



# Grade A Girl

**Author:** *Cara Wade*

**Category:** Erotic, Romance, New Adult

**Description:** Once sassy butcher. Two hunky chefs. If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen. Charlotte (Charlie) Paxton, Butcher extraordinaire, is stuck between two hunks of meat—Kade Benson and Jaxson Whittier. Kade is broad and brooding, while Jaxson is tall and charming. Each man brings a uniqueness to the table she never expected to need. Only in her wildest dreams did she think she would end up with two men at the same time. Now that she's sandwiched between them, she can't imagine being with just one. Will Kade and Jaxson be able to keep their past hidden from her, or will their truth put them on the chopping block?

**Total Pages (Source):** 21

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: August 18, 2025, 4:21 am*

Charlotte

ACut Above,Dad's butcher shop, is in my hands now. I've been working for him for the better part of my life, but it's finallymine. As I grew older, I used to work in the front area of the shop, helping customers and ringing up their orders. I saw him cutting hunks of meat a few times, and it soured my stomach. Watching him work was the reason I went vegetarian for a few of my dramatic teenage years. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with not eating meat, but have you ever tasted bacon?

Enough said.

Mom and Dad decided they'd had enough of northern California winters and wanted to retire early in Florida. They officially moved two weeks ago, and I'm back after helping them get settled. It's a good thing, too, because Dad's number one client, Kade Benson, has been blowing up the phone. He's the owner and head chef ofLocal Burn, one of the hottest farm to table restaurants in town.

I've been dealing with his assistant over the phone for the better part of a year, but never him directly. He only ever wanted to work with Dad, even though I'm the one who has been putting together his meat orders for the past few months. It's enough to make me roll my eyes.Ugh, men!

After finishing my three-year apprenticeship almost a year ago, I was lucky I had a place to go besides a supermarket. Butcher shops are a dying breed nowadays, but this shop was started by my grandfather, and when I have kids, I'll pass it down to them. My sister Stephanie has never had any desire to run the shop, so it's up to me to

keep it going.

I haven't seen her in a year. She's in New York trying to become an actress. So far, she has snagged commercials for a fast-food place and a pet store, and her most recent success is a chorus role in an off-Broadway show. Basically, she pays her bills by working a lot of odd jobs.

But I'm proud of her; I just wish she would find her big break. She talks about how her dream is to work with Caleb Evanston or Tait Flanigan in Hollywood. I think she just wants to date one of them, but Caleb is married with a kid on the way, and I've read *TMZ* rumors that Tait is asking his girlfriend Sam to marry him.

The bell above the door rings, startling me from my thoughts. I hear Scott, the kid I hired to work the register, talking to another man. I'd recognize Kade's deep timbre anywhere as he speaks to Scott with authority.

After pulling my gloves off, I untie my apron and push open the swinging door from the back. Kade turns his head in my direction and looks over my shoulder for someone. I glance behind me, thinking someone might be there by the way he looks at me. I stand as tall as I can in my jeans and bright pink t-shirt. My brown hair is pulled back into a low ponytail.

This man is more than I expected. Not terribly tall—probably five-ten, with brown hair that's buzzed on the side and longer up top, but man does he have muscles. Lots and lots of muscles. I always pictured him being a fat guy with glasses. The glasses part is right, but he's not fat at all. A script tattoo peeks out over his navy blue Henley t-shirt which pulls across his taut muscles. I instinctively lick my lips as he shifts his weight to his other foot.

"I was told I'd be meeting the new owner, Charlie Paxton, today," he announces, flitting his eyes over my five-two frame as he fixes his thick-framed glasses higher on

his nose.

This man looks like sex on wheels. I wonder how much he works out? No man in his right mind should be allowed to look this sexy. His jeans hug his hips just right, and images of me running my hands over his muscles have me clenching my thighs together to warn of the impending need.

Now is not the time to be fantasizing about having sex with this man.

He clears his throat, and I smile. “That’s me. I’m Charlotte Paxton, Charlie for short. You must be Kade Benson.” I walk forward, my hand extended to shake his.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he mumbles barely loud enough to be audible.

On second thought, I’ll take a raincheck on exploring his muscles. I drop my hand to my side as the smile slowly fades from my face. I get it now. This asshole thinks that, because I’m a woman, I can’t do the job. Well, buddy—anything you can do, I can do bleeding. I’ve been around men like this since I decided to follow in my father’s footsteps and make A Cut Above mine.

My apprenticeship was brutal—until the other men figured out I wasn’t someone to be messed with. I was the only woman in my class of ten, and most days, they refused to talk to me. Stupid boys. I didn’t let it get to me though. I got my head in the game and buckled down. Once the master butcher started to take notice of how much I was pulling ahead of the others, they changed their tune.

I don’t need to deal with elitist bullshit.

“Is there a problem?” I cross my arms over my chest, making sure to stand a little taller in my flat boots.

“Not to sound like an asshole,” too late, “but how long have you been doing this? I have a very reputable restaurant, and I don’t want the quality of my cuts to go down under new ownership.”

“I finished the apprenticeship program last year and I have been working here in this shop on and off since I was a teenager. I’m the one who has been preparing your orders for the past several months. Trust me, your cuts are in good hands, Mr. Benson.” I put a little too much emphasis on his name, and he cocks his eyebrow at me. “Now, if you will please follow me, I’ll show you what we have today.”

I don’t wait for his reply as I storm through the swinging door to the back room. He’s on my heels when I turn to face him once more. He stands at the end of the cutting table, his hands on his hips, waiting for me to continue.

“I’ve reviewed your past few weeks of orders. Are you going to be changing the amount you order, or just the cuts?” I pass him his last order invoice, and he picks it up off the table, reviewing the cuts and amounts listed.

“I wanted to add an additional twenty pounds of marinated chicken to the order.” He puts the paper back down and looks into my brown eyes. His are a light blue with little gold flecks throughout. God, they’re beautiful, I take a split second to get lost in them. He pushes his glasses up his nose with his middle finger and crosses his arms over his broad chest again. Another tattoo peeks out from under his sleeve, and I tilt my head to get a better look.

“Ms. Paxton?”

I blush when I look back up at his face, and there appears to be a trace of a smile on his lips. “What marinade would you like?”

I pull a pen from my hair and click it to write on the invoice.

“Do you always keep a pen in your hair?” He raises his eyebrow at me.

I scrunch my face. “Do you always ask so many questions?”

## Page 2

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He chuckles and shakes his head. “I want the white garlic one. Have the delivery set for three this afternoon. Let’s go over the cuts, and I’ll pick out what I want.”

Bossy.

Does this man ever have fun, or is he all business, all the time? I want to know about his tattoos, and I’d be a liar if I didn’t want to see how many more he has. I really want to know what the one peeking out from under his collar says and what it means.

We walk into the large cooler and go over the options for meat. I point out the different sections of animals, and he chooses what he wants and what cuts of each. He’s increasing his order from the past few weeks. That small fact makes me want to smile.

I finish writing down everything I have to do to complete his order and get it to him on time. “Getting busy at the restaurant?”

He offers a heavy sigh. “Why would you assume we weren’t busy?” His voice falls flat.

I roll my eyes but keep them on the paper before I slowly drag my gaze up his body to his face. “I wasn’t assuming. I was making pleasant conversation.” He’s really starting to annoy me. “Have I done something to offend you, Kade? Is it because I have a vagina? Do you have a problem with me because of that?”

He smirks. “No, I rather like the fact that you have a vagina.”

I toss my hands in the air and raise my voice. “Then what’s your problem?”

We stare at one another for too long before he says, “Three o’clock today. Don’t forget.” He turns on his heel and storms out of the back room. By the time I register that he’s not standing there, he’s no longer even in the store.



## Page 3

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Kade

Charlotte looks so much like Blair, it borders on pain being in her presence. I put my car in reverse and peel out of the parking lot. Maybe it's time to look for a new butcher. I'm not sure I'll be able to continue working with her.

And the mouth on her. I wanted to kiss the sassy remarks out of her.

Vivid memories of Blair run rampant through my mind as I drive home. The nights we spent together rolling around in bed, or the days we spent lying on the beach, enjoying each other's company. It was short-lived, and I'd kill to have more time with her. Jaxson too. I need to call him. He's never going to believe this.

Jaxson and I met Blair during our sophomore year in college, and I knew she was the perfect girl the first night. There was something so different about her. She was sassy as fuck and kept me on my toes. We had a ball together, but after only a year, she got sick. At first, we thought it was a bug she couldn't kick, but things got worse and worse. She was diagnosed with leukemia, and within a year, she was gone.

Right after that, I dropped out of school and enlisted in the Marines because I just didn't want to live without her. I figured, with all the bullshit going on in the world, I might have a shot of joining her and we could be together. Jaxson begged me not to go. Told me it wasn't worth it, but I was too far gone to listen to him. I left for basic within a month.

I'm honestly lucky I didn't do anything too crazy—not that enlisting wasn't crazy. I wasn't in a good place, and I probably should have sought help from a professional,

but I couldn't. That option never even crossed my mind.

After my unit found out I could cook, I spent more time in the kitchen than on the battlefield. I did two tours in Afghanistan before returning and enrolling in the Institute of Culinary Education in Los Angeles to get a degree. The path I chose wasn't traditional, but I wouldn't change it now. I needed that time to get my head on straight and see the important things in front of me.

"Fuck," I yell, hitting my palm against the steering wheel as I wait at a red light. I pull up Joe's number, and he picks up on the second ring.

"Hey, Kade. What can I do for you?"

I swallow hard. "You told me I was meeting Charlie. I didn't know the butcher was a woman," I say with a tight jaw. I wouldn't have acted like a complete ass if I wasn't caught off guard. She's a natural beauty. No makeup and her hair was in a ponytail, and to me, she looked like she'd just stepped off a fucking runway.

"Yeah. I thought you knew my daughter was taking over the shop. You're in good hands with her, Kade. No need to worry. She was top of her class and did very well in her apprenticeship. She was going to go for her master apprenticeship, but when Donna and I decided to retire in Florida, she stepped up."

"I'm not worried. It was unexpected, that's all." I rub my eyes under my thick frames and lean my head against the headrest. A car honks at me when I don't move from the red light fast enough, and I glare at him in my rearview mirror in time to watch him throw his hands up in annoyance.

"Give her a chance. She'll surprise you." He chuckles. "Also, she has a bit of a temper like her mom. Don't let it get to you. Her bark is worse than her bite." Duly noted. "Listen, I have to go. Donna is waiting for me. Let me know if you run into any

trouble.”

“Will do. Thanks, Joe.”

I hang up just as I pull into my garage. I have a few hours before I need to head in and work on menu options for the week. I toss my keys on the table next to the door and plop down on the couch.

How the hell am I going to survive working with her? I smile at the memory of her undressing me today with her eyes. I was doing the same to her when she wasn't looking. Brown hair pulled away from her face, a petite frame with a little curve. She's fucking perfect. There was so much fire behind her large brown eyes.

What secrets are you hiding?

I've got to give it to her; she had no problem trying to put me in my place, which is hard to do. Most people look at me and my size, then back down quickly. She must have dealt with a lot of grief in the field she chose. I don't think I've ever heard of a female butcher.

I hover my thumb over Jaxson's name. I haven't talked to him in a few years, but I've sent a few emails in the past and have kept up with what he's been doing. I know I was an ass for abandoning him when he needed me. We both lost her, and I know he suffered as much as I did. My palms are slick with sweat as I think about what to text him.

Me: Would you believe me if I told you I found Blair's doppelganger?

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I get to the restaurant a little before two and start work on the menu for the week. I'm

pulling out a few classics. With the marinated chicken I'll get this week, a side of garlic green beans and roasted potatoes are going to be perfect.

My sous chef, Victor, will be here soon, and he can help unload the truck. I'm a lucky son of a bitch to have found him. He was in my unit, and when the two of us worked together, it was like magic. He was injured during his second tour—lost his right leg—and was sent home. It took him a long time to get back to himself; me offering him a job really helped.

Local Burnis my restaurant and baby. I started it from the ground up. What most people don't know is I still do all the hiring, and everyone that works for me is a veteran. A lot of these people struggle to get back into the workforce after returning home, or jobs don't want them. There's a decent amount of turnover, but I'm not complaining. I get the chance to help make a difference in someone's life and get them back to something remotely normal. I wouldn't change that.

I put the last plating touches on the dish and wipe some stray sauce from the side of the plate. Victor walks through the swinging door into the kitchen, a large smile on his face.

"Seems someone got lost trying to make a delivery," he says casually as he drops his stuff off in the back room.

"What?" I turn to look at him, but as I do, I hear someone grunting as they come through the swinging kitchen door. Charlie stands in front of me, holding a large box.

She huffs and pops the box up higher on her hip. "Where's the fridge?"

"Jesus." I rush over and take the heavy box from her hands. "Why didn't you come to the back with this stuff? And why didn't Victor help you?" I call louder so Victor can hear me.

## Page 4

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He pops his head out from around the corner and shrugs. “I tried. She wouldn’t let me,pendejo.” Then he flashes me a shit-eating grin. It’s a good thing I like Victor; otherwise, I wouldn’t put up with his shit.

“I knocked on the door, but no one answered, so I went to the front as Victor was coming in.”

“There’s a bell. Next time, use that.” I pull open the fridge door and drop the box down. Victor will unpack everything in a few minutes. I lead her to the back door, and we walk through the chilled air to get the rest of the boxes. The days are getting colder now that it’s September. She guides me to the truck, and we each grab the last two boxes.

We drop the last of them in the fridge, and she hands me the invoice to review. Everything I ordered is listed, but I’ll have Victor double-check it later anyway.

“Wow, it smells amazing in here. What’s on the menu?” She smiles up at me, and my knees go weak. That shit isn’t supposed to happen to me. Women don’t get to me. One did. Her smile tugs at my heart, and I can’t help but melt some of my icy exterior. I’ve had walls built up for so long to protect myself. Yet around her, they seem to be slowly crumbling.

“Thanks. It’s a bone-in pork chop with an apple and thyme glaze, roasted Brussel sprouts with garlic, and whipped potatoes.” Her face lights up, and she licks her lips and hums in appreciation as I finish rattling off what’s on the plate. “Want to try a bite?”

She beams. “Really?” I nod. “I’d love to. I haven’t had lunch yet today. I’m starving.”

“Well, we can’t have that, can we?” I cut some of the pork and hold the fork out for her to take a bite.”

She wraps her lips around the tines, pulling the food into her mouth. She chews a few times as she nods in approval. “Holy crap, this is amazing, Kade. I can see why the restaurant is always packed.”

She finishes and swallows the bite. I offer her a Brussel sprout and watch as she hungrily takes it. I love a girl who can eat. I spend a lot of time in the kitchen and want someone who’s willing to try new recipes. I hand her the plate and fork, and she looks up, questioning me.

“You look like you could use it. Plus, if the way you’re scarfing it down is any indication, it must be good. I’m sure the patrons will love it, too.”

She smirks but shakes her head. “No, I should get back to the shop. We have an order coming in later, and I want to make sure to stay on top of things. I’ll stop for something quick before I go back.”

“Well, shit. If she’s not going to eat it, I sure as hell will,” Victor announces as he clasps the last button on his chef jacket.

I growl at him and pull the plate out of his reach. “No. You can start on the next dish. I’ll walk Charlie out.”

I place my hand on the small of her back to lead her to the door, and her warmth radiates up my arm. It feels like an electrical hum coursing through me, heating me from the inside. I know I shouldn’t, but I can’t help wanting to touch her. She pats the

back pocket of her jeans, and I wish it was my hand there. I sneak a quick glance at her ass, and damn. She looks great in the jeans, not that I expected differently.

Not anticipating her move, she turns suddenly, smacking into my hard chest. Her hands fly up to my pecs as she gasps, and I cling on to her upper arms, steadying her. I stare down into her expressive brown eyes, not wanting to break this connection between us. After another few seconds, she shrugs out of my hold.

“I forgot my keys,” she responds quietly, keeping her eyes trained on the tile between us. Her cheeks are a nice shade of pink, and I can’t help the smirk that graces my lips. She walks over to the counter and waves and smiles at Victor as she picks up her keys.

“See ya around, chica,” he says.

I watch the exchange and bite the inside of my cheek to keep from yelling at Victor. As I hold the door open, she steps out into the cool air.

“Same time Wednesday?” she asks, smiling.

I offer a curt nod. “I’ll be there.”

“Any idea what you’re going to want? I’d like to make sure I have it in stock.”

I shrug. “It all depends on how these meals go over. If I’m basing the menu off your reaction, then I’ll take more pork for sure.” I try to smile, but I’m sure it looks like a grimace to her. What the fuck is wrong with me?

She nods slowly. “Good. I’ll make sure to have it.” She waves at me. “See ya later, Kade.”

“Wait,” I call after her. She turns and watches me, her brown eyes full of questions. “Your dad gave me his cell in case I needed to add something last minute to the order. Can I have yours so I can do the same?”

She smirks and her eyes brighten in amusement. “This isn’t a ploy to get my phone number, is it?” she teases.

I shrug. If I said yes, would you fault me?



## Page 5

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Jaxson

I look at the familiar name on my screen, and my heart gallops as I read his words. Blair. There's not a day that goes by without me thinking of her. She was perfect for us, and the day she left this world killed me—killed us. Kade became a shell of himself and hid in the military. I handled it slightly better, but not much.

Me: Bullshit. Where?

I sit on the edge of my bed, bouncing my leg frantically in anticipation of his response. Jesus, Kade, fucking answer me. I run my fingers through my raven locks, tugging the ends in frustration.

Kade: Charlie. She's the new owner of A Cut Above. I ran into her today and made an ass of myself.

I laugh reading his words. He would make an ass of himself. Always one to put his foot in his mouth.

Kade: I was caught off guard by how much she looked like Blair. I didn't know how to act.

The girl beside me stirs, and I suddenly feel sick—like somehow, I've tainted Blair by sleeping with the new hostess at Entice. I'm the head chef there and couldn't help that she was hitting on me. She's cute, has a tight body, and a need to please. I knew it was a mistake as soon as I asked her, but I couldn't help it.

“Hey, handsome, how about breakfast?” Tammy purrs and kisses my shoulder.

“Can’t. I have a couple of errands I have to run before heading to the restaurant.” I get up and pull on a pair of boxers, hoping she gets the hint. She pouts as she stares into my green eyes. I assume she thinks she’ll change my mind. I’m not even sure she realizes she’s doing it until I pull a t-shirt over my head and wait for her to move off the bed.

“Oh. Okay. So, I’ll call you later?”

Now I’m going to be a real asshole. “Best to keep work and personal separate, don’t you think, Tammy?” She turns beet red and jumps up, pulling her clothes on as quickly as she can. She knocks her shoulder into me on the way out and calls me a dick with some other explicit I don’t catch.

Yeah, I know I am.

I need to see Charlie before I talk to Kade. Maybe he’s having a shit day—more nightmares and was wishing she was there. Even thinking about it, I know it’s a lie. Kade has been distant from me since he left for the Marines. Even after he came back, things were never the same. He checks in from time to time, but we’re not close anymore. A Cut Above is the butcher shop in the center of town, easy enough to walk in and order some meat.

I get ready and head out, hoping to bump into her in the shop.

What if he’s telling the truth?

What the hell am I going to do if she’s already taken? No. I can’t think like that. There’s a reason she’s coming into our lives now. Charlie is becoming my obsession, and I haven’t even met her yet. Hell, Kade only told me about her thirty minutes ago,

and I can't get my brain to shut up. The shop comes into view, and I pull into an empty spot so I can take a few minutes to compose myself.

I wipe my sweaty palms on my jeans and take a few deep breaths, slowing my heart rate. God, I hope Kade wasn't fucking with me. We used to play jokes on one another all the time, but that was before Blair.

I search the recesses of my mind for memories of her. When she died, I locked everything up and tried to move on. It was the only way to stop the pain she left in her absence. Then, a few weeks later, Kade told me he was enlisting and heading out to boot camp.

My world was crumbling around me, and there wasn't a damn thing I could do to stop it. I begged him to stay, but he wouldn't. My best friend was too heartbroken to see past his own pain and help me with mine.

That's when I decided to take up cooking. Blair used to love watching the two of us work in tandem in the kitchen cooking for her. I have especially fond memories of having some of the best sex in my life and then cooking. Kade would carry her into the kitchen of our apartment, and the two of us would make lots of food to sate our hunger. There was always so much laughter surrounding those moments that, at times, smiles would turn into more and we all had to go back to the bedroom for another round.

As I reach for the front handle, I see her behind the counter.

Holy.

Shit.

The air leaves my lungs in a whoosh. Feeling lightheaded, I grip the handle like it's

my lifeline, the only thing keeping me from drowning in a sea of emotions. Kade wasn't lying. She's the spitting image of Blair. I step through the door, hearing the bell above it jingle. When she looks up at me, my whole world stops.

"Hi, what can I help you with?" she asks, looking into my deep green eyes. Her voice is light and airy, and it tugs at memories I locked away so long ago. She smiles as she waits for me to speak. She's barely tall enough to see over the counter to look at me.

I'm speechless for a moment, lost in the connection. Her giggle pulls me out of my stupor. I shake my head and smile at her. "Sorry. Hi, I'm Jaxson."

"Hi, Jaxson, what can I get for you?"

My name falls off her lips like honey—so sweet and innocent sounding. I need something to drink. It feels like someone shoved cotton balls in my mouth. Get it together. Kade was always the jackass who had problems speaking with pretty girls, not me.

"How about your number?" I rest my arm on the top of the glass cooler and give her the biggest smile I can. Blair loved this shit. She fell hard and fast for it.

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She scrunches her brows together, but her eyes light up. “How about you order something, and maybe we can discuss my number,” she flirts. Not exactly the answer I was looking for, but I haven’t lost my touch.

Damn. I like her. I dig through my wallet and hand her a business card. “Jaxson Whittier, head chef at Entice.” She examines the card, running her tiny finger over the bold black lettering of my name.

She looks up at me again. “How can I help you, Jaxson?”

“I heard from a buddy of mine you had some of the best cuts in town, so I thought I’d pop in and have a look.”

Charlie comes out from around the counter, and she’s even smaller than I thought. She stands mid-chest to me and I want to wrap her in my arms.

She’s not Blair, remember that.

She tells me about the shop and the different kinds of cuts and meats she carries. She’s animated, and when another guy walks through the door, she greets him without missing a beat.

Charlie finally takes a breath. “I can give you some information about the store to take with you if you’d like.”

“You know, a woman who likes what she does is extremely attractive. How about your number?” She cocks her eyebrow and crosses her arms over her perfect chest,

pressing her breasts together. I'm not even sure she realizes how much it's turning me on. I lick my lips and bite my lower lip, stifling my chuckle.

"You aren't used to women telling you no, are you?"

I offer her the biggest smile, showing off my set of white teeth. "Nope. So, how about it?"

Charlie stays silent for a minute, weighing her options. "If I agree and give you my phone number, what are you planning on doing with it?" Her cheeks take on a rosy hue, and it's so damn cute. I want to pull her into my arms and kiss her, make her giggle so I can see more of it.

"Ask you to dinner," I reply without missing a beat.

"What makes you think I don't have a boyfriend?"

My hands tighten into fists at my sides. If she has a boyfriend, I think I'll die. I won't be able to stand knowing she's this close and I can't do anything about it. I take a step closer. She takes one back, hitting the wall behind her. I stop, sensing she's uncomfortable with the proximity, and back off slightly.

"Do you have a boyfriend, Charlie?"

She scrunches her eyebrows, and her mouth parts open in confusion. "I haven't told you my name yet." I see the flutter of her pulse in her throat and look back into her brown eyes. She's not scared, maybe a bit turned on though.

The bell above the door rings and I step away. I need to control myself. I watch her glance down. No way she's missing the hard-on I'm rocking. She looks over my shoulder and greets the person, telling them she'll be with them in a second, then

holds her phone out for me.

“Put your number in my phone, and I might call.”

She didn't think that one through. I type in my number and send myself a text. “Now, I've got yours. Pick you up on Friday?”

She shakes her head no, but smiles. I'll wear you down in time.

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Charlie

Quitting time, and I couldn't be happier. It was the strangest day. First with my interactions with Kade. He was so hot and cold; I was getting whiplash trying to keep up. Then meeting Jaxson. God, something must be in the water at these restaurants because he was just as fine. A little taller than Kade, with more of an athletic build versus the muscles Kade has, but there was nothing small about him. Especially the dick print. It was hard to think of anything else for the rest of the day.

It's been a long time since I've worked full days in the store, and since I'm the only butcher, it was busy. When Dad started the transition of me taking over the shop, I worked half-days with him and half-days with Tony, the accountant. I got my undergrad in business management because I wanted to be able to run the store by myself. I also spent time reaching out to the different contacts Dad had at the slaughterhouses to introduce myself.

Getting to this point—running the shop feels like a long time coming. It's not like Mom and Dad are gone forever. If I need them, they are only a phone call away. Dad is too type A to give up full control, and I know he will be checking in on the books, and probably with Kade, too.

I push open the front door to my apartment and pull my shirt over my head. The bad part of working with meat all day is I always smell like it when I get home. I shimmy out of the rest of my clothes and toss them in the overflowing hamper. Looks like my night consists of some laundry.

After a quick shower, I get into pajamas. Feeling like myself again, I open the fridge



and peer inside. Nothing. Well, not true. I have food, I just have to cook it, and I hate cooking. My food always comes out bland and overcooked. I can cut meat, no problem, but I can't cook it for shit.

I wish Kade or Jaxson were here with food. No, I wish both of them were here doing something else. Kade, I can't get a read on. Jaxson, though, he knows what he wants, and if his flirting is any indication—it's me.

I think about Kade today in the kitchen, in his element. He looked different, calm even. His face comes to mind and I smile. It was more than a mental change; it was a physical one, too. He wasn't wearing his glasses. He looks good with or without them. Not that there was any doubt in my mind, but still.

Then Jaxson. Oh. My. God. The outline of his dick in those jeans. He was packing some serious heat below the belt. If he's the head chef at Entice, I'm sure his cooking is superb. I'd love a chance to try his cooking, too. Is it actually possible both of them are single? Jaxson maybe, with the way he was flirting, but not Kade. There's no way.

I look at the clock, Local Burnis closing soon. I pull my phone out and hesitate, my finger hovering over Kade's name. I want to text him, but I don't want to be a bother. I tap his name, pull up a blank text, and stare at it. My stomach grumbles and, reluctantly, I send the text.

Me: Any chance there is more of that meal from today lying around looking for a stomach to settle in?

I wait for his response as I pull some ice cream from the freezer and dig a spoon out of the drawer. I start feeling like a fool for even sending it the longer it goes without a reply from him. Is there a way to unsend messages? I start typing an apology text when a reply comes in.

Kade:No, but I could whip you up something. I'm still at the restaurant. I was finishing with clean up, then going to head out. Can you be here in twenty minutes?

Me:No, you don't have to do that. I was just joking. I hate cooking but need to make dinner.

Kade:I'll be here for the next twenty minutes or so. If you change your mind, ring the bell.

I pull the spoon with the chocolaty goodness from my mouth and ponder his message. I have the chance to get delicious food, or I can eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It's an internal war, and for the sake of not making myself look like more of an ass, I decide to stay in.

Peanut butter and jelly it is. I make a sour face when my brain is yelling at me to accept his offer.

I can't bring myself to get my ass down there. He already seemed annoyed with me today. There is no need to add more fuel to the fire. I take my boring sandwich to my bedroom and pull my computer into my lap, pulling up a search for Kade Benson. A few articles pop up, but the one at the top is about the opening of Local Burn, dated eight months ago.

I click on the article, and a picture of Kade standing in front of the restaurant loads on the screen. He's standing out front, his arms folded across his broad chest—a typical chef's pose—with a huge grin on his face. He's even more handsome this way. I have yet to see him smile in person, but I can't help how my lips quirk up. Not to say the brooding look isn't sexy, but this makes him seem more human.

His other look, the one I've seen in person screams “kneel and take it like a good girl.” Now, don't get me wrong. I would gladly take the second one, especially if he

was willing to cook for me after. But his smile warms my heart. He seems so guarded, and I want to know what secrets he's hiding.

I skim the article until I get to a section about Kade's past.

Benson, twenty-nine, is a retired Marine, having served two tours in Afghanistan. He fell in love with cooking while serving and came back to study at the Institute of Culinary Education in Los Angeles where he graduated top of his class. Local Burn is a farm to table restaurant, and the entire staff is comprised of veterans.

"We, as a culture, are used to getting fruits and vegetables when we want, but when you taste them at peak freshness, it's a game-changer. I want people to experience the freshest food they will ever have. We work with local farms and vendors for all our options, and the menu changes weekly depending on what's available."

When asked about hiring veterans, he had this to say. "So many of our men and women return home and have a difficult time getting back to normal life. I help give them the opportunity to do that and support their family. Most don't stay long, having found something else, but I want to be there to assist any way I can."

It makes sense that he was in the military. He has that vibe about him. And I love how he only hires veterans; there's something so heartwarming about that. I go back and read the article from the beginning, taking in every word. It's nights like this I wish I was a detective instead of a butcher. I want to know everything there is about Kade Benson.

Jaxson: Hey beautiful, hope your night is going well. I've been thinking about you, and I can't wait for our date on Friday night.

I pick my phone up and read the words. He sure is persistent.

Me:I'm not sure if you forgot, but I haven't agreed to a date with you on Friday.

Jaxson:You never said no, either. Come on, it will be fun. We can go out, or I can cook for you.

I choose to ignore his message for now, deciding to do a little online research on him, too. Most of the information I find on him is from social media. I click on one of the accounts, and my mouth pops open as I stare at the screen. Jaxson is standing next to Kade, their arms slung around each other with big smiles plastered on their faces.

They know one another. Mystery is solved as to which friend told Jaxson about me. I scroll through a few more pictures and stop on one with a girl squished between them. Her head is bowed toward her chest so I can't see her face, but I catch a glimpse of a smile on her face. She looks happy to be there.Squished between those two hunks, who wouldn't be excited?There's a caption next to the picture that reads,Blair's man sandwich.

Well, Blair, aren't you a lucky bitch?

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: August 18, 2025, 4:21 am*

Kade

I don't know if I should be angry or relieved. I waited at the restaurant for an hour after I was supposed to be out, giving her plenty of time to show, but she never did. I wanted to hear the small moans of delight as she ate dinner with me. I wanted to tempt her with something decadent afterward.

I'm lying in bed, my dog Bruno sprawled out next to me, snoring away. I have my hand tucked under my head and the other resting comfortably on my stomach. I fucked it up today with Charlie. I know I did. Why wouldn't she come to the restaurant otherwise? I look at my clock and see it's already eleven p.m. I've been lying awake for the better part of an hour.

I pick up my phone, hoping to see a new message from Charlie, but frown when I come up empty. Get a grip, Kade. I toss the blankets off and pad toward the kitchen for some water. Bruno lifts his head to watch me but makes no move to get up. Lazy bastard.

I fill a glass to the brim and drink the contents down as fast as I can. I know nothing about Charlie except she's a butcher. I don't know her age or if she's seeing anyone—nothing. Since I can't sleep, I might as well do some research. I don't know how anyone found anything without the aid of social media. Within minutes of typing in her name, I find her profile and start scanning through her pictures.

There are several of her with her family and friends, and there is a whole album dedicated to Besties. I clench my fist and lock my jaw as I scroll through picture after picture. The ones that really twist my gut are the ones where Charlie and some guy

are kissing. She looks so fucking happy.

What do I have to offer her?

I'm still fucked in the head. There are times I still have nightmares about being overseas. When that happens, I wake in a panic and usually go for a run to clear my head, no matter what time it is.

Plus, I haven't dated anyone seriously in three years. I know my way around a woman's body, but none of them stick around when they see how fucked up I am. I lean forward and place my head in my hands. What the hell am I doing?

My phone rings and Jaxson's name pops up.

"Hey, shouldn't you still be at work? Doesn't the hottest spot in town close at two in the morning or some shit?" I joke. It feels good to talk to him again—natural. I never should have dropped him.

"You were right, Kade. Charlie looks so much like Blair, but she's so much stronger. Feistier even. I can't get her out of my fucking mind."

"Me neither. I don't know what the fuck I'm going to do."

"Do you think there is even a remote chance she would be open to both of us? Like how it used to be? That's the only time things ever really felt right for me," he admits.

I was thinking the same damn thing. Both of us there to care for her, and push her—make her better. I rub my hand over my face. I don't know though. There aren't many people who would be okay with a relationship like that.

“She texted me asking if I had any food left because she hates to cook.” An idea slams into me. I sit up tall with a smile on my face. We can cook for her. She seemed to enjoy my food. I can show up at the shop with a nice meal, and we can eat together and get to know her. It’s perfect. “You around tomorrow for lunch?”

\* \* \*

It’s eleven in the morning, a little early for lunch, but I need to be at the restaurant for one to prep, and I want to have a little time to spend with her. Jaxson pulls into the spot next to me, and the two of us go in together. The Déjà vu feeling is strong.

Jaxson clasps my shoulders, giving me a reassuring squeeze. “Don’t worry about it, man. It’s gonna be fine.” One more deep breath and the bell above the door rings as we enter.

“I’ll be right there,” Charlie calls out from the back room. When she pushes open the door, her large brown eyes lock with mine first, then she skirts to Jaxson. Her mouth pops open into an O shape. “Hi, Kade, Jaxson. What can I do for you guys?” She wipes her hands on her apron.

“We thought you might be hungry. I assume because you didn’t come by last night that you didn’t eat a good dinner.”

“Thought we’d help keep you fed,” Jaxson chimes in. She blushes and smirks. “Plus, you ignored my request for a date last night. Guess that means I have to try a bit harder.” He winks at her, and she looks to the ground. I wish I was as smooth as he is. I’ve always been more of the quiet type. When I’m with the right girl though, I will protect her from anything—even the asshole next to me.

Charlie looks at me as her cheeks redden further. “I shouldn’t have texted you last night. I’m sorry. That was unprofessional—”

“I wish you’d come,” I cut her off.

Her brows pull down, and she bites her lower lip “Why?” she whispers.

“I was an asshole to you yesterday.” She nods, agreeing with me, and I continue. “You caught me off guard, and I’m not used to it. This is my way of apologizing.” I hold the bag in my hand up. Her gaze flits to it and back to me. “I hoped we could eat together before I have to be at the restaurant. Start over.”

“And you, Jaxson?” she asks, motioning to him.

“You’re cute, and I need to eat, too.” He gives her the smile that always made Blair swoon.

“Give me a few minutes to clean up, and then I need Scott to get back before I can leave.”

“All right, we’ll wait here.”



## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: August 18, 2025, 4:21 am*

She turns and walks through the swinging door. I can see her through the small window standing at the sink. She's swaying her hips as she cleans up, and I'm curious as to what she's listening to. She really is perfect. Scott comes through the front door and stops short when he sees me.

"Hey, Kade. Have you and your friend been helped?"

"Yup. We brought food for Charlie." When he narrows his eyes at me, I correct myself. "I was an ass to her yesterday. I'm making up for it." Jaxson snickers next to me, and I roll my eyes.

Scott smirks. "Didn't think she could hack it because she's a girl?" I narrow my eyes at him, but he doesn't stop. Jaxson tenses next to me, and without looking at him, I know he wants to rip this guy's throat out. Scott's word vomit doesn't stop there though. "I didn't think she would be able to do it when I first met her. She was still in her apprenticeship, but she's a tough chick. I wouldn't want to mess with her. She knows how to hold her own, that's for sure."

My jaw ticks with how tight I've clenched it. I grip the bag in my hand a little tighter and do my damned best to hold it together. She steps out and smiles at Jaxson and me before either of us can teach Scott a lesson.

"Scott, I'm going to go to an early lunch. If you need me, call. Otherwise, I'll be back in an hour."

He tells us to have fun as Charlie waves at us to follow her through the back. There's a small picnic table behind her shop, and she takes a seat, Jaxson sliding in next to

her before I can. Asshole. I place the bag down and unpack the items. I've made us each our own personal plates of chicken, roasted butternut squash with butter and cinnamon, and sauteed spinach with garlic and olive oil.

"I wasn't sure what you liked, so I made one of the meals on the menu tonight."

Charlie holds the glass dish to her nose and inhales the aroma before putting it down again. She closes her eyes and smiles. "This smells so good, Kade. I can't wait to dig in." She takes a bite and hums in appreciation. "So, I looked you both up last night," she says casually, glancing between us.

I hold still and exchange looks with Jaxson, who is also waiting on bated breath. What did she uncover? I rack my brain, thinking about what she could have learned about me. Was it about the restaurant, or about me? It couldn't be too bad; otherwise, I don't think she would be having lunch with me.

Charlie continues telling us both how she found a few articles about Local Burn and how it's awesome I only hire veterans. I can't help the smirk that crosses my face, and how in awe she seems. She also tells us about finding Jaxson's social media accounts, and that's how she put two and two together that we're friends.

The conversation is flowing amongst us. She asks us questions about our jobs and lives, and we do the same, getting to know her a little bit more. Everything is going great until she asks the last question I expected to hear from her soft-looking lips.

"Who's Blair?"

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: August 18, 2025, 4:21 am*

Jaxson

Fuck. I look at Kade's face. His jaw is set, and his Adam's apple bobs with a deep swallow. I know he wants to blow, but he's trying to maintain his cool. Blair is still a very sore subject for him, not that Charlie would know that. Hell, until two days ago, I didn't know it.

"Shit," she whispers to herself when she sees him. "I'm sorry, Kade. I shouldn't pry like that." She places her hand on top of his. He slides his hand out from under hers and places it in his lap. Charlie's shoulders sag, and she looks at me like she's been burned. My leg bounces a mile a minute under the table with nervous energy.

"It's fine." He looks at the time on his phone. "I have to get to the restaurant."

He stands, leaving the two of us sitting there, alone. Charlie's crushed. How can he not see it? She's curling in on herself, looking anywhere but at us, and he's too fucking absorbed in his feelings for Blair to even recognize it. I can't stand it. Her big eyes shine with unshed tears as she starts poking her food with her fork, seemingly uninterested.

"Hey, don't worry about him. Blair's a bit of a sore subject, even after all these years." I squeeze her hand in mine.

"Will you tell me?" She looks up at me through her lashes.

I want to tell her. She has a right to know, especially with what we are proposing with both of us. I lick my lip and shake my head sadly. "Kade needs to be around for that

conversation. How about we cook for you tomorrow night?"

She smirks and shrugs in indifference. "The big bad chefs have a Friday night off?"

"For you, anything." She gives me the prettiest smile, and I fall a little harder for her. The more time I spend around her, the less I see Blair, and the more I see how amazing Charlie is. Shit. I'm falling hard and fast for this girl. Not that it's altogether surprising. I've always been the guy who falls hard and fast.

She blushes again and rubs her cheek, trying to hide it. I lean forward, my breath fanning across her face. "Charlie, can I kiss you?"

She sucks in a deep, shaky breath. "What about Kade?" She darts her eyes back and forth between mine, searching for answers.

"He wants you just as much as I do."

She pulls back, the heated moment between us passing. She sits quietly, but I can see the gears turning in her head. I see questions burning in her big brown eyes. "This isn't the first time you've done something like this, is it?"

I cock my head to the side. "What do you mean?"

Charlie swallows hard. "Shared?" I shake my head no. "Blair?"

I nod. "Yeah. Things haven't been the same between Kade and I since she... left." I can't have this conversation without him. Charlie needs to understand where both of us are coming from, and she needs to decide if she might want us both after we explain. The thought of being able to have the kind of relationship I used to have is exciting. It's the only time I've ever felt complete.

Kade and I aren't intimate with each other. It's always about her, but we complete one another. What he lacks, I make up for. I've never met someone else in my life like that—not even my own brother. Which is why when he left for the Marines and shut me out, I was crushed. I coped with several drunken nights and then lots of unimpressive sex by me. My heart wasn't in it, and even though my dick wanted action, it soon caught up with my brain.

“Is that something you'd be interested in? Both of us?” I ask, holding my breath, waiting for her answer.

I'm not sure how I'll even handle it if she doesn't want us together. I know Kade needs this; he told me as much during our talk last night. If I'm being honest with myself, I need it, too. I felt the connection the three of us had today. The way Charlie's pupils dilated when we both walked into the shop. She wants us just as much as we want her, she just has to.

“Yes,” she admits breathlessly. The grin that crosses my face is so large I can't contain it. “But I've never done anything like this. I'm not even sure how it works.” She looks at the plate, her cheeks flaming red in embarrassment.

I brush my finger along her flushed skin until she looks at me again. “It starts with you coming to dinner with both of us on Friday. I'll work with Kade to make the arrangements and text you the address. We'll talk and clear the air. If it's not something you want, then we don't move forward.”

“What if it turns out I only want one of you?” Her voice is small as she plays with her hands in her lap. I know this is hard for her to talk about. It's not a traditional way to start a relationship.

Hearing those words is like a knife to the gut. I can't fathom her not wanting both of us. She's too perfect.

“Do you?”

I can count the number of heartbeats that echo in my ears as I wait for her reply. She doesn't want to hurt either of us because that's not the kind of person she is. I think this is scary for her, and she doesn't want to mess it up before anything even happens. “No.”

I smile at her. “Okay.” I stand and clean up everything so I can pack it and get it back to Kade. “You're coming to dinner tomorrow. I'll text you the address, and if you don't show, we'll know our answer.” I lean over her. Her chest heaves and her breaths are shallow. I plant a gentle kiss on her cheek “See ya later, babe.”

I get out of there as fast as I can and race to Local Burn. Kade needs to get over this shit with his feelings about Blair. It's been too many years for him to still be moping around. Not when he could have a chance at something real again. I ring the back bell until someone I don't know answers, and I push my way past him, telling him I need Kade. I hear him mutter something in Spanish, but he doesn't stop me.

“What do you want?” Kade growls, putting the knife down with a little too much force.

“You're taking tomorrow off. We need to sit down and explain things to Charlie. It's either my house or yours, but we're clearing the air.”

Kade sighs as the guy who opened the door comes into view. “Victor, can you give us a few minutes alone?” Victor looks between us and walks out without saying a word. When the kitchen door closes, Kade lowers his voice. “I can't do it, Jaxson.”

I run my fingers through my dark locks and tug at the ends in frustration. “Why the hell not? And don't tell me it's because Charlie reminds you of Blair. You know damn well after spending more than ten seconds in her presence she's one-hundred

percent different and just as amazing, if not more so.”

Kade nods, but the sad look in his eyes hasn't faded. “I know she is. Charlie's wonderful and is perfect for us if we could convince her.”

I smile a wolfish grin. “If you hadn't run off today, you would know that she wants us both.” He snaps his head up and glares at me, not believing it. “Don't give me that look, asshole. You know I wouldn't lie about something this important.” I smile as I tease him. God, this feels good, just like old times.

The look of relief on his face says everything. He wants this just as much as I do. I know Charlie's going to want us, too. We just need to tell her everything first and hope to God she's willing to see past our initial attraction to her.

Charlie

Fashion is my enemy. I don't wear girly clothes on a day to day basis, and it feels unnatural to start now. I've straightened my long brown hair and have left it flowing down my back, and have paired it with an orange dress and a purple sweater. I tug at the skirt, trying to work a small wrinkle out of it. I opt for a pair of ballet flats because I don't want to embarrass myself by tripping.

My stomach feels like a butterfly garden has taken up residence there. I can't stop fidgeting as I look in the mirror again. I tuck my hair behind my ear and rub my palms over the material of the dress. I can't stall any longer, so I grab my keys and head out, sliding into my driver's seat. I pull up the address and study it for a few minutes. It's on the other side of town and should take me about fifteen minutes to get there. I rest my head back against the headrest and take a few deep breaths.

What am I getting myself into?

I think back to the conversation with Jaxson. Is it possible they actually want this? I've known them both for a few days. It all seems like it's moving too fast. I shake the thoughts from my head and focus on each man. I can see myself with either one of them... okay, both of them. Jaxson is confident and outgoing, while Kade is reserved; but when they're together, I see the spark. There is something about them together that sends a thrill down my spine.

I drive to my destination, still unsure whose house we are having dinner at, not concentrating on the directions because my GPS yells at me through the car speakers. My mind is too wrapped up thinking about each of them. Thinking about how it



would feel to have their fingers and lips touching me. Would they take turns or take me together? I blush thinking about having sex with both of them.

Could I even handle them both?

I pull up to the cute cottage style house and cut the engine. I see Kade peek out from the window and know it's too late to turn around. I gather my purse, smooth my dress, and walk up the steps. He's at the door before I even have a chance to ring the bell, smiling down at me.

Kade is in a pair of fitted, navy pants and a light blue button-down with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He opted to wear his glasses, which just adds to the muscular geek look. And let me tell you, the look is hot!

"Damn," I murmur. He smirks and clears his throat. My face heats up when I realize I said that out loud, and I snap my mouth shut.

"You look nice, Charlie. Come on in," he says. His voice has a bit of a husky quality to it, and I'd be lying if I said it didn't make my girl bits stand at attention.

Kade takes my purse and puts it in the hall closet while I walk into the living room. I lick my lips when I see Jaxson in the kitchen, his back to me. He's wearing a pair of snug jeans and a white t-shirt, and his feet are bare. Why is it so sexy when a man is in the kitchen barefoot? I give a small gasp in surprise when Kade's hand lands on my lower back, guiding me into the kitchen.

Jaxson looks over his shoulder, a huge smile on his face, and walks around the counter to place a gentle kiss on my cheek. "You look gorgeous. Glad you could come."

"Thanks," I say, touching my cheek where he kissed me.

“How about we get you something to drink, and then I can show you the house?”

“This is your house, Jaxson? I like it.” I look around at the cream-colored walls that have a littering of pictures and shelves with small trinkets.

“I wasn’t sure how you felt about dogs and thought Jaxson’s house would be better. We can cook at my house next time,” Kade says, scratching the back of his neck.

Next time.

A thrill runs through my body at the prospect that this could happen more than once. Kade seems so unsure of himself, it’s adorable. You would never guess this man had a shy bone in his body based upon his bulk and size.

I smile and place my hand on his cheek. “I’d like that.”

“Great, now that’s settled, let’s get you a drink, and Kade can take over cooking while I show you around.”

“That’s good, I won’t last long on alcohol alone. I’m a cheap date as it is.”

“Hmm... a drunk Charlie. I might enjoy seeing that,” Jaxson teases. I tuck some hair behind my ear and look up at him through my lashes. I know what I’m like when I’m drunk, and let me tell you, I’m very friendly.

He leans close, glancing at Kade who’s watching us, then says, “I hope to see you a little drunk tonight. I imagine the three of us could have some fun.”

Wetness pools between my legs, so I shift my weight from one foot to the other. Jaxson hands me a glass of wine, and I swallow half of it before I ever take my eyes off him. He smirks and looks at Kade, who is wearing the same sort of expression on

his face, then takes my hand for a tour.

Jaxson shows me room after room, all of them blending together as I focus on the heat emanating from his hand. When we make it to his bedroom, my heart jumps into my throat. Jaxson's bed is huge, and with the lack of food and half a glass of wine coursing through my body, my mind has wandered to all sorts of dirty places.

Jaxson takes that moment to look at me, interrupting my dirty thoughts. "Later. We need to talk first, explain everything."

Kade is leaning against the wall just outside the bedroom and reaches out for my hand. Instead of letting me go, Jaxson takes my glass so I can place my other hand in Kade's. It's a comforting sort of feeling, having these large men surround me, touching me. Kade sits on the couch, and Jaxson hands me my glass back. Nerves are starting to set in as I bite some loose skin on my lower lip.

The men look over my head at one another, and when I glance at Jaxson, he motions for Kade to start. Kade looks down at our entwined fingers and takes a shaky breath. I try to give him a reassuring squeeze as I know this can't be easy for him.

"I joined the Marines after my," Kade sighs and corrects himself, "our girlfriend died because I didn't want to live without her." His voice is so soft I can barely hear him over the noise of my thumping heart.

Died.

He didn't want to live without her.

I jerk my face up to meet his and stare wide-eyed at him, my mind reeling with questions. What the hell does someone say to something like that? I feel more and more like their romance was one of Romeo and Juliet. Did he actually want to be killed

over there? Does he still have these kinds of thoughts?

Wow. This just got heavy. I toss back the rest of my drink and hand it to Jaxson for a refill. I think I'm going to need a few more to make it through this entire story.

Kade

What the fuck was I thinking telling her that? Her response was pretty much what I expected. She's staring at me with wide eyes, her mouth popped open. It's a bomb to drop on her, but I had to tell her if there is any chance in hell we can start something with her. I look up at Jaxson, who is coming back with a full glass of wine for her. He nods at me in encouragement to continue.

Jaxson hands her full glass back to her, and she takes another sip—although smaller this time. She puts the glass down on the coffee table, licking the extra liquid from her lip with the tip of her tongue.

She clears her throat. "What happened?" she asks, her voice scratchy.

"I want you to know, I'm not suicidal."

She nods and relaxes just an ounce at my words. When I'm sure she fully comprehends, I continue. The ambient noise fades away, and it's just Charlie, Jaxson, and me. Nothing else matters as I recount my story for her. Jaxson knows all of this, but he listens without interrupting. I tell her all about Blair, her leukemia, and my reason for enlisting.

We were never meant to fall for Blair, and it was never supposed to be more than a fling, but once Jaxson and I spent time with her, we couldn't let her go—and she couldn't let us go. The three of us just... fit. Blair was home. Being with her and Jaxson was the only time my life felt complete.

It started off as the both of us dating Blair, separately. Jaxson knew I was seeing her, and vice versa. She would bed hop in college since we weren't roommates. If one of us needed her, she would come by. It was after about a month of this when we all sat down and talked it through. Blair admitted to wanting to try a relationship as a threesome, and Jaxson and I were open to it.

"So how did that work? Like are Jaxson and you intimate as well?" Charlie asks.

I shake my head. "No. It was always about her pleasure. Making her feel good made Jaxson and me feel good. We're a team. We work better that way." I look at Jaxson, and he's smiling at us.

I haven't told many people this story, and it feels good to get it off my chest. I feel I can breathe a little easier for the first time in alongtime. I hope she understands how difficult this is for me. My heart is on the line, and I'm trusting her not to break it.

When I finish telling her, she sits there, staring at me, absorbing everything. Jaxson places his hand on her leg, and she looks at him for the first time since I started talking.

"And you?"

"I didn't join the Marines, but I started sleeping around a bit. We both have always enjoyed cooking. It makes sense we would find ways to cope and that cooking would be one."

She takes another sip of her drink and mouths 'wow'.

"Dinner's ready. How about we eat something, and we can discuss things now since you know about our history," I say quickly, trying to ease some of the tension. God, I hope she doesn't run for the hills. I can't handle that kind of rejection right now, not

after putting my heart out there.

A subtle blush creeps up her pretty neck and settles into her cheeks. God, she's beautiful. I lean over and kiss her as the blush deepens. "I've never done anything like this before. Never had two guys. I'm not sure I'd know what to do." Then quietly, she adds, "What the hell are my parents going to think?" That is definitely a discussion for another time, not something she needs to worry about yet.

We sit at the table, and Jaxson plates up our meals, placing them in front of us. I take a few bites but watch Charlie pick at the food. With the amount of wine she's had, she has to be feeling some of the effects. As much as I want to see a friendly, drunk Charlie, it's best if she's not.

It's so quiet in the room, I swear you could hear a pin drop. Jaxson and I look between Charlie and each other as a clock in the distance ticks away, counting the seconds. She takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. The tension is killing me; it's so thick you can cut it with a knife. Jaxson and I are trying to give her time to think, neither of us wanting to break the silence first.

I'm going out of my mind, waiting for someone to say something first. I know she has a million questions. I look at Jaxson, panic written on my face, and he gives me a subtle nod to continue.

"Would being with both of us be something you would be interested in, Charlie?" I ask, finally breaking the silence.

She looks at me, her dark eyes wide. She licks her lips and then looks back to her plate, nodding her bowed head. "Yes," she says quietly. She takes a deep breath and risks a glance up at us through her lashes. "Both of you are all I've been able to think about since I've met you."

I move my seat closer, and Jaxson does the same. He places his hand on her thigh, while I place mine on her shoulder. Her body sways as she tries to figure out which direction to lean.

“Can you tell me why you both like it?” She looks back and forth between us, and Jaxson smiles wide. He looks like he hasn’t got a care in the world, but I know he’s on pins and needles waiting for her to respond.

“We complete each other. We always have, it’s weird. Being in a relationship together with a woman makes for a strong bond. Things I can’t give you, Kade can, and vice versa.” She nods, and he continues, a huge grin on his face. “Plus, imagine getting twice the pleasure in each fuck session.”

I roll my eyes. That’s just like Jaxson to scare the girl. “Jaxson,” I say through gritted teeth. When I look at Charlie though, she doesn’t look scared. Her face and neck are flushed and her breathing is shallow. She twists her fingers in her lap. Then she looks at me. Her pupils have expanded, making her brown eyes almost black as night. Her eyes are half-lidded as she licks her lips before taking another breath. I see the willingness to accept us, or at least try.

Try.

That’s all I want. I want a chance to try this thing between us.

She swallows thickly. “Does one person watch, or is it together?”

“Together,” Jaxson and I say in unison. “Unless that’s not what you want. But we can figure all that out. Why don’t you take a few bites of food, and we can play it by ear?” I push her plate closer to her, urging her to eat.



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She does as I ask, her breathing calming down, but the way she's looking between us—like she wants to devour us, has me straining against the zipper in my pants. I want to toss her over my shoulder, deposit her on the bed, and spend the rest of the night exploring her. Learning the sweet spots on her body that turn her into a quivering mess, begging for a release.

I lean closer and breathe in her scent. It's a mix of apples and vanilla. She smells like the perfect dessert, and I have a sweet tooth.

Jaxson rubs his hand up and down her thigh, gently stroking her. When the bottom of her dress pulls up, exposing more of her soft thigh, I'm done for. I lean over as she turns to face me.

“Can I kiss you, Charlie?”

My lips are centimeters away from hers. Her breath is warm against my skin. I'm insane with need for her. She nods, and I press my mouth against hers. The kiss starts off soft. Her lips feel good pressed against mine; I can only imagine where else they would feel this good. She moans against me, and I deepen the kiss, dipping my tongue past her lips for a taste. Charlie is driving me insane. Quiet whimpers urge me on, and I feel Jaxson's eyes on us, watching, enjoying.

I pull back and she pouts.

“My turn,” Jaxson says and wraps his hand around the back of her neck, pulling her close to him.

She holds on to his bicep with one hand and reaches her other arm back in search of me. It's all instinct, like she knows she needs both of us. I link her fingers with mine and pull her away from him. Jaxson looks at me in question but doesn't say a word. He knows what I want—what I need. I help her stand and tug her hand to follow as I lead her to the bedroom.

We barely make it through the threshold when I press her against Jaxson's hard body and weave my fingers through her long dark tresses as I explore her mouth with my own. Her pink lips are soft and supple under mine. I need more of her. Jaxson's hands explore her body, and she moans in pleasure as he pinches one of her hardened nipples through her dress.

I press my pelvis against hers, my growing erection pressing into her soft skin. Her fingers rest on the hard plains of my chest, and I'm not sure if she is trying to push me away or pull me closer. As long as she's touching me right now, I don't care. I need to feel her small hands on me, exploring.

I pull back to watch her. She licks her lips as she tries to get her breathing under control, and Jaxson spins her around to have some fun as well. I undo a few buttons, then pull my shirt up and over my head, dropping it on the floor by my feet. It's been too long since I've been lucky enough to have this. Watching is as much of a turn on, especially knowing she wants us both.

Now, I just hope she doesn't stop us.

Jaxson

Charlie feels like heaven under my fingers. She is so responsive to our touch. It's been hard not to devour her, but I know we need to go slow with her if we don't want to scare her. I pull back to give her a moment to gaze at me. She then turns her head to see Kade already topless. Charlie reaches her hand out and draws her fingers down his abs and stops at the bulge in his pants.

Fuck, she's so beautiful. I squeeze her hips, pulling her backside to me, letting her feel how much she's turning me on. Then she surprises me and reaches her hand between us, rubbing me through my jeans. I lean my head back and moan in delight, relishing the moment. I open my eyes to look at her. Her eyelids are heavy, and her bright eyes have darkened. There is a nice rosy hue covering her cheeks. She's excited.

Exactly how I want her to look. I want her to be needy and wanton. I want her to want us as bad as we want her. I haven't been able to get her out of my mind since I met her. I didn't expect it to come to this, but I'd be a liar if I said I wasn't happy about it. I pull my shirt over my head, giving her an opportunity to see me the way she sees Kade.

Her tiny hands land on my flushed skin, and it feels like I've been brushed with a branding iron. Sparks of electricity hit wherever her fingertips land. She looks back and forth between the two of us, her fingers trailing down our stomachs again, and she hovers just above an old bullet wound on Kade. He pushes her hands lower, guiding her to his belt buckle. With deft fingers, she undoes the leather strap and pops a button.

She turns back to me and tries to take my pants off, but I shake my head at her attempts. I know we both won't be able to take her tonight. She says she wants it, but I can see her nerves. I'm going to watch her and Kade, and then I'll have my turn with her. He needs her more than I do right now.

"You have too many clothes on, babe," I comment, helping her unzip the back of it.

She grabs her dress by the hem and pulls it over her head, dropping it on the floor next to my shirt. She's wearing a delicate looking, powder blue bra with matching panties. They are sexy but still give her a fair amount of modesty. Her nipples pebble under my attentive gaze, and I reach forward to grab her breasts, testing the weight in each hand. I run my thumb back and forth over the nipples, making them strain more against the soft material.

"Fuck, Charlie," Kade says. His pupils are blown, and his breathing comes out in harsh pants. His blue eyes are dark with lust as he slowly drags his gaze over Charlie's perfect body.

He pushes his pants down, leaving his boxers in place. He puts his large hand between her breasts, urging her onto the bed. She lands softly and props her head up to watch as he crawls between her perfect thighs. I sit in the chair in the corner of the room to watch the show unfold before me. I undo my pants and pull my cock out, slowly stroking it as I watch. I want to be nestled in her warmth. Charlie turns her head to look at me and gasps in surprise as she watches.

"Kade needs you now, Charlie," I say, and she turns her head back to watch his ministrations.

Kade pulls her panties down her legs, dropping them on the floor, and I see she's bare. Fuck me, could she get any more perfect? He looks up at her, and she lifts her hips toward his waiting lips, urging him to continue. The two of them are lost in one

another as he touches and teases her. I know she senses I'm here, but she only has eyes for him.

"Please, Kade. Make me feel good."

Charlie reaches down, tugging on Kade's dark locks, pulling him closer to her as he works his mouth, tongue, and fingers over her sensitive flesh. She moans in pleasure, pressing her hips up again, chasing the orgasm she needs. She turns her head to me again to watch me stroke myself. Her eyes are hazy with pleasure, and the sight of the two of them is fucking unbelievable. In this moment, everything is right with the world. She reaches a hand out toward me but withers under Kade's expert touch. Her eyes slide closed for a moment before popping open to watch me again.

"Jaxson," she whispers.

I shake my head, continuously stroking my hard cock. "Not until you come, babe."

"Come for me, Charlie," Kade demands. A few more well-timed thrusts of his fingers as he sucks her clit, and she arches off the bed, a silent scream leaving her lips as she comes all over his hand and face.

Fucking. Beautiful.

I walk to the side of the bed, kneel next to her, and let her stroke me like I promised. Her tiny fingers barely fit around it, and she pulls me toward her mouth as Kade is busy rolling a condom up his length. He rubs the tip of his cock up and down her wet slit, and she pulls away from me with a pop to pull her bra off.

"Kade is going to fuck you now, and I'm going to watch as you come apart on him, then you'll do the same for me." I take a step back when she tries to reach for me again.

Kade flips her on her stomach and pulls her onto her hands and knees, facing me. She's in the perfect position for me to watch her come apart again on my best friend's cock. I'll be able to see both their faces contort in pleasure.

"I'm probably not going to last," Kade admits. He presses into her, and she grips the sheets in front of her, her eyes never leaving mine. He starts moving in slow, deep strokes. Each time he presses in, I see the ecstasy on her face. I can't wait until she is able to take us both. I want the three of us to be able to come together, fill her to the brim.

Her eyes are glued to mine as Kade wraps one hand around her hair and pulls her hip back against him with the other, chasing his release. Her body bounces off his as she meets him thrust for thrust.

"Rub that pussy, Charlie. I want to see you fall apart on him," I demand.

She does as I ask and rubs herself as Kade's thrusts become erratic. "Fuck, she's squeezing me so tight," Kade groans. Charlie's pants of pleasure increase as her entire body trembles with her orgasm. It doesn't take long before Kade groans his release deep inside her.

"My turn," I smirk at her. "Can you handle it?" She licks her lips and nods as I pull my pants and boxers all the way off and grab a condom from the nightstand. My dick bobs against my stomach and jumps under her attentive gaze. Kade sits in the chair to watch the two of us now.

"How do you want me?" she asks as she crawls toward me, her face inches from my cock.

I smirk. "I want you to ride me until you give me another orgasm, and then after being a good girl, I'm going to take you from behind so you can play with Kade." I

jerk my head in his direction, and he smiles at her, already anticipating her mouth on his dick.

I slide up the bed and help her situate herself over me, and when she slides down, it is pure heaven. Everything around us disappears, and it's just Charlie and me now. The way her body grips me tight is almost too much. No way I'm going to last long. Her small hands rest on my chest as she fully seats herself on me.

"Jesus, Charlie," I grit out. "You feel fucking amazing." I pop my hips up, hitting deep inside her.

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She gasps at the intrusion but only grinds down harder on me. “I’m not used to being on top.”

“Do what feels good. Don’t worry about me.” She looks to Kade and he nods, agreeing with me.

“I want to see a show,” Kade chimes in. “We gave Jaxson a good one, and look how hard he got for you.”

She moans, closes her eyes, and bites her lip. She then tosses her head back, her long tresses tickling my muscular thighs. She takes me deep, moving and grinding her hips, taking exactly what she wants, but I feel her holding back. She’s not as relaxed as she was with Kade. I try to rub my hands up and down her body, but when that doesn’t help, I flip us. She giggles as her back hits the soft mattress beneath her.

“I want both of you,” she says, looking into my green eyes. “Please,” she adds as she runs her fingers through my hair.

“You’re not ready for that yet, but you can play with Kade while you come on my cock. I want to feel you milk me dry.” I start pumping into her hard and fast. Kade moves to the side of the bed, and she grasps him in her hand, struggling to keep up with a solid rhythm.

Her orgasm is building again, and I hold my own back. When she pulls Kade into her mouth though, it’s hard to stop myself. Jesus. It’s been too long since I’ve seen that. Too long since I got to experience my friend’s ecstasy along with my own, which is why, when she starts to come, I can’t hold back. I hold her hips and chase my release



as Kade chases his second one.

“I’m gonna come, Charlie. Either let go, or I’m gonna come in your mouth,” he says shaking.

She locks her lips around him and takes it all. She takes everything both of us give her, and it’s fucking perfect.

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Charlie

Holy. Shit. That was the most amazing sex I've ever had. Not one orgasm, but three! What girl gets that lucky? This bitch, that's who. Both of them were perfect, each making me feel cherished in their own way. I loved how Jaxson took control of the situation. It's like he knew how it was going to go in his head and executed it.

Kade was still in control, but more caring. He took me slowly, wanting to savor every moment. Holy crap though, they are both very well endowed. I can still feel both of them between my legs, and can still taste Kade.

I'm reeling in the post-sex haze when both men plop down next to me, sandwiching me between them. Jaxson wraps his body around mine in a cocoon of warmth, and Kade is in front of me, pressing his hard body against mine. I revel in the feeling for a moment, but then a thought hits me, crushing everything.

Do I get up and leave, or do I stay?

I attempt to slide down the bed, but both men's hands on my body keep me in place. I shift under their touch, and Kade furrows his brows. "What's wrong?" he asks, moving some stray hair from my face.

This is so embarrassing. "I-ah, I figured you'd want me to go home. It's getting late." God, I sound like an idiot. If I could cover my face without adding to my embarrassment, I would.

He keeps his eyes locked with mine "Do you want to go home?"

I feel my face heat, and I duck, burying it in Kade's chest. I must be fifty shades of red by now. I'm not good at this. It's not that I haven't had boyfriends or dates, but I've never done the one-night stand thing—especially with two men. Is it normal to spend the night? I mean, the thought of waking up next to them in the morning is appealing.

“If you want me to stay, I will.” I'll leave the decision up to him.

Jaxson kisses my bare shoulder. “We want you to stay, Charlie.”

He walks to his dresser—still naked—and I watch the muscles in his back and legs flex as he reaches in a drawer for boxers and a few shirts. He tosses Kade's boxers to him along with the clothes for us to slip into. I sit up to pull the shirt over my head, and it hits mid-thigh, covering everything.

Kade and Jaxson are covered as well, and I hate to admit how much I wanted them to stay naked. I smirk at my thoughts, and Kade picks up on it.

“What's so funny?” he asks.

“N-nothing,” I manage to squeak.

I slide under the covers and they follow, wrapping me in their arms—I settle into Kade's chest as Jaxson wraps himself around me. I'm so warm sandwiched between these two men that I start to fall asleep almost immediately.

“Goodnight, Charlie,” Jaxson says as he kisses my shoulder moments before sleep pulls me under.

I wake a few hours later to Kade thrashing around the bed, whimpering and talking in his sleep. “Kade, wake up,” I say.

“What’s going on?” Jaxson asks, his voice thick with sleep.

“Wake up,” I say louder. He keeps thrashing as I kneel beside him. I reach my hand out to him, and Jaxson pulls me back, holding me against his chest and not letting me touch Kade. “Kade,” I yell. I flinch when he sits up suddenly and screams, burying his head in his hands.

I don’t even know how to react to what I just witnessed. Jaxson is stroking my arms, trying to soothe me. I know he was in the Marines, but the way he talked at dinner made it seem like he didn’t see much action. The screaming stops, and he blinks his eyes a few times, recognition settling in. Kade reaches his hand out toward me, and I shy away, deeper into Jaxson’s embrace.

“I’m so sorry, Charlie.” He holds his shaky hands out in front of him, showing me he means no harm. “I haven’t had a nightmare in months.”

I pull out of Jaxson’s hold, picking up my discarded clothing from the floor, and close the bathroom door behind me, making sure to lock it. I hear Jaxson saying something to Kade through the door, but their voices are too low to distinguish it.

“Please, Charlie. Can we talk about this?” Jaxson’s muffled voice comes through.

I finish getting into my clothes and open the door. Both their faces fall when they see I’m fully dressed. “I should go. I didn’t mean to cause you any sort of distress tonight.”

Kade’s entire face falls, and I want to reach out for him and soothe the worry lines I see. “I haven’t had an episode in months,” he tries to reason with me. “I usually have my dog around; he helps when this happens. Tonight’s was different than they have been—” he stops suddenly when he sees my face.

Great, so I made him go crazy by being here. That does a hell of a lot for my confidence. What do I say to that? This is more awkward than the walk of shame.

“Please stay, Charlie. I’ll leave,” Kade reasons.

I shake my head no and gather my stuff. “It’s fine, really. I’ll talk to you guys later.” I’m out the front door before they have a chance to say anything else. I space out during the ride home, and when I finally lock myself in my apartment, I look at my phone and see there’s a message from Kade.

Kade: I’m so sorry about tonight. I can’t control it, and sometimes it happens. I haven’t had an episode in a months. I really like you, Charlie. I don’t want this ruining anything between us.

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I see the three dots and know he's adding more. I wait, staring at my phone until the screen goes dark again. I light up the screen and wait, but another response never comes. I need to think about what I'm going to say before I respond to him.

\* \* \*

Things have been awkward between Kade, Jaxson, and I since that night. When I say awkward, I mean you can cut the tension with a knife. Kade tried to reach out to me one more time, and when I didn't respond, he stopped. I know I'm being childish; Jaxson has even made a point to tell me that—but I'm scared. It's Wednesday again, and I know Kade will be here any minute to go over his order. Jaxson wanted to be here, but I told him no.

The bell rings above the door, and I hold my breath as I look out from the back room window. Kade is standing there in all his glory in jeans and a t-shirt. I instinctively lick my lips as memories of the two men and three orgasms come rushing back to my mind. Everything hums, and I have to clench my thighs together to stop the pending rush of wetness. I push open the door, and when his eyes meet mine, I see his shame.

"I've got it from here, Scott. Kade, follow me." I nod to the room, and he follows without saying anything. We walk to the back of the freezer, and I turn suddenly, smacking into his chest. I didn't realize he was walking so closely behind me. He grabs my upper arms and holds me steady as I blush from head to toe.

"I'm sorry I didn't text you back or call you," I admit quietly. He murmurs something about it being okay, but it's not. I need to let him know why I left. "You were having a nightmare—"

“I was trying to tell you it was different than ones I’ve had before,” he tries to reason.

“You called out for Blair,” I spit out. His face contorts in fear, and I hesitate. “I didn’t know what to do.”

He wasn’t expecting me to say that. The color drains from his face. His lips are pressed in a hard line, and his eyes are wide in shock. “What?” He drops his hands and takes a small step back. “Charlie, I…” He presses his glasses up and rubs his eyes, then drags his hands down his face before he looks away, shame gripping him. “I didn’t know.”

I shrug. What can I really say to that? I turn away to grab the invoice, and he starts speaking quietly.

“You look like her.” I turn to look into his darkened eyes. “You look so damn much like Blair. I didn’t even realize I said her name when I woke up screaming. It was all subconscious.”

“I look like your ex?” My mouth drops in surprise. Everything seems to come to a standstill, and I stop breathing for a moment. “Is that why you and Jaxson like me, Kade? Is that why you wanted to have sex with me?”

Please don’t let that be the answer. Please say no.

“Yes—no! Fuck!” He tries to correct himself, but it’s too late. I take a step back from him, my eyes wide and my mouth open, then nod in understanding.

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Kade

Charlie pulls away from me, and her whole demeanor changes. She straightens her back, squares her shoulders, and gets down to business. She starts rattling off my order, and I'm so taken aback it takes me a moment to follow what she's saying.

"Do you want to add anything else to your order?"

"Can we at least talk about this?" I ask in disbelief.

"I get it. We had a fun night, nothing more to it. Don't worry about it. Now, your order. Anything else?"

My head is spinning, and I feel as if I could puke. She's shutting down on me. Seriously? Yes! A lot of something else. I needed her that night, and while I may have called out my ex's name, it doesn't change the fact that I needed her. Charlie. As soon as she left, I high-tailed it out of Jaxson's place, too embarrassed I ruined a perfect fucking night.

I shake my head and keep my eyes to the ground, shame filling me. "No. Nothing else to add," I say.

"Great. I'll deliver it later today." She turns around and picks up a knife, returning to her job, ignoring me.

"We need to talk—"



“No. We don’t need to do anything. You need to get out of my shop before we both do something we regret.” Charlie points the knife in my direction, and the hatred in her eyes says it all—go the fuck away.

I know when to tuck my tail and run. I’ll leave her alone for now, but when she comes to the restaurant later today, I will make her talk to me then. I’ll make sure Jaxson is there. “This isn’t over,” I say and storm out. I push the swinging door with so much force it bounces off the back wall, and a customer in the shop glares at me.

I get to the restaurant, and Victor is already there prepping. He’s early today, and that pisses me off even more. I turn toward the back room, and without even looking up he says, “What’s eating you?”

“Nothing,” I grumble. I walk into the office, pull my chef coat on, and push my glasses up my nose.

When I walk back to the kitchen, he glances up at me but doesn’t say a word. Smart man. I’m not sure how much of my temper I’d be able to rein in if he wanted to talk. We work in uncomfortable silence for a while until he puts his knife down and turns to me. He’s about to say something when the doorbell for the back rings.

Saved by the bell.

I put my knife down and pull open the door. Jaxson is there with Charlie, her arms wrapped protectively around her as Jaxson holds the box with my order. As soon as Charlie sees me, she shoulders past me to get inside. Victor smiles at her, and she tries to return it but I glare at him. He smirks. I know he’s figured it out, and I really want to punch him in his smug face. My glare in his direction says it all. When he sees Jaxson directly behind her, his eyes widen.

“I’ll leave you all to talk.” Victor scurries out of the kitchen and into the front part of

the restaurant before I can say anything. We help Charlie unload the boxes and put them in the fridge. When she puts the last one down, I cage her in, my hands going to the cold metal on either side of her head. It's just the three of us, and I need to clear the air. I need more of her, and I'll be damned if she pushes me away over this.

She glares up at me, and I see her fire and spirit. God, it's sexy. "You need to let me explain—let us explain."

I press her further into the fridge wall, and she gasps as the cold metal comes in contact with her back. I lean down, my face inches from her. She smells so good. I want to wrap my hands in her hair and pull her to me. Kiss the look of annoyance right off her beautiful face. Jaxson stands in the doorway to stop her if she tries to run.

"Just because I called out Blair's name, doesn't mean I wanted her. I was having a fucking nightmare, and normally, Bruno, my dog, would have been there to pull me out of it."

"The problem I have now isn't because you called outhername. The problem is you admitting you wanted to take me on a date and fuck me because I look like her." She pushes back on my muscular chest, aiming for space, and I hardly feel it. Her glare turns on Jaxson, and without looking, I know he's as pissed off as I am.

I speak through clenched teeth, trying to get my point across. "I didn't mean to. My dreams morphed from the battlefield to watching her die. You're the first girl I've spent the night with in a long time. Coupled with being with Jaxson again, and I couldn't help it." I take a step back, giving her some room, and she takes a deep breath. "I'm sorry I called out for her, but I'm not sorry about anything we did. I just wish it didn't end that way."

Jaxson speaks behind me, and I'm glad to have a moment to calm down. "Just

because you have similar characteristics doesn't mean that's why we want you. Within five minutes of being with you, we both knew you were different than her—better than her.”

She mumbles something under her breath about us being right. We stare at one another for a minute, and when she doesn't say anything, I push past Jaxson and step out into the warm kitchen. Victor still hasn't returned, and that's probably wise. I turn to look into her big chocolate eyes. Wetness pools on her bottom lid, and it breaks my heart knowing I've dragged this emotion from her.

She wraps her arms around her middle and she looks so small in my kitchen, so unsure. “Why did you ask me then?”

I see the uncertainty flash in her eyes. She's been here before. I can tell by the way she looks between us, pleading for us to tell her she's not a second choice. Someone has hurt her in the past, chose someone else over her.

Dumb fuck.

“Because you're smart, funny, and beautiful,” Jaxson says.

“And you can cut a mean steak,” I cut in with a grin.

Her lips pull up into a smile and her features soften. “Don't you forget it. You better not hire someone else. All you'll get is a hack job.”

I step into her space and run the back of my fingers down her cheek. Her eyes flutter closed, and her lips instinctively part.

“Charlie, something like this has happened before, hasn't it?”

Jaxson

Watching the two of them interact is like watching a ping pong match. I'm not sure where I fit in with this puzzle, but I know if I wasn't here, things wouldn't have gotten resolved. All they needed was to talk to one another, and they clearly needed a moderator to bridge the gap. I want the three of us to go home, snuggle on the couch, and Kade and I can give her so many orgasms she'll forget her own name. I smile at the thought.

"Charlie, is Kade right? Has someone made you a second choice before?" I ask. The same pain flashes across her features, and I pull her body to mine, hugging her tight and kissing the top of her head. "Babe, you're not a second choice for us. I can promise you that. Not by a long shot. How about you come over tonight and I'll cook dinner. Kade can come over later and you can talk to us."

She pulls back and puts a small amount of distance between us. "I'm not sure that's a good idea," she says, a sadness behind her eyes.

"Yes, you're coming," I state, leaving no room for discussion. "You and I will have a nice dinner, then when Kade is done, he will come over and we can talk." She narrows her eyes, and if I had to guess, I would say she would rather spit in my face. "Please," I add softly.

Her shoulders relax and she glances between me and Kade. Finally, after what feels like an eternity, she nods slowly. I pull her to me again, and she reaches out for Kade, wanting to feel both of us. It feels so right, even after a short amount of time. She is meant to be with us. I know it.

“Fine, but I’m not spending the night.” Charlie crosses her arms over her chest and juts her hip out. It’s the cutest fucking thing I’ve ever seen.

I place my hands on either side of her face and bring her lips to mine for a gentle kiss. “Deal. We won’t make you stay, but you might just want to.” I smirk and give her a flirty wink.

I leave her alone with Kade for a few minutes. I know he feels bad and wants a few minutes alone to clear the air. This is not the way I imagined the day going, but I got to see Charlie, which is a bonus.

She kisses Kade, and he holds on to her a little longer, whispering in her ear. I know him well enough to know he is telling her sorry a million more times and trying everything in his power to make things right. The big softy.

The two of us walk her out to her car, and when she leaves, I turn to him. “Really? You told her we want her because she looks like Blair?”

He rubs the top of his head and groans. “I was taken aback by the question when she asked. I know I fucked that one up. Why is this so much harder with her? With Blair, the three of us fell into an easy rhythm.”

I fight the urge to roll my eyes. Kade is smart, but sometimes he’s an idiot. “Because you keep comparing her to Blair. She’s not, and you need to let that shit go. We finally found someone who wants us both, but it’s going to be different. She’s going to have different insecurities, and we need to treat her like Charlie, not Blair.”

He nods and groans at himself. It’s all going to work out, but we have to communicate with one another. We all have to be on the same page, and in order to do that, we need to know about Charlie’s history. She seems to trust us, but she’s been burned before, and we need to know how so we can avoid making the same

mistake.

\* \* \*

Charlie shows up right on time wearing a pair of jeans and a Bon Jovi t-shirt. She's left her hair down, and I imagine tangling my fingers in her hair, exposing her lithe neck for me to nip and kiss to my heart's content. As if she can read my mind, she smirks. God, she's sexy. I move to the side, letting her step though. As soon as the door closes, the air between us becomes thick.

I pull her to me and seal my lips over hers, swallowing her moan of pleasure as she clutches my shirt like I'm her lifeline. Dinner is all but forgotten as I press her into the closest wall, grinding my erection into her. I've wanted to do this since I saw her this morning. I've wanted to do this since I saw the pain reflected back at me when we talked.

"Tell me to stop and I will," I say. If she tells me to stop I might die.

"Don't stop. I want you," she moans.

I lift her, urging her to wrap her legs around me, and carry her to my bedroom. The same place the three of us were less than a week ago. I grow harder thinking about Kade and me being able to take her together, claiming her the way she should be. Worshipping every inch of her sexy body.

I place her on the bed, and the two of us are frantic to get our clothes off. She tugs her shirt off and her jeans down her legs, standing before me in a sexy bra and panties. Her eyes have darkened, and she pants as she watches me strip out of my own clothes. I could get used to her like this all the time. Needy.

I stroke my steel-like cock a few times, and her eyes are glued to the movement. "See

something you like, babe?” I ask, knowing she’s loving the show. She slowly nods her head, never moving her eyes, and then drops to her knees, crawling to me. She stops directly in front of me and looks up, asking permission. How could I deny her?

She takes me in her mouth and I’m a goner. She’s so warm, wet, and incredibly sexy on her knees for me. I wish Kade was here to see this.

“I want Kade to see what he’s missing. Can I send him a picture?” I close my eyes and moan in appreciation as she hums around me and nods.

I take a few of them; all of them she’s looking up at me with big doe eyes, enraptured by what she’s doing, the pleasure she’s bringing me. I send one with a message telling him how much he’s missed and toss my phone on the bed. I let her suck me off for a few more minutes before I pull her off me with a pop and help her stand.

“Are you on birth control?”

She nods. Thank God. I’ve pictured taking her with nothing between us since last week. I stalk toward her until her knees hit the bed and she sits. I place one knee at the edge, wrap my hands around the back of her legs, and pull her onto my hard cock in one swift motion. Heaven. That’s where I am. Nestled between her thighs, watching myself slide in and out of her.

She grips me, bringing both of us closer to our orgasms, and when my name falls from her lips on a sigh, I know I’m done for. I pound into her, chasing my own release, and empty everything inside her.

“Wow, that’s some show,” Kade says behind me.

Charlie

I look past Jaxson and lock eyes with Kade. I expect to see him upset that he wasn't here, but he's not. He looks turned on. His eyes are hooded, and he licks his lips slowly like I'm the best-looking meal he's ever seen.

"You know, if you get her alone, I get her alone, Jaxson." He smirks from the doorway. He's in his chef pants and a tight black t-shirt. He looks delicious enough to eat.

"Didn't expect you here so quickly." Jaxson smiles back at him before placing my feet on the ground and helping me sit up. He kisses me on the lips and walks to the bathroom to get a towel.

I try to cover my nakedness, but Kade shakes his head, stopping me. God, why is this so hot? I lower my hands again and let him roam his eyes over my body. He licks his lips, and when I peek at his crotch, he is definitely tenting his pants. Jaxson returns and helps me clean up before tossing me a t-shirt to throw on.

Before I have the chance to pull it over my head, Kade is on me. His kisses are hot and passionate, and he trails his fingers over my curves until he reaches my sex. My body hums and I want more. I pull him closer, not letting an inch of space between us, and he chuckles against my lips.

He drops his forehead to mine. "Let's have dinner and talk. Then you and I are leaving so we can have some alone time."



“Hey, not fair,” Jaxson calls from the kitchen.

He smirks and turns in Jaxson’s direction. “Maybe you should have kept it in your pants a little longer then,” he calls out, then turns to look at me, “Unless you don’t want to.”

I place my hand on his cheek and smile. “I’d love some one-on-one time.”

Kade helps me pull the t-shirt over my head, and I take a big whiff. It smells like Jaxson, and I smile as he takes my hand and leads me to the table. How the hell did I end up in a situation like this? I look between both of the guys who I have only known for a short while but already can’t see my life without them. Each man brings his own uniqueness to the relationship; where one lacks, the other makes up for.

Kade helps me into my seat. As soon as I’ve taken the first bite, he says, “Tell us what happened?”

Mid-chew, I pull the fork away from my face and place it down in favor of a large gulp of wine. Where do I even begin?

It’s complicated. Kelly and Evan were my best friends in college, and they dumped me like yesterday’s leftovers. I was more upset about losing Kelly in the deal—chicks before dick and all that. I shouldn’t be. Clearly, she didn’t think anything of it, but it still stung. We were friends all through school.

Kelly introduced me to Evan, who was in one of her classes. The three of us became thick as thieves. We did everything together. Evan was hot. There is no doubt about that. With his blond hair, dark brown eyes, and athletic build, he was a dreamboat. Most of the girls on campus wanted him, but he didn’t want anything to do with them.

It was definitely a morale booster knowing he wanted to spend his time with Kelly and me. I was like every other girl—smitten with him. I thought he felt the same, but it turns out, I was wrong.

During a party one night, Evan was feeling me up as I was humping his leg when he told me he wanted to be friends with benefits with me. He then told me he had been hooking up with Kelly the same way for a few months, and she was fine with him sleeping around. That should have been my first clue to cut and run, but I was stupid and horny.

In my drunken haze, I jumped at the chance to be with him. My crush on the sexy guy was going to become a reality. Friends with benefits. How perfect is that? There have been enough movies made to tell me what a horrible idea it was.

He was okay in bed, but he kept calling me Kelly as we were having sex. I felt cheap and dirty, like I was second best. I couldn't face either of them for a while, and when I finally confronted Kelly about it, she was pissed at me for sleeping with him.

She had no idea about us. He definitely didn't discuss it with her like he said. She was so blinded by her rage she ended our friendship, and both of them left me high and dry. The rest of the school year was spent with my nose in a textbook. I always knew I was number two in his book, but it killed me to know I was the same to her.

I wring my fingers together as I finish telling them about my past experience. Kade pulls me into his lap and strokes my hair, planting gentle kisses on my forehead. It's been so many years now, I don't cry over it, but it still breaks my heart to talk about.

“Charlie, I want you to know neither of us would put you in a situation like that. You're it for us, if you'll have us,” Jaxson says as he takes over my seat to rub my back. His words and hands on me are comforting. “You've never been second best to us. Even in the short time we've known you.”

“I’m sorry for what I said to you, and I’m sorry for the way it came out. After being with you for more than two seconds, I knew you were nothing like Blair, even though you have similar features.” He blushes and buries his head in the crook of my neck.

I run my fingers through his locks and kiss the top of his head. “It’s okay. I’ve gotten over it, but when you told me you asked me out because I look like your ex, it stung and brought up memories I’d rather forget.”

“Let’s finish eating, and then I believe I owe you a lot of make-up sex for being an ass.” Kade smirks and squeezes my bare thigh.

I bite my lower lip and smile but look down. I know Kade said he wanted me alone since Jaxson had me alone, but I really want a night with both of them. Ineedit. “Would it be okay if I have both of you tonight?”

Jaxson and Kade look at one another as large smiles spread across their faces. “Anything you want, babe,” Jaxson says.

I look up at Kade. “I’ll make it up to you, promise.” I kiss him, but when I try to pull back, he keeps me in place, taking a few extra moments to explore my mouth and body. My breathing hitches as he pulls away, and I look between my two sexy men. How is it even possible this is real?

I stand and reach both my hands out for them to take. Each man stands and takes my hand as I lead them toward the bedroom. They stalk toward me, smiles on their faces. In a few more minutes, I’m not going to have control of the situation, but for now, I can show them how much they mean to me.

I pull Kade’s lips back down to mine and press my body into his as I pull Jaxson closer behind me. I want to feel them worshipping me. Not because I think I’m a queen or anything, but because I want them to understand exactly how they make me

feel.

Jaxson's lips are on my neck and shoulders as he moves across my back. His rough fingers dance across my skin, and he presses his bulge into my ass. I moan into Kade's mouth, relishing in the feel of both men on me.

Jaxson runs his fingers over my bare ass and presses his thumb against my puckered hole. I automatically clench my muscles, not used to the foreign feeling. "Has anyone ever had your ass before, Charlie?" he husks in my ear. He moves his thumb away, and I want it back.

I shake my head and gasp when Kade nips at my ear, his hand around my throat, exposing me to him. "Do you want us buried deep in your ass?" Kade asks.

"Yes," I whimper as Jaxson brings his wet thumb back to my hole and gently presses again.

"Relax, Charlie," Jaxson coos as Kade distracts me with his roaming hands. He finds my clit and starts to rub as Jaxson presses past the ring of muscles. Kade doesn't stop moving his hand until I'm bucking my hips back and forth on him. They both pull away suddenly, and I pop my eyes open in shock.

"Get the plug," Kade says.

Kade

Her eyes widen in fear and she whips her head around when Jaxson moves from behind her. He pulls out a brand new plug and hands it to her to examine. She tests the weight of it in her hand and traces her finger over the outline.

“Will it hurt?” she asks, looking between us.

I shake my head and stick my finger under her chin so she looks at me. “No. You will feel some pressure back there, but it won’t hurt, and we’ll use lots of lube. You’ll like it. If not, tell us to stop and we will.”

She nods and hands the plug to me. Jaxson strips out of his clothes, leaving his boxers on, and lies back on the bed. “Take your top off, baby, and climb up here.” He pats his lap. She crawls on top of him, staying on her hands, and knees and arches her back beautifully. She’s a wet dream like this. Every fantasy I’ve had looks like how she is presenting herself.

Jaxson pulls her face to him and kisses her as I pop open the tube and drizzle some lube over her ass and on the plug. Jaxson is two fingers deep in her as I start to push the plug in. I rub her back and ask her to relax until it slides in and sits securely.

“How does it feel,” I ask, massaging her ass cheeks.

“It doesn’t hurt,” she says and gives her butt a little wiggle. I slap it, and she yelps in surprise, looking back at me with a huge grin on her face. She’s so damn beautiful.

“Now, I want you boys to do something for me,” she says, climbing off Jaxson. He sits up on his elbows to look at her as she lowers herself to her knees, looking up at both of us. “I want you both to strip, and I want to play with you.”

I peel my clothes off and look down at her as I pull my black boxers down my legs and let my cock spring free. She reaches a hand out for Jaxson and wraps her fingers around him, as her lips wrap around me.

“Shit,” I say, digging my fingers in her hair. She hums around me as she bobs her head up and down, rolling her tongue over me. The three of us stay like this for a few minutes. Jaxson’s eyes are glazed over as he watches Charlie pleasure me. My cock taps the back of her throat, and she gags.

“I think she’s ready,” Jaxson says, smiling at her. She pulls away from me and looks between us. I see the fear and excitement rolled together.

“We’ll go slow, and if you want us to stop at any time, we will,” I reassure her as I help her to her feet.

Jaxson lays on the bed and cocks his finger at Charlie. She smiles warmly as she climbs on his lap and slides down on his length.

“Oh,” she gasps.

“Tight fit, babe?” I ask. She nods and moans as she slowly rocks her hips back and forth. “Press your chest against Jaxson’s. I need some room to work with.”

Charlie complies as Jaxson takes her face between his hands and gives her some slow, sensual kisses. I grasp the base of the plug, and it comes out with a pop. She whimpers.

“Are you okay?”

She sighs. “Yes, I just miss the feeling already.”

Damn, our girl is naughty. I lube myself up and kneel behind her. “Charlie, I’m going to go slow, but you need to tell me if it hurts at all.”

“Please, Kade,” she moans and wiggles her butt.

I smirk and grab a fistful, pulling her cheeks apart. Jaxson places his hands on her hips, holding her still as I line myself up. I press forward, and she whimpers. I pull back a little, and when she places her hand on my thigh, I know she’s okay. I press forward again, and this time the tip passes her tight muscles. She slowly opens for me, giving me access to her virgin hole.

Her breathing has increased, and she pants against Jaxson’s lips. I press in a little more until I’m all the way inside her. “Fuck, you’re so tight. I’m not sure how long I’m going to last.”

“How does it feel for the both of you?” she asks, rolling her hips on top of us, testing the waters.

“Fucking amazing. You’re so tight,” Jaxson says.

The two of us fall into an easy rhythm. I pull out as he pushes in and vice versa. Both of us know we have to go slow with her. We’ve already discussed it, and this experience is no less than perfect. She is perfect. My orgasm starts to build, and I fight the urge to pound into her, to chase it.

I wrap my fingers around her hair and pull her head to the side. I lean over, scraping my teeth down the side of her neck. Her pulse is fluttering out of control in her throat. Her breaths come out in small pants, and she’s squeezing me so hard I know she’s close.

“You’re going to come, Charlie,” I grit out.

“Give in to it, babe.” Jaxson takes her face between his hands and kisses her. Her body tenses before she begins to shake as her orgasm takes over. Her body keeps trying to push me out, but I fight to stay, extending her orgasm until I can’t take it. I pull out of her and stroke myself, coming all over her back. Jaxson starts pounding up into her until he’s groaning her name.

She collapses on his chest, her eyes closed. I get a face cloth to help clean the mess I made and toss one to Jaxson to finish while I start the water for a shower. Once the water is warm, I walk back into the bedroom and lift her off the bed. She has a sleepy smile on her lips and nestles her head into my chest. I put her on her feet, helping her step under the spray. I look out to Jaxson, and he waves at me to go without him.

I pull her to me, her back against my front, and kiss her neck. “You did amazing, Charlie. Are you okay? Did we hurt you?”

She turns in my arms and smiles up at me, her eyes sparkling. “I loved it. You both were so gentle. It was perfect. Thank you, Kade.”

We wash, and I take extra care to be gentle with her as I clean her up. When we are done, I help wrap her in a fluffy white towel and tie mine around my waist. I stand back and watch Charlie walk to Jaxson and snuggle into him for a hug. This is how it should be. All of us. Together. Her willingness to accept Jaxson and me has made me the happiest man in the whole fucking world. There’s nothing we won’t do for her.

We lie down, Charlie in between us, and I look at Jaxson. He strokes her cheek, a contented smile on his lips. I know we are going to have our ups and downs, and it’s going to be a lot to figure out, but the three of us can figure it out together. I kiss the back of her head as she sighs deeply in her sleep, the three of us tangled together.