



Hooked by the Mountain Man (Mountain Man Summer #10)

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Category: Romance

Description: This was supposed to be a no-dating summer, but how long can I resist a sexy, possessive millionaire when all he wants to do is make me his wife?

Brynn

My grandpa always told me I was a great catch, but it never occurred to me he was being literal. Ethan Hobbs, best-selling author and millionaire recluse, accidentally hooks me while fishing, and now he insists I'm his muse, soul mate, and future wife? I finally landed my dream job, working for the hottest new resort in Festival Valley. I don't have time for a man. Especially an obsessive alpha millionaire who makes my heart flutter and knees weak. How do I convince him to leave me alone, when I can't even convince myself?

Ethan

Mine.

Tropes: millionaire, small-town, grumpy/sunshine, obsessive alpha MMC

What to expect from a Lara London short read: Quirky heroines, sexy men who can't get enough of them, no cheating, an HEA, and a double dose of heat!

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Brynn

"Brynn, I have a little problem." Sophia bites her lip and dances anxiously from foot to foot. Her long blonde hair is tied up in a neat ponytail, and her uniform is impeccable.

"What's wrong?" I'm the Director of Entertainment at The Palmer Resort and Spa , a swanky mountain resort in Festival Valley, home to celebrities, renowned public figures, and the ultra-wealthy.

Sophia is one of the luxury stewardesses for guests who pay for extra service, and one of my most reliable workers.

She's on summer break from her university, and she busts her butt to give the guests a great experience.

"The Winfrees want to go out on a cocktail cruise around the lake to look at the mansions along the shore, which is usually great.

I love being out on the boat." Sophia's talking a mile a minute and then stops abruptly, wringing her hands.

"But...Eric is in the boathouse this afternoon, and.

.." She trails off, shrugging her shoulders at me.

"Say no more." I hold up my hand. "I'll get changed and go with them."

"Oh my god, thank you so much, Brynn. You're the best!" Sophia's whole face lights up. "I don't want to be alone with that guy. He's such a jerk." With another grateful smile, she runs off to make the arrangements for the Winfrees.

I walk to the front desk, sighing as I throw myself down onto the polished mahogany counter.

"That bad?" Celeste Blaze, Assistant Manager of The Palmer, hands me a candy from the small bowl set out for incoming guests.

"I have to spend the afternoon with Eric," I mumble.

Celeste passes me the whole bowl of candies. "That kid is going to get his comeuppance one of these days. You can't be rude to everyone but the guests and expect to keep your job." Celeste clucks her tongue.

Eric is the nephew of Walker Russell, General Manager and Celeste's boss.

Nepotism is in full swing here. Walker is a decent guy, but for some reason, he won't fire his nephew even though anybody else in his position would have in week one.

Since the resort is brand new, we're all trying to make a good impression with our CEO, Mr. Maloney, which means not complaining right out of the gate.

We handle the personality issues and obvious ineptitude as needed, but we are desperately hoping Eric's time is almost done.

The resort opened in June, and over the past six weeks, Celeste and I have bonded over bottles of wine, gallons of ice cream, and our shared desire to make our jobs at The Palmer a career.

Celeste grew up in Festival Valley. The Blaze family is well-known and there are a lot of them, so extra pressure to achieve her dreams under a microscope.

"It's fine. Fake it 'til I make it." I plaster on a big smile. "Can you please block me out on the calendar for the next few hours?"

"Of course." Celeste enters my request into the system, giving me twenty extra minutes so I can run home and change.

With the exception of having to deal with the Eric-types, I love my job.

The Palmer is the first management position I've ever had.

Every full-time employee at the resort gets free room and board via a tiny house village at the back of the property and access to the employee cafeteria.

Great benefits and time off are icing on the cake.

I'm also living closer to my brother, Cole. He's in Duhring Park with his fiancé, Miranda, who is like the sister I never had.

I work long, hard hours, but it's rewarding, and I want to protect my happiness like a dog with a bone.

My watch vibrates with an incoming text message, and I can't help but smile. Speak of the devil.

Miranda

Can't wait to see you, Brynn-Brynn! Betty and Violet are coming with me tomorrow. Are you still free to hang with us? LY. heart emoji

Yes! Come to the resort for lunch. Text me when you're close, and I'll meet you in the lobby.

I gather my tablet, phone, and papers. "I'm going to change and then head to the boathouse to deal with he who shall not be named."

"We're both off tomorrow, right? Let's get lunch, and you can share the list of idiotic things Eric is bound to say today."

I laugh. "I'd love to, but my future sister-in-law is coming to take care of some wedding details. Dinner instead?"

"Perfect." Celeste gives my shoulder a final squeeze.

After a stop at one of the resort's restaurants to make reservations for lunch tomorrow, and a quick change at home, I'm out on a boat with the Winfrees.

It's a beautiful July day. Sunny, but not terribly hot.

Perfect for cruising around the lake. Eric points out the fancy houses and regales the guests with architecture facts.

He manages to come across as a somewhat normal human being with the guests, although his tone is patronizing, and he calls Mrs. Winfree, sweetheart , which she clearly does not appreciate.

It gives me minor comfort when sociopaths don't blend as well as they think they do.

When Eric slows the boat so they can hear his spiel over the motor, I take the opportunity to pull out the small cooler.

"Would either of you like something to drink?" I ask, sitting on my knees.

"Rum and coke; thank you, dear," Mrs. Winfree requests with a kind smile.

I nod as Mr. Winfree puts up two fingers indicating he wants the same.

As I lean over to get the drinks started, Eric pulls away quickly, knocking us all back against the cushions.

The top of the cooler smacks me in the leg, and I flash him an irritated glance.

Eric hides a grin, taking off across the water like we're in a race.

Dick.

When he idles again to point out the Dillinger Mansion, I manage to get the drinks poured and hand them to the guests.

I catch a shit-eating grin on Eric's face, and I try to sit down quickly knowing he's about to do something stupid and reckless.

Before I can move, he lurches the boat forward and I stumble, tipping over the side of the boat and into the cold lake water.

"Brynn!" Mrs. Winfree screams, and Mr. Winfree yells out, "Man, 'er, woman overboard," as I break the surface of the water, gasping and coughing out a mouthful of lake water.

Eric circles me with the boat, making waves that jostle me back and forth. Luckily, I insisted on a lifejacket even though Eric scoffed at me.

"Not sure we have one in your size, Brynn," he said. Like his opinion would keep me from being safe on a boat.

I'm a curvy goddess, and he can get bent.

Eric maneuvers closer to me and then turns off the engine. He bends down to offer me his arm.

I grit my teeth and swim over to the side of the boat.

Is he seriously going to try to pull me up?

This is humiliating. But I don't have the upper body strength to do it myself, so I reach for his arm and try to hoist my leg up and over the side of the boat.

I'm close, and then, Eric winks and releases me.

I splash down hard into the water again.

"Whoa, I can't lift you, Brynn. All those curves work better on land than water. Too many bonbons, I guess."

What did this fucking dickwad just say in front of the guests? Body shaming frat boy, douche!

"You'll have to meet us back at the shore. Head that way." Eric points behind me and starts the engine again.

Mrs. Winfree eyes me with concern, and she hits Mr. Winfree's leg to get him to say something to Eric, but I don't need the guests involved, so I wave them off.

"Not a problem! I'll see you guys back at the dock.

" My words are drowned out, literally, as I splutter and cough when Eric jets away, spraying water over me.

I'm not the best swimmer, which is why I insisted on a lifejacket in the first place, but the shore doesn't look too far away.

So, I turn and start making my way to the closest pier.

Okay, to-do list.

One, swim to shore.

Two, get the guests back to the resort.

Three, Eric and I are going to have a little chat.

I can do this.

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Ethan

"What's the point of living on a lake if you aren't going to fish?" Weston Billings goads me as he baits his lure.

"You sound like my father," I grumble, struggling to get my hook tied.

West preens like it's the best compliment he's ever heard. "Great minds think alike, my son."

I roll my eyes, and West grins before turning to effortlessly cast into the water. He sets his pole into the holder and takes a seat with a contented sigh.

"Need help, Ethan?" Barrett, West's brother and my closest friend, holds out his hand, but I shake my head. Barrett chuckles at my stubbornness and then walks down the pier to cast his line out into the water. He reels it in, walking closer to West's and puts it in a holder as well.

I've known the Billings brothers since boarding school.

Barrett and I were in the same class, but West is two years younger.

Their older brother, Vaughn, was a grade above Barrett and me, but he and I played on the basketball team together so I've gotten to know all three of them pretty well over the years.

They are a real-life copy/paste situation in terms of looks, but vastly different in

personality.

I'm probably most similar to Vaughn out of all the brothers, if I'm being honest. He's moody and prefers solitude, which I can appreciate.

As CEO of Billings Corp., an eco-conscious research & design company, Vaughn pretty much lives and breathes work.

He is particular and impatient, but cares a lot about the people who work for him and making the company a success.

Barrett is the rational peacemaker of the three.

He's the Chief Marketing Officer at their company, and it's the perfect job for him.

He's friendly and loves connecting people.

West is a shameless flirt who loves being the life of the party.

He acts like he doesn't have a care in the world, and yet, he's the CFO of Billings Corp.

, and that is no easy task. Vaughn once told me West's constant joking is nature's way of finding balance for a brain that can crunch numbers like a calculator.

"Gah!" I clench my jaw, refusing to ask anyone else to tie my hook, but I'm about to lose my freaking mind.

"I'd be happy to tie it for you, son." West cranes his neck around to look at me and lets out a loud hooting laugh when I flip him off. "Kids. Always so stubborn." He takes a long drink from one of the cans in the cooler I brought down to the dock and

then spits it out with a dramatic spray.

"Ugh, Weston. You're going to scare the fish, brother." Barrett wipes the spray from his bare arms.

"What is this swill? Why are we drinking this?" West yelps, ignoring Barrett's reminder to be quiet.

His discomfort gives me immense joy. "I'm trying to get into the mind of my character. He drinks cheap beer, so that's what I've got." I finally get the line tied and then focus on baiting my lure.

"So, we all have to suffer?" West puts the can down on the dock gingerly, as if even touching it is beneath him.

He jumps up, pointing his finger in my face and grins.

"I know you have whiskey somewhere, Ethan Hobbs, and I'm going to find it.

Barrett, watch my line. Ethan..." West turns to me quickly, a serious expression suddenly on his face.

"Whatever you do, do not touch my pole." He waves his hand over me quickly.

"Bad mojo coming from you for fishing." He grins and then ambles up the dock and into the house.

Once West is at a safe distance, Barrett glances at me. "You still have writer's block?"

"Yep." I sigh, abandoning my pole on the dock as I take a seat in West's now empty chair.

I stare out at the water, watching the boats in the distance.

They create waves that slap against the dock beneath us.

I don't care what West or my father says.

Living on a lake is about watching the water and getting lost in the sounds.

My family used to come to Festival Valley when I was a kid, and later we'd meet here in the summers on break from college.

I majored in English Literature at an Ivy League school.

The wrong one, according to my father who went to Princeton, as did my grandfather, and his father before him.

My brother chose correctly, pursuing law and falling in line like a good little Hobbs.

My father might have been proud if I had ambitions to write the next great American novel, but when I hit the best-sellers list and started appearing in every airport bookstore in the country, he dismissed it as if it was a foolish hobby.

He's a bit of a snob, but I don't live my life for him.

I've written twenty books since then, and have loved every minute of it.

Something about this next book is holding me back, though.

I grab a cold can of beer and crack open the top.

"Didn't you skip Christmas because you were blocked?" Barrett prods again.

"Yep." I take a sip of beer and glance at Barrett over the lip of the can. "West is a diva. This isn't bad at all."

Barrett grunts. "You're telling me. I grew up with that nut job." He smiles out at the water, his love for his brother ringing contrary to his words.

Suddenly, West's pole begins to dip, and I grab it instinctively. "Oh shit. What do I do again?"

"Oh no. You touched the pole. Okay, let's get it in before he comes back.

He's actually superstitious, and if he sees you, we'll have to hear about it for the rest of the weekend.

" Barrett stands and guides me through the process.

"Alright, now, slowly reel it in and let it out a bit so the line doesn't break. "

I follow Barrett's instructions. After a good five minutes, the fish flops out of the water, but a larger wave hits the dock and the fish somehow disengages from the hook. "Shit!"

"Ah, nothing you can do about that, man.

" Barrett claps me on the back, as he inspects the now empty hook.

"Let's get it out in the water before West gets down here.

He won't believe me if I tell him it wasn't your fault.

" He quickly baits the hook for me, and I whip the pole's line behind me.

It pulls taut, and I hear a yelp and a woman's voice scream, "Ow! Fucking hell!" The line snaps free.

Dropping the pole, I turn to the other side of the dock and see a woman about twenty yards out. She's holding her arm.

"Shit! You hooked her, Ethan." Barrett points at the woman, but she gets dunked under the water by another wave caused by the wake of a boat speeding too close to shore. She bobs up, her lifejacket doing the job, and then coughs out water as she looks around wildly.

"I'm so sorry, miss! Here! Come over this way," I call out, and the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen turn toward me. Holy shit.

"No, I got turned around. I'll come up on shore here." Her melodic voice calls out, but she sounds tired. Why is she swimming over here? Noting the lifejacket again, I scan the water for a capsized canoe or kayak.

"Do you have swim shoes on?" I call out, and she shakes her head no. "It's too rocky by the shore. You'll cut your feet."

She turns to determine her odds for herself, and I can see the hook in her arm.

I think I'm going to be sick. "Please let me help you!"

"I call to her, and she eventually nods.

She makes her way to the dock, and I reach my hand down for her just as another wave sweeps her under to the other side of the dock.

A loud knock sounds on the underside of the dock, and Barrett looks at me, his eyes

wide. "Was that her head?" Barrett gets down on his knees trying to see under the dock, but she bobs up on the other side cursing like a sailor.

I reach down and grab the back of her lifejacket, pulling her up and laying her down gently as she tries to catch her breath.

The woman's long hair is plastered to her head, and her chest heaves. She turns and looks up at me and our eyes lock, stealing my breath away.

Like a switch goes off in my brain, my heart opens for the first time in my life and beats in a rhythm designed for her.

A bright light circles this gorgeous woman's face, and suddenly I can't stop my brain from thinking about love, lust, and life.

Her mocha eyes, glinting with hints of caramel, gaze into my soul.

This curvy Aphrodite is my everything. My reason for living. Mine.

"Is she okay? Ethan? Should I call an ambulance? Check for splinters." Barrett gets out his phone, pacing as he waits for me to respond. I shake my head, unsure what to do.

The woman pulls at her vest, and I quickly snap open the little clips, freeing her sexy curves. Not now, creep.

I check her arms, wincing at the hook sticking out of her skin, and then push on her neck gently, as I help her turn to her side. She coughs, spitting lake water onto the dock. "What's your name? Does anything hurt?"

"Um, Brynn." She examines the hook, and before I can stop her, she loosens it out of

her skin, yelping in pain and then tosses it to the deck.

She's a fucking badass.

Bright red liquid blooms on her skin from the puncture wound, mixing with the water and falling in diluted droplets onto the deck. "Ow," she says with a little gasp, touching her forehead and pulling her fingers back quickly as a large goose egg grows before my eyes.

"I need to get you to a doctor." I scoop her up, ignoring her protests. "Barrett, my keys are in the kitchen. You're driving."

Barrett sprints for the house as I take the quicker path, up along the pine trees and around to the front.

"I'm fine. You don't need to carry me!" Brynn, aka, my future wife, tries to wiggle out of my grasp, but I hold her tightly to my chest.

Barrett sprints out the front door, followed closely by West who, of course, wears a grin even in an emergency. Barrett clicks the locks open and rushes around to the driver's side door.

"I leave you alone for five minutes, and you hook a mermaid!" West pulls open the back door, and I carefully lower myself into the backseat with Brynn cradled in my arms. Her eyes, bright and burning, are locked on mine.

"I can sit by myself," Brynn breathes out, but I pull her closer to me with a growl, and her cheeks turn red. Nothing has ever felt more right than having Brynn in my arms.

West loops an arm across the back of the passenger seat, and Brynn breaks eye contact with me to look at him, which makes me want to knock his teeth in.

"Well hello, Ariel." West wiggles his eyebrows suggestively. "This is Barrett, and I'm West. The big guy holding you is none other than renowned best-selling author, Ethan Hobbs."

She turns to look at me in surprise, and then her beautiful eyes flutter closed, and my heart almost stops.

"West, call ahead. Let them know we're coming!" I yell. Pulling her closer to me, I lean down to whisper against her temple, "I've got you. You're safe."

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Brynn

"Blood pressure looks great, hun. The doctor will be in shortly.

" The nurse smiles at me as she takes the cuff off my arm.

She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear and glances at Ethan and his two friends quickly before meeting my eyes again.

The three of them, all tall and handsome, take up a lot of space in the small room.

As she leans in to adjust my pillow, she whispers, "Get it, girl," and then heads out of the room with a giggle.

I shake my head, darting a quick glance at Ethan who has not stopped watching me since he pulled me out of the water. "Um, you guys should go. I can get a ride back to The Palmer when I'm done."

"No." Ethan crosses his arms in front of his chest stubbornly, and I look at his friend for help instead. Did he say his name was Garrett? No. It was Barrett.

Barrett eyes Ethan carefully, before shrugging his shoulders. "We'll stay a little longer."

I let out a long sigh.

"Are you in pain? Should I get the nurse?" Ethan paces a few steps and then comes

back to the bed. He tugs at his light brown hair, making it stand up on the side. His bright blue eyes are filled with concern.

"No, I'm fine. I just...I don't understand..." I trail off, shaking my head again as my cheeks heat. "I'm not going to sue you, if that's what you're worried about."

The third guy, whose name I've completely forgotten, scoffs. "You totally should. Ethan's loaded. And not just from book money." He winks at me with a flirty smile, and I let out a nervous laugh.

"Shut up, West," Ethan grits out, but he doesn't look away from me.

"No, seriously, Brynny—may I call you that? I can tell we're going to be great friends. He's got the money. Sue the pants off of him."

Ethan walks over to West, shoves him backward, and closes the curtain between us. "I'll pay for all your medical expenses and any other bills that arise from this situation, Brynn. No question."

"No. It's not necessary." I lick my lips and then flush when unmistakable lust flashes in his eyes. This man is ridiculously hot. All strong and growly. His expensive t-shirt strains around his biceps, emphasized when he crosses his arms stubbornly. I shake my head.

Nope. This is a no-boys allowed summer. It's the painkillers. It's making me impulsive and horny. I squeeze my thighs together and firm my resolve.

My vag is off-limits, Hotty-Pants-McGee.

"I have health insurance through the resort. And I shouldn't have been by your pier." The last part comes out embarrassingly breathy as I try, and fail, to calm my racing

heart under his intense attention.

"My client is not admitting fault, Ethan Hobbs.

" I break eye contact with Ethan as West's vice floats through the thin curtain, loud and clear.

"Brynnny-kins, you should be able to swim wherever you like without fear of being hooked like a common fish.

" I glance at Ethan quickly, biting back a smile as infuriated irritation flashes across his face.

"You're a glorified accountant, West. Not a lawyer," Ethan grits out.

"No, but I know tons of them, Brynnny. We'll get through this."

Barrett places a hand on Ethan's chest, standing between him and approximately where West must be as Ethan clenches his fists.

"West and I are going to get a car back to your place, Ethan.

Brynn, I hope you feel better soon." He turns quickly, ducking behind the curtain, and I can hear West's protests down the hall until the door closes behind them with a soft click.

And then we're alone. I swallow hard, holding my breath when Ethan opens his mouth. But he closes it again and continues to stare at me. My heart beats wildly. Oh my god. This man is intense.

I clear my throat. "May I borrow your phone please?" Ethan immediately unlocks it

and hands it to me. His fingers brush mine, and I shiver from his touch. Work is a good distraction.

Hi Celeste, this is Brynn. Don't panic, but I'm at the hospital. It involves Eric being his typical jerk self and a fishing hook. Fill you in later.

Can you let me know if the Winfrees made it back to the resort okay? And, see if you can get my phone from the boat?

"Who are you texting?" Ethan asks on a growl, and I look at him in confusion. Does this man ever speak without sounding like a grumpy, hungry bear?

"I'm texting my friend at work. I need to let her know where I am and check on the guests I was supposed to be with."

303-555-7878

OMG! I've been so worried about you. Mr. Maloney said you're off the rest of the day and maybe longer. We've got it covered.

The Winfrees are fine, but they were furious you were left in the lake. I think Eric is in big trouble, btw. thumbs-up. I dropped your phone and bag off at your place. Text when you get back, and I'll bring you some food.

"Did you call my work?" I ask incredulously.

Ethan clenches his jaw. "I know Bradford Maloney. I told him I had to take you to the hospital and you would be off for a few days."

"Excuse me?!" I squeak out. "You told the CEO of the resort I wouldn't be in for a few days? I need my job, Ethan."

Ethan snorts. "Bradford isn't going to fire you for this. I'd have his ass if he did."

Overstepping, entitled, arrogant, growly, sexy, ass-hat!

I stare at him, so enraged my internal thoughts are trapped. My mouth is open, but all that comes out is a tiny little squeak. I grind my teeth and try to calm down so I can give him a piece of my mind with working audio, but then the door opens.

"Hello. I'm Dr. Schmidt." A kind man who looks to be in his early sixties walks over to my bed, giving me a big smile as he reads my chart. Oblivious to the tension in the room, he pulls out a flashlight and checks my pupils, then he notes my vitals before declaring me ready to head home.

"Did you check for a concussion? She passed out in the car on the way here." Ethan drills the doctor, who does a double-take.

"Mr. Hobbs! Yes, of course. Your wife is in great health." Dr. Schmidt, who I've already started calling Mister Rogers in my head, smiles at me kindly. "Other than the puncture in your arm from the hook and a goose egg on your noggin, of course. Rough day on the water, eh?"

"He's not my husband," I say, focusing on the most pressing issue. I glare at Ethan when he scoffs. "Well, you're not!"

"Yet," Ethan mutters, and I gape at him incredulously.

What the what?

Mister Rogers looks between the two of us and then clears his throat.

"While there are no signs of a concussion, we do suggest you take it easy for the next

twenty-four hours or so.

You should have someone with you, just in case.

"The doctor pats my arm, and a low growl comes from the gorgeous man hovering over me like I'm going to break into tiny pieces at any moment.

Is he seriously jealous of Mister Rogers, who looks like he has a whole gaggle of grandchildren who visit him on the weekends?

"I'll keep an eye on her," Ethan grits out.

What is this guy's problem? He's that afraid of a lawsuit?

Mister Rogers nods, quickly removing his hand from my arm and then hustles out of the room.

"I'll go tell the nurse you're ready to leave," Ethan says curtly, but I stop him before he can go.

"Ethan, I appreciate your concern," I start, in as gentle and unthreatening a tone as I can muster, "but I'm calling a ride-share to take me home. You've done plenty." I use my polite but firm voice reserved for extra-annoying wealthy guests.

Ethan turns back toward my bed, getting close to my face as his large hand cups my cheek. His skin is hot against mine, his eyes dart to my mouth, and I swallow hard, mesmerized by the cut of his strong jawline. Like it's chiseled from marble. My body reacts instantly as I suck in a quick breath.

"If you think I am leaving you alone, you have no idea who you're dealing with."

Then he kisses me with an intensity that steals all my breath away.

"You're mine," he whispers on a growl, before striding out of the room with purpose.

Oh my god. I'm in a coma.

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Ethan

It's dusk when I wrap around The Palmer to what looks like a small village.

Standing in stark contrast to the rustic elegance of the resort and hotel, the cabins are simple and sturdy, but large.

Young men and women who look to be teenagers and early twenties mill around, laughing and playing music.

I drive around a large grassy loop with picnic tables and horseshoe pits in the middle, following Brynn's directions and pull up to the fanciest shed I've ever seen in my life.

"Home sweet home," Brynn says, watching me.

"It's tiny," I blurt out.

"It's a tiny house ," she corrects, luckily finding my response amusing, if not also irritating. "Seasonal employees bunk together in the larger cabins at the front, but year-round employees get a tiny house on the property. And in the winter, there's a shuttle to the front of the resort."

"Ah, Bradford has found a way to willingly enslave people to their jobs by making them never need to leave the compound," I grumble, staring at the dollhouse Brynn calls home.

"Yeah, he's such a monster. Giving us free room and board, access to excursions and

activities on our days off, and a gourmet chef, on top of paying better than any resort on this mountain.

" Brynn rolls her eyes. "Let me guess, Ethan.

You spent your summers staying at places like The Palmer growing up, didn't you? "

"Yes."

Brynn pulls a face at my blunt response. "Thank you for the ride, Mr. Hobbs. I've got it from here."

Cute .

I take off my seat belt as she gets out of the car, and meet her at the bottom of her minuscule front porch.

"Seriously? Go away!" Brynn swats at me when I put my arm around her waist to help her up the front stairs.

Pulling her against me with a gentle firmness, her breath catches when I lower my mouth to her ear. "If you ever Mr. Hobbs me again outside of a sexy bedroom role-play game, I'll call your boss every day, using the worst cutesy nickname you can imagine. For the rest of your life."

Brynn lets out a startled laugh. "You wouldn't."

"Try me, my little Snickle-Fruit-Bear. My Pickle-Bottomed-Squeaky-Cuddle-Bug." I grin wickedly as Brynn's mouth drops open in disbelief.

"You're threatening me?"

I shrug. "It's not a threat if you mean it. It's a promise."

"You're evil." Brynn breathes out, but a smile tugs at her lips.

"I'm evil what , my little Peacock-Tailed-Sex-Kitten?" Her eyes widen and her mouth opens like she's about to yell at me, but then she clenches her jaw.

"You're evil, Ethan ," she finally corrects through gritted teeth.

"Thank you, Brynn ," I whisper, staring at her mouth as her tongue darts out to wet her lips. She swallows hard, her eyes locked on mine, but then, she turns quickly and starts up the few short stairs.

I stand behind her, admiring the roundness of her full ass, as she keys in the code to her front door. She doesn't slam it in my face, so I follow her in.

Brynn flicks on a small lamp and then throws her arms wide. "Okay. I'm home safe."

I nod my head. "It's bigger inside," I admit. Which isn't saying much, but I'm not going to tell her that.

Her "home" is no more than 350 square feet if I'm being generous.

The front area has a couch that folds into the wall, and I can practically touch the kitchen counter from the front door.

A small set of stairs leads up to the lofted bedroom, which is directly above the kitchen and open to the rest of the space.

It fits a mattress and that's it. I'm not even sure she can stand up.

Brynn watches me as I look around and then sighs. She opens a small door to the left of the kitchen and disappears into what appears to be the bathroom. My phone pings.

Bradford Maloney

How is Brynn feeling?

None of your fucking business, playboy. I want to leave him on read, but Brynn has made it abundantly clear she wants to keep her job, and I need to convince her to trust me, so instead I respond.

Fine.

I don't have anything against Bradford specifically. I was loudly opposed to the renovation of The Palmer a few years ago, as was half the town, but it wasn't personal. I didn't want to deal with the number of tourists I knew the resort would attract.

West said you're bringing her back to the resort?

What's the name of the guy who knocked her off the boat? I want to talk to him.

Bradford appealed to the city, worked with the roads and highway department to regulate traffic around town, and the resort has brought in a lot of jobs.

All in all, The Palmer has proven to be a boon for an already prosperous town.

Still, he's friends with West, so I don't trust him around my girl.

Already been dealt with. Kicked off the property within hours.

Shouldn't have been working here in the first place.

Brynn told me about him. Well, she told the nurse about him, and I was right there, so it counts. How the nephew of a higher-up has been terrorizing the whole staff right under Bradford's nose.

Let me know when you drop her off. I'll have the medic stop by.

No.

Screw that. I'm sending her a box of chocolates if she's been dealing with your moody ass all day. Dick.

If you send my girl chocolates, I will shove them up your fucking ass, Bradford.

Your girl? Since when?

I leave Bradford on read as Brynn comes out of the bathroom.

She eyes me and then licks her lips again.

The doctor said she needs to take it easy for twenty-four hours, but all I want to do is rip her clothes off and apologize for hurting her by worshipping her body all night long.

I finally pull my gaze away from her delicious curves, meeting her eyes, and she throws her arms up in frustration.

"Ethan. My dance partner didn't have an illegal medical procedure that your doctor father, staying at the inn, saved her from.

We aren't going to lose out on an important dance gig if you don't become an expert in the cha-cha anytime soon.

You are wealthy and I live here, for free, as part of my job, which matters to me.

" Brynn pauses in her rant, her hands on her hips as she stares me down.

"You've gone above and beyond. I'm not going to sue you.

You have no obligations here. So, dance away, Johnny Castle. "

"Wouldn't I be Baby in this scenario?" I ask her, equally amused and irritated she thinks I'll walk away from her so easily.

"How dare you use my reference against me," she snaps and then huffs in irritation.

Chuckling, I hold up my hands in surrender. "Okay. you're right. You've a had a shitty day."

I move closer to Brynn, and she takes a step back, but her kitchen counter traps her in place.

She lifts her chin defiantly, but her chest heaves from my proximity.

When I wrap my arm around her waist, she lets out a sigh.

Against her better judgment, all the fight goes out of her, and she slumps into my hold.

I lean down slowly, brush her hair off her shoulder, and lower my mouth to her neck.

When she doesn't shove me away, I kiss along her soft skin, sucking lightly, and she whimpers.

So responsive .

Disappointment flashes across her face when I pull back, which I take as a good sign. "I will never forgive myself for causing you physical harm, Brynn. Please let me take care of you for the next few days." And then we'll discuss you moving in with me because you deserve a fucking palace.

Brynn's eyes narrow suspiciously, as if she heard my internal monologue as well, but she doesn't push me away. Finally, she sighs heavily. "Give me your cell number. I'm going to bed, but I'll text you in the morning and let you know I'm still alive."

I nod, handing her my phone so she can enter her number. I don't move away from her, so she rests the phone on my chest and eyes me over the top of it.

"Go, Ethan. I'm getting in the shower and then bed. Nothing is going to happen to me." Brynn pushes at my chest.

"Need any help in the shower?" I ask, staring at her mouth like a man starving.

"No, I do not," Brynn squeaks, blushing prettily.

Twenty-four hours.

I step back to give her space. As I turn to leave, I call the number she entered, and her phone rings. Brynn cocks her head at me.

"Just checking," I grunt.

She rolls her eyes but gives me a little smile. "Goodnight, Ethan."

"Goodnight, Brynn." I let the door click behind me and walk out into the dark evening. I open the trunk of my car, pulling out a thick flannel blanket and a sleeping bag that I keep there in case of emergencies.

Nobody puts Baby in the corner ...but apparently the front steps are acceptable .

I make myself comfortable, settling in against the door so I can hear if she calls out for help. And then I do something I haven't been able to do in almost a year.

I open the notes app on my phone and start writing.

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Brynn

I blink my eyes open as the morning light streams through the skylight window and moan. My body aches, and I pop a few extra-strength pain relievers with a sip of water from the bottle next to my bed as my phone sounds with an incoming text message.

Miranda

How are you feeling? Can I bring you anything?

I called my brother from the hospital yesterday. Cole insisted on heading over immediately, but I managed to convince him to wait and let Miranda check on me today instead.

I'm fine. Let's stick to the plan. I'll meet you guys at The Watershed at noon. It's right off the lobby.

smiley face emoji xo. See you in a few hours!

Holy shit! What time is it? Oh my god. I slept in. Damn it! I grab my phone, ready to send a frantic text to Celeste, but see one from her sent last night.

Celeste

Don't forget you're off tomorrow and the next day.

I was so frazzled by Ethan, I managed to take a quick shower and then poured myself into bed.

Thank you for this. I completely forgot.

Since I took off half of yesterday, I should come in and check on a few things, though.

I start to wiggle out of bed, but my phone pings immediately.

If you step one foot in the lobby, I'm supposed to send you home and call the medic.

Mr. Maloney's orders.

Oh my god. Bossy, arrogant men trying to tell me what I should do.

Intense blue eyes invade my brain, and I subconsciously flit my fingers over my neck where the owner of said eyes kissed me yesterday.

I've been horny and wound up since last night.

Hell, since he held me in his arms in the car, carried me into the freaking hospital, and refused to leave my bedside while he claimed me with his gaze.

I shake my head. Banish thee!

Fine, but I'm meeting Miranda for lunch, so I will have to walk into the lobby.

I'll allow it.

Lol. BTW, I have a lot to tell you tonight...

I hope it has something to do with the tall, sexy man sleeping on your porch. Because I'm dying to know what that's about.

What?!

I quickly crawl out of bed and make my way down the steps. I peek out the small window of my door, but I can't see anything, so I throw it open and Ethan spills backward into my house.

"Morning," he says sleepily, completely unfazed and sporting a scruffy five o'clock shadow that I immediately picture between my legs.

"You slept here all night?" I stare at him, dumbfounded.

Ethan sits up, stretching his back as he disentangles himself from the sleeping bag. "No, I wrote for most of it." He stands, and the impressive bulge at the front of his pants distracts me for a moment. I look away quickly, but Ethan doesn't take his eyes off me. "You're my muse, Brynn."

I roll my eyes in an effort to tamp down the girlish glee bubbling up within me because who talks like this? "Yeah, I can see what my musing does to you." I look pointedly at his crotch with a raised eyebrow.

"You're the one walking around looking like sex on a plate, Brynn." Ethan's hungry gaze roves over my body, and I glance down, realizing I'm only wearing undies and the tight tank top I slept in. My cheeks heat as I notice my hardened nipples begging for his touch like erotic little sluts.

"I dreamed about you, Brynn." Shutting the front door behind him, Ethan stalks toward me. As if called to attention, his bulge grows before my eyes.

I can't look away, even as I take a step back and bump against the kitchen counter. Damn, this tiny house. I want to run toward and away from this man, and I don't have enough square footage to help me decide properly.

He invades my space, pressing against me.

Leaning forward, he kisses my collarbone, laving his tongue against my skin.

His hands grip my hips as he sucks gently along the soft skin of my neck.

My chest heaves, and a small whimper escapes.

I close my eyes as his cock presses against my stomach and take a calming breath.

No boys allowed. No boys allowed. No boys al-

Ethan's thick fingers trail along my hip and across my lower stomach, tucking into the top of my panties, but he stops before going any farther. He pulls back, waiting for my consent as his fierce blue eyes pierce through all my shields.

With any other man, I'd be disgusted by this level of control-freak intensity, but with Ethan, I want to tease him within an inch of his restraint and then let him unleash his possessive infatuation on my body.

My nipples tighten thinking of what he might be able to do with his hands and tongue.

My pussy weeps, begging me to give in already.

Fuck it. One boy allowed.

I lunge forward, turning my head slightly to kiss him properly, and maybe it's a concussion after all, because fireworks explode in my damn brain when our lips meet.

I wrap my arms around his neck, our tongues tangling as he opens his mouth.

Ethan takes over immediately, nudging my legs wider with his knee as his thick finger slides through my wet folds.

"Oh god," I breathe out, stilling and gripping his muscular biceps to steady myself as he finds my clit and begins slow circles. Ethan grins, and I spread my legs even more to give him better access.

"That's right, baby. Let me in." Ethan's thumb takes over on my clit as he pushes one thick finger into my core.

"Oh fuck," I moan. Reaching for the hemline of my shirt, I pull it up and over my head to toss it away.

"You are so beautiful, Brynn." Ethan stares at my body in awe, and I have never wanted to fuck a man so badly in my life. No, not just fuck him. I want to let him worship my body and then tie him to my bed and keep him forever.

Oh no.

I don't have time to analyze the ping-ping ball thoughts in my brain because Ethan chooses that moment to pull his fingers from me, and I whine like a toddler.

He chuckles and lifts me onto the counter like I weigh nothing. Peppering kisses along my collarbone, my shoulder, and then down one arm and the other, he stops when he gets to the little bandage on my forearm from the hook and grimaces. "Baby, let me take care of you. I'm so sorry I hurt you."

Yesterday I would have protested. Today, I nod. "Get those fingers back to work, and we're even."

"No. I need to taste you." Ethan grins wickedly and pushes me back gently until I'm lying on the counter.

He quickly removes my panties. The butcher-block wood is uncomfortable under my back, but within seconds I don't have the bandwidth to think about it, because the crazy man who hasn't left my side since yesterday descends on me like he's starving.

His tongue finds my core, and he immediately licks me like an ice cream cone.

I must be this man's favorite flavor because he moans from my taste, doubling his efforts when I buck against him and call out my pleasure.

I'm drowning in sensations, lightheaded as I squeeze my breasts together and pluck at my nipples.

Moaning, I gaze between my legs as Ethan looks up.

Locking eyes with me, he finds my clit and flicks it with his tongue.

He has one finger inside me, thrusting into my throbbing pussy, and I have to roll my nipple with a sharp pinch to keep myself grounded.

I close my eyes tightly, calling out his name as I writhe against him.

"Oh god, Ethan!" Panting, I look down again. Ethan's staring at me with the same intensity as yesterday, and it sends warmth throughout my body and into my heart. I cannot catch feelings for this man.

Too late, my horny pussy declares as she grips Ethan's thick finger like she's desperate for it to be another part of his body doing the work.

In an effort to break the emotional connection, I lay my head back and try to focus on the physical sensations as his magical mouth drives the intensity higher and higher.

"That's right, baby. Lay back and enjoy; I can do this for hours.

" He adds another thick finger, and I arch off the counter, bucking against him.

His fingers pump in and out of my throbbing core as I climb toward the edge, and then he sucks on my clit.

I still and release, covering this man's face in my juices with a feral moan as he licks me through my orgasm.

Panting, I throw an arm over my head and try to process my thoughts, while tamping down the overwhelming desire to ride Ethan's cock into the sunset.

"I wouldn't say no to that," Ethan's deep voice startles me back to reality.

His intense gaze smolders in my direction as I bite my lip. I sit up, leaning back on my elbows, and all sense of reason or rationality is out the window.

"Take off your pants, and get in my bed, Ethan Hobbs."

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Ethan

"Your wish is my command." I immediately strip in the middle of the room, kicking my pants and underwear to the side so fast, Brynn gasps. Or, at least, I assume the gasp is due to my speed, but the way she's staring at my package has me preening like a damn peacock.

Remembering how her walls gripped my finger, I pump my shaft twice, desperate to alleviate the built-up tension as I stare at her gorgeous, curvy body.

Brynn licks her perfect lips, and my already hard cock sticks straight out like he's straining for his target, as needy for Brynn as I am.

He's already weeping with the desire to be inside her warm, wet pussy.

Brynn slides off the counter and walks toward me, her pillowy tits on full erotic display, her hips swaying as she looks at me from beneath her long lashes.

She pulls my shirt up and I finish the job, tossing it to the side as she loops her hand around my neck.

Her fingers tangle in the short hair at the nape, and I shiver.

I want Brynn's hands on me at all times, and vice versa.

I'm obsessed with her. Nothing makes me happier than being near her, pleasing her, hearing her laugh, and especially hearing her moan.

This woman has the power to destroy me, and instead of scaring me away, I'd gladly tear my heart from my chest to lay it at her feet if she asked for it.

Brynn's dark eyes search my face, reflecting my own vulnerability, and I want to reassure her I'm not going anywhere.

But then her soft lips land on mine, and all thoughts of talking go out the window.

I wrap my arms around her waist and grab her ass with both hands to pull her to me.

"Mine," I say with a desperate, throaty murmur as I explore her body.

Caressing her curves, I silently communicate everything she isn't ready to hear out loud yet.

I kiss her, swirling my tongue with hers and let her taste herself on me. She moans, only breaking our kiss to stare at my chest.

Writer's block has afforded me a lot of time in my home gym, a fact I'm suddenly grateful for as her mouth makes a little "o" shape when I flex. "Sexy, crazy man," she mumbles, her hands roaming over my pecs and tracing the lines of my biceps.

I wonder if she realizes she's talking out loud.

Doesn't matter. I know I'm crazy. Crazy for this sassy, quirky, funny bombshell who was custom made for me.

Hell, even I couldn't have put together a more perfect woman.

I didn't even know what I wanted until I found Brynn.

It's been a long-running family joke that my brother is most likely to carry on the family name.

I don't catch feelings easily, I've never brought a girl home to meet my parents, and I've never ever been in love.

At least, not before yesterday.

"I need you." I walk Brynn backward, and she gives me a sexy grin before heading up the small staircase to her loft.

As she reaches the third step, my face is eye-level with her round heart-shaped ass, and I grab her hips, stalling her in place.

She sways, planting both hands on the step in front of her to steady herself, looking back at me over her shoulder questioningly.

I lean forward, nipping at her ass cheek, then soothe the mark with my tongue before moving to the other side.

"I could spend a lifetime worshipping your ass, Brynn," I breathe against her skin, her honeysuckle scent already committed to memory and filed under, "home" in my brain. I lower my mouth to her slit and run my tongue from front to back.

"Oh. My. God," Brynn pants, and then she squirms. "Wait, no, Ethan!

I need your cock," she whines like a pouty little princess, and I release a feral growl, swatting at her ass as I chase her up the stairs.

I have to duck when I get to the top step, crouching to watch Brynn crawl onto the queen-size bed.

"We're staying at my house tonight," I warn, narrowly missing the ceiling as I make my way to her bed.

Brynn either ignores my comment or doesn't hear me at all. She's preoccupied staring at my cock.

"Gimme, gimme, gimme!"

I chuckle. Fucking adorable. Brynn's hand grips my hard shaft as I crawl up her body, hovering over her on all fours.

She pumps twice, twisting slightly at the head of my cock until I'm moaning above her.

She palms my balls with her other hand, massaging them as she works my cock, and I lean forward, placing my forehead to hers as she jerks me off.

"Fuuuuck." When I open my eyes, my gaze lands on her full tits.

Her nipples are pebbled, and I lean forward.

I lave her hardened buds with my tongue, one after another until they pucker.

I pull back, admiring the wet rings around her swollen nipples, and she takes the opportunity to shimmy down the bed underneath me.

When her mouth lands on my cock, warm and willing, I have to plant both hands into the mattress to keep from rutting into her like an animal.

"Fuck, yes. Fuck!" I grit out, ready to spill my load down her throat, but equally desperate to hold back. "Baby, I need your pussy."

Brynn comes off my cock with a loud pop, and I pull her up the bed for a kiss. We're both breathing hard when we finally part.

"I'm on birth control and haven't been with anyone in...too fucking long." Brynn runs her hands up and down my back as she watches me. "I was tested at my last appointment and I'm clean."

"Me too. I haven't been with anyone in years," I admit, and her eyebrows lift in surprise. "I don't want anything between us, but I'll wear a condom if you aren't ready."

Brynn lifts her leg to wrap it around my waist, and she reaches for my cock, notching me at her entrance in answer to my question. She bites her lip, desperation and lust warring with each other in her eyes.

Fuck, yes. I never want anything between us. Ever. I momentarily wonder how long she plans to stay on birth control and if she wants kids. I never thought I wanted them, but now, I'm consumed with a feral desire to see Brynn's belly swell with my baby.

Not going to let that level of crazy out just yet.

I run my cock through her dripping release, coating myself in her honey before notching my cock at her entrance. Brynn wraps her other leg around my hip and uses her heels against my ass, urging me forward like a horse.

Giddy up, baby.

I lock eyes with her, and the vixen grins at me. I've never seen anything more beautiful or sexy in my life, and I drive into her with one long thrust. Her mouth falls open, she grips my shoulders, breathing hard as we both moan from the joining of our

bodies.

"Oh yes," she says on a long breath.

"You feel so good." I pull out slightly, thrusting back in, and she arches from the bed, driving her hips against mine to meet my thrust. "You like it, baby?"

"Yes, oh god, yes," Brynn ends on a whimper as I begin to circle my hips, watching her responses as I learn her body.

Her thighs grip my waist as she moves against me.

She moans loudly as I bottom out and grind against her clit.

I shift one of her legs up higher, and she cries out as I hit a spot deep inside.

"There it is. Is that it, Brynn?" I ask, and she nods, moaning as she rolls her head back and forth across the mattress like she doesn't know what sensation to focus on first. I pull her leg closer, reaching between us to squeeze a nipple since she seemed to need a bit of pain when I was going down on her earlier.

"Oh fuck, Ethan!" Brynn calls out, and then moans her appreciation as she trails off into a garbled mess.

"I like when you say my name, Brynn," I growl, getting closer to her ear. "You are mine, and I will destroy anyone who tries to take you away from me." Brynn whimpers in response, her eyes rolling back as her pussy squeezes my cock like a vice.

The thought of Brynn with anyone else drives me insane, and I pump into her, desperate to mark her with my scent. I want to fill her with my seed and warn away

any other man who thinks he has a chance against me.

"You're so fucking sexy, Brynn." I snap my hips against her, thrusting in and out of her wet, warm pussy.

"Oh god, yes, yes, yes!" Her words come out labored, her skin flushes, and she grinds against me, close to release but needing something more.

"You are mine. Mine. Mine. Mine." I chant the word over and over, emphasizing it with each thrust into her pussy, and she strangles my cock with her muscles as she whimpers and moans around me.

"Say it, Brynn. Say you're mine!" I demand, fucking her with the same intensity consuming my body, heart, and soul since I locked eyes with her yesterday.

She mumbles incoherently, and I reach between us and slide my hand across her lower stomach, flattening it between us until I can reach her clit with my thumb.

I brush my thumb across once, and she arches off the bed.

"Oh god, please, more. Yes, yes!" Brynn begs me, widening her legs as she thrusts against me erratically, chasing her pleasure.

"You're mine," I demand, flicking over her clit once, twice, but not pushing hard enough to give her what she needs.

"Oh god," Brynn whimpers. "Right there, please, please," Brynn begs, practically sobbing as I edge her.

I can't take her misery; instead, I increase my pace, filling her with my cock, and then I use my thumb and grind circles into her clit.

"Oh fuck, yes!" Brynn sobs out her release, her pussy milking me as I follow her over the edge.

"Oh, god. Mine!" I yell, thrusting in as I try to get my cum as deep inside her as possible. She said she was on birth control, but it's not always effective, so I vow not to waste any opportunity to get her pregnant from here on out.

We collapse together, panting heavily as we come down from a blissful orgasm high. I shift to her side and pull back, tracing her cheekbone with my finger as I brush a long strand of hair out of her eyes.

She looks at me with guarded caution. "You invited me in," I say simply.

"What, like you're a vampire? I can invite your ass back out any time I want," Brynn counters, but the corner of her mouth twitches, despite the slight wariness in her eyes.

I grin, enjoying her mouthy playfulness. "Do you have any idea what you fucking do to me?"

Brynn looks away, but I pull her chin back, forcing her to stay connected. "You're a runner, aren't you?" I ask.

She lets out a huff. "I don't really enjoy any exercise," she quips, but she doesn't deny it. I decide it's a conversation that can wait. I pull her into me, and she rests her cheek against my chest. I put my mouth to her hair, breathing in her scent.

"My heart is yours," I whisper and then let the exhaustion overtake me.

She can run all she wants. I'm not letting her get away.

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Brynn

I race into The Watershed restaurant and head straight for the back table I requested.

The mountain view out the back windows is amazing.

Almost as amazing as the view of the ridiculously muscular naked ass I left wrapped in my sheets at home.

I bite my lip, thinking of Ethan snoring softly as I slipped out the door.

"There you are! How are you feeling?" Miranda envelops me in a big hug, and something about her warmth and scent causes the prick of tears to start at the back of my eyes. By the time she pulls back, fat drops are running down my cheeks, and I can't shut off the spigot.

"Oh, no. Oh, Brynn. What's wrong? Do we need to go to the doctor?" Miranda pushes my hair off my face as I start sobbing too hard to respond.

Betty, Miranda's pseudo-grandmother who cusses like a sailor and basically runs Duhring Park, gently urges me to sit at the table next to her.

She hands me some water and rubs small circles on my back as I try to get control of myself.

"Brynn, dear. Tears like those are usually caused by one thing.

So tell me, sweetheart. What man do we need to bury before we head back? "

I finally laugh, still sniffing, and then pull back in alarm at the look on Betty's face. "Are you serious? Nobody. No!"

I turn to Miranda who simply shrugs. "She'll shank someone in the kidney for you, Brynn."

Betty nods seriously and tilts her head. "And I won't even ask if he deserved it."

I stare at Betty for a moment too long before whispering, "Please don't bury anybody for me."

"Another time, then." Betty settles her napkin on her lap and reaches for a roll.

I shake my head, glancing at Miranda's wedding planner, Violet, who looks like a deer caught in headlights. She's new to Duhring Park. I have a feeling it's growing on her, though, because she finally shrugs and says softly, "Women need to stick together."

Betty nods at her approvingly.

"Is this about a guy, Brynn?" Miranda asks gently.

"Yes. He doesn't deserve to be buried, though," I add quickly, my eyes darting to Betty to make sure she heard me. "I've met someone, and he's going to ruin everything. I need to focus on my career, and he's intense, and smart, and so very...sexy."

"Aw, don't make me bury a sexy man. What a waste." Betty grimaces.

Ignoring the casual murder comments, I look at my future-sister-in-law in a panic. "I don't have time for him, Miranda."

"Brynn, it is possible to find someone on your specific timeline.

But it is not always possible to find the one on your timeline.

" Miranda holds my hands, speaking gently but she leans down, forcing me to meet her gaze.

"If he's the right one, he'll value what you value, and if that's your career, he'll make it his priority too.

" She clears her throat before continuing.

"I'm not sure if you know this, but I didn't think I had time for your brother when he came into my life a few years ago. "

I grin at her and raise my eyes in surprise. "Cole called me the day he started his new job in Duhring Park and told me he'd found the love of his life. He didn't say you fought him on it."

"Sounds about right," Miranda laughs. "I was a fool to push him away. He's everything I needed and more."

I nod, looking out the window as I contemplate what she's said.

"Have you talked to this guy about your concerns?" Violet asks, and I shake my head.

"We haven't really had time to...talk," I admit, and my cheeks heat when Betty gives me a knowing wink.

I shake my head, suddenly embarrassed by my tears and desperate to change the topic.

"Thank you, guys. You've given me a lot to think about.

Let's eat, and then you can show me what you found for the wedding. "

A few hours later, I walk up to my cabin with Ethan's car still in my driveway, and my heart flutters.

When I open the front door, Ethan stands from my little couch, his intense gaze making it harder for me to breathe already.

"You're up," I whisper breathily.

"You left," Ethan responds, clenching his jaw even as his eyes travel down my body in a slow perusal.

No doubt about it, this man loves my curves.

"I had to meet some friends for lunch. I figured you needed to sleep." I hang my purse on one of the hooks by the front door and turn to face him.

He starts to walk toward me, but I put up a hand to stop him. "Ethan, I need to say something, and I can't have you touching me when I do."

He pauses and then gives me a sharp nod, but he doesn't sit down.

"I love my job. I want to have a career in hotels and resorts. I don't have the energy to be a random summer fling, and I don't have time for games. So, if that's what this is to you," I say, gesturing between the two of us before continuing, "you need to leave

me alone."

"You done?" Ethan growls, and my stomach flutters because everything about his intense possessiveness gets me hot and bothered.

"Brynn, I'm not playing games. I'm not overthinking this.

To be honest, I'm not thinking about it at all.

It's set. I'm not an impulsive man. I'm not romantic or capricious with my feelings.

I don't flit from one woman to the next.

Hell, I sometimes take weeks to craft the perfect sentence, mulling over words like an oyster with a grain of sand before I ever put them to paper.

There's nothing to analyze here. Nothing to consider or weigh.

The second I saw you, I fell in love with you.

Simple as that." He steps toward me and cups my cheek, staring into my eyes. "I want you and only you. Forever."

My heart is about to explode. I capture his mouth with mine, and he tries to walk me backward toward the stairs to my bed, but I push him onto the couch and straddle him instead.

Kissing up his neck, I stop to whisper into his ear, "If you break my heart, Betty knows how to bury a body where nobody will find it."

"Baby, if I break your heart, I'll hire Betty myself." Ethan buries his face between my

breasts and pulls the front of my dress down to suck and kiss along my cleavage.

I grip his hair, moaning from his touch, and his large hand comes between my breasts to rest across my heart.

"Mine," Ethan commands, staring at me with what I can only call the perfect mix of love and infatuation.

"Mine," I reply, placing my hand in the same position on his chest.

The grin that lights up his face is dazzling, and I know in my soul I am going to spend the rest of my life trying to make him as happy as he is today.

"Yours," Ethan whispers. And then he stands and plants me on the couch. He reaches behind his neck, removes his gray t-shirt with one hand, and lowers himself between my open legs, ready to show me what's his. Forever.

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October, The Following Year

"Oh, god, yes, yes, yes!" Brynn's sexy voice cries out her pleasure as I pump into her from behind.

I grip her shoulder to try to keep her in place.

When we get enough movement, her incredible tits bounce to the sides, and I can see the tip of her nipple thrust forward each time I bottom out. It makes me feral.

The bed shakes, and the headboard slams against the wall. We meet each other thrust for thrust, matching our rhythm as we build toward ecstasy.

"I'm going to fuck you full of babies, Brynn." My balls tighten as she moans, and her pussy clenches me as she rolls her hips against my movements. "I'm going to fill you with my cum and bury myself so deep, you don't have any choice but to have my baby."

"Oh fuck, yes, yes, yes!" Brynn's chants are desperate now, and I quicken my already punishing pace.

I reach around her hip and find the tight bud at the apex where we're joined, then start slow circles as she moans loudly.

She buries her face in the bed, both hands in front of her gripping the sheets as she tries to muffle the sound.

This is my favorite part of us. When she hands her body over to me and trusts me with her pleasure. There is no greater honor in the world.

"I've got you, baby. You're doing so good.

" Praise works for her, and she sobs into the bed.

"Come for me, Brynn. Fuck my cock with your tight, wet pussy.

I need to feel you throb around me, and then I'm going to make you my wife.

" She whimpers, her walls tighten around me, but she needs a little something else.

"Take over for me on your clit, baby." Brynn reaches between her legs with a desperate sob and starts rapid circles on her tight nub. She moans and writhes on my cock. I grip her ass with both hands as I thrust into her tight channel.

I lick my lips and watch her back hole squeeze with each thrust. Letting go of one perfect peachy ass cheek, I suck my thumb into my mouth.

Slowly, I push my wet thumb against her tight back circle with a steady rhythm to match my thrusts, waiting for her to let me in.

I can barely break through the tight muscle as she clenches around my thumb, moaning loudly from the slight intrusion.

"Good job, you're doing so good, Brynn. Let me in, baby." I rub her lower back, and Brynn sighs, relaxing enough so I can thrust my entire thumb inside her.

"Oh god, yes! Oh, Ethan," Brynn pants, her tight channel pulsing.

"You like that? You're so wet for me." I continue thrusting into her pussy with my

cock, letting her get used to being filled in two places at once. Her face is buried in the mattress so everything sounds like gibberish, but she thrusts her ass against me.

"Oh, I think you do. My sweet, filthy, little Brynn."

I move my thumb in and out of her back channel, and Brynn turns her head to the side, letting out a wanton moan as she gives up trying not to make noise.

It's the most erotic sight of my life, as I pump in and out of both her tight channels at once.

Her body flushes, telling me she's close, and my balls tighten. I clench my jaw, trying to hold back.

"Take your pleasure, baby." Brynn sobs out a response, and then her whole body tightens, giving in as she clamps down and moans her release.

Her pussy milks my cock while my thumb is locked in place from her orgasm.

I continue to pump into both of her tight channels, drawing out the sensations as long as possible.

The circle of her asshole grips me tightly as her orgasm pulses and releases throughout her body.

Two more hard thrusts, and I follow her over the edge, yelling out her name as I empty ropes of warm cum into her tight little pussy.

We fall to the mattress, and I pull her over to me as we catch our breath. My cock, still glistening with our combined release, rests against her gorgeous ass, and I dare say he's ready to go again if I'd let him.

"I liked what you did with your thumb there," Brynn murmurs breathily, and I grin, kissing her hair.

"Good. I packed a plug for the honeymoon."

Brynn laughs and then stills. "Did you really?"

"Three different sizes. Two vibrate, and one has a jewel on the end that might seem a little princessy, but I insist on eating you out with a jewel sticking out of your ass, so there we are."

Brynn's body shakes with laughter, and then she turns to me with a cheeky smile. "Typical man. Get me to the altar and then spring a butt plug on me once we're in paradise."

I shrug. "If I can't buy you sexy toys for the bedroom, who are we?"

"Not us," Brynn agrees laughing, and then her breath catches as my fingers find her sensitive clit, and she moans.

"Oh yes. Wait, no! Everyone will be here any second.

We can't," she protests, even as she lifts her leg over my hip to give me better access.

Her warm hand finds my cock and pumps me.

She opens her eyes, biting her lip when I quirk a brow at her.

"The lady doth protest too much," I murmur, and she grins. I lean in to kiss my almost-bride, but the doorbell for our suite sounds, and I groan.

"Later," she promises and then gives me a little push. "Go answer the door. It's either

the guys or Caitlyn." Brynn stands, her glorious curves begging for my touch, and I reach for her with a growl, but she dances away with a laugh and closes the bathroom door.

Sighing, I pull on underwear and sweatpants, adjust my semi-hard cock, and go answer the door, glaring at my friends and future-brother-in-law for showing up on time.

"It's everybody," I call back to Brynn. West, Barrett, and Cole ignore my mood, barreling into the suite with Caitlyn's supply bags. Caitlyn follows with two other young women who look around the two-story suite in awe.

I don't blame them. It's an impressive room, and I grew up staying in fancy hotels. The Jade Petal Hotel & Casino spared no expense in decor and opulence, especially in these high-roller suites, a gift from Barrett for the wedding.

"I'll be out in a minute, Caitlyn," Brynn calls from the bedroom, and Caitlyn directs the guys to drop all the bags by the window.

"The light is perfect here." Caitlyn claps excitedly and then quietly instructs the other two women to set up at the dining table.

Caitlyn's the Director of Spa Operations at the hotel.

When we decided to get married in Vegas, Brynn insisted we contact Caitlyn who did hair and makeup for Cole and Miranda's wedding last year.

She's been living in Vegas for the past year and has made planning the wedding a breeze, so I'm a big fan of this woman.

"Alright, West. We're starting with you. Monica is going to style your hair."

"The best first, Caitlyn, of course. Hello, Monica.

Now, this is important. You must do everything in your power to make me look worse than Ethan, which is a monumental task, but I will not upstage the groom on his wedding day.

" West deadpans, and Monica dissolves into giggles.

"Additionally, I am a happily married man, Monica.

" West taps the solid black wedding band on his ring finger and smiles at me smugly.

"So, I need everything about me to scream, stand back, home-wrecker. I'm taken ."

Monica, Caitlyn, and Cole all laugh, but I pinch the bridge of my nose, wishing I could have kept him away this weekend.

The fact he managed to get his wife down the aisle before me really sticks in my craw, and he knows it.

He wasn't even supposed to be here. I invited Barrett to serve as our witness, and Brynn invited her brother.

Two witnesses and the officiant, and then we jet off on our honeymoon without a big production.

When West found out he wasn't invited, he threw a temper tantrum to rival anything I've ever seen outside of a preschool, and Brynn gave in to his theatrics.

"Please don't encourage my brother," Barrett begs, but West winks at Monica and she giggles again, turning bright red.

"Cole, you're going with Trish, over there.

Barrett, relax and answer some emails." Barrett nods, immediately grabbing his phone and taking a seat at the couch.

He's been grumbling about somebody named Parker since yesterday, which makes West grin like fool, so I'm guessing there's more to that story than I realize.

"Ethan, our lead barber, Jackson, is headed up to give you an in-room shave before we style your hair." As if on cue, the doorbell rings, and Caitlyn breezes to the front door.

"Okay, gentlemen," Caitlyn says. "While Jackson sets up, can I get any of you a drink?" She heads to the fully stocked wet bar and looks at us expectantly.

"Did all the liquor come with the room?" Monica blurts out and then quickly covers her mouth with her hand. "Sorry!" she squeaks, glancing at me quickly, and even Caitlyn shakes her head with amusement.

"You'd have to ask Barrett." I grin. "He's the high-roller."

"Actually, you'd have to ask Alistair," Barrett admits. West quirks an eyebrow when Trish and Monica exchange a look. The two ladies both dart glances at Caitlyn, who turns to hand me my drink. Her jaw is clenched, but she manages a smile when she sees me looking at her.

"Gorgeous Caitlyn. Do you happen to know Barrett's best friend, Alistair Evans?" West asks, looking at Trish quickly when she coughs to cover the little snort she lets out at his question.

"I'm his best friend," I grumble, but West shushes me, batting his eyelashes at Caitlyn expectantly.

Caitlyn pauses too long before responding. "Yes, of course. He stays here often as one of our high-rollers."

"He'll only get his hair cut by Caitlyn," Monica whispers to us. "Calls her his lucky charm."

West gasps, his eyes lighting up with mischief. "Tell me more, Monica."

"Monica." Caitlyn's voice is firm. "We do not gossip about our guests." Monica ducks her head, chagrined, and gets back to work.

"Mr. Evans is...particular about his hair," Caitlyn says, and Barrett snorts knowingly.

"Alistair is particular about everything," Barrett concedes. "But he's brilliant and incredibly generous with people he cares about."

Caitlyn flushes. Brynn comes out in a long white robe, and whatever is going on between Caitlyn and Alistair is no longer any of my concern.

I jump up, stalking toward Brynn, and she holds up a hand to ward me off.

Please . That only makes it a challenge for me. I pause like I'm going to listen to her, and then charge at her while she shrieks. When I catch her, I lower my shoulder into her stomach, lifting Brynn over my shoulder to carry her back to our bedroom.

"She'll be out in twenty, Caitlyn," I call out, grinning as my soon-to-be-wife gives up and waves an apologetic hand to her friend.

"I've got to get set up anyway," Caitlyn calls back.

I lock the door to both the bedroom and bathroom, turning on the shower before lowering Brynn to the tile. She shakes her head, hands on her hips, but her robe is

askew, her glorious tits on full display, and I have zero regrets.

"You're lucky I need to steam my dress anyway. You have ten minutes," she warns.

I turn, staring at the sparkly long wedding dress hanging on the hook in the bathroom, and suddenly, all I want to do is make this woman my wife.

"I've been trying to get you down the aisle for over a year. We're not missing the ceremony," I promise, pulling her robe off her shoulders. Her eyes heat, and she bites her lip. I lift her onto the counter, then open her legs wide, before kissing her like I've come home from war.

"Ethan," Brynn breathes in my ear, biting at my lobe as I free my cock and notch myself at her entrance.

"Brynn," I growl back with the promise of forever, and we moan together as I enter her with one hard thrust.

My muse.

My Aphrodite.

My wife.