms.

The three of them were sprawled on the king-sized bed.

Several empty pizza boxes were stacked on the dresser.

It was pretty handy to have a man like Lucas around after all.

When normal delivery companies refused to come way out to the middle of the sticks to deliver a few pizzas, Lucas Fox quickly made them change their minds with a couple of added zeroes to the total and gigantic tips.

“Chinese,” Lucas announced suddenly. “What do you think about that? I know a great place that delivers.”

Brooklyn laughed and used her right foot to nudge Lucas’s bare ass. “Much as I hate to hide your cute butt, how about we put on clothes and go out again?”

Lucas reached over and stroked Brooklyn’s blonde hair. “You want to leave during our sexy weekend marathon? I’m not sure I want to let either of you out of my sight.”

“Well, not for good,” Brooklyn hedged. Something about her grin made Dylan feel like a million bucks.

He hadn’t seen any signs of the cold, clinical neurologist professional since the party he’d crashed.

She was full of smiles and laughter and so damned willing in bed that Dylan was already in love with her.

“But you know, we could go out and then come back here, and it would be like starting over again. You know, with the undressing and everything. I could maybe do a striptease. I was a dancer, remember.”

“You definitely have my attention,” Lucas said, those dark eyes intense.

Brooklyn scrambled upright and swung her legs over the side of the bed. “That’s it. It’s settled. We’re going out!”

“Can you deny her?” Lucas asked him in a voice filled with warm humor. “Because I can’t.”

Dylan was already getting out of bed. “I know a place. It’s not far. The food isn’t amazing, but it’s outside the city and caters to people passing through on their way to and from Vegas.” He shrugged. “Hey, it’s hot and there’s a lot.”

“Sounds good enough.” Lucas stretched and rose from the bed. At least Lucas wasn’t stuck up about food, needing five-star cuisine or something. The guy continually surprised him.

Seeing Dylan watching him, Lucas caught him around the waist and reeled him in for a light kiss. “Thank you, Dylan. Really. You have no idea how much these past couple of weeks have meant to me.”

Dylan and tossed him a salute. But he wondered if Lucas realized just how different things were going to be from now on. You could not have an experience like this without it changing you. One way or another.

“Okay, so who’s driving?” Brooklyn called from the front of the cabin. “I vote that Dylan drives.”

Dylan pulled on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. “Hell, yeah! I’m still the best here. I’ll get us there in no time.”

Brooklyn narrowed her eyes with warning. “Just don’t wreck us rushing to get cheeseburgers.”

He put on an expression of mock outrage. “It’s not called wrecking. It’s called ‘unconventional driving.’”

Now she was glaring at him. “Is it too late to change my answer? Because I specifically remember treating you after you rolled your trophy truck, bucko.”

Lucas smirked. “She has you there, Dylan.”

He knew when he was beaten. He promised to keep all four wheels on the road and that seemed to placate her.

They were a motley crew as they hurried from the cabin and to Dylan’s crew cab pickup truck.

This was his street vehicle—Bubba was for off-road play, and his trophy truck was being repaired.

The pickup was about as workhorse as it got.

He always felt a moment’s hesitation, a sudden fear that this wasn’t a good enough ride for someone like Lucas Fox, whose flashy Bugatti drew plenty of attention parked in front of the clubhouse.

But Lucas and Brooklyn never said an unkind word about his truck as they piled in.

During the ride, the talk was comfortable and casual, as it always was between them. They lapsed into silence as the sunset colors began to light the indigo sky with swaths of bright orange and fiery pink.

Dylan felt more content than he ever had.

He couldn't put his finger on exactly what it was.

Something... An invisible aura that enveloped the three of them in a wonderful glow of companionship that felt so natural it was almost too good to be true.

Hell, listen to him. He sounded like he'd fallen head over heels... and maybe he had.

He didn't know how this had all come together so quickly and perfectly over these last couple of weeks, but damn it all, he wasn't going to give it up for any reason in the world.

Lucas lounged in the backseat of the truck, watching the sunset as the radio played.

He was idly thinking back over all that had happened.

He was also thinking about the next steps, planning and strategizing for the future.

He needed to understand how this would work if it really and truly became life .

This threesome. These two incredible people.

How could he protect it against all the challenges life would throw their way?

Especially Brooklyn. He felt very protective of her.

They had not talked of her lost brother since that first night together, but her words didn't fade in his mind.

He wanted to be worthy of her trust, just as any good man would want to be worthy of the woman he loved.

And if this wasn't love, it was damned close to it.

So much so that the lines had blurred in so very short a time.

His smartphone chimed. He pulled it out and glanced at it.

It was another voicemail message from Dr. Gibson, this one saying there had been significant developments in the head trauma center project.

He sighed and didn't bother to listen to it.

He never should've given the guy his personal number.

That had been a mistake. The chief of staff had been pestering him with requests for funding for the trauma center almost non-stop.

He intended to fund it, but it was irritating being leaned on so hard.

Brooklyn glanced at him and saw him staring at his phone. "Anything important?"

"Dr. Gibson. Probably another request to meet about a platinum-tier donation." He glanced at her.

“One question I’ve meant to follow up on.

Wouldn’t funding your hospital ER directly accomplish basically the same result as a new trauma center?

I mean, if ER had all the tools and personnel it needed.

That’s where you and Dylan met, correct? ”

“That’s right,” Brooklyn said. She turned sideways in the passenger seat so she could look back at him.

“When Dylan came in with a tagged injury—someone who had experienced a situation that often results in a higher instance of head trauma—they called me, and I went to have a look. But realistically, that only happens when I’m on duty or another specialist is available.

If there was an actual center, it would become part of the emergency room protocol.

Everyone who had a tagged injury would have immediate access to those specialist services and care.

Statistics have shown this lowers the number of post-concussion syndrome cases and increases the number of patients who go on to have little to no long-term effects. ”

Dylan tapped the steering wheel. “So, does this mean I’m past the danger point for head trauma?”

Brooklyn reached over and put a hand on his shoulder.

“This means even a neurologist has to realize that patients have to live their own

lives. I just... I don't want any other family to go through what my family did with Colin.

Part of this center would be about education.

I'm talking ads and having resources to visit schools and talk to kids.

If someone had told me that it would be possible for my brother to just die after that crash when I thought Colin was fine, we might've told our parents about the accident. It's education and not only treatment."

This was truly a calling that touched very close to home for her.

He couldn't begin to imagine what she had gone through.

Losing someone close was always traumatic.

But a twin? Lucas had never had a brother, much less a twin.

"I think it's amazing that you've taken a personal disaster and tried to make the world a better place because of it. "

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“That’s right,” Dylan said with a glance in the rearview mirror at Lucas.

Then he turned and squeezed Brooklyn’s thigh affectionately.

“I know I usually sound like an ass, but I’d be willing to be part of any educational efforts you want to make, Doctor Beautiful.

I’d love it if you looked over our safety procedures and course materials at the club. ”

“Really?” Brooklyn looked surprised and deeply pleased. Watching the eager gleam in her eyes really did something to him.

He had always intended to fund the trauma center, but now it had become a lot more personal.

He wanted to make this woman happy.

Brooklyn felt like her head was spinning. She hadn’t expected so much support. Especially since she knew she came off as so intense about the issue that she was usually forced to dial it back with a cool professional demeanor.

“I can’t tell you how much it means to me that you’re both taking this seriously.”

“This doesn’t mean I’m wearing a helmet when operating a regular motor vehicle,” Dylan quipped. “I have to put my foot down somewhere.”

Dylan pulled off the highway into a gravel parking lot before a lodge building that

looked as if it had been here since miners and trappers had first settled the area.

Brooklyn began teasing Dylan about all the safety equipment she was going to buy for him to model for her educational ad campaigns and the helmet she was going to make him wear in the shower, in case he slipped.

Dylan seemed more than a little appalled at the thought. That made her laugh.

It seemed so surreal to think that they'd been casual and even nonexistent acquaintances two weeks ago.

But it was Sunday evening again. They had to go back to the real world tomorrow.

These stolen weekends when she didn't work were magical.

But the world of regular jobs and commitments and things that took them away from one another loomed on the horizon again.

"Enough about safety," Dylan finally griped. "Let's get some food."

"Spoken like a man after my own heart," Lucas agreed.

Both men grinned at each other, sharing one of those bro moments. Brooklyn watched the two of them and felt a warm glow of appreciation for these them both. They'd helped her melt a few layers of frost to discover her passion for life once again. She could never repay that favor.

A well of emotion bubbled up in her heart, and Brooklyn slipped her arm around Dylan's waist and Lucas's waist when they were out of the truck. It felt good to be between them.

The three of them headed for the building's entrance. It was cool inside and smelled of the most incredible French fries and the kind of cheeseburgers with bacon that could bring a strong man to his knees. Her stomach growled.

"I don't know if it's just because I'm starving or what," she said. "But it smells incredible. I might have to get my cholesterol checked tomorrow, but tonight will be worth it."

"Tonight," Dylan teased her, "we're all going to work off a million calories. And that's all I have to say about that."

They were still laughing together when Brooklyn's phone started ringing inside her little clutch purse. Ever mindful of the possibility of a patient needing her or a hospital emergency, Brooklyn politely excused herself and walked outside of the restaurant again.

She plugged her left ear and pressed the phone to her right to hear clearly. "This is Dr. Foster."

"Foster, I want to know what in the hell I'm watching right now!"

The voice was familiar, but it took her a second to place it. She didn't recognize Harvey Gibson's voice until he had launched into a tirade about some video footage that had been sent to him by a "concerned colleague."

"Mr. Gibson, I apologize, I don't understand what you're referring to," Brooklyn said quickly. Had he seen something on the hospital security cameras that upset him? If so, what could it be?

"Let me make this clear!" Gibson was practically shouting into the phone. "I'm watching a viral video of you getting out of a truck after speeding your way across

the desert! And then you got out—clearly you, Dr. Foster, clearly you —and you use blatant and offensive obscenities.”

The bottom dropped out of Brooklyn’s stomach.

She didn’t know what to say, so she blurted the first thing that came to mind.

“I was wearing a helmet and full safety gear, sir. As for swearing...” She tried to come up with an excuse and only got angry.

What was this? A convent? She couldn’t use a little rough language like the boys?

Only male doctors were allowed to curse? What kind of bullshit was this?

“It looks abominable,” Dr. Gibson snarled. “The whole thing is a PR disaster. I was told this filth has gone viral, embarrassing the hospital millions of times.”

Her heart was pounding at what felt like a thousand beats per minute. Her hand was shaking as her grip tightened down on her phone. A sick dread filled her stomach. She’d definitely lost her appetite.

“Mr. Gibson,” she said carefully. “I can explain everything—”

“I want you in here on Monday,” Gibson said. “We can discuss your candidate status for the new trauma center in detail then. I assure you, I have much to say.”

Her hand was shaking even more as she disconnected and put the phone back in her clutch purse.

Her brain felt full of cotton, her thoughts sluggish and unfocused.

She remembered being filmed. She remembered being caught up in the moment and shouting something.

But that had been on her own personal time.

How the hell had Gibson ever found that video?

Someone must have sent it to him. He'd mentioned a concerned colleague.

Her competition for the position, maybe?

He said it had gone viral. She didn't watch many videos online, so she didn't have much experience with what that meant exactly when it came to scope.

But right now, Dr. Harvey Gibson's threat was clear.

It had endangered her candidacy, her dream chance to run the trauma center, and Gibson had never been her best cheerleader in the first place.

She walked back inside on legs that felt like stilts. Both men were waiting for her. As soon as they saw her, their faces changed to nearly identical expressions of concern.

"What's wrong?" Dylan immediately asked when she reached them.

The hostess was waiting to seat them, watching them expectantly.

"I want to sit down," Brooklyn said, her voice sounding cold and detached to her own ears.

Lucas slipped an arm around her waist and her two men escorted her to the table. She sagged into the chair as a server brought them drinks.

When they were alone again, Lucas looked at her sharply. “What happened, Brooklyn?”

“I got videoed driving Bubba,” she said. “That morning after we got stuck out in the desert. Remember?”

“Hell, yeah, I remember that,” Dylan said. “You were awesome.”

But Lucas seemed to see the problem faster than Dylan. His lips thinned into a tight line, and his expression darkened. “Who saw the video?”

“Dr. Harvey Gibson,” Brooklyn replied.

Lucas let out a long exhale of breath.

Dylan only looked confused. “A doctor saw it? So what?”

She turned to explain. “He’s the chief of staff at the hospital. He doesn’t really want me to head the new trauma center. He doesn’t think I liaise and fundraise effectively enough. I’m not a good glad-handing schmoozer, in other words.”

“So it’s hospital politics bullshit?” Dylan asked, still looking a bit lost.

“Maybe. He thinks I’ve...I don’t know. Shamed myself and embarrassed the hospital.”

Lucas put his arm around her. “You’re the best candidate to head up this trauma center. He’ll see reason.”

“What if he doesn’t?” she asked in a quiet voice.

Lucas's dark eyes hardened. "He wants funding and donations for the trauma center, doesn't he? Maybe he needs the right person to discuss things with him."

"Or I could wreck his car," Dylan said, rubbing his chin. "What does he drive? I bet it's a Beemer."

Lucas snorted. "Don't waste your time, Dylan. Believe me, money talks with administrators. They're all the same."

Brooklyn didn't take her eyes off Lucas. She leaned forward, grabbing his hand. "Don't. Don't ever do that. This isn't about me. The city needs the trauma center. I don't want you holding out for me. I don't want any special treatment. I must earn this, or I don't deserve it."

"I admire that," Lucas said grimly. "But things don't always work that way in real life."

"Promise me you won't interfere."

He hesitated long enough for her to feel a spike of concern.

"Promise me."

"If that's what you want," Lucas finally said. "But I'm worried you're making a mistake."

"I'm not. Trust me on this. I can handle it."

Monday

“After this PR disaster,” Dr. Gibson said, his fingers steeped together as he stared at Brooklyn, “I think it’s best if we withdraw your candidacy to run NLVMC’s new traumatic brain injury center.”

Gibson was sitting behind his desk in his office. He watched her with those pitiless eyes. She knew he was judging her, seeing how she dealt with this blow.

“Sir,” she said. “I’m still the most dedicated and qualified candidate. I know this hospital. All the other candidates are from other parts of the country. I’ll help make our new center one of the leading ones in the nation. Imagine what that will do for our funding.”

She was playing her last card here. Trying to tempt Gibson into letting her have her shot at the top slot with the implied promise of better funding, bigger donors.

As final hopes went, it was pretty weak.

He had been against her from the beginning.

They had fundamentally different ideas of what was important in modern medical care.

She wanted to help and heal. Gibson paid more attention to bottom lines, profit margins, donors, fundraisers, and media events.

Dr. Gibson looked unimpressed by her plea.

“Unfortunately, I don’t think you are right for the position at this stage in your development, Dr. Foster.

That was shown very clearly when I viewed that video of your...

reckless joyride—” Dr. Gibson’s nostrils flared in outrage “—and your obscenity. I was forced to make a tough decision.”

“And you decided my private life, my personal fun , should disqualify me from consideration.” She was so angry she could barely talk. This was incredibly unfair.

“All factors of a candidate’s professional and personal life are evaluated when considering a candidate for promotion to this level.

Especially when it reflects upon the hospital.

This is part of your physician’s employment contract.

I’m sorry you are upset. You’re a valuable asset to this medical facility.

But for now, we will focus on what is best for the hospital. At this time, that is not you.”

She wanted to protest. To kick this up to the next level.

But she knew it would be impossible. Pushing it might make Dr. Gibson even more hostile toward her.

He could make her life and career difficult in a thousand different ways.

She didn't want to lose her position here. It meant too much to her.

So that was it. Her brief fling with wild fun, getting dirty and having a dirty mouth, had ended her chance at the position she desperately wanted. It was so stupid she could hardly believe it was really happening to her.

Dr. Gibson leaned forward, his face earnest. "I find this whole thing regrettable, Dr. Foster. But I know there's a path forward.

One where you continue to do what you do best—treat patients—and one where the hospital finds the perfectly rounded candidate we need to bring in donors and fundraising and keep North Las Vegas Medical Center untarnished in public opinion. That's all. Thank you."

Brooklyn nodded and left his office. Her legs felt numb. She had feared this since the call yesterday had interrupted their dinner. She had barely slept last night because she'd been so worried, and she'd done her best to hide that worry from Lucas and Dylan.

She desperately wanted to see them now, to talk with them, but she couldn't. She had work to do and patients who were counting on her.

Brooklyn held her head high as she left the administration offices to get back to what she did best. Helping her patients, the people who needed her. With all the gossip that would be flying around the hospital after this, she knew she needed to focus on what really mattered.

She'd had her fun. Now she had to act like a professional again no matter what the cost.

* * *

Dylan wasn't really a morning person, but this had to be the best morning ever.

He was standing in Lucas Fox's swanky high-rise office, holding a check in his hands. A check for two hundred grand. It was a sponsorship for him to turn pro.

He'd never been this close to that much money. Dylan had been living hand to mouth for most of his life. But this? This was a game-changer. It was a chance for him to achieve his dream.

"Don't usually see you speechless," Lucas said.

He sounded so casual about this. Of course, Lucas probably wrote checks for a hundred grand every other day. But this meant the world to Dylan.

"Things don't usually shock me like this," he finally managed to say. "Man, I don't even have any words."

Lucas stood from behind his desk and moved closer to Dylan. "I don't want this to be weird. You earned this. I don't need thank yous."

"To hell with that," Dylan said. He reached out to pull Lucas into an embrace. "Thank you."

Lucas laughed against him. "You don't follow directions well, you know that?"

"True. But damn, this is way more money than I need."

"It's not." Lucas seemed so off-hand and certain about this staggering amount of money. "You'll probably need more. The cost of going pro is significant, but this will get you started. If you need more, we'll sit down and talk about it."

He shook his head slowly. “Crashing that fancy party was the best idea I ever had.”

Lucas gave him a huge grin. “We agree on that. But I have a lot of faith in you. You’re a great driver. You’ve got excellent instincts and work ethic. I admire that. This is a sound investment.”

“I can’t wait to tell Brooklyn. What are we doing tonight anyway?”

Lucas’s lips curved into a smile, and his dark eyes lit up with pleasure. “Brooklyn suggested we meet at my place this evening. I think she likes the view.”

“Who wouldn’t? You can see the whole damn strip.” He paused, frowning, his thoughts shifting to the three of them and what they shared. “I want to make this work, Lucas. You feel that way too?”

“Yeah. I want this, you crazy bastard. I want Brooklyn and I want you, and I think the three of us can somehow make this work. It blows my mind to even imagine it. But it’s going to be amazing.”

“Hell, yeah.” He was beaming. He couldn’t help it.

He knew he looked like someone had just handed him two million bucks instead of two hundred grand.

But damn...two hundred grand! “I’m heading back out to the club to talk to my managers.

We’ll be pushing forward with the pro tour.

I’ll send you a business plan and a schedule.

And we'll need your company logo to add to the paint job too. ”

“Listen to you, sounding professional already,” Lucas said with obvious pleasure. “I can’t wait to see my name at the top of your sponsor list.”

Lucas’s smartphone began to chime. Dylan recognized the ringtone. It was the one Lucas used for Brooklyn’s calls.

“She has great timing,” Dylan said as Lucas pulled out his phone and answered.

“Hey, sweetheart.” Lucas’s eyes lit up with joy every time he was talking to Brooklyn. It always warmed Dylan’s heart to see it. “We were just talking about—”

He cut off and his expression darkened into a scowl.

Not good. Dylan’s stomach seemed to drop somewhere into his boots.

So much for this being the best morning ever.

Something told him the news from Brooklyn wasn’t good.

Last night, she’d been upset. Someone had videoed her driving Bubba.

He thought that was awesome—a sexy doctor who churned up dirt, racing in her free time?

Hell, yeah. But apparently one of her bosses or whatever had a stick shoved sideways up his ass about it.

“I see,” Lucas finally replied. If anything, his scowl had deepened. “I hope you know that’s complete bullshit.”

Dylan mouthed the words What happened? to Lucas when the man glanced his way, but Lucas only shook his head. He was focused on listening to her.

“Dylan’s here with me. You want us to come to see you? Moral support?”

From Lucas’s frustrated expression, she’d turned him down.

There was another long pause as he listened to her. Then he said, “We’ll see you tonight, Brooklyn.”

He disconnected and set the phone down in front of him.

“What happened?” Dylan asked quietly.

“That prick Gibson kicked her out of the running for the trauma center director because of that video of her racing around in Bubba.”

He ran a hand through his hair, feeling as if he’d been punched in the balls. “Shit. She’s losing her chance at her dream because of me.”

Lucas glanced at him, frowning. “Why do you say that?”

“It happened at my club. Those were racers at the place I work.”

“No one had any idea this would get back to some administrator with his tight-whities in a twist. Gibson wants one of his cronies to have the job. He’s wanted it from the start. He was looking for a reason not to give it to her from the beginning.”

“I feel terrible for her. What the hell are we going to do? There has to be a way to help her.”

A look of grim determination showed on Lucas's face. "There is. I'm going to call the board of directors. All of them. It's time to put my money where my mouth is."

Uh-oh. He didn't like where this was going. "Brooklyn begged you not to get involved. You promised."

"Brooklyn has pride. I get that. But she can't stand against this kind of bullshit alone.

No one can. I'm not going to sit idly by and watch a woman I love be passed over for her dream because some lickspittle administrator thinks she doesn't glad-hand donors well enough and wants his own buddy to have the job. "

Dylan began to grin. "So. I'm learning two big things out of this. First, you're going to go kick somebody's ass with a bankroll smackdown. Second, you love Brooklyn."

Lucas met his gaze, his handsome face dead serious. "I love her. I know myself well enough to understand the feeling, even if it hit me like tidal wave out of nowhere. And I'm going to do everything in my power for her."

Dylan felt warm right in the center of his chest. Like he'd downed a hot chocolate on a cold day.

"Sounds like you and me are on the same track. Because I love her too." He crossed his arms, grinning.

"And hell, it just so happens, I love you too. You know, since we're blurting this kind of stuff out right now. "

He threw that admission out there without fear. Life was wasted if you weren't bold. If you didn't pursue what you wanted. And Dylan knew exactly what he wanted.

Lucas stood from his chair and came around the big office desk. Dylan stood his ground, watching. Lucas slipped his arms around him and went in for the kiss. Dylan didn't submit, but he didn't dominate either, he simply kissed back with all he had. After all, they were equals.

As the kiss deepened, he could feel the other man's passion for him too. When Lucas finally drew back, a gentle smile graced his lips. Dylan looked deep into his eyes.

"I love you, too," Lucas said. "Now, let me fix this so the three of us can focus on what's important. Us."

Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:25 am

Brooklyn's shift was over, but not her nightmare.

It was twilight. She was sitting in her car in the parking lot, staring at her phone. There were voicemails and texts from Lucas and Dylan, but she hadn't glanced at any of them. She couldn't.

Late this afternoon, Dr. Harvey Gibson had summoned her back into his office.

No reason given. She'd been terrified that she was going to not only lose her chance at the promotion but lose her position at the hospital entirely.

Walking into his office for the second time that day had been one of the hardest things she'd faced in years.

This time it was as if she'd been caught in the Twilight Zone. Dr. Gibson was furious. She could tell by his eyes and the thin slash of his mouth. But what he'd said to her nearly floored her.

"Congratulations, Dr. Foster," he'd told her in a voice so polite it was nearly cracking under the strain. "I'll get right to the point. You will be the head neurologist and director running our new, fully funded traumatic brain injury center."

She stared at him, certain she'd misheard him. Or that he was playing some kind of cruel trick on her.

"I'm sorry...what?"

“The board of directors just let me know their decision. I apologize for any earlier confusion. You are the candidate they have chosen.” His cold eyes told her that she definitely wasn’t the candidate he’d wanted, and his barely suppressed anger told her how much he resented it. And her.

“When did this happen? I thought—”

“You are far better at glad-handing than I suspected. Nicely done. I’m not too proud to admit I’ve been outmaneuvered. You have powerful friends.”

Her heart was in her throat, but her stomach felt as if it had plunged three floors down. “What do you mean?”

But she thought she knew exactly what he meant.

“I mean your apparently extremely close friendship with Lucas Fox. He has agreed to fund the trauma center construction in full. Provided you run the center.” Again came that icy smile. “How could the board of directors turn that down?”

“I see...” She felt like she was all broken glass inside. In a way, she felt even worse getting what she’d wanted than she’d felt when Gibson had denied her any chance at it.

Because she hadn’t earned it. Lucas had used his money to solve the problem. To toss her a bone. This was something she’d pursued all her career, a culmination of a dream, and she had to rely on a billionaire to hand it to her.

Thank you so much, Lucas Fox.

Her anger and her sorrow deepened. First, they’d somehow lured her into that crazy nighttime ride into the desert...

and what in God's name had she been thinking?

It had been a complete lapse of sanity. Then she'd proven herself cognitively unsound by pretending she was a wild kid again and racing that big truck over the off-road track, only to have that bite her in the ass.

Thank you so much, Dylan Pierce.

So now she had zero desire to read a bunch of texts and calls from them, congratulating her on something she hadn't earned. Listening to those calls or reading those texts might even make her break down in tears. She would be an emotional wreck.

Like the responsible person she truly was, she waited until her hands stopped shaking before starting the car and leaving the hospital. She turned on the radio but didn't really hear any of the music. It was white noise. She was headed for Lucas Fox's condo. They were going to have dinner tonight.

The doorman let her into Lucas's luxury condo tower. The desk clerk signed her in. She stood there, letting them do their jobs, her mind a blank, but her emotions roiling inside her. They let her through. She walked through the fancy lobby to the fancy elevators and took one to the top floor.

This place was luxurious beyond belief, but she wasn't really seeing that either. Her head was throbbing. She could feel her pulse in her temples.

Lucas's door was unlocked. She didn't knock. She opened it and stepped inside.

"Congratulations!" Dylan and Lucas both yelled. They knew she was coming. The desk attendant notified them.

They both looked ecstatic, happy beyond words to see her. They were standing beneath a banner that said the same thing: Congratulations . The word opened a wound in her.

It didn't take long for either of them to see things were very wrong. There were no congratulations to be had.

"Brooklyn," Lucas said, moving across the big luxury condo toward her. "Talk to me. Tell me what's wrong."

"You know exactly what's wrong."

The ice in her words brought him up short. "Gibson told you."

"You're damn right he told me." But she didn't shout the words or even say them loudly. No, her voice came out as little more than a whisper. "I asked you... I begged you not to get involved. And you did anyway."

Dylan was frowning—a rare expression for his usually happy-go-lucky handsome face. "They were fucking you over, Brooklyn. What that guy was doing was bullshit—"

"So you both decided to fuck me over yourselves?" she said, still quietly.

"Everyone at the hospital will know I didn't earn that position.

" She clenched her fists, glaring at them.

"First, you trick me into sleeping in the desert after putting my life at risk. Then...I made a mistake and drove that stupid truck, and it cost me my chance at my dream job."

“That wasn’t a mistake,” Dylan said. “It wasn’t a trick, and your life was never at risk. You loved it. I know. I was there. I saw it. Don’t do this to yourself. Don’t retreat like this—”

“What do you want from me?” she snapped, her voice breaking. “I lost everything today!”

Lucas was watching her with hurt and sympathy in his eyes, and she hated that right now. She didn’t want or need his sympathy, damn him.

“I won’t stand by and watch them destroy you,” Lucas said. “I won’t apologize for standing up for you. Or for using my wealth to right the wrongs in the world. That’s what it’s there for. I won’t hesitate to protect the people I care about.”

She closed her eyes. A tear slipped down her cheek, and she turned her head away from them, hoping they wouldn’t see. She wanted to seem strong. She needed to be strong.

“I’m not one of your employees, Lucas,” she said. “I told you I wanted to handle it. You pulled strings with the board of directors and got them to choose me. I didn’t earn it. I didn’t beat out all the other candidates because I’m the best. No, you bought it for me.”

“You are the most qualified person for that job—”

“How would you know that? Simple. You don’t. You stuck your wallet in because you were listening to your cock instead of listening to me. You wanted what you wanted and damn the consequences.”

His expression darkened. “That’s not fair, Brooklyn. Not at all.”

“What’s fair about any of this? Nothing.

I never cared about your money. But you threw money at my problems— my problems—as if I’m some investment you were trying to turn around and make a profit on.

You want to sweep in and throw your money around, then sit back and be labeled a hero.

Was that what you wanted tonight? For me to fawn all over you and thank you for your gift ? ”

There. She’d said it. She’d spat out the poisonous words that had been burning inside her like acid since that second meeting with Dr. Gibson. She was breathing so hard she was practically panting. The pressure of tears behind her eyes was almost too much to bear.

“Brooklyn,” Lucas said, taking a step toward her. “Listen, I—”

She stepped backward. “I’m done listening. I’m done screwing around. I’m done acting like a little girl who thinks she can have everything. No. I’m done.”

She turned and headed for the door. Dylan called her name, desperation in his voice.

She didn’t answer. She didn’t pause or wait for them to catch her. That wasn’t the kind of woman she was. There would be no more games.

As she’d told them, she was done.

TBI Center Celebration Gala

Bellagio Ballroom, Las Vegas

Things moved fast. Lucas was used to getting results. It took five days after Brooklyn had walked out of his life for him and his army of assistants to organize and arrange this celebration event at the stunning Bellagio Hotel grand ballroom.

Still, as fast as that was, it felt like an eternity to him without Brooklyn.

Tonight, his foundation would present a check for the construction of the new traumatic brain injury center to the hospital. Celebrities were here. Politicians, local and state, were here. Prominent businessmen. Anyone and everyone important who could make it on short notice.

Why had Lucas insisted on throwing this event when he usually hated them? Simple. He desperately wanted to see Brooklyn again.

Nothing else mattered.

Beside him, Dylan pulled at the collar of his tuxedo and grimaced. "I hate these monkey suits."

"You look good in it, though," Lucas said distractedly. He was waiting impatiently for one of the attendants to text him when Dr. Brooklyn Foster arrived. Until she arrived, he would be on pins and needles. Hell, even after she arrived, he'd feel the same.

Not only would this be the first public announcement of his backing of the project, announcing dates for breaking ground and all of the usual ceremony, but it would be formally announced that Brooklyn was director for the new center.

He couldn't take back what he'd done. From the beginning, he'd promised he would fund this project. And Brooklyn was still the best in Nevada to run it. He believed that in his heart. But tonight, he was going to do everything in his power to make things right with her again.

Dylan glanced around uneasily. "She here yet?"

"Not yet. Be patient." But that was easier said than done, and he knew he was being a complete hypocrite. He wanted to see her so badly he could taste it.

This whole night was about her. Now he found himself desperately hoping she didn't blow it off because she was so furious with him. Because she couldn't forgive him.

Dylan had wanted to go to her and patch things up.

Lucas had wanted the same, but he wasn't as naive as Dylan, who never seemed to lose hope for an instant, no matter what.

Brooklyn wouldn't return their calls. They couldn't see her at the hospital.

Both times they had shown up at her place, she hadn't been home.

He didn't know if she was crashing at a friend's pad or what, but it was beyond clear that she was avoiding them.

Then again, he wasn't a man who let what he desired slip away easily. And this time, the stakes couldn't have been higher.

He wanted Brooklyn. She belonged with them. He would do anything to get her back.

Lucas spent his time waiting, chatting with the celebrities or business leaders who approached him, but he was utterly distracted. He couldn't remember a word any of them had said ten seconds after they went on their way again.

Finally, his smartphone buzzed. He pulled it out of his pocket and nearly dropped it, he was so eager to read the notification.

It was a text from an attendant at the front door. Dr. Foster has arrived.

He texted back his thanks and met Dylan's gaze. "She's here."

Dylan blew out a long breath and ran a hand through his hair. "Damn. I'm more nervous than I've ever been before a race. I hate this feeling."

"Same here."

He moved to the edge of the grand ballroom, a good distance from the main entrance.

He didn't want her to feel ambushed. She would know he was going to be here.

Dylan too. She had to be just as nervous as he was.

He felt bad about that. But not nearly as bad as he felt about letting her down.

He'd had a lot of time to think over what she'd said.

It seemed to take forever before Brooklyn appeared in the open doorway.

She was wearing a red evening gown that perfectly complemented her lean frame and

those graceful curves.

Her hair was pulled back in a French braid, as it had been the last time he'd seen her at one of these events.

She had a simple gold necklace around her elegant neck.

It looked good on her, but he had to fight back the urge to buy her more.

Diamonds, gold, platinum, whatever she wanted, and as much as she wanted.

He had to keep his urges in check. As much as he liked to show his feelings and love by buying nice things for the people he cared about, that willingness to throw money at what he wanted, be it problem or solution, was what had landed them here.

He wasn't going to make that mistake again. At least not until Brooklyn understood how much he loved her and gave him her trust again.

She didn't see either of them near the far wall. He wasn't surprised. There were hundreds and hundreds of people here, all milling about, and the grand ballroom was huge.

"She's beautiful," Dylan said simply from beside him.

"She's ours," he murmured back. "She just doesn't know it yet."

Dylan shook his head. "Hey, usually I'm the cock-eyed optimist, but this time...I don't know. I don't want her to go back to what she was before. She wasn't happy then."

"You're right." He took a deep breath and gathered his courage. "Now, let's go see

our girl and help her realize that.”

“I hope you brought kneepads,” Dylan shot back. “Because I got a feeling we’re going to be down on our knees and begging.”

Lucas smirked. “If that’s what it takes, I’ll do it.”

Dylan glanced at him, frowning. “In front of all these fat cats and glitterati? You got balls, and I admire that.” He rubbed his chin as he watched Brooklyn take champagne from one of the servers and move around the edge of the crowd. “I doubt she’d appreciate us making a big scene.”

“Maybe. Maybe not. But she’s worth it either way. Whatever she wants.”

“Yeah.” Dylan punched him on the shoulder. “Whatever she wants, man. I’m right there with you.”

Together, they made their way through the crowds of men in tuxedos and women in evening gowns. He nodded absently to the people who called out to him, but he didn’t look their way. He was a man on a mission. He refused to be distracted or diverted.

Brooklyn Foster appeared even more beautiful up close. Those big blue eyes widened when she spotted them. He saw her take in a quick breath, holding her champagne glass up as if it were a shield.

He hated that the mistake he’d made had come between them.

He’d charged in like a white knight, thinking that he’d known what was best. Then he’d refused to see her side of things, believing she would come around to his way of thinking.

It had been arrogant. He'd made a mistake and risked everything they'd had together.

He'd risked love and happiness because he'd been too damned determined to give her what he thought she wanted, even though she had warned him not to get involved.

But now he had one last chance to make this right.

"Brooklyn," he said softly as the two of them stopped in front of her. He had to resist the powerful urge to sweep her into his arms and simply kiss her until she realized exactly how much he loved her, needed her. "Thank you for coming."

"I didn't have a choice. I'm the new director for the trauma center after all."

"You look amazing," Dylan said. "You're going to be perfect for this."

She gave him a distracted smile. "Thank you." She hesitated. "I thought long and hard about turning it down. But I can do a lot of good, so at the end of the day, this isn't about me."

Now was the time to make his play. If he didn't, he would lose her.

He reached out and took her hand. Nothing more than that. He held her slim hand in both of his, looking her right in the eyes.

She seemed surprised, but she didn't draw away. His heart soared because that was the second sign that he might be able to repair what he'd done. The first had been her showing up here at all, but the second was just as important. She wasn't pushing him away. Not yet.

"I'm a fool," he said simply. "I have no excuses. You told me not to get involved. I didn't listen to your wishes. I failed you, Brooklyn. I can't tell you how deeply sorry I

am.”

She blinked and bit her lower lip, watching him with those pretty eyes he loved so much. That blue that melted his heart, especially when he saw joy and happiness there.

“I throw money at problems,” he continued. “That’s what I do. It’s what I’ve always done. But this time, that was exactly the wrong thing to do. I was furious that Gibson was going to stop you from having your chance at your dream. I wanted you to be happy.”

She opened her mouth to reply, but he suddenly felt a burst of fear, as if what he’d said hadn’t been enough. If she spurned him now, he knew the three of them would have no hope of making a future together. This wasn’t something money could fix. It was about feelings. Emotion. Love.

That was it. He needed to take the biggest risk possible and tell her how he really felt. He had no other choice.

“I love you,” he said before she had her chance to speak. “With all my heart. I love you. I love Dylan, and I love you. For me, it’s that simple. I’m not a perfect man, but I will do everything in my power to try and make you happy. I promise that.”

She was watching him with wide eyes. Dylan was watching him with eyes just as wide.

He knew he’d surprised them with the brazen declaration out here in the open where anyone could hear, but he didn’t care. Dylan knew already, but it was long past time that Brooklyn knew as well. As for the rest of the world? They could hear it loud and clear.

He loved Brooklyn Foster.

Brooklyn's mind was reeling. Tonight had been overwhelming to begin with, the big event, the stress of knowing she'd see Lucas and Dylan again, the ache in her heart at how badly she missed them...

But now, Lucas had just poured his heart out, not giving a damn if any of the people around them overheard him.

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And he loved her. He'd said it. She'd heard it with her own ears.

She swallowed, the lump in her throat making it hard to talk.

I love you . Those words were bright as neon in her brain.

She wanted to say them back. Being away from them had been hell, and she'd hated every second of it.

But she'd needed this. The gesture from Lucas.

She'd needed him to show he understood how he'd hurt her, even though she knew he'd had the best intentions.

But it seemed tonight wasn't her night to talk, because Dylan moved up beside her and boldly slipped an arm around her waist. He flashed that mischievous grin at her as he leaned in close to whisper in her ear.

"I love you, Doctor Beautiful. I'm dirty. I'm dumb. And I have a large dick. But I love you more than anything."

She burst out laughing and turned to him, not believing what he'd just said. "Was that third part of the list supposed to be a negative?"

Dylan was grinning from ear to ear now. He gave a nonchalant shrug. "I thought I'd throw it in there. To tempt you back."

“Dylan,” Lucas said, frowning. “You ruined the damn moment.”

She put a hand on Lucas’s chest. “No. He didn’t. He made me smile. That’s one of the ways he shows he loves me. And you.” She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “Lucas Fox. You’re a bastard who doesn’t listen closely enough...but I love you. Do you hear me? I love you.”

She saw the joy light up in Lucas’s eyes.

Her heart was beating fast, and she felt as excited—no, more excited—than she’d felt when she’d been racing around in the truck.

When both of these amazing men told her they loved her, it was the best thing ever.

Better than the scorching-hot sex they rocked her world with.

She was so overwhelmed with the power of her emotions, her love and affection for them, that she thought she might start crying.

And if she ruined her makeup before having to give an acceptance speech, there was going to be hell to pay.

But Lucas didn’t give her a chance to break down in sobs.

He moved in, slipped his arms around her waist, and drew her against him.

She tilted her head up to him, her lips parting, her heart pounding away faster than ever.

He leaned in and captured her lips with his.

He kissed her soundly. The kiss started off as tender, gentle, but as his passion swelled, he deepened the kiss until she could feel the depth of his desire, his love, in the press of his lips against hers.

It was wonderful.

He left her breathless. She knew people were staring and she didn't give a damn.

She wasn't going to give a damn about anything but these men and her own happiness anymore.

Well, that and her patients. But Dr. Gibson could go soak his head because she would off-road if she wanted.

She would love two men if she wanted. She would be awkward at fundraisers if she wanted. She would curse on video if she wanted.

She was a talented physician with a bright future ahead of her. She was going to help people and save lives. She was going to be happy, and these two men would help her do it. In turn, she would make them happy. That was all anyone could ask for in life, wasn't it? A chance to find real happiness.

And tonight, she realized that she'd found it.

Brooklyn knew her brother would've approved, and that, more than anything, told her this was right.

Dylan moved in for his own kiss. Kissing him was always different from Lucas but no less thrilling.

He didn't start off tender. No, he claimed her lips like he was conquering a race and

claiming victory.

And yes, she could feel that big dick he'd been bragging about, hard and pressing against her stomach as he embraced her tightly.

It sent a thrill of desire rushing through her body.

These two men were going to get so lucky tonight when she got them home...

Dylan finally drew back, smiling down at her with love in his eyes. "Crashing my truck was the best thing that ever happened to me." He frowned. "Did I already say that? Got a feeling I did. Must be amnesia."

She laughed and smacked him on the arm. One thing was for sure, both of these men were going to be a pain in her ass.

She loved them anyway.

Brooklyn smoothed her dress, trying to settle herself down again. "Do I still look okay? I have to give a speech. Did my lipstick get messed up?"

"You look stunning as always," Lucas assured her. "And you'll be brilliant on stage. I know it."

She glanced around at the crowd. There were people who were watching them. They must've seen her huge PDA kissing of not one but two men. One of them once the most eligible bachelor in Las Vegas. She resisted the urge to hide behind the buffet table and drink all the champagne.

Lucas was watching her. "What's wrong, sweetheart?"

She tried to calm herself. “Those kisses... They were wonderful...”

“But people were gawking?” Dylan said loudly, making a show of glaring around at the busybodies.

She couldn’t help but laugh. He was such a clown.

Lucas put a hand on her shoulder, meeting her eyes. “If you’re worried about my inability to keep my hands and my lips off you and what people at the hospital will say, don’t be.”

“Why not?”

He gave an arrogant shrug with an arrogant smirk. “If there’s a problem, I’ll buy the hospital.”

She raised an eyebrow at him. “Buy the hospital? You don’t learn quickly, do you?”

“I love you. There isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for you. If you don’t want me to buy this hospital, then you’d better help me build a new one of our own.”

Brooklyn shook her head. She wasn’t going to go near touching that craziness tonight.

She supposed she would have to learn to live with the protective urges of her two men.

But there were far worse things than having two men who loved you so much they wanted to defend you and make you happy. Far worse things.

“Oh, one last thing,” Lucas said to her, his expression and his voice turning serious.

He reached out and gently touched her cheek in an infinitely tender gesture. “We’re going to dedicate the new trauma center to your brother. We’re naming it after Colin Foster. If that’s okay with you...?”

Now she did begin to cry, mascara be damned. She couldn’t help it. She threw herself into their arms, hugging them so tightly, loving them so hard. Of course it was okay with her. It was the most wonderful, touching gesture in the world.

Dylan and Lucas held her. No one said a word. It was enough to know that the three of them understood each other, loved each other, and love was more than enough. With their love, she could face whatever life threw her way.

With their love, nothing could ever drive them apart. She was alive. She was in love. And she was happy.

CHAPTER ONE

JADE

Jade Aristos kept her skills honed to a knife's edge. That meant constant training. A bodyguard had to be ready for anything. This morning, keeping her skills sharp meant heading to one of the open terraces around the villa with her bo staff for some martial arts weapon forms.

She'd start her training right after she checked on her principle, the man she was protecting—Maxim Hawthorne.

The handsome bastard who drove her so crazy.

It was bright and sunny out. A few strands of clouds drifted over the ocean that spread past the rocky cliffs.

The wind wasn't even bad today. The little Greek isle could get annoyingly windy at times.

It bothered her more than it did Maxim. She had long hair, after all.

Wind could make unbound long hair a real trial.

But her long hair was pulled back and tied up in a ponytail, and she was ready for business. All she had to do was check on Maxim.

He was probably meditating on the lower terrace, focused on the waves and the wind. Part of her wished he would train with her again. Like they'd used to train together. Light sparring. Grappling. It had been the grappling that finally ended their training together. All that touching, body to body...

Jade felt a surge of desire pooling low in her abdomen. She had to stop and force it away. Focus. She needed to focus. That was all in the past.

Jade had been a bodyguard for most of her adult life. She'd never had a client like Maxim Hawthorne, though. Brilliant. Intense. Gorgeous. So good in bed, he left you trembling and hoarse from all your cries of pleasure.

Damn it! Stop thinking of that!

They were done. They were lovers no more. Finished. Over .

And yet she still worked for him. She still protected him. She lived on a small island with him, for God's sake.

She was crazy. One of these days, she'd get sick of yearning for what she couldn't have, and she'd finally leave. She'd head back to the States, find a good man, and settle down. Own a dog. And a fish. And maybe...a cat. If they could all get along. She would forget about Maxim forever.

Except in dreams. Where even now, he sometimes haunted her with those intense, smoldering eyes...

Enough! She stormed across the decks overlooking the cliffs and the ocean, holding her fighting staff.

She was wearing her training outfit. A sports bra and form-fitting boy-shorts for maximum flexibility.

She was ready to get in some serious workout, once she determined her charge was safe, and wouldn't you know, Maxim was being a pain in the ass, as usual.

Damn him.

She took her job very seriously. Not that anyone came to this side of the mostly empty island. The job was almost too easy.

Except it wasn't. Because of Maxim. Because of how much she wanted him.

As expected, she found him on the lower terrace. Except he wasn't meditating as she'd expected. He was leaning against the stone railing with his hands in his pockets, staring at the ocean and the seagulls who were riding the wind currents.

She hesitated only for a second. Even now, the sight of him sometimes struck her hard.

He was handsome. Distractingly so. It annoyed her, especially since it was her job to pay attention to any and all threats around Max.

Someday she'd be ogling his firm butt and she'd be caught off guard and then what?

The thought of losing him was like an icicle piercing her chest. That was one reason she was still here with him, working as his lone bodyguard. Working for him even after all their history and all the passion between them. She couldn't stand the thought of losing him forever.

Guess that made her a fool.

Maxim saw her approaching and grinned at her.

But his gaze remained the same penetrating stare it had always been, fierce and

direct.

It was one of the things she liked about him, although the intensity could unnerve people who weren't used to him.

People who didn't know he had a heart of gold under all that muscle.

The rest of him was just as appealing as his smile.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, and clean-shaven, showing off his high cheekbones and bone structure that must have come from some Eastern European country, although he'd been born in Detroit.

He was wearing loose-fitting khakis and a dark T-shirt with a white button-down shirt over it.

The button-down was wide open and blowing behind him with the wind coming off the water.

It was easy to see how fit he was. Athletic. Part of Maxim's routine was lifting weights and physical training, including running, swimming, and diving. He wasn't as bulgy as a bodybuilder, but he was cut and hard, and when he wandered around with his shirt off, she had to stop and stare.

Without him noticing, of course. He wasn't paying her to drool over his pecs.

She managed to push all those distracting thoughts to the back of her mind where they belonged. She wandered to him, ready to tell him that she'd walked the house and the grounds and it was all secure. Only he beat her to the punch.

"You ever wish you could fly?" he asked in a musing baritone that was smooth as polished mahogany. He turned to stare at the circling gulls.

She snorted. She was used to odd questions. “Who doesn’t want to fly? It’s the crashing that’s the problem.”

He laughed, his eyes going all warm in a way that had her turning all melty inside. Damn him.

“Thank God I have you around to keep me grounded,” he said, still smiling.

She liked the praise. She always did. But it hurt a little too. Because she wanted so much more.

She should be happy with what she had. She was paid a very generous salary to live in a beautiful house worth millions, sometimes heading out for days on Maxim’s luxury yacht, all to keep a handsome man safe from threats that never made their way to the tiny isle.

Sometimes she wondered if Maxim was a little paranoid, keeping a bodyguard around like this when they only went to mainland Greece once every couple of weeks. Still, she wasn’t going to complain. The money was great.

Maxim was wealthy. Not just rich but super-rich.

He’d had this modern villa built here on Patroklos, the private island he’d bought from the Greek government.

On the opposite side of the island, he’d built a spa and health resort that specialized in homeopathic treatments and total care for body, spirit, and mind.

To her, it was more New Age stuff, but it was popular.

Probably because he kept the prices low and even had sponsorships for those in need.

That was Maxim. One great big softie.

Except for those eyes. And all those muscles.

“Do you want lunch?” she asked, suddenly casting around for something to say to break the silence. She didn’t want him to know how being this close to him still affected her. “Dimi is fixing something for us if you’re hungry.”

“Thanks,” he said, glancing back at the water. “But all my needs are met.”

That was a very Maxim thing to say. He’d told her once that he was very different than he’d been six years ago.

Back then, he’d been a high-end software engineer back in the States.

More like a software Mozart. The first AI program he designed had made him a millionaire, and it was only upward from there.

But after one project for the government, he’d suddenly pulled up stakes, sold his company and all his shares, and left the US. He’d also hired her to keep him safe...and teach him how to fight.

She’d done both. She was very good.

“So,” she said, jerking her chin toward one of the white terraces artfully built into the grounds around the house. “I’m going to do a few forms. Want to join me?”

He looked her in the eyes. Her breath caught in her throat at the look he was giving her. The intensity in his gaze had dialed up to the max.

He wanted to. She could see it.

Her realization made her respond with a wild mix of emotions. Her own desire. Followed by her hesitation. Her need to be touched by him. Kissed by him.

She'd made a mistake by making the offer. She realized that now. Forms might lead to sparring and then to grappling. You couldn't grapple without touching. Could she handle rolling with him? Having his body pressed against hers?

She would have to do her best. She was a professional.

Suddenly, Maxim seemed to pull back and regain control of himself. His eyes became guarded as if he didn't trust himself to keep his hands off her if the temptation became too much.

"You go ahead," he told her. He was still looking her right in the eyes, but the desire there had been concealed once more. "I feel like meditating for a while. Clear the mind, calm the soul."

She rolled her eyes. He was really laying it on thicker than usual today. "Okay, Zen Master. You could be like me, smacking things with a stick and having fun, but no." She narrowed her eyes at him. "I thought guys liked to hit things with sticks?"

She was poking him, part of her wanting him to train with her again. Like old times. Another part of her just wanted to see that desire again.

He wasn't taking the bait. His grin was charming. That damn grin was all he'd ever needed to disarm her.

"Thanks, but I'll pass. Need to clear my head." He actually looked a little... What? Off-balance? Rattled? Something. Maxim shrugged and began to walk toward the house. He passed right by her, very close. "Have fun, Jade."

She watched him go. Emotions frothed inside her. Maybe she needed to do more

mediation. She certainly wasn't calm of spirit right now. She was frustrated and horny, and she had a gorgeous man so close, but he was off-limits.

She cursed, low and savage.

Even after all this time, she could remember how his lips felt on her body. How his kisses had claimed her, owned her.

She remembered all of that far too well.

Without allowing herself another word or thought, she walked to the faux temple terrace. She raised her fighting staff and began to work her way through her forms, fighting invisible attackers and beating them all down with her staff.

She had a lot of steam to work off. She might be here a while.