



# Serving Tegan (Sexy As Sin)

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**Category:** Sport

**Description:** Welcome to the Sexy as Sin series, where badass female athletes don't mind working up a good sweat on or off the field.

When a prank goes wrong, tennis star Tegan finds herself in bed with her rival's coach. She should be horrified, but in the midst of a tennis tournament, she just finds herself drawn to Roman, the surly former tennis ace with a reputation and a lot of baggage.

As the tournament rages on, Tegan and Roman find themselves on opposite sides of the court. They should be focused on the game, but they're just focused on each other.

And when the heat kicks in, they can't seem to deny the one thing they shouldn't want.

**Total Pages (Source):** 12

# Page 1

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## CHAPTER ONE

Roman

I would have thought I was too old for wet dreams. As I pull myself into consciousness, I'm aware of the heat of someone pressed against me. I'm aware of a hand creeping down my chest, headed straight my cock. I'm aware of the scent of lavender and something else, something minty.

And I begin to realize that I'm not dreaming at all, not even close. There's someone in my bed, someone pressed against me. I've got my hands on smooth skin, the dip of a hip. Without thinking, I trace higher, find the curve of a bare breast.

My eyes shoot open.

In the dark, it takes me a second to orient myself. I'm staring up at the ceiling, and there's someone pressed to my side. A certain someone who is definitely about to put their hand down my shorts.

"Are you hard?" the woman breathes into my ear. My hand reaches out to wrap around the thin wrist. It takes all my willpower to stop the downward descent, especially because I'm not entirely positive I'm not still dreaming.

Except that I can't remember ever being aware of smells in a dream, or the heat of someone's breath against my neck as they kissed me there.

"What the fuck is going on?" I growl.

The lips on my neck freeze. “Oh, my God,” the feminine voice says, and she is gone in an instant, her handripped away, her body catapulting from mine.

I can make out the shape of her in the dark, a small, shadowy figure scrambling around. I reach over for the lamp, my body rendered immobile the second the light cascades over both of us. Because when I turn on the light, there is the half-naked form and the shocked face of Tegan Sharpe, the Women’s Tennis Association’s darling.

She's in a pair of athletic shorts that I know for certain she wasn't wearing a second ago, because my fingers had fully touched that hip, bare except for some kind of lacy thing. She hasn't quite managed to get into her shirt, and I get an eyeful of the tits that I was touching.

Her eyes meet mine, and she presses her shirt to her chest. “Hey, Roman,” she says, smiling like we just passed each other in a hallway.

“What the fuck are you doing in my room? How the fuck did you get in here?” What I actually want to ask is what the fuck she was doing trying to give me a hand job in the middle of the night. I pull my blankets up to my hips so she can't see that I'm still extremely stiff.

But there's nothing to be done about the state of my bare chest, and I see her eyes flicker down, run over my shoulder, where I have a particularly grotesque surgery scar.

“I'm sorry,” she says, inching back towards the door, her blonde hair a mess, falling out of the ponytail it was in as she grasps for the doorknob behind her back. “I'm in the wrong room.”

What's the right room? I want to ask. “How the fuck did you get a key to my room?”

I ask instead.

Like she's just remembered that she does, in fact, have a key, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out the little card. She tosses it onto the stained carpet.

“Sorry,” she says again.

And then she's gone. Just like that.

Of all the wake-up calls I've ever gotten in my time as a tennis player and then a tennis coach, this was certainly the most shocking.

And that's coming from someone who was once raised from the dead at 3:30 in the morning with a bucket of ice water to the face. My room falls quiet again, and I'm left sitting there in my bed with a raging hard-on, staring at the back of my hotel room door.

What the fuck just happened?

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 7:48 am*

### CHAPTER TWO

Tegan

I stand outside the cafeteria, my hand on the door, taking deep breaths.

This is fine. This is absolutely fine. Those assholes who gave you the wrong keycard are not going to get the better of you.

I lift my chin high, take one more deep breath, and then open the cafeteria door. I make my way in, shoulders back, walking confidently.

If there's anything I have learned in this sport, it's that you can't show weakness. Weakness off the tennis court is just as lethal as weakness on it. Tennis players watch each other. They pay attention to each other's bodies, to the way they serve, to the way they lunge. Always looking for something they can use to their advantage. And right now, I will be made of steel, and I will not let them know that they've won.

I get in line, grab some fruit and a bowl of oatmeal. Maybe they haven't won. I mean, after all, what does it matter that I accidentally climbed into bed with Roman Jostad? So what? As far as I know, it's not against any kind of bylaws to get frisky with your rival's coach.

It's not like anything even really happened. Yes, we technically made it to second base and almost third. He definitely groped my boob. And it was definitely really hot. But seeing as how neither one of us knew who the other was in the dark, it was

also extremely inappropriate.

I grab a Powerade out of the cooler and sit down.

I haven't been seated for ten seconds before a body lands in the seat across the table from mine. Alexandria Cruz presses her elbows into the table and leans across it to me. She's wearing a devious smile.

I just watch her, carefully schooling my expression. I have an excellent poker face. I will never let her see that she got one over on me.

Because that's what happened, right? How else could the guy I made out with in the ice room last night have gotten the key card to Roman Jostad's room if not by getting it from the player he's been coaching? Alexandria is one hundred percent responsible.

"Did you have a good night?" she asks, her ponytail swinging from one side to the other as she speaks animatedly. She might as well pat herself on the back, get herself a trophy, jack herself off. She is so proud of herself.

"I had an excellent night," I say, smiling back at her while I twist open the cap of my Powerade. I look away from her long enough to take a few gulps and then slam the bottle back onto the table, ignoring the blue liquid that sloshes over the side.

"Oh, I bet," she says, putting her chin in her hands. "I can't wait to hear all about it." Her eyes go wide with feigned innocence. "Did you want to tell me, or should I ask Coach?"

For the first time this morning, fear really starts to settle under my skin. It's true that I didn't break any tournament rules. But I did almost stick my hand down someone's shorts by accident and Roman could certainly tell Alexandria what happened in that room.

It's bad enough that she knows I was in there in the first place. She doesn't also need to know that I tried to jerk off her coach. Would he tell her? The humiliation of that might be something I can't come back from.

"I don't know what you mean," I tell her, copying her fake innocence. If she's going to look like a clown, then I'm going to imitate her so she can see how stupid she looks.

"Oh, don't you?" she asks.

And then I wonder, what would she do if I told her exactly what happened? What if I lied and told her I fucked his brains out?

Before Roman agreed to be Alexandria's coach, she was bottom of every bracket. When we were in school, she was passably good. The competition was minimal. But when she got out into the big leagues, she was nothing. And then Daddy paid out the ass for veteran all-star Roman Jostad, and now look at her. I have no doubt that it'll be me and her in the finals.

"I went to bed early," I lie.

There is no version of last night that ends with me going to bed early, or even at a reasonable time. I've never been very good at being disciplined where these things are concerned. I don't always eat the way I should, and I don't always refrain from alcohol like I should, and I definitely do not get enough sleep like I should.

And that's how I found myself making out with a complete rando in the ice room of our hotel last night. A guy who got a phone call as he was fingering me, slipped me the key to his room, and told me to meet him there in twenty minutes, since the phone call was deeply personal.

In my head, I imagined it was his sick mom or something. But instead, I can only assume that it was Alexandria calling to tell him it was time to ditch me and give me the key to her coach's room.

And that is also how I found myself in bed with Roman Jostad at three in the morning.

Muted laughter reaches me from the other side of the room, and I glance over at a table of people I don't recognize. There's one girl who I'm pretty sure I played yesterday though. Sometimes it's hard to see them from across the court, and I'm not very good with faces. I do my research just like everyone else, but I'm not really interested in looking at photos of people.

I do recognize one face. The guy who had his fingers inside me last night.

I look away, back at Alexandria. She looks like she's won the tournament already. She's glowing.

What did she think was going to happen, exactly? That I would be so embarrassed that I would drop out? Imagine being so certain that you're going to lose that you have to manipulate your competition. It's pathetic, really. But that's Alexandria. Jealous since the day we met in high school.

"How much did you have to pay him?" I ask her.

When her eyebrows furrow in confusion, I point at the guy, who's still looking over at us. I can see the interest in his blue eyes. If Alexandria hadn't called, he would have pumped into me right there in that ice room, no question. He was hard. I know he wanted to fuck me.

"Your boy over there," I clarify. "You know, the one who pretends to be friends with



you because he wants your money?”

Her smile falls at that, and I wonder if she's into him. I could rub salt in the wound. Tell her how hard he was against my hip while he was sticking his tongue in my mouth last night.

Instead, I say, “It must really suck to have to pay for friends.”

This girl, she's never had a poker face in her life. I've seen the desperation in her eyes when she's about to lose a match. I've seen the way her hands jitter. The way she moves slower when she knows she's no real competition.

“Anyway,” I say, pulling my tray back toward me as if I'm done eating, even though I haven't touched anything. “I have kind of a big day ahead of me, but maybe you could draw a map of where a clit is for your friend in all your free time?”

Her mouth drops open, and I pick up my tray and walk away from her, stopping to dump my uneaten food in the trash. It doesn't matter. I'm not sitting in this room with her and her little posse of pathetic gold diggers.

I throw open the door and barge into the hallway that I just came in from and slam right into Roman Jostad.

### CHAPTER THREE

Tegan

Everything comes screaming back in a bright flash. The warmth of Roman's skin. The hair on his chest under my hands. His thick, long cock against my leg.

Alexandria's little friend had definitely gotten the party started, but two minutes with Roman Jostad's glorious hard-on would have sent me into the stratosphere, I just know it.

"Good morning," I say, stepping around him like I'm just going to keep walking, even though I know he won't let me.

His hand comes up to wrap around my arm. "You owe me an explanation," he says in his thick Scandinavian accent.

"If you want an explanation, maybe ask your protégé."

I smile even as I yank my arm out of his grasp. I don't care who the fuck he is and how many Wimbledons he won. He doesn't get to touch me or treat me like that.

Even if I did accidentally touch him inappropriately in his room last night. At least, I wasn't doing it intentionally.

His eyes slide to the cafeteria door that's still swinging lightly. "You know," he says, crossing his arms, "I would have expected more from you." I keep my eyes on his

very blue ones to keep from noticing the bulge of his biceps.If ever there was an athlete who did not let himself go after he retired, it is Roman Jostad.

“Excuse me?” I ask.

He waves at the cafeteria door.“Athletes are supposed to be about honest competition. And from what I hear, women are supposed to support each other.”

I press my hand to my chest. “Um, I do believe in honest competition. And I do support women.But I don't support snakes who go around deceiving people. I don't need you to chastise me. You're not my coach. You have an issue with what happened last night?Maybe you should take it up with your little tennis ace in there, okay? Because that was not my doing.”

He takes a step toward me.“It was you who tried to put your hand down my shorts.”

I laugh because I don't know what else to do at this point.I take a step toward him, too, making sure he knows that I don't back down to anyone. We're close enough that I can feel his breath on my face. “And I apologize for that, but I didn't know it was you.” My eyes drop to his pants. “And you were hard as a fucking flagpole.”

At this, his jaw tightens, his eyes falling to my mouth. When he doesn't say anything, I just smile.

“Tell me, coach, why did Alexandria have a key to your hotel room anyway?”

At this, he steps back from me.“What are you implying?”

I shrug. “Nothing.Just seems a little inappropriate.”

“I accidentally grabbed her bag at luggage pickup. I sent her back to my room to get

it. I was busy.”

“Sure,” I say, striving to sound chipper. I love the way it unnerves people. I can always see it in their eyes. “Hey, I’m not saying anything untoward is happening. I’m just saying it might look bad.”

I can see the way he grinds his teeth, balls his hands into fists, opens his mouth to respond, but I just raise my hand and turn my back to him.

“I’ll see you later, Coach.”

“You know, I thought you were serious about tennis.”

His words stop me in my tracks. The hallway stretches out in front of me. I have to go. I have practice to get to. Warm-ups, stretches. I don’t have time for this bullshit. I don’t have time for Alexandria and her games, and Roman and his insecurities. But I turn around anyway.

“Excuse me?”

“They all say the same thing,” he raises his voice to call to me. “Tegan Sharpe is the new It Girl. The next big thing.” He walks toward me slowly. “But you’re just a scared little girl. Out getting drunk the night before a match? That’s not what serious athletes do.”

“Oh, is that so? Tell me, Roman, what were you doing when you were my age?”

His face changes at that, going smooth. He knows I’m right. Everyone knows what Roman Jostad was doing when he was my age, when he was twenty-three and an up-and-comer, brand new to the sport. All eyes on him.

He wasn't demurely going to bed at an early nine o'clock every evening, alone in his hotel room. He was fucking everything with two legs and partying every chance he got. And he still took the tennis world by storm before that accident ripped it all away.

“Correct me if I'm wrong,” I say, feeling my mask start to shrivel a little. “But I don't think that you got in that car accident because you were sitting in your hotel room like a good boy the night before a match.”

I refuse to look away from him, holding his steady gaze. He thinks that because he's fifteen years older than me, more experienced than me, and been around longer, that he knows what's good for me better than I do.

He doesn't. I take one more step toward him, tilt my head back to look up at him, so much taller than me. His shaggy blonde hair and his thick beard. particularly blonde in the fluorescent light. Blue eyes, shockingly blue.

“At least I'm not afraid to get out on the court, Coach.” This time when I walk away, he doesn't stop me.

### CHAPTER FOUR

Roman

It's probably bad form to manhandle your player in a cafeteria full of other athletes, but I'm far beyond caring about any of that now as I drag Alexandria over to a corner by her severely underworked arm.

“Ow,” she says, shoving at my wrist as soon as I come to a stop. “What's wrong with you?”

“What's wrong with you ?” I hiss at her.

I see the moment she realizes that this is serious. This is not me catching her slacking off. This isn't me catching her eating fast food when she's not supposed to, breaking her nutrition plan. This isn't me having to bang on her apartment door to wake her up for practice, or any of the other things that I have to do to get her to give a fuck about this sport.

“Tell me you didn't send Tegan Sharpe into my hotel room last night.”

All the color drains out of her face, and she swallows. “It was just supposed to be a joke.”

“Next time you want to play a joke on someone,” I say through my teeth, “leave me the fuck out of it. You've embarrassed me for the last time. Be ready for your fucking match tonight.”

I stomp out of the cafeteria. We should be practicing. We should be getting ready. But I can't fucking look at her.

So instead, I walk the grounds for a solid hour. I watch pedestrians go back and forth in front of the tennis center, people who have nothing to do with this world that I'm caught in the middle of. The sun beats down through the palm trees, and I can smell the salt on the water.

By the time I get back, the afternoon matches are about to begin. Today is only day two of the tournament. And I'm ready for it to be over already. Usually, I find it intoxicating being back when I've been away for a little while. When you spend your whole life doing something, it becomes all you know, and coming back to it is like coming home.

And once that's gone, what else is there? When you're someone who was once in the spotlight, they don't just let you leave. They reject you but shackle you to it all the same. They offer you a couple million a year to coach a mediocre tennis player.

Alexandria is not going to win this tournament. She's going to make it far because she has me as a coach. But she's not good enough to beat Tegan, and we all know it, including her.

I don't even know what I'm doing as my feet take me to the court. I know Tegan's match is up next, and I can't seem to stop myself. I settle into a row in the bleachers off to the side where I'm not terribly visible. A couple of people glance my way, and I know I've been recognized, even though I pulled my hair back and put on some sunglasses. It doesn't help that there's a portrait of me in the welcome center.

They announce Tegan and the woman she's playing against, an English tennis player who's good, but not as good as Tegan. She sets her things on the chair on her side of the court. A towel, a bottle of water, a small bag that she rummages

through, pulling out a hair tie. And even as I watch her, I realize I have made a huge mistake. Because when she looks up, I'm right there in her direct line of sight.

And she sees me immediately. Her face gives nothing away. She watches me for a moment. And then, like I'm not even there, she turns away, drinks down some water, and takes a seat.

It's a solid match. Tegan's English competitor puts up a good fight. It's not an easy match for Tegan. By the time it's over, she's dripping with sweat under the Miami sun.

She uses the hem of her shirt to wipe her brow and I see the soft, flat expanse of her belly, the belly I touched last night. I remember how soft her skin was under my hands, what she smelled like.

I wonder what could have happened if I hadn't stopped her in the dark. How long it would have taken her to figure out I wasn't who she thought I was. Would we have gone all the way? Would she have realized before or after I fucked her into an orgasm?

"Excuse me?"

I rip my gaze away from Tegan and look up at a middle-aged woman smiling kindly down at me. She's wearing a tennis outfit like she's ready to join the tournament at any moment.

"Are you Roman Jostad?"

"Um, yeah." I sit up straight in my chair, realize that while I was watching Tegan, the stands were beginning to empty.

The woman thrusts a program at me. "Can I have your autograph?"



### CHAPTER FIVE

Tegan

“Here, taste this.” The boy sitting next to me at the table tilts his wine glass up against my lips. The sweet red blend fills my mouth, and I hum as I swallow it down.

“Delicious.” I smile up at him and bite my lip, and he looks like he’d go at me right here on this table if I asked him to.

But I have absolutely no interest in doing anything with this guy. In fact, if Roman Jostad wasn’t watching me from the other side of the courtyard, I would get up and walk away from this table right now. I thought the party would be fun, much more fun than it actually is.

I like the parties at the tournaments. It’s an opportunity for the players to get to know each other, especially the ones who aren’t competing against each other, the way that I’m not competing against this young gentleman.

It’s an opportunity to see people’s faces up close, to hear what their voices sound like. Apparently, it’s also an opportunity for douchebag tennis coaches to stalk you.

I don’t know what Roman’s problem is, but he’s honestly acting like I can’t see him watching me. He’s talking to several very rich-looking men. As far as I know, none of them are tennis players, probably parents or sponsors.

A lot of people have shown up to this little shindig. There’s not a whole lot else to

down when you're stuck in a hotel room for four days.

You play tennis.

You train.

You eat.

And you talk to other tennis players.

That's it. That's all there is to do. But I'm not convinced for even a second that it's a coincidence that Roman and I have ended up at this particular party at the same time.

I saw him at my match. I saw him watching. I was aware of him the whole time, his eyes prickling my skin. It sucked, honestly. Such a distraction. I didn't play my best, by far.

Why is he even here? I can feel him watching me just like I could on the court. Only this time, I decide to fuck with him. So when this boy, whose name I absolutely cannot remember, leans close to me, I run my fingers along the sharp edge of his jaw.

“Give me a little more,” I tell him.

His pupils are wide. He definitely thinks he's getting his dick sucked tonight, but he's not.

I usually like hooking up with guys at tournaments and other events. It's the easiest way to scratch the itch. A tennis tournament is easier than Tinder. All these men are out here, spending their days exerting themselves, exercising, building up all this testosterone, and at the end of it, they're just looking for someone to fuck. And usually, I don't mind being that person.

But not tonight.

Roman's words are niggling me. I know I'm a serious tennis player, and I don't need to prove anything to anybody.

But he's probably right that I shouldn't be drinking the night before matches. That I can be stronger, better, faster, healthier. If I was getting more sleep, if I was sober.

But those are not things I'm very good at. This guy—I think his name is Jeff, or Joey—sets his hand on my bare thigh and squeezes.

“We should go back to my room.”

I smile up at him, sweet as pie. “I don't think so. I'm actually really tired, and I have a big match tomorrow.”

He pulls his head back, his lustful expression disappearing. “Yeah, I have a big match tomorrow too, Tegan.”

“I don't know why you're getting so defensive.”

He rolls his eyes. “Because you're a bitch,” he says, pushing away from the table. He's gone faster than the roadrunner.

Shit.

Well, if my plan was to fuck with Roman, he knows now that I'm not getting railed tonight. I thought I was at least going to leave with Jeff/Joey and then I would let him down easy at his door.

I pick up Jeff/Joey's wine glass and throw back what's left in it, using my finger to

wipe away a bead of red wine that threatens to trail its way down to my chin.

I will not look at Roman. I will not look to see if he's watching. I will not be embarrassed because I didn't get a chance to reject that asshole first.

I stand from the table, smile at a nearby group of ladies to pretend like everything is perfect, fix my skirt, and turn to leave. I walk around the side of the building, feeling a weird sense of relief when the music and conversation from the party starts to dim in my senses, when the lights stop being able to reach me.

I walk down the path in the dark. I could have gone through the building to get to my room, but it's on the opposite of the building from the party. This is nicer, calmer. The midnight sky is blue, and somewhere, I can smell a hint of fresh water and ozone, like it might rain tomorrow.

"You shouldn't walk alone at night."

My feet skitter to a stop when I hear his voice. "Listen," I say without turning around. "I don't know what I did to make you think that I want you to follow me around, but?—"

I don't even finish my sentence. Roman settles a large hand on my shoulder and spins me around.

When I look up at him, eyes shining in the moonlight, I feel like everything has tipped upside down. What the hell is happening?

And then his mouth slams down on mine, hard like he's trying to hurt me.

I groan against his tongue, every thought in my head immediately going quiet so that I can focus on the way he's grabbing me, walking us backwards as he kisses me, until

I'm pressed against the side of the hotel, the brick hard against my back.

He's gone so quick I gasp, dropping to his knees in front of me. I don't even have a second to think before he's got my skirt up around my hips and his mouth pressed between my legs. His tongue licks me through my underwear, and I bite my bottom lip to keep from crying out, my hands going into his soft hair.

Holy shit.

I look down at him, one of my legs hiked up over his shoulder. Is this really happening? Is Roman Jostad really about to eat me out up against a building, yards from a very loud party?"

His eyes find mine, and the picture of him is intoxicating, chin pressed to my pelvic bone, hands gripping my bare thighs.

"This okay?" he asks.

I snort. "Sure, now you ask."

He bites my thigh, and I yelp before slamming a hand against my mouth. Down below, Roman chuckles, and then all amusement is gone as he pushes my underwear aside and opens his mouth against my bare pussy.

I slam my eyes shut and press my head back against the building, focusing on breathing, on not letting a single sound escape. The last thing I need is for anyone to wander away from that party and find me with Roman's mouth between my legs.

Roman Jostad doesn't need a map to find my clit. He finds it first with his fingers and then with his mouth, tongue flicking against it so fast, my eyes roll back in my head.

But before I can go over the edge, he stands, ripping something out of his back pocket, and it takes me a second to realize it's a condom.

We're really doing this. This is really happening.

"Do you always carry condoms around in your pocket?" I ask, watching as he frees himself from his pants and rolls the condom on. In the dark, I can't get a good look at his dick. What a shame.

"Yes," Roman says simply, and I don't have time to question him before he's got one of my legs hiked up over his hip and is sinking into me.

My mouth falls open, and his hand clamps down over my lips before I can make a noise.

"Quiet," he says into my ear, pressing his cheek to mine as he pulls out and plunges back into me.

"Harder," I whisper back.

He grunts and hooks his elbow under my leg, lifting it higher to spread me further. The friction is so good. I tilt my hips, let every press of his body slam up against my clit. I surprise myself when I wrap my arms around his shoulder, when I let him use my body however he wants because he's Roman Jostad and also because it just feels so good.

"Yes. Fuck me, fuck me."

He's ruthless in his thrusts, the sound of his hips slapping against mine seeming so loud in my ears, like tiny gunshots. He starts to roll his hips against me, hitting something inside me that makes me see stars.

I squeak, an unfortunate sound I can't seem to keep inside, and then start to come around him.

He lets out this relieved sound and then thrusts into me even harder, like someone racing toward a finish line. He groans into my neck, and I hold onto him while he does, my hands buried in his hair.

After a few minutes, Roman lifts his head from my shoulder, looking me in the eye.

What the hell did we just do?

### CHAPTER SIX

Roman

I grimace as I stretch my shoulder and run my fingers over the scar. Apparently, when you have a shoulder injury that never quite healed, you shouldn't lift a girl up and fuck her against a wall. I guess I thought it would be okay, considering Tegan Sharpe can't be more than 110 pounds, but clearly the adrenaline took hold because I didn't feel any pain last night but I sure as fuck feel it now.

I look at myself in the mirror. Who the fuck am I? What was that last night? I don't even know how to explain it. It was like some kind of animalistic knee-jerk reaction. I saw her flirting with that guy, and when I saw him reject her, I couldn't decide whether I wanted to kill the kid because I was jealous or because he had turned her down. Both and neither, it would appear.

And then I chased her out of there and fucked her like an animal, thinking if Alexandria found out, she'd kill me. Her father would have my nuts in a jar before the day was out. There's a knock at my door, and I reach for my shirt, pulling it over my head.

Some ridiculous desire inside me hopes it'll be Tegan, but I can't even begin to imagine what I think would happen. Round two? Some kind of blackmail demand? Some kind of discussion about what last night meant, if anything?

But unfortunately, it's not Tegan Sharpe at my door.



It's Alexandria Cruz and her father.

“Sir,” I say, holding the door open wide to let him in. He shakes my hand, gives me a curt nod, and steps into the room. He's wearing a three-piece suit, as if we're not at a tennis tournament in Florida.

His eyes take in my hotel room. It's messy, sure, but not embarrassing. Alexandria trails in behind him, wearing a strange grin. I think she secretly loves this, watching her father put me in my place. Makes her feel big.

“How's the tournament going?” he says, clasping his hands behind his back. I expect him to sit down somewhere, on the bed or at the desk, but he looks at both with a grimace and just stands in the middle of my hotel room and waits for me to reply.

“Good. Things are going good. She's still on the bracket, so?—”

“How much longer?” he asks.

“Two days,” I tell him. “She's got her work cut out for her.”

Mr. Cruz tilts his head to the side. “She does, or you do?”

I do my best not to grind my teeth. He notices little things like that. I don't need to give him something to hold over my head later.

“We both do, sir.”

He nods. “Yeah, I heard the competition was pretty stiff, but she needs this tournament if she wants to get into a Grand Slam, play with the big dogs.”

The big dogs. Alexandria's father has a whole path set out for her. The path of a

champion. A path that she's not good enough to walk, by far.

"One match at a time," I say, trying to sound optimistic.

He lifts his chin. "We focus on today, and then we beat Tegan Sharpe tomorrow."

I feel something roil in my stomach. Generally speaking, Alexandria's father ignores her. He has no idea what's going on in her life at any one time. Doesn't care. But he must have done his research on this thing. Must have done his research on who would be here.

"Right," I tell him. "It's going to be a tough one. Tegan is?—"

"I don't care what she is. Alexandria is going to win this tournament. Masters in April. Grand Slam next year. Or we're going to find ourselves a new coach."

I sigh. "Come on, Mr. Cruz, you know I don't have any control over that."

He steps closer to me, lowers his voice, which is laughable really, because this hotel room is quiet as the grave, and what does he need to sugar coat it for anyway? Alexandria knows where she stands in the world of tennis. He doesn't need to pretend otherwise.

"You got Alexandria here," he says. "I know that you're capable of magic."

Over his shoulder, Alexandria's expression doesn't even change. She's not surprised by her father saying that it's going to take a literal magician to make her a good tennis player.

"But I'm not capable of magic. She's here with... Tegan Sharpe is phenomenal."

“She doesn't need this competition. But Alexandria does,” Mr. Cruz says, “You got her here; you're gonna get her to the next step because that's what I pay you this much money for.”

Yeah. That's what he pays me this much money for. And he's the only thing currently standing between me and crippling debt. Or homelessness.

“I'm gonna do what I can,” I tell him. “I have worked my hardest for you. And so has Alexandria.” I'm fairly certain that last bit is a lie, but I'll say what I need to at the moment. “But if Tegan plays a better match, there's nothing I can do about that.”

Mr. Cruz nods. Makes this face that says, we'll see.

We'll see if I can work a miracle.

We'll see if I can somehow control the fates and help Alexandria win. But unless Alexandria has some kind of Tonya Harding stunt under her sleeve, she's not going to beat Tegan Sharpe.

### CHAPTER SEVEN

Tegan

I am pathetic. This is pathetic.

Everyone in this building, in this complex, in this part of Florida, on this beach, is celebrating me right now. They're celebrating me because I'm one of the last two on the bracket. Tomorrow, it's just me and Alexandria.

Everywhere I go, people are patting me on the back, stopping to tell me "great match."

And for some godforsaken, completely unbeknownst to me, reason, I'm looking for Roman Jostad. Why am I looking for Roman? I'm looking for Roman because I have not stopped thinking about his dick all day.

And I do mean all day. I was out on the court, slamming another player into the ground, and like some kind of caricature of a male wet dream, all I could think about was Roman holding me against that wall, fucking me into oblivion.

And now I'm strung so tight that I know if I don't have him again, I will actually die.

A part of me is also kind of wondering if maybe I'll lose tomorrow if I don't have him again. Which is crazy. But he loosened me right up.

I know I'm good at tennis. I know that I have a long career ahead of me. But I also

know that I get wound a little too tight during a match. Get too focused, get too precise. My hands start to sweat. It's my only real weakness.

But today, I was as smooth and pliant as if I had just come off the massage table. Which, you know, I had, but that's beside the point. My whole body was relaxed and ready and not strung tight at all.

Except between my legs, of course.

And if I want to win this tournament tomorrow, I'm pretty sure I need Roman to bruise my pelvis tonight.

Just one more time, I tell myself as I wander back to the hotel. Just once more to get me through the rest of this tournament.

I mean, what does it matter that Roman is Satan's coach? No one would care, except maybe Alexandria. It's not against any rules. No one's asking any questions. We're all adults here. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that he knows how to fuck, and I desperately need to get fucked.

I could certainly go find some other guy to hook up with, but I am nothing if not efficient. And why would I waste my time looking for some other guy who might not be able to satisfy me when I know that Roman knows exactly how to touch me to make me scream?

This is just a thing that makes sense. That's all it is, common sense.

And that's how I find myself outside of Roman's hotel room, knocking, watching as he opens the door in sweatpants and a gray t-shirt. He looks like he was already in bed.

"God, you really are ancient," I say when he doesn't greet me. "Did you manage to

make your seven p.m. bedtime?Did you get your early bird special?"

"What are you doing here?" he asks.

I'm certainly not here for small talk. When I don't say anything,Roman steps aside and lets me into his room.

It's strange to be back here. The last time I saw this room, I was half-naked, utterly mortified, and shamefully turned on.

Roman shuts the door and steps around me, blocking me from going any further into the room. He doesn't say anything, and as I stand there and look at him, I know that I lied to myself.

I'm not just here because Roman is a good fuck.

I'm here because when we argued yesterday, and then when he held me against that wall, I felt something . I don't think it would be fair to call it affection. But it was definitely something. Like when your feet have gone numb and then you get in a hot shower, and your skin burns.

It's not good or bad. It's just something.

"I know I shouldn't be here," I finally say, my voice sounding loud in the silent hotel room.

"No, you shouldn't be," he says. And then he takes a step toward me. "But I'm not going to ask you to leave."

I push up on my tiptoes and kiss him.

Last night, everything was fast and hard and surprising. But as Roman pulls me backward into his room, we go slow, his tongue caressing mine, his hands slipping under my shirt.

He lowers me onto the bed and wastes no time pulling my athletic shorts down my legs. He shoves my shirt up and kisses the spot just below my belly button. His tongue leaves a line along the hem of my underwear and then dips into my navel.

I finally find my brain, the lust haze lifting long enough for me to shove him away. “No way,” I say, pushing up to sitting. “You got to call the shots last night. It’s my turn.”

He’s on his knees in front of me, his eyes wide. And then he smiles this sexy, devious little smile. “What are you going to do with me, Tegan?”

I give his shoulders a shove, and he falls back on the bed. It’s not a very big bed, but he’s a very big guy. I reach for his pants, and when he realizes what I’m doing, he laughs and relaxes, his head hanging over the end of the bed.

Some sharp emotion spears through me, and I slither up his body to kiss his Adam’s apple, give it a good suck, before going back to his pants. I easily free his cock and don’t hesitate before leaning over to wrap my mouth around it.

He moans, a loud, desperate sound, and hearing it makes me wet. Roman must have been holding back last night because we were out in public. Tonight, he moans and whimpers as I run my tongue up and down the length of him before sucking him down.

When I gag, he lets out a little shout, so I do it again and again, taking him down further than I would normally be bothered to. This isn’t some dude bro in a backward cap begging me for head.

This is Roman Jostad, a man who every single tennis player in the world knows. And for some reason, he wants me, and I want him. Especially all those noises.

“Oh, fuck,” he says, pressing his hips down into the bed and grabbing my face. He lifts his head to meet my gaze. “You have to stop.” He fumbles for the scrunched pocket of his sweats, pulling out a condom.

I grin, wiping my chin before I whip my shirt off over my head. Between my spit and the way I’m leaking between my legs, I slip down onto him with no effort at all.

We both gasp, and he reaches up to grip my hips as I start to ride him. I plant my hands on his broad, hairy chest, anchoring myself so I can ride him hard. This may have started gently, but I don’t want gentle anymore.

I lean forward, push my hips against his with every roll, setting a steady rhythm.

“Fuck, look at you,” he says, his hands sliding up to grab my breasts. “So beautiful.”

I bite my lip to hold in a sob.

So beautiful.

Even in the middle of sex, I don’t think anyone has ever called me beautiful before.

Intense. Tenacious. Driven. Determined. Ruthless.

But never beautiful.

I collapse onto him, wrapping my arms around him and slamming my mouth against his. Roman kisses me like he’s trying to swallow me whole, and I love it. Being wanted so badly, there’s nothing as sexy as that.



In this position, pressed against him so completely, it doesn't take long for all the friction to push me to the edge. His chest rubbing against my nipples, his pelvis grinding against my clit, his hands clutching my ass.

"You gonna fill me up, Coach?" I break away from him to ask.

He doesn't give a coherent answer, just moans long and hard, and that's all it takes to shove me closer and closer, until I catapult over the edge.

"Yes, yes, yes," he says against my ear, clutching me hard. And then he groans loud, his fingers digging into me so hard, I know he'll leave bruises.

Perfect.

### CHAPTER EIGHT

Tegan

I should definitely get up and leave. But Roman's skin is so soft and warm.

I can hear his heart beating under my ear. Steady.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“I suppose,” he says, his voice rumbling against my cheek.

“Why Alexandria? Why coach her?”

He's quiet for a long time. I think maybe he doesn't trust me, doesn't want to talk to me. Which is perfectly fair, but something has shifted between us. I can feel it. Something fundamental. All of my attitude, my ire, it's just kind of melted away. I just want to talk to him, no more sarcasm. No more eye rolling. Just two adults. Talking.

“Her dad hired me,” he says, as if that answers the question entirely.

“That simple, huh?” I say. It's easier to have this conversation with him when he isn't looking at me. His eyes are too intense. It makes it hard to have a normal conversation.

“Yeah. That simple. No one else wanted me.”

I grimace and push up onto my elbow to look at him. “What are you talking about? Why wouldn't anyone want to hire you? You're a tennis champ. You were one of the best.”

“I was .”

“Yeah, but?—”

“A lot of people lost faith. No one wants someone that can't be trusted, an alcoholic or a flake or a walking disaster. It is what it is. It's like you said: When I was your age, I should have been working hard, and instead, I was partying.”

I sigh. “I didn't mean any of that.”

“Yes, you did.” He doesn't look hurt by the fact. He watches me carefully. “You don't say things that you don't mean, do you?”

“I guess not,” I say. “But I shouldn't have been so mean to you.”

He smiles at that. “I wasn't exactly kind either. Has it occurred to you that the reason I like you so much is because you're mean to me?”

I laugh, pinch him in the side and watch him squirm. “Is that it? You into masochism?”

“No,” he says, shoving my hand away. “I just have no interest in people who pretend to be something they're not. I have no interest in people who make themselves soft for the sake of others.”

After a moment, I settle back on his chest, cheek pressed to sternum. “If you don't want to, you don't have to work with her.”

He glances over at me, then back up at the ceiling. His fingers move absently on the skin of my shoulder. I'm not sure what's happening here, but it's definitely not the very casual, quick encounter I thought it would be. Any kind of dislike I have for this man is very quickly diminishing into nothing.

“No one wants to work with me after the drama that I caused when I quit. My options are non-existent.”

Even as he says it, my fingers find the raised, pink scar on his shoulder, tucked right beneath his rotator cuff. I was too young to be paying attention when he had his accident, but I learned about it later. It happened almost ten years ago. He was at the height of his career and then got behind the wheel drunk. From what I read, his shoulder never healed the same after his steering column almost went straight through it.

And he didn't handle it well. He sank into alcohol addiction, got arrested a few times, just generally became made of mischief. But he pulled back out of it. Look at him now. But he unfortunately has a reputation. And I guess I understand why people don't want to work with him.

But Alexandria's dad does.

“Maybe you've proven yourself,” I tell him. “You know, maybe you could move on to someone else now that you've proven that you can turn a nobody into a winner.” I clamp my mouth shut, but it's too late. I've already said it.

He raises one very blonde eyebrow at me. “A nobody, huh?”

I sigh and flop back on the mattress. “Look, I'm not trying to be petty or be a mean girl. If anything, between the two of us, that's Alexandria's job. But you know she was a talentless hack before you started working with her.”

He turns his head to look at me, still lying flat on the bed. My eyes trace the lines of him. His throat and his clavicles and his chest bone. He is truly magnificent. And it's something I noticed before this week. Everyone in tennis is aware of how hot Roman is. But there was no way in hell I thought I was going to be in this situation with him.

“How do the two of you know each other?” he asks. “She’s never spoken of you.”

Not surprising. “We went to school together. High school. She was just as awful back then as she is now. Spoiled little Daddy's girl. I actually think we could have been friends, you know? I hate to admit it, but I liked her. But she was always...” I feel like if I say this next part, it's going to sound extremely self-aggrandizing.

“Jealous?” he asks.

I sigh. “I’m not trying to sound full of myself.”

“I know,” he says, finally shifting to his side to face me, his shaggy blonde hair falling into his face before he pushes it away with his big hand. “I’ve seen the two of you. I’ve watched you play and I’ve watched her play. I know very well that she doesn't have the raw natural talent that you do.”

I roll my eyes.

“What?” he asks.

“I hate it when people say I have natural talent.”

“You do,” he says. “Some people are built for sport. They're built for competition. They're built for focus and hard work. I don't mean to say that tennis comes easily to you.”

He takes my chin in his thumb and forefinger, turns my face back toward his.

“I’m not trying to diminish the work you put in. I’m trying to say that you were born to work hard for what you want, and Alexandria wasn’t. And that’s why you are incredible. And she, she reaches.”

He grimaces. “She doesn’t want to work hard, but I’ve taught her good technique. She strains. She fights. But you...”

His thumb brushes over the tip of my chin.

“Your technique is built into your body. You teach it to yourself and it becomes an extension of you. You are fluid.”

He runs his fingers down my neck, across my collarbone.

“You’re like a dancer when you play. But her? It’s like watching somebody struggle under too much weight. She’ll never be you.”

There’s a beat of silence between us. And then I lunge at him, wrapping my arms, my whole body around him, and kissing him.

### CHAPTER NINE

Roman

I sit in the stands, front row, on Alexandria's side, beside her father. It's the last match of the tournament. Alexandria versus Tegan, just like everyone predicted.

I have to keep my eyes from finding her on the court. She hasn't looked over here, which I'm thankful for. I'm trying to keep my mind in a box, carefully locked in, so that I don't think about her, the taste of her, the smell of her, the feel of her.

So that I don't think about the fact that I feel like I'm in the wrong place. Like over there, where she is, is the shore, and I'm bobbing in the ocean, getting further and further away. I'm surprised Alexandria's father is here to watch the match.

Part of me thinks it's less about watching the match and more about keeping an eye on his investment. I grit my teeth as the match goes on, one girl earning points, and then the other, back and forth.

Alexandria and Tegan have each won one set. I watch the shape of Alexandria's body as she fights each one of Tegan's drives.

It's just like I told Tegan, Alexandria has to work so hard. The sport doesn't come naturally to her body. She has long, awkward limbs, and while longer limbs should be a benefit to her, they aren't. She doesn't know what to do with them.

It's taken hours, days, months, to teach her how to properly hold herself, how to react

quicker, how to calculate and watch. I spare a glance at Tegan. She's like a heat-seeking missile. She grips her racket, her whole body poised to attack, like a wild animal.

I think about her last night. She climbed on top of me and rode me into next week. We fucked four times before I let her sleep.

And when I woke up this morning, she was gone. I shouldn't have kept her up. But it was like trying to starve myself when there was a steak on the table in front of me.

I watch with everyone else as the ball goes back and forth, as each woman lunges, hits, grunts.

Everything happens so quickly.

One minute, my eyes are on the ball, sailing over the net.

And the next, Alexandria is on the ground, clutching her leg. The ball bounces beside her. The umpire halts the set.

For a moment, we all just stare. The whole world feels disjointed.

I can't quite make out exactly what happened. It's like nothing is lining up in any sense of reality. Alexandria was not in any kind of position to injure herself. She lunged, yes, but not with any real force.

As medical officials rush onto the court, my eyes find Tegan. She looks as confused as I do, watching with a scowl, her tennis racket hanging limply from her hand.

Then she looks up at me. And I know.



I've just lost my job.

And for absolutely nothing.

### CHAPTER TEN

Tegan

I war with myself about whether or not to go to the medic to see Alexandria.I don't actually want to see Alexandria.I want to see Roman.

I glance down the long expanse of hallway.There's a sign at the end: CLINIC, with an arrow.The hallway's empty, quiet.

I've played the moment over and over again in my head.I was watching Alexandria closer than anybody else.

Nothing happened.

She did not injure herself.

One minute she was up, her eyes on the ball,and the next minute, she was on the court,clutching her leg as if someone had taken a bat to it.

I stop at the turn, stare at the sign for the clinic. When I turn my head, look down the next hallway,Roman is at the end of it.He leans against a wall, rubbing the back of his neck. He hears me coming, the squeak of my tennis shoes.But he doesn't move.Just watches me as I approach.

“Hey,” I say.

He doesn't say anything. I glance at the shut door to the clinic. Through the window in the door, I can see Alexandria and her father. They're arguing, and I can just barely hear their muffled voices but can't make out any words.

"You probably shouldn't be here," Roman says.

"Probably not," I say, but I have no intention of leaving. He's about to go through an ordeal, and I don't even know why, but I can't bring myself to let him go through it alone.

"How is she?" I ask. Which is an odd question, since I'm looking at her right now, and she's standing on both of her legs, looking healthy as a horse.

"You know she's fine," Roman says.

"Yeah." That's all I can say in return.

"I can't figure out why she did it," he finally says after a long moment. "X-rays. Examinations. Everything's fine. No sprains, no tears. Not even a bruise. Except maybe her bruised ego. She faked it."

"Yes," I say.

He finally turns to look at me, confusion written across his face. "All because she was afraid to lose to you?"

"Some people just can't take it, I guess."

His eyes shift back and forth between mine. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"It's not supposed to mean anything. It's just that some people... I don't know. The idea

of peaking, of being...being reduced to one single accomplishment..."I don't know what we're talking about anymore.If we're talking about him or Alexandria. He won Wimbledon at twenty-four.And then he crashed.Like an airplane with no pilot. "Fear of peaking.Fear of not being enough.Fear of reaching your what could be your greatest accomplishment so youngthat there's nothing else stretching out in front of you?It's too much for some people."

I suspect it was too much for Roman.

"You don't know anything about it," he says, and I can tell by the tone of his voice that he think I've taken it too far.

I move, stepping in between him and the door."Maybe," I say."But maybe it's a tale as old as time. And maybe it's time to forgive yourself and move on."

His jaw works.Clenching and unclenching. "Congratulations on your win, Tegan," he spits at me. "You can go now."

I don't want to leave him, but I also don't want to stay where I'm not wanted. So, I turn, and I leave him there.

### CHAPTER ELEVEN

Roman

I'm packing my bag when there's a knock at the door. It's not like I'm surprised. I was waiting for it. Maybe even dragging my feet so that I wouldn't have to have the conversation over the phone.

I open the door, find Alexandria. "Hey, Coach," she says, her voice downtrodden, her head bowed.

I've never seen her humbled like this before, but I can only imagine the things her father said to her when he found out she faked an injury so she wouldn't have to face her biggest competition.

"Alexandria," I say, stepping back to let her in. I wait for her father to follow, but he doesn't. I step out into the hall, look both ways. It's empty.

"Where's your father?" I ask.

She shrugs, her head still bowed. "He said that I had to do this on my own."

"Do what? Fire me?" I say, letting the door slam closed.

"He's not firing you," she says.

I've already got my duffel bag in my hand. The room has been cleaned, but I glance

over at the bed, looking away quick when memories of Tegan pop into my head. I'll never forget the smell of her.

“You lost the tournament. The stipulations seemed pretty clear to me. You lose, I'm fired. You lost.”

“Only technically,” she says. She's very closely examining her shoelaces, the ones that are attached to the shoes on her very not-injured feet. “It's not your fault I didn't win, so Daddy said you can keep teaching me.”

We stand there for a long time. I wait for her to look up. I will not say this to the top of her head.

When she finally raises her eyes to mine, I say, “Alexandria, I don't want to be your coach anymore. And you don't want to play tennis anymore. So what do we say, we both just tell your dad to go fuck himself?”

Her brow furrows. “I have to do what he says.”

“No, you don't,” I say, hoisting my duffel bag up over my shoulder, the strap bisecting my torso. “No, you don't. You're an adult, and you don't have to do what anybody tells you to. And I'm an adult, too, and I don't have to let your father manipulate me just so that I can pay my rent. All right?”

“You think he's manipulating you ?What do you think he's doing to me?”

I have never, in the several years that I've been working with Alexandria, had a lick of sympathy for her. Yes, her father is terrible, but she's always taken that terror and turned around and paid it forward to everyone she knew. How can I feel bad for someone like that? I feel bad for her now. Because her father is terrible, and he's holding things over her head, and nobody deserves that. Even if they are kind of

awful.

“Alexandria,” I say, stepping forward and placing a hand on her shoulder. “I’m really sorry. Truly.”

She looks up at me with those ocean blue eyes of hers, pleading.

“I’m not going to let your dad push me around anymore. And I suggest that you do the same. But at the end of the day, I have no control over you. Only you can help yourself out of this situation. Tell your dad I quit. Tell him I refuse to work with somebody who would throw a tournament because they were scared.”

Her chin wobbles at this. I sort of feel bad, but I don’t really. I mean it. I’m not going to work with someone who doesn’t want it, someone who would do what Alexandria did today.

“I guess, thank you for everything that you’ve done for me,” she says. “I appreciate it. I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for you.”

I pat her on the shoulder. “Just fucking quit, Alexandria. There are more important things in life than tennis.”

And with that, I leave.

### CHAPTER TWELVE

Tegan

I should be happy. In the middle of a party being thrown in my honor for winning the Miami Open, I should be happy. But I'm not.

There has never been a victory as empty as this one. Not just because of what Alexandria did, but because Roman is gone. According to Alexandria, who kindly dropped by to congratulate me, he left hours ago. Moved on. Maybe never to be heard from again in the world of tennis. And maybe that's not such a bad thing, for his sake.

While the party rages on, I walk down to the beach. It takes a while to get there from the hotel. The sun is starting to go down, the waves rolling onto the sand, and I stand at the very edge of the water, let it rush over my bare feet.

No one's even going to notice I'm gone. Most of them are half drunk. When I get back to my hotel room tonight, I'll probably drink myself into a stupor as well.

A cool wind blows in and I cross my arms. I'm wearing a strapless dress, so it doesn't take much. I sort of feel like I want to cry, which is so ridiculous.

What, I'm going to cry because I won a tournament? I'm going to cry because Roman lost? I'm going to cry because I'm probably never going to see him again?

The lump forms harder in my throat. I have no idea what we were doing these last few days, but...it was nice. It was nice to not be alone.



I've spent the last few years traveling. Working hard. Sure, I have tennis friends. But I'm not very good at socializing and Alexandria was turning a lot of people against me.

And I'm just busy. So busy trying to have a career that friendship is not exactly at the top of my priority list. Neither are romantic relationships.

And somehow, in the last two days, I had both. I had somebody who I liked to talk to. Somebody who I wasn't counting down the seconds until I could leave. And now, I'm probably never going to see him again.

I feel one hot tear roll down my cheek and angrily wipe it away. It's so stupid to be upset about this. To be upset about some weird little tryst I had with Roman Jostad.

If you had told me a year ago that I would have sex several times with Roman Jostad, I would have laughed in your face.

When the water comes up over my calves, my feet sufficiently buried in wet sand, I turn back for the hotel.

There's a dark figure on the beach, standing at the bottom of the stairs that lead back up to the road,

I can still hear the music from the hotel. The lights from the buildings above are casting a deep shadow over whoever it is watching me right now.

A little sprinkle of fear goes through me. I'm out here alone. No one up at the party is paying any attention to what's going on down at the beach. I could very easily get attacked and no one would even notice. This person could toss my body into the ocean, and I'd be fish food by morning.

But then the figure steps out of the shadows and into the fading light, and I see that it's

Roman, his blonde hair pushed out of his eyes, a duffel bag slung over his body.

Why is he still here?

“Roman?” I call. I want to go to him, but I feel frozen. So I'm glad when he walks toward me, both hands grasping the strap across his chest. He looks like all the tennis bros I went to college with, and I feel my heart start to pound, because he's here, and he's beautiful.

And I'm seeing him again. I'm getting another chance. We could exchange phone numbers. We could make some kind of plans to see each other at another tournament. I don't know.

My mind is racing when he finally stops in front of me.

“I have to leave for my flight,” he says.

“Where are you going?”

“Home.”

“And, um, where is that?”

One side of his mouth quirks up. “You don't know where I live.”

I shrug. It's not like I memorized his Tennis Association profile. I didn't know we were going to end up here. “Sweden?”

He laughs. “No. I moved to Amsterdam a decade ago.”

“I've never been to Amsterdam.”

He tilts his head to one side. “Really?”

I nod. He nods, too. And this weird, awkward lull in the conversation happens. Did he come here to say goodbye, or...

“Ask me to go with you.”

His eyes shoot back to mine with laser focus. “What?”

I take a step toward him, a big one so that I have to crane my neck to look up at him. “Ask me to go to Amsterdam with you and I’ll say yes.”

I see his Adam’s apple bob, see his chest move up and down in a heavy breath. “Why would you want to come to Amsterdam with me?”

I shrug. “Because I really like you? Because it might be fun? Because I kind of want to let you fuck me the Netherlands, like a million times?”

At that, he laughs. And so do I, the tension between us snapping.

He steps forward until he’s pressed to me, reaches up and takes my jaw in his big hand. “I’m not a tennis coach anymore,” he says.

“Okay. Are you happy with that?”

He shrugs. “I’m happy not to be working for Alexandria’s father anymore. I don’t really know what to do with myself now. But I’m not afraid anymore.”

I think about what I said to him outside the clinic. I don’t know if it was the right thing to do or not, but maybe it brought us here.

“You could coach me.”

He scoffs. “You have a coach, a very good one.”

“Be my assistant then.” I step closer, wrap my arms around him, grab onto the strap behind his back, not letting go. “You could just travel with me and...be there to cheer me on. Be a consultant or something. Help me with my technique. Have sex with me every night, so that I'm all limbered up for my matches.”

His smile is brighter than what's left of the sunlight. “And you think that would be a fulfilling life for me?”

“I don't know. We could play tennis together.”

At that, his smile dims a little. “I'm no competition for you.”

“I don't want competition. Just a partner.”

He presses his forehead to mine. “Will you come to Amsterdam with me?”

I smile. “Yes.”