



# Hidden Feelings (Quick Bites #1)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Having a massive crush on your straight roommate is the definition of bad life choices.

But here I am, hopelessly falling for Derek Garner, my best friend, and the one guy I shouldn't want but can't stop thinking about.

It's not just his stupidly perfect smile or the way his laugh makes my chest ache. It's how he's always there when I need him, how he somehow became the most important person in my life. And yeah, it's killing me.

He'll never see me that way, and I'd never risk screwing up the one good thing we've got.

At least, that's what I thought . . . until the party.

There was a dare. We kissed.

And now, everything's different.

Hidden Feelings is a short MM story dripping with all the good vibes. A quick read to enjoy during your lunch break.

**Total Pages (Source):** 4

# Page 1

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## Paranormal Activity

“Mmm,” Derek moaned, shoving the last forkful of the lasagna I’d made for dinner into his mouth. “That was delicious.”

Lasagna was supposed to be an easy meal, and fun to make. Nothing hard.

However, watching Derek’s lips move around the fork, something was definitely hard.

It just wasn’t the lasagna.

Pushing the image of his tempting lips out of my mind, I managed to pull myself together and smile. He didn’t know that half the reason for my newfound culinary talent wasn’t because I genuinely liked making food.

It was because I liked it when he ate it.

I shifted in my seat, willing that boner to shrink immediately. “Glad you liked it.”

He winked at me, flashing that lazy lopsided grin that always made my heart skip, before standing up, his chair screeching against the hardwood floor.

There it was again.

That signature Derek charm I loved so incredibly much.

“Thanks for dinner,” he said.

“Anytime.”

Derek nodded. “Pretty much perfect, honestly.”

“Pretty much?” One of my eyebrows raised. “Do you have improvements, critic?”

He chuckled. “It would’ve been an even more perfect dinner if you hadn’t brought your loser ex-boyfriend up. He leaves a bad taste in my mouth.”

“A bad taste, huh? Couldn’t tell with the way you gobbled up every piece on your plate.”

He laughed, pushing his chair back against the table, and I swear it took every bit of my self-control not to openly stare at his face.

Grabbing my empty plate, I trailed after him, trying to play it cool. But my eyes? They had a mind of their own.

I didn’t mean to, but my eyes drifted, taking him in from behind: the tank top stretching across his shoulders, boxers riding low on his hips, the way the muscles at the back of his thighs flexed with each step as he sauntered into the kitchen—

Nope. Not today, Satan.

I looked away fast, forcing my gaze anywhere but at him.

If there was one thing I’d call Derek Garner, it’d be a wicked angel sent to torment me.

Rippling muscles. Perfectly styled dark brown hair. Eyes that made you melt in their caramel hues. He was something you should only see in a wet dream, yet here he was in the flesh. As if God and the angels had wanted to add a dash of sexiness but accidentally spilled the whole bottle when creating him.

Yeah, that would be the only way to describe this beautiful specimen of a man.

On top of all of that, Derek wasn't a horrible person. He was a nice guy. Like, actually, a genuinely nice guy. He was the kind of guy who volunteered at homeless shelters or walked drunken girls home from parties, not to get into their pants but to ensure they got home safely.

He was godly.

Perfect.

And unbelievably straight, which was just my luck.

Every time I felt my heart swell around him, I fought to keep myself from descending deep into the pits of wanting something I couldn't have.

Hence . . . the torture situation.

Still, I was lucky enough to be his roommate, even if it meant pining for him from a distance like an idiot.

We lived a few miles off campus in a two-bedroom apartment. The place predominantly belonged to him. I was more like a sub-renter, and wasn't paying as much as I knew I should be paying for living in such a luxury apartment as this, but Derek insisted on charging me the regular amount you'd pay for a college dorm. So I made up for it in the little ways I could.

I made sure to make our little home as hospitable and nice as possible.

With the huge discount I was getting on rent, I didn't want to freeload on his generosity, so instead of him paying for cleaning services as he'd originally planned, I insisted on taking up those tasks.

The cooking was just an added benefit. Just a way for me to feel connected to him—a pathetic way, but hey.

Pathetic, at this point, was my middle name.

Our arrangement didn't bother me. I mean, that's what a good roommate would do, I presumed. Plus, this semester Derek had been incredibly busy. He had an internship class, so was gone for long hours at work, and when he wasn't, he spent his time at the library, catching up on his studies. The weekend was for baseball practice.

We had lived together since freshman year, but even now in our senior year, Derek still glowed with satisfaction and gratitude whenever he saw the efforts I put in to making our place comfortable. There'd be something that would twinkle in his eyes, yet before I could decipher anything, like usual, he would turn and walk away. I dared to let myself think, at times, that we were almost like a happily married couple.

Pathetic.

I know. It really was sad, how much I enjoyed the domestic bliss we had going. I knew Derek did too, food notwithstanding.

"I knew living with a gay boy was a good call," he would sometimes tease.

And I'd laugh and flip him off with a playful, "Fuck you."

Coming from someone else, that might've been taken as a backhanded compliment, or even a sly insult. However, Derek didn't mean it that way. He grew up with his gay uncle and understood the nuances of the culture. And his uncle and I got along just fine.

Derek wasn't one of those homophobic pricks I'd encountered a few times on campus. He was cool with gays.

It was just a shame he wasn't one himself.

Though I wasn't sure how cool I was with him being cool with it, because Derek was way too comfortable—like really, really comfortable—with nudity or getting changed in front of me.

I mean, I didn't mind in the slightest. A good piece of eye candy never hurt.

On more than one occasion, he'd just strip naked or walk around in his towel after a shower. It wasn't like he was parading himself, per se, I just don't think he understood what his body did to me.

An athlete's body, with a model's face and a dreamy smile, his hair dripping wet trails down his glistening chest... Lord almighty, it took everything in me not to ogle him like a damn pervert and grab the nearest object to hide my boner.

His comfort around me was another kind of torture. Hell, he probably didn't even realize the effect he had on me.

I'm not sure when my attraction to him started. Maybe it began after I broke things off with my ex, or maybe it was always there, buried in the background, waiting for me to notice. Either way, of late it seemed that background static of attraction had kind of ... tuned in somehow. Like it used to be just fuzzy and now it was in crystal

clear IMAX high definition.

That is to say, I've always thought Derek was hot.

But lately he's melting my brain.

I've been seeing him in a new light, catching all the small details I'd otherwise overlooked.

A lot of it had to do with how great he was to me through the whole breakup situation. Derek showed up for me in a way none of my other friends did during that time. Like how he would send inspirational quotes to me every morning and check on me throughout the day until we were both at home. He'd buy my favorite cookies on his way home after baseball practice. He even got a nipple piercing when I casually mentioned he'd look cool with one.

It was that and a thousand other moments that really cemented my attraction. The little shoulder squeezes. The way he'd cocoon next to me on the couch when we were watching TV together, or his random foot massages that I liked so much.

Yeah, being his roommate was both a blessing and a curse.

Still, we worked well together. I knew my boundaries. I didn't dare make any moves at all because I liked what we had going on.

Instead, I decided to just return the sentiment. I also stepped up my care for him.

I would remind Derek about important class tests coming up, or doctor's appointments, and I'd sometimes drive him to and from everything since he didn't like driving. In return, he would keep me in check—like reminding me why I broke up with my ex-boyfriend, who was constantly trying to get back with me. My ex and

I had a toxic relationship, to say the least, but after months with no sex I'd started to think he wasn't that bad, that I should call him and maybe after a few drinks we could... you know, finally seal everything off with one last time together.

Derek had this uncanny way of noticing whenever I was "in the mood." Probably because I would be moping around the house like a lost kitten, complaining about my dry spell. He took that as his cue to lecture me about all the horrible things my ex had done to me. In the end, I would give up the thought and find a way to... find other means to... Oh, you know what I mean!

Today was a frustrating "it's been five months without sex and I think I might just die if I get no action" kind of day, and as usual I'd been complaining to Derek about it all through dinner, teasing the idea of meeting up with my ex one last time.

I suppose he was more than just my roommate now. Somewhere along the line we'd become good friends. Best friends even.

Derek headed toward the pile of dishes in the kitchen sink. "Hey, I got this."

Hmm. That little sparkle was back in his eyes, but I couldn't make him wash that huge pile all by himself. So I joined him, stepping up beside him at the sink. "How about this. I wash, you rinse and dry?"

"Sure," Derek said with a shrug. Then he smirked. "Only wish you were as good at making decisions about your love life as you are at cooking."

I shook my head but couldn't stop the grin from spreading across my face. "I'm decisive enough to feed your sorry ass, aren't I?" I elbowed him lightly and reached for the sponge.

Big mistake.



My arm brushed against his and it sent a jolt straight to my core. I clenched my jaw, trying not to think about it... or him... or how close we were.

It was always like this. Being near him was like being hit by lightning.

Every time.

But not for him.

Only for me.

The torture.

“Guess I can’t complain,” Derek said, oblivious. Then he pinned me with a stare, his smirk shifting into something more serious. “But honestly, you should just block your ex already. Stop letting him mess with your head.”

I already knew this would end up in another lecture, but I had no one else to vent to.

“I’m just saying . . .” I avoided his gaze as I washed up, passing the plate to Derek. “We never had breakup sex... so would it really be that bad if I texted him back? Would it actually be so bad if we had one more night together? Just to finalize things and say goodbye? He texted me last night again and... he’s clean, and I know him...”

Derek groaned. “Kyle, I mean it in the nicest way when I say I want to smash this plate over your dumb head.” His eyes flicked to me and then narrowed. “I’m going to assume you didn’t do anything to ask for that text in the first place. Did you?”

“No,” I murmured, pouting. I really should have blocked him on my phone months ago, because once again my curiosity about what my ex-boyfriend was reaching out about is coming back to bite me in the ass. “It was a late-night booty call kind of

situation.”

“So he sent you an unsolicited picture of his penis?”

I huffed, scrubbing hard at something nonexistent on the plate in my hands. “It was a video. A cumshot video. Uh, he knows that’s my weakness.”

“And...” Derek trailed off, and when I turned my head to the side to look at him, he really had the plate raised, ready to smash it over my head.

I held up soapy hands in a gesture of surrender. “It worked, okay? It was a good video!”

Derek shook his head “May I remind you why you never had breakup sex? It’s because he was cheating on you with about ten other guys. How can such a person be clean—”

“He got tested afterward,” I exclaimed. This was turning into an argument pretty quickly, and I badly wanted to keep it from getting worse. It seemed that lately, all our arguments were centered around my ex-boyfriend. I wish it was because Derek was jealous or something, but I knew deep down it was because he was an amazing friend and roommate. “He showed me the results.”

“Uh, yeah, but if he slept with that many guys when he was with you, how many guys do you think he’s fucking now ? For all you know he could be making up those test results. I’ve seen it happen plenty of times.”

“He was grieving back then when it happened,” I said in my ex’s defense. “His grandpa had just died...”

I stopped, aware that I sounded even more pathetic as soon as I said it. It shouldn’t

ever be an excuse for cheating, regardless of how one grieves. I knew that, but at the time I was willing to forgive him because of it.

Ugh.

I might still be willing to, really.

If it meant that I could get some of this sexual frustration out.

I risked another glance at Derek and I knew I had it coming when I saw his jawline tick.

“So the only way he could feel better was by dipping another guy’s balls into his mouth?” Derek exhaled and gave me a flat look. “Man, your standards go out the window for him. What’s so good about him anyway? As far as I can tell, he’s not even an attractive dude... Like, you’re way better looking, and you have more going for you.”

“It’s not about him being good,” I groaned, closing my eyes for a moment. “Okay, fine, I’m horny. It’s been forever. There—said it. I’m worried my dick will fall off if I don’t start using it soon.”

“Aren’t you a bottom?” he asked, his brows knitting together.

I rolled my eyes. “You really don’t know how gay sex works.”

“No, I don’t,” he confessed with a smile. “Enlighten me.”

I blinked. “What?”

Derek’s cheeks flushed a little. “Well it’s not like I’m going to ask my uncle or

anything. Tell me what I'm missing here that's worth going back to this dude for."

My heart hammered in my chest. "Seriously?"

"Seriously," he nodded.

I took a deep breath, picking up another soiled plate. I couldn't believe we were about to go into that territory.

"Well, it's not like straight sex." I huffed. "Plus, the pool of who you can fuck is smaller, especially at our school. There are like . . . nine out of all the closet gay guys in our year, and most are taken, or lame and weird, or ugly, or whorish . . ."

"Like your ex," Derek chimed in. "Who is all of the above. It's been five months," he said, his voice softening. "Give up on him for your own good."

Right. Derek would never understand the difference between him and me when it came to finding someone for a good lay. He had it so easy with his good looks and outgoing personality. Plus he was on the baseball team.

"All you need to do to get laid is exist. You basically just walk outside and girls drop at your feet. They're everywhere! Like vultures! I've never seen so many women willing to stab one another for some action with you!"

Derek laughed. "It's not like that. I still need to... try."

"Oh, please." I snorted, rolling my eyes. "I've seen you enter a room and girls offer to sleep with you. Like that girl who hit on you last week at the library."

"That's not true!"

Yeah, right. “I literally watched it in real time,” I said, deadpan.

When that girl flirted with him, he flirted back with practiced ease. I had to bury myself in my laptop and pretend the sight didn’t sting. “So you didn’t sleep with her?” I arched my brow. I knew he did. I saw the evidence of it when I went to take his clothes for laundry that night and saw an open pack of condoms in his pocket, with three missing out of the pack of twelve.

Derek stared at me, his perfect eyebrows knitted together. “This isn’t about me. We’re getting off-topic. This is about you and how you’re not getting with your ex. I’ll do anything to stop this train wreck.”

My mind went places it shouldn’t have gone with that “anything,” and I shifted, hoping he couldn’t see the growing bulge in my pants.

Derek continued, completely oblivious to my discomfort. “In fact, I’ll help get you laid, okay? Come with me to Sam’s party on Friday night. We’ll mingle and find you a nice piece of ass to... well, grip onto, ’cause as far as I know bottoms don’t do the... poking.”

I snorted, returning my focus to the dishes “You’re correct, we get plowed.”

Derek bumped his fist against my shoulder. “Well look at that, those are the types of details that don’t bother me.”

My face warmed. “I really don’t think you need to know them, Derek.”

“I want to know everything if it means I can help you not get back with that loser, Ky.”

The nickname made my chest ache. “I appreciate that.”

Derek grabbed the soapy dish from my hands and rinsed it. “I’m more than just a pretty face, you know. I can help you out with stuff like that.”

“Stuff like what?” I looked at him.

Derek shrugged. “Finding you a new guy to get under so you can get over that asshole.”

I shook my head. “Hm, I never thought I’d get a wingman slash roommate slash best friend rolled into one. Slow it down there, buddy,” I laughed.

“So you’ll come?” he asked, ignoring my comment. “To the party?”

I stared at him. “I don’t know... These frat parties, they’re always kind of... loud.” Sam was Derek’s teammate and the de-facto party organizer for Beta Sigma Phi. He was often here at our place in between lectures. A “Sam’s frat party” meant a guaranteed hangover the next day, and I wasn’t sure I was ready to deal with that.

To be honest, it wasn’t like I would actually die if I didn’t get some dick. I’m not some crazed, horny-ass guy seeking the next piece of meat he could find. There was more to it than just that.

My whole frustration of wanting to get laid was so I could finally convince myself that I’d moved on from my ex, and also to get over these hopeless feelings I was developing for my roommate. The best way to get over a guy is to get under a new one, as Derek had so accurately pointed out. The earlier I could set my attention elsewhere, the better it would be for me to get over this crush.

That’s all it was. A crush.

I didn’t want to ruin everything over a crush brought on by loneliness and sexual

frustration. I didn't want to mess things up with Derek, or let anything slip out by accident that would make him all of a sudden self-conscious and uncomfortable around me. You know, like a stare that goes on for too long, or an inappropriate remark, or god forbid he notices one of these accidental boners that pop up at the most inconvenient moments.

Yeah, I didn't want to fuck things up.

I hummed, thinking hard about the offer.

"It won't kill you to get out of the house and out of your shell for one night," Derek prodded. "And who knows, you could even end up hooking up with your soulmate. Trust me. I'm a total matchmaker. I've hooked up all my mates."

"Yeah, with girls," I countered.

"How different could it be?"

Right.

He continued, totally oblivious to my skepticism. "If anything, guys would be easier. You know when it comes to guys they're far keener to think with what's in their pants than girls are," he continued.

"Not with each other."

Derek rolled his eyes. "Well, a lot of guys are coming from other schools, so stop being a pessimist. I'm going to get you laid by the end of this week, my friend. Mark my words."

In a locker room kind of way, he smacked me on the ass.

My muscles tensed. A rush flooded through my veins. My whole face felt hot.

For a second I just stood there, totally frozen, thrown off by the unexpected smack.

“So you’re in?” he asked, mistaking my stunned silence for hesitation about the party.

It wasn’t. At least not anymore.

“Uh, yeah. Fine. Sure.” I shrugged.

Apparently, all it took was a smack on the ass from him, and I would agree to just about anything.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:33 am*

### The Party

“I don’t know what to wear!” I shouted from my bedroom, panic finally seeping in.

Clothes were flying back in Derek’s direction. He had been fully dressed and ready for about half an hour now. Both he and Sam were waiting for me.

“Fucking find something already, dude! Nobody cares,” Sam yelled from the living room, where he was lounging on the couch while Derek tried to help me settle on an outfit.

“The white shirt looked fine,” he offered, pointing to the shirt that was now on the ground and covered in wrinkles.

Absolutely not. “There was a stain!”

“As long as it wasn’t a cum stain, there’s nothing to worry about,” Derek joked, but when I gave him the side-eye, he quickly wiped the smile off his face and cleared his throat. Did he forget the only reason I was doing this was because he suggested it?

Derek looked at the bed, where all my clothes were currently laid out. “Try on the gray one again.”

“The gray one was too tight!”

He let out an exasperated sigh. “Okay, what if you borrowed my brown T-shirt? The one you like.”

Oh, that shirt. If only he knew it was one of my favorites because he wore it the night he took me out after my breakup to help me forget everything. He'd looked so good that night, I couldn't help but let him know.

"First of all, it's not brown. It's maroon." I corrected. "And second, it won't fit me."

Compared to him, I was practically a twig ready to be carried away by the wind if it blew too hard. There was no way my skinny ass could pull off that shirt.

"Nah, it might," he said. "It shrunk a bit in the wash and I haven't worn it since. Hang on."

Derek dashed off to his room, telling Sam we were almost ready, before he arrived back in my bedroom and closed the door.

It was kind of cute, I guessed. Like he was protecting my modesty from Sam.

Who—also straight—was definitely not looking.

Cute, but pointless.

He looked at me expectantly as I started to strip out of the stupid navy-blue button-up I was wearing.

"This is it or nothing," I mumbled, taking the shirt from his hand.

His scent. It hit me instantly as I pulled the T-shirt over my head. It smelled like his cologne mixed with something warmer, something unmistakably Derek. I couldn't stop myself from breathing it in.

I tugged the T-shirt down, and when I glanced up Derek was still watching me. A

muscle ticked in his jaw like he was fighting back a thought he didn't want to say out loud. His eyes rolled up and down my body and I felt the heat creeping up my face fast. I turned away, pretending to check myself out in the mirror, but really it was just to buy me a second to breathe.

The shirt was a little big, but it looked nicer than any of the options I'd tried on earlier. Plus, it seemed to match well with the black jeans I had on. Not sure what it was about the color of the shirt, but it did make my green eyes pop, and contrasted perfectly with my fair complexion and black hair.

Derek stepped up behind me, so close I could feel every inch of his presence. His breath lightly brushed the back of my neck, sending a sharp chill down my spine. The tiny hairs there prickled.

I swallowed hard, dragging in a deep breath with it.

I caught his gaze through the glass. "How do I look?"

Firm hands landed on my shoulders. "It suits you." He held my gaze in the mirror. "You look good. You always look good."

He didn't mean it. I knew he didn't. Oh, he might have meant it in a hype-up-your-friend type of way, but he didn't mean it like a compliment .

He didn't mean it like I heard it.

And yet there was that heat again, causing flutters in my chest.

"You're just saying that so we can leave," I teased, arching one brow, and he shook his head, smiling.

Derek's gaze returned to the shirt. "Nah, I mean it. You can even keep the shirt if you want."

"Really? You'd give me your shirt?"

He shrugged. "Looks better on you. Besides, as I said, it shrunk in the wash."

"You sure it shrunk and you didn't just bulk up?" I chuckle. "I mean, look at you! Your muscles have muscles. I don't know what you're benching, but you've definitely gotten bigger—like, in a good way. I'm not calling you fat or anything."

Derek huffed a laugh. "Right." His eyes did that rolling up and down thing again. "You look great, Kyle." He gave my shoulders a squeeze. "I think we should get going before Sam gets mad."

As if on cue, Sam yelled from the living room for us, and we moved along, my cheeks still tingling warm from Derek's compliment.

"What took you guys so long?" Sam was slouched on the couch with one leg draped over the armrest like he owned the place. "Did one of you forget how to tie a shoe or something? Can't believe I'm late to my own party."

Derek shot him a flat look. "No one asked you to come over after class."

Sam scoffed, pushing himself up from the couch. "Are you hinting at something? Is my awesome presence no longer welcome here?"

"Awesome, my ass." Derek replied, glancing at me. "Ready?"

"Should we Uber, or are you driving?" Sam asked "I'm getting hammered tonight and will probably crash at the frat house."

“I’m not driving.”

Both of them turned to me, their expectant stares making it clear they weren’t volunteering for the role of designated driver.

“Fine,” I muttered, grabbing the car keys from the coffee table. “Not like I plan on drinking anyway.”

Derek’s grin spread wide as he slung an arm around my shoulders. “That’s the spirit. We need you sharp and ready... for our plan tonight.”

Right. Operation Get Laid.

Just then my phone buzzed, and when I went to look at it, lo and behold, another text from my ex!

I’m at the cafe across from campus. Meet me there?

Before I could text him back, Derek snatched the phone from my hands.

“Hey!” I protested. Of course I’d forgotten he was right next to me when I opened the message. “Give it back. I’m not going to meet him anyway. I’m just going to tell him to fuck off.”

“No! You’re going to ignore it. Remember why you left. Ten guys, Ky. While you were still together.”

His words hit like a punch to the gut, but I needed to hear them.

Derek put my phone in the back pocket of his jeans as he pulled me toward the door, with Sam following behind us.

“You two are like an old married couple, I swear.” Sam laughed. “How you move and read each other, it’s freaky.”

I rolled my eyes while Derek chuckled as we walked out the door.

“No, seriously. He’s always in a hurry to leave after classes to pick you up,” Sam said. “And when we go out with the team, he doesn’t want to stay out late because he says you’ll be waiting up for him.”

Well, that was true. It had become our thing recently to wait for each other at night before heading to bed. There was something comforting about knowing the other was home safe. It was part of the whole domestic-bliss thing, and had started right after the breakup.

But that didn’t mean anything.

Sam’s eyes narrowed at me. “We all wouldn’t be surprised if he told us you’re both going out, the way he brings you up all the time.”

I snorted. “Oh, come on.”

Then the message hit somewhere in my brain. Wait... Derek brings me up all the time when he’s with his teammates?

I glanced at Derek, expecting him to wave off Sam’s comment with a witty remark or something, but what I saw stopped me. His face was flushed, a deep red spreading to his ears, and he was smiling.

He didn’t debunk it.

Maybe he was just embarrassed by Sam’s comment and not because he actually

wouldn't mind?

Nope.

I wasn't that delusional.

I quickly dismissed the thought as the three of us stepped into the elevator.

Hopefully, tonight would go well. At the very least, I might meet someone who would take my mind off everything.

A fresh start. New beginnings.

To be honest, it wasn't like me to do the whole one-night-stand thing, but I really needed to relax, and maybe getting my mind off my ex and the hopeless one-sided crush on Derek and moving on to someone else wasn't the worst idea in the world.

I wanted to go home the instant we arrived.

The party was everything you'd expect from Beta Sigma Phi—lots of drunk people, some sneakily doing drugs, and others not so sneakily fucking in the pool. Sam was a popular guy, so there were a ton of people here.

The house was so crowded you had to bump into people just to make your way inside. Once we were in, Derek got me a drink and we scoped the room for something to do. I eyed the dance floor. I wasn't much of a dancer, hell, I wasn't much of a partier, but Derek always seemed to know where the fun was at.

"Oh, epic." He nodded toward a corner of the hall. "They're playing spin the bottle over there. That'll get you started for sure."

Before I could protest, Derek grabbed my hand and yanked me toward the group of people. We sat down and I noticed most were girls. How kissing girls was supposed to help me hook up with a guy I had no idea, but Derek was so thrilled when it was his turn to spin that I couldn't bring myself to ruin his excitement. I watched as the bottle spun, slowing to a stop on some blonde girl.

She smiled, looking over the moon to kiss Derek, and I didn't blame her.

He leaned forward, pecking her on the lips, which got a few boos from the group. Apparently, it had to be a full-on smooch, but that didn't matter because when the blonde girl spun the bottle, it landed on Derek. He laughed and leaned back in. This time they really went for it, getting cheers from the crowd as they locked lips and mashed tongues and all that gross stuff I didn't want to see my roommate doing with some girl. Nonetheless, she seemed happy—and hopeful—as Derek spun the bottle again.

Clearly, she hoped it would come to her, like destiny or something fated in the stars.

Instead, it landed on . . . me.

Everyone looked at each other like they weren't sure what to do.

It was painfully obvious that no one else had been so unlucky to get someone of the same sex tonight. Or maybe the girls did and they just didn't care, but it was obvious from everyone's expressions that no one was expecting a guy-on-guy kiss.

“Uh.” I swallowed, looking at Derek with a nervous chuckle. “You can spin again. It's okay.”

“Don't make it weird,” he said. “It's just a kiss, no bigger deal than what I did with... um...”



His expression scrunched as he looked over at the blonde.

“Heather,” she introduced herself with a sultry smile.

“Right.” He smiled. “Heather.”

“You don’t have to kiss anyone you don’t want to,” she said, clearly not into guys kissing or wanting her now obvious crush to lock lips with me or anyone other than her.

“Yeah, you don’t have to,” I added, not wanting to make it awkward.

“No, that’s the whole point of the game, and I’m not one to back down from it,” Derek insisted, rolling his eyes. “If people start objecting, it takes the fun out of the game. I mean, what’s the point in playing if you don’t kiss the person the bottle lands on?”

“Uh, not making out with your roommate?” I answered.

“A peck is fine,” said Heather. Her tone was jealous. “At least in this case ...”

“Nah, rules are rules,” he insisted.

“So . . . we . . . kiss kiss?” I felt my expression scrunch. “I don’t know if—”

He snorted. “Don’t be a bitch.” Then he grabbed me by the scruff of my shirt—or his shirt that I’d borrowed—and then he...

He pressed his mouth to mine.

My heart stopped for a moment ... before it started to beat so fast and loud that I

could hear it drum in my ears.

Oh god! . . . Oh god!

Where should I put my hands? Was I supposed to touch him? Where was appropriate?

I didn't know what to do, because everything inside me was short-circuiting. Haphazardly.

So I just followed his lead, falling into the kiss.

Firm lips folded against mine, coaxing my lips to move in tandem. It was like being kissed for the first time. No wonder I was acting like I didn't know what to do. This wasn't just a kiss.

This was like learning how to kiss all over again.

Nothing before had ever been like this . . .

Ever.

I heard cheering in the background as Derek grabbed the back of my neck with his free hand, pulling me in closer. I doubted Heather was one of those people cheering, but I didn't care to think about that. Not when I was too busy freaking out.

God, what was he doing?

His lips were soft, so soft, and powerful at the same time. I had to make a conscious effort not to accidentally moan when his tongue slipped into my mouth for the briefest second, and before I knew it—before I could catch my breath—it was over.

It felt like the room, and everyone in it, rushed back to us, the bubble that we'd shared during the kiss gone.

And I didn't know what the hell to do.

Derek pulled back, staring at me a little strangely as people cheered, and then it was my turn to spin the bottle.

I wasn't ready for it, still riding that dizzying high from Derek's lips. I wanted a minute to collect myself, or at least try to read Derek's reaction to this, because holy hell... I was shaken to my very bones from that kiss.

I needed time. I needed space.

I needed to talk to Derek.

But people were smacking me on the back to hurry up, so I spun the bottle, and by some miracle it landed on another guy.

Only this one was gay.

I could tell by his eager smile, and well, the rainbow flannel shirt he was wearing said something too.

The guy leaned in without hesitation, and I did too. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed that Derek had gotten up, but I couldn't back out now. I kissed the guy.

Instant regret.

His sloppy, too-wet kiss couldn't compare to Derek's perfect one.

People still cheered around us, but when I pulled away my gaze searched the crowd for Derek's face.

However, much to my surprise and bafflement, he was nowhere to be seen.

What. The. Hell.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:33 am*

### The Repercussions of Kissing

The car ride home was silent except for the low hum of the engine. I kept my hands at ten and two, eyes locked on the road, doing everything I could to keep it together.

The rest of the party had been a shitshow after that happened. Not only did Derek abandon me at the stupid spin-the-bottle game, he all but avoided me after the kiss. I was left hanging by myself, at a party I didn't want to attend in the first place.

I found a spot and pretty much sat there through the evening, watching other people have a blast. When I couldn't take it any longer I'd gone in search of Derek.

I found him in the backyard of the frat house, after nearly forty minutes of searching every room, with a group of guys I'd never seen before. He wasn't drunk, he was just acting weird . Oddly quiet.

For someone who promised me a good time and said he would act as my wingman, well, Derek did a poor job of it.

I was a bit upset, but it was more at myself than at Derek. I shouldn't have allowed the kiss. It was just a game, nothing more. But god... I kissed Derek Garner!

I still couldn't believe it had happened. It was everything I had dreamed his lips would taste like and more. I was still reeling with the sensation of his lips on mine.

Fuck.

This made things more complicated now. There was no way I was getting over this. No moving on from my feelings for him. That kiss only cemented them, solidified them in a way I didn't know was possible. How was I supposed to look Derek in the eyes after this without making my feelings obvious?

Maybe it wouldn't matter to Derek. I mean, he was straight. He would brush this off and laugh about it later like it was nothing.

I stole a glance at him in the rear-view mirror, only to see his face set in stone, staring out the window. For one thing, Derek never sat in the back seat. Ever. But tonight he was sitting there.

A sinking realization hit me in the gut.

Something didn't feel right.

Was he freaking out? Did he hate it ?

Did he regret going along with it?

When we got to the apartment, he didn't say a word. It was driving me nuts.

"Okay, what the hell's your problem?" I asked, finally breaking the silence.

No response. Not even a glance.

Derek skirted around me to the kitchen. He yanked open the fridge and grabbed a bottle of water, twisting the cap with unnecessary force.

Ah, fuck this.

I followed him, the frustration boiling in me to breaking point. “I knew the kiss would make shit weird. That’s why I didn’t want to do it! But you insisted. You made us do it, so can you not act weird around me now? Like, I didn’t even want to go to the stupid party to begin with.”

The fridge door shut with a loud thud as Derek spun around to face me. Finally.

He took two big gulps of water, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and set the bottle on the counter. For a second he just stood there, fingers tapping the plastic like he was working something out in his head.

“What are you talking about?” His tone was defensive. “I’m not being weird. You’re the one making it weird by reading into it.”

“Reading into it?” I exclaimed. “You’re the one who’s all distant and quiet.”

“I’m not.”

“Yes, you are!”

It came out louder than I intended. Clearly, I wasn’t going to hold any of this in tonight.

So I just went with it.

I took a step toward him. “You disappeared on me at the party. I thought we were supposed to have fun together, and you even promised you’d hook me up with someone, but after the kiss—” I heard my voice waver and winced inwardly. I wanted to play it off like it wasn’t a big deal but damn it, it was hard to hold my emotions back. “After that happened, you just... you won’t even look at me now. You were the one who said it was fine. But clearly it’s not fine!”

Derek shook his head, then started to pace the small kitchen space. I realized I'd never seen him so on edge like this before. What the hell was his problem?

He sighed. "Look, can you stop making it a big deal? It was just a game. We were playing spin the bottle... we kissed, it didn't mean anything."

I could feel my face fall and I wasn't entirely sure why.

He was right.

It hadn't meant anything. To him.

And to me?

It had.

Derek looked at me, taking a few steps forward. "I'm not saying..." He sighed, stopping right in front of me. I could feel the tension seeping from him. "I'm just saying it was only a kiss. A kiss isn't a big deal! It's just lips... It doesn't need to mean anything. It didn't affect either one of us. It's just smashing the places we eat from together. Look..." He grabbed my face. "I'll do it again and it won't matter."

I froze. I didn't know what to do. Half of me wanted to push him away.

But I didn't have the benefit of time to decide.

His mouth was on mine the next instant. Fierce and demanding. He gave me a brutal kiss that outdid what we'd done during spin the bottle.

I whimpered, caught off guard by the sudden aggressiveness, but couldn't resist surrendering to it. My lips softened against his.



Derek slowly slid his hands from my face to my neck as he pressed in closer, still kissing me but more tender now. Gentle. Almost peck-like.

“See?” he murmured against my lips. “Not a big deal. Doesn’t mean anything. It’s just... kissing. Right?”

“Right . . .”

My voice was barely a whisper. Unrecognizable. I was still trying to wrap my head around... this. I noticed Derek hadn’t stepped back after the kiss. His hands were still on my neck, and his thumbs brushed softly against my skin, leaving a trail of sparks with each gentle motion. I wasn’t sure he even realized what he was doing.

“Uh, Derek . . .”

His eyes had turned dark. His expression was unreadable.

“I want my shirt back,” he said.

“What?”

“My shirt. Take it off.”

I felt the surprise on my face as I looked at him. It was like moving through mud. My brain was so fried from the kiss I didn’t understand what he was asking. “Like, right now?”

He nodded and slowly inched back. His fingers moved to pull the shirt out from my pants. In his attempt to help me take it off, his knuckles brushed up against my sides. I hissed. Electricity zapped through my body, firing every nerve.

I heard him suck in a deep breath.

I wasn't sure what was happening, but the way his eyes raked over my bare chest and down and up my body had my face heating up. Was he checking me out?

But Derek was straight. He wasn't into guys.

He wasn't ... My thoughts spluttered, focusing on how his gaze locked onto mine.

Then in a swift move, Derek removed his shirt too. My brows shot up in shock. "What are you doing?"

His nostrils flared. "I bet kissing with more clothes off would mean nothing too."

Um... What? Was he hypothesizing? It sounded like he was testing a new theory or something.

A theory that it was possible for a straight guy to kiss another dude and like it?

I nodded, almost robotically, and just like that, his lips returned to mine. Only now our chests were touching, skin to skin. Oh, it felt so good. Divine. Fuck.

I felt the moan rumble inside me before it escaped my mouth, meshing against his lips.

"Sorry," I mumbled into our kiss.

"For what?"

"For moaning."

“Don’t be sorry about that.” His breath fanned against my mouth. “Your lips are so...” He gripped my hair, yanking my head back, and stared at them. “Insanely tempting.” He pressed a kiss on my lips.

“So soft.”

Kiss.

“Fuck.”

Hard kiss.

He wrapped his other arm around my waist and pulled the rest of my body against him. The force of it sent the air from my lungs. I moaned into his mouth again.

Derek groaned. His embrace became tighter and tighter, matching the intensity of the kiss. Reason was quickly slipping away from my mind. I was losing badly against the walls I’d set up when it came to Derek.

Yeah, I was crossing every line and boundary and I just couldn’t stop. Kissing Derek was like holding on to every dream I’d ever had. It was every holiday and birthday and moment of good news, all wrapped up into one. I would never experience another kiss like this. I knew it in my soul, and it just made me lean into it harder.

I couldn’t breathe, because that would be a waste of energy. Every moment needed to be spent soaking him in, absorbing... this.

I didn’t want to throw away the precious seconds I had here, with him.

So breathing?

Optional.

And when it felt like I would pass out from lack of oxygen, Derek broke the kiss, pulling back just enough for me to catch my breath.

“I think I have an idea what’s going on here,” he said, more to himself.

I didn’t understand what he meant by that, but I nodded along, trying to see where he was going with this.

“Do you know what I didn’t like?”

I met his gaze. “What?”

“Watching you kiss that guy.”

He leaned back in and gave me another kiss. At this point, I was thinking this was a bad idea. It was a terrible idea. What were we even doing? Why was I going along with it? We were roommates for Christ’s sake... This would make living together awkward.

His legs bumped against mine as he started moving us toward the couch.

“Derek...” I wanted to stop him but it came out as a moan.

We both fell onto the couch, him on top of me. We’d wrestled a few times, mostly for the remote, and getting pinned under Derek was nothing new, but this time it felt different. His lips were moving down my jaw to my neck, and it was getting harder to form a rational thought.

“I didn’t like watching you kiss Heather,” I said. I mean, if we were being honest

about what we both didn't like tonight, I might as well let him know his kiss with that blonde girl did bother me.

"Fuck Heather," he replied.

The vehemence in his tone made me smile, just a little. I kept going. "And I didn't like that you abandoned me at the party."

"Right... I'm sorry." His teeth grazed my collarbone, nibbling the skin there.

For someone who hadn't ever done anything with another guy, he sure knew the right places to touch and tease. I could feel his arousal. Thick and hard. Maybe it was just hormones, or the alcohol, but something was clearly not working in that head of his. Or mine for that matter.

My body was taking on a mind of its own just as his was. My fingers clawed down his back, caressing and groping wherever I could reach, and I even found myself grabbing his ass.

He had a good ass. A firm ass. My fingers dug into the fleshy muscle, giving them a gentle squeeze.

He moaned in my ear, and it was the best sound I'd ever heard in my life.

His large hand grabbed my thigh. He lifted my leg to hook around his waist, then he pulled me against him, aligning our growing erections together.

I nearly came undone in my pants. Every nerve in my body zeroed in on where we touched. We moved together in a slow grind. I'd roll my hips up into him while he'd hump down into me. It was electrifying. Every rub took me to different heights of pleasure. I couldn't stop the filthy sounds that escaped my lips.

“Oh, Kyle,” he murmured, so low and thick. “Take off your pants.”

I went still.

Not because I wasn't riled up for him. I was. I was rock hard and throbbing in my pants. I had dreamed of this moment, literally, even if everything about it was a bad idea. Getting with a straight guy, especially after a terrible breakup, wasn't smart. Hooking up with my roommate when I had no other place to stay also wasn't smart, but my cock was hard, and his cock was hard... and he was rubbing up my thigh.

And he was everything I'd ever wanted.

“Take off your pants,” he repeated. “Unless you don't want to?”

I wanted to. I really wanted to. I'd never wanted to fuck someone as badly as I wanted to fuck Derek Garner right now. But if we crossed this line there was no going back. Was he ready for that? Was I ready?

We started kissing again. Soon enough, the hesitation left my mind. My hands fumbled to undo my pants, and he did the same. We were both breathing hard as we struggled out of our pants and underwear, and then his hands were on my hips, forcing me around faster than I could catch my breath. Then he started planting kisses down my neck.

He leaned over me, his breath hot against my ear.

“I liked kissing you. It excited me more than my kiss with Heather.”

I met his gaze, silent for a moment.

“I'm so hard,” he whispered. “I'm so fucking hard... for you.”

I knew that. I could feel the evidence of his arousal pressing against the back of my thigh. The realization, though, that it was because of me?

I'd never heard something so erotic.

"I've never . . . I don't . . ." he trailed off, breathing heavily as his gaze remained locked on mine. The raw desire in his eyes was unmistakable. "I want you so bad right now."

I sucked in a breath. Was he even sure? Did he know what he was asking?

I had to know. "Derek, you're thinking with your dick right now. I know it. I'm doing the same thing."

He shook his head. "I'm not."

My hands shook, the truth of his statement sinking in. "Do you really want to have sex with me? I don't want you to freak out on me or anything." I just had to be sure. I don't want to lose you.

He cupped my chin, gently lifting my face to meet his. "I'm sorry for my behavior earlier. That kiss... it, um, gave me an epiphany."

"An epiphany?" I echoed, puzzled.

"Uh, I think they call it an awakening?"

I blinked, sensing a glimmer of something important.

But I needed him to say it. "What did you need an awakening from?"

“You know... I wasn’t exactly sure what it was or when it started. I thought maybe it was because we spent so much time together, but of late I was beginning to... notice things... notice you. I kinda brushed it off because I didn’t understand it then,” he said. “All it took was a kiss to make me realize that I didn’t care about you only as a friend or roommate.” He captured my mouth in a kiss that had my eyes rolling back. “I want you,” he whispered against my lips. “I want this.”

“But you were going to hook me up with someone tonight.”

“I thought so, but fuck me, that spin the bottle showed me I didn’t want that at all. Seeing another guy kiss you didn’t sit well with me at all. I knew then that fixing you up with someone else wasn’t happening, especially not after our ... kiss. Fuck. I’ve never been this turned on for someone, Kyle.”

I had so many things to say in response to that, but my body couldn’t hold off any longer. I was lost in my lust for him—literally throbbing for him.

“Lube and condoms. Nightstand. Second drawer,” I told him, my gaze lowering to his cock. For all the times that I’d seen Derek partially clothed, or even with his flashes of nudity, I’d never taken a good look. It would have been inappropriate.

Now, though, I let myself look and . . .

Oh.

He was a big boy.

He sprinted to my room to grab them and was back in a flash. I watched him slip the protection on his cock then lube himself up. The squelching sound it made was filthy and arousing. I was already leaking so much precum from my slit.



I'd never been turned on like this before. I looked at Derek. "I want you," I whispered, my throat raw.

He smiled. "Fuck, Ky. I want you too."

Then he settled behind my parted legs.

I shuffled, unsure of what to help him with. "Do you even know how to do this?"

Derek let out a chuckle. "Not sure if it would interest you to know that this isn't my first time at anal."

Oh.

Okay.

He grabbed the lube and squirted some on his fingers, coating them. He brought his slicked-up fingers to my hole. The cool touch sent a shiver down my spine.

Oh, he really wasn't lying about it not being his first time. He was ready for this. Good at it, even. The way he worked those fingers into me—prying me open, preparing me for him—I lost all reason and surrendered to the pleasure.

By the time his fingers were out of me I was a leaking mess.

"You ready?" he asked, guiding his lubed cock to my entrance. His hands on my hips were trembling. Our gazes locked.

There was no returning from this. I think he knew that. I think he was communicating that to me as he waited for my answer. This would change everything between us. I had no idea how it would be, but I knew deep within me that no matter what, this was

going to be one of the best decisions of my life. I fucking liked this guy so much.

Nodding, I bit hard on my bottom lip.

His grip on my hips tightened, then he pushed in. I grunted. God, he was big.

“Fuck. Kyle,” he hissed as he worked into me. Slow and delicious. “Fuck. Fuck. Fuck,” he growled as he drove in till he was buried to the hilt.

I didn’t have anything more eloquent than that.

Instead, I made a groaning noise and arched back into him, waiting for my hole to adjust to his size before I started to rock my hips back and forth.

He moaned out loud, pulled back till he was almost out, then slammed into me with a force that almost made my arms give out

“Derek . . .” I cried out.

Fuck, that felt good.

He started planting kisses down my back. I didn’t mind his sloppy saliva marking my skin. Hell, this felt like a dream I didn’t want to wake up from.

He began to thrust, slow and deep, building the intensity until we fell into a steady rhythm.

God, the way he moved, the precision. Every thrust hit that sweet spot. Derek was either a fucking god, or he just... worked for me. Every second we spent moving together was like we were in perfect sync. He didn’t have any bad moves. There was nothing except sweet, sweet pleasure. Soon I was shuddering, with what felt like

micro-orgasms shooting from my insides to the tip of my cock.

I gripped the couch. “ Oh , keep going. Keep going...”

His hand wrapped around my frame to grab my cock and stroke it. He moaned louder, like touching me there got him off, and then I felt him start to pulse.

“Shit. I’m so close,” he growled.

He gave a few hard thrusts before he came with a long grunt. His legs violently shuddered against the back of my thighs. The way he pumped my cock had me there too, the orgasm ripping through me with so much intensity it took my breath away. With a strangled gasp, I spilled over his hand and onto the couch.

Holy. Shit.

Derek continued pressing kisses down the back of my neck and shoulders. When our breaths came back to normal he slipped out of me, maneuvering our bodies to position himself next to me on the couch in a spoon cuddle. In our sweat and body fluids. I didn’t know how to say to him that I’d just had the best sex... ever.

“Ky...” His arms tightened around me as he buried his face in my hair.

What just happened felt unreal. I was afraid I’d blink and it would all go away. I was afraid to even speak.

“Are you okay?” I managed to ask after a while. If anyone had told me this was how the night would end, I would’ve laughed my head off.

But here we were.

“Mm-hm,” he whispered, nuzzling my neck like we were old-time lovers. For a straight dude who’d just had sex with another man for the first time, Derek seemed way too calm for me. And his confession earlier about caring for me beyond just being roommates and friends...

I needed to ask. There was so much we had to clarify. I opened my mouth, my heart in my throat. “Derek...”

“Shh.” He silenced my lips with his finger. “We are not having this conversation tonight,” he said.

“How do you even know what I was going to say?”

He gave me that charming smile of his. “I know you, Kyle. Your mind is buzzing with a lot of questions right now, and you’re wondering why I’m not freaking out.”

He was right, I was. Perhaps there was truth to what Sam said earlier this evening. Derek was simply able to read me like a book.

I turned within his embrace to face him. “What if I am? Don’t tell me you don’t have a thousand questions running through your head right now, about us. About what we just did.”

“Oh, I do.” He kissed my forehead. “But...” He wrapped his leg around mine, drawing me even closer.

He was silent for a while, as if pondering his next words.

“How did you know you were gay?”

Ah, the good old question.

“Um, just the same way you thought you were straight?”

He snorted. “Can’t say I am exactly that anymore for sure now, can I? Maybe I’m bi?” He sighed. “Man... I don’t even know anymore.”

I shifted. A part of me feared what was coming. Was this the moment where his senses were coming back now he wasn’t thinking with his dick anymore?

“Do you regret it?” I asked, holding his gaze, bracing my heart for impact.

“No,” his answer was quick, and it rang with a kind of finality that felt right.

I blinked. “You sure?”

“I don’t regret what we did, Ky.” His fingers started drawing little circles down my back, sending shivers through my entire being. It was so easy, the way my body responded to him like it was the most natural thing to do. “I liked it. A fucking lot,” he murmured.

I knew Derek. I’d heard every tone of voice, every turn of phrase. I knew when he was telling the truth, and I could hear honesty in every word.

I decided to accept it. Settling into the moment, I sighed. “So what do you think is going to happen now?”

His chest rumbled against me as he chuckled, the sound tickling my ear. “It’s not going to be the same, is it?” He paused, searching my eyes. “I’m . . . still processing this. Us. I don’t regret sleeping with you, but I need to do some soul-searching, I guess. But what I can promise you is that I’ll be honest with you about everything. My feelings, my thoughts... everything,” he said. “Let’s take it a day at a time. What do you say, hm? For now, I just want to enjoy this moment with you.”

He didn't wait for my answer before he claimed my mouth again, and I didn't mind.

I could accept the complexity of this. Life is complicated.

And I liked how complicated this was, with Derek's mouth on mine.

It was safe to say we wouldn't be leaving the couch anytime soon.

I had no idea where this was going to go for either of us, but the smile on his face right before he kissed me, the gentleness, the way he was looking at me with so much...

Lust?

Desire?

Love?

I knew we were going to be okay.

"Okay," I whispered against his wet lips. "We'll do just that."

So we took it one day at a time.

It didn't take that long. Derek spent weeks talking to his uncle, and he used an on-campus resource for students who were exploring their sexuality. He came home every day to me, and we did all our normal things.

We had dinner.

We laughed.

We fucked.

Everything was just . . . us.

But better. IMAX high definition.

And it just so happened that two months later, after a lot of reflection and deep conversation, I did not only have a roommate slash best friend.

I had a loving boyfriend.

THE END

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:33 am*

“What are you doing here, Spencer?” Finn’s deep voice echoed through the now empty office as his eyes settled on me.

I rolled my eyes at his words while trying to keep my composure in check. I swallowed the lump that had suddenly lodged in my throat.

“Well, I figured I should try to say my goodbye properly after you brushed me off earlier, and I thought I might as well be last given how... preoccupied you were. The office is thankfully going to be a whole lot quieter without you here,” I said, and just like that, I was ready to hang myself. It seemed that when it came to this guy, my tongue didn’t know how to act aside from blurting snarky remarks.

Finn shrugged. He leaned against one of the desks, folding his arms. I couldn’t help but notice the bulge of his biceps fighting against the fabric of his shirt.

I forced my eyes up to see him with his head cocked to the side, staring at me with a curious gaze.

“You could’ve left after you said goodbye hours ago, Spencer. You could’ve been at home doing whatever it is you do at this hour.”

That was true.

I quickly racked my brain for an excuse as to why I was still here. I couldn’t come up with anything, and all that wine I’d consumed earlier was not helping me in the slightest. Liquid courage, my ass.



“I could have. I probably should have, but I decided to be nice for once and...” I gestured around the office awkwardly. “Help you clean this mess up,” I said, grasping onto the first thing that came to mind. Though most of my colleagues were decent enough to clean up after themselves, there was still some tidying left to do. Well, it was a good excuse to buy me more time with him.

He gave me one of his trademark sinister smirks. “Wow, how thoughtful of you. My saving grace.”

“Man, would it kill you to be nice for once?” I said, turning my back to him as I began to collect the remaining plastic plates, putting them all in one pile. “Consider this my goodbye gift. Don’t say I never did anything for you.”

“Don’t tell me you’re already missing me now, Spencer.”

I didn’t dare turn around to face him. I didn’t want him to see me blush. I knew I was, given the way my cheeks were burning.

My mind reeled once more. Should I be the first to say it? Should I let him know? The thought of telling him how I truly felt had been nagging at the back of my mind relentlessly. I’d been debating it the entire evening. It wasn’t like I was expecting anything in return. I just wanted him to leave knowing I didn’t hate him.

“Not to sound cheesy or anything—”

“But you’re definitely going to say something cheesy,” he interrupted right away. When I stalled in my movements, not saying anything, he gave an exaggerated sigh. “All right, spill it all out.”

“Why do you have to make everything so unnecessarily difficult? Can’t you just be quiet for once and listen?” I huffed, turning to face him, now visibly frustrated.

Finn made a zipping motion over his lips. Ugh. He was such an annoying ass.

Fuck. I was really going to miss him.