







# My Best Friend's Billionaire Brother (Billionaire Brothers #4)

**Author:** *Penelope Ryan*

**Category:** Romance

**Description:** He's off-limits. Untouchable. And one weekend away from breaking every rule.

Josie Donovan has spent years trying to forget the one man she was never allowed to want—her best friend's older brother. William Summers is rich, brooding, infuriatingly hot... and way out of reach. But when they're forced to share a luxury villa for a weekend wedding in Cabo, all her buried fantasies come rushing back.

He's grumpier than ever.

She's sunnier than he remembers.

And the tension between them? About to boil over.

Will Summers doesn't do relationships. As heir to one of Boston's most powerful families, he's always kept things simple: short-term, no strings, no mess. But Josie isn't just any woman—she's the one who got away. The one he never should've wanted. Now grown up, gorgeous, and very much spoken for, she's still off-limits... but suddenly impossible to ignore.

He can't stand the thought of her with another man.

He'll protect her. Claim her. Ruin her for anyone else.

There's only one problem: falling for her might destroy everything.

A sizzling romance, and the fourth standalone installment of The Billionaire Brothers Series, this book is as hot as they come.

Tropes: billionaire romance, best friend's brother, grumpy sunshine, forced proximity, touch her and you die, protective alpha male

**Total Pages (Source):** 19

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

The subway wooshes to a stop with a loud squeal, and the doors slide open. I tug my coat tighter around my torso as I patiently wait for riders to get off before hopping through the doors and finding a vacant seat. With another squeal, the train takes off.

I glance down at the time on my phone. If there aren't any delays, I should make it just in time.

I tuck my feet under the seat, feeling the cold metal of the railing against my bare ankles.

I glance down at my heels, hoping they'll hold up to the inevitable five-minute frigid, rainy, January walk from the station to the Boston Public Library .

Where my best friend is currently having what I can only imagine is the most lavish engagement party of the century.

I shake my head with a small grin just thinking about it.

When Chloe had told me she was engaged just a few months ago, I knew I was in for a wild ride.

And not even in a bad way. Daughter to one of the most prominent families in Boston, with old money going back generations, I knew that simply being in the vicinity of her wedding was going to be an experience unlike any other. And it's already starting.

With her parents renting out the entire Boston Public Library for her engagement party.

I only hope my deeply discounted Abercrombie and Fitch dress is fitting enough for the occasion.

The ride into Boston and down to the library takes a little over thirty minutes.

I don't have the funds to live in actual Boston, so my place is a bit on the outskirts. Thank god for easy public transit .

When the subway pulls up to my stop, I hop up and dash out the door like the rest of the riders.

Bracing myself for the cold and pulling my hood over my meticulously curled hair, I head out into the rainy streets.

The walk is barely five minutes—just crossing a street and finding the entrance—but it feels like an eternity with the wind and rain.

I jog up the front steps of the Boston Public Library, feeling the warm woosh of air as I step inside.

Immediately I'm greeted by a kind man in a tux offering to take my coat, which I gladly hand over.

He directs me toward a hall off to the right, and I follow the sound of soft music and laughter until I come across the party.

Stepping in the large and lavish room, I'm immediately confronted with what seems to be hundreds of people. Hundreds. For an engagement party.

I smooth the front of my deep green satin shift dress, knowing full well that it barely stacks up to the elegance of the dresses around me .

The room itself is beautiful, with ornate paintings adorning the walls and gorgeous chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. Waiters saunter about with drinks and hors d'oeuvres on trays, and soft ambient music plays in the background.

Over the sea of people, I finally manage to catch someone's eyes. Chloe, dressed in an adorable, tulle, white gown suitable for a bride, lights up when she sees me, immediately gliding across the room through the throngs of people.

She throws her arms around me with a squeal, and I laugh. "Chloe, this is incredible," I say, gesturing around.

"Isn't it gorgeous?" she says, pulling back from the hug and shooting me a smile. Her blonde hair sits in soft waves around her shoulders.

A man comes up behind her, sliding an arm gently around her waist. Chloe looks up at him, her smile only growing.

"Hey, Turner," I greet .

"Josie," he says with a smile. "So glad you could make it to our party."

"She's the maid of honor," Chloe says with an eyeroll. "If she couldn't make it, I would have rescheduled." She laughs.

Chloe and Turner have been dating for about two years now, and they're about as perfect as two people could be for each other.

Both athletic, outdoorsy types, they spend their free time running 10ks, playing

tennis, and going on extravagant, wilderness-related travels.

From the moment Chloe introduced me to him, I knew he was the one.

A waiter walks by, and Chloe waves him over, offering me champagne. I take a glass and thank him, and he wanders off. I take a sip. Not surprisingly, this might just be the best champagne I've ever had.

Chloe and I have known each other since elementary school.

We were fast friends, and despite our drastically different lives, we've remained thick as thieves ever since.

Chloe came from stability, money, extravagance, and I came from a broken household with a single mother and less stability than a bird balancing on a twig.

Nonetheless, my friendship with Chloe has weathered each and every storm.

And I can't wait to celebrate her and Turner's love.

"Did you get those links to bridesmaid dresses I sent you this morning?" Chloe asks.

I nod. "Yes, they're gorgeous. Do you have a favorite?"

She waves off my question. "Choose the one you like best. That's what I'm having all the girls do. Same color, different styles. I want to make sure you feel pretty too."

I cock my head, grinning. In all honesty, I don't care if I look like a complete and utter blob on Chloe's wedding day, as long as she's happy. But, true to her personality, Chloe is still thinking about others—even on the day that's supposed to be all about her.

Turner's attention is called away by a new arrival, leaving Chloe and I alone. She clasps her hands together and practically squeals again. "It's all coming together so well," she says with a shake of her head. "I'm so excited."

Her joy infectious, I grin back.

"I had my first dress fitting yesterday, and," she rolls her eyes as if having a spiritual encounter, "god, is it going to look incredible on a beach."

Chloe and Turner are having a destination wedding in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, only four short months from now.

May is supposedly one of the best times to get married there.

Chloe has always dreamt of a beach vacation.

Besides, it's a short jump from there to Turner and Chloe's honeymoon in Costa Rica where they'll be hiking in the wilderness, ziplining, and sliding down waterfalls.

"It's all going to be so beautiful," I assure her with a nod.

"Chloe!" a voice calls, and she pivots.

"You made it!" she exclaims as a tall, slender man approaches.

He's dressed in a dark blue suit, and his brown, wavy hair is just long enough to be sexy, but short enough to be professional.

I scan him up and down, about to make a mental note to grill Chloe about this man later when suddenly ... recognition slowly creeps over me.



Shit. No. It can't be.

He leans down to give Chloe a hug, the height difference between them oddly hilarious. He straightens and turns his gaze on me. I feel a shiver run through me, although from what emotion, I'm unsure. He looks so different. So ... unlike the boy I used to know.

William Summers. Chloe's brother, and the only man to have ever broken my heart.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Will

Even after all these years away, Boston still feels like home.

Driving through the busy streets on my way to my sister's engagement party, that was the reigning thought in my head.

After five years away, living on the west coast as a financial advisor for a large company, I finally moved back just a month ago to take over as the CFO for my parents' multi-million-dollar wealth management business.

It was something I'd always considered, but after their CFO retired earlier this year, and since I was feeling a bit lonely out in California, here I am.

Back in Boston, running my parents' company, and living in the city I grew up in.

Walking into the Boston Public Library, I'm immediately greeted by old family and friends. The festivities surrounding Chloe's wedding have been a great excuse for extended family to get together, catch up, and celebrate. Almost more like a family reunion.

I scan the crowd, searching for Turner. My best friend from college, I'd introduced him and Chloe two years ago when I'd been back in town for Christmas.

Apparently they'd immediately hit it off but had been too scared to tell me they were dating until six months in.

Turner knew how protective I can be over my sister, and honestly, if it weren't for the maturing I'd seen with my own two eyes on his part, that protective streak probably would have reared its ugly head.

But their relationship had grown on me, and now here we all are.

My best friend and my sister getting married.

One of the first friendly faces I recognize is Asher King, one of my fraternity brothers from college. He, Turner, and I were practically inseparable back in the day. He's since started an incredibly successful company with his brothers, gotten married, and has a child on the way.

"Will!" He exclaims, crossing the room, a gorgeous blonde who I recognize as his wife, Olivia, beside him.

We hug, and I turn to hug Olivia as well. She's definitely far enough along now that her pregnancy is visible. And she's positively glowing.

"Congratulations, you guys," I say with a wide smile. "Really, it's so exciting."

Olivia beams, her hand moving to her stomach instinctively.

"We're excited," Asher says to me, although his eyes are locked on Olivia's, his smile infectious.

A clap on the back has me spinning around to see a grinning Turner, who pulls me in for a hug.

"Hey, man," I say.

He turns to greet Asher and Olivia, and then the four of us are huddled together chatting. I gesture around the room. “Nice party.”

Turner shrugs. “Only the best for your sister.”

I roll my eyes. “Don’t I know it?”

He chuckles. “Go say hi to her—she’s over there with her maid of honor.” He nods to his left, and I follow his gaze to see Chloe in a fluffy, white party dress.

“I probably should go see my sister, shouldn’t I?” I say, saying a quick goodbye to Asher and his wife, promising to catch up with them later.

“Chloe!” I call, heading in her direction.

She turns when she hears her name, and as she does, she steps aside just far enough for me to see who she was talking to. And it nearly stops me in my tracks.

My breath catches in my throat, and it takes everything in me not to halt my stride and simply stare at her.

Josie Donovan. My sister’s best friend from childhood.

Damn, I haven’t seen her in a long time.

And holy shit does it show. Last time I saw her, Josie was a short, frizzy-haired, little nuisance.

And now ... well, she’s still short, but that dress is hugging her curves in all the right places, and her eyes are this piercing dark green—have they always been that green ?

Chloe leans in to hug me, and I'm forced back into the moment, leaning down to hug her back. I straighten and immediately turn my gaze back to Josie.

"Will," she says with a friendly smile. "God, it's been a long time."

"That's right!" Chloe says. "You guys haven't seen each other in forever. How long has it been?"

"Five years," I say just as Josie mutters, "About five years."

I shoot her a look, but her expression is somewhat unreadable.

"It's good to see you," I say after a moment of silence.

She nods. "It is."

"Well, you two should probably catch up," Chloe insists. "Maid of honor and the best man? You two are going to have to keep this whole party in line," she says with a laugh.

Josie raises an eyebrow at me. "Best man?" she repeats.

"Yeah, Turner and I were roommates in college," I say.

"Oh wow," she says. "I knew you'd introduced them, but I didn't know you were so close."

"Oooh," Chloe interrupts, spying a group of women who, based on appearance and vibe, I'm assuming are some of her sorority sisters.

"I should go say hi," she says laying a hand on Josie's arm.

“I’ll come find you later.” And with that, she’s off, leaving us to bask in the awkward silence settling around us.

After a few heartbeats, I clear my throat.

“So. How have you been?” I cringe internally at the blandness of the question.

I could easily find a reason to slip away, go chat with the various relatives or friends I see scattered about, but I’m finding myself oddly wanting to catch up with Josie.

Not that we were ever particularly close .

She was always just my little sister’s friend.

Her somewhat annoying friend, at that. The friend who always seemed to be getting into trouble and needing someone to save them.

Whether it was getting stuck at the top of the enormous tree in my parents’ backyard as little kids, or needing a ride home from a high school party when drunk, Chloe and Josie were always the little girls I simply needed to protect.

Although the Josie in front of me seems far from the little girl I used to know.

“Good,” she answers with a shrug and a small smile.

“Just hanging around Boston. Not jet setting from coast to coast,” she jokes, obviously referring to my last few years on the other side of the country.

Chloe must have kept her updated. I wonder why Chloe never updated me about Josie . I guess I never asked ...

I chuckle. “It’s not as exciting as it sounds.”

“But you’re back now, I hear? ”

I can’t tell if she sounds happy about that. Or do I just want her to sound happy about that? God, that dress she’s wearing has got my mind wandering. “Yeah,” I answer. “I took over as CFO for my parents’ company.”

Josie nods. “I thought Chloe had mentioned something like that. That’s amazing. Congratulations.”

“Thanks. What about you? What do you do?”

“Graphic design,” she says, straightening ever so slightly, her face brightening. “I work for a design company. Remote.”

“That’s awesome,” I say, vaguely remembering her proclivity toward creativity back in the day.

A pause settles over us, and I see Josie glancing around the room.

I’m unsure what to say, but for some reason, I desperately want her to stay.

To take up more of her time. I don’t know what’s come over me.

And before I can stop myself, I hear myself blurting, “You know, we should probably exchange numbers. ”

A twinge of embarrassment sneaks through me at the raise of her eyebrow, but I cover it quickly. “To coordinate wedding stuff,” I clarify. “You keep the bride in line, and I’ll tackle the groom. Together, we’ll be unstoppable.”

At this, she laughs, throwing her head back slightly, her eyes sparkling. Fuck. When did Josie get so pretty? Was she always this pretty? Surely I would have noticed before.

“That’s probably a good idea,” she says, fishing around in her purse and pulling out her phone. It has a bright purple case on it with flowers. She hands it over, and I plug in my number. She takes it back and fiddles around for a moment. “Just sent you a text,” she says.

I can’t help the satisfying grin that comes to my face. “Great,” I say.

“Josie!” Chloe’s voice travels across the room, and we both whip our heads in her direction. She’s beckoning Josie over the crowd, surrounded by a gaggle of women .

Josie turns back to me with a smile. “It was nice to catch up with you, Will,” she says.

Will . The way she says my name is sending tingles through my brain. What the actual fuck? “Yeah, same,” I say as she turns and walks off. I try not to obviously check her out as she does, although I’m sure I fail miserably.

I take a deep breath, running a hand through my hair and turning. I need a drink.

In all honesty, I’d assumed Chloe and Turner’s wedding and the festivities surrounding it were going to be a bit of a slog. But now ...

Well, it might just be a tad more bearable.



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

I close my laptop with a sigh, leaning back in my chair. A soft purr sounds from below me, and I look down to see my cat, Roberta, rubbing against my legs. She knows it's the end of the workday just as much as I do. Or rather, she knows it's dinner time.

I get up, walking across my small apartment to the cabinet above the sink to retrieve a can of wet food, opening it up and placing it on the floor for her. She immediately starts scarfing it down.

I open my fridge to peruse my dinner options. Based on what's available, it looks like I'll be rounding up a few vegetables and making a stir fry. I suppose a normal twenty-five-year-old might have more to do on a Friday night in one of the most exciting cities in the country.

But I've never been the most social butterfly. That was always Chloe's job. And she's settled down quite a bit since dating Turner, so I don't often get pulled into a late night of bar hopping anymore. More likely, it's brunch on Saturdays.

And my boyfriend is out of town on a business trip. Owen always seems to be traveling for work. He works remotely, but his company is based in New York, so he hops over there quite often. Leaving me all alone on a Friday night.

So for today, it's just me and Roberta. And the newest episode of 90-Day Fiancé .

As I'm investigating some old carrots in the back of the fridge, I feel a buzz in my

back pocket. I straighten, pulling my phone out and raising my eyebrows.

On my home screen is a text from quite possibly the last person I'd ever expect .

Will.

I stare at it, dumbfounded for a few seconds.

Seeing him for the first time in years at Chloe's engagement party last weekend was surprising enough.

Obviously, I'd known I was bound to run into him at some point over the next six months.

I guess I just hadn't mentally prepared myself enough.

To see him standing before me in the flesh, just as hot as ever.

And seemingly just as aloof as ever too.

Although he had asked for my number. I'd just about had a heart attack at that—only to learn that his reasons for it were completely practical. Of course it would make sense that we had each other's numbers.

And I guess he's putting those numbers to good use.

I open the text, holding my breath. I scan the first sentence, and my eyes go wide as saucers.

Will: What are you doing tonight ?

But just like when he'd asked for my number at the party, my initial shock subsides when I read the rest of it.

I thought we could get together and plan Chloe and Turner's Bachelor/ette parties.

I sigh. He's right. Again. I remember Chloe telling me about her bachelorette ideas a few weeks back. She and Turner both want parties in Vegas, over the same weekend, the first night a big party together with both sides of the wedding party, and the second night split.

It does make sense that Will and I get together to iron out the details.

I rub my temples. God, I wish I'd have had a heads up that Will was the best man. Part of me is shocked that Chloe never told me .

Although I suppose she doesn't know the full picture. Doesn't understand why that would be information I'd like to have. While she knows practically everything about me, this is the one thing she isn't privy to. The one thing I've never confided in her about.

Every other relationship, every other crush, I've spilled my guts, down to the last gory detail. But Will ... well, of course not.

Besides, in a sense, there really isn't anything to tell. Not in actuality.

Nothing ever happened between Will and I. And that right there is the crux of it all.

I spent years pining over William Summers. Casting sidelong glances his way, hoping he'd notice me. My crush first materialized in middle school. He'd been a freshman in high school at the time, and the most crush-worthy guy around. My best friend's older brother .

I spent all of high school trying to get his attention, and then when we went off to college, I still tried. We went to different schools, but I'd still see him around and on holidays when I'd spent time with Chloe and their family.

And then there was the night I threw in the towel.

Will and his roommates were throwing a party at their house.

They were seniors, and Chloe and I were sophomores.

We'd attended, and Chloe spent the night flirting with a guy she had a crush on at the time.

I'd seen it as the perfect opportunity to talk to Will.

To maybe get my feelings out in the open and see if he felt the same.

I'd had maybe a bit too much liquid courage, but I knew it was now or never.

I spent the evening hanging around Will, summoning the courage and hoping against hope that he'd feel the same way.

But I'd never spilled my guts. And honestly, it's good that I didn't.

Because later, he introduced Chloe and I to his new girlfriend.

They'd just met a few weeks ago. I nodded and smiled like I was the happiest in the world for them.

And I'd gone home and cried myself to sleep. And no one ever knew. Not even Chloe. Especially not Chloe.

I'd assumed all those feelings were long gone. That the naïve girl with a crush was long behind me, and here I was, a strong, independent woman. But seeing Will last weekend had all but shattered those stupid walls I'd so meticulously built up around me.

And now here I am, staring down at my phone as if someone had just texted me a fucking bomb threat.

It's not like any of this really even matters. I have Owen. Sure, it's pretty new—just about four months or so—and it's yet to be seen whether he turns out to be my forever guy, but still. And it's not like Will does—or has ever—like me. He made that abundantly clear over the years .

“God,” I mutter to myself, slamming the fridge shut. I definitely won't be eating tonight. There's no way.

I craft a text and shoot it back.

Josie: Nothing. We can definitely get together. It's probably a good idea to start planning now.

I sigh. Whether I like it or not, I'm going to have to face my unrequited crush from childhood. Not exactly on my bingo card for the year, but here we go.

Will suggests a trendy restaurant in the North End where we can grab dinner and drinks and discuss the upcoming Vegas trip.

I hadn't planned on going out today, meaning my hair is an unwashed mess.

Regardless, I throw it up into what I'm hoping is at least an acceptable messy bun, throw on some makeup, and head out the door.

By the time I get to the restaurant, he already has a table. I fight the surge of butterflies that appear in my stomach upon seeing him. It's just anxiety over the feelings that used to be there, I assure myself. Nothing more.

I tuck a few flyaway strands of hair behind my ear and make my way to the table.

Will looks up as I approach and offers a small smile that doesn't reach his eyes. It's not even a smile, really. More like a grimace of acknowledgement.

"Hey," I say in greeting, sliding into the seat across from him.

"Glad you could make it," he says.

I purse my lips. God, this is feeling like a business meeting. Which, I guess it kind of is? Well, not business, per se. But we're here to plan parties for Chloe and Turner, not catch up as old friends. Were we ever even friends?

"Do you want a drink?" Will's question pulls me from my racing thoughts.

"Yeah," I answer. Fuck yes, I'll need a drink if I plan on making it through tonight. Hell, I'll need dozens of drinks over the coming months. I scan the menu and order one of their signature cocktails when a server comes by. We also order a few appetizers to share.

Once the server takes our menus and leaves, Will leans forward, his forearms on the table.

I can't help but notice the way he's rolled his sleeves up—just below his elbow.

Have his forearms always been that sexy?

Of course they have—all of him has always been sexy.

That's why you liked him in the first place, I remind myself.

I resist the urge to physically shake my head. God. What is wrong with me?

“So, Vegas,” Will says.

I chuckle. “Vegas,” I repeat, taking my drink after our server drops it off. “That's gonna be ... fun.”

He snorts. He doesn't smile, but his eyes do light up just a bit.

I raise an eyebrow. “You dreading that weekend just as much as I am?”

He shoots me a look. It's the most direct eye contact we've made since I sat down, and his gaze pierces me to my soul. I swallow and look away.

“Yeah, it's going to be one hell of a bachelorette party,” I say.

“And bachelor,” Will adds.

I laugh. “Hopefully the wedding will be chill.”

Will widens his eyes, and I immediately know that my wish is in vain. “Yeah, chill isn't a word I'd use to describe Chloe or anything relating to her.”

I laugh harder. While I love the girl, he's absolutely right. And as the maid of honor at this event, I know I'll probably be having the least chill time of all. “Do you at least have a plus one you're bringing to help get you through it?” I ask him.

He shakes his head. “No. You?”

“Yeah, actually. I uh ... my boyfriend,” I answer.

“Boyfriend.” He says it like a statement, but he raises his brows in question.

I bristle slightly. “Yeah, I have a boyfriend.” Is that surprising? Irritation claws through me.

He nods slowly, expressionless. “Does this boyfriend mind that you’re out on a Friday night without him?”

I narrow my eyes slightly. “He’s not my dad,” I say with a snort. “And he’s out of town anyway.”

“Where?”

“New York. A work trip. He also has family there.”

“Are they nice?”

“I don’t know, haven’t met them. ”

His expression shifts ever so slightly. “You haven’t met them?” he echoes.

“We’ve only been dating for four months,” I protest, feeling the irritation grow. What is this, an inquisition? Since when did William Summers care about my dating life? Since when did William summers care about me at all? Period?

“New York is an hour flight away.”



I widen my eyes at him. Is he seriously pushing me on this?

“It would also be a nice, romantic getaway weekend. Why aren’t you tagging along on this work trip?” Will goes on.

I’m honestly shocked at the audacity. And it’s all coming back to me.

Now I remember why my crush on Will was fraught with such indecision.

He’s a grumpy asshole, that’s why. I take a deep breath, reminding myself that getting upset is really not worth it.

“The details of my relationship with Owen are none of your business,” I say coolly .

“Owen,” he repeats slowly, slight surprise evident in his face.

Just when I think he’s going to start making fun of my boyfriend’s name, he shuts his mouth, pursing his lips.

“I suppose you’re right.” He stares at me for a long moment.

“But you could do better than a guy who doesn’t invite you to New York to have a romantic weekend and meet his family. ”

I open my mouth to protest, but Will beats me to it.

“So back to Vegas,” he says, pulling out his phone. “Chloe tells me the second weekend in March is what she and Turner both want.”

“I, uh ...” I stutter, caught off guard by the sudden change in topic. Did he really just insult my relationship and then move on to planning the bachelor weekend like

nothing happened? He can't be serious.

But by the look on his face, waiting for me to respond to his statement, he's dead serious .

I blow a frustrated sigh out through my nose and take a breath. "Yeah, that's what she told me too," I reply curtly.

"I was thinking Ceasar's Palace would be a good place to stay," Will goes on.

"Well, I was thinking the Flamingo," I snap back. In all honesty, I don't have much of a preference, but I'm mad, and I don't feel like agreeing with anything Will has to say right now.

Will raises a singular eyebrow. I'm beginning to hate how he does that. "Okay," he says simply. He starts rattling off ideas for the weekend, and I'm only partially listening, sipping my drink and staring him down from across the table.

Just get through the next few months, Josie , I tell myself. You can do it.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

“Come on, I’d obviously get a separate room from you guys,” Owen says, squeezing my hand as we walk down the grocery store aisle.

It’s our weekly date night, and we’d decided on making spaghetti at my place.

I’d initially wanted to go out, but after his New York trip last weekend, Owen insisted on staying in and saving the money.

I can’t blame him. I should also probably be saving up for the bachelorette weekend in just a few weeks.

The bachelorette weekend that just so happens to be the current topic of conversation .

I laugh, rolling my eyes. “Yeah, that wouldn’t be weird at all—pulling my boyfriend along on my best friend’s bachelorette.”

I shoot him a playful look only to see that he’s not laughing. It takes a few seconds to dawn on me that maybe Owen hadn’t been joking just now.

“Wait,” I say, trying to reign in my laughter. “You’re not serious?”

He scrunches up his face, reaching down to grab a box of spaghetti noodles from the shelf. He brushes a strand of blond hair from his eyes, his baggy t-shirt scrunching around his waist as he straightens. “Why not? It’s Vegas , Josie. I’ve always wanted

to go.”

I open my mouth, close it, then open it again. “Yeah, well you can’t tag along on a bachelorette party,” I insist. This is common knowledge, isn’t it?

“But it’s the bachelor party too!” Owen says, his eyes lighting up again. “It’s not like there won’t be any guys. ”

I narrow my eyes at him in incredulity. “Bachelor and bachelorette parties aren’t exactly plus-one events,” I protest.

“Sure, I get it’s unorthodox,” Owen concedes as we make our way to the checkout counter. “But it’s in such a cool place. God, I’d love to go to Vegas. And since you’re already going, it’s kind of like a perfect time.”

“Except that it’s not. Because it’s my best friend’s bachelorette party,” I insist, still shocked that he brought this up.

Owen is silent for a moment, pursing his lips. I can tell he’s irritated but is trying to hold it in. Finally, he shakes his head. “I just feel kind of left out that you get to go have this cool weekend in Vegas, and I’m left alone here,” he admits.

Just then, the checker turns to us. Owen doesn’t step forward, so I do, pulling out my card and paying for the dinner ingredients.

Owen, the checker, and I stand in silence while we wait for my payment to go through and the checker bags our groceries.

I offer her a quiet thank you as I grab the bag and Owen and I head for the exit.

“I mean, I feel kind of left out when you take trips to New York without me,” I say

quietly as we step out into the chilly evening air.

My conversation with Will last week comes to mind, and I hate to admit that he's right, but maybe he had a point.

When I think about it more, it really starts to nag at me.

Owen is rolling his eyes. "That's different. New York is right down the road."

"That almost makes it worse," I protest. "Like, why haven't I come yet when it's such an easy trip?"

"Those are work trips, Josie. They're boring. This is nothing like that, and you know it. Don't try to twist this."

I glance at him in surprise. That last comment was harsh, wasn't it? I turn back ahead as we make our way down the road toward my apartment.

"I'm sorry, Owen. Chloe wouldn't like it.

And neither would Turner. I'd love to have you there, but it's not my call.

"I add the last sentence to help soften the blow.

But in all honesty, no, I wouldn't love to have him there.

Not that I'm planning on doing anything too wild and crazy—I am the mom of the group after all—but I'm looking forward to a girls' weekend where I don't have to worry about Owen.

Why does he care so much about this anyway?

After a moment of silence, Owen moves closer to me, throwing his arm around my shoulder and tugging me into his side as we walk. He plants a kiss to the top of my head. “I understand. It’s Chloe’s call.”

I smile, feeling the tension dissipate just a bit. “Besides, you get to come to Cabo,” I remind him.

“True,” he says as we take a turn off the road and walk across the parking lot of my apartment complex. After all, what could be more romantic than a wedding weekend in Cabo? Surely better than a simple trip to New York. Or even Vegas.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Will

As the car pulls up to The Flamingo hotel, I check the group chat that Josie had created for everyone in the wedding party.

Currently, it's full of a bunch of airplane and heart-eye emojis, mostly from the girls.

Everyone seems super stoked about the weekend.

And so am I. Definitely. I'm not at all nervous or on edge. Nope.

I'm just a bit restless. For no particular reason.

It has nothing to do with the fact that every time I've met with Josie over the last few weeks to plan this weekend, I've been unable to keep my eyes off of her.

Unable to think about her adorable dimples, the way her eyes crinkle when she smiles, the way her cleavage peaks out just a bit when she bends over.

Unable to think about all the downright horrible things I want to do to her.

The expression on her face when I do those unspeakable things, the sounds she'd make ...

The Uber driver comes to a stop, and I thank him as I hop out of the car, my bag in tow.

Jesus. Get it together, Will. I've never had a woman take up this much real estate in my brain.

What is it about her? Is it something about the fact that I've known her for years?

That my attraction to her years later is coming as such a surprise?

Josie has always just been my kid sister's best friend.

Practically another little sister I had to protect.

Where is all this attraction coming from?

Or maybe it's because she's off limits. Not only is she Chloe's best friend, but she has a boyfriend. She's a hundred percent a no-go. I can't have her, and maybe that's why I want her so badly.

That has to be it .

As I enter the large, pink lobby, I pull up my reservation information and head to the front desk.

We've reserved two large suites with multiple rooms and bathrooms—one for the girls and one for the guys.

I grab all the keycards and text the group chat the room number, letting the guys know I'll be hanging out there until everyone arrives.

Ten minutes later, I'm up in the room, my stuff unpacked, bed claimed, scrolling through my phone. A message pops up in the group chat, and I check it. It's from Josie. Apparently, she's the first of the girls to arrive and is doing the same thing I'm



doing—waiting in the room for everyone else.

I glance at the door, knowing the girls' suite is across the hallway from ours. I clear my throat, turning back to my phone.

But something gnaws at the back of my brain.

Is it weird to not go say hi? We both know we're here.

Or is that enough? Would it be weird to go say hi?

Fuck, when did I overthink and obsess about walking across a fucking hallway and saying hello to a girl?

I almost smack myself in the head, hoping to get the thoughts out.

But before I can send myself into another spiral, a soft knock sounds at the door.

I spring up, tossing my phone aside. I sit frozen for a moment before standing and striding across the room. I don't even look through the peephole—I open the door.

And standing before me is Josie. In a green sundress.

Fuck me.

"Josie," I manage.

"Hey, Will," she says quietly with a somewhat hesitant smile. "Just thought I should come say hi. I'm the first of the girls here."

I nod. "Yeah, same. Wanna come in and hang out until everyone arrives?" I don't

stutter over my words—I've never been one to do that—but my heart is clawing its way up my throat, my nerves on edge .

Josie widens her eyes just a tad but then nods. “Yeah, sure.”

She steps in, and as she passes me, I see that her dress barely covers her ass. Fuck. What I wouldn't do to bend her over right now, press up against her, and—

“You got the tickets for tonight's show, right?” Josie asks.

I swallow. “Yeah. They're on my phone.” We're all going to a comedy show tonight. Some comedian Chloe likes.

She nods and takes a seat on one of the large, recliner chairs, pulling her legs up underneath her. I'm sure if I looked hard enough, I could catch a glimpse of her underwear, but I'm doing everything within my power to not.

I sit back down on the bed, leaning back against the backboard.

Josie's phone vibrates and she pulls it out. Her brows crinkle just a bit.

“Someone in the wedding party?” I ask .

She looks up, startled, and then shakes her head. “Oh. No. It's Owen.”

The boyfriend.

I raise an eyebrow. “You don't seem happy to be getting a text from your boyfriend.”

Her gaze darts to mine. I can't tell if she's angry or wants to confide in me. Or both. She purses her lips. “Relationships have rough patches. It's normal,” she snaps.

Ah. So they're fighting.

I shrug. "True."

"It is ," she insists.

"I agreed with you."

She turns and looks out the window. Soft brown curls frame her face. She's biting the inside of her lip.

"Do you want something to drink?" I offer, standing up.

She frowns, glancing at me .

I level her with a stare. "You look like you need a drink. Besides, Chloe needs you to be your happy-go-lucky self this weekend. So forget about lover boy. Your fight can wait until Monday."

The corner of her mouth tugs upward ever so slightly.

I walk to the kitchenette, opening the liquor cabinet and pulling out one of the small shot bottles. "You a vodka girl?" I call over my shoulder.

"It'll do," she replies.

I dig around until I find some tonic water and mix together a passable drink before bringing it back to Josie. She looks up at me with those big green eyes, slightly wary but slightly grateful. She takes the glass with a soft smile. "Am I drinking alone?" she asks.

I snort, heading back to the kitchenette to fix myself a drink as well.

I hear a soft sputter from behind me. “This is strong, Will,” she says with a laugh .

Will . There it is again. My name from her lips. And now all I can think about is her moaning it, screaming it. I could definitely make her scream.

Shut the fuck up, man. Pull it together.

I turn and head back to the bed with my own drink. “You need a strong drink,” I reply.

She rolls her eyes and sips delicately.

“Here’s to a great weekend,” I say, raising my plastic cup.

She raises hers in return. “To a great weekend,” she replies with a grin. I watch as she brings the cup to her lips and drinks.

Jesus, this is going to be a long weekend.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

“Can you see my underwear through this?” Chloe is turning in circles in front of the mirror, peering over her shoulder to check out her ass. She’s wearing a white sundress that falls just above her knees.

“Perfect,” Chloe says, smoothing the wrinkles and glancing at herself in the mirror again. “You never know with white.”

“Okay, is everyone ready to go?” I call, plopping my mascara wand back into the tube and tightening it. Rounds of tittering and giggles erupt from the various rooms we have in our large suite. Chloe is putting on her shoes—a pair of white espadrilles. Probably Chanel, if I had to guess.

Hannah and Maureen appear from one of the rooms, looking dressed and ready to go.

After a few minutes, Evie emerges as well.

Chloe’s other bridesmaids are all from her sorority in college.

While we went to the same school, I was never really into the sorority crowd.

Nor did I have the money to be a part of one. Those things are expensive as shit.

I glance over all the girls. Their outfits and hair are gorgeously on point. I’d guess their dresses cost more than my car.

I'd picked out a cute TJ Maxx dress and had blow dried my hair this morning .

“Okay, first thing on the agenda,” I declare, as the maid of honor and therefore ringleader of the weekend, “is brunch!”

The girls all cheer, and off we go. The guys meet us out in the hall, and all of us make our way to a fancy brunch place that Will and I had meticulously picked and had made reservations at.

A cute atmosphere for Instagram pics, as per Chloe's demands, as well as gluten free waffles for Turner. Everyone would be happy.

I glance at Will as we make our way downstairs to wait for our Ubers. He's wearing jeans and a dark blue t-shirt. A stupidly simple outfit, but somehow he makes it look ... expensive. Suddenly his eyes dart to mine, and caught staring at him, I look away, feeling a slight blush on my cheeks. Fuck.

I think back to last night. How we'd hung out in the suite until the others arrived. We'd probably only been alone for about half an hour or so, but it had felt like an eternity. The way he'd stared at me over his glass. Was it just my imagination or had he been undressing me with his eyes?

I shake my head. It doesn't matter. Besides, he's notoriously hard to read. He was probably just tired after a long day of travel.

We make it to the restaurant, and there's a bit of scrambling as we all find our seats at the large table.

All the other bridesmaids want to get a sorority group picture with Chloe, so they all end up sitting together and snapping about a million photos for Instagram.

Turner sits next to Chloe, so that means I'm wedged between Will and one of the other groomsmen.

No matter. As long as Chloe's happy, that's what matters.

That's all I care about when it comes to this weekend.

Chloe orders mimosas for the table, and then we each order our brunch plates.

My phone buzzes in my pocket a few times, and I resist the urge to look at it.

I'd stopped texting Owen last night after Will had suggested so.

Because he'd been right. This weekend is about Chloe, and this fight with Owen can wait until Monday .

It's over the stupidest thing too. He'd been over when I was packing for the trip the other night, and he'd seen some of the outfits I'd planned.

Well, one in particular. A hot pink, skintight romper.

Covered in sequins, low cut, short—very Barbie inspired.

All of us bridesmaids are wearing the same thing tonight while Chloe wears an identical version in white.

Granted, it wasn't my idea, but rather one that one of the girls had brought up and then the whole group ran with it.

"It's a little revealing, don't you think?" Owen had asked.

I'd shrugged. "It's what Chloe wants."

And while he'd let it go for the time being, that conversation has yet to end, culminating in his demand that I promise not to wear the outfit. To be honest, it's pissing me off. And stressing me out—I have enough to worry about this weekend.

The phone buzzes for the third time in the last few minutes, and with a sigh, I pull it from my pocket .

Owen: You know what guys are going to be thinking when they see you wearing that. And I'm not even there, Josie. It just seems disrespectful.

I grit my teeth, staring down at the text. I never took Owen for the jealous or controlling type, and this fight is honestly surprising me.

"You still texting Owen?" a deep voice asks from beside me.

I hurriedly put my phone back into my pocket. Will is looking at me with yet another unreadable expression.

"It's fine," I tell him with a smile. "We're working it out."

Will looks unconvinced.

Brunch continues, and Chloe seems to be having a fantastic time, drinking multiple mimosas, getting the "best pancakes she's ever had," apparently, and lots and lots of Instagram pictures. Perfect. Just what I'd hoped .

Will glances at the time on his phone, grabbing everyone's attention with, "We've got a reservation in half an hour—let's head out!"



While I'm usually up for anything, this next item on our agenda I'm not exactly the most excited for. It had been Will's idea. An idea that both Turner and Chloe agreed with, so who was I to argue?

Our destination is only a short walk from where we had brunch, so we all head out onto the street, with Will taking the lead, following Google Maps instructions. In about twenty minutes, we've reached it.

A zipline over the Las Vegas strip.

My blood runs cold just looking at it. I purse my lips as a pair of screaming people fly above us, down the line. I suddenly wonder if maybe I can get out of this. Wait for everyone down here and just take pictures of them.

I briefly propose this idea to Chloe, who cries, "Oh no you don't! You're not getting out of this, Josie." She grabs my shoulders, pushing me toward the building entrance. I roll my eyes and try to steel myself for the horror to come.

We head inside where Will presents our tickets and we're instructed to take the elevator to the top floor.

Everyone chatters excitedly while I dig my nails into my palms and try not to think about hurtling through the air hundreds of feet above ground.

Chloe squeezes my arms encouragingly, and I smile the fakest smile ever in the hopes that she believes it.

At least she's having fun, at least she's having fun, I keep telling myself.

The elevator doors open, and we step out. We're ushered out onto a balcony, and immediately my stomach drops.

Jesus Christ.

Okay, it's not the tallest zipline in the world. We're only a few stories up, and the slope is gradual. By the looks of it, there's a motor that pulls you across. But I'm not a fan of heights, and this is way out of my comfort zone .

"The zipline is two at a time," someone is saying, although I'm partially blocking them out, taking in the view of the strip before me. I can see The Flamingo from here, as well as the dozens of other hotels and attractions lining the street. "Simply sit in the seat and hold on."

There's a bit of bustling as everyone starts talking amongst themselves.

It takes me a moment to realize that everyone is choosing zipline partners.

I glance around for Chloe, only to see that she's already been snagged up by another bridesmaid.

I look around at the other girls but quickly remember that we're an odd numbered group.

Great. I'll have to go with one of the groomsmen.

I twirl around to face the guys. They're still chatting amongst themselves, but it slowly dawns on me that someone else is in the exact same situation that I'm in.

Will.

Perfect. Not only do I have to go hurtling through the air, but I have to do it with William Summers. I approach and shoot him a tight-lipped smile. "I guess it's you and me."

He shrugs. “Guess so.”

Chloe and Hannah are up first. They giggle as they ascend the small staircase up to the two seats hanging from the wire. The entire thing sinks just a bit as they sit down. They swing slightly back and forth, which makes my stomach flip just looking at it.

The zipline operator hooks them in and then counts down before setting it off, and Chloe and Hanna fly off with a shriek. I ball my fists at my sides, making the conscious decision to turn away while the rest of the pairs take off.

I hear them as they zip away, pair by pair.

A touch to my shoulder startles me, and I look up to see Will staring down at me, his eyebrows crinkled together. “Are you okay?” he asks, and I realize his frown might not be from irritation, but from concern.

“Uh, yeah,” I say quickly.

“You’re nervous. ”

I force out a laugh, but it sounds almost more like some kind of dying animal.

“Look, it’s not that high, and it’s a quick ride,” he says. His voice is somehow ... softer than I’ve ever heard it. He’s speaking quietly, his tone low.

I bite my lip, turning to see the last set of groomsmen climb into the seats and strap themselves in. “Yeah ...” I say quietly.

The two groomsmen zip off with a shout of laughter, and I watch as they fly into the distance. A few minutes later, the chairs are slowly pulled back up, and the operator ushers us forward.

I swallow hard. I can feel Will's eyes on me, but he steps forward first, walking up the small set of stairs and then turning back to me. He holds out his hand.

I stare up at him, surprised. Is he actually being ... nice to me? Not that he's ever been terrible, but ... wow.

I take a deep breath and reach for his hand. He grips mine firmly, his skin warm to the touch. I walk unsteadily up the stairs and take a seat. The chair wobbles from my weight, dangling from the wire above me. I suck in a breath and close my eyes.

I feel Will taking his seat beside me, and I open my eyes to see the attendant strapping us both in. He steps back. "Ready?"

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

“Oh shit,” I mutter under my breath, looking out at the city below us. We are so incredibly far away from the ground.

“We’re good,” Will calls. And then, to my surprise, he reaches over and takes my hand again. I look to him, and he meets my eyes. He doesn’t smile—he rarely does—but his gaze is comforting. “You’ve got this,” he says quietly. “We’ve got this.”

I nod, unable to say anything as my mouth has gone dry—although from the fear of the zipline or from something else, I’m not entirely sure.

I hear the click of the zipline being let go, and suddenly, off we go .

I shriek and squeeze Will’s hand as we lurch forward, over the edge of the building, and suddenly we’re flying through the air over the Las Vegas strip. I close my eyes, breathing deeply.

A strange noise sounds from behind me, and it takes a few seconds for me to register what it is. Laughter. Will is laughing . A small, quiet chuckle.

“Open your eyes, Josie,” he commands, and for some reason I do it.

And while I’m still scared out of my mind, opening my eyes was the right call. I can see all of Las Vegas from up here. The hotels, the lights, the people, the mountains and the desert beyond. It’s ... incredible.

A laugh bubbles up from deep within me. I glance at Will, and his eyes are sparkling,

the corner of his mouth slightly upturned.

We careen across the zipline, over crowds of people below us, and soon we're whooshing our way toward the final platform. The seats slow down with a slight lurch that pulls a startled cry from my lips, and then we're being slowly pulled to a platform on the top of another building.

I can see the rest of the group cheering as we arrive.

"You did it!" Chloe calls, jumping up and down.

Will tugs slightly, and just then I realize I'm still holding his hand—no, squeezing his hand. Embarrassed, I immediately release him. Is it just me, or does he smirk just a tad at that?

Feeling the heat rising in my cheeks, I quickly unbuckle myself and walk unsteadily down the stairs to the platform.

Chloe and the girls rally around me, jumping up and down.

Amidst the chaos and high spirits, we all collectively agree that it's time to hit up a bar, however early in the day it might be. I mean, we're in Vegas, right?

I follow the crowd as we make our way out of the building, Chloe leading the way with Google Maps, and I take the opportunity to decompress from the ride.

A wave of accomplishment washes over me.

While I wouldn't necessarily do it again, I'm glad I summoned the courage and did the zipline. And the view was amazing.

A buzz in my pocket catches my attention, and I pull out my phone without thinking, only to see another text from Owen.

So you're ignoring me now?

I sigh, my feelings of excitement and giddiness suddenly overshadowed.

"Is he still mad?"

The question pulls me from my spiraling thoughts, and I look up to see that Will is walking beside me. We're at the back of the pack. Trying to brush it off, I simply roll my eyes. "It's not a big deal."

"What is it that can't wait until Monday?" he asks, cocking an eyebrow .

I purse my lips. While I wouldn't normally confide relationship problems in Will of all people, it's not like I'm going to bother Chloe this weekend. And I really do feel like venting. I sigh. "He's upset about the outfit I'm supposed to wear tonight," I say honestly.

Now both eyebrows are up. "Seriously?"

"Seriously. I mean, what am I supposed to do about that? The girls all agreed, I can't just not wear it."

Will is silent for a long moment. Long enough that I start to think the conversation is over. Ugh, this is why you don't vent to guys. They don't know how to handle it.

"Does he regularly critique your outfit choices?" Will asks, his voice suddenly taking on a different tone. Is that anger I hear? Why would Will be angry about this?

I shoot him a sidelong glance. “No. This is the first time,” I’m quick to defend. “He’s just got jealousy issues is all, and he’s worried about other guys seeing me and—”

“Jealousy issues?” Will repeats. “So he’s controlling.”

This hits a nerve, and I frown. “No.”

“You look like you’re lying.”

“What?” My voice is loud enough that a few of the guys walking ahead of us glance over their shoulders momentarily. Lowering my tone, I continue, “He’s not controlling. We’re just in a fight.”

“He sounds like an asshole,” Will retorts.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard what I said, I don’t need to repeat it,” he replies flippantly.

I stare at him, dumbfounded. “I can’t believe you,” I mutter.

“Why not?” he retorts. “He’s an asshole, and you deserve better.”

I’m momentarily halted by his last words. You deserve better. Since when does he care about what I deserve? He certainly never paid me any attention when we were kids. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

He meets my gaze and stares at me just a heartbeat too long. “Chloe found a good guy,” he finally settles on. “Try to find someone like Turner. Not this insecure wimp you call a boyfriend.”



I can practically feel my blood boiling.

The insinuation that the man I picked out isn't a good match.

And the fact that I'd tried and wished and pined for years that Will would just give me a second glance.

And he has the audacity to say that ? "Fuck you," I mutter quietly enough that no one else can hear, and then I jog ahead to the front of the group.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

“Shots!” Evie yells, throwing her hands up in the air.

“Shots, shots, shots!” Maureen and Hannah chime in.

Chloe laughs contagiously, jumping up from the couch we’re sitting on in a crowded bar on the strip, her sash with the word Bride emblazoned with rhinestones glittering in the lamplight.

The rest of us are wearing matching Bridesmaid sashes, and because of them, we’ve received more attention and free drinks than I ever thought possible.

I follow the girls up to the bar where Maureen orders us all shots of tequila .

After a few moments, with shot glasses in hand, we raise them to the sky and then down them.

“Whoo!” I cry, shaking my head as the tequila burns its way down my throat. It heightens the buzz I already have, tipping me closer and closer to drunk. Or maybe I already am drunk. Who knows at this point?

It’s late into the night. Late enough that I refuse to check the time on my phone, knowing it won’t do me any good. After seeing a burlesque show and hopping around from bar to bar, the five of us have been partying hard.

Chloe bumps into me, wrapping me into a hug and giggling. I somehow find it the

funniest thing in the world, and I laugh along, cackling even louder when we stumble and almost fall. This gets the other girls laughing, and soon we're all a ridiculous chorus and giggles.

"Ooooh, I wonder what the boys are up to," Chloe shouts over the loud music .

We'd parted ways with the guys after dinner, venturing off into our separate bachelor and bachelorette parties.

"Probably drinking somewhere," Hannah says with a giggle.

"I miss Turner," Chloe says with an exaggerated sad face, slumping against me drunkenly.

"This is your bachelorette!" Evie cries. "No men allowed."

"But I loooooove him," Chloe retorts and then falls into yet another fit of giggles.

She pulls out her phone, and it takes me a second to realize she's texting.

A few moments later, the screen lights up again.

"Ah!" she screams. "They're at a strip club!"

"She breaks out into more laughter. "No fair, I wanna go to a strip club too."

"We can go to a strip club," Evie offers, pulling out her phone to start searching.

"I wanna go to their strip club," Chloe insists.

"Where is it?" Maureen asks .

Chloe spends a few seconds fiddling around on her phone, checking Turner's location and then searching strip clubs in the area. "Oh my gosh, it's right next door," she says, and then bends over, cackling drunkenly.

"We have to at least go say hi then," Evie declares, looking at the rest of us for agreement.

I'm pretty apathetic about the whole strip club experience, but what I really don't want to do is see Will.

We haven't spoken since I told him off after the zipline adventure.

We'd pretty much avoided each other the rest of the day, and then when our groups split up, I was relieved to no longer have to think about his presence.

And now Chloe wants to go join them? And Evie too?

Well, I guess that's not particularly surprising considering she and one of the groomsmen have been making major eyes at each other all weekend. Ugh.

I resign myself to my fate as Maureen goes up to the bar to close out our tab, and then we're back out on the street.

We walk a block through the dazzling lights of Vegas, past other groups of drunk tourists, until we reach the club.

We're stopped at the door where we have to present IDs and pay a small cover charge.

Then we enter the club and start scanning the area.

There's a large stage in the center with poles and dancers in various stages of undress.

Runways jet out from all four corners of the stage, each with a pole and a dancer at the end.

The lights are all pointing at the stage, and bright, making the rest of the room, filled with chairs and couches, somewhat obscured.

It takes a few minutes, but eventually Chloe squeals, "Over there!" She points to the other end of the room.

I take her word for it and follow the group as we weave our way through.

We finally make it to a clump of couches in the corner where Turner, upon seeing us emerging from the crowd, throws his hands up and yells in greeting.

He's obviously just as drunk as Chloe is.

She squeals and throws herself onto his lap. "Have you had a lap dance yet, baby?" she asks, wiggling on top of him. They both erupt into laughter .

The guys greet us, scooching around on the couches to make room. Evie makes a beeline for the one she's been flirting with all day, and I scurry to sit anywhere but next to Will, ending up squashed between Maureen and one of the groomsmen named Jack.

The group starts chatting amongst themselves, and I just lean back against the couch, closing my eyes momentarily. The buzz I'd had earlier is definitely turning into actual drunkenness. That last shot really did it for me.

"I'll go up to the bar and grab us all drinks," Jack offers, standing up.

“I’ll go with you,” Maureen declares.

It takes a few seconds for me to realize that with Jack gone, there’s no one between me and Will.

Damnit. And ... now that I look around, where’s Evie?

I glance around, but the huddle of couches that was just occupied a second ago by everyone in the wedding party just has Will, me, and Turner and Chloe—and they’re on the opposite end, practically ten feet away, making out.

I sigh in frustration, refusing to look in Will’s direction. The music is loud enough that it isn’t exactly awkward to be alone with Will, but it certainly isn’t comfortable either.

The dancer on the stage in front of us catches my eye.

She walks out across the catwalk, to the pole barely five feet from us.

Slowly, she twirls around it, her long hair falling to her butt.

It’s now that I sneak a glimpse at Will beside me.

He’s watching her, but in a cool, calculated sort of way.

I can’t tell if there’s desire in his expression or merely mild interest.

But what do I care?

“You know, you might think my boyfriend is an asshole,” I say, to which he turns and levels me with one of his unreadable expressions.

“But at least I’m getting it regularly.” It’s definitely the alcohol talking.

I would never say something like this sober, and I know it.

But Will is single—at least I’m assuming so based on the fact that he isn’t taking anyone to the wedding, and the way he’s eyeing that girl up there?

Well, let’s just say I’m not above hitting below the belt.

He raises an eyebrow, a slow smirk spreading across his face. “What make you think I’m not regularly getting it ?” He says the last words slowly, as if he likes how they taste on his lips.

I feel myself redden, and I turn away, back to the dancer on the pole.

She’s backed her ass up to it, holding the pole behind her for support as she leans over.

Her breasts, covered only in flamboyant nipple tassels, dangle provocatively below her.

The sight of her only makes me blush harder. Or maybe it’s the alcohol.

Fuck.

“You know, you could be getting laid by an actually decent boyfriend,” Will says, and I realize he’s moved closer. Almost close enough to touch. “And honestly, based on the vibe I’m getting, does he even get you off? ”

I snap my head in his direction, my mouth open in shock.

There's that infuriating smirk again. "Based on that reaction, I'm going to assume the answer is, at best, sometimes."

"No, that's not—" I stammer, but I'm having a hard time concentrating when Will is looking at me like this. Like how he'd looked at the dancer just moments before, only this time it's like ... he wants to devour me. Like a fucking panther. Like I'm some piece of meat.

"Do you ever scream his name, Josie?" Will asks, his voice low, so low I almost wonder if I made it up.

"And not for show, not to please him, not because you think you're supposed to," he towers over me, staring me down, "but because you can't help yourself?

Because you can't think of any other word?"

My breath hitches in my throat, and my face is burning. Fuck, it's hot in here. Is it supposed to be this hot? "Yes," I breathe, forcing the word out of me whether it's true or not. Because any other answer would mean giving Will the satisfaction of winning this stupid, stupid conversation.

His eyes twinkle, and he snorts. "You're a bad liar, sweetheart."

Sweetheart? What the fuck? How patronizing? But what's worse than him using that nickname was the way my lower belly clenched when he said it. Shit, I need to get out of here. This night needs to end. Now.

"Take my advice," Will says, leaning in so I can better hear him over the music. His breath tickles my ear, my neck, sending shivers down my spine. Is this the closest he's ever been to me? "Find a man who's more interested in making you come than in what you're wearing."



I only have a moment to register the shock before Will is leaning back up and suddenly Maureen and Jack are waltzing back over, drinks in hand.

“Here you go,” Maureen says, handing me some pink, fruity-looking thing before plopping down beside me .

“Thank you,” I mutter quietly, still in shock. I look to my side to see that Will and Jack have struck up a conversation, chatting away like he didn’t just say the most inappropriately insane things to me.

I turn back to my drink, taking a big, long sip. The dancer continues to twirl on the pole in front of us, everything on display.

Chloe has disentangled herself from Turner and has now joined Maureen and me. “Best bachelorette weekend ever,” she gushes, leaning over to squeeze my arm.

“Yeah,” I say on autopilot. “Best weekend ever.”

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Will

I rub my eyes, heading for the other one. I definitely drank the least out of everyone tonight. Partly because I felt like someone needed to keep their faculties about them. And partly because I'm just not that much of a drinker. I did drink enough, however, to say that stuff to Josie.

I sigh just thinking about it. It was true. All of it was true. The way she'd looked at me when I guessed at Owen's lack of prowess in the bedroom had nailed it. My guess had been right.

But maybe I'd been a bit too harsh. I take a piss and wash my hands. I can hear the guys settling down in the room. The tiredness is probably hitting them. I hope so. I'm ready for this night to be over. More than ready.

I sigh, staring myself down in the mirror.

I hadn't planned on upsetting Josie today.

Insulting her boyfriend, then asking those provocative questions.

It was just seeing her reactions to his texts, the frustration, the hurt in her eyes.

And then when I'd learned what their stupid fight was about?

What an absolute shithead. I grit my teeth just thinking about it.

And I meant what I'd said. That she deserves better. She deserves someone who's not controlling, not an asshole. Someone who cares about her, someone who puts her first.

What I didn't tell her, and what I'm barely able to admit myself, is that I wish that I could be that person .

Find a man who's more interested in making you come than in what you're wearing. The way her eyes had widened at that comment had practically made my dick hard. Fuck. Thinking about it now is making my dick hard.

I'm definitely more interested in making her come than in what she's wearing.

Although her outfit tonight had been just about the sexiest thing I've ever seen on a woman.

She even paled in comparison to the dancers on stage.

That deep V that had showed just enough cleavage to have me practically drooling.

And the way she'd defiantly stared me down when I'd implied that her boyfriend wasn't satisfying her.

The way she'd lied to my face, knowing that I knew the truth.

Fuck, I'd wanted to take her right there. Fuck that smug look off her face and show her what a real man could make her feel. Have her screaming my name. The only name she'd ever remember.

I hear the guys bustling around in the room, getting ready for bed. Damn, I'm not going to be able to go to bed now .

I lock the door and turn on the shower, shedding my clothes and leaving them in a pile on the tiled floor. I face the showerhead, letting the warm water hit my chest and wash over my body. I take a deep breath and close my eyes.

I imagine getting her alone in a room, her standing before me, her chest rising and falling as I stalk toward her. I imagine hooking my finger under the strap of her top, sliding it down her shoulders, doing the same with the other side until her breasts, perky with pink erect buds, slip free.

I'd take one into my mouth, suckling and biting softly until she moans, the sound filling the room, my ears, my very soul.

Fuck.

I reach down to grasp my already hard cock in my hands, squeezing gently and then pumping slowly.

I imagine pushing Josie toward the bed, her slipping out of her dress, leaving her completely and utterly naked before me. Taking hold of her shoulders, pushing her back against the bed, crawling over top of her. I'd position myself over her and then plunge into her soft, soaking center.

I grit my teeth, imagining the feel of her around me. How she would welcome me into her. The way her eyes would widen at the feel of me inside of her, her mouth opening in a perfect O.

Will.

She'd moan my name softly.

I'd pump faster.

Will!

I'd reach down to play with her clit, rubbing softly, faster and faster.

Will, Will, Will.

My name would tumble from her lips like a prayer, like a chant she wouldn't be able to stop. I'd fuck her harder and harder.

My name is the only one you'll remember. The only name that matters , I'd say to her .

I pump my dick faster, bracing myself against the shower wall, gritting my teeth as my climax nears.

I imagine Josie screaming my name, screaming unintelligible words, her pussy clenching around me, her head thrown back in ecstasy, her breasts bobbing.

And with a deep groan, I explode.

I slump forward, both hands on the shower wall, panting, those dirty images of Josie at my mercy still etched in my mind.

I open my eyes, staring at the water as it rolls down my legs and circles the drain. God. I'm fucked now, aren't I?

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Will

It's well past the end of the workday when I finally shut my laptop and stand up from my desk. My plan to get drinks with Turner is the only thing stopping me from continuing to work well into the evening.

Things with the new job have been going well.

Exceptionally well, honestly. The transition to CFO has been smooth, the job is everything I wanted, and it feels nice to finally let Dad take a step back from his empire and move toward retirement.

I know that's what both he and Mom want.

I'm hoping that my being here will give them the confidence to eventually fully step down.

Travel the world, get a dog, just relax .

I check the time on my phone. I'm supposed to meet Turner in twenty minutes in an upscale bar in Back Bay. I should make it there just in time.

I head to the parking garage of the tall, skyscraper our company is located in, in the heart of downtown Boston. It doesn't take me long to drive to the bar, and I manage to find a good parking space just a block away.

When I walk in, I see that Turner already has a table for us. A high-top in the back

corner. He waves me over, and I take a seat.

“How’s work? You just come from the office?” he immediately asks. He pushes a Corona toward me, having already ordered.

I smile. He knows me so well. “You know it. A lot going on.”

Turner shakes his head. “When are you going to learn to relax? You’ve got more money than you could ever know what to do with. What’s your motivation for working anyway?” he jokes .

I roll my eyes. “I’d be bored out of my mind, that’s the motivation. Besides, my parents’ legacy is important to me. They built this company, and I intend to make sure it continues thriving.”

“The good old Summers legacy,” Turner says with a grin.

“Someone’s gotta keep it going.”

“Yeah, speaking of that,” Turner says, leaning forward, gripping his beer in hand. “How you planning on keeping that legacy going without a woman by your side?” He laughs. “Chloe says you don’t have a plus one to the wedding, and I know you don’t really date ...”

I raise an eyebrow. “Since when have you cared about my dating life?”

“Since I’m marrying your sister and she cares about your dating life.”

I laugh. That’ll do it. I shrug. “Like you said, I don’t really date.”

Turner fixes me with a long, hard stare .

“What’s that look for?” I retort.

“What about that friend of Chloe’s? The cute, short one.”

My stomach lurches. “Josie?” Is it just me, or does my voice sound hoarse just saying her name? Shit.

“Yeah, the one you were totally enamored with the weekend of the bachelor party?”

My blood practically runs cold at this. Fuck. Turner noticed? Did other people notice?

That weekend was about a month ago now, and I haven’t seen Josie since. Sure, I’d fantasized about her more times than I care to admit, but there hasn’t been any reason for us to be around each other since then. And all I can think about is the wedding and getting to lay eyes on her.

But the fact that Turner is so casually calling me out? He knew ?

I suddenly realize I’ve been silent for too long when Turner chuckles. “Why don’t you make a move, man?” he asks me.

I debate denying his claims, but quickly come to the realization that it won’t do any good.

Turner knows me well enough—obviously. I sigh.

“She’s got a boyfriend,” I admit, grimacing at just the thought of him.

I wonder what went down with Josie and him when she got back from the bachelorette weekend.



Did he know that she ended up wearing that outfit he so staunchly disapproved of?

I wonder if she put him in his place or simply tried to pacify him.

Best case scenario is they got into a big fight that ended their relationship.

“Boyfriends can be switched out,” Turner simply replies.

This gets a laugh out of me. Always the optimist. “And she’s my sister’s best friend,” I add, as if that should stop me right in my tracks. Well, it hasn’t stopped me from thinking about the unspeakable things I want to do to her, that’s for sure .

“I’m marrying my best friend’s sister,” Turner says, throwing his hands in the air.

Okay. I guess he’s got me there. “Well, uh ...” I don’t usually find myself at a loss for words, but here we are.

“So what I’m hearing is you have no excuse,” Turner presses.

I avoid eye contact, taking a deliberately slow sip of my beer.

God, he can be a prick when he wants to be.

Since when does he care about the women I date?

Or don’t date? Because let’s face it, I need to get Josie out of my system before the wedding rolls around.

I don’t think I could handle seeing her in a fucking bridesmaid dress, her hair and makeup all done ...

Fuck. I'm ready for another shower session just at the thought of it.

“Just think it over, man,” Turner continues when I don't reply. “Don't let her be the one who got away.”

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*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

“I’ll take a vodka cranberry,” I yell over the loud music.

The bartender nods and turns away to fix my drink.

I lean on the bar as I wait, glancing over to the table on the far side of the room where Owen and a group of his friends are hanging out.

It’s a high top with only a few chairs, so some of the guys are sitting, and others are standing around.

One of Owen’s friends, Luke, had gotten some great promotion at work, so he’d invited all the guys out to celebrate. It’s a Friday night, and Owen and I’d had plans for a date night, but I didn’t mind rescheduling it to celebrate his friend .

This bar is a bit on the rowdy side. Loud music, bright lights. It kind of reminds me of the bars we went to in Vegas.

“Here you go,” the bartender calls, handing me my drink. I give him my card, opting to not leave a tab open. I don’t know how much I really want to drink tonight. After the hangover in Vegas after that night at the strip club, I don’t want to venture anywhere near that again.

I take my card and my drink and head back over to the table of guys. Owen is sitting, so I sidle up next to the two guys standing, one of them Luke.

“Congratulations on your promotion,” I tell him with a smile.

“Oh thanks,” he replies, turning toward me. “Yeah, I’d been gunning for it for quite a while. Can’t believe I actually got it. And the workload is going to be so different. I’m nervous but excited.”

“That’s amazing,” I tell him .

“How about you? How’s work going?” he asks me. “Owen says you’re in graphic design?”

I nod. “Yep. Designing logos, websites, marketing materials, things like that. I’ve got a super fun project I’m working on right now. A rebrand for a bakery. Really cute stuff.”

“Nice,” Luke says.

Our conversation fizzles out and turns into a larger conversation with the group.

Rick starts telling stories about the weird guy he works with, getting the whole group laughing along.

After about half an hour, I shuffle my feet a bit, feeling a bit tired from standing.

I glance around, hoping to see an abandoned chair somewhere.

“Hey, Josie,” Owen’s voice pulls me from my perusal. He’s standing next to me now. At first, I think he’s going to offer me his chair, but the look on his face seems ... serious.

I quirk an eyebrow at him. “Yeah? ”

He grabs my arm, pulling me away from the group. They're deep in some conversation about football, so they don't seem to notice or care about our departure. Owen leads us to the corner where there are less people and it's a bit quieter.

His grip still tight on my upper arm, he turns to me. "What the fuck?"

I stare at him like a deer in headlights. "Uh ... what?" I sputter.

He rolls his eyes, letting go of my arm in exasperation. "What was that back there with Luke?" he demands.

"With Luke ...?" I glance back at the guys in bewilderment. "What are you talking about?"

He levels me with a glare. "You were flirting with him right in front of my face." There's venom in his voice, an anger I've never seen from him before.

I pause, staring at him in shock for a few heartbeats, in disbelief that this is an actual conversation we're having. "I wasn't flirting with Luke, we were talking," I finally reply.

Owen shakes his head. "Yeah, whatever. I saw the way he looked at you. And who can blame him—I mean, look at what you decided to wear tonight." He gestures at my outfit. A pair of jeans and a V-neck top. Sure, the top is slightly low-cut, but what the actual hell?

"Excuse me?"

Owen shakes his head again. "I can't believe you, Josie. I really can't. You dress like that, you act like a flirt, and you pretend to be completely oblivious to the consequences."

My mouth drops open. Silence stretches between us as my brain struggles to comprehend the words that just came out of his mouth. What the hell has gotten into him? I've never seen this side of Owen.

Well ... maybe that's not true. I think back to our fight over the weekend of the bachelorette party.

How he'd been so angry about that stupid outfit.

How I'd lied and told him I hadn't worn it just so he'd shut the hell up about it.

How he always wanted to be a part of my plans but never wanted to include me in his.

How he never wanted me going anywhere without him—even out to drinks with friends.

“You're not serious,” I say, almost as a final plea. That this is all just a stupid joke. That Owen isn't actually the asshole he's pretending to be.

He raises his eyebrows at me incredulously. “Knock it off, Josie,” he snaps.

And that's when it hits me. Like a slap in the face. That this pattern is only going to continue. And get worse.

I shake my head, suddenly angry. Furious. “We're done, Owen,” I snap. I wait just long enough to see his expression morph from irritation to shock. And then I turn on my heel and leave the bar.

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*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

Josie

I sink into the couch, Roberta immediately taking her place on my lap, kneading biscuits into my thighs and purring. I stroke her fur absentmindedly, my mind running through the events of the last hour.

I broke up with Owen.

It's odd, I expect to feel some kind of sadness. Some kind of heartache. But I don't. I mainly just feel anger.

And relief.

Fuck. It suddenly dawns on me how big of a bullet I just dodged. While Owen hadn't seemed controlling in the beginning, those aspects of his personality had been starting to peek out the last month or so. And yes, after his behavior tonight, breaking up with him was the right call. The only call.

Roberta curls up on my lap, purring quietly before falling asleep. I reach for the remote beside me, turning on some mindless reality show that will hopefully calm my brain and get my mind off Owen. My nervous system is still all jacked up.

Half an hour later, though, there's a knock at my door loud enough to startle Roberta awake and have her dashing for the safety of the bedroom.

I glance to the door in alarm. It's almost 10 p.m. Who would be here?

I hurry to the door and glance through the peephole to see none other than Owen. I pull back, sighing in frustration.

“I don’t want to talk, Owen!” I yell through the door .

“Open the door,” he calls back. “Come on. You at least owe me a conversation. You just left—we didn’t get to talk!”

I pause. He might be right. We did date for four months. Isn’t an actual conversation kind of owed? Besides, I don’t want him to keep screaming outside of my door and upsetting my neighbors.

After a brief moment of consideration, I give in and unlock the door.

But as soon as Owen steps over the threshold, I wonder if that might have been a mistake.

He angrily storms into my apartment. “What the fuck was that, Josie?” he demands.

I swallow, turning to face him. “Owen, I know you’re upset, but how you spoke to me—on multiple occasions—wasn’t okay,” I say evenly.

“Oh, so I’m the bad guy here?” he shoots back. It’s then that I realize he’s drunk. And not just drunk, but really drunk .

“This might not be the best time to have this conversation,” I tell him, trying to keep my tone as light as possible. “How about we meet up tomorrow, okay?” I try to gesture to the door, but he simply shakes his head, stomping into the living room and pacing back and forth.

“You embarrassed me,” he yells. “In front of my friends. Who the hell does that?”



“I didn’t mean to embarrass you,” I tell him. “But I don’t want to have this conversation while you’re drunk. Please leave, and we can talk tomorrow.” I try to keep my voice firm and even, but the look in Owen’s eyes is starting to scare me.

“You can’t dump me in front of my friends,” he shouts, turning and kicking my couch hard enough that it lurches back a few feet.

I startle at the sound, taking a few involuntary steps back. “Owen,” I say loudly, keeping my voice firm. “Please leave.”

“I’m not fucking leaving, Josie. You don’t just get to act like a bitch and get away with it.”

It’s at that moment that I turn and run down the hallway, careening into the bathroom and locking the door behind me. I can’t tell if Owen followed me or not. He’s probably too drunk to even see straight.

I pull up Chloe’s contact on my phone and call her.

Maybe she and Turner can come over and help me persuade Owen to leave.

Or maybe I can just stay the night with them.

But as the rings continue, I realize she isn’t going to pick up.

She and Turner are early risers and are never awake this late.

I try calling a few more times, to no avail.

“Shit,” I mutter.

A bang on the bathroom door has me jumping up with a small shriek. “Come out and talk to me,” Owen demands. He bangs a few more times.

I bite my lip, staring down at my phone. Calling the police feels like turning this whole nightmare into something even more complicated. Besides, don’t they take forever to respond anyway? It’s then that I see the other “Summers” contact in my phone right next to Chloe’s.

Will.

Would he even help me? It’s not like we’re friends, exactly. More like ... god, I don’t even know what we are. And we haven’t seen each other since Vegas. Vegas, where he asked me personal questions about my relationship and told me Owen was an asshole.

Which, unfortunately, he was right about.

Another violent bang on my bathroom door makes up my mind, and before I can stop myself, I’m calling Will’s phone. It rings enough times that I worry he won’t pick up.

But finally, he does. “Josie ...?” His deep voice reverberates through the phone, coated in confusion.

“Will,” I say, my voice choking, even to my own surprise. “Can you come to my apartment? ”

“What’s going on?” he asks, his tone shifting to concern.

Owen bangs on the door again, forcing a startled cry from my lips. “Owen’s here, and he’s drunk, and he won’t leave, and I just need ... I need—”

“Send me your location, I’ll leave right now,” he interrupts me.

“Okay,” I breathe. I end the call and immediately text him my location.

“I’m not leaving, and you’ll have to come out of there eventually,” Owen shouts, his words slightly slurred.

He bangs on the door again, and then I see the handle jiggling as he wrestles with the lock.

I pray that it holds, glancing around the bathroom for anything I could use in self-defense.

I settle on a can of hairspray, clutching it tightly in my hand, figuring I could temporarily blind him while I make a run for it if needed.

It only takes ten minutes for Will to make it to my apartment. “Josie!” I hear him yell upon entering the door that I thankfully left open when Owen had barged in.

I hear a confused noise from Owen outside the bathroom door and then his steps as he stumbles toward the front door. I unlock the bathroom and step out into the hall to see Owen about ten feet away from me, facing an angry-looking Will who’s just stepped through the door into my apartment.

Owen whirls around to face me. “Who the fuck is that?” he yells, pointing at Will.

“My friend,” I say, trying to keep my voice steady, but it comes out small, scared. “I called him when you wouldn’t leave.”

“Your friend ,” Owen scoffs. “A friend who runs to your apartment in the middle of the night? What kind of friend is that?” He turns fully to face me now, taking a step

forward.

“Leave, Owen,” I demand, taking an involuntary step back. But there’s only a closet behind me. Nowhere to go .

“You heard her, man.” Will’s voice is soft yet commanding. He walks down the hall.

Owen looks over his shoulder at Will, sizing him up. But he’s too drunk to care that Will is practically a foot taller than him, and much scarier too. He’s got a fire in his eyes I’ve never seen before. Sure, I’ve seen grumpy Will. But angry Will? Never.

“This the reason you broke up with me, Josie?” Owen snaps at me. “So you could fuck this douchebag?”

“Leave the apartment. I’m not going to ask again,” Will says.

Owen scoffs, taking another step toward me. I shrink away. “I never knew you were such a slut,” he spits at me.

At this, Will snaps. He covers the distance between them, grabbing the back of Owen’s shirt in two fistfuls, yanking him away from me and then slamming him against the wall. Both Owen and I let out a startled cry. A few canvasses clatter from the wall to the floor.

“Don’t you dare speak to her like that,” Will mutters dangerously. Owen struggles against him, but Will simply slams him harder against the wall. “You hear me?”

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” Owen stutters.

After a few seconds, Will lets him go, and Owen backs away quickly, angrily fixing his shirt. “Jesus, man,” he snaps.

“Get out,” Will orders, pointing to the door.

Owen glares at him, and then over his shoulder at me. “Really, Josie? You called this prick to handle your business for you?”

“Get out or I’m gonna slam your head into the wall next,” Will says, his tone rising ever so slightly. He takes a step forward, and this time, Owen reacts.

He hurries toward the door, throwing one last glance over his shoulder as he leaves. “Fuck you. Both of you,” he snaps before slamming the door behind him.

The silence settles around us, but the tension remains. Will turns around to face me, the anger in his expression completely gone, replaced by concern.

I stand frozen where I am, unable to take a step, unable to move.

“Josie,” he says softly, and I can feel myself cracking. I cover my face with my hands so he won’t see the tears.

I hear his footsteps, and then I feel his strong arms wrapping around me, pulling me into his chest. A quiet sob escapes me as I let myself be pulled into his embrace, inhaling the smell of him. Pine and peppermint.

“You’re okay,” Will murmurs. “You’re okay.”

I nod against him, breathing deeply and calming myself down. Everything is fine. Nothing happened. Will came. He came. It suddenly dawns on me how amazing it is that he dropped everything to come to my apartment within ten minutes.

I sniffle, pulling back just far enough to look up into his face. “Were you busy?” I ask.

An incredulous scoff erupts from his lips, and he shakes his head. “No, I wasn’t busy.”

“Thank you for coming,” I whisper.

He stares down at me, his smile slowly morphing into something more serious. “Thank you for calling me.”

I frown in confusion. “Why ... would you thank me for that?” I stammer.

He purses his lips, searching my eyes. “Josie, if anything had happened to you ... if he’d done something to you ...”

Suddenly my chest feels tight, like I can’t get enough air.

As if I could get all the air in the world but it still wouldn’t be enough.

Will’s gaze is boring holes in my soul, staring deeper and deeper.

His gaze flicks to my mouth, then back to my eyes.

His chest is noticeably rising and falling, like he can’t seem to get enough air either.

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And then he reaches up to cup my face in his hands, and he kisses me.

Shock courses through me, along with a mixture of emotions I can hardly identify. All I know is that I want to kiss him back. Badly.

So I do. I reach between us, grabbing a fistful of his t-shirt in my hands and pulling him closer, deepening our kiss.

We stumble backward until my back hits the door of the closet behind me.

Will's thumb caresses the side of my face as he kisses me deeply, slowly, his tongue entering and tangling with my own.

When our kiss breaks, he looks down at me, panting, our foreheads touching. "God, you have no idea how long I've wanted to do that," he breathes.

A small smile slides over my face. "Me too."

He glances to my lips. "... and everything else I want to do to you." It comes out in a desperate breath, like he can barely hold it in. I've only ever seen put-together Will, aloof, grumpy, an asshole. Not this. Desperate for more of me, practically falling apart at the seams.

Can he tell that I'm falling apart too?

"Then do it," I say, my voice barely a whisper.

His gaze flicks up to mine, questioning.

“Do it,” I repeat. “Anything and everything you want to me.”

His eyes darken with desire. He glances around until he spots the bedroom door, reaching down to grab my hand and pulling me toward it. We enter the room, and I reach for the light switch to turn off the overhead lights, but Will stops me.

“I want to see you,” he says, coming up behind me and wrapping his arms around my waist. He presses a soft kiss to my neck, and I feel myself melting. “I want to see all of you.”

His fingers dance at the hem of my t-shirt, sliding under the fabric and against the skin of my belly. I’m only wearing a t-shirt and shorts, no bra—and I think Will can tell. My nipples have hardened in arousal, creating stiff peaks visible through the thin fabric of my shirt.

His hands travel slowly up my stomach, pulling the hem of my t-shirt with them.

As they crest the tops my breasts, I feel the cool air brush across my skin.

I lift my arms obediently, and Will pulls the shirt over my head, tossing it aside.

Still behind me, he reaches around to lazily trail his finger from my neck, between my bare breasts, and then in circles around my nipple, circling closer and closer until he finally reaches my peak.

I arch my back and whimper as he softly fingers my nipple, delivering a delicious sensation throughout my entire body. He does the same with my other breast, and before long I’m panting with desire.



He cups both my breasts, squeezing gently, kissing the side of my neck, down my shoulder. Then he reaches down to hook his fingers under the waistband of my shorts. He tugs them down and lets them fall, and then he does the same with my panties until I'm standing there before him, completely naked.

Before I have time to feel self-conscious, he pulls me against his body, walking us backward until we reach the bed. He sits and then pulls me into his lap sideways, my legs resting on the bed, my back propped up against his arm as he holds me close.

He looks down at my naked body in his lap, and I can feel myself reddening. My breasts are heaving in anticipation, and my pussy is absolutely drenched.

He grins down at me, half a smirk and half something else. Something genuine.

He reaches down to part my legs, urging my right one out and over so he has access to my center. He trails a finger up my inner thigh, sending shivers all over my body. And then he slides it slowly along my slit.

A deep sigh escapes me.

“Fuck, you're wet,” he groans, as if it practically hurts him just to say it.

He slides a finger up to my clit, rubbing gently. A moan from deep within my core escapes me, and my head falls back, draping my neck over his arm.

“That's right,” Will praises, leaning down to whisper in my ear, his breath hot against my skin. “Let me make you feel good.”

He rubs my clit faster, and I don't know if it's the sensation, how undeniably dirty it is that I'm completely naked in his lap and he's still fully clothed, or the fact that it's Will doing this to me, but I'm actually close to climaxing.

Still holding me like a baby in his arms, he snakes his free arm around my back, reaching around me to gently cup my breast, squeezing and then lightly fingering my nipple.

A desperate whimper escapes me as I feel the pleasure building and building. “Oh god ,” I whine, any sense of pride and self-consciousness fully gone.

“Yeah, Josie?” Will presses. “You like that, sweetheart? ”

He pinches my nipple harder, and I cry out in pleasure. He picks up speed on my clit, and then stars explode before my eyes. My orgasm washes through me, and I collapse, limp in Will’s arms. He presses a kiss to the top of my head, then sets me down on the bed.

He moves to stand, but I stop him, reaching for the hem of his shirt and pulling upward. Delighted surprise covers his features, and he takes over, shedding his shirt and tossing it aside. I reach for his belt next, but he stops me.

“Are you sure, Josie?” he whispers, leaning down and pressing his forehead against mine.

I look up into his impossibly blue eyes and nod.

His breath hitches in his throat, and his gaze darkens with desire yet again.

He reaches into his back pocket, pulling out his wallet.

He retrieves a condom and rips open the wrapper, unzipping his pants and stepping out of his jeans.

Looking down at me, he slowly lowers his underwear until he’s standing fully naked

before me, his hard cock on full display .

My eyes widen slightly at the size of it.

He rolls the condom over his cock and then slowly crawls over top of me. My chest still heaving from my orgasm, I stare up at him. He positions himself at my entrance, and then, gaze glued to mine the whole time, he slowly enters me.

I gasp as the sensation of him filling me, and he covers my gasp with a deep kiss, devouring all of me. He breaks the kiss to begin slowly thrusting in and out of me, and I moan.

“That’s a good girl,” he praises, and I feel my insides melt. He pumps faster, jostling me on the bed, his cock penetrating impossibly deep. I moan, the sensation almost more than I can bear.

“Fuck, you feel good,” Will chokes out, his expression looking almost pained.

I reach for him, pulling him harder against me.

He leans down, kissing the side of my neck, down my shoulder. “I fantasized about this countless times, but I never imagined you’d feel this good .”

I moan, clutching at him. “Harder,” I plead. “Please.”

He does as I ask, pounding into me harder with each thrust. I can feel another orgasm building, and I whimper in response. “Oh god,” I whine. “I’m gonna come again.”

“Good,” Will replies, snaking an arm between our writhing bodies to find my clit.

I cry out as he rubs it, continuously pumping in and out of me. “Fuck, fuck,” Will

chokes out, closing his eyes.

My second orgasm tears through me, and I shriek in pleasure, just as Will finishes, stilling inside of me. He collapses on top of me, and we lay there, panting, trying to catch our breath.

In the hazy aftermath, the harsh overhead light boring down on us, it suddenly just dawns on me the gravity of the last few hours.

I broke up with Owen.

I was momentarily afraid for my life .

And I just had sex with William Summers.

Will

Soft, morning light streams in through the curtains, and I sigh, stretching lazily. I open my eyes, and it takes me a moment to realize where I am. The unfamiliar window, the plaster on the ceiling ...

The woman lying asleep beside me.

I turn my head to see Josie, arms sprawled above her head, her hair splayed out at her side. The covers have migrated just low enough that her bare breasts are exposed to the room, heaving gently as she breathes in and out.

I'm momentarily distracted by them—how perfect and perky they are. And I'm suddenly overcome with the urge to do what we did last night all over again .

Fuck, the feeling of being inside of her had been incredible. The way she'd moaned, the way she'd whimpered while I pleased her.

Shit, I'm already hard.

Josie sighs quietly and stretches, then she opens her eyes.

It takes a moment for her to turn her head and her gaze to land on mine, and when she does, an adorable blush creeps over her cheeks.

Realizing how exposed she is, she pulls the covers up over her chest. But it's too late—the sight of her will forever be ingrained into my memory.

“Morning,” she says softly.

“Morning,” I reply.

We stare at each other for a long moment. Then her gaze travels lower, eyes widening, and she giggles, covering her mouth with a hand. I look down to see that my obvious arousal has created quite a tent through the lone sheet I have covering me.

Josie stifles a giggle. “Sorry, I know that just happens sometimes. You can’t really help it. ”

I turn to her, raising an eyebrow. “Oh, this isn’t one of those times.”

Her face blushes an even deeper red, and fuck I can feel myself getting harder. “Oh?” she squeaks.

“Yeah, it was probably my view of your perfect, naked tits that did it for me.”

She opens her mouth. “How long were you staring?” she demands.

I shrug. “Long enough to think about all the things I did to them last night ... and all the things I want to do again.”

She swallows, and I can see her breath quicken. “Yeah?” she breathes.

“Yeah,” I repeat, reaching out to take the edge of her blanket from her fingertips and slowly pull it down her body, revealing her breasts, her stomach, and that perfect pussy that had taken me so well last night.

She shivers, from the cold or from anticipation, I’m not sure. I take my time to look

over the length of her, her perky tits, her pink erect nipples just begging to be played with. I glide my gaze lazily along her stomach, her hips, her thighs.

I reach out to place a hand on her waist, anchoring myself as I meet her gaze and, without breaking eye contact, lean down to press a soft, chaste kiss to the tip of her breast.

A quiet sigh escapes her.

I take my tongue and lazily run it over her nipple, back and forth, pulling it into my mouth and sucking.

She moans, reaching down to tangle her fingers in my hair. “Will,” she breathes, and it just about lights me on fire.

I reach out to finger her other breast while I continue to lick and tease the first one with my mouth. And there she goes, whimpering like a little slut just like last night. A little slut all for me .

My perfect, little slut.

I take my time winding her up until her whimpers become more and more hysterical. I reach a hand between her thighs to find her deliciously dripping wet and ready for me. I sit up, grinning down at her.

“Turn over, sweetheart,” I instruct.

A momentary expression of surprise passes over her face, but she quickly does as I say, giving me a perfect view of her round backside. I lean over the bed, grabbing my wallet from my jeans pocket on the floor and pulling out a condom. I rip it open, sliding it over my cock.

I urge her legs apart, climbing between them. I lower myself over top of her, kissing up along her spine and positioning myself at her entrance. And then I slide into her.

She moans into the pillows, and I roll my eyes in ecstasy. Fuck, she feels incredible. She bucks her hips back toward me, begging for more, and I give it to her, thrusting in and out.

“That’s a good girl,” I praise, pressing a kiss to her shoulder. “Take me like a good girl.”

She moans louder .

I pump faster, loving the feel as I thrust deeper and deeper each time, claiming this perfect woman as my own. Why did I never see her like this before? Why did I wait so long? Waste so many years?

I snake a hand between her stomach and bed, finding her clit and rubbing. She moans louder, and I pick up speed.

“Say my name, Josie,” I instruct, my lips against her ear.

“Will,” she pants, moaning in time with my thrusts. Her cries become more hysterical as I rub her clit faster.

“Say my name when you come,” I tell her.

A strangled moan escapes her. I can feel her pussy clenching around my cock. “Will!” she cries, her orgasm ripping through her. I’m right behind her, finishing with a deep groan.

We lay there panting, and in the light of day, it suddenly dawns on me what we’ve



just done. I've slept with Chloe's best friend. Her best friend . Right before her wedding.

I glance at Josie, her face flushed and pink, her gorgeous eyes glistening. As much as I want this—as much as I might need it—this might just be the worst timing ever.

Josie

I toss a t-shirt into my suitcase with a little more force than I'd intended, sending it skirting over the side and flying off my bed. I sit down with a sigh.

Chloe's wedding is in two days. Two days. Chloe's wedding. Her destination wedding in Cabo. Preparations, travel, nerves. That's why Will hasn't texted me , I tell myself. Or called. Or done anything at all since we had the best sex of my life two weeks ago.

Twice.

He hasn't reached out because he's busy .

But I'm not na?ve. Maybe I would have been back in college. And maybe I still am today. But I'm old enough to recognize when it's happening.

And I'm being na?ve.

We'd parted on seemingly good terms. We both had work to get to, so he kissed me—sweetly, deeply, passionately—before heading out the door. And I'd waited for a text. Or a call. Or even a visit.

And ... nothing.

Sure, I could have reached out too, but as the days went by, it just felt weirder and weirder. And now? Two weeks later?

Besides, I'm about to see him in literally an hour when the entire wedding party climbs aboard the Summers family private jet to fly us all to Cabo. My stomach is in knots just thinking about it.

Thankfully, I haven't heard from Owen since Will chased him out of my apartment that night. It's honestly the only reason I'm not furious with Will's behavior right now. Well, maybe I am a little furious. But mostly confused. And hurt.

And dreading the upcoming weekend.

Taking a deep breath and steeling my nerves, I hurriedly finish up packing, grab my purse, bid Roberta farewell with kiss atop her head—I have a pet sitter coming to check on her—and head out the door.

My nerves tangle violently in my stomach as I approach the airport where the Summers' family jet is. It's a small airport on the outskirts of Boston, and I park in the covered garage before seeing Chloe and making my way over to the jetway.

The rest of the bridesmaids are also getting out of their cars, and together, with all our luggage, we trundle onto the plane.

I've been on this jet once before—when I went on a family vacation with Chloe back in high school—but I forgot how insanely nice it is. There are couches—couches—along the sides, with coffee tables in the middle laden with coffees and snacks set up and waiting for us.

“Ooooh, caramel!” Chloe exclaims, reaching down to grab a chocolate from the table.

Immediately, I clock Will and the rest of the guys scattered on couches at the back of the plane. Our eyes meet momentarily, and a shiver of adrenaline courses through me. As usual, his expression is unreadable—completely blank. It stirs something deep

inside me. Anger? Frustration?

Images of what he'd done to me, the parts of my body he'd seen, how I'd moaned his name, all coming flooding back to me in a hot flush of humiliation.

But just as quickly as our gazes meet, he pulls his away, back to whatever conversation the guys are having.

I take a seat next to Maureen, trying to ignore the terrible icky feeling building in my chest. Not now. I can deal with whatever this situation is later. But not over Chloe's wedding weekend. I just have to keep it together. Just a few days.

"God, I can't get over how gorgeous your ring is," Maureen says, leaning forward in her seat to get a better view of Chloe's finger.

Chloe obliges with a smile, holding out her hand. "Isn't it? Designed by Ezra Bishop himself—you know, the famous New England jeweler?"

"How'd you manage that?" Maureen asks.

Chloe shrugs a shoulder, pulling her hand back and staring lovingly down at the ring on her finger. "Ezra is a cousin of the King brothers—you know, Asher? He and Turner went to school together. Connections, connections," she chuckles.

I spend the flight trying to not glance back at Will and trying to suppress my horrible range of emotions.

A few hours later, we touch down in Cabo, and we step out to warm, balmy weather and palm trees.

My nerves are momentarily overrun during the gorgeous car ride past glistening

ocean waves to our resort—a practical mansion set high on a cliff overlooking the sea.

We gape in awe upon entering. One side of the villa hosts the rooms for the wedding party, while the other side will host rooms for family. Out back is a huge pool overlooking the ocean, surrounded by chairs, tables, and lounge cushions.

Next door is a lavish villa where the ceremony and reception will take place with even more stunning views.

I meet Chloe's gaze and laugh. Of course her parents would shell out this type of money on her destination wedding .

As everyone wanders off to claim rooms, I try to glance around and catch Will's eye.

Maybe we could have a private moment to chat.

If not to iron out what exactly happened between us, then to at least clear the air before the wedding.

But he's practically glued to Turner's side, helping him carry in the luggage.

I spend the rest of the night hoping to find some time to speak with him, but he keeps his distance.

The next day is much the same. Although I'm also occupied as I end up helping Chloe and the rest of the bridesmaids steam dresses and get everything ready for both the rehearsal dinner tonight and the ceremony tomorrow.

Just as the sun begins sinking toward the horizon, we don our rehearsal dinner outfits and prepare for the night. As the caterers are setting up the dinner in the main hall,

the wedding party gathers at the villa next door to rehearse.

Chloe and Turner are as giddy as you would expect, stealing glances at each other and giggling .

As I walk down the aisle, pretending to hold a bouquet and imagine a crowd watching me, I try my hardest to make eye contact with Will. He glances at me for just a second before looking away, out at the ocean.

I stand at the front, glaring at the ground in frustration as the rest of the bridesmaids glide down the aisle, followed by Chloe. We finish the rehearsal to cheers from everyone, and I try to push away my sour mood—for Chloe's sake.

Whatever Will's problem is, it's not something that can be solved this weekend.

And you know what? Maybe it's time I finally face it.

That William Summers is just a jerk. A grumpy, asshole jerk who just uses women and throws them away.

I was dumb enough to fall for it, and I'm paying the consequences.

Deal with it, Josie , I chide myself, pushing down the lump in my throat.

I make it through the rehearsal dinner by sitting as far away from Will as humanly possible, glad my view of him is obstructed as well. I focus on chatting with Chloe, trying to enjoy the delicious food and gorgeous view of the sunset over the water.

Relatives stand and give their good wishes to Chloe and Turner, raising their glasses and toasting.

The drinks are flowing, and after a few, I'm feeling less and less upset by the whole ordeal.

After all, heartbreak happens, frustration happens.

Why should I let Will's lack of good manners upset me?

As the night wears on and people begin drifting off to their rooms, Chloe and the rest of us girls pile onto a few of the lounge chairs, staring up at the stars and sipping on champagne.

"I'm getting married tomorrow," Chloe says with a wistful smile.

I reach out to squeeze her arm. She turns her head toward me, smiling.

As the moon climbs higher into the sky, we finally decide it's time for bed. "After all, you need your beauty sleep before the big day," Evie reminds Chloe with a laugh .

We head back to our rooms, Chloe reminding us to meet up in the morning to begin preparations, and then we're off to our own separate rooms.

I shut the door behind me, step out of my heels, and sigh.

Yawning, I head to the bathroom, freeing myself of jewelry and unclipping my hair from its updo.

I reach behind me to unclasp the back of my dress but struggle to find the zipper.

I try reaching over my head, but that doesn't work either.

With a sigh, I turn around, glancing over my shoulder to see the back of my dress in

the mirror.

I tug delicately on the zipper that I can barely reach. Ugh. Is it stuck? I tug harder, but to no avail.

I roll my eyes. Maybe one of the girls can help me.

I stride toward the door, my hand still behind my back, trying to get at the zipper. I throw the door open and step into the hallway.

Only to come face-to-face with Will.

I gasp in shock, taking a quick step back .

Will looks just as shocked as I am. His eyes widen. “Oh, sorry. I was, uh, just on my way back to my room.” He inclines his head to the door right next to mine. I don’t remember taking the room right next to his, although I guess he wasn’t around when I’d picked this room.

Surprised and at a loss for words, I don’t say anything.

“Are you okay?” he asks, noticing my lack of footwear and my arm wrenched awkwardly around my back.

“Yes, I’m fine,” I stutter. “I just, uh ... I need one of the girls’ help getting out of my dress.”

“Oh,” he says. But he doesn’t move out of the way.

I brush past him to the room across the hall. I knock lightly on the door. “Chloe?” I call. There’s no response. I knock again. “Chloe?”



“I, uh ... think she’s with Turner,” Will says from behind me .

About to knock for a third time, I let my hand fall to my side. “Oh.” I turn around. I glance up and down the hall. I don’t quite remember which rooms the girls had taken and which are occupied by the other groomsmen.

“I can help you with it,” Will says.

I look up. There are those inscrutable blue eyes again. I swallow. My head is telling me no, no, no , but what else am I supposed to do? Sleep in the dress and beg Chloe for help in the morning?

Honestly, that’s not so bad of an idea.

At my long silence, Will sighs, inclining his head toward my room. “Come on, I’ll help you.” He walks inside, leaving me with no choice but to follow.

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*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 2:54 am*

The door automatically closes behind me as I patter after Will and into the main section of the room. Avoiding eye contact, I turn around, pulling my hair over my shoulder and exposing my back. “I think the zipper’s just a bit sticky,” I say quietly .

I hear his footsteps coming up behind, and then I feel his presence. The soft exhale of his breath against my skin, his hands grabbing the fabric against my back. I feel him pulling on the zipper, but it does nothing. He tugs a bit harder.

“It’s ... not working,” he eventually says.

“Try harder,” I say. “It’s just stuck.”

He tugs harder, jostling my body. I grit my teeth, remembering the last time we were this close. The things he’d done to me, the things he’d made me feel. Fuck, just the proximity of him again is turning my brain to mush.

He continues tugging, but the zipper doesn’t want to budge.

“Harder,” I say, the word catching in my throat.

He yanks violently, enough to pull me back against him, and suddenly the zipper gives way, tearing all the way down my back, my dress sliding from my grasp and pooling on the floor around me. Will catches me as I stumble backward, his arms wrapped around my waist.

I gasp, staring down at my body, only clad in a white, lacy bra and panties.

Will seems frozen as well, his hands hot on the skin of my stomach, but he doesn't move.

He doesn't move a muscle. I feel my breath quicken, my chest rising and falling, images of our night together two weeks ago flashing through my mind.

The way he'd touched me, the way he'd filled me, the way I'd moaned his name.

And I hate myself for it—because I know I'm just falling again for someone who's only going to brush me aside come morning—but I desperately want the rush of him all over again.

So maybe I could take the heartbreak just one more time.

Unable to take the tension any longer, I spin around, Will's hands still on my waist, grab the collar of his shirt, and pull his lips down to meet mine. There's surprise in his response, but only for a second. And then he's devouring me .

He claims my mouth as his, forcing his tongue in to tangle with my own. He grips my hair tightly at the back of my head, holding me steady as he deepens the kiss.

He pushes me backward until I'm pressed up against the wall, and then he reaches down to grab my leg under the knee, pulling it up so that it rests around his hip.

He breaks the kiss to stare into my eyes, pinning me with his gaze as he lowers his hand between my legs, under my panties, to find my soaking wet center.

He glides a finger along my slit, and I moan, throwing my head back against the wall.

He grins, biting his lip. "Fuck, yes," he growls.

Then he slowly slides a finger inside of me. I yelp as he curls the finger upward, making a “come hither” motion. I squeal when he inserts a second finger and does the same. I grip his shirt, the sensation of his fingers inside me practically undoing me .

He starts pumping his fingers, slowly at first, and then faster and faster. I whine, closing my eyes, desperate for more, but knowing I’m at his complete mercy. My mouth open in a permanent O, I surrender to the ecstasy.

His other hand finds the top of my bra and yanks it down, exposing my breasts, which are heaving while I pant. He fingers my nipple, pinching it sharply and causing me to cry out in both pain and pleasure.

He pumps his fingers faster, and I’m desperate.

“Will,” I whimper.

“Yeah, Josie?” he whispers, pressing his lips against my ear. “What do you want?”

What do I want? My mind trips over that question and falters for a moment. What do I want? More of what he’s doing, yes. To come, yes. But also ... more of him. The real him. Not just sex. Not just this. I want Will. I’ve always wanted Will.

But this isn’t the way to get him. It can’t be.

“Wait,” I say, my voice choking .

Will immediately senses the shift and stops. He removes his hands from me, taking a small step back. There’s that concern on his face again. Just like the night he’d saved me from Owen. My hero. Why can’t he be my hero now? “Are you okay?” he asks.

It’s then that I realize I’m crying. Crying . Fuck. Tears are streaming down my cheeks

and I'm unable to stop them.

"I can't do this," I whisper, brushing past him to reach for the closest piece of clothing I can find. A white, fluffy robe laid out on the bed.

"What?" Will stammers, staring at me in bewilderment.

"I can't do this with you," I repeat, tying the robe around my waist and, without thinking, grabbing my hotel key and running toward the door.

"Wait, Josie—" Will calls after me, but I'm already out of the room, running down the hallway. I don't look to see if he's followed me. I don't care .

I run through the empty villa, finding a secluded stretch of garden on the other side of the house where I hunker down, bury my face in my hands, and cry.

I don't know how long I sit there crying under the starlight, the sounds of the ocean waves crashing against the shore reverberating in my ears.

But when I finally return to my room, Will is gone.

Will

I might be an asshole, but I know when I've fucked up.

And I've fucked up.

Bad.

Seeing the tears in Josie's eyes last night? Yeah, that was probably the worst feeling I've ever had in my life. Because the last time I'd seen her cry, it was because of some douchebag. But this time, I was that douchebag.

I rub my temples and take a sip of coffee. Turner and the other groomsmen are out on a morning run, and Chloe and the bridesmaids are beginning to get hair and makeup done. So I'm sitting alone out by the pool, watching the waves crash on the shore hundreds of feet below.

I think back to that night a few weeks ago. When Chloe had called me and I'd heard the fear in her voice, I'd dropped everything to get her place as fast as I could. I hadn't planned on making any kind of move. I hadn't planned on taking advantage of the situation.

Only I did.

And that's the crux of it. No matter how incredible that night had been, and that morning after—I'd made a mistake.

Not a mistake in who I spent that time with, but a mistake in how it was carried out.

I'd taken advantage of Josie in a vulnerable moment. In a moment where she shouldn't have been pushed to make that kind of decision. And I'd been a selfish asshole, wanting her so desperately that I didn't stop to think whether this was a good time for her to make that decision herself .

And as much as I wanted to call her, text her, show up at her apartment—I held back. And maybe that was wrong too. Hell, I don't know. I fucked up, and now I keep fucking up.

At first, I thought maybe I could handle this after the wedding.

Because I couldn't do anything to potentially ruin Chloe and Turner's day.

I'd already done enough. So I thought maybe all of this could wait until after the wedding.

Then I'd tell Josie my feelings and we'd work it out like adults. Whatever it is.

But then last night had happened. Despite trying to keep my distance all day, there I was, ripping Josie's dress apart and coming face to face with the very thing I desire more than anything in the world with nothing to stop me.

And I'd let that get the best of me yet again.

Resulting in Josie running from the room in tears .

I'd hung out in her room waiting for her for a while before I realized that maybe space was the most respectful thing I could give her .

I'm sick to my stomach just thinking about it. I'm an asshole. A selfish asshole.

A commotion behind me has me turning around to see Turner and the guys clattering through the front door, breathing heavy from their run.

"Hey, man," Turner says when he sees me.

I wave in response.

"We should start getting ready soon," he says. "Don't wanna risk being late. Your sister would kill us." He chuckles.

I stand, following him and the rest of the guys back toward our rooms. There's a whole lot more my sister would kill me for if she knew.

We spend the next few hours getting ready, and as the hour of the wedding draws nearer, Turner is getting more and more antsy. Although not in a cold feet kind of way. In an almost giddy kind of way. His love for my sister would be obnoxious if it wasn't my sister, who I want the best for .

A few minutes before the ceremony, I exit the mansion to glance over to the villa next door. The vast backyard facing the ocean has been decked out with tents, chairs, and a beautiful arch under which Turner and Chloe will exchange their vows. People are already filing in and filling the seats.

I head back into the room, and after a few minutes, the wedding coordinator comes in with a broad smile across her face. "It's go-time guys," she says, flashing bright white teeth.

Turner straightens his suit, glancing in the mirror. "Do I look okay?" he asks me.



I clap him on the shoulder. “You look great,” I tell him. “Truly.”

He stares at me for a minute, then pulls me in for a hug. He pulls back, shaking his head as if he wants to say more but can’t find the words.

“Let’s go,” I say for him.

He smiles .

We follow the wedding coordinator out of the mansion and through the villa, where we walk up the aisle one by one, taking our places at the head by the officiant. I glance out over the sea of elegantly dressed attendants, smiling at relatives I recognize.

We stand there for a few minutes, the nervous tension in the air palpable. And then the music starts, and the bridesmaids begin their descent down the aisle. Obviously, I know that Josie is coming, but I still can’t stop my heart from beating just a little faster when I lay eyes on her.

She appears at the end of the aisle, her blue satin dress hugging her curves just right, her brown hair falling in elegant waves around her shoulders.

She holds her bouquet tightly in front of her, smiling as she walks down the aisle.

I can tell she’s avoiding eye contact with me, and I almost feel as though I’m staring her down, but I can’t help but watch her every move.

My breath hitches in my throat, my eyes glued to her. Her tears from last night flash before my eyes, and a wave of guilt spirals over me. I tear my gaze away from her as she takes her place opposite me, turning and facing the crowd.

The music changes, the attendees stand, and suddenly there's Chloe, her arm wrapped with my dad's.

He leans over to whisper something in her ear, something that gets her eyes tearing up.

She glides down the aisle, and I find myself turning to look at Turner.

And there, in his face, is an expression that might just be seared into my brain forever.

Complete and utter adoration. Joy, relief, excitement, love. It's a look I so rarely see.

A look, I suddenly realize, that encapsulates every feeling I have for Josie. The look I just might have given her mere moments ago.

As Chloe reaches the top of the aisle, turning to give my dad a hug, my mind is racing.

As I watch my sister and my best friend say their vows, promising to love each other for the rest of their lives, I can't help glancing past them and at Josie.

We're facing each other, only Turner and Chloe standing in our way.

For a brief moment, she meets my gaze. I'm frozen to the spot, pinned by her look, desperate for more.

But just as quickly as it happened, it's gone, and she's back to watching Chloe.

As soon as the officiant declares them husband and wife, Turner leans in to give Chloe a kiss. They turn to the crowd, throwing their hands in the air and laughing as

they make their way down the aisle.

It's now that Josie and I are meant to walk down the aisle together.

I try to meet her gaze, but she ignores me, silently placing her arm through mine and smiling at the crowd as we walk slowly down the aisle.

The feel of her hand on my arm is sending shockwaves through my body in every way possible.

I desperately want her to never let go. To pull her away somewhere where we can talk.

Because we need to talk.

I realize that now .

And it's the only thing I want. The thing I want more than anything else in the world. For Josie to let me explain myself and to give me another chance.

But as soon as we reach the end of the aisle, she pulls her hand away, and she's gone, disappearing into the crowd.

Josie

I watch Chloe head off with Turner and their photographer, and I glance around as the ceremony area is swiftly being transformed into an area fit for a reception, with tables, chairs, and servers wandering around with flutes of champagne.

I try to rub my mind free of the feeling of Will's arm under my fingers. The electricity between us, the way he'd tried desperately to make eye contact.

But I can't talk to Will. Not now. Not today. Maybe once we're back in Boston, once the dust has settled, once the wedding is behind us. Or maybe I just won't ever have to see him again, and the embarrassment of being his almost-three-night stand can die away.

I grab a glass of champagne from a passing waiter and take a sip, resisting the urge to down the entire thing at once.

I spot the other bridesmaids gathering near a nice view, taking selfies, and I make my way over to them.

We take turns taking each other's pictures until the newlyweds come back with their grand entrance, and we all take our seats for dinner.

I can practically feel Will's eyes boring holes through my skull from across the table as we eat, although he's too far away to actually speak with me.

What does he even want? He has to know I was upset about him not reaching out to

me for two weeks. Or maybe he thinks that I simply wanted the same thing. That a fun hookup was all I was looking for. And this weekend was the perfect opportunity for more.

So he just wants more.

I shake my head, continuing to eat .

When the time comes for speeches, Chloe's dad gives one, and then Will. It takes everything in me to actually look at him as he speaks. But as he goes on about his love for his sister, his love for his best friend, and how happy he is that they found each other, I feel my heart melting.

Is this really the same man who has treated me so cruelly? How does one person have such incompatible traits? I try to hide my frustration as he raises his glass and everyone toasts the happy couple.

Next comes the first dance, and soon after, Chloe is pulling me and all the other bridesmaids up onto the dance floor. When an ABBA song comes on, we're all jumping up and down and singing our hearts out, and soon I'm able to momentarily forget the drama and just celebrate my best friend's wedding.

After dancing for quite a while, I excuse myself to go to the bathroom, taking a deep breath and wandering back into the villa. The sun has long since set, making the trek over the cobblestones and into the building a bit tricky in heels .

I make it inside, finding the bathroom and beginning my walk back outside. But as soon as I step out into the hallway, a looming figure stands before me.

"Josie," Will says, his voice pleading.

I stop, shocked to see him, and also a little annoyed. Can he not read the signals? I ran out of my room crying last night. Is that not enough of a signal for him? I begin to brush past him, but he reaches out to grab my arm. I stare down at his hand, his fingers digging gently into my flesh.

“I’m sorry, Josie,” he says, and it’s now that I finally look up into his eyes. And in them I see ... guilt? “I’m so sorry about last night. And about the last few weeks. I ...”

I cock my head, surprised to hear him apologizing to me. Is this just another ploy to get me into bed? “I’m not ... looking for a hookup buddy, or whatever it is you’re used to,” I say. Maybe putting it bluntly is the only way to deter him .

A look of hurt flashes across his face, but only for a split second. “I’m not looking for that either.”

I blink. “I don’t understand. You show up, act the hero, spend the night with me, and then you ghost me. For two weeks,” I snap.

He nods. “I know, and I’m sorry. It was ...

” He trails off, shaking his head, looking away.

When he finally looks back, his eyes are pleading with mine.

“I felt like I’d taken advantage of you.

You’d just broken up with Owen, you were scared, you were upset, and I ...

I shouldn’t have done anything. I felt so awful, and I—I truly thought the best thing to do was give you space.

” He takes a deep breath through his rambling.

“But I was wrong. It was stupid. And then last night, it happened again and ...” He reaches out to gently grasp my other arm, bringing me face to face with him.

“Josie, I want to be with you. I don’t know why it took me so long.

I don’t know why it took me years when you’ve been right in front of me the whole time but ... I want you. All of you. ”

I stand silent, dumbfounded, as the weight of his words settles around me. “You ... want to be with me?” I finally stutter.

He nods.

“But ... you’ve never given me a second glance. I’ve been here. For years.”

“I know. But you were always Chloe’s best friend. I couldn’t— wouldn’t risk that. You were off limits. Honestly, I’m afraid you might still be off limits ...” He grimaces slightly. “Only now, I don’t think I can resist it anymore.”

My eyes are locked on his, the tension between us sparking at dangerous levels. Finally, I break the silence with, “I don’t think I can resist it either.”

And that’s all Will needs to span the distance between us and plant his lips against mine. The kiss is desperate, hungry, ravenous. I cling to him, the scent of him, the feel of him, all of him overwhelming me.

We stumble in a desperate attempt to somehow get closer, closer, closer.

Will breaks our kiss to glance around wildly, taking my hand firmly in his and pulling

me deeper down the hallway.

We pass a room filled with couches and lounge chairs, and after glancing around to make sure no one is near, he pulls me inside, leads me to the nearest couch and pushes me down onto it.

I expect him to continue kissing me, but instead, he sinks to his knees before me, placing a hand on both of my thighs and spreading my legs before him.

He looks up at me with that intense gaze I've come to love so much, slowly gathering the fabric of my dress in his hands and inching it up, up, up.

"I want to taste you, Josie," he murmurs, leaning down to press a kiss to the bare skin of my inner thigh.

My mouth drops open at the sensation.

He pushes my dress up farther, until the majority of my thighs are exposed.

"Can I taste you, sweetheart?" he asks me, kissing my other thigh.

"Yes," I breathe. "Please. "

He grins, his gaze darkening in desire. He reaches under my dress to hook his fingers under the strap of my panties. "Lift your hips," he instructs.

Bracing myself on the back of the couch, I do as he says, and he slowly slides my panties down my legs, tossing them aside.

My dress now bunched around my waist, he spreads my legs even wider.



My breath hitches in my throat as he stares at my center, my pussy wet, dripping, and completely exposed to him.

He holds my thighs open, gripping the flesh tightly as he begins planting soft, sweet kisses along my leg, moving upward.

I gasp when he reaches my center, gliding his tongue along my slit. I lean back against the cushions, gripping the pillows beside me as he lazily draws his tongue up to my clit, licking slow, delicate circles.

A deep moan escapes through my lips, causing Will to momentarily halt his perusal of my most private area .

“Shhhh—be a good girl and be quiet for me, okay sweetheart?” he asks.

Desperate to have his tongue back on me, I simply nod, spreading my legs wider, begging for more. He shoots me another delicious grin before returning.

As his tongue flicks across my nub, I bite my lip and squeeze my eyes shut, holding in the desperate moans and whimpers I know would otherwise be echoing throughout the room.

As he picks up the pace, it’s all I can do to keep quiet. I’m panting, squirming beneath him, the pleasure building and building. His fingers are digging into the flesh on my thighs, roughly holding me in place as I practically fall apart.

“Will,” I pant, my voice rising in pitch. “Oh, god ,” I whine, trying to stay as quiet as possible. I throw my head back, gasping and bucking my hips. And then with a cry I can’t hold in, my orgasm shatters over me .

I lie there, spent and gasping as wave after wave rushes over me.

I vaguely hear the sound of a condom wrapper tearing, and I open my eyes to see his pants unbuckled and unzipped, revealing his hard cock.

He rolls the condom on. He grabs my legs, pulls them onto the couch so that I'm now lying down and climbs over top of me.

The waves of my orgasm are still rolling through me as he enters me, causing me to cry out in ecstasy.

He wastes no time in thrusting into me—hard and fast. I grip the couch cushions, my body jostling at how roughly Will is fucking me.

He hits that sweet spot inside of me at just the right time that I feel a second orgasm barreling through me.

A strangled noise escapes me, and I throw my head back against the pillows, surrendering to both Will and the pleasure he's forcing onto me.

"That's a good girl," he leans down to whisper in my ear as he keeps pumping.

He snakes an arm between us, finding my swollen clit, and begins rubbing quick circles .

"Oh god, Will," I pant. "I don't know if I can—"

"You're gonna be a good girl and come a third time for me, Josie," he demands. "Just take it."

I moan, and it turns into a whimper as my body transforms into molten lava, the pleasure increasing so high it's almost unbearable.

I writhe beneath him, and Will pumps into me harder, almost like he's trying to put me in my place with just his cock alone.

I can feel my third climax building, and my moans are getting louder and louder—I'm unable to stop them. Will plants his elbow beside my head, bracing himself on it as he reaches over to clamp his palm over my mouth, muffling my cries.

“Shhhh, sweetheart,” he murmurs.

But my moans only become more and more hysterical.

The pleasure builds and builds and builds, and finally I break into a million pieces.

I grip the couch, screaming into Will's palm, my body utterly spent.

Will pumps a few more times, finishing and then collapsing on top of me.

We lie there like that, panting, Will staring down at me, his blue eyes twinkling.

He presses a soft kiss to my lips, and I smile. “You wanna be my girlfriend, Josie?” he asks, and there's just a tiny hint of worry there—almost as if he's afraid I might say no.

A laugh bubbles up from deep within me. “After all that, I'd better be your girlfriend,” I say, taking his face between my hands and kissing him.

Josie

With my steaming cup of coffee grasped firmly between my palms, I pad out the back door of the villa, past the pool, and across the manicured lawn to take in the early morning view of the ocean far below.

The wind rustles against my silk robe—a cute gift from Chloe to all the bridesmaids—as I take a sip of my coffee.

The whole wedding party had danced late into the night, well past the time when most of the other guests had left—and then we'd all finally made it back to the villa where we'd collapsed in our respective rooms. Will had snuck into mine, where we'd dozed in each other's arms until just a few minutes ago when I'd woken up and was unable to fall back asleep .

I'm afraid you might still be off limits .

Will's words from last night ring in my head, and I bite my lip.

I want to tell her so badly. And I have to.

I'm just so afraid of what she'll say. She and Turner are heading off on their honeymoon to Costa Rica this afternoon where they'll tube down waterfalls and hike mountains.

I don't want that heavy of a conversation weighing over her during that trip, so I plan to bring it up once we're all home in Boston.

And I hope against hope that she'll be okay with it.

Because after years of this crush, the mind-blowing sex, and spending last night wrapped peacefully in his arms, I don't think there's any option left for me other than to simply be with Will . There's no going back.

I hear the creak of a door across the yard, and I turn to see a familiar set of blonde curls. I smile. "Hey," I greet as Chloe walks up to me, carrying a cup of coffee as well.

She smiles and comes to stand next to me, staring out at the ocean view .

"It was a beautiful wedding, Chloe," I say, shooting her a soft smile.

"It was, wasn't it?" she says with a giggle.

We stand in comfortable silence as the sound of distant crashing waves floats up to us.

Finally, Chloe breaks the silence. "Josie?"

I look at her, raising an eyebrow and waiting.

She smiles, but there's something mischievous in it. "Do you have something to tell me?"

I freeze, and I simply stare back at her. There's no possible way she's thinking of what I'm thinking of. "What do you mean?" I press.

She laughs, taking a sip of her coffee and staring at me conspiratorially over the rim of her mug. "Come on," she says when she's done. "I'm your best friend, you're supposed to tell me everything."

I bite my lip. Does she ... know ?

Chloe rolls her eyes. “Turner said he saw you and Will sneaking off somewhere at the reception last night,” she comes out and says. “Wanna elaborate?”

Fuck. Okay, so she does know. I grimace. “God, I’m sorry, Chloe. I wanted to tell you, I really did. But I didn’t want to ruin your wedding, and I didn’t want to ruin us, and everything, and it just happened, and—”

“Whoa, Josie, I’m not mad,” Chloe says, reaching out to grab my arm.

I stare at her in shock. “You’re not?” I echo.

Chloe laughs, throwing her head back. “Why would I be mad?”

“Because he’s your brother.”

“And you’re my best friend. You’re two of my favorite people in the world, and I want you both to be happy.”

I blink, her words slowly settling into my brain. “You’re not mad,” I echo .

She shakes her head. “I’m not mad, I’m ecstatic.” She giggles, and slowly I join in, and then we’re both full blown laughing, trying not to spill our coffee.

“So Turner guessed it?” I ask.

She snorts. “Turner said he thought something was up between you two over the bachelorette weekend. And then he saw Will sneak into your room last night.”

I widen my eyes in horror. “I thought we were being discreet.”

She shrugs. “Yeah, definitely not.”

I laugh harder.

“So, you two, like, dating?” She wiggles her eyebrows at me.

I grin. “As of last night, he’s officially my boyfriend.”

Chloe squeals. “You know, Cabo is a great place to have a wedding.” She elbows me, and I roll my eyes .

A sound from the villa has us both turning around to see Turner and Will taking seats on the patio furniture, steaming cups of coffee in their hands as well.

“I should probably pack up a bunch my things before the day gets away from me,” Chloe says. “But when we’re back in Boston, I need all the details about you and Will. Well ... maybe skip a few. But most of the details.”

I laugh. “Most of the details—got it.”

She saunters over to Will and Turner, leaning down to plant a kiss on the top of Turner’s head.

I can’t hear their conversation from here, but I see her turning to Will, and his expression morphs into one of concern, then laughter.

They chat for a few moments before Chloe tugs Turner up out of his chair and they disappear back into the villa, probably to go pack up their things.

Will sees me from across the yard and makes his way over to me. His hair is still tousled from sleep, and he looks about as adorable as I’ve ever seen him. He walks up, wrapping his arms around me as we take in the view.

“So Chloe knows, huh?” he says softly.

I giggle. “Yeah, I guess we aren’t that discreet.”

“And she didn’t kill us,” he adds.

“Lucky us,” I murmur.

“Damn, I should have started dating you a long time ago.”

I nuzzle my head back against his chest. “Yeah, bad call on your part,” I tease.

I feel him shrug. “Better late than never.”

“Y eah,” I agree, twirling around in his arms so I can see those gorgeous blue eyes. I press a soft kiss to his lips. “Better late than never.”

The End