







# Hat Trick Heart (Frostwolves Hockey)

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**Category:** Sport

**Description:** Sassy

I left dreams for reality a long time ago.

And a gorgeous hockey player with a body like a Greek god wanting me?

Not bloody likely.

But he starts turning up everywhere I go and before long, I realize that even though I'm scared, I need to go out with him and need to explore whatever's happening between us.

We can't keep our hands off each other until I hear something that makes me remember why I can't trust men, especially jocks.

I need to move on with my life.

I was a fool to think someone would want me for me.

But Emile isn't ready to let me go.

Can I listen to my heart and let it guide me back to the man I don't think I'll ever get over?

Emile

My life is hockey and I have nothing else.

I dream about hockey games and making better plays.

Until I see the most beautiful woman in the world at a game and I can't stop thinking about her, but I have no idea how to find her.

I go out with friends and see her sitting in the bar and one night changes my life.

She's special to me and that leads me to do the most stupid thing I've ever done.

# Page 1

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1

SASSY

“Please don’t ask me to do this with you,” I beg, staring at my roommate and best friend.

“Come on, Sassy. It’s been so long since we actually got to hang out together. I need this,” she wheedles, staring at me with these big, puppy-dog brown eyes that I just can’t say ‘no’ to!

“I’ve been working. You know that. We’ve got so many new things going on at the library and it’s been a mess with the renovations. I just haven’t had time to do anything but work. It’s nothing personal.”

She huffs, her short, caramel-brown curls fluffing up as she glares at me. “I’m telling you, if you don’t come out with me when I’ve got these tickets my boss gave me for free... I’m gonna take it personally. We never get to go anywhere,” she whines.

It’s true. We’re always trying to save up for some girls’ trip or other adventure but we usually get derailed by some expense that we never saw coming. Like my car breaking down twice this year. I really need to replace the dang thing but it’s more than I can afford right now. It’s not like librarians make a ton of money.

“Fine. But if we do this, we’re not hanging around once it’s over. I absolutely do not want to go stare at a bunch of sweaty neanderthals at a bar who can’t do anything but grunt and belch!”

“You can be so judgmental about jocks. I just don’t get it. They’re human too. They put on their pants one leg at a time. They just happen to have fantastic legs that go with bodies like Greek gods.”

Rolling my eyes, I cross my arms. I don’t just dislike jocks.

I hate them.

I’m sure there might be some great guys out there that play sports. I’ve just never run across any of them and I’m not likely to in a bar after a hockey game or whatever the hell it might be called.

“I’m not gonna hang out with hockey players. I don’t care what you do to get invited...” I point my finger at her because we both know she’ll try. She likes meatheads. “I’m not going with you. You’ll have to go by yourself.”

“Fine. Be that way. But I think you’re missing out if you don’t ride one of those boys like he’s a bucking bronco one of these days.”

Her exploits are legendary. The girl likes to find herself some action everywhere she goes. I’m just not interested.

I lift my brow and grin at her. “You’ve had enough dick for the both of us. I think I’m good.”

“Pfft!” She wags a finger at me but lets it drop. “Just get dressed. I can’t wait to see this match-up! These guys are hot with a capital H!”

“Doesn’t mean they’re any good.”

“Seriously, lighten up!”

I sigh and turn around. "I'll change into jeans and a T-shirt. Be back in a minute."

I shut the door behind myself and sigh. I really hate this. I don't like any kind of sports and I sure as hell don't like guys who play sports.

I remember back to hearing: "There she is! Miss Ice Princess in all her glory! If by glory you mean her big ass!"

I wince when I picture Brett Barker. The bastard made my life hell all through school. If he wasn't knocking my books out of my hands he was sliding under me when I wasn't looking. I lost track of how many times I didn't pay attention and all of a sudden found myself sitting on his lap, his arms around me like an iron ring holding me in place.

"I bet you'd be so grateful for a good fuck that you'd have no problems doing any damn thing I wanted," he said.

I blushed and lifted my hands up to my flaming cheeks. Always. He was always so foul-mouthed that I couldn't stop blushing. Even now, I can't. He's the reason I've never even gone to a game or looked at a man if he plays sports.

They're all big-ego bastards who think you should be grateful if they deign to notice you. Too freaking bad. I'm not interested. Not at all.

I finish dressing and walk out, holding my arms out. "Well, how do I look?"

"Like a girl who needs a good time more than I need my next ice cream bar."

"Wow! That's saying something," I laugh and grab a light jacket. "Since you eat those dang things like they're going out of style!"

“Hey! Sometimes you just have to eat your feelings and considering that I’m in a very long dry spell, I need that chocolate goodness.”

I throw my head back and laugh. “You’re such a dirty girl.”

She laughs and points at herself. “Guilty as charged.” She turns serious. “One of these days you’re going to have to get rid of that V-card. Or at least go out on a damn date.”

I groan. “Not this weekend, please. I still have to go in to work tomorrow and I just don’t have the dang energy to deal with thinking about that right now.”

“Fine. But make sure you relax because I’m setting us up on a double date next weekend. You need to get out more and so do I.”

“Hmph!” I snort. “You date all the time.”

She points her finger at me. “No arguments. We’re going out next weekend. I’m supposed to be going out on my third date with this guy I’ve been seeing, so you know what that means?” She winks at me and her brown eyes sparkle.

“Uh. Yeah. You’re doing something very bad and you want to make sure I don’t see said bad thing. Thank you for the warning.”

She giggles and I smirk at her. “Whatever. But we’re going out. Ben has this friend of his that he wants to set up.”

“Why doesn’t this guy have a girlfriend?”

“He’s kind of picky. I guess he turns him down every time he asks him to double. But this time we’re not giving him the chance to say no.”

“Whoa.” I wave my arms at her like I’m stopping traffic. “That does not sound like a guy I want to go out with.”

“It’s just one date. Just to get back on the horse. You’ve been sitting home alone too long.”

“I like being home. You’re there. I’m there. My things are there. It’s perfect.”

“Don’t do it.”

“Do what?”

“I’m already seeing signs that you’re gonna back out on me. Don’t do that to me.”

“Fine. I’ll go out with this guy if you stop bringing up dating after that. I’m just not that interested.”

“Well, get interested.”

“Alright, alright. Let’s go before I back out of this too.”

She glares at me. “You’ve been working too much and you need to have a little fun. That’s my middle name you know.”

I roll my eyes. “Yeah. Sounds like you.” I stalk to the door and then hold it open. “Let’s get this torture over with.”

She swats me on the shoulder as she goes by, shooting me a cross glare. “Settle your ass down and paste a smile on your face, girlfriend. You’re about to see some of the cutest guys in the NHL. Enjoy it!”



Rolling my eyes, I shut the door behind her. “Right.”

When we reach the arena, the place is packed and I groan. “Ugh. This place is ridiculous. I’m not sure how the hell we’re gonna find a seat. Let alone parking.” But we find a spot and get parked.

Stepping inside and heading to our seats in the front, I can’t help but feel the excitement creeping inside me. I’ve never been to a sporting event and there’s just so much going on. I can see the players warming up out on the ice, their bodies looking huge in the gear and padding that they wear. You can barely tell they’re human with all of that and the helmets covering so much of their heads!

But the crowd is screaming already and it’s like the gods out there on the ice know it. The lights and sound bounce off of them as they hammer each other and there are high-fives every time one of them does something.

Like breathe? I guess.

I sit down in the seats that Becca’s boss got for us. Or for anyone in the company, I guess. “How did you get these seats anyway? These are really good seats...I think.” I seriously know nothing about hockey but I can see that there’s plexiglass right in front of us and I wince when I see some of the guys running each other into the barriers.

“He likes to come to the games with his brother but both of them were busy this weekend so they did a drawing at work. And I won!”

I smile and smack her shoulder lightly. “That’s amazing! You didn’t tell me that!”

“It didn’t matter. All that mattered was getting you to agree to this.”

“Fine. I’m here. Let the games begin!” I holler, pumping my fist in the air.

“That’s the attitude.”

Before I can think too much about it, I see a guy out on the ice look over at us. He’s big. I mean, they all are but this guy seems super-big. And he’s got all this gear on that makes it hard to get a look at him. But when he looks up from where he’s lining up with another guy facing him and two more guys from his team flanking him by a red circle, I can see his bright green eyes and I still, my breath even freezing in my throat.

“Who are you looking at?”

I point shakily over to the line and she smiles. “You’ve got good taste. That’s the center, Emile. But they call him Frostbite. I’m assuming because he tears the other guys apart... I’m not really sure.”

But the whole time she’s talking I watch him and he stands up, his gaze locked on mine. I can’t breathe. Can’t feel my fingers, my toes. All I feel is my own heart pounding in my chest and the rush of my blood in my veins.

I see the official with him saying stuff and he seems to jerk back to himself. And then the puck hits the ice and the screaming around me jerks me back to the present.

I watch as his big body hammers into another guy and then they go at it. He gets the puck and drives forward, the other guys flanking him. One of the other team powers forward so fast that he’s a fucking blur and then he grabs the puck from the first guy.

The whole game is a nail-bitingly intense game of chess at high speeds and with extreme bodily contact.

I wince when he gets slammed into the barrier around us, hell right in front of us. I can hear the grunt of his air rushing out of his lungs although I have no idea why! It's loud as hell and he's not screaming, he's grunting.

But it doesn't matter. I still hear him and that pisses me off. I can feel my body melting, straining towards him.

I tell that hussy to knock it off. "You don't like these big, violent kinds of guys."

But no matter how much I tell her that, she doesn't listen and my pussy throbs. The other guy pulls off of him and he stands there for a minute, staring at me, his big hand on the barrier. I walk forward like I'm in a trance and my hand lifts, looking tiny alongside his huge paw. His green eyes lock on me and I breathlessly stare at him.

But then one of his buddies comes up and taps his arm and he turns away. It feels like the first time I can take a whole breath and I scramble out of the box hollering that I'll be right back.

When I reach the top of that arena, I look back and I swear his eyes lock on me immediately and I can feel their laser warmth from here.

I don't bother with checking in with Becca. Just make a run for it. I can't be here. I call for an Uber and run away.

My heart doesn't quit racing until hours later when I can finally close my eyes and rest.

Hockey is way too dangerous. Becca's pissed at me because I took off but there was just no way I could be around that guy. Not watching him skate around that ice like an elegant assassin. Not while his eyes locked on mine and hypnotized me.

Not while my whole body felt alive whenever I saw him move. I'm not sure what my problem is, but the best thing to do was get the hell away from him. I don't need or want a jock.

Not even one that looks like a god among men.

I've got to remember that all men are the same.

Trouble.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: August 14, 2025, 6:59 am*

2

EMILE

I rip my gloves off my hands and glare at the locker door as I slam it shut. I don't know what the hell is wrong with me. This week has been an absolute mess since we played the Texas Tankers last week. We lost so bad it wasn't funny but that wasn't the worst part.

I saw her. I don't know who the hell she is but I can't seem to forget about her. Her auburn hair gleamed in the arena lighting like a copper penny and when I locked eyes with her, hers were the most perfect shade of blue I've ever seen in my life. So light and bright that they looked like ice chips on a sunny day.

I shake myself and groan, palming my aching cock which is pushing damn hard against my cup and killing me.

"Hey, LaCourt! Get your ass back here!" The coach's sharp voice grinds on my nerves and I groan.

Alexie grunts next to me and pats my shoulder so hard he almost slams me to the floor. "Coach is not happy."

I roll my eyes and slam the rest of my stuff into my locker and stalk away. "That's a god-damned understatement, man."

I follow him into his little office and groan when I see that Vic is in there too.

Fucking great!

On any given day, coach was called Iceberg for a reason. He tends to keep calm no matter what.

Right now, he's not that guy. I know he's taking a lot of heat because we're not where we need to be. The guys are all good but we're not meshing as well as we could be. Should be.

Vic on the other hand is a bomb waiting to go off. And she's got her sights set on me.

"What the hell's been going on with you this week, LaCourt? Your head doesn't seem to be in the game at all. We've got a packed season and it's like you're off in Lala land. Tell me why the hell I shouldn't move one of the other guys up to first string and let you ride the bench for awhile," he grits out between clenched teeth.

"I'm sorry, Coach. I'm not sure what's wrong. But I'll get my act together before the game tomorrow night."

Friday night's game is against the Kansas City Crusaders and we're so far down in the standings that we're guaranteed a loss. Unless we all start to work better as a team.

"You better or I'll bench you so fast your fucking head will spin." He sits back and crosses his arms on his chest. "You need to be better than this. I need a center who's got his head on straight and can make the big moves that we need if we're gonna pull our asses out of the hole we've managed to get into."

I nod my head. "Yes, Coach. I understand."

He stands up and Vic just watches us silently. I feel like she wants to say more but

Coach is walking me out.

“I hope you do. We’ve got a lot riding on these games coming up. Something needs to click with this team.”

I walk out as quickly as I can. Hoping that I can get away without having to actually admit why my head’s a mess. Especially since I don’t really know why it is.

I just keep wondering about that girl. When I saw her she was smiling, her bright eyes glowing with happiness. Her friend was turned around and they were obviously laughing together about something.

As soon as her gaze crashed with mine, something electric zipped all the way down to my toes. It was like being hit with a lightning bolt and I almost turned around to look and see if it was storming but that would have been crazy in a closed building.

I strip off the rest of my clothes and throw them in to wash and hit the showers, groaning when the hot water hits my skin. Every damn part of me hurts today. I think a few of the guys might have decided to try to get my attention and straighten out my thoughts.

I soap up and immediately my mind starts picturing her again. She was wearing a T-shirt and jacket and a pair of slim jeans that showed off some of the most dangerous and fantastic curves I’ve ever seen in my life. My dick starts to hit half-mast and I groan, pushing away thoughts of her and running through drills in my head, picturing the offside play that I had in the last game that ended up costing us in the end.

“Hey! You wanna go out to the Summit tonight? I hear there’s a good band playing and there’s bound to be a lot of girls in there. Maybe even some puck bunnies that would be willing to play around a bit!”

The younger player is on the fourth string, a right wing. Peter, I think.

I know I shouldn't go out tonight. Practice was rough. I'm tired and it's gonna be a rough match-up tomorrow. But I don't want to go home to my big, empty house and stare at the walls and try not to get all fucked in the head thanks to a pair of icy blue eyes and curves for days.

"Yeah. That sounds good."

He fist pumps at me and grins. "Yeah, man. Time to have a little fun."

He crashes back into the locker room hollering about the night and I sigh, leaning against the wall. I have a feeling I just made a huge mistake. I hope it doesn't cost me the game tomorrow. I don't want to get moved down to second string center. I know I'm getting a bit older but I'm not out of the mix yet. I've got a good five or more years left. As long as I don't fuck things up.

I get dressed and grab my huge black SUV out of the players' section of the lot. It doesn't take long to reach the Summit and as soon as I step inside the door, I wish that I had stayed home. It's packed and there seems like no room to sit. Bodies mill around and I bump into someone who turns to glare at me, their stare smoothing out when they see who I am.

The Colorado Frostwolves might not be the best team out there right now but they're still the home team and we still command some respect everywhere we go.

"Hey man. Sorry about that. Didn't see you there." He nods his head at me and I try not to laugh. I'm six foot four and weigh 230 lbs. I'm not sure how the hell you don't see me.

But I just nod at him and then grin when I see the guys at a couple of tables pushed



together in the side of the bar.

I make my way over and sit down with a sigh, grunting and nodding at the guys here. It's mostly the younger, third and fourth string guys. The newer ones on the team that haven't put in their time yet. But I do see Snow Beast and Iceman. Iceman has been having a rough string lately and he barely talks to anybody.

Snow Beast is well-known for fighting and a bar seems like it might not be the best place for him. And I don't think anybody's gonna tell him that he shouldn't be here.

Definitely not me.

The server stops by and grins at me, her eyes sparkling with temptation as she runs her gaze up and down my body. "Well, well. Frostbite. I see you've been having a bit of a rough streak. I bet I could fix that for you." She giggles.

I fight to keep the disgust off of my face. I don't like puck bunnies and I sure as hell don't like being propositioned. I like to be the one doing the asking. Push me and I've got no interest in you. Simple as that. I like a challenge.

This girl is no challenge at all.

But I've got to be nice to the fans so you can't just tell them off. I gotta keep that shit under control and make sure that our fans aren't disappointed.

I smile at her. "I'm sorry. But thank you for the offer. Very generous of you."

She smirks. "You can cash in that offer whenever you want to. Just so you know."

I smile like I'm actually considering it even though I'm not.

“What would you like?”

“I’d just like a beer. Whatever’s on tap. I’m not picky.”

She grins and pats my arm, her fingers lingering on my bicep. “Good to know. I’ll get that for you.”

I keep the smile plastered on my face with some effort. When she leaves, I glance around and my whole body goes still and then lights up like a fireworks display.

I only got a glimpse of her from a fair distance but I know those curves and that glorious rusty auburn hair curling around slim shoulders.

I stiffen when I realize that she’s sitting with two men and the woman who was at the arena with her.

One of the guys leans into her and I can tell that she’s on a date. My heart jumps and then a pain streaks across my chest. I rub at it and eye the table closely. I listen to the guys around me discuss our chances but I can’t see anything or anyone but her.

After about a minute, I see her head come up and she starts glancing around the bar. It takes her about half a minute and I see her laser-blue eyes widen, her body stiffening.

I stand up and shift over so that I can see what’s going on at that table. She’s startled but her face is flushed and I can tell that she looks pissed. Her friend is happily chatting with the guy she’s with and it looks like they know each other quite well if the way they’re touching each other every chance they get is any indication.

On the other hand, she’s stiff as a board, her smile is forced and there’s no happiness in her smile or her eyes. If I had to guess, I’d say this was a fix-up and she’s not

happy about it.

But I know one thing. The guy reaches over and tries to lift her onto his lap and I see red.

Who the fuck does this guy think he is, touching what's mine?

I jerk to a stop when I realize that I'm on my way across the room and I'm pissed as hell. I want to rearrange this guy's face and then I want to drag her out of here and steal her away with me.

That's fucked up, right?

I don't even know her name or anything about her. I can't just walk up and destroy a guy and steal his date.

Can I?

But his octopus hands reach out and try to grab her again and she's struggling and that's it for me.

I stalk across the room and glare down at the guy's head, grunting when he doesn't even look up. Death is staring at him and he's so stupid or drunk he doesn't even see it.

But she does. She stills and I see her face go pale and then flush bright red when she sees me stop beside them.

"Get your hands off of her, man. Before I fucking break them."

The guy finally realizes that the grim reaper is standing right next to him and he looks

up and pales.

“Hello? Can I help you?”

“Yeah.” I point at the woman sitting there glaring at me with her mouth hanging open. “She doesn’t want you touching her so I think that you should get your filthy hands off of her.”

“Or what, buddy?”

Okay, clearly he’s not that smart or he’s got a death wish. Not really sure which it is.

But I pick him up by the scruff of the neck and shake him like a rag doll.

“She would like you to keep your fucking hands to yourself,” I growl, low and rough.

“Hmph! I think she can talk for herself.”

She stands up, visibly shaking, her face pink and her eyes so bright they could cut glass. “She can speak for herself and she’s been saying it all night. Keep your dang hands to yourself. Now I think I’ll go.”

She smirks at me as she steps away.

But the idiot just can’t let her go and he grabs her arm. A rumble of some feral noise rips out of me when she flinches. But that’s all the warning he’s getting.

I grab his arm and jerk it away from her, slamming my fist into his face and putting every bit of my hate into that one punch.

He falls to the ground, out cold.

I shake my fist out and smile at her. “What’s your name?”

Her eyes are wide and she stares at me like I should be wearing a fucking mask. Like I’m a criminal. “Sassy. I need to go.”

“I’ll take you.”

“That’s not necessary.”

“It absolutely is. Let’s go, angel.”

I grasp her elbow, feeling a zap of electricity in my fingers. They tingle and I stretch them on her soft skin. I lift the coat on the back of the chair and hold it out for her to put on, tucking her into it and fluffing her hair, my fingers lingering on the silky curtain. We leave the bar that’s gone eerily quiet except for the guy writhing on the floor as he comes to.

But I don’t give a shit about any of it. I found what I’ve been looking for for the last week and I finally feel my focus coming back.

I’m just not sure if it’s great that it’s all on the tiny woman walking beside me.

### SASSY

I'm honestly not sure what just happened. I was on the date from hell and trying to escape the octopus hands of the guy that Becca's boyfriend set me up with. He's an absolute ass. For some reason he seems to think that even though we just met, I should be putting out because Becca and her boyfriend are touchy-feely to a PDA level that makes me uncomfortable. Which certainly means that I'm not interested in it for myself. Especially with a total stranger.

He grabs me one last time and then all hell breaks loose as a growly, gigantic guy yanks him off of me and then they get into it, and I blink, surprised to see Mr. Handsy lying on the floor of the bar, holding his jaw and moaning.

I look up and up and into the green eyes of the guy from the hockey game and for some reason, my belly just flips, my insides melting into a puddle of goo and my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth.

"Let's go, angel."

And then I'm walking out the door with the guy I've been dreaming about for the last week. He looks back at me, his lip turning up at the corner and giving him this sexy, quirky vibe that I have to admit, I like a lot.

"I can manage to get home by myself," I say softly, putting my hands in my pocket to keep from touching him. The impulse to touch him is so damn strong that my fingers

curl inside my pocket, wanting loose to get to him.

“Not gonna happen. I’m going to take you.” He looks around the jammed parking lot at the Summit. “Where’s your car?”

“I walked.”

“Great! ’ll walk with you.”

“Then you’ll have to walk back here to get your car!” I protest.

“Doesn’t matter. A little walking won’t hurt me. Extra exercise.”

“Right,” I mumble under my breath, peeking over at him while he’s looking down at the ground.

Dang, he’s gorgeous! And so big!

“So what do you do?” I jerk up as his green eyes shoot to mine and I gasp, looking away, unnerved by how his eyes are looking at me. So intense and focused.

“I work in the library in town.”

“A librarian?” He seems stunned and I’m not really sure what he’s trying to say.

“Do you have something against librarians?” I ask harshly.

“No, no. I’ve just....” He pauses and cocks his head. “You just don’t look like any librarian I’ve ever seen.”

“What are librarians supposed to look like?”

He shrugs his broad shoulders and my eyes follow it, completely captivated by every dang thing he does. He's just so blasted perfect!

"I don't know. Just not like you."

"Well, I know what you do and you look exactly like what I thought you would."

His dark brow quirks. "I feel like that was an insult just now, Angel."

"Don't call me Angel," I snap, my face heating.

"Why?"

"It sounds very personal and we're not personal. At all."

He grins. "You've got a lot of bite for a librarian. I like it."

I roll my eyes. "I'm so happy that you're happy. But I've really got to get home. I've got an early morning and there's so much to do."

"At the library?"

"Yes." There's a brief pause and I feel compelled to fill it in. "So what to do you do every day?"

"Oh, you know. Sleep, get up, eat, go to the gym and work out than every other day go to practice. Then every other day I'm getting ready for a game. Then I'm icing down my body parts after the game."

"Sounds exciting..." I huff and he laughs because he knows I'm not serious.



“What about you? What do you do every day?”

“Oh, you know.” I wave my hands around. “Just ordinary stuff. Nothing like playing hockey in front of thousands of screaming fans.”

He nods his head. “But what is your day like? You look tired.”

My brows lift and I turn to look at him. “Are you trying to say that I look terrible?”

He almost physically backtracks. His hands go palm up in the air. “No, no! Absolutely not! You’re gorgeous and you have to know it!”

I narrow my eyes at him, not sure if he’s messing with me or not. I know what I look like. I’m not gorgeous. I’ve got hips that they used to call breeder’s hips. I’ve got a slimmer waist and a lot of boob that attracts attention wherever I go.

Nobody would call that gorgeous. But I’m alright. Nothing like this guy though. He’s so tall and broad. Muscles for days and a body like Thor. He should be pictured up on Mount Olympus scowling at humans and pitching lightning bolts at them. Zeus with a thunderclap reverberating around him and a pair of green eyes that practically glow at you they’re so dang bright. Every stride he takes, his jeans cling lovingly to his muscles and I can see them shift under his clothes.

My heart jumps and I groan under my breath. This guy just thinks of me as some kind of project. There’s no way a girl like me gets a guy that looks like him. It’s insane.

But there’s also the fact that this guy sticks his foot in his mouth every other word to me. I can’t imagine what he’s like giving an interview! His coaches must try to hide him whenever there are reporters anywhere around.

He’s a mess. An adorable, grouchy, sexy as heck mess. I don’t even know what to

think about him.

We walk in silence for a while and then he kicks a rock and glares at me. “You’re a very quiet woman.”

I giggle. “I’m a librarian. Perhaps you haven’t heard but it kinda goes with the territory.”

His mouth drops open and I see his eyes lock on my mouth. My belly flips and I suck in a breath, not sure that I really saw in his green eyes what I thought I saw.

“I guess that’s true. I’ve never been a library or book kind of guy. I was always busy with practice and working out.”

I nod my head. “I get it. My thing was always books. If I wasn’t at school or doing homework, I was always sitting reading. I used to hide in the corners of the classroom when everybody went out to play on the playground. I’d sit there with a book and be happy as heck.” I glare at the ground and kick a bunch of rocks out of my way. “Until the teacher found me and made me go out to play because ‘it was good for me’,” I air quote the heck out of that saying.

“So what did you do then?”

I smile up at him. “I took my book outside and hid out in the big tires that they had to play with on the playground. Just hid in one and then was perfectly happy reading my book.”

He chuckles and stares at me. “Of course you did. I bet you were a stubborn little girl!”

I cock my head, my smile growing. “Ask my parents. I definitely gave them a run for

their money. Even though most of the time I was lost in a book.”

“So becoming a librarian was your life’s dream?”

I sigh and shake my head. “Nope. I wanted to be an author. But my dad told me that that wasn’t a real job and I’d never make money at it so the best thing to do was become a librarian. Close enough.”

He stops and holds his hand out, grasping my arm. “I’m sorry they did that to you. They should have supported you if that’s what you wanted to do with your life.”

My heart jumps at the sweet, sad, soft look in his eyes. “It’s okay,” I say breathlessly. “I like my job.”

“Like... not love. You should love what you do.”

“Do you love hockey?”

He grins mischievously. “What’s not to love? I get to take all my aggression out on guys who do the same thing I do. We all love being out there and just letting the sport take us into this place that is hard to describe. It’s gritty and dangerous and harsh. But it’s also so purely freeing that I love it. There’s no faking it in hockey. If you suck, you won’t get very damn far. You’ve got to be on your A-game and know what the hell you’re doing or you’re gonna get hurt. Most people don’t make it very far if they’re not good.”

I stare at him, my heart locked in my throat. He looks so dang happy when he describes the sport he obviously loves. It changes the harsh lines of his face and he’s freaking beautiful to look at. He almost glows. Like a man in love.

“Are you good?” I ask breathlessly.

His head drops and once again he gets this heated look in his eyes that makes my belly clench and my whole body tighten, burning with a fire that I've never felt before.

He stares at my mouth so hard that it feels like he actually touches me. I can feel the soft pressure of his mouth on mine and the tingles in my belly wash over my whole body.

"I'm good, Angel. Good but bad."

My eyes clear and I flush when I realize what we're talking about.

I stop moving when I look up and realize that we're standing in front of my little house. "This is me."

He glares at the house like it personally offended him. "Oh. Ummm. I guess I'll see you later."

"Sure," I say quietly. I know dang well this guy isn't gonna come looking for me so the odds of me seeing him again are astronomical.

He backs away, his hands in his pockets and his eyes locked on my face. "Thanks for letting me walk you home."

I laugh and smile at him. "Shouldn't I be telling you that? You're the one that has to walk all the way back to the bar."

"Pfft! That's nothing. But I really enjoyed talking to you. I'll see you around. Have good dreams tonight, Angel."

There's something there in his words that I don't really understand. Something soft

and pure and hopeful.

“You too, Emile.”

He grins at me and backs away until he reaches the corner and then he turns around and walks away.

I shiver. The cold of the night finally waking me up to the fact that I’m standing around outside my house instead of going inside.

I take one look at the dark corner he just walked around and then I unlock my door and walk inside, closing it on the night and the weird longing to follow him wherever he goes.

I have to remind myself that he’s nothing to me. I’m alone and that’s the way I like it.

EMILE

The next day, I grunt as I work out the next morning in the team gym lifting weights. I didn't sleep worth shit. I just kept picturing Sassy in the dim street lights and then in my bed. It's a big leap but I just can't help it. There's something about her that draws me in like a firefly to the light.

I've always dreamed of playing hockey. There's never been anything else. But since I saw this girl, I keep dreaming about her. Nothing but her wakes me and gets me going. Even hockey is a distant second to her.

It's crazy intense and it's too soon and if I tell her what I'm feeling that skeptical look on her face is going to change to outright terror cause I sound like a crazy person.

I can't concentrate and I know that my teammates would tell me that she's just a girl. Stop taking it so seriously.

But it is serious. My whole life is always serious. Everything that I do is to make sure that I can still feel fit enough to perform out on that ice.

Because that's my career and without it, I don't know who or what I am. I've never done anything just because it feels good or I want to do it. It's always with the ultimate goal of my career.

She's a distraction that I can't afford. But I can't seem to shut it off.

“LaCourt! Get in my office!” The coach is screaming at me again and I groan, dropping the barbell that I’m lifting, slowly and carefully cause that fucker is heavy.

Then I swipe a towel across my face and stalk across the room, following the coach’s disappearing figure.

I reach the office and immediately my body stiffens when I see that it’s not just the coach. It’s the assistant coach again. And the GM. I was recruited personally by Robert Anderson and I like the guy. But the look on his face right now doesn’t bode well for me.

The coach sits down in his chair behind his desk. He’s flanked by the GM and Vic.

“What happened last night?” His voice is deceptively soft and my heart rate kicks up. I never fight and I don’t really know what he’s gonna do about it but it seems like they’re all pretty pissed.

“I saw this girl and she was trying to get away from this guy and he wouldn’t let her go. So I made him.”

Robert lifts his brows. “You broke the guy’s jaw! He’s in the hospital right now threatening to sue the whole damn team because of that stunt!”

“Hey! If he’d let that girl go any one of the several times she struggled to get away from him it would never have happened. It’s his fault,” I answer, pouty like a two-year old who needs a nap.

The coach glares at me. “You’re a helluva lot bigger than this guy and you had to know that you could seriously hurt him. What the hell were you thinking?”

I glare at all of them but I know that I can’t tell them that I was thinking about her.

That I couldn't stand his hands on her because she's mine.

She's not mine. She will probably never be mine.

So what the hell was I thinking?

I don't really know. Which is a piss-poor excuse for what I did.

"Doesn't really matter what the reason was. Point is that you put a guy in the hospital with his jaw wired shut. Because of some girl you didn't know."

Here Robert gives me a sharp look. Like he's waiting for me to argue but I just slam my mouth shut. He sighs and turns to coach.

"You're suspended, benched, until we get a read on what was going on there and how much it's gonna cost us."

"How long will that be?"

Vic snorts. "You should be more worried about getting traded. We've already got hotheads on this team. We don't need more. You've always been stabilizing for the team because you handle everything so calmly. No matter what."

"Were you drinking last night?" Coach asks me.

"Not more than one drink. I had just gotten there when I saw Sassy... I mean the girl."

Robert jerks his head up. "You knew her." It's not a question.

"Just a little. She was at a game last week. I didn't even know her name."



Coach's eyebrows shoot up. "And from that you tried to kill a guy that was copping a feel? Have you lost your mind?"

I grunt but don't say another word. I'm already in enough deep shit. I don't need to add anymore to it.

"Get cleaned up and go home. Take a few days and get your head on straight. Hell, find this girl and go fuck her and get her out of your system! I don't give a shit. But the next time you are back in this arena you better have your shit together."

I nod my head and stalk out of the office, heading to my locker and throwing my clothes in there, stripping down until I'm naked and then I take a towel and head for the showers.

It's while I'm standing around in the showers that I start to think that maybe coach is right. Maybe I just need to spend some time around Sassy. Maybe fuck her once or twice and get her out of my system.

My whole world is hockey. What I can do for it and what it can do for me.

There's no room for a girl in there.

I wash up and stalk out, ignoring the guys when they call to me and ask what's going on. Most of them are just getting in and they're getting shit ready for our game.

And I've left my guys open to who knows what tonight without me because I let myself get distracted by a pretty face and fucked up.

I can't do that again. Never again.

Throwing my stuff in the back seat, I sit in the driver's seat and stare in front of me,

my hands on the wheel, gripping it tight.

I don't know what to do. I've honestly never done anything but hockey.

What else is there?

I do know one thing. I can never let myself get messed up in the head about a girl and what's going on with her.

I start my car and drive aimlessly, not heading home but not sure where I'm heading. The snow is drifting down across my windows and I squint, growling when I see the large building in front of me on my right. I slip into a parking spot and stare at it.

Then I step out and stalk up to the door, opening it and slipping inside.

It's so hushed and quiet that my hackles rise. I'm used to noise everywhere I go. In the bars and restaurants that we hang out in, fans rushing over to get autographs and talk to us. On the ice it's quiet when you're in your head but there's noise all around you. The fans screaming, the music, the coach screaming plays during practice and yelling that you're fucking shit up.

The only time I hear silence is when I'm home getting ready for bed. And that's why I avoid my penthouse apartment except when I'm sleeping. It's eerie.

Just like this place. I didn't lie. I never hung out in the library.

My eyes study the old building, staring at the rows and rows of bookshelves packed with every kind of book that you could wish for.

If you wished for books.

There's a single, long bookshelf in front of the desk and I wander over to take a look at it, realizing that they're new releases.

I look around again and that's when I spot her. She's on the other side of the huge L-shaped desk and she's smiling as she does something with the books someone hands her and then she hands them back to them.

They take the books and walk away, smiling and perusing what they're taking home.

I walk over to her and she smiles at me. "What are you doing here, Emile? Shouldn't you be getting ready for your game?"

"Not right now." I don't know why I don't tell her about the suspension. I just know that I don't want her to know. I glance around the room and eye the huge space packed with spaces to sit and read and research. "This is... nice."

She snorts. "Right. That didn't sound convincing, Emile. Not that I'm really surprised by that sentiment out of you."

I cock my head and frown. "Why me in particular?"

"You don't seem like a reader and you said you never really hung out in libraries so it's kinda hard to picture you being enthused about one." She laughs.

"You might be surprised."

"Sure. Can I help you with anything today?"

"Yeah. I thought I might check out some magazines."

She points over to the side where there seem to be newer issues on a long display that

appears to have cubbies underneath with stacks. “There are our current magazines.”

“Thanks.”

I walk away and study the magazines offered and pick up two sports magazines that are current. I take a seat in a chair that allows me to see the desk and office and keep an eye on Sassy. I start reading them but every few seconds my head comes up and I watch what she’s doing.

She’s beautiful. She’s wearing a pale pink, soft two-piece sweater like a 1950’s T.V. character and her glorious auburn hair is pulled back in a soft updo that shows off her pretty face and the long column of her throat. When she steps out from behind the desk to help someone find a book, I almost swallow my tongue when I see a dark gray skirt that hugs every one of her luscious curves down past her knees. Her dainty feet are wearing delicate sandals that show off her delicately muscled calves.

She’s a fucking work of art and if I thought that coming to see her at work was going to disabuse me of my fascination with her, I think the opposite is true. I want to see more. I want to touch that fabric and see if it’s as soft as it looks. See if her pale skin is softer.

I want to lift her up in my arms and carry her off to my place for the next few hours and just devour her, consume her.

I don’t think even that will cure me of my feelings for her though. I’ve never wanted a woman like I want this one.

By the middle of the day, she’s got company at the desk and she picks up her purse and speaks to the woman who just came in. She laughs and smiles and then she walks out the door and I stand up abruptly and put my magazines back, following her out.

By the time I get outside she's way ahead of me on the sidewalk but I consider it a win since she didn't take her car. I follow behind her, keeping her in sight. After a five-minute walk, she turns into a tiny restaurant that serves the lunch-time crowd. She gets a table in the crowded place and I quickly step inside, ducking around a corner and finding another handy spot to keep an eye on her that's hopefully out of her sight.

I see her order lunch and when a server comes up to me, I ask for a hamburger and double-order of fries plus a huge glass of water. The water's brought and I keep my eye on her as I sip at it. She pulls out a book and immediately seems to get lost in it, even jumping when the server brings her lunch. I frown when I see that she's just got a salad and a drink.

That's not enough food for a bunny let alone a fully-grown woman.

The server comes around and drops off my food and I take a bite of the hamburger, groaning under my breath. Fuck that's good!

I see there are televisions in the corner of the place and there's a sports news program on and I can see the GM of the Frostwolves on there talking and I cringe, assuming it might be an announcement that I'm not going to be starting for the immediate future.

Within seconds of that program being on, I start to hear rumblings around me and my stomach sinks. It doesn't take long before the first person shows up at my table, holding out a piece of paper and a pen.

"Hey, are you Emile LaCourt? Could you sign this for me?"

That's the start of the swamping of my table. I'm at least three deep when I manage to get a second to look through the people circling around me and I see her standing there, her mouth dropped open, staring at me before she walks away.

But I can't get up and run after her. I smile and sign things and chat with all of these people because it's what I'm supposed to do. These are our fans and we are dependent on them to keep our jobs. This is important.

No matter how much I want to get up and push my way out of here, I can't.

But I miss her more than I thought it was possible to miss a perfect stranger.

And although that should be terrifying and confusing, I just can't stop wanting her more than anything in my life.

### SASSY

What the heck is going on? Everywhere I turn, I see Emile LaCourt's big body shadowing me, standing off to the side.

I went to the grocery store after work yesterday and there he was, tapping on a melon and staring at me. Turned the corner in the dried pasta aisle and he's there pushing a cart and shoveling boxes of pasta into it.

Then I went home and this morning I went to a coffee shop to get a latte and a donut before work and there he was again... at an ungodly hour of the morning, three people behind me in line.

I whip around and stare in front of me and order my coffee, breathless, my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. The more I see him, the more I seem to want to see him and it's got my insides in a mess. I can't seem to stop thinking about him and when I do manage to stop, there he is, pushing himself to the front of my mind again.

I move over and wait impatiently for my coffee, chatting with the barista, who I see every time I stop in. She's nice and loves books so she asks about the newest true crime books that have come in and we have a great time talking about our favorites until she hands me my coffee.

"See you tomorrow," she nods and I hold up my coffee, smiling, even as I feel his green gaze burning into me. I turn and he's standing there, his eyes focused on me so

hard that I lean back stopping, my body frozen.

“Hello, Sassy. Nice to see you this morning.” The whole time he’s talking, his eyes are running over me like he’s mapping my body. My chest constricts and my belly flips, my nipples tightening into stiff little points.

“Emile. You’re up early.” I nod at him like my whole body isn’t firing up just from being feet from him.

He grins and reaches over me to grab his coffee. He nods his head and takes a sip, making me cringe. I have to wait because it’s so dang hot but it doesn’t seem to bother him at all. He sucks it down without even wincing.

“I am. Hockey players tend to be early risers because we’ve spent our whole lives getting up early to play before school or whatever.”

I nod my head and go to step around him. “It was good seeing you.”

He grabs my arm with his free hand, and I flinch, feeling the strange burn that goes through my skin every time he touches any part of me. He drops his hand and waves me forward towards the door, following me out. I whip around outside and he’s standing there grinning at me. I lift a brow and say, “How come all of a sudden I keep seeing you everywhere I go?”

He shrugs and takes another sip and I can’t stop staring at his mouth. I’ve just never seen another man so gorgeous. He swallows and I follow the way his throat moves. It’s so dang strong.

“I don’t know. Just lucky I guess.”

I snort. “Pfft! I doubt that very much. I feel like you’re following me, Emile LaCourt.



Why would that be?”

He grins. “Sounds like you’re a little paranoid, sweetheart. But let’s say that I am following you. For the sake of argument. Maybe I like you. Maybe I like seeing you.”

“Pfft,” I snort again. “What a load of bull!”

“How about you let me worry about it. And maybe you’d do me the favor of joining me tonight.”

I eye him, my brow crinkling. “For what?”

He chuckles. “I know it’s been a while but I’m trying to ask you out. I didn’t think I was this terrible at it.”

I jerk back, surprised. “You want to go on a date with me? Why?”

He steps closer and I can smell him now. That sweet and spicy scent that shouldn’t smell like a man but it does to me. It’s him though. There is nothing about this man that is less than masculine no matter what he does or wears.

He lifts his free hand and touches my cheek and my eyes widen, stunned. “Why would you find that confusing? You’re a beautiful woman. More beautiful than I thought when I first saw you. The more I see you, the more stunning things I find about you and I want to know more.”

“You want to date me?”

His dark head cocks and he smirks at me. “I really need more practice at this. I’m apparently not explaining it very well at all. Yes, I want to go out with you. I want to go on a date with you. I want to eat dinner. Maybe go dancing and then I want to

walk you home and...". His deep voice trails off and I shiver at the heat in his darkened green gaze.

"What?" I ask breathlessly, not sure if I really want to know or not.

"I don't intend to sleep with you tonight if that's what you think. I just want to spend time with you. I know that you think I'm some kind of playboy because I'm sure that's what most people think about famous people but the thing is... I'm not. I don't really date that much. I'm usually too busy. There's just something about you and I want to know what it is."

I smile at him. "So one date?"

He grins wickedly. "I can't promise that. I for sure want one date. Probably more. So I can't promise that I'll only want one date."

I eye him, nodding up and down and wondering if I should even be considering this. But I haven't dated and something about this guy really makes me want to get to know him better.

I sigh. "Fine." I hold up a hand when he smiles and reaches out his hands to pull me in for a hug. "No! Wait! I'm only promising one date. That's it."

He backs away from me. "I'll take it. Thank you, sweetheart. I'll see you tonight." Then he takes off like a shot, leaving me standing there and wondering if I really should have agreed or if I should have stuck to my guns and told him I wasn't interested.

But he's out of sight now and like an idiot, I didn't get his phone number so even if I wanted to change my mind, I don't have any way to contact him. No matter what, I'm stuck until I see him tonight. And I'm assuming that he's gonna come and pick me up

since I don't know where he lives either, and since he walked me home from that bar, he knows where I live.

Honestly, it's obvious it was a spur of the minute thing because neither one of us really made good plans.

Now I'm stuck and I can't think that it's a bad thing. Excitement wells inside me as I stare at the place that he disappeared to.

I've got a date! With the most gorgeous guy I've ever seen! I head to work and groan when I walk in the door to see the director there. Time to get back to work and stop daydreaming about the guy that's captured my attention.

I run in the door and groan when I see the time. It's so freaking late I've only got about half an hour to get ready for this date and I can't call Emile to tell him that I'm running behind.

I jump into my shower and wash so quickly that it feels like I'm only in for about a minute. I jump out and dry my hair while wearing my towel wrapped around me. I won't even have time to flat-iron my hair which is going to leave frizzy waves and bumps in my hair in weird spots. I grunt in frustration and pull on a pair of jeans and a soft green sweater that settles lightly on my curves and doesn't make me feel like a sausage. Then I grab a pair of high-heeled boots and pull them on.

I glance at the clock and realize I only have about five minutes so I grab my makeup and just put on a little bit of peachy-pink blush, a shimmery taupe eyeshadow and chocolate brown liner and then a little black mascara. As soon as I finish, there's a knock at my door and I sigh, running for it.

I whip it open and smile, gasping for breath. "I'm sorry. I'm just finishing up. I only got home about half an hour ago. The director had a lot of things to run through and

we're getting ready for Christmas festivities."

He smiles. "Seems a little early for Christmas."

I laugh. "We have to get everything ready to go so there's no problems. We actually start the tree decorating process right after Halloween. There are clinics that we do with children to make ornaments that they can leave on our tree or take home with them. If they leave them, we take a photo of the kids with their ornaments and they put their names on the ornament backs and then we put the phone numbers and names on the photos so we can match them all up with their ornaments after Christmas and they can get them back to keep forever."

He follows me inside and I grab my coat, which he pulls from my hands and holds out for me to slip into. "That sounds like an amazing program. You ever think about having some hockey players there to help? The guys love doing things with kids. We've got several hockey clinics that we do to help kids in unusual situations with home life that can't afford to get a coach or any kind of practice routine so that they can move into a hockey team to play and possibly get a future career that will move them out of those difficult situations that they grow up in. I do two clinics a month myself and I know the other guys all try to fit them in as well. Even during the season."

I turn around and find him so close to me that I can see the gold flecks in his bright green eyes. My breath stalls and I can't think. I feel hot all over and I don't move, paralyzed by the hunger in his eyes.

I've never had a man look at me like he does. Like he could eat me up. My breath comes soft and quick. I clear my throat. "That's really nice of you."

He laughs. "It's fun. I like to talk to the kids. They're the future of our sport."

I nod my head and gulp a swallow. “Yeah. Sure.”

He clears his own throat. “Well, let’s get on out of here.” He eyes me up and down and tugs at my dark green parka. “At least you’re dressed warm.”

“Why?” I ask him, following as he walks out my door and I grab my keys and slim wallet, putting them in my pocket. I hate to carry a purse unless I’m at work. I also grab my phone and then I lock the door after us. He’s standing watching me patiently.

“Because we’re going to do my favorite thing.”

“Which is?” I ask again, a smile creeping up on my face at the sheer joy on his.

“You’ll see.”

## Page 6

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6

EMILE

“Oh my god! Don’t let go, don’t let go!”

I can’t stop laughing as I hold her hands and lead her around the arena. We don’t have a home game tonight and I made arrangements with some of the night guards and the guys that take care of the ice to keep it open for me.

I wanted to show her something that I love more than anything on this earth. The game and the ice have always given me great joy and it’s also given me a career that I love. It means a great deal to me. Which is why when I was suspended, it felt like my heart was ripped out of my chest.

The only thing that gave me even a smidgen of the happiness that I get on the ice is the first time I talked to her.

“Hey,” I chuckle. “Why don’t you tell me about yourself?”

She smiles and her arms windmill again and I grab them before she goes down. She giggles.

“What do you want to know?”

“How old are you? I know what you do but what about your family? Your life other than work? Your friends?”

“Wow! That’s a lot! I’m twenty-four. I have a mom and dad who are no longer together and they hate each other with a burning passion unlike any I’ve ever seen before. I see them both a couple of times a year but it’s always awkward because they still can’t let their history go and they like to try and get me involved in it. They got married shortly after they had me and they didn’t believe in divorce so they just went on with their relationship and it was awful. They fought all the time.”

“That’s terrible. I’m so sorry that your home life was like that.”

“What about yours?”

“I lost my mom when I was a kid so it was just me and my dad. He was a huge hockey fan. He loved to watch me play. Used to come to my practices all the time. He even coached my school team so that he could be right there on the ice with me. He played hockey when he was a kid too. It was something we had together that we both understood and loved.”

“What happened to him?”

I sigh and roll her in to me so that I can hold her close while we circle the ice lazily. I look down into her pretty, worried face. “He was a hard-working guy. He worked at a factory, manufacturing car parts. Anyway, he was on his way home one night and he was hit by a car going the wrong way on the highway. Killed him instantly.”

“Oh my god! I’m so sorry.” She hugs me tight and I can see the tears in her bright blue eyes.

“Hey! I didn’t tell you that to make you cry. He was a big influence in my life. I just wanted you to know something about him.”

“Did he ever date after your mom died?”

I shake my head and smile. “He was a one-woman man. When she died, he had friends that tried to fix him up, thinking that he shouldn’t be alone but he just refused. Said there wasn’t a woman like my mom out there and he didn’t want another woman. I won’t say that he was never lonely or unhappy but he had his memories and that seemed to be all he wanted except for me and my life.”

“That’s nice. My parents weren’t really interested in what I was doing until I told my dad I wanted to be a writer and then he flat-out told me that was a ridiculous fantasy and I needed to get my head out of the clouds and find a real career.”

I can see how much that hurt her. “I’m sorry that he didn’t support your dreams. Every little girl should have her dad’s support.”

She shrugs and comes to a stop on the ice, her blue eyes far away. “I have a good job that I like so I can’t say it’s all bad.”

“Still. That was kinda rough. How are your parents now?”

“Bitter, angry. Even though they hate each other they won’t move on and find someone new. It’s like they’re still attached to each other. That might be because they don’t believe in divorce, either one of them. I’m not sure. But I go visit them and every time I do, my mom asks me if I’m seeing someone and she tells me I shouldn’t bother with men. That they’re nothing but heartache.”

“Wow.”

I don’t know what to say. My parents’ marriage was a dream that ended in a nightmare. It sounds like her parents’ marriage was a nightmare that just won’t end.

I shake myself out of the sadness that surrounds her and tug her into me. “Okay. Time to do a spin.”



She laughs and shakes her head. “Oh, no, no! I can’t do that.”

“Yes, you can. I’ll help you.”

We go slow at first and then faster and she throws her head back, laughing.

Which was all I wanted. To make her smile and laugh again. I hate seeing her unhappy. It’s not right. Her pretty face was made for smiles.

After I bring us to a halt and she falls into me, laughing loudly, I lean down and touch her lips lightly with mine. She freezes and time stands still when she closes her eyes and melts into me. Her soft curves fit against me just right and I slide my palm around until I’m cupping her lush ass, bringing her as close to me as I can. Her mouth opens and she mewls low in the back of her throat, sinking into my touch, her tongue slipping along mine making my dick hard in seconds. Her hips push against me lightly and I can’t think straight. My other hand slides up in her hair and I hold her head steady while I devour each little sound and gasp she makes, our kisses becoming frantic and needy.

I jerk my mouth up, panting, hard as a fucking rock and stare down into her flushed cheeks as her lashes come up and I drown in her sapphire gaze, her lips puffy and red and wanton.

“That was...” I don’t get to finish because the lights go out on the ice and a voice comes over the speaker.

“Time to go. I’m sorry, Mr. LaCourt, but I’m due home and I can’t stay any longer.”

I wave my hand in acknowledgement, and she goes brick red and her head ducks down.

“I forgot that there was someone here with us,” she whisper-hisses.

I chuckle and carefully help her over to the side of the rink. “Several someone’s actually. But I think we both got a little lost in our heads over here. I’ve kept you out here long enough. I should take you somewhere and feed you.”

She laughs and pats her rounded belly. “I’m sure you can guess that I could use missing a meal here or there. It’s not a big deal.”

I turn to her and lift her easily into my arms and over the little step out of the rink. She gasps and her hands grasp at my coat. I stand steady and glare at her. “Don’t say shit like that about yourself. You’re beautiful and if nobody’s said that to you before, there’s a lot of idiots out there in the world. I don’t intend to be one of them.”

Her bright eyes that remind me of the blue of alpine ice narrow in on mine and then widen, surprised. “You really mean that.”

“I really do. You’re perfect just the way you are and anybody that doesn’t recognize that isn’t worth your time or energy.”

I set her lightly on her feet but she doesn’t move away from me. Her little hands stay wrapped up in my parka and her eyes search mine until she nods her head like she’s just decided something important.

“I don’t want to go out to eat.”

“Oh.” Disappointment and fear well up inside me. “Are you not feeling good?”

I have to hope that that’s what it is because if I’ve said something that’s made her want to run away from me, to leave me, I’m going to kick my own ass.

And then stalk her because there's no way in hell that I'm letting her get away from me now. I'm addicted to this woman.

She shakes her head and her auburn curls slide around her shoulders, wild and just a little frizzy. I kinda like it. She's like a perfect doll most of the time so the untamed hair is sexy and surprising.

"No. That's not it. I want you to take me home."

I nod my head, my heart sinking. "Okay."

"And then I want you to make love to me." I nod my head at what she said before it sinks in.

But then...

"Are you serious? I mean, are you sure?" I jerk back and eye her narrowly, my eyes trying to see inside her, to pick apart what's going on with her.

But she nods and smiles happily, her huge grin bursting over me, warming me from the inside out. "I am so sure, Emile. I've never met someone like you but I know that whatever's going on with us, I don't want it to end. I just want to spend more and more time with you. I want it all with you."

I don't wait to hear any more than that. Just grab her and pick her up throwing her over my shoulder. She laughs and I can feel the shakes of it all the way through to my soul.

"What are you doing? We've both got skates on!"

"Oh. Yeah." I stop and carefully lower her and pull off her skates and mine and then I

tug my boots on and toss her shoes to her before throwing her over my shoulder again.

“Wait! I need to put my shoes on.”

I shake my head and run out the door, feeling her grunt and scramble to keep from bouncing on my shoulders.

“Nope. You’d just have to take them off again when we get to your place. Might as well leave them off. I got you.”

And I do. I buckle her in after loading her quickly into my car and then I do the speed limit, working so hard to control myself that my hands are shaking on the steering wheel. We reach her place and even though it kills me, I ask her again. “Are you sure about this?”

She reaches over, her blue eyes bright in the dark interior of the car. “I am so sure.” Her hands hold steady on my cheeks and there is no uncertainty in her eyes. “I’m all in. Just don’t make me regret this, Emile. I couldn’t handle it if you just threw me away like a used tissue or something.”

I crinkle my nose in disgust. “That is truly a terrible image.”

“I know. That’s why I said it!” She giggles again and I growl under my breath.

“You’re gonna pay for that, sweetheart. Even if it takes me all night long.”

She leans over and her eyes glitter with emotion even as she touches her finger to my nose lightly, grinning when I pretend to snap at it. “I sure as heck hope so.”

That’s all the invitation I need. I jump out of my SUV and race around the front to

yank her door open, tugging her out and over my shoulder. Then I run for the door.

“Do you have your key?” She hands it to me and I shove it open, slamming it shut behind us. Then I pause inside the door. “Where is your bedroom?”

A slim, pale finger points down the hallway and I immediately follow her finger, pushing the bedroom door open and tossing her on the bed.

“Clothes off.” I don’t have the patience I need right now. I know it. I feel like an out-of-control animal. I want to rut inside her, claim her, own her.

I want her to be mine until the end of our days.

“I need you... now,” I snarl, yanking at my own shirt and jeans, almost landing on my ass as I attempt to strip clothes off of me left and right.

“I need you too,” she huffs, ripping her sweater over her head and tossing it aside.

One after another, clothes litter the floor like a hurricane came through this room and left devastation in its wake.

The devastation is all inside me though. I can’t stop looking at her. Her pale, smooth skin stretched over soft curves like a plush pillow. Her ice-blue eyes that laser through me, cutting me apart and stitching me back together at the lust and hunger in her gaze. Buried under all those strong feelings is something new. Something that I recognize as the same feeling rippling through me.

Possession. Love.

She is mine. I am hers. For now, that’s all that matters. That and our bodies and the way they fit together. The way they belong like two halves of one whole.

She holds her softly-curved arms out to me and I fall upon her, rolling her under me. My lips find hers and I groan when she opens her mouth and her tongue slips along mine, tangling in some erotic duel with no winner, no loser.

Over and over, I kiss her, my mouth changing, licking along the soft curve of her bottom lip, tasting the little bow under her nose that's tempted me since I met her.

She gives as good as she gets and I can't get enough. My mouth finally breaks free of hers on a gasp and I move my body down hers, my lips suckling at her throat as she moans and her fingernails drag across my back leaving electricity in their wake. I suck hard wanting to leave my mark on her smooth, pale skin. Like some primeval beast I need every man jack out there to know that this woman is mine and only mine. Touch her and I'll hunt you down and break you.

I slide even further as her throat tips back and her breasts push up into my chest. My hand finds one of her rounded peaks and my thumb skates across her pebbled nipple. She moans and pushes her chest up into me further until both of us are writhing in pleasure.

"Emile," she gasps on a whimpered sob. Her fingers tangle in my hair and she tugs hard, my scalp tingling at the zip of pain. "Don't stop. Don't you dare stop."

As if I could. She's a goddess. A seductive siren calling me to my demise, and I'd gladly give my soul to rest with hers forever.

"Yes, yes," I growl, lifting myself and tangling my fingers in her hair, devouring her whimpers and sighs, her soft mewls.

"I can't take much more of this, angel. You feel so damn good. You taste so perfect. Sweet, tart. Sooo good." I mutter under my breath, unable to say anything else. Just needing her before I fucking blow all over this damn bed before I get inside her.

“Do you want me, Angel? Tell me you want me and I’ll give you every damn thing you need.”

“I want you,” she gasps.

That’s all I need to hear. But first I need to taste her.

“Oh my god,” she whimpers, her voice a husked scream as I push her thighs wide and yank her hips up to meet my mouth.

Smooth and creamy and just a little tang with the sweetness. “You taste just like your attitude. I knew you would.” And I bury myself inside her so far that I can barely breathe. Can barely do anything but smell and taste her all around me.

And if this is the way I have to go... I will die a fucking happy man in her arms.

### SASSY

My brain is a mess. All I can feel is him around me. All I can smell is him. The spicy clean scent of him that drives me nuts and makes me want to climb him like a tree envelopes me.

“Emile,” I gasp as his tongue taps at my clit before he sucks it into his mouth and rolls the little pearl around, tugging lightly.

“Oh shit!” I can’t stop the orgasm rolling over me like a tsunami. “Yes, yes, yes!” I scream to the heavens, my head thrown back and my hands tangled in his hair, pushing his face into my fluttering core.

Before I can even gasp out a breath, he rears up over top of me, wiping his mouth on his arm and then he lines my limp body up with his hard as steel length and drives inside of me in one hard thrust. I gasp for air, my body tensing so hard that it feels like I could break right this second. My eyes widen then close on a stifled scream of pain and my fingernails dig into his broad shoulders until I know that I’m drawing blood, leaving marks.

“Fuck! Why the hell didn’t you tell me?”

I suck in a shocked breath, still so tense that it feels like I could snap in two.

“Wh—what?” I gasp out, then gulp, hard.



“You were a virgin... why the hell didn’t you tell me that?” His voice is strained, his body taut and still, not even moving an inch as I struggle to ground my shaking body.

“Does it matter?” I grit my teeth when I feel him slip inside me just a touch more.

“Hell yeah, it matters. I would have gone a lot slower, warmed you up a bit more.”

“Given me more time to freak out,” I mutter, a strained smile on my face.

“Hey.” He leans down and his forehead gently touches mine. “I don’t care about time. I care about hurting you. I know I did and that is breaking my heart, Angel. I would never willingly hurt you.”

“Then it’s a good thing I didn’t tell you. You would have made a big deal about it,” I huff.

“Hey.” He touches my cheek gently, using his thumb to wipe away a tear that I didn’t even realize was trailing down my cheek. “Open your eyes.”

I open them slightly, hating the worried look I see in his eyes. The green in them is so dark it looks like a pine tree in the middle of a forest. “Are you alright? Really alright.”

I smile and lean up to kiss his lips lightly. “I am so alright that I think you should move.”

His eyes search mine again and he sighs. “Oh fuck, yeah.”

He leans back and his steely length slips inside me, almost leaving my body until he carefully pushes back in. His mouth takes mine again and I curl one hand into his shoulder and the other into his soft hair. He feels so good inside me. Filling me. But I

need more.

“Faster, harder.”

And like a man let loose, he finally loses control and drives into me so hard that the air punches out of my lungs. I moan and meet him thrust for thrust.

“I feel so full,” I groan and lift up to him. The delicious slide of his dick inside me lighting up my nerve endings until it feels like fire trails along my body wherever his skin touches mine.

In and out, round and round, he teases me, torments me and takes me higher and higher until I’m shuddering and then with one last, desperate wail, I fall over that wall and straight into a sky full of fireworks that trail down and across my skin.

“Fuck, yes. Yes!” My body shakes and shudders and my soul shatters into a million pieces even as I hear his harsh, guttural growl in my ear and his warm release inside me before it slips down my thighs.

He backs away until he grunts and comes free, his seed spilling down my thighs. He rolls up and then disappears into my bathroom, coming out and gently wiping me off with a cloth.

Shuddering at the pink stain, he dumps the cloth in the bathroom and then climbs back into bed with me and covers me gently with the blanket, tugging me tightly into his body.

“I love you, Angel.”

I lift my head, dazed. “I love you too.” I drop down onto the wide warmth of his chest and breathe him in, smiling, before I close my eyes and sink into exhausted slumber,

my fingers clinging to him like I'll never let him go.

But in the morning, all that's left of him is the scent of our lovemaking on the pillows and the sore feel of my body that almost matches the pain in my heart when I realize that he's snuck out and left me all alone.

I should've known that the chubby girl doesn't get the hot guy.

Reality is a real B sometimes.

## Page 8

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8

EMILE

I hated leaving her like that but the coach called me and I knew that I had to go in. I left her a note and I hope she found it.

I hit the arena and groan when the security guy that I dislike is the one on staff today. He smirks at me. “Got yourself in a bit of trouble didn’t you, LaCourt? I always knew you’d manage to fuck things up for yourself.”

“I’m not done, asshole. And at least I’ve got good prospects. Unlike you.” He glares at me and then the GM comes around the corner before something else can happen.

“Hey, I told you to call me when he got here.”

Johnson stiffens. “He just got here. Sorry, sir.” I can see the words stick in his craw and the urge to needle him about it pricks at me but I don’t. Whatever’s going on here is his problem not mine. I’m not going to get involved in his childish games.

“What do you need, Robert? I was about to meet Coach.”

“We’re all meeting in my office upstairs.” He nods to the security guard and leads me away. “We’ve just got to go over a few things and then I think pretty soon we’ll have all your legal issues cleared up and you can come back to the team with a few stipulations.”

When I reach the office, I'm not surprised to see Coach and Vic sitting there already. But there's another person there and she's got a look to her that I don't like.

Robert nods to me and indicates the seat across from his desk which is right next to the strange woman's seat. I nod at her assessing gaze and then sit down.

Robert steeples his fingers and eyes me narrowly. "Now, we've managed to get things sorted out pretty well but there's one stipulation that the other attorney is requiring that we thought you might have a problem with."

"What's that?" I ask, a lump building in my throat.

"They think that you need some anger therapy."

I jerk upright and glare at all of them. "What the hell? And you agreed to that? I've never even gotten into a fight on the ice!"

Robert nods. "I know that. But it didn't seem like that much of an ask since technically you could go to jail for assault. We've offered them a nice payout and season tickets but the last piece of the puzzle is this last ask."

"How long are we talking about?" I ask, stunned. I'm not one of the hotheads on the team and I've never been one off the ice. It's just that I couldn't let that guy touch Sassy again.

"At least two months of weekly therapy. Only one day a week. We think that can work well into your training schedule even during the season so it all sounds good to us."

"I still say this is bullshit," I mutter under my breath.

“Maybe so. But it’s better than jail.”

“And if I don’t agree to this?”

“You go to trial and you don’t play this year. Maybe not ever again, depending on how things go at trial.”

“Great options,” I mutter.

“The guy was really pissed. And since he’s gonna be drinking through a straw for the foreseeable future, it didn’t seem like such a big ask.”

I hang my head. “Fine. Is that all?”

He nods at the sleek woman sitting across from him and near me. “This is Dr. Carter. She’s going to be taking care of this for us and she’ll be your therapist.”

I nod at her and sigh, rubbing the middle of my forehead. “Great. Sorry, I’m glad to meet you, Doc.”

“Don’t worry about it,” she smiles, her voice soft and controlled. “We’ll get to know each other in our sessions. I’m hoping that this helps you out and makes you a better, more controlled player.”

I shoot Robert a dirty glare. “Yeah. Sounds great. Is there anything else that I need to do? I’m sorry but I’ve got to get back home. There’s somebody I need to go meet.”

Coach sighs. “Take this seriously, LaCourt. If you start skipping your meetings you might find yourself suspended again for an even longer period of time.”

“I get it, Coach. I’ll do whatever good little boy things I’m supposed to do.”

He nods but his lips tighten and I want to tell him to fuck off. I'm not a troublemaker. But I don't. I just stand and nod at the room in general.

"I think you can play this Saturday. So make sure you get to practice tomorrow. And get some rest tonight. Don't fucking party all night long."

I smirk and roll my eyes. "You know that's not my speed, Coach."

"Yeah. But I didn't think you'd break some guy's jaw either. Things change, LaCourt."

I nod my head and stand, leaving the office behind and running my hand through my hair. I can't believe this idiocy but it's a mess of my own making so I'll have to do what I need to do to be back in the game.

I smile and put my hands in my pocket, whistling as I walk away. I'm about to go back to my first love, the game. And I've got a new love that's even stronger than the first. I couldn't be happier than I feel right this second.

I'm a lucky fucking guy.

I walk out the door, ignoring the guard and get in my car, heading into town to find something new for my girl. I need to find the perfect adornment for the woman I intend to make mine forever.

After a satisfying day shopping and finding the perfect London Topaz ring that's set in a platinum filigree setting that's as delicate and lovely as she is, I slip the box into my pocket and head to my car.

I step out of the door and groan when I look up at the snow floating down heavier than I've seen so far this year.

“What the hell?” I groan, staring at it. I pull my phone out and feel my heart slam against my ribs when I see the Iceman warning. I suppose since I was busy with falling for my little angel, I hadn’t been paying attention to the weather and I’m paying for it now. The sky is dark and the streets are mostly empty. I grab my SUV and head to Sassy’s house, sure that she’s home by now.

But when I pull up at her house it’s still dark and no matter how many times I bang on her door, nobody answers.

“Shit!” I grunt and try calling her but she doesn’t answer. Then I try the library and it just switches over to voicemail.

“Damnit!” I growl and slam my car into gear and head straight for the library, searching the streets for her car, hoping that she hasn’t been in an accident.

But when I pull up to the library, I see her car sitting in the parking lot. I see a shadow moving in the dark cabin and immediately slam it into park and leap out. I bang on the window and almost cry with relief when I see her face in the shadows. She opens the door and her head stays down, she won’t meet my eyes.

“What are you doing here, Emile?”

Her voice is soft and sweet but a little stiff.

“I came to make sure that you’re alright. What’s wrong, angel?”

“You didn’t need to do that. I’m fine.”

“Why are you sitting here in this parking lot then? And your car isn’t on?”

“I don’t know what’s wrong with it. It just won’t start.”



“Why didn’t you call me? I would come get you right away.”

She sighs. “I wasn’t sure...after you left this morning and didn’t tell me...”

“I left a note. On the fridge.”

Her eyes come up for the first time and I can see the little glint of them in the dark.

“Oh... I didn’t have time to get anything to eat this morning. I slept late.”

“Must have been cause you were up late last night,” I tease her and she blushes.

“I’m sure that must be it.”

“Anyway. Why don’t you come on and I’ll take you home, angel?”

“I called a tow truck.”

I nod at the snow falling in thick sheets of white all around us. “I have a feeling it might be a long wait. I want to take you home. Why don’t you just let me and we’ll worry about your car later?”

“I—I suppose so.” She grabs her things and steps out of the car, slipping a little on the ice.

“Whoa! Don’t you hurt yourself. I’ve got you.”

And I hold her hand, walking her slowly across the parking lot, ever vigilant for anything that might hurt my girl.

I settle her in the passenger seat and she sighs, settling in the warmth of the car. I slide in and eye her, smiling. “You are so beautiful, Angel. I missed you like hell

today.”

Her smile grows like the sunrise coming up over the mountains around us. “I missed you too.”

“Let’s get you home.” I start the car and we head to her place, slowly, wrapped up in the eerie silence of the cold, white streets.

But I’m relieved to have her here with me, knowing that she’s safe and that I’ll make sure she stays that way.

9

SASSY

We reach my place and the roads are terrible. We pass two accidents on the way and I thank heavens that Emile came and got me because the snow continues to fall heavily and the temperature on the dash continues to fall.

“You want to come in?” I smile at him and he sighs, grinning. “I wasn’t sure if you’d ask me in.”

“Why?”

“I wasn’t sure after I did what I did yesterday.”

My brow crinkles. “What? You mean leaving without telling me.”

“I took your virginity. And I wasn’t gentle about it at all. I probably hurt you. I’m not a little guy.”

My brow lifts and I smirk. “I’d agree with that. But I liked it. I’m not sure why you’d say all of that. I’m not mad at you.” I glance out the window at the mess around us. “And I wouldn’t send a dog out in this.”

I eye him up and down. “I don’t think you’re a dog.”

He grins. “Nope. I’m not.”

He follows me inside and right after we get our coats off, I turn on the lights and grumble when they don't come on. "I guess the power's out."

"You've got a fireplace. Why don't I light it for you and we can cuddle up out here and just talk?"

I narrow my eyes at him. "Just talk?"

He shoots me a wicked look, his dark brow raised. "To start with. We'll see how the rest of the night goes."

I shake my head and walk to the bedroom to change my clothes and grab some spare blankets.

I put on some yoga pants and a loose t-shirt that I wear when I'm staying at home. It's worn and comfy and faded to the softest blue.

I hand him the blankets and he sets them out and holds a hand out to help me sit down in front of the fire. I take his hand and sit down, smiling when he sits as close to me as he possibly can.

"I've noticed that sometimes when you see one of the guys or even when you're talking to me, you kind of curl your lip. Do you not like sports at all?"

I cock my head. "I wouldn't say that I hate sports exactly. I just don't trust jocks."

"Why?" he asks and his fingers idly run down my arm, setting off little flickers of fire under his touch.

"I guess it started back in school," I huff, turning to the fire and studying the flames.

“Tell me about it.” He tugs me into his chest and the warm, spicy scent of him washes over me. Tingles erupt all over my body and my pussy tightens, my nipples suddenly pebbled points.

“I got picked on a lot. I mean. I wore glasses and I had a little stutter that made me quiet because I didn’t like people to hear it. My parents also didn’t spend a lot of money on clothes for me so I tended to have older clothes that my mother found at garage sales.”

He nods and rubs my back. My spine feels like fire is spreading all through my backside.

“Anyway, the football team took a rather perverse joy in picking on me. Especially this one guy. Brett Barker. He used to really torment the heck out of me. He knew that I had my nose in a book half the time so one of his favorite things to do was to jump into my seat before I could turn around and see him. And then he’d wrap his arms around me and hold me on his lap.” I feel my face flaming. “I hated it. Everybody stared at me and laughed.”

He holds me tight and then turns me to face him. “That guy’s a dick and if you want me to, I’ll go find him and kick his ass.”

I grin and laugh. “No. It’s not necessary. I don’t really think about it anymore. I just tend to stay away from jocks. I guess I don’t trust them.”

“I can understand that but that just sounds like kid shit. Guy probably liked you and he was too much of a pussy to tell you.” He leans close to my ear and whispers, “Unlike me who’d like to tell you every second of the day how much I like you.”

I reach up and tug him down until his lips are a breath away from mine. “Maybe you’d like to just show me.”

His eyes search mine and they're soft and sweet, full of so much heat that it fires up my belly again. "I'd like to, Angel. But I think you're probably still a little sore today and I'm not going to touch you again until you've had a few days to rest up."

I pout and he laughs. "I promise you, I'll make it worth the wait. But I don't want to hurt you. I swear last night took years off my life when I realized that it was your first time."

He hugs me close. "I am going to hold you all night long and then I'm going to help you dig out in the morning because this storm isn't supposed to last long. I have to go to practice in the morning but I'll drive you to work before I go in. And I know a great guy with cars. He'll get your car all straightened out. I'll call him in the morning."

"You don't have to do all that."

"I want to do all that and more." He leans close and kisses me hard and deep, until I'm panting wildly. "I want to take such good care of you that you never want to get away from me."

I cuddle into his chest and we watch the fire. My eyes drift shut and I sigh. "You've got a real good start on it, mister."

He chuckles. "Good." His warm lips brush my cheek. "Good night, angel. Sleep well and happy dreams. I know I'll have sweet dreams tonight."

I smile and let the darkness wash over me, content that he'll take good care of me and I have nothing to worry about.

The next morning we get ready quickly and he digs out the foot of snow so that I can walk to the car with him holding my hand. He drives me to work and kisses my cheek

after he walks me up the steps. He turns to run and smiles at me. “Love you, Angel.”

And I watch him running away from me, my heart pounding in my chest. “I love you too, Emile,” I whisper.

I groan when I see the other team’s enforcer slam into one of the Frostwolves again.

“Good grief! Why are they hitting them so hard? Is that normal?”

Becca smiles. “That’s how hockey goes, Sassy. It’s a rough game.”

“But that guy didn’t even have the puck. The other one just slammed him into the side of the glass. For no reason!” My voice lifts higher and higher while I sit there, my hands fidgeting relentlessly with my new long-sleeved t-shirt with Emile’s number and name on the back of it.

“It’s all part of the game. Don’t worry about it. But let me just say one thing. I never in a million years thought that I’d ever get to go with you to a game and that you’d be wearing a hockey player’s number on you! It’s like you’ve been tattooed by him.”

I roll my eyes. “For heaven’s sake. Don’t be ridiculous!”

She laughs and hugs me. “Don’t kid me. You’re so hung up on this guy that it’s not funny. It’s actually kind of adorable though. I couldn’t be happier for you.”

“Shut up! I know you’re trying to distract me from what’s going on out there.” I wave my hand out towards the ice. “For God’s sake, it’s barbaric!”

She laughs again and hugs me tight while I grumble, staring at the ice.

It’s hard to follow the play. It’s so fast. But I can see Emile wherever he goes. It’s

like he has a beacon that follows him so that I can't look away.

I hold my breath when he goes racing down the ice and one of the other team's players goes head to head with him for the puck. Then as soon as he gets the puck, he races to the other team's net and his offensive team scrambles to keep him in sight and block the other team's hitters. That's all I can call them because that seems to be all they want to do.

I wince when Iceman gets hammered into the boards by the other team yet again.

"Sheesh! Do they ever stop that? I mean, that guy's got to be hurting right now."

"If they need to they'll go to the second or third string if he gets hurt but that's just love taps."

I roll my eyes and then close them when I see another defensive player rolling into the boards with Emile. The two of them cross sticks over and over again and then Emile gets the upper hand and slams the puck to Iceman who takes off like a shot to the net. He jerks hard and then the puck whips out and slams into the other team's net. Buzzers go off and there are lights flashing everywhere as the crowd screams out their approval.

Before the noise level goes down, another player from the other team lifts his stick high and whack Iceman across the knees, bringing him down.

Emile and his teammates see the hit and this is about to get real ugly.

"Oh shit!" I whisper. I look over and Becca is cringing. "Don't do it, don't do it," I mutter to myself.

But it's a foregone conclusion and the screaming bloodlust of the crowd intensifies as



they all figure out what's coming.

Every one of Iceman's teammates, except for one who guards him against his attacker, picks one of the other guys and it's on. Sticks and fists fly and I cringe and close my eyes.

"I can't look, Becca! Tell me that they're stopping."

She sighs and hugs me tight again. "I wish I could tell you that. But those guys are really going at it."

"Emile isn't hurt is he?" I can't stand the thought of him getting hurt, bleeding, broken.

"Ummm. Define hurt."

I whip around, my eyes opening and groan when I see that Emile and the biggest defender are going at it, throwing punches left and right. They're both missing their jerseys and they're circling each other with their pads and helmets on. Emile leaps forward and slams into the guy and then that guy slams a fist into his middle, doubling him over.

Meanwhile, every person in this place is going crazy, screaming and cheering.

"How can they cheer for this? It's awful."

Becca shrugs. "It's the nature of the game. It's mean and dirty and they love it!"

"Well, I don't." I huff and cross my arms over my chest.

At the rate this is going, all of the guys might end up in the penalty box and it's about

to be one really boring game. I might like a little boring right about now.

At last, after what feels like hours, but was probably only a couple of minutes, they manage to separate the guys and the major instigators, including Emile are escorted over to the penalty boxes where the penalty timekeepers hold them until their time is up. I see Emile holding a pack of ice on his busted lip and eyeing the timekeeper and the play simultaneously.

I count the time down too and as soon as they nod at Emile I groan, “Oh shoot, here we go again.”

Becca grins. “Don’t worry. I’m sure he’s got this.”

I roll my eyes and sit back down, praying that this is over soon and we can go back home and I can ice up his various injuries and lecture him on why he shouldn’t have gotten involved in that dust-up.

Thank heavens there’s not much time left and the final buzzer rings with the Frostwolves up by two points.

I lean my head back and groan. I roll my head over to glare at Becca. “I blame you for all of this.”

She laughs. “I’m responsible for you finding the love of your life? I’ll take that!”

Emile said that I can go down to the hall by the locker rooms and wait for him.

I grin at Becca. “How’d you like to go down to check out some hot men?”

She grins. “Well, I broke up with Ben so considering that I’m newly single I’d love to check out some guys that might be looking for a little action.”

“Come on then.”

We walk down and I show the guy guarding the hallway the pass around my neck and one I got for Becca since I knew she was going to be with me.

Then we go stand and wait. And wait. Guy after guy comes out and then wanders off with a reporter or friends or family. Until we’re the only ones standing out in the hall.

My brow crinkles and I check my phone to make sure that I don’t have a message from Emile. There’s nothing.

I crane my neck and then the security guard comes up. “Who are you waiting on?” he says with a scowl that could cut glass.

I show him my pass and say, “Emile LaCourt.”

He smiles and waves me out of the little cordoned-off area. “Come on through. Your friend is going to have to wait here but I’ll take you to him. He’s just talking to Coach.”

I turn to Becca with raised eyebrows and she waves me on, eyeing one of the third-stringers who’s eyeing her up like she’s his next meal. “Hey, go on. I’m just gonna stand here and talk to...”. Her voice trails off and he grins at her.

“Casey.”

“Right, Casey. Tell Emile I said hi!” She nods at me and waves and then she turns her full attention to good ol’ Casey, twirling her short caramel curl around her finger and giggling at him like a schoolgirl.

I roll my eyes and follow the security guy. He leads me into the locker room and I

stall by the door nervously. “Ummm. I’m pretty sure I shouldn’t be going in here.”

He holds the door open and smiles wider. “I promise you that if I don’t let you through here, I’ll be getting in trouble with Mr. LaCourt.”

I stare at the door nervously but I absolutely don’t want to get this guy in trouble.

I nod my head and slowly creep through the doorway, keeping my eyes down.

He holds out his hand. “Come on, Miss. I’ve got you.”

He leads me to a room in the corner of the back of the room. We’re still about ten feet away when I hear someone shouting and the guard says, “Why don’t you stay here.” He glances at something on his phone. “I’ve got to get to a fight that’s broken out.”

I nod my head and he scurries out the door. I glance around and almost cringe at the testosterone smell in here. It’s overpowering as hell.

“I told you to fuck her and get your head straight! I didn’t tell you to bring her with you to the game and turn it into a brawl on ice because you’re so hopped up on your dick that you couldn’t keep from starting a damn fight!”

“You know that they started it, Coach! That late hit against Iceman was bullshit! That should have been called immediately.”

“You guys didn’t even give them the chance to call it! You were too busy jumping the other team! I’m surprised all of you didn’t get tossed from the game and rack up some penalties.”

I peek around the corner and see Emile in the glassed-in room with the guy I think is the coach. They’re facing each other, both of them practically vibrating with rage.

Emile's face is suffused with red and my own face is flushed.

"I still can't believe you brought your newest piece of ass to the game and then started a brawl. I expect better from you, LaCourt! You're no young hothead!"

"Just cause I'm not a young hothead doesn't mean that I'm gonna let those guys walk all over us."

"Fine. But I've got to think about this. You might be suspended again, depending on what the doc says. And for fuck's sake if you can't keep your fucking dick under control don't bring your latest piece of ass with you!"

Tears drip down my cheeks and I push my fist into my mouth, before I turn and run out the door, banging into the lockers painfully because I can't see through the tears in my eyes.

This was too good to be true. I should have listened to my head and not my foolish, foolish heart.

I skid to a halt next to Becca who's standing talking to the guy.

"Becca," I whisper through my tears. "I need to go. Please, let's go. Please." I can't breathe and tears are coming down so fast that I barely manage to squeeze out the words and hold myself still while she turns towards me and tugs me into her.

"Oh, Sassy. What the hell? Did he hurt you?" She glares at the door. "I am going to kick his ass! You wait here!"

"No, no!" I grasp her arms with my fingernails until she winces. "Please. I just want to go. Let's go!"

She nods slowly. “Fine. But as soon as we get home you’re telling me what he did and I’m gonna hunt him down and punch him in the junk.”

The other guy winces and backs away, holding his hands in front of his own dick.

“I—I’ll catch you later, Becca.” She glares at him like he’s the one who did whatever to me.

“We’ll see.”

And then she hugs me into her side and guides me out to the car, her arm tight around me when we get to the door and I start to slump to the ground, the sobs wracking me so hard that I can’t even hear her anymore.

But I know that no matter what this pain isn’t going anywhere soon. It hurts to breathe and my head is killing me. And there’s nobody to blame but myself. I knew better.

You can’t trust any jock. I know that. Emile’s no better than all the others. Once he got what he wanted, he was ready to leave me behind.

10

EMILE

“Dammit!” I groan when I see her running away around the corner.

“What the hell is your problem now?” Coach grumbles.

“She was in here. She heard what you said.”

“So?”

“I bought a ring. I’m asking her to marry me. She’s the one. The woman that I’ve been waiting for all this time. And now she just heard you telling me to fuck her and forget her and I didn’t say a damn thing.”

He winces. “I didn’t know you were that serious about the girl. You just met her.”

“I know. But I also knew as soon as I saw her that she was the one that I was going to spend the rest of my life with. I’d have screamed it from the rafters if I could’ve. She’s it for me. And now she thinks that...” I can’t even finish the thought, running my clenched fingers through my hair.

“Just explain it to her. I’m sure she trusts you.”

“She got picked on when she was in high school by jocks. She doesn’t trust them. I guarantee she’s gonna think the worst.”

“Then let her go.”

I want to punch him in the mouth but I clench my fists and push that anger down. “I can’t do that. I think I said she’s the one.”

He shrugs. “So figure out how to make it up to her. What’s in all those damn rom-coms? A big gesture?”

I grasp my hair and groan. “I don’t know what to do though.”

He pushes up. “I don’t know. But you’re shit to me right now. So go home and tomorrow you’re gonna need to go see the therapist. In the meantime, if you want the girl, figure out how to get her. You’re an athlete. Surely you can figure out how to win one girl over. It’s not like there’s a whole team you have to beat.”

I sigh and push out of the chair and then out of the office. “I guess I’ll have to figure this out myself.”

I walk out the door and see one of the third-stringers, Casey. “Whoa, man. That chick that was in there looking for you came out really pissed. What did you do to her?”

“I didn’t do anything to her. She misunderstood something Coach said.”

“Well, she was crying. Her friend took her home and was threatening to kick your ass. I think I’d be scared of her if I was you.”

“Were you talking to her?” I ask.

“Yeah.” He grins. “I like the crazy ones! I got her number and I’m gonna call her.”

“You’ve got her number? Can I get it?”



He glares at me. “Hey man! Just cause your girl is pissed at you doesn’t mean that you can have mine.”

“I don’t want your girl. She must be the one that’s friends with Sassy. I want to ask her some questions about her. To try and fix this shit if I can’t get her to answer me. That’s gonna be my last resort. I have to try and talk to her first.”

He nods and hands me the piece of paper that she jotted her number down on and then grunts when I put it in my phone and give it back to him.

“I’d make sure that’s a last resort. She really was pissed. I think she might actually hurt you, man. We’re big guys but she scared me.” He grins again. “I like them like that. Keeps things exciting!”

I roll my eyes and walk to my car, hitting the button to call Sassy. But it goes to voicemail. By the time I get to my car I’ve called at least ten times and she’s sent it to voicemail every time.

I sit in the car for a minute. Then I sigh. I’m sure her friend is there right now and they’re probably trashing jocks and figuring out which of my body parts they want to cut off first.

But I think I’m gonna have to go to phase two with her friend. I’m just gonna have to be patient and hope that I can get this figured out because there’s no way I’m gonna be able to let her go. Even if I have to kidnap her and tie her to my bed, I’m gonna get her to listen to me.

The next morning, after the worst night of my life, pacing and picking up the phone to try and call her about fifty million times, I call her friend.

“Hello?” she asks, wary as hell.

“Hi. You don’t know me but I’m Emile LaCourt.”

“Oh hell no! I know exactly who you are, asshole! You hurt my bestie! I’m going to crush your nuts!”

I cringe.

Shit! That’s quite the picture.

“I’m sorry about that. She just misunderstood what the coach was saying. I would never say that about her. As a matter of fact, I told the coach that I was going to ask her to marry me. I spent the other day looking for the perfect ring for her. Found it too. I’ve got it already to give to her. But right now she won’t even speak to me.”

“You want to marry her? Really?” Her voice is still wary but there’s a bit of hope in it too.

“Yes! I love her! I told her that!”

“Men tell women that all the time,” she scoffs.

“I’ve never told any woman that. Only her. But I need to find that big, romantic gesture that’s gonna get her to at least let me explain what happened.”

“So what do you want from me?”

“If I can get things together, can you get her back to the ice rink that’s in the middle of town? The open air one that the whole town goes to?”

“Sure. But why?”

“I don’t know exactly yet. But I think I have an idea how to get her attention. I just have to try and get my shot lined up.”

“Okay. Just don’t fuck this up. If you do love her, I’d hate to have to neuter you.”

I close my eyes. “Jesus. Yeah. Let’s try and avoid that.”

“What can you tell me about that Casey guy?”

### SASSY

“I’m telling you, Sassy. You need to get out and get some fresh air. You’re starting to get a little ripe. I’ve got just the thing to do. But first... go take a shower and wash your hair. You look like you haven’t had a shower all week.”

It’s been a week and although at first he called me constantly, he hasn’t called me at all for days and I should be happy.

Instead, all I can do is cry.

“I don’t want to go anywhere.”

“Too bad. You’re my bestie. You need to get it together, girl. You’re letting this guy make you look like hell! Where’s your pride? You gonna let this jock mess with your head again! I thought you wouldn’t let one of them make a hash out of your life again.”

I lift my head and growl at her. “I don’t want to hear this anymore, Becca! Why can’t you just let me wallow right now?”

“Because you stink and you’re letting this guy get away with making you look like shit! I expect better out of my bestie!”

I sigh loud and long. “If I get ready and we go do whatever the heck it is that you

want to do will you finally lay off and let me wallow in peace.”

She crosses her heart and smirks. “Promise you. If you do this one thing, I will let you wallow for a whole damn week before I bug you again.”

“Fine.” I drag myself up and try to remember when the last time I took a shower was. “I did take a shower the other day. Somebody at work complained.”

Becca rolls her eyes and mutters. “Seriously? That shouldn’t never be a thing. Go get ready.”

I stalk into the bedroom and grab what I need to take my shower and then get dressed in a warm sweater and jeans.

“Hey! Where are we going? Am I dressed alright?”

Becca pops in the room and nods her head. “Yeah. But make sure you grab a pair of gloves. You don’t want your hands to get cold. Got to take care of your fingers.”

I scrunch my brow and stare at her. “You know. You’re acting really weird.”

“I’m always weird. It’s part of my charm.”

Cocking my head, I grunt. I can’t really argue with that. Instead, I grab a pair of gloves and shove them on. “Okay. Let’s get this over with.”

“Great. Sounds like we’re gonna have fun,” Becca mutters.

We pile into her car and I buckle up, tilting my head back and closing my eyes. I can feel a headache beating at the backs of my eyes again and I’m so damn tired that I just want to crawl into a hole and pull the dirt back over me.

I don't open them until the car stops and I open my eyes and groan. "Are you serious? Since when do you think that I like ice skating?"

"You need some exercise and it's a good time of year for this. It's one of the few things you can do over the winter that's outside. And you desperately need some sun and fun."

I struggle out of the car, muttering under my breath. "I don't think you know what fun is?"

But I follow her out and we grab two skate rentals and then start making our way around the ice. I shuffle my feet, remembering why I don't like this.

"You better not leave me. I can't do this."

"I'll be right back. I think there's something going on over there."

Then she disappears and I'm standing in the middle of the rink, trying not to spiral into a panic attack and wondering if I should just go down onto the ice and crawl my way back to the edge.

Then a song starts playing loudly and my head comes up. An old song comes on so loud that I can hear the words clearly. Tears start in my eyes when I hear the beginning of "It's Not Over."

Then my eyes widen and I see that the ice is clear and people are ringing the ice singing along to the song and then they start pointing behind me and before I can turn, they're laughing and taking video.

A whoosh comes up behind me and then a man that I recognize from the Frostwolves swings past me dressed as a prince and I start laughing. The guy is huge and he's

wearing tights which I don't know how he got them made that big. His thighs are stretching them out so bad that when he bows in front of me and hands me a rose without thorns on it, I'm not sure how he doesn't rip those tights in half.

I take the red rose and then he skates off to just swing around the rink over and over again. Then I hear the whoosh again and another one of them comes past me and he stops right in front of me and hands me a pale pink rose.

About eight of the guys end up handing me roses in every color of the rainbow until I have a gorgeous bouquet that fills my arms and tears pouring down my cheeks as I watch them dance around to the song.

Then my very own prince comes out, his arms empty as he races around me, stopping on a dime in front of me. He pulls a glorious silvery-purple rose out of his waistband and hands it to me.

“Angel. I know what you thought you heard but that wasn't what I thought about you at all. I never planned to let you go. I have spent the last week missing you every second of the day. I promise you that if you give me another chance I will protect you from every damn thing out there. I would gladly give up my life to protect you. You mean so much to me. I will never let another tear fall from your gorgeous eyes unless they're tears of joy.”

“I want to go to sleep with my arms wrapped around you every night and wake with you every morning. I want the glorious blue of your eyes to be what I wake up to and the last thing I see at night. I want to smell you on my clothes and know that if any fucker out there even looks at you, I'm right there to let him know that you're taken. You're mine and you always will be. Even if you tell me to go pound sand, you'll still own my heart until the day I take my last breath.”

I can't stop crying and I stare at him like he's a mirage. “I missed you too, Emile. So

much that it almost killed me.”

All eight of the guys run around us in dizzying circles as he gets down on one knee and my mouth falls open, the song crescendos around us.

“I love you so much, angel. Will you do me the honor of finally being mine?”

I drop the roses to the ground and fall into him, almost landing flat on my ass. “I will. Yes, please!”

He grins happily. “Thank you, baby. I swear I will never let you go. You’re it for me and you have been since I first saw you in that rink with those beautiful blue eyes that stopped me in my tracks.”

I nod happily and he slips the ring on my finger. I can’t stop staring at the stunning stone. “This ring is the exact shade of your eyes and I knew it was meant to be on this pretty finger as soon as I saw it.”

He lifts my finger up to his mouth and kisses it lightly, tugging me into him. The guys cheer and I blush as they race around and act like idiots. Emile pulls me tight into his arms and his lips take mine gently. He lifts up slightly and I can feel his warm breath on my mouth.

“I can’t wait to get you home and finally make love to you like you deserve. I have fucking missed you so much it hurts. I dreamt of you every night. And the one thing that kept going through my head was that it’s not over. It can’t be over.”

“No matter how hard I tried to stay mad at you, I couldn’t stop dreaming about you coming to me.”

“I will always find you, Angel. You are mine.”



“Forever and ever.”

He grins wickedly and lifts me up in his arms. “Now... how about we go act out some of those dreams?”

I smirk at him. “You think you’re up to it? You turned me down the last time. I think you were the one that needed some time.”

He lifts a brow. “Oh, baby. You’re gonna pay for that remark.”

“Over and over again, I hope,” I laugh.

“Get him, Sassy!” Becca yells and I laugh, my head thrown back, as he skates us off the ice and then he gently settles me in the car.

I blow her a kiss. “You’re the best!”

“I want all the dirty details later!” She hollers.

A warm burst of blood shoots to my cheeks and I shoot her a glare.

Emile starts the car and we wave at all of the team members who came to help him.

I turn to him and lean over, running my fingers over his soft hair. “I hope this is the start of something amazing.”

“It is. I promise you that I will work my ass off to make you happy every damn day. And I know how to work, Angel. I’m a professional athlete. It’s what we do.”

I kiss his hand and lay my hand on his as he drives out of the lot. “Where did you guys get those tights?”

He laughs and kisses my hand. “I’ll tell you on our wedding day. It’s an interesting story.”

I giggle. “I’ll look forward to hearing it.”

“Hope you know that I’m gonna have to move you in soon.”

“We’ll work on that.”

“Oh. I’m gonna work a lot of things out on you, sweetheart.” His gorgeous green eyes glow with love and happiness and I can’t believe this is real.

But when he rolls me under his big body later and claims me until I’m screaming his name, I know it’s real and it’s forever.

Just like a fairytale.

### EPILOGUE

Sassy

I love to watch my husband and our kids out on the ice. All of them are much better than me. Emile smiles at our daughter, the seven-year-old with auburn pigtails grinning at her brother with her mouth guard in.

“Okay, you guys. Now I’m gonna drop the puck and you guys get it! Cleanly! Don’t hammer each other and high-stick!”

“Yeah, Rebel. Don’t hit me,” her brother grouches.

“I told you that was an accident,” she mutters, glaring at Jaxon.

Emile chuckles. “It might have been but you still need to be careful. You could have really hurt Jaxon if he wasn’t wearing his helmet.”

Not that Emile would ever let our kids mess around without being fully protected. He’s a wonderful father and I can’t believe how lucky I am.

“Mmmm,” Kat growls as she gnaws happily on her teething ring. I laugh and chuck her under the chin, wiping away the trail of drool that’s dripping.

“Is that good, baby?” She giggles at me, her glorious green eyes that are the exact same shade as her daddy’s smiling at me happily.

She is the happiest baby. Nothing phases her, even her brother and sister arguing right next to her. Even her daddy taking her around the skate rink in his big, burly arms.

He's taken his dad's memory to heart and every chance he gets he's out on the ice with our babies, all three of them. He even works as an assistant coach on our son's team. The ten-year-olds think he's a god and can't get enough of his help. He tries to keep things focused but every once in awhile I see them asking him for stories about his days in hockey.

It's been twelve years since we got married and every single day of them has been amazing. Especially since he talked me into following my own dream.

After our first year of marriage, he sat me down and said that he wanted me to think about writing that book I'd always wanted to. Even that I should quit and just focus on the hard work of making that dream come true.

It was even more successful than either of us thought it would be. By the time he was ready to retire the next year, I was already successfully writing and publishing my first series, a three-book series that might become more. The collection is a magical fairytale with fairies and dragons, princes and princesses, all wrapped up in a story of epic travels and fights that has been rattling around in my head for years.

My very own hockey-wielding prince gave me the opportunity and the joy and support that I needed to tell my tales and finally let others enjoy them.

And headlining those stories was a young girl with emerald eyes and dark hair just like our daughter, the picture of my Emile. My fiery little Rebel is the very image of my heroine, a girl who dresses as a knight and hides who she is to live the adventures she wants to live until one knight sees her heart underneath the armor she wears inside and out and wins her love. She's a girl who lives to be more than what everyone tells her that she is.

It was a massive success and Emile retired and takes care of everything that I can't when I'm on a deadline and buried under my work.

"Hey, sweetheart! How about you go ahead and get Kat ready and I'll take us all out to get some dinner tonight so you can take a break."

I smile. "You spoil me, Emile!"

"You're easy to spoil." He smiles his huge, playful grin that makes me happier than I ever thought I could be.

We go out to the kids' favorite diner in town and then we head back home to the kids getting ready for bed and I read them a story that I just finished working on. It will take us many nights to finish the story but sometimes the tale takes a long time and it deserves that effort.

After a couple of chapters, I set the book down and tuck the kids in, kissing their cheeks and grabbing the book, ducking out of the room and gently shutting the door.

As soon as I turn around, I'm gently pushed into the door by Emile, his green eyes burning with need.

I smile and gently tap at his chest. "Did you need something, honey?"

"Just you," he says and his lips come down on mine, teasing mine open until I'm groaning and wrapping my arms around his neck, smacking him in the head.

He pulls away and growls at me. I giggle, shrieking softly when he picks me up and throws me over his shoulder.

"Stop it!" I whisper. "You're going to hurt yourself."

“When are you going to figure it out? You will not hurt me. You’re light as a feather and I like hauling you around.” He slaps my ass and I squeal quietly.

“Neanderthal,” I hiss.

He throws me on our bed and grins, stripping quickly out of his jeans and t-shirt. Then he grabs my ankle and starts to strip me out of my pants, grinning when I laugh and roll around.

“Dang it, Emile! You know that tickles,” I huff.

“I also know how to fix that.” I moan when his warm fingers slip inside my pussy lips and gently stroke my throbbing clit.

“Oh my god, Emile! Don’t stop!”

“Don’t worry, honey. I’ll get you there. Just hang on.” He slips down my body and grunts, pushing my legs wide. Then... before I can even brace for what I know is coming, he buries his face in my body, his scruffy jaw feeling like heaven.

His tongue taps at my clit as his fingers curl inside and my overwrought body immediately flies away, throbbing with ecstasy, my back rigid, my eyes fluttering closed. A scream trapped in my throat, strangling me on my own pleasure, a gurgle the only sound I can make.

He smirks and wipes his mouth off, climbing up my body to stare down at me as he lines himself up with my throbbing core. With one quick thrust he’s buried all the way inside me and I freeze, the air in my lungs stalling painfully before I gasp and pant below his big body.

“You feel amazing,” he growls in my ear, his thick length moving inside me slowly, carefully. I nod my head frantically, still unable to breathe or talk.

With each deep thrust, Emile pulls out almost to the tip and then pushes in fast and hard. Again and again, he pushes inside me and then pulls out. Again and again, his thrusts take me higher and higher, the tension in my body building until I'm stretched so tight it feels like I'm going to snap and break.

One deep thrust that reaches so far inside me that it feels like he's going to be buried inside me forever and then the tension cracks and breaks, shards of pleasure flying into the ether around us, sparkling like starlight behind my eyes.

"Emile!" I scream and collapse into the mattress, his big body tensing over me as I dig my fingernails into his warm skin. He groans and his teeth scrape my throat, his frantic thrusts finally falling away as he growls and collapses on top of me.

I tap his shoulder and groan. "You're crushing me, big guy."

He rolls over and grunts, kissing my cheek before he falls to the side and mumbles, "Sorry, baby. I think I blacked out for a minute."

I giggle and curl up on his big, broad chest, my fingers twirling in his soft mat of dark hair that tapers down to his nether regions in that lovely happy trail that makes women drool.

I close my eyes, sleep tugging at me and the warmth of Emile's bare skin, the scent of him curling in my nose relaxing me until I'm barely hanging on.

His breathing starts to even out but just before I fall asleep, Emile sighs, "I love you so much, Sassy. I didn't think I could love anyone as much as I love you."

"I love you too, Frostbite," I sigh and curl closer to him, needing his warmth, his love.

He chuckles low and deep and kisses my cheek gently. His arms tighten around me

even as his deep breaths go slow and steady.

My heart settles down finally and a smile curls my lips. My life has turned out so much better than I ever thought it could. So much more than I thought anyone's could.

And it's all because I let dangerous Frostbite claim me. Let myself really be as happy as he made me feel.

As he makes me feel every single day. His love is what makes our family work, what makes us well-run, happy and complete. His love is what I was missing and being found has to be the best feeling in the world.

With him, I'm always exactly where I'm supposed to be. Safe in his arms for the rest of our lives. Living the dream.

With the man of my every fantasy.

Forever after.

Thank you for reading. We'd love to hear what you thought in a review! Hat Trick Heart .

A limelight-loving hockey player with a viral video problem falls for a curvy PR consultant with a public past she keeps private. But when sparks and misfired texts fly, can newfound love survive when trust is shaken?

Maddox

"Work hard, play harder" is a motto that's taken me to the top of my game, both on and off the ice.



But after a spontaneous, not-so-private dance for some bachelorettes goes viral, my mantra finally lands me in big trouble.

Now I'm suspended from play and stuck under the supervision of a PR consultant tasked with spinning my every move into squeaky-clean social media posts.

Enter prim and proper Jocelyn Tan, the woman whose curves, choreography, and mysterious exit from the public eye has lived rent free in my head for years.

One look at her is all it takes to reignite my obsession, and now that she's in my life, I'm never letting her go.

Can I convince her I'm more than a headstrong hockey star and man enough to own my mistakes after one of them puts her back in the limelight?

Jocelyn

As a former content creator, I have personal experience with viral videos helping or hindering a career.

It's why I've shunned the spotlight and reinvented myself into a stick-straight, no-nonsense PR consultant with a plan.

But when I'm hired to revamp the image of a charismatic hockey player with an infuriating habit of disregarding the rules, I'm horrified to discover he knows exactly who I am.

And not only does Maddox Davies want answers- he wants me.

I won't mix business with pleasure again, especially with some pucker in possession of an attention-seeking wild streak.

Shutting him out should be easy, but I didn't count on him dismantling my defenses and waking dormant passions I thought I left behind.

When history repeats itself, can I trust Maddox to protect my reputations and my heart?

Want to see a rule-bending rebel hockey player with a huge heart fall first, and fall hard, for a rule-following dancing fixer who can't resist his charms? Then grab Offside Obsession and add this humorous, feel good, sweet and steamy romantic novella to your Tbr today!

Brace yourself for a series that captures the excitement of hockey, the enchantment of love, and the undeniable connection between adventure and the human spirit.