



Single Daddy To Go

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Description: The growly, gorgeous single dad wants more children, and the curvy girl would be the perfect mommy to his kids. Rob Lockhart's daughter is in my pre-school class. When he comes in to pick her up, the breath exits my lungs in a whoosh! After all, the alpha male is growly, gorgeous, and so eligible with intense blue eyes, chiseled features, and a physique that would make an Olympic swimmer jealous. But one day when he picks up his daughter, his jacket flies open and I see ... ohmygod. Is that enormous Christmas present for me? I gasp, growing hot. Evidently so, because this single dad wants more kids. In fact, he wants a dozen or so to form a hockey team. A dozen? The thought makes me catch my breath. I'd be more than delighted to give this possessive, demanding billionaire dozens of children. But are my curves right for Rob Lockhart? Or will he be a single daddy forever?

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Ally

I have an awesome job, and today is another beautiful day. I work with children, which is all I've wanted to do since I was a child myself because I've always loved taking care of kids. Right now, I work with two and three-year-olds at Ladybug Tots in NYC, which is a cheery yellow building smack dab in the middle of the city.

The main room of the day care center is a happy place decorated with cartoon ladybugs and charts about letters and numbers. Here and there, kids' art pieces are tacked up on the brightly painted walls. A set of cubbies take up one side, filled with the children's belongings and marked with their names.

Right now, the tots are engaged in free play, amusing themselves with blocks and dolls and playing all sorts of different games with each other. I'm keeping a watchful eye, making sure no one hurts anyone else or gets into trouble, but this part of the day gives me and my co-worker a rare moment to catch up.

We both crouch on tiny, bright-colored plastic stools. Emma and I have worked together here for about a year. She's a blonde with a perky bob and round cheeks. When she smiles, two dimples form above the corners of her smile, and wrinkles show up beside the corners of her big hazel eyes. Right now, she's giggling like one of the kids, her dimples in full effect.

"OMG, Ally," she whispers. "My date last night was sooooo good. My boyfriend Justin came over and we were supposed to watch Planet Earth on Netflix, but he was so

handsy! I just didn't know what to do."

It's not exactly my area of expertise, but I smile and nod. The expression I'm going for is knowing conspirator, but I'm not sure if it comes through or not.

"Is that so?" I ask her.

She giggles even harder.

"Justin has these really big hands. I'd tell him to stop, but I didn't really want him to stop, and I guess he could tell. I'd push him off and he'd pause for a while and then go back to it, you know? Eventually I couldn't resist anymore. He wanted mesobad. Who was I to say no? I guess you could say we were the subject of our own nature documentary. Mmmm Justin, he's an animal but I love it!"

She flashes me what is definitely a conspiratorial smirk. I laugh in response, perhaps a little weakly. He's an animal but I love it isn't something I've ever felt about anyone.

"So," Emma goes on, her fit of giggles subsiding. "Tell me about your last date."

I suck my teeth. It's not a good story.

Emma gives me a poke in the ribs.

"Come on, dish it, girl!"

I can feel my face turning red. I really don't want to talk about this, but here I am anyway.

"The guy stood me up," I finally admit with a sigh.

Emma's pretty mouth drops open.

"What? Really? What an asshole!"

The expression I'm going for is nonchalance. I shrug.

"Yeah. Whatever. It's O.K. These things happen."

I'm only pretending because it wasn't O.K. at all. I can feel a pit opening in my stomach as I remember the evening.

It's embarrassing because this was actually an old-fashioned set up. My mom set me up with my date, which means that people actually know us. So how could he no-show? It's humiliating.

After all, if you're dating on-line, at least a no-show is anonymous. I understand some of the sites will ding your user profile if you're reported for a lot of no-shows, but still. I was stood up in real life.

It's my mom's fault. She's always trying to set me up with what she thinks are "good guys." I usually tell her no, but Clarence actually sounded kind of awesome. He was the son of one of her friends from Bridge Club. My mom told me he was a medical student who wanted to focus on building artificial limbs for children disabled by land mines. The pictures she showed me revealed a handsome man with wavy brown hair and a winning smile. He looked a little short, but sweet anyways.

"He seems too good to be true," I told my mom as she excitedly relayed how Clarence wanted to take me out on a date. My mom isn't the most practical woman. She buys tickets to the lottery and is always dreaming about me getting married to some doctor or lawyer. I tell her that things are different now, and guys don't really want that sort of old fashioned romance, but she always tells me she knows better.

“Why not, darling? You’re a beautiful woman with a heart of gold. Any man with half a brain can tell you’re a catch!” Bernice tapped her red lacquered nails on her wine glass.

Of course she thinks I’m a catch. She’s my mother, after all. She’s almost constitutionally obligated to have such an opinion. Still, it made me smile.

“I love you,” I told her. “Tell you what? If Clarence is really serious, I’ll go on a date with him.”

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“Splendid!” Bernice said, as the waiter brought her another glass of Chardonnay. “Althea and I will set it up. Clarence is a little shy and focused on work, but Althea wants him to get out more, and she agrees that you would be perfect for him.”

I rolled my eyes.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. It’s just a first date first, right?” I quipped.

But all kidding aside, I was really excited to meet the guy. I spent three days day-dreaming about our time together. When the weekend rolled around, I spent an hour taming my mane of brown curls and another hour deciding what to wear for my special night, trying on every outfit I owned until finally settling on a blue dress that showed off my curves without being overtly sexy. Fortunately, I own a pair of matching heels that were high, but not too high.

I looked like a million bucks, but it was all for nothing because Mr. Big Shot never showed up. I didn’t get so much as a text. He flat out no showed.

It was devastating. I waited at the neighborhood bistro for over two hours, my heart getting smaller with every minute. The waitress kept coming by to check on me, as all the cheer drained out of my spirit. By the time I finally left, I was so embarrassed and felt utterly worthless and stupid for having believed that it would work out.

I called my mom, and Bernice called her friend in a huff. The son gave some weak excuse about work, but it didn’t matter. I definitely wasn’t going to try again because I was way too hurt by the whole experience. I would never do that to someone. I’d literally have to be in the hospital in a coma before I’d stand someone up without

even texting something, and I wasn't about to try another date with someone who had so little consideration for my feelings.

"These things happen," Emma consoles me, back in the present. Over her voice I can hear the squeals of excited children as they dart around the room. "No, Ally. They don't just happen. That guy was a jerk."

He was, but I don't want to dwell on it. If I let myself go down that road, I might cry, and I don't want to break down in front of Emma or the kids. It wouldn't be professional. I shrug again, doing my best to cover the wound in my heart with an extra dose of perkiness.

"Yeah, sure, and I'm not going to let it get to me. He was just some guy I never even met. I don't want to give him space in my mind."

She nods, her energy rising.

"I don't know how you stay so nice, Ally. If a guy did that to me, I'd want to find out where he lived and... I don't know... egg his house? Key his car?"

"Hire the mob to break his kneecaps?" I tease half-heartedly, glad the subject has moved into the realm of the theoretical. I'm still hurt about what happened, although I'm trying not to feel it. Clarence got my hopes up and he let me down. I'd rather just not have a date at all than have something like that happen again.

"Yeah!" Emma says encouragingly. "That's the spirit!"

I laugh. She laughs too. The conversation moves on to other things. But as we chat, I keep silently flashing back to that night, to the way I felt sitting there in that restaurant as the clock ticked away the minutes – sad, embarrassed, and alone. I really wish she hadn't brought it up. It's not her fault, of course, because my co-worker

didn't know. Still, it's a subject I didn't want to have to re-visit.

I don't know what's wrong with me that makes me so unlovable. My mom may think I'm a catch, but guys don't seem to agree. I hear "I love you" all the time from sweet kids and my friends, but I've never had a man say it and mean it.

Maybe it's my size. I've always been a bigger girl, with giant boobs up front and a whole lot of junk in the trunk. I've tried dieting and I do get a reasonable amount of exercise with walking and biking, but no matter what I do, my body stays curvy and soft. I've given up on trying to change this aspect of myself. Trust me, it never works.

When I was in high school, other girls used to make fun of me and call me fat, but I just smiled through it, doing my best to be a good person even though it made me want to cry sometimes. Besides, being fat is a whole lot better than being a cruel person. So what if I'm curvy? I have a good heart and I'm kind to people.

These days, no one insults me openly or anything like that, but the dates certainly aren't lining themselves up. I guess it's O.K. Or at least I tell myself it's okay and try to be grateful for what I have. I enjoy my job and being around all the little kids. I have a good relationship with my family and plenty of friends. Everything except my love life is amazing, so I really shouldn't complain, but sometimes I feel empty on the inside. It would be so nice to have someone to share my life with and a special someone to wake up with in the morning.

A buzz on the front door breaks me out of the moment. I glance up at a clock on the wall and notice that it's five o'clock. I work until 7 PM, when the last of the parents arrive, but the first one start coming to pick up their kids around five.

"Coming!" Emma announces, in the sing song voice she uses with children and their parents as she heads for the door. She opens it to reveal the twiggy frame of Mrs. Cavannah, who has twins in day care, a boy and a girl with matching blonde hair and

green eyes.

“Piper! Aaron!” I call out to them. They run over to me on their little feet, clad in Transformers and Frozen-themed shoes. Piper throws her arms around me as I help her put on her Sponge Bob Square Pants backpack, slipping the straps over her little arms.

“How were my little angels today?” Mrs. Cavannah asks me, as I return her children to her.

“Very good, weren’t you?” I say, tousling Aaron’s hair.

“I’m always good,” he says confidently.

“I made you a painting!” his sister announces, holding out a piece of purple construction paper with a red heart made of gold glitter and the word “Mom” in unevenly sized letters.

“That’s beautiful,” Mrs. Cavannah says, taking the paper with a wide smile. My heart feels warm, overjoyed to see the love between parent and child. I just love kids so much, and the twins are an especially good pair of little souls.

As they head off, the kids chattering excitedly to their mother, I go back to the play area and start helping the other children to get ready to go home, making sure everyone gets the right backpack.

Suddenly, a shadow looms over me. I feel it as much as I see it, the air blowing both hot and cold at the same time over me.

“Hello,” growls a very deep voice behind me. “I’m here to pick up Katie Lockhart.”

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Whoever this is, he ought to narrate romance novels, I think to myself. But when I look up, it's clear that the voice in question belongs to literally the hottest man I have ever seen in person.

He towers over me. Some tall men look awkward and stooped when they're that tall, but this guy is built like a marble statue. He's imposing, with a broad chest beneath a well-tailored sport coat.

He's probably in his forties, but incredibly handsome with a full head of black hair cut in a loose style and the most amazing pair of eyes. They're blue like the ocean on a wish-you-were-here postcard of some exotic beach, and they seem to be staring right through me, cutting into my soul like a diamond-sharp blade.

My jaw drops. It's everything I can do not to let out a sound to go with the expression. It's like I've just ridden over a bump in the road in a car, like some organ inside of my abdomen has leaped up and made its presence known. I feel a spreading warmth in my pussy, suddenly very aware of his presence in my secret spot.

Wow. This is a new one. I've been turned on by hot male celebrities or by stunning male models, but this is an altogether new experience. I feel steamy all over, my skin tingling. I'm worried that I might be blushing and hope to god that my face isn't beet red. This is deeply inappropriate.

Quickly, my eyes go to the ground, avoiding the man's gaze. I don't want him to notice how turned on I am. I don't want him to laugh at me, some silly fat girl getting all hot and bothered in her workplace over a parent here to pick up his kid. But this guy is so attractive that he's probably used to it. He probably gets this kind of

reaction all the time. I take a deep breath and try to calm myself down.

This is my job. I'm here to take care of kids, and not act like some silly schoolgirl. Whoever this gorgeous hunk of man is, I've never seen him before, and I'm not about to let a child go home with the wrong person. I look back up, meeting the man's penetrating eyes again.

"Yes, Katie Lockhart attends daycare here at Ladybug Tots. May I ask who you might be?"

The handsome man grins once as his blue eyes flash.

"Her dad," he rumbles deep in his chest. "Who else? Now I'd like to see my daughter please."

2

Rob

The pretty girl gazes up at me with the most beautiful big brown eyes I've ever seen. I feel a little taken aback, but I suppose it's to be expected. After all, I don't get to Ladybug Tots much. My daughter is three years old, but this is the first time I've ever picked her up from day care.

After all, I run a multi-national conglomerate with investments in multiple sectors of multiple world economies and my high-powered lifestyle doesn't leave a lot of room for errand running. I haven't even done my own shopping in decades, much less cooking and cleaning.

Plus, I used to be married, so my ex did a lot of the kid-related things like pick-ups and drop-offs. But that arrangement has gone the way of the dinosaur like everything

else about my marriage.

Technically, we've been divorced for a year, but the drama has showed no signs of letting up. After a protracted legal battle and a whole lot of time spent in court and lawyer's offices, we've finally settled our custody issues. My ex, Lindsay, and I have hammered out an agreement to share custody of Katie, our little girl. The schedule is asinine, like most things devised by my former spouse, but it's good enough for now.

But it's been a huge change because before, Lindsay took care of most kid-related activities since I had no time. Now, I'm making an effort to participate in Katie's life. It's the right thing to do because I've heard the horror stories: supposedly little girls who grow up without father figures are insecure as adults, and let men treat them badly. As a result, I'm having to rearrange aspects of my work to spend more time with my daughter, but it's worth it.

After all, I do love my daughter. I can't regret my marriage, even though it was something of a disaster, because it brought me Katie. I just wish I didn't have to deal with my ex. Lindsay is a train wreck mixed with a personality disorder, and it's only gotten worse since we divorced.

I was going to send my assistant, Bernard, to pick Katie up today, but at the last minute I decided to head over myself, since I'd never been to the place before and figured I ought to check it out and make sure everything is going well for my little girl. Ever since the break up, I'm doing everything I can to make sure I'm being the best father I can be. I know the divorce hasn't been easy on Katie, and I don't want my choices to mess up her life. The most important thing in the world to me used to be myself, but now it's this child.

"I'm Rob Lockhart," I say to the beautiful woman, who stands up, smoothing down the front of her dress. I notice that she's got glitter glue stuck right above her left breast. They're quite the set: big round mounds that stretch the fabric even though

she's obviously going for a conservative look.

"Katie's father?" asks the woman, who I can't help but notice is blushing beautifully, her round cheeks turning a particularly appealing shade of pink.

"That's the one," I say, smiling. Although it sounds stuck-up, she's far from the first woman to have such a reaction to me. Girls have been throwing themselves at my feet since my voice dropped at age fifteen. I've loved and left my share, but something about this one feels different. She seems so sweet and innocent, and not at all like the desperate cougars in my social circle dripping in designer duds.

In another life, I might have invited her out to my car or a cloakroom and had my way with the woman, but having a daughter of my own has slowed my roll on that sort of thing. I don't want to take advantage of a sweet woman's heart, especially not one who's responsible for my daughter's care. She intrigues me, however.

She nods, pulling herself together. "I'll get Katie," the woman says simply. Her voice is very soft, gentle and warm. When she turns, I watch her ample buttocks sway as she moves, my attention focused on her like a laser beam. It's as if the motion of her generous ass is the only thing in the whole world. I wouldn't even call myself an ass man, but I want to get lost in this one.

This girl is not my usual type, but something about her makes me feel a pulse of instant attraction, like a magnet pulling at my eyes, my heart, and my thick shaft. My skin starts to tingle, the air between us pulsing with some strange electricity.

But what the hell? We're surrounded by little children at the moment. In fact, I'm about to pick up my own little child. It would be deeply inappropriate to allow the rising arousal that I'm feeling make itself known. I pinch my arm and force myself to focus on the image of a smashed rat that I saw the other day on the sidewalk on Park Avenue, flattened like a sheet of paper. It was disgusting with bloody, matted fur and

grisly rat organs oozing onto the cement. There, that does it. The edge is taken off.

Besides, usually I date blondes with bodies like whippets, thin girls with thigh gaps and small breasts and skin stretched taught over countable ribs. The day care provider is almost an exact opposite of my go to type. She's young, but her body is that of a real woman, and not a girl. She's very curvy, plus sized even, with luscious tits and wide hips. I search the files of my memory, but I don't think I've touched a pair of breasts as large as these.

Her hair is a wild mane of brown curls, which match her velvety coffee-colored eyes. Her face is open and kind, with a gentle smile. I love the sound of her voice. Plus, she seems really with good with kids. As she walks to get my daughter, other children come up to her. She treats all of them with kindness and care.

Maybe being a father has changed me. Maybe the ongoing drama with my ex has soured me on skinny blondes forever. Or maybe the girl is just so gorgeous that my usual tastes don't matter. Either way, I can't stop thinking about her.

When she returns, I have to force myself not to stare at her cleavage. She's got Katie by the hand, which helps. My little blonde angel squeals when she sees me. "Daddy!"

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She runs towards me. As I lean down, she throws her arms around my neck. I can feel her heartbeat. Her hair smells of Johnson and Johnson's baby shampoo. My own heart swells with love and pride.

"Katie! Were you a good girl today?" I ask her.

She regards the question, deliberating, her little lips pursing in thought. The day care provider smiles, hiding a laugh. "Yes," Katie says. "I was good today."

I flash a look at the provider, entreating her opinion.

The woman's cheeks turn pink again, a little less pronounced than the last time, but impossible not to notice. "She was great today," the brunette says, smiling. "She sang the whole alphabet song today, didn't you Katie?"

My daughter nods, seemingly proud of herself. "Do you want to hear it, Daddy?"

Normally, I'd want to get this pick-up done quickly and be off to my next thing, but I'm enjoying the brunette's company, and the room full of children is strangely soothing. I could get used to this. I get down on one knee, so I'm closer to Katie's level. "I would love to hear it, sweetheart."

She starts slowly at first, as if she's having some trouble remembering the words. I notice a chart of the alphabet on the wall, but Katie doesn't look at it, singing the letters from memory alone. "A... B... C..."

As she keeps singing, Katie gets into the groove of it, her pace quickening as she

remembers all the letters. When she gets to “Z” she’s positively beaming.

“That’s amazing, sweetheart!” I tell her, tousling her hair. “That was perfect. I’m so proud of you.”

She hugs me a little bit harder. I look over at the day care provider. “You’re doing a great job with her.”

The woman shrugs, smiling. “It doesn’t even feel like a job. Katie’s a lovely girl.”

I feel a tiny shred of shame for using one of my usual lines on the lady, but it wouldn’t be a “usual line” if it didn’t work. I make eye contact, and speak in a low voice. “I’m afraid you have me at a bit of a disadvantage. You know my name, but I don’t know yours.”

The woman shifts her body back and forth, subtly but unmistakably aroused by the attention. “Oh. Sorry. I’m Ally. Ally Summers.”

“No need for an apology. Pleasure to make your acquaintance, Ally Summers.”

She starts to laugh throatily, and then puts her hand over her mouth to stop it. Instead, the woman speaks quickly, trying to seem professional. I know the drill.

“Mr. Lockhart, Katie is a great girl and she’s doing really well here. She always eats her snack and naps during nap time, and she’s usually really good about getting along with the other kids. There was an incident today, however, when she refused to share a toy with a little boy named Victor.”

Katie’s energy rises. “That was Victor’s fault!” Her little voice is indignant. “He pulled my hair. I didn’t want to share with him. He’s a bad boy. I hate him!”

Ally chides her softly.

“Katie, it’s not O.K. to hate people. Remember yesterday when Victor shared his lunch with you? Remember how you love playing Duck, Duck, Goose with him? You don’t really hate him, do you?”

The little girl sighs and reconsiders.

“No. I don’t hate him. I used to think he was my best friend. But he did pull my hair!”

“He just did it because he likes you,” Ally says, her voice full of patience. “It doesn’t mean it’s O.K. You can tell him to stop or come get me so I can talk to him about it, but sometimes little boys do that sort of thing because they want to be friends.”

“Really?” Katie’s eyes widen.

“Yes,” says Ally. “Boys don’t always know how to express themselves in the right way. Victor likes you.”

Katie’s brow knits.

“Boys are weird.”

Ally nods, smiling.

“Yes, Katie. I think you’re right.”

The luscious brunette turns her attention to me, smiling with those pouty lips.

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“What’s your opinion, Mr. Lockhart? You’d know better than either of us.”

My fingers twitch. I have a very strong urge to pull Ally’s hair, right here, right now, as if I’ve been transported back to the playground myself. I stare at her brown curls, studying the gentle waves shining under the fluorescent overhead light. I don’t pull them, but only because I have built up significant self-control through years of practice. I wouldn’t have made it to where I am, leader of a successful business empire, if I couldn’t keep my base impulses contained.

“Boys are very weird,” I growl, interlacing my fingers together to reduce the temptation. “It’s a bizarre thing.”

Both girls laugh. Katie’s giggles are like the tinkling of a Christmas bell, while Ally’s are like the sound of a songbird. It’s all very beautiful. Neither of them knows how close I am to acting like a caveman right now. I join in the laugh fest, keeping my animal urges to myself.

“Well, Ally, it’s been lovely to meet you,” I rumble when the girls have finished being amused by the mad behavior of the male species. “I trust that you’re taking very good care of my daughter, and helping her with all the weird boys?”

She smiles again, sweet and true.

“Girls can be weird too. I’m sorry I was harsh to you when you arrived. I just hadn’t seen you before, and we’re not supposed to let just anyone pick up our kids,” she says.

It turns me on, the way she saysour kids.But I have to keep it together. After all, she and I just met.

“No, I’m not bothered. I wouldn’t want you to let my daughter go with some random stranger. But now you know who I am. I won’t be coming every day, but I’m sure we’ll see each other again.” Before I met the woman, I wasn’t looking forward to coming back here, but now I’m certain I’ll find the time.

Ally nods.

“See you later,” she says, with a big, warm smile. Her brown eyes meet mine and electricity flashes in the air between us, before she turns away quickly, her cheeks flushed.

As a father, I feel happy that my daughter’s care is entrusted to someone with such a good heart. But as a man, I can feel the sparks flying between us. After my divorce, I told myself I was done with women, but this one makes me feel somethingdifferent. I don’t know that I’ll do anything about it, but Idoknow I’ll be back to see her again.

“See you next time,” I call over my shoulder, taking Katie by the hand. “O.K. sweetheart, let’s go home.”

“Which home are we going to?” my daughter asks innocently.

It stabs, but I don’t let her see it. “My big house, baby,” I say.

We walk out of the door and out to my black Rolls Royce, waiting outside the day care center. Katie waves at my driver, Alex. He produces a strawberry lollipop, which in turn, elicits a huge grin. The Russian sure knows his way to a child’s heart.

I sit in the back on the luxurious leather seat with my daughter as she prattles on

about what she's learning and her interactions with other kids. I learn more than I ever needed to know about the names and personalities of a particular line of plastic pony dolls. Something about the purple pony being better-educated than the pink? It's weird how toy manufacturers invest so much into the toys' back stories.

My mind drifts and suddenly I'm thinking about Ally Summers again with her gentle smile and generous curves. I don't think she knows how beautiful she is, which makes her all the more appealing.

"Daddy!" Katie's voice rises, breaking me out of my reverie.

"What's that, sweetheart?" I say. I suppose I haven't been listening.

"Didn't you hear me? Which pony is your favorite?"

I make a show of deliberating. "Sparkle Pony," I answer, certain that was one of them.

She laughs her Christmas bell laugh. "No, Daddy," she scolds. "That's not a pony! You're so silly. Let me tell you about all of them again."

I try my best to pay attention but it's hopeless. The beautiful brunette is all I can think about as my daughter chatters on beside me. Ally Summers. When will I see her again?

3

Rob

Traffic is terrible, but the Rolls is so comfortable that it doesn't really matter. We arrive some time later to the concrete skyscraper that houses my Park Avenue

penthouse.

“Come on, sweetheart,” I say to my daughter while ushering her into the building.
“Let’s get you changed out of that uniform.”

My doorman is a portly older gentleman with a pronounced Brooklyn accent, his bald head concealed beneath a jaunty cap. “How’s my favorite blonde?” he teases Katie as I lead her into the foyer.

Katie thinks about it. “Pretty good,” she replies. The doorman smiles. My daughter is one of those little kids that’s an absolute hit with everyone she meets.

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We ride the elevator up to the top floor. Katie sheds her backpack at the door like a lizard wiggling out of its skin, dropping it on the ground and running to her bedroom. I follow her at a far more leisurely pace. I peek in the door, watching Katie play.

It's a sweet scene. I've had her room done up to be the envy of any princess. Her room features a four-poster bed with a pink canopy, equine-themed wall paper, and lush carpet. She has a huge dollhouse and a toy collection worthy of a magazine spread. As was obvious in the car, she's in a plastic pony mood today.

I stay by the door for a while, watching her play with the brightly colored horses. She's lost in her own world, imagining stories for her toys and doing different voices while neighing and snorting. I can't quite follow the action, but I know my daughter is happy and that's all that matters.

Before too long, she'll take a nap. I leave her to her own devices, trusting that she's safe in her room, and wander back to the entrance to retrieve her backpack. I like my apartment to stay as tidy as possible.

Shit. It's wet. I recoil as I touch it, surprised by the water. Her water bottle must have spilled. Never a dull moment with a kid. I open the Frozen-themed sack and confirm that her water bottle is indeed leaking. I withdraw the thermos and place it on the marble counter. Stuck to it is a piece of paper.

Peeling off the orange slip, I notice that it's a flyer for something called "The Annual Fair." I read it, taking it all in. It seems to be some kind of family fundraiser for Ladybug Tots.

I feel myself making a face, grimacing at the flyer. I hate this kind of thing. It's bad enough that I have to attend fundraising events for work, but I didn't realize having a child came with its own set of such events. I've never done anything like this before. Before the divorce, I was a pretty hands-off dad. If I'd known about the annual fair at all, I would have just sent my wife and some money.

I sigh. Oh well. I guess this is what it means to step up to the plate. I'm probably going to have to hob-knob with teachers and parents and listen to some speeches. Or maybe I'll just write a check and skip the bullshit. Whatever. It's not that big of a deal. I've certainly done worse things for less important people than my own child.

I feel my pocket buzzing. I pull out my cell and see the hard eyed smile of my ex, staring back at me from her profile picture. I told myself I was going to change the pic to one of Cruella DeVille, but never got around to doing it. I steel myself, and answer.

"Hello, Lindsay," I say, trying my best to sound civil. She's the mother of your child, I remind myself.

"Hello, Rob. Did you pick Katie up from daycare?" Lindsay's voice is like nails on a chalk board, high and shrill. I must have liked it years ago, somehow, but now it makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. She always sounds like she's trying to pick a fight with me. Even though we've settled our custody issues, she just has to needle me.

I take a deep breath, resolving to remain calm no matter how much she irritates me.

"Yes, Lindsay. I picked her up right on time. You can call the day care if you don't believe me."

There's a small pause, as if my ex expected the worst from me and doesn't know how

to respond.

“Well, that’s good,” she says eventually, in a tone that makes it seem like she doesn’t think anything I do could possibly be good. I am so fuckingsick of this tone. I have heard so much of it from her over the years.

“So,” I say, flatly. “What’s up?”

Her shrill voice taunts me. I know she’s just trying to get under my skin, and it’s working, even though I know what she’s doing. I hate that she has this effect on me.

“So, will you be going to the preschool’s Annual Fair? I trust you know about it. It’s next week.”

Speak of the devil. I’m holding the flyer in my hand, and Lindsay is needling me like a fucking mosquito in my ear.

“Yes,” I say, in a tight voice. “Of course I know about it. I was already planning on going next week.” Well, damn. Now I’m stuck.

Lindsay’s laugh is like a hyena: chortling, sinister and sharp.

“Oh, good!” she makes an exaggerated show of saying, her tone smarmy. “I’ll be there too. Me and Sheldon wouldn’t miss it for the world! It will be so good to see you.”

She’s lying. She doesn’t think it will be good to see me and neither do I. I can’t dignify her behavior with an agreement.

“Great,” I say flatly, lying through my teeth.

“Bye now!” she sings in her most cloying voice.

“Bye,” I grunt, hanging up the phone. My back teeth grind together. I think about throwing the phone across the room, but it’s not the phone’s fault. Instead, I just grip it, letting my rage flow through me.

Somehow, I used to love this woman. It seems so far away now, but a long time ago, I thought she was the love of my life. She was different then, or at least I thought she was: kinder and softer, seemingly always up for a good time, interested in my work and my hobbies. I knew Lindsay was ambitious, but I thought she’d use it to create some kind of success for herself. Instead, the focus of her ambition has been entrapping men, chiefly me.

Even now, I recognize that my ex is a conventionally attractive woman with luxurious golden locks and a tight, toned body that’s never without a perfect tan. Maybe I was just mesmerized by her body. Maybe I didn’t notice how grating her voice was. Maybe she used to be different, or maybe she was just really good at playing the game and pretending to be someone she’s not so I’d get hooked like a hapless trout.

I guess I should have been more careful, but when Lindsay got pregnant I did the right thing and married her. It was all downhill from there. Once the woman had the ring and the baby, she stopped being the darling girl I had come to love, and revealed herself to be a social climbing harpy.

Lindsay told me she wanted a large family, which was important to me. But as soon as we had Katie, she announced that she was done. What could I do? It’s not like I could force her to have more kids. As soon as Katie was weaned, my ex hired nannies and staff to take care of the child and spent most of her time going to parties and getting in good with other socialites. Pretty soon, it seemed like whatever I did and whatever I said was wrong.

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She didn't love me, she just loved my money and my status. She wanted to be my wife so she could go to all the right parties and meet all the right people, but she didn't seem to care about me as a human being at all. The connection grew cold, in and out of the bedroom. Eventually we stopped having sex at all because we couldn't stand each other.

If it wasn't for the kid, I would have up and left sooner, but I liked the idea of having a family, even if in practice, it wasn't what I had hoped. I do care about giving my daughter a healthy home and I wanted to try my best to keep my marriage together. But my home life just kept getting worse and worse until eventually we had no choice but to file for divorce, which was a hell of its own.

Lindsay didn't want to be married to me, but she did want to waste as much of my time as possible. Her lawyers found every possible way to drag the court battle out, filing motion after motion, fighting over every scrap like hungry dogs. I'd arrive to court only to have them continue the case again and again.

I glance at the calendar on my phone, noting that the anniversary of our legal split was only a few days ago. Tellingly, it's been just about a year since we called it quits, but Lindsay has already remarried.

Sheldon Sty, her new husband, is the CEO of a major cosmetics empire. Like me, he's a billionaire. Technically, his net worth is greater than mine, but he's also got at least twenty-five years on me. He's got the approximate body type of my doorman, portly and round, and like Bennie, he's going bald and trying to hide it. He chain smokes expensive cigarettes and always sounds like he needs to clear his throat.

We run in the same circles, though I wouldn't say we're friends. I suspect that Lindsay might have been sleeping with him towards the end of our marriage, after I'd stopped trying. The man's kind of disgusting, but that's not my problem. She's the one who has to see him naked.

Sheldon's got four grown kids from his first and third marriages. Lindsay is wife number four. He trades them in every so often for a younger model. His oldest son, a well-known lawyer, is two years older than my ex wife, but I guess that doesn't bother her.

I think the whole thing is disgusting, but I hold my tongue. It's not like I want to deal with the woman anymore. If she wants to be some old man's latest piece, that's her business. I mostly only worry about Katie, growing up around a man like that.

So yeah, I can feel my hackles raising. I know I shouldn't let it get to me, but I feel my blood starting to boil in spite of myself. I'm cringing, thinking about showing up to the school's annual fair alone while Lindsay is there on the arm of her new billionaire husband. I shouldn't care about the gossip and the stares, but deep down inside, I really do. I would hate for everyone to think that Lindsay is doing better than I am.

I wish I had a date to take to this stupid shindig, so I could show everyone that I've moved on. I mean, I have moved on, but the look I'm going for is a stable, committed, and healthy relationship. I don't have anything like that in my life. I don't have anything even close to it. Where would I find the right date to take to a preschool event on such short notice?

Casually, I've been seeing a few women here and there. I roll through the file in my mind, debating whether I could call up any of them and ask them to accompany me. At least two would say yes, but I don't know that I'd want them to, to be honest. I've mostly been using these girls for sex. I have physical needs, child or no child, but that

doesn't mean I want to bring another woman into my life in any real sense. So I've been messing around with a couple of hot blondes with whom I have little in common besides mutual attraction. They're all younger than me, and the usual social climbing types that I tend to attract because of my job. I know how to spot it now, after Lindsay. I don't mind it as long as there's no attachment on either side.

Plus, I don't know if these sort of girls would be able to handle a kiddie event. They're the kind of girls whose main interests revolve around expensive shoes and brand name handbags and making sure they stay connected enough to keep enjoying those things. What do they know about children? I don't want to make things worse for the rumor mill by bringing a date who gets too drunk or says the wrong thing. Then I'll get pegged for mid-life crisis pathetic loser.

More to the point, I really don't know if any of my little side pieces could handle Lindsay, the high queen of all the social climbers. She's a demon, and she knows how to rip another woman apart with just her eyes and her words.

I heave a sigh, laying the flyer out on the counter so it can dry. The orange paper wrinkles a bit in the afternoon sun. I feel sort of sick to my stomach, dreading the event. Whether I go solo or bring a date, it's going to be a mess. Shit. I have a week to think about it. I'll come up with something. I let the wheels in my mind spin as I pour myself a stiff drink. Hopefully the alcohol will wash away the taint of my ex-wife's shrill voice, and leave me in peace for the moment.

4

Rob

The next day, I take another break from work to pick up Katie from Ladybug Tots. A good 75% of the reason is that I want to see the pretty day care attendant once more. Ally's been wandering through my thoughts non-stop, interrupting my accounting

and distracting me while I was on the phone with a Chinese investor.

I arrive at the cheery day care center to find Ally sitting on the floor, surrounded by a circle of kids, playing some kind of a game involving brightly colored blocks. She doesn't notice me at first, so I watch from the sidelines as she entertains her charges. She has a playful spirit herself, squealing with laughter along with the kids, but she also seems wise. Yesterday I watched her handle Katie's squabble with that other little boy with aplomb.

I feel myself drawn to her. I could watch her all day. The woman seems so wholesome and caring, and she's just so good with kids. Suddenly, a bolt of inspiration strikes me, like it's been thrown by a Norse god. What better date could I possibly bring to the school's fair than this wonderful girl? She'd be perfect. Ally's great with kids, projects a wholesome image, and she's a day care provider to boot. If she cared about being in the right social circles or making a bunch of money, she wouldn't be here so she'll be immune to my ex-wife's barbs. What could Lindsay even say to her?

I smile to myself, satisfied with my plan. At that moment, Ally looks up and notices me. She smiles back, her big brown eyes sparkling. She seems a little bit embarrassed, like I've caught her in her lingerie lounging on a plush sofa with a glass of wine in hand. Oh shit. Hold that thought. I'm getting hard just thinking about it here at Ladybug Tots.

But then the woman smiles sweetly and nods. "Oh, hello Mr. Lockhart. How long have you been standing there?"

"Not very long. I just got here." It's close enough to true.

"Katie was very good today as usual. There were no problems with sharing, and no hair pulling." The woman walks over towards me. She's in flats, and not a very tall

girl to begin with, so she's looking up at me with her innocent eyes. She's such a sweet girl, so different from the ladies I normally play around with.

"I'm glad to hear that," I say. I want to steer the conversation away from the kids and towards Ally herself. "I must say, I admire your spirit. Putting up with all these little kids must be a lot."

She shakes her head. "No, not at all. I love children. It's a responsibility, sure, but I really enjoy them. I like the way they think. You can always learn a new way of looking at the world if you hang out with children. They see things that you and I don't notice."

Good point. "I hadn't thought about it like that," I say slowly. "But you're right. My life has changed since Katie came into the picture. She makes me think about things differently for sure. When it was just me, it didn't matter what I did. If I wanted to... I don't know... run off to Colombia or take up racing motorcycles I had only myself to think about. But now I have to make sure I'm around for my daughter."

Ally's smile widens. "That's good. We wouldn't want you to disappear now that ..." her voice trails off, cheeks turning pink again.

I'm intrigued.

"Now that what?" I press her.

"Now that you've started coming to pick Katie up. Little girls need their dad." She recovers her composure.

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I smile at her, saying nothing, until she adds, demurely. “I’d hate it too, if you got hurt.”

Wow, this woman’s an angel. I feel a little bit bad, angling towards a date like a shark sizing up its prey. She’s an innocent and I’m such a bastard to use her in this way. Plus, I’m in no place for a relationship, and I can tell that that’s what Ally wants. I just need the right date to the kiddie prom.

I’m about to change my mind when I feel my phone buzzing. There’s that fucking picture again. It’s Lindsay. I click the call off, so it stops buzzing. A moment later, I get the notification that she’s left a message and wince.

“Oh, are you O.K. Mr. Lockhart?” Ally asks me, picking up on my discomfort immediately. I thought I was hiding it, but she’s such a nurturing person that she notices anyway.

“I’m alright. It was nothing. Just some business I don’t really want to have to deal with,” I reassure her. The call from my ex has hardened my resolve. I need the right date to the fairnow, and Ally’s perfect. I’m not going to show up looking like some lonely hearts loser while Lindsay swans around with that fucking Lex Luthor-lookalike Sheldon. I know exactly how to play this game, even if I feel like a jerk for doing it. I’ll just steer the conversation until the moment is right to make my move.

“I feel you,” Ally murmurs, totally unaware of my thoughts. “I don’t mean to be a busybody. I spend all day taking care of kids so I tend to worry about people. I think I get it from my mom.”

“You don’t have to worry about me,” I rumble. “Life’s good. I confine my risk-taking to the stock market these days, or maybe the occasional high stakes poker game. Anyways, I don’t stick my neck out there, just my money. There’s plenty of fun to be had in this city without endangering life and limb. I’m a particular fan of checking out new cocktail bars. How about yourself?”

Why did I just babble like some ridiculous schoolboy? But Ally freezes like a deer in the headlights.

“I don’t know. I usually just go to the same couple of bars with my friends. I’m a creature of habit, I guess.”

“Is that a hard and fast rule? No new bars?” I ask her.

“No, I... of course not.” She looks at her feet.

“Well, then how would you like to check out a new one with me this weekend? There’s this spot I’ve been meaning to drop by. Maybe I can expand your horizons a little bit.”

Her cheeks go pink and she tips her chin towards the floor.

“I don’t know,” she says, shuffling her feet. “I’m not sure if I should.”

I set my eyes on smolder, giving her a playful smirk.

“Why not? What’s the harm?”

Her lips purse.

“Well, Mr. Lockhart...”

“Rob, please.” I flash her my most charming of smiles.

She blushes a darker shade of pink, stammering.

“Well, Rob, listen... Rob... I just don’t know if it would be acceptable for me to get drinks with one of the dads.”

I shrug.

“Is there an official policy about it?”

I watch her brow knit.

“Um, I’m not sure. I don’t think so, but it might look. Well, I don’t know. It mightlookbad.”

Who cares about looks?

“Why?” I rumble. “We’re adults. All I’m asking you to do is get a drink with me. It’s no big deal.”

She gives me some sad puppy eyes that would make Sarah McLaughlin proud.

“I’m sorry. I would love to but I just don’t think I can. Mr. Lockhart, I love this job. What if I got fired? Maybe that wouldn’t be a big deal to you, but it would be areallybig deal to me. Besides, think about the children.”

I shake my head.

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“Ally, you’re being silly. If there’s no written policy in place stating that you are not allowed to get drinks with a client, then you are allowed to get drinks with a client. You’re not my teacher. I’m a businessman. I go out with business contacts all the time.”

She’s still nervous about it, but she’s starting to weaken.

“I guess I can see your point,” she says. “I know there wasn’t anything about this in my employment contract. It just seems inappropriate.”

I flash her another sly smile.

“Tell you what. If you get in trouble, I’ll have my law firm defend you. Ever heard of Benson & Frederick? Well, Benson is my personal attorney.”

Her jaw drops. I take it she has heard the name. It would be hard not to, since they’ve been all over the news involved with a bunch of high profile cases. For a moment, she stares at me gape mouthed before she gets herself together again.

“Wow,” she whispers.

“I take it that’s a yes?” I say, confident that it is.

She nods.

“You’ve made me an offer I can’t refuse.” She looks down, smiling shyly. “Actually, I would really love to get drinks with you. I haven’t been out in a while. Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” I say. “But don’t thank me yet. Wait until you taste the cocktails at Bar Virage. Trust me, they’re worth the potential legal action.”

I laugh, and she joins me, mirthful but nervous. Suddenly, my daughter trips over to us.

“What’s so funny, Daddy?” Katie interjects.

I scoop the little girl into my arms, setting her on my tall, broad shoulders.

“Just a grown-up joke, baby girl,” I say. She giggles, happy to be up so high, the matters of grown-ups completely forgotten.

Other parents start to arrive, and I realize I need to get going and let Ally do her job.

“Alright, Ms. Summers. I have to take my daughter home now, but we’re on for drinks, right? How about Friday night?”

She smiles, her face lighting up.

“Yes. Friday would be amazing. I’m really excited about it.”

I linger on her form for a moment, feeling the sparks flying in the air between us, before forcing myself to turn away. Damn, she’s gorgeous. I make my exit, still carrying an excited Katie on my shoulders. Now I’m excited about it too, not just because I need a date to the school fair, but also because I’m eager to get to know the brunette on a deeper level. Normally, I’d only mean that in the carnal sense, but something about this girl has me thinking softer thoughts.

But to tell the truth, I still feel a little bit bad about asking her out because she’s not a part of my world. I’m using Ally, and she doesn’t know what she’s getting herself

into. Oh well. She'll learn. At least I'll show her a good time and expand her horizons. I don't know what Ladybug pays its attendants, but a single drink at Bar Virage probably costs more than she makes in an hour. I won't hurt her. I'll make sure that she enjoys the experience.

I reach my car, my mind distracted with thoughts of the date and the stupid school fair. My driver gets out to help me buckle Katie into her car seat.

"Are you alright, Sir?" he asks me. "You seem like you're somewhere else."

"I'm just thinking about a business deal that I'm trying to close," I say vaguely. It's close enough to the truth, and my driver nods. It's not exactly business, but I am trying to close a deal. I feel as confident about it as I do in the boardroom. I am a man who gets what he wants, and right now, I want this gorgeous curvy sweetheart to be my date to the Annual Fair.

5

Ally

I spend the next couple of days floating, like I'm not quite on Earth. I'm so excited to be going on a real date, let alone with a man as gorgeous as Rob Lockhart. It seems almost too good to be real, but it is real. I feel like I'm walking on air.

Friday finally rolls around. I'm half hoping to see Rob at Ladybug Tots, but he sends his assistant to pick up Katie, meaning I'll have a little time to go home first to get ready before meeting him at the bar. I take the subway home to the postage stamp apartment in Brooklyn that I share with my roommate Haley.

I slip off my grubby work clothes, stained as usual with an assortment of snack foods and marker marks. I so seldom get a chance to get out of kiddie mode. Stepping into

the shower, I turn the water on and let it run over my skin, luxuriating in the warm stream. I take this moment to myself, focused on nothing except making myself beautiful.

I don't always feel good about my body. I'm not the sort of girl you see in movies or on the cover of magazines. In fact, I'm not the sort of girl that most men notice. But Rob wanted to take me out so bad that he offered me a lawyer if I get in trouble with my work. I guess he must find me sexy, and who am I to question it? The thought of his attention makes me feel so much more alive, so much more comfortable with my curvy body.

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I lather up my pink shower puff and soap up, rubbing the foam all over my curves. I shave my legs, slowly and carefully so I won't get razor burn. It's been a while since I've bothered, to be honest. Running my hands over my body, I'm shocked by the sensuality of my skin. The smoothness of my newly shorn legs feels amazing and a tingle runs through my body.

I pause with the razor in my hand, debating whether to shave my lower lips. Am I expecting the date to go that well? I feel nervous, worried that thinking about it at all makes me a crazy slut, but I push past the feeling. My legs feel really good, and I want this to feel really good too. Better safe than sorry, right? I lather up my pussy and remove the hair, gently, slowly, taking care to do it just right.

Next I wash my curls, soaping them up with my favorite shampoo that smells like kiwifruit and is specially designed for curly hair. Stepping out of the shower, I take care not to get water everywhere while I blow dry my curls, making sure they look pretty instead of crazy. My hair is a lot of work, but it's one of my favorite features. I love having wavy hair, even though it can be hard to style sometimes.

I'm still in the bathroom when my roommate comes home. I hear the door open and the sound of Haley's feet clomping into the front room that we share. I finish washing up and grab a towel, wrapping it around my body. It can barely contain my tits, and I guess I can barely contain my excitement, because when Haley sees me she says, "Did you finally win the lotto or something? You look so happy."

I laugh. "That's my mom that plays the lotto, silly, not me. I am happy, though. Guess what?"

Haley sticks out her tongue.

“What?”

“I have a date tonight!” I beam.

Her eyes go wide.

“You go, girl!” Haley says. “You have to tell me all about him.”

“Ok, ok. But I also need to get out of this towel and into something sexy,” I banter back.

“I’ll help you pick something out,” she says immediately. Damn. I’m not sure I really want her to choose my clothes, but I don’t want to hurt her feelings, so I let her follow me into my bedroom. She sits on my bed while I look through my closet for the perfect outfit.

Haley is a willowy redhead with some tattoos. She has three butterflies on her left foot and a sleeve devoted to forest animals on her right arm. She and I have been friends since college and roommates since graduation. I share pretty much everything with her. She has a job as a dog walker and makes jewelry on the side. She’s an awesome girl with upbeat energy, even if she can be a little bit too much at times. I love her like a sister.

With vigor, I throw open my closet door. I don’t have that many good dresses. I don’t want to wear the blue one I wore on my last date, because it’s embedded with bad memories. I look at my clothes wistfully, wishing I’d had time to go shopping. Rob is always so well-dressed in his thousand dollar suits and immaculate wing-tips. By contrast, I mostly hang out with children so I’m not an especially fashion-forward person.

“So, who’s the guy?” Haley presses me, dangling her feet off the edge of my bed.

I sigh, sad about the state of my wardrobe but over the moon about the guy I’m about to see.

“His name is Rob. He’s one of the dads from daycare.”

“Ooh, scandalous!” Haley teases.

“It’s not. There’s no rule about going out with parents. I checked.” I don’t tell her about the part where he offered me free legal representation, because then it really will seem scandalous.

I pick through my dresses and pull out a simple black number. It’s pretty basic, but at least it fits. It has a high neck, cap sleeves, and a flared skirt. I wish I had something sexier, but beggars can’t be choosers. As some consolation, the demure outfit means I won’t look like I’m trying too hard.

“What does he look like?” Haley keeps going, as I drop the towel and start pulling on the dress.

My mind flashes the image of Rob’s handsome face. I stifle a sound of pleasure.

“Oh, Haley. He’s the most gorgeous man I’ve ever met.”

“Yeah? Tell me all about him.”

I take a deep breath and let it out.

“He has black hair and these blue eyes that seem like they can see right through to your soul. He’s really tall, like maybe six four with the body of an athlete. He’s like

something out of a daydream, Haley. I'm so excited."

Her eyes go wide as I get the dress on, wiggling a bit to get it over my wide hips.

"Do you have a picture?" Haley asks.

I shake my head, trying to focus on getting ready. I feel like I'm sure to forget something important with all these questions. Still, I like that my roommate cares about my life.

"Um, his name is Rob Lockhart. Maybe you can find his Facebook profile or something."

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I zip up the dress and look at myself in the mirror. It's nothing crazy, but I look sweet. I pick up my brushes to start on my makeup when Haley squeals so hard I drop a cosmetic brush in shock.

"What?" I ask, turning towards her. "Is everything okay?"

My friend's eyes are fixed on the screen, eating it up greedily.

"Is this Rob Lockhart?" Haley turns her phone towards me. The image on the cell is a headshot of Rob in three quarters profile. He looks a bit younger in the picture, but it's definitely the same guy.

I nod, smiling at how handsome he is.

"Oh my god, Ally. Way to bury the lede. One of the dads from daycare, my butt. Why didn't you mention that part where he's the billionaire CEO of Lockhart Industries?"

What? My heart skips a beat. I don't even know what to say. I just stand there, unsure how to process this information.

"Um, I didn't know that part," I mumble eventually, when I can make my mouth work again.

Holy shit, is this true? I knew Rob was well off, because he wears business suits and because pretty much all of the parents at Ladybug are doing well. Its location on the ritzy Upper West Side makes that par for the course. But I had no idea he was

abillionaire.

“Oh my god, Ally, he’s on theForbesWorld Billionaires list. How on Earth did you score this one?” Her voice is filled with bemused incredulity. Haley keeps scrolling her phone, learning more about Rob. I’m not the sort of girl who googles a date. I guess I’m old fashioned. I just like to get to know people on a personal level.

I shrug, in disbelief myself. “His daughter attends the day care I work at. I’ve met him a few times when he’s come to pick her up. He seems really nice. I don’t know, Haley. He asked me out. I actually tried pretty hard to say no, because I was worried about what it would look like if I went out with one of the dads, but he’s really charming andverypersuasive. I swear, I had no idea.”

“Maybe that’s why he likes you,” she says with a thoughtful look. “Because you’re the sort of girl who agrees to a date with a ridiculously rich guy and doesn’t even notice that he’s rich.”

“Maybe,” I say, going back to the mirror to do my makeup. I was always going to put my best effort in, but now I know I have to turn it up a notch.

“Quite the man about town,” Haley says, as she keeps looking at pictures on her phone.

I want to ignore her and focus on what I’m doing, but the curiosity is too much for me.

“What do you mean?”

She shrugs.

“Goes to a lot of events. Gets his photo taken a lot.”

I grab the phone and look. She's right. He does go to a lot of events and gets his photo taken a lot. The part she didn't mention was that he does so with lots of different beautiful women.

I scroll the photos, my heart sinking. Rob is in a tuxedo in a lot of the snaps and looks absolutely stunning. Unfortunately, so do the women on his arm. They're almost all tall and blonde, and resemble supermodels. They're wearing high fashion dresses that probably cost more than a year of my salary, and they're decked out in diamonds and pearls.

I hand the phone back, feeling dejected.

"Wow. Why would he even bother with me? These women are like perfect beauty queens while I'm just some average girl. Here he is with all these tall blondes, whereas I'm a pumpkin by comparison."

Haley shakes her head.

"No, you're awesome. And besides, maybe he doesn't want a supermodel. Maybe he wants someone down to Earth and kind. Beauty fades right? It's what's on the inside that counts. Plus, just because you're curvy and short doesn't mean you're not desirable."

There's a lump in my throat. I try to swallow it down, but it remains.

"People say that but--"

"No!" Haley cuts me off. "It's real. Don't get down on yourself. He asked you out, right?"

I think back to the moment, replaying in my mind.

“Yes. He asked me out.”

She shrugs.

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“So he wants to go out with you. You were so excited before I googled him. Just pretend it didn’t happen if you need to.”

I shoot her a wobbly smile. I go back over to the mirror and look at myself. I tell myself that Haley is right. I remind myself that I’m beautiful on the inside and the outside, and just as good as any supermodel. I square my shoulders, taking a deep breath in before letting it out.

I’m going on this date. What’s the worst that could happen? I suppose he could stand me up, but I’ve been there before. I can weather that. If it goes bad, nothing’s lost but some time I would otherwise have spent sitting at home. Okay, it’ll be awkward at school pick-ups, but I can handle it. And if it goes well, who knows? I shore up my confidence. I’m going to be ok, no matter what.

I put the finishing touches on my makeup and straighten out my hair. I add a simple necklace with a shell that my mother gave me after a trip to Tasmania. I smile at myself. I feel good, and I think I look good, or at least, as good as I’m going to get. I slip on a pair of low black heels and give Haley a hug.

“Wish me luck,” I say.

“It’ll be great,” she says reassuringly, flashing me an encouraging smile. “I probably won’t see you tonight, but I’ll see you in the morning. Good luck.”

“Stop it,” I scold. “We’re just going out for a couple of drinks. What are you implying?”

“Sure, okay,” she says with a wink. “Have fun girl. You only live once.”

I roll my eyes.

“Goodnight, Haley,” I say.

I take another deep breath and step out in the night, making my way to the subway. I feel really nervous, like some piece of me wants to turn back, but it’s too late. The wheels are already in motion. This whole thing is so crazy, but it doesn’t matter. I’m ready for whatever the night brings me, good or bad. Whatever happens, I’ll at least be able to say that I went on a date with a billionaire. If I get really lucky, it’ll be a good date with a billionaire, but even if it’s bad, I’ll be able to say I was brave enough to do it. And that’s what’s important.

6

Ally

It takes me an hour and half on the subway to get to Bar Virage. I ride in silence, reading the subway ads over and over again while looking at bullshit on my phone and trying not to stress out about my date. I’d never really understood the expression “butterflies in my stomach” but now I do. It feels like a whole swarm of them is fluttering around in there.

I remind myself of my resolve to go through with the date, good or bad. I try to calm the slight uneasiness in my belly. I make myself remember how much I liked talking to Rob at the day care, before he asked me out. I force myself to stay present and not spin out stories about what could possibly happen tonight. It’s not in my control. Whatever will be will be.

The venue is a short walk from the 96nd Street stop off the 6 train. The last time I

ventured anywhere near this far uptown, it was to go the Met Museum. The night air is crisp as I walk past rows and rows of tall brick buildings with their deep red awnings and well-dressed doormen waiting in the foyer. I feel out of my element before I even step inside the bar.

The bar itself doubles down on the fish out of water theme. It's so fancy, I feel like I shouldn't even be here. My friends and I usually hang out at a couple of dive bars in Brooklyn, which are homey places where the bartenders know us and the drinks are cheap. I'm pretty good at pool and a whiz at darts. I always have a good time when I go out, but the places I go out are like a totally different universe from Bar Virage.

The lighting is dim, emanating from some overhead fixtures and wall sconces that look like pieces of modern art worthy of a museum. Red leather banquettes line the walls, occupied by patrons wearing fine suits and even finer evening gowns. The bar is a long piece of polished oak. I can see myself reflected in its sheen, my face distorted by the grain of the wood.

With trembling legs, I sit down on an empty bar stool, entwining my feet in the silver metal as I settle onto the red leather seat. The bartenders are dressed in fancy vests and ties, and doing bustling business. I glance at a drink menu laid out on the polished oak surface.

Wow. I've never seen a thirty dollar price tag on a cocktail before. To its credit, the bar seems to have gone to a lot of trouble to put together some seriously fancy drinks, featuring top shelf artisanal liquors and fresh ingredients, but still. Thirty bucks is a lot of money. I hope that I don't look as shocked as I feel.

I just sit there until one of the bartenders notices me. If I wasn't waiting for Rob Lockhart to arrive, I'd think of the server as tall, but he's got nothing on Rob. Anyway, he's a tallish guy with a mustache and slicked back brown hair, expertly put together. "What can I do you for?" he asks me, his face open and friendly.

“Um,” I say, tentatively, feeling so out of place. “I’ll have a seltzer water.”

He nods. “Coming right up.” He doesn’t seem to notice that I don’t belong, so I relax a little bit.

“Are you sure that’s all you want?” a deep voice interrupts. It sends a shiver down my spine. I want to purr like a kitten, but I hold it in.

“Hello, Rob,” I murmur, turning to meet his piercing gaze.

He looks even more amazing than he usually does. He’s wearing a perfectly cut suit that shows off how athletic his body is, the strong bulge of muscle just visible beneath the tailored sleeves of his fine jacket. He cuts an imposing figure as he slides on the stool next to mine.

I’m so attracted to this man. I feel my insides turning to jelly. In fact, I might just melt into a puddle at his feet and call it a night. I’ve never felt like this before, and don’t really know how to handle it.

“Um,” I stammer, feeling like an idiot. “I like seltzer water?”

He raises one eyebrow. The gesture makes his face even more commanding yet amused at once, making my situation even worse. “You don’t drink?”

“Um, I do, I just...” I stop. What am I going to say? I just can’t afford these drinks? He’s on the Forbes World Billionaires list. Thirty dollars is literally nothing to him.

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“Will you allow me to buy you a drink?” he asks courteously, his eyes smoldering.

I nod, blushing, feeling awkward all over. “Yes, thank you. But I don’t know what to order. When my friends and I go out, I usually stick to beer.”

It amuses him. He lifts the corner of his mouth, only on the left side. “They do serve beer here, but I feel that you’d be making a mistake not sampling the cocktails. They are every special.”

“Um, okay. Well then, what do you recommend?”

A black brow lifts again.

“Do you like sweet drinks or hard ones?”

The way he says it is like a double entendre, and I blush furiously again.

“Sweet, I guess?” is my hapless stammer. The man grins.

“Try the Paloma,” he says. “It’s one of the best things on the menu, made with fresh organic grapefruit juice.”

I would take whatever he offered me, even if it were diet soda, which I absolutely hate. “Sounds good,” I say with what I hope is a cheery smile.

Rob smiles mysteriously before calling the bartender back over, and orders me the Paloma and himself a Vesper Martini.

“What makes it a Vesper?” I ask him.

“You’re not too young to have seen a James Bond film, are you?” he asks me.

“No,” I say, incredulous. “I’m not a child. I saw *Spectre* and *Skyfall*! Plus a couple movies with Pierce Brosnan.”

He makes a noise in his throat. “If you haven’t seen Sean Connery as Bond, you haven’t seen Bond. But that’s not the point. In the books, the writer Ian Fleming provides a recipe for Bond’s favorite martini. It’s not just that ‘shaken not stirred’ gibberish. The drink is a mix of gin and vodka with lillet vermouth and garnished with a lemon peel instead of an olive.”

You learn something new every day. Who knew?

“James Bond is based on books? I had no idea,” I say, absolutely amazed.

He shakes his head. “Yeah, and they’re good books too. I’ve been a huge fan since I was a boy. You should read one and see.”

I nod enthusiastically. I love reading. It’s one of my favorite pastimes. I’m kind of shy, but with a book I can be transported to so many other worlds and live so many other lives. I’ve always liked books better than movies, because I can put myself into the story and use my imagination. “I’ll have to check one out,” I say, with genuine excitement. “They sound good.”

He shrugs. “I’ll loan them to you. I have the whole set.”

The bartender returns with our drinks. I sip mine and discover that it isn’t exactly what I would term sweet. Instead, it’s a strong tequila drink with a salt rim and a kick from the grapefruit. Maybe that’s what sweet tastes like to a man whose drink of

choice consists of nothing but different kinds of alcohol. It is good though, and it feels warm as it goes down my throat, loosening me up. I start to relax a bit more, feeling like perhaps I do belong here after all.

“So, Ally Summers,” Rob rumbles, taking a sip of his James Bond inspired cocktail. “Let’s talk about you.”

He looks at me with those penetrating blue eyes. I gasp and then look down, staring at the salt on the rim of my glass. “I don’t know that there’s much to talk about,” is my shy murmur.

“Nonsense,” he says. “Where are you from originally?”

I don’t know why my date cares about this stuff, but he seems genuinely interested and the attention feels good. I take a deep breath.

“I’m a native New Yorker, actually, but not from the city. I’m from a little town north of Manhattan called Westin. My mom still lives there but I live in Brooklyn with my roommate Haley who was my best friend in college.” I feel like I’m running my mouth, but he doesn’t seem to mind.

“What a coincidence. I’m from New York myself,” he says.

“From Manhattan?” I guess.

“Ding ding ding, we have a winner,” he teases me. “I guess you can read it all over me. I did the prep school thing, went to college and business school, blah blah blah, before I came back here to make a life for myself. My father is Preston Lockhart. Maybe you’ve heard of him?”

Oh shit. I’m just not that well informed about the business world. I feel a little silly

about it, but I can't lie. "No, I'm sorry. I haven't."

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He regards me quizzically, then smiles. "Fair enough. We're not here to talk about my father anyway, are we?"

"I don't think so," I try, feeling out of place once again.

"No worries, I like that you're a little different. Anyways, college was a blast. I didn't study much, but I worked out a ton. I was on the crew team," he says. "We never won anything while I was rowing, but I made a lot of friends."

I nod enthusiastically, even though I'm totally unathletic. "Do you still row?" I ask him.

He winces a little bit. "Only in the gym, unfortunately. I don't have time to keep up with it. Do you like the water?"

I nod. I don't have too much experience with boats, but I've always liked swimming, even if I'm not exactly what you'd call good.

"Yes but it's a challenge to find a pool in Manhattan," I laugh. Rob nods knowingly.

"I keep a boat at one of my summer homes. Maybe I'll take you out there some time. It's a speed boat, though. Machine powered not man powered."

I laugh, taking another sip of my drink. Boats? Water? I'm so out of my element. But the billionaire doesn't notice.

"By the way, how'd you get into the day care game?" he asks me, cocking his head

quizzically. I take a deep breath.

“Well, I always knew I wanted to do something in the education field,” I say. “I went to school in Chicago where I studied elementary education. I thought about being a kindergarten teacher, but my mom knows the owner of Ladybug Tots and he was happy to give me a job. I really love kids, so it was an easy sell. Some people say that two and three year olds are ‘terrible’ but if you ask me, they’re some of the best creatures in the world. I just love watching them learn and grow.”

“Do you think you’ll stay there long term?” he asks. “It doesn’t seem like an easy gig to handle thirty kids at once.”

I nod and laugh a little.

“For the time being, at least. I really like the job. Ladybug is a great place, and the kids that come are really good kids. I grew up a little sheltered, I have to confess. I don’t think I’d do well in a rough environment or dealing with tough cases. Not that I wouldn’t do my best!”

He touches my arm briefly, not exactly in a sexual way but the closeness is enough to send a bolt of electricity through me. “I think you’re doing a great job. Katie talks about you sometimes. She loves you.”

My heart lifts, taking the focus off the spreading warmth in my lower parts.

“Oh, I’m so glad to hear that! Katie is a really special girl.”

“I think so too,” he says, his voice filling with pride. “She’s certainly very special to me.”

I laugh.

“I love being a day care teacher, but actually, I’m leading you astray. I do have other plans. I’m saving up to go back to school,” I confess. Despite Rob’s insanely good looks, he’s actually really easy to talk to, almost like he’s a normal guy. The cocktail doesn’t hurt either. “I want to get a Master’s in Education,” I say. “The way the world is going, kids have to start and earlier and earlier to learn the skills they need to compete. I want to focus on really early childhood education, kids Katie’s age. Getting the right foundation is very important, and I know I have the patience to deal with little kids, which not everybody does.”

He nods.

“I’ve watched you with them. You are really talented. I loved how you explained to Katie that the little boy was only trying to show her that he liked her when he pulled her hair. You didn’t excuse the behavior, but you explained what was happening while staying fair and neutral.”

The thought goes through my mind that I would really like it if Rob pulled my hair right now. I feel silly for thinking this, and my cheeks start to color. He looks at me rather intensely, perhaps imagining the same thing.

“Would you like another drink?” he asks smoothly.

“Sure,” I murmur, looking down at my lap. Suddenly, I feel really hot. Having finished the first drink, I’m a lot more present, and no longer worried about not belonging at the bar. “I want to try something different this time.”

“Anything the lady wants,” he chuckles deeply.

I scan the menu. “How about a Sidecar?” I venture.

He calls the bartender over and orders another round.

“I love that you’re interested in children,” he says, once he’s ordered the drinks. “I like women who are interested in family and kids. Do you have any children of your own?”

My uterus hears this and contracts pleurably inside of me. Oh my gosh, really? I often think about having kids, but I’d need to find a father for them first.

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“No, I’ve never been married,” I tell him, blushing. “I don’t have any kids.”

“I’m sure you’d make an amazing mom,” he says, which makes me blush harder. I thought I’d overcome my shyness, but clearly I was wrong.

I’m grateful when the next round of drinks shows up.

“I... um... well, I can’t do that on my own, can I? I had a steady boyfriend in college, but that seems like ages ago. We broke up when we graduated because he was joining the Peace Corps in Poland.”

He raises an eyebrow again.

“Peace Corps, huh? Very interesting. But what about you? You haven’t dated much since coming to the city?”

I can feel my cheeks getting even hotter. I take a big sip of my drink. This one is legitimately sweet, with a rim of sugar instead of salt.

“No, I haven’t. Not that many men are interested in me.”

The confession is humiliating, and suddenly I feel about two inches tall. Unable to meet his eyes, I look at my lap, praying to disappear into the floor.

But Rob’s gaze narrows as he looks at me thoughtfully.

“Is that so?” he asks in a low voice. “That’s hard to believe. You’re so beautiful.”

What? It's hard for me to believe that he thinks so.

"Stop it," I say, barely able to look him in the eye.

"Why? It's true." The way he gazes at me, I have to trust his words, but it seems so alien. Other men don't think that I'm beautiful. Other men don't even notice me.

I let myself bask in his approval for a moment, but then images of Rob with all those other women crowd into the back of my mind. I think about bringing it up, but I don't want to ruin everything. There's no sense in letting him know that I stalked him before coming on this date. Instead, I tell myself to just enjoy what's right here in front of me.

"Thanks," I say simply, still not quite convinced but making the shape of it.

He looks me up and down.

"Have you looked at yourself in the mirror recently?" he asks.

My first thought is to wonder whether my hair is out of place. My hand moves up reflexively to tame my curls.

"What is it?"

"Just you," he grins. "Your eyes, your smile. Everything about you is gorgeous."

He reaches for my face, stroking my curls. I touch his hand. I'm melting, far too turned on to say or do anything except lean into his touch. My head feels like it's swimming. When he pulls his hand away, I realize that it's not just the overwhelming power of his eroticism, but that I'm also feeling pretty tipsy.

Oh shit. I don't really want another round, but Rob orders one. We keep talking. I do my best to follow the conversation, but all I'm thinking about is how much I want him to touch me again. I feel elated, and happy just to be in his presence.

After the third round, he suggests taking a walk for some fresh air. I agree, enthusiastically, stepping down off the bar stool. My head is spinning, and it's an effort just to make my legs work properly. I don't usually wear heels either. I feel like I'm one of the toddlers, unsure of my own feet while wobbling here and there.

Rob opens the door for me like a proper gentleman, and then offers his arm for me to hold. I take it, feeling the hard muscle beneath the soft fabric of his suit jacket.

I don't know if it's the shock of the contact or just the alcohol, but either way, I trip over my heels and almost fall down on the sidewalk. If I wasn't holding onto the billionaire, I'd probably face plant right here in front of the bar, but fortunately, he's there to hold me up.

My heart races. Wow. That was almost a total disaster! I spin out the possibilities, imagining Rob having to take me to the hospital with a broken nose, bleeding all over his fancy clothes. I'm so relieved that I was holding his arm.

"Um, those drinks are strong," I mumble, recovering myself. It occurs to me that I haven't eaten dinner. I'm not a heavy drinker in any case and imbibing on an empty stomach is a recipe for overdoing it. Plus, I put away those cocktails pretty fast on account of my nerves.

"Well, they should be, at thirty bucks a pop."

I feel embarrassed, spending his money on trendy cocktails only to get stumbling drunk. I hope he doesn't hate me for it. "I'm sorry."

He grins knowingly.

“For what? I invited you here. I bought you those drinks. Don’t get weird about it. Aren’t boys supposed to be the weird ones?”

I smile despite myself. “I think everybody’s weird sometimes. Life’s just... strange, you know? Even when you think you get it, it seems like it’s going to go one kind of way, but then it goes another kind of way altogether.”

He nods, digesting the thought. I watch his brow knit. “Yeah, that’s what makes life so wonderful. The unexpected. Life’s an adventure.”

I smile wanly. “I don’t know if what I’m saying even makes sense. I’m kind of, uh, drunk right now,” I stammer. “I’m having a really good time though.”

But the truth is that I’ve sobered up now that the cold night air is blowing on my face. It was cramped and loud in the bar, but being out on the streets of New York has helped me regain my equilibrium. Plus, to be frank, it’s also my extra padding. I’m no lightweight like those tiny girls. Instead, the alcohol metabolizes quickly and now, I’m stone-cold sober.

He smiles. “You’re making plenty of sense. Maybe you’d like to go back to my place for some coffee?”

Squinting my eyes a little, I eye the billionaire. I’m not feeling up to a long walk. “Where do you live?”

The gleam in his blue eyes deepens. “Across the street, actually,” he says, and then points at a tall building across from the bar. Concrete and steel, with a green and gray awning out front, it’s a building as imposing as the man standing next to me.

I’m neither too drunk nor too naive to know what going to a man’s apartment means, whatever excuses either of us may make for it. If he was any other man, I’d say no, and call a cab. Even with my college boyfriend, Daniel, I waited four dates before I gave it up. But Rob Lockhart isn’t just any other man, and I can’t resist. In fact, I don’t want to.

“Yes,” I breathe. “Let’s go.”

With that, we make our way across the street and into the lap of indescribable luxury.

7

Ally

I’m shy as we step into the elevator. It’s not just being in such close quarters with this man. It’s the fact that I’m way out of my element. Rob Lockhart is a billionaire, and his building shows it in every way. When we stepped into the foyer of this imposing fortress, there were three doormen waiting, all dressed in natty red uniforms with jaunty caps.

“Welcome home, Sir,” said the one at the door, bowing a little. “I trust you had a good night?”

Rob nods while taking my elbow.

“It was fantastic,” he growls. “Good night everyone.”

And with that, we began walking to the left, our shoes tapping against the shiny marble floor. I start.

“Wait, isn’t it that way?” I ask in a whisper, nodding to the right. “The elevator banks are over there.”

A gleam enters his blue eyes.

“Yes, if you’re everyone else. But if you’re me, and you live in the penthouse, then you have your own private elevator. Come on, sweetheart. This way.”

My mouth almost falls open in shock, but I catch myself in time. His own private elevator? What kind of world does Mr. Lockhart live in? Clearly one of immense privilege, where nothing is too good or out of reach.

Like a shy child, I follow him into the gilded gold box. I catch a glimpse of myself with Rob in a mirror mounted on the elevator wall, and suddenly, my heart folds in on itself. I’m momentarily reminded of why we’re such an unlikely pair. The man I’m with is tall, gorgeous and dominating, dressed in a perfectly-cut black suit with an expensive watch on his wrist. Me, I’m in an outfit I got from Ann Taylor on sale for fifty bucks when I visited the outlet mall in New Jersey last year.

But I make myself take a deep breath and straighten my shoulders. The billionaire invited me here, and I chose to come of my own accord. He wants me, and I want him too. Is that wrong? This is the modern age where women come and go as they like, so I shouldn’t be ashamed of what I look like, or what I have to offer. *Carpe diem*, the voice in my head whispers. You only live once.

How ironic. Wasn’t there a James Bond movie called *You Only Live Twice*? At this point, I can’t think. Rob is looking at me with such heated intent that a small flame ignites in my pussy and my knees go weak. All this, and he hasn’t even touched me

yet.

Ding!The elevator chimes and the doors slide open noiselessly. It's so different from my walk-up, where you have to heave yourself up five floors before arriving at my teeny apartment which is cramped and untidy. Instead, the elevator opens up directly into a foyer of sorts, except that there's a canary yellow Lamborghini parked by the door.

“What is this?” I asked, staring at the car. “Why is there a sports vehicle here?”

The billionaire throws his head back and laughs.

“Well evidently the developers got it in their minds that parking lots were passe,” he drawls with amusement. So they built a special car elevator, and my Lambo sleeps at night in the penthouse with me.

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It's true. Staring closely at the white wall, I can see tiny seams that run about ten feet up and fifteen feet across.

"So there's a hidden elevator here, that drops your car off on this floor?" I ask, gesturing to the slide indentation in the wall.

Rob nods.

"That's right. You know us billionaires. We don't like to be apart from our toys, and that includes our cars."

I'm stunned. I've heard of crazy things before, like Japanese robot parking attendants that can fit fifty cars into a small, boxy lot with elevated riders. But having your car parked in your penthouse, ready for you at any time? It's a luxury that blows me away.

But Rob is totally at ease.

"Come on, pretty girl," he teases me, opening a gilded front door. "Come see what other toys there are."

I step hesitantly into a blinding white apartment with black leather furniture. A giant, glittery chandelier hangs from the extra-height ceiling, and what looks like a sculpture of a tree adorns one corner. Artwork is placed in each wall niche, carefully highlighted to bring out the exquisite detail and craftsmanship.

"Wow," is all I can manage, looking around with a stunned expression. "It's like you live in a museum."

“Oh that?” he asks with a casual glance, indicating the tree with a nod. “That’s just something I picked up at Art Basel last year. You know I’m pretty into the art scene and enjoy collecting. It speaks to something in me,” he says simply.

I’m surprised, shooting him a glance.

“Really? You’re into art? I thought you were more of a business and finance type.”

He grins.

“I am, but who’s to say I can’t have outside interests?” he shrugs. “Art helps me see things in a different light, and gives possibility when I feel like I’ve hit a wall. Running my company is tough, and there are a lot of times when the shit hits the fan and I want to give up. But imbibing art and seeing how it changes the world helps calm me down and give me insight into next steps,” he says.

The words are casual, but I know he means every syllable. I’m infused with respect for this titan. Of course, running a corporate empire must be difficult. It’s no walk in the park, and everyone has a different way of blowing off steam.

“Well, I guess it’s better than using hookers and blow,” I say in what I hope is a funny voice. Immediately, I wish a hole would open up in the floor to swallow me up. Why did I say that? What a stupid remark. He’s probably going to throw me out of his apartment now, and I would totally deserve it.

But instead, Rob just shrugs. “Maybe for a younger man,” he remarks, “but I leave that to my subordinates. Nope, it’s the gym and art that do it for me,” he says. “And a good woman,” he adds on a low note while shooting me a glance. “That also helps me relax a lot.”

Immediately my body goes hot all over. He wants me. He wants my body to take his

cock and to give him relief. He wants to use me as a plaything, and to bend me to his every whim and will. The problem is that I see nothing wrong with that. I'm absolutely willing to give him what he wants because the truth is that I want it too.

"I'm ready," I say in a quiet voice. "If you're ready then I am too."

He doesn't say anything for a moment, merely looking at me all over and eating up my curves with his eyes. My knees turn into jelly as a flame ignites in my lower belly. Yes, I want this man. I want those broad, square shoulders blocking out the light as he owns my soft curves. I want that hard slash of a mouth descending on my lips, and swallowing my cries as I dissolve beneath him. I want it all, and I'm ready to give it to him.

But instead, the billionaire takes my hand, our flesh meeting with a sizzle.

"Sweetheart, not so fast," he growls. "Don't you want to see the rest of the apartment?"

I do, and I don't. I do, if it means going straight to his bedroom. But instead, he leads me to the kitchen, showing off a set-up worthy of a professional chef.

"Do you cook?" he asks casually.

I gasp.

"Yes," I say. "And this is top of the line everything! Oh my god, you even have an induction food processor," I say, opening one of his drawers to see the long, chubby tool the size of a curling iron.

He grins, pulling it out.

“We’ll have fun with this,” the billionaire laughs, taking my hand again. He leads me out of the kitchen and into a lavish sitting area.

“Is this your second living room?” I ask. “I mean, the one that we were just in must be your main entertainment area.”

He nods, eyes flicking over the huge projection screen mounted on the wall.

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“Yeah, this is where I go when I want to kick my feet up and catch some football. You know, drink beers and relax.”

“You mean you don’t always drink thirty dollar cocktails?” I tease. Oh god, I put my foot in it again. What’s going on with my big mouth? Why do I keep being such a sassy smart-ass?

But Rob likes it because he just throws his head back and laughs, showing off even white teeth.

“Not only do I not drink thirty dollar cocktails, but I think this space qualifies as a man cave,” he says with another amused chuckle. “Check this out.”

The billionaire pulls out a remote before pressing a green button, and then a grinding noise starts. The dark man grimaces.

“It’s not supposed to sound like that,” he grunts. “I paid top dollar for the best contractors. I don’t know why it sounds like a fucking squeaky garage door.”

But I can’t speak because slowly but surely, the wall is beginning to rotate and turn clockwise.

“Oh my god, it’s a hidden wall, like they have in detective movies!” I gasp.

“Not exactly a hidden wall,” Rob corrects. “But it’s my personal bar,” he says. “Complete with top shelf liquor, warm nuts, and magazines at your disposal. Whatever you need is here,” he says.

It's my turn to laugh then.

"But why do you have to hide it?" I ask. "You live here alone, right?"

Suddenly, I'm caught off guard again. Maybe he doesn't live here alone. Maybe he has a girlfriend, or even worse, he's still sharing it with his ex-wife. Is that even possible? My mind whirs. There were times when Katie's mom came in, but I don't remember them clearly. All I remember is a skinny blonde who always had ginormous sunglasses on, and a sour, nasty expression on her face. She was always angry with her daughter for some reason or other, although Katie is an absolute angel. There's no way he's still living with her, right?

The billionaire shrugs, and I'm relieved.

"Yeah, I have this place to myself. Lindsay moved out a long time ago. Before we even technically "separated," in fact. We just weren't getting along," he says matter of factly.

I want to ask more, but it seems inappropriate. Instead, I just nod with what I hope is an empathic expression.

"It sounds terrible," I murmur. "I hope you're okay."

Rob shrugs again.

"It's been a long time," he says casually, although there's an edge to his tone. "My marriage was over long before we decided to divorce. We'd been leading separate lives, and to be honest, nothing was keeping us together except for our daughter and the fact that we shared a roof. One day, we looked at each other and realized there was nothing gained by staying married. What was the point? We'd be happier apart, and so would our daughter."

I nod sympathetically.

“Kids are really smart,” I say slowly. “Even if you take pains never to show your distress, they’re like sensitive radars. They can pick it up.”

He nods.

“Yeah, Katie was really young, but we could tell she was affected by the tension, even though we tried not to fight in front of her. She’d burst into tears if she thought I was upset, even if I wasn’t upset at her.”

I nod again.

“Kids are sensitive,” I say quietly. “I see it all the time in my work. The ones who come from troubled homes have difficulty settling down in the morning. Even though they’re only two, they’re already acting out, instead of exploring a new environment or learning skills. Instead, they’re trying to express the fact that their home lives are less than ideal, even if they don’t have the words for it yet.”

Rob shoots me a look.

“So what do you do with the troubled kids?” he asks. “How do you help them fit in?”

This is a tricky question because parents don’t want their child impacted by another child’s problems. Fortunately, I’ve been asked this question many times in the past, and I deliver my answer with sincerity and a genuine belief that this is the right approach.

“We work with every child one-on-one, so every child gets the care and attention that they need,” I say. “It can be very individualized, and much more than an onlooker realizes. For example, if two kids are playing with ponies, and the troubled one

begins to make the ponies fight, I'll intervene. I'll talk with the troubled child to find out why the pony is unhappy, why they're fighting, and what that fighting means. Meanwhile, another teacher will work with the other child, and continue the pony play in a much less challenging setting."

Rob looks thoughtful.

"Interesting," he rumbles. "And do you have a lot of troubled kids at Ladybug?"

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My answer to this question is ready too.

“Thankfully, no,” I say. “We’re located in a well-off neighborhood, so we tend to draw affluent families like yourselves. Not that money doesn’t equal problems,” I say quickly. “But we don’t have troubled children in the traditional sense, who pick fights and have aggression issues. Instead, the tots are mostly well-behaved, and eager to learn and explore.”

Rob nods with respect in his eyes.

“You know, I never thought elementary education would be this nuanced,” he says slowly. “I thought it was nothing more than a day care.”

“Well, we area day care,” I say, “but there’s more to it than that. We don’t just let the kids wander around and do nothing. Instead, we seek to provide enriching experiences, and to help each child develop to their fullest potential in a safe and nurturing environment.”

A moment of silence.

“Ally,” the billionaire says with an amused smile. “I’m already sold on Ladybug Tots. My daughter’s already enrolled, and I think the world of you guys. No need to give me the marketing spiel.”

My cheeks go red.

“No, I didn’t mean that!” is my half-hearted protest. “I know it sounds like I was

spouting the company line, but ... but”

“But you were,” he finishes for me with another amused smile. “Come on, I’ll show you the rest of the apartment.”

And slowly, we walk down a thickly carpeted corridor, my footsteps silent on the pile. Oh god. What have I done? Why is everything I say so lame and predictable? And why in the world did I give him the marketing spiel from my job? Even if I did, at least I could have made it sound less processed, and more real.

My cheeks flame. Rob’s been throwing open doors and showing me room after room, but I don’t see a thing. Instead, all I can think about is how I’m totally out of my league. After all, he brings me to his penthouse, and I gawk at the space. He shows me his man cave, and I immediately think that his ex still lives here. He asks me about my job, and I turn into a robot spouting slogans. What the hell is wrong with me?

But Rob doesn’t notice, his broad back leading me further down the hall. Finally, we stop before a set of imposing oak doors.

“Is this where it happens?” I ask, trying to crack a joke. “You know, all the magical machinery of Willy Wonka’s factory? Are there oompa-loompas waiting to jump out and dance for us?”

I’m trying to be funny because I figure that the solid oak doors hide an office inside. Something luxurious and grand, with a massive desk and club chairs upholstered in the finest leather. Maybe even a fireplace.

Well, I wasn’t wrong about the luxurious and grand part because when Rob throws open the doors, the space inside is imposing. It’s huge, with floor to ceiling windows that overlook Central Park. The night sky beckons, illuminating the room with the

cool glow of moonlight and the sparkle of the city below.

But that's when I gasp, every cell suddenly tingling with awareness. This isn't Rob's office. This is his bedroom. The furniture is all heavy, masculine wood, with a navy coverlet on a king-size bed. It's sparsely decorated otherwise, and definitely all man.

"Oh I see," is my faint voice. "No oompa-loompas then."

"No oompa-loompas dancing," he agrees in a low voice, shutting the door behind us.

"But maybe you'd like to dance for me instead, sweetheart?"

Suddenly, I realize that the evening's reached its climax, and I'm ready for this man in every way.

8

Rob

Shit, she's so beautiful that I can't stop from staring. Ally's a different one, that's for sure. Most women I know are practiced and so smooth that it's like gliding on ice. You're making conversation, but learning absolutely nothing about each other. You could be talking to a TV, it's that bland.

But Ally's all sparkle and shine, with a really cute way of putting her foot in her mouth. She's shy, sure, but at the same time opinionated and bossy. And she definitely knows her stuff around children, which turns me on like crazy because I've always wanted a huge family. My penthouse is enormous. It was cavernous even when Lindsay lived here, like some ghostly space haunted by three souls. We rattled around the ice box most nights, sticking to our respective corners.

But I want things to change. I've always wanted dozens of rug rats, and for some

reason, Ally makes me think that it could come true. She's the motherly type. Just look at how good she is with Katie, and how knowledgeable she is when leading a class full of tots. I'd love to make that curvy form grow curvier still, hopefully with a couple of my babies inside.

"You ready?" I ask in a growl.

She's literally trembling like a leaf. Yet I can feel the frisson of awareness between us.

"For what?" she says in a whisper, taking a deep breath. My dick hardens at the sight of those huge breasts lifting and then falling. I need to touch them, and there's no reason to hold back. I've finally gotten the curvy girl into a room alone, and the time has come to sample what she has to offer.

Slowly, my bronzed fist reaches out and gently cups the bottom of one large tit. Oh shit, this is exactly how I like them. Huge and soft, with a pebbly tip that's already poking out under the thin fabric of her dress.

"Mr. Lockhart!" she exclaims, eyes wide and startled. "Oh my god!"

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“Oh my god what, sweetheart?” I ask, gently jiggling it. It’s gorgeous. Her flesh moves naturally, wobbling a bit like jell-o yet with the firmness and elasticity of youth. This is going to be fun.

She’s panting now, and still as a doe under my touch. Her breast is warm and soft in my palm and I squeeze it a little, causing a low moan to emanate from her throat.

“This is what you want, isn’t it?” I ask in a dark voice. “Tell me, sweetheart. Tell me you want it.”

She can’t speak for a moment, mesmerized by my gaze. An array of emotions pass over that beautiful face, and for a moment, I’m afraid she’s going to say no. Holy shit. It’s been so long since a woman said no to me. Probably more than thirty years, in fact. But is Ally going to buck the trend? After all, she’s unpredictable, and I wouldn’t be surprised if she took matters into her own hands and walked out.

But instead, that narrow chin tips up until she’s looking me with no fear in those brown depths.

“I’m ready,” she says in a slightly quavery voice. “I’m ready for whatever you want, Rob. Use me, if that’s what makes you happy. My body is yours.”

Ah, the words are so sweet to my ears. I love women in general, but I love it even more when a smart, intelligent, and independent woman bends to my will. I love when she lets me be a man, and take charge. So I squeeze her breast one more time, making her yelp, before lightly pinching her nipple.

“Good,” is my growl. “Because I want you to dance for me.”

Her cheeks color.

“I’m sorry?”

But I’m already striding to a club chair by the window.

“I want you to dance,” I say simply, folding my broad form into the buttery leather.

“Dance, and show me what you have. Show me everything, sweetheart, because I want to see it all.”

She’s still staring at me with wide eyes.

“Dance?” she echoes again, unsure.

“Dance,” I say firmly, making a twirling movement with my fingers. “Let me see what you have.”

Again, Ally seems like she’s about to bolt from the room and make her escape. Maybe I’ve overplayed my hand. But then her narrow shoulders straighten, and she looks me in the eye once more.

“Of course, Mr. Lockhart,” she says in a dulcet tone. “I’d love to dance for you.”

With that, the girl begins to sway, undulating her hips from left to right. It’s a little mechanical at first because she’s unsure of herself, but I’m entranced from the very first move. Ally’s absolutely beautiful, like Salome doing the Dance of the Seven Veils.

Sure enough, she begins to feel more comfortable with herself and does a little twirl

so that she's facing away from me. The girl shoots me a sly look over one shoulder, and then parts her legs before bending down slowly to let her hands almost touch the floor. Oh shit. The sight is so gorgeous that my dick literally jerks in my pants, rock hard and ready to rumble. The material of her dress slides up those ivory thighs, stopping just under her pussy. In fact, I can see the shadowy vee of her soft spot, and a glimmer of white fabric there. Are those her panties?

"Do you like what you see?" she giggles, wiggling her butt a little. "Is this what you want, Mr. Lockhart?"

Oh fuck. This is what I want and a thousand times more. I want to rip those panties off her lovely pussy and burrow my head in her wet spot until she screams with delight. I want to taste every inch of that succulent pink twat until she creams hard into my mouth, crying my name while riding my tongue.

I will do all that, and more, but it's too early yet. I want to draw it out some first.

"Sweetheart, you know there's no holding back when it comes to me," I rumble, almost casually. But there's nothing casual about my stance. I'm rock hard, with every muscle tense and ready to jump this girl.

She giggles again, swaying her hips a bit more so that her pussy tempts me.

"I'm not holding back," she says coyly. "Why, is there something I should be doing that I'm not?"

My dick jerks again and spurts a little inside my pants. Oh fuck. I'm literally leaking sperm already, this chick has me so turned on.

"Pull your panties to the side," I command, my eyes never leaving the vee between her thighs. "Show it to me."

She pretends mock-shock.

“Pull what?” is her throaty purr. “What is it you want to see?”

Oh shit, I’m totally out of my league. I want her to say the words, but instead, I’ve become putty in Ally’s hands. She’s controlling this scene, and the fact is that I love every second of it.

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“Yourpanties,” I grunt. “Show me that steamy pink.”

Ally sways her butt a little more, teasing me before her fingers dance up her thighs. Her ivory legs make my mouth water, they’re thick and solid, just the way I like them. Her fingers stop right at her pussy, teasing gently at her silk-covered pussy.

“Oh my god, I’m wet,” she mewls with mock shock. “The fabric is so drenched.”

As if on cue, my nose detects the scent of sopping cunt. It’s true. She’s sticky and soaked, and the girl proves my point by hooking one finger into the crotch of her panties and pulling it down to show me.

“See?” she exclaims, slowly easing the silk down. “See how wet I am?”

It’s true. There’s a line of pussy juice connecting her lips to the silk, and oh shit, but I watch mesmerized as the line grows thinner and longer as she pulls the fabric down lower. My dick is about to explode, and I can’t resist. Undoing my zip without tearing my eyes from the delectable form in front of me, I meet her gaze while yanking my massive shaft out.

Her eyes widen as a gasp escapes her lips. “Oh my god!”

“Oh my god is right,” I smirk. “You’re taking ten inches tonight, did I mention?”

My cock jerks again as she trembles. But this girl is ready for it because if I’m not mistaken, her cunt just spurted a little at the sight of my huge tool. Oh yeah. Ally wants this buried tight between her legs as she screams, riding this huge fuck pole to

heaven.

“Oh Mr. Lockhart,” she moans, still bent over while showing me her twat. “Oh god, Mr. Lockhart.”

“Don’t oh god me,” I growl. “Now pull those panties to the side like I told you. I want to see everything, and that includes you holding yourself open.”

This time, Ally knows I’m not joking. Bending further down with her legs wide, she takes a deep breath. Her tits hang down, squashed against her knees and my cock twitches again. Fuck, I want to titty fuck her so bad.

But first things first. Ally slowly eases her fingers up her thighs once more, and this time she loops her hand into the crotch of her panties before drawing the soft silk to one side and hooking it over one giant buttock. Oh fuck, she’s so beautiful. Her snatch glistens and beckons to me in the low light of the moon, the folds so wet and swollen, her hole practically begging for it.

“Is this what you want?” she whispers, her head between her legs. “Is this what you wanted to see?”

I growl, fisting my massive shaft. It’s wet and slick from pre-cum, and I work the liquid into my skin.

“Yeah, but even more,” is my dark command. “Reach back and pull yourself open, baby girl. I want to see everything.”

Ally wobbles a little at the dirtiness of the command, but then finds her footing again. With two small palms, she reaches in back of herself and with one hand on each giant asscheek, pulls them open wide to show herself to me.

“Like this?” she mewls. “Is this what you want, Mr. Lockhart?”

Oh fuck. This is exactly what I want, and more, because she’s so fucking beautiful that it takes every iota of self-control not to jump her right then. Her big butt cheeks have lifted, showing me the pink lips between her legs, swollen and plump. They’re sopping wet, with a line of goo running down from her hole to dangle right at her clit. But it’s her clit that has me entranced because she’s got a huge one, so big and hard that it visibly pulses before my gaze, begging for a lick and a kiss.

“Oh sweetheart,” I rumble, unable to tear my eyes away. “You’re so turned on. You like this don’t you?”

She looks at me coyly from over one narrow shoulder.

“I do like it,” she confesses in a whisper. “Aren’t you going to taste me now?”

The truth is that I don’t know if I have time for tasting. My cock is pulsing under my grip, and my hips are already beginning to gyrate in the chair. I’m ready to spurt, and there might be no time for niceties. But I can’t resist one last command.

“Baby, do me one more favor,” I say in a low rasp while rubbing my shaft hard. “Hold your pussy lips open and let me see inside.”

She gasps and goes stock still. But then Ally nods imperceptibly and her right hand lets go of one big cheek. It slips between her legs until two fingers are planted on each side of her labia, and then pulls that soft flesh open.

Oh shit. Oh take me to Heaven and kick the shit out of me because that’s what I deserve. The innocent girl is all hot pink flesh and delicious goo in her channel. I can literally see it welling up, the nectar of her pussy beckoning to be tasted.

I can't resist this time. In a flash, I'm kneeling behind the little girl, my big form poised behind her small one.

"Ready?" I rasp. But there's no time to answer because my tongue's on her in an instant, lapping up that female juice. It's tangy and tasty, and everything I've ever wanted. She moans and closes her eyes, hands reaching forward to brace themselves on the edge of the bed.

"Oh god, Rob," is her throaty whisper. "Oh god, this feels so good."

I lap again, letting her fluids gush down my throat before forming my tongue into a point and pushing it as deep as I can into that channel. Oh fuck, she's small. Her pussy's tight and it's going to be hard to work it in, but I've never backed down from a challenge before.

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“Give it to me,” I murmur into her trembling flesh. “Give it all to me.”

Ally begins to buck against my face, her face pressed into the mattress now.

“Rob, Rob,” she cries out as I nip her clit, shrieking a bit with the pleasure. “Oh fuck!”

“Oh fuck is right,” I growl, “because you’re going to get fucked so thoroughly tonight, you won’t be able to walk tomorrow.”

With that, Ally careens over the edge. She goes stock still, my tongue still buried in her pussy and then lets out a cry of ecstasy as her cunt explodes all over my face.

“Oh shit!” is her scream. “Oh Mr. Lockhart!”

I hold her hips as she comes hard, drinking up every secretion from that delectable fount of goodness. Her pussy pulses again and again, streams of liquid hitting the back of my throat, and I gulp it like a thirsty man trekking in the desert. Finally, Ally finishes. Her big boobs tremble and sway as she gasps for air, cunt still quivering under my tongue.

“Glad I got you all lubed up because you’re going to need it,” is my smirk as I get to my feet behind her. “Now hold on, baby girl, because this is gonna be a tight squeeze.”

She braces herself against the edge of the bed, hands gripping the coverlet. “I can handle it,” she whispers while looking at me over one shoulder. “I can take it.”

Pleased, I nudge her hole with the tip of my dick. She moans, eyes fluttering shut at the feel of the hard shaft teasing her lips.

“You like that, don’t you?” I ask. “You want it inside you, don’t you, my little slut?”

She mewls, wetness seeping from her cunt to coat my hard rod all over again.

“I do,” she admits. “Now put it in me, Rob. Use my body to please yourself. My body belongs only to you.”

Oh fuck. This is a woman who knows her place because I intend on using all three of her holes. But first things first. Slowly, I push my hips forward so that my dick slips in one inch, and then two. She moans, eyes rolling back to show the whites as she pants and gasps.

“You’re so big!” is her exclamation. “Oh fuck!”

“That’s right,” I rasp behind her, running my thumb over one big butt cheek before reaching around to caress her little nub. She squeals and squirms, another cascade of fluid coating my shaft with her wetness. “More!” she squeals. “More, more!”

“That’s my greedy little girl,” I rasp in her ear, slowly pushing further and further into her wet pink channel. “You have a hungry cunt, don’t you? You need to have a big dick in you, otherwise you’re not happy, isn’t that right? My baby needs cock otherwise she’s a pissed off little girl.”

Ally’s moaning and thrashing a bit, even as her pink sleeve takes my massive shaft so good.

“Unnh,” is her breathless cry as another few inches slip in. Finally, I hit bottom, all ten inches buried deep in that wetness, and she lets out another grunt. “Oh!”

“Fuck,” is my growl. “This fucking slutty cunt took my huge dick in one slide. With most girls, I have to work it for ten minutes. But you? You’re so slutty that you took it all on the first try.”

She nods and pants, juicing all over my fuckshaft.

“Yes,” she pants. “Yes, yes.”

That gives me the permission I need. I begin pulling my hips back, before sliding all the way into her again. Her pussy’s so tight and wet that I almost cream right then, but my woman’s pleasure matters. Ally looks like she’s about to orgasm again. Her fingers clutch spasmodically at the coverlet while her cheek presses against the mattress.

“Yes, Mr. Lockhart,” she moans again. “Yes, I’m a slut. I’m yours slut.”

That does it. My body erupts into a frenzy of motion and I start drilling that tight twat hard. Each stroke goes all the way to the end, my curvy girl gasping and jolting with every hard pound.

“Yes, yes, yes,” she cries out. “Yes, I need it.”

The cliff arrives, and suddenly, we’re both soaring over it. Despite the fact that she just came a few minutes ago, the gorgeous day care provider seizes up and goes still for a moment before her pussy clamps down and then dissolves into a series of hard, earth-shattering tremors.

“Mr. Lockhart!” she screams. “Oh god!”

“I’m yours baby,” is my strangled reply. “Fuck!”

Hot jets of semen shoot down the length of my dick and into her tight twat, inseminating the girl with virile male seed. She pulses and clenches, drawing it deep into herself as blast after blast of the hot semen sprays her internal channel.

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“Oh fuck baby,” is my moan as she milks me for everything I’ve got. “Fuck!”

Finally, my balls are drained entirely dry and I pull out of her wetness with an obscene squelching sound. To my surprise, she’s not particularly sloppy. Not one drop of sperm comes oozing out, and I pull her pussy lips apart to look deep into that channel. Sure enough, it’s there. My sperm, boiling and milky, right where it belongs.

“I think you’re so big and long that you shot it in there really deep,” she says, reading my mind while still panting for air. “I like it thorough like that.”

I smirk, pressing a kiss to her cunt and making her squeal before lounging on the bed.

“Good, because we’ll be doing that a lot from here on out,” is my casual drawl. “I’ll be giving it to you hard every which way. I can promise you that.”

She raises big brown eyes to me.

“Really?”

I smirk once more before pressing my lips to her soft pout. She’s so beautiful and desirable, especially after being flooded with my sperm. Why wouldn’t I want more of the same with the gorgeous day care provider?

“You can bet on it baby,” I rumble, savoring the taste of her lips. Ally is so sweet and innocent that I don’t tell her what’s on my mind: that I plan on taking her morning, noon, and night until she’s ripe and curvy with my baby.

Ally

It's been literally years since I've woken up next to man. I'm up before Rob is, maybe because I've been drinking, maybe just because of the strangeness of the whole thing. His arms are still around me. I lay there, feeling the rise and fall of his breath, wanting nothing else at all except to stay there next to him. I close my eyes, but don't fall back asleep.

How can I, when last night was so amazing? After our first session, there was a second, third, and finally a fourth in the grey light of morning. I came so many times that my body's now wrung out and exhausted, limp from the crazy number of orgasms.

Suddenly, I sit up with my mind spinning. Crazy number of orgasms. Oh god. Rob came in me over and over again, and we didn't use protection even once. He probably thinks that I'm on the pill, but I'm not because I haven't been with a guy in so long that there was no need. I wasn't exactly going to get pregnant via immaculate conception.

But why didn't he pull on a condom? Isn't that the safe thing to do? I'm going to have to talk to him about it once we're both awake and sober. Oh god.

I press my knees together, clenching my thighs deliciously. Something deep within gurgles a bit, and I know in my heart of hearts that it's his sperm. He shot gallons into me last night, and I'm literally sloshing around in it now. It's warm and trickly and I lift my pelvis up a bit to keep it in.

What are you doing? the voice in my head asks, totally aghast. Are you insane? You need to get to the pharmacy for the morning after pill.

But I can't make myself stop. Something feels right about having this dominating man's virile semen in me, and I glance shyly over at Rob's inert form. He's out like a light, and my eyes roam over that hard male body, bronzed and sculpted. Oh god. Every muscle is perfectly defined like a Greek god, and I long to drag my tongue over a flat male nipple before delving lower for a kiss to that thick pink cock lying against his stomach.

But I make myself stay still. It's tempting, but we don't know each other well enough yet, so I close my eyes again. Birth control, my mind chants. Birth control, birth control. Slowly, I drift once more into the hazy grayness of semi-sleep.

Some time later, Rob stirs and gives me a kiss on the top of the head. I turn over, and meet his sleepy gaze. Our lips lock again, my body melding into his.

"I would love to stay in bed all day, but I'm afraid I have to go to work," he rumbles, breaking the kiss.

"But it's Saturday," I plead, giving him my best sad puppy eyes.

"I'm behind on a lot of things," he says. "The world markets don't take a day off. Would you like breakfast before you go?"

"O.K." I say, sad but sort of expecting this.

"What would you like?" He gets up and goes over to the window, opening it to let the light stream in. It's the first time I really see him. I was drunk last night, and it was dark. In the full glow of the sun, I study the lines of his body. I notice his toned ass, the dimples in his back, and the definition of his six pack abs. He is perfection, in every way.

But I have to keep my mind on the here and now.

“I don’t know,” I stammer, rising up on one arm, willing myself to get up and get dressed but not quite there yet. “What are my breakfast options?”

He turns and looks at me, throwing me that quizzical look with his eyebrow raised once more. “Anything you want,” he says, bemused. Hmmm, that sounds good.

“How about waffles?” I suggest tentatively.

He picks up the phone. “Bernard, good morning. Bring up some Belgian waffles with fresh fruit and real maple syrup, and that ham I like. Yes, for two. Thanks. See ya.” The phone clicks shut and I stare at him.

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“Who’s Bernard?” I ask.

“My assistant,” he says nonchalantly. OMG. I’ve never met anyone with a personal assistant before. Well, I have but they’re more like an administrative assistant. They might get you a cup of coffee at work, but they wouldn’t whip together a giant breakfast and bring it to you in bed.

Everything about this experience is so surreal, but it’s just Mr. Lockhart’s day to day reality. I try to keep my surprise from showing as he saunters off to the shower. Wow, this guy has an amazing back view too. His ass is toned and bronzed, and not at all like someone who spends ten to twelve hours a day sitting at his desk. I hear the water running and leap out of the huge, soft bed and find my discarded clothes. I locate my dress and heels and my bra, but I can’t find my panties anywhere. Oh shit. I put the rest of my clothes on. I give up looking when Rob returns from the shower, smelling fresh, his face newly shaved. He’s wearing only a towel around his waist and my insides go mushy again. Water droplets run down that thick, muscled chest and I long to trace each one with my tongue before pressing a kiss to his perfectly sculpted mouth.

But Rob doesn’t seem to take much notice of me as he gets dressed. Of course, all I’m doing is watching him. His closet is vast and expertly organized. I can smell the musky odor of his cologne above the spicy notes of his body wash. He selects a pair of boxer briefs, and then a charcoal grey suit from his massive collection.

When he’s done getting dressed he looks over at me, as if he’s just realized I’m there. The billionaire smiles, making me feel hot all over. I want to pull him back down to the bed, but he’s stronger than me. “Come with me,” he growls.

I follow him, like a house pet, into what I guess is a breakfast nook, some room with wide open windows and a stone counter top with black leather topped stools. I think this is what passes for a casual space in a billionaire's penthouse.

"So sweetheart, ready for breakfast?" he asks with one black eyebrow arched. I sit up straight and smile.

"I'm always ready for breakfast," is my smart reply. Rob grins.

"Good, I like a girl who eats," he growls approvingly.

At that moment, a man appears dressed in slacks and a sport coat. He has dark hair and eyes and olive skin, and is carrying two silver trays, which he sets down on the counter.

"Morning ma'am," our server says. "I'm Bernard."

I nod, trying to act like I belong here.

"Hello," is my shy reply.

Bernard lifts the silver domed lids to reveal thinly sliced ham and thick waffles, drizzled with syrup and sprinkled with powder sugar, with strawberries on top before disappearing into the room from which he came.

"Dig in," invites Rob with a smile, and I do.

The first bite is heaven, the waffles the exact right amount of sweetness, not too much and absolutely perfect. The flavor of the strawberries complements the crispy batter. The ham is out of this world, like everything else about this meal. I savor the slightly salty taste, and can hardly prevent myself from smacking my lips with appreciation.

“This is so good,” I murmur almost orgasmically.

“Mmm-hmm,” he concurs, his mouth full of waffles.

When we’re done eating, Rob gives me another kiss and instructs Bernard to drive me home. I’m grateful that I don’t have to make the full walk of shame on the subway and back to my apartment. Instead, I only have to walk into the car and back to my place. Dating a wealthy man sure does have its perks.

When I get back to my place, Haley is eating breakfast. Her spread is a lot more modest than the one I shared with Rob this morning. She’s got a piece of toast with jam and a bowl of cheerios.

My friend takes one look at me in my dress from last night and gapes, tossing her long red mane.

“Oh my god, Ally. Your date must have gone really well.”

I feel my cheeks coloring as I remember the details of last night.

“Yeah, it did,” I smile.

“Want some Cheerios?” she offers. “Tell me all about it.”

But instead, I shake my head.

“No, I already ate. He has an assistant. When we got up in the morning, he called the guy and had him deliver food. He lives in this enormous penthouse uptown and it’s like a hotel. I mean, the size of it is incredible. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

She laughs.

“Enough about his apartment. What’s he like? How big is he?”

I don’t even pretend to misunderstand. I can’t believe she’s acting like this.

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“Haley! Stop it.”

She raises an eyebrow at me.

“Come on, Ally. You’re Miss Innocent now? Come on, tell me everything. I know you got up to no good,” she teases.

I blush again. Sometimes, I wish my cheeks wouldn’t give me away like this, but Rob seemed to think it was an appealing feature.

“Well, we had a lot of fun,” I admit.

But Haley won’t be put off.

“A lot of fun!” she pshaws. “Please girl, you had more than a lot of fun. You had a mind-boggling, body-shaking, orgasm-inducing night of booty call! How was it? Tell me more!”

I swear. I could wring Haley’s neck. It’s only 9 a.m. but I’m willing to commit a crime if it’ll get her off my back. But instead, I feed her some scraps otherwise the nagging will never stop.

“Haley, he was incredible,” I admit. “He’s gorgeous, and intelligent, and funny.”

“And is he a troll, or is he as good-looking as everyone says in real life?” she asks with one red eyebrow lifted.

“He’s even better than his pictures,” I say firmly. “This man is a god. Six four at least, with really wide shoulders and long legs and long arms and ...”

“And?” she squeals, practically jumping out of her chair. “Is he big down there, too? Come on girl. Fess up to your best buddy.”

I blush again, going practically scarlet, but the memory makes my insides go loose and warm all over again.

“Yeah, he’s huge down there,” I admit. “It’s got me feeling sore this morning.”

Haley literally jumps out of her chair then and gives me a bear hug, almost squeezing the air out of my lungs.

“You go girl!” she shrieks. “That’s the way to end a dry spell. I know you haven’t hooked up with anyone in so long. This is gonna be the beginning of a hot and heavy season for you, Ally. This guy is just the first.”

That comment startles me.

“What do you mean, this guy is just the first?” I ask with some confusion. “I’m not seeing anyone else.”

“I know you’re not,” she says with a comforting pat to my shoulder. “But that’s the point. All it takes is one guy to break the dry spell, and then boom! When it rains it pours. You’re going to be hooking up with so many guys from here on out,” she says gleefully.

What? This is beyond bizarre. That’s not what I want at all and I stare at my best friend.

“Haley, that’s not what I had in mind,” are my slow words. “I mean, I figured Mr. Lockhart and I would start dating, and we would be ... well, you know.”

Her eyes go wide.

“You thought you’d start dating Rob Lockhart exclusively?” she asks slowly.

My mind is growing dizzy.

“Well, yes,” I stammer. “I mean, why not?”

Haley shakes her head and clucks, looking at me with pitying eyes.

“Well for one thing, he’s got millions of dollars and you have none,” she says. “I mean, look at where we live,” my friend says, gesturing to the peeling wallpaper and rickety breakfast table that we picked up off the street. “There’s no way you could keep up with him.”

I stare at her.

“But it doesn’t matter,” I say slowly. “I mean, it doesn’t take money to have a nice time together. We can always go to the movies or just get drinks. It doesn’t costthatmuch for a drink in Manhattan.”

Haley shakes her head, casting me another pitying look.

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“Yeah, but Ally, what about more than that? I mean, you can’t watch movies all the time. He’ll want to attend charity events where the tickets go for ten thousand dollars, and socialize with his buddies at upscale resorts in the Hamptons. Trust me, it’s a whole other world. One that we can’t afford,” she says.

I shake my head, still confused.

“But none of that matters! He can’t expect me to buy a ticket to a charity that costs a thousand dollars. He knows I can’t afford it.”

“Of course you can’t afford that,” Haley says quickly. “But it’s not the ticket, sweetheart. Of course, he’ll buy that for you. It’s everything else. The dress. The jewelry. The professional hair and make-up. You know, the girls who attend those events don’t just go to a salon to get their hair and make-up done. They pay for stylists to come to their homes, which costs a pretty penny. And it’s like that for everything,” my buddy continues. “You have to look and act a certain way with a man like Rob Lockhart, and sweetheart, you and I aren’t it,” she says with a sad smile. “You with your day care job and me with my freelancing? We’re not the type of woman he dates long-term. For hook-ups yes, but not more than once or twice.”

Oh my god, is my friend right? She can’t be. I’ve been raised to believe that money is a means to the end. It’s not the ultimate goal. But Haley seems to be saying something else. She’s saying that these folks live in a world completely different from ours, where everything is gilded in money. You’re expected to look and act a certain way, and given my meager salary, I can’t even afford to show up, much less participate.

Reading my mind, my friend nods again.

“And remember,” she says in a low voice. “Robert Lockhart is known for having multiple women on his arm,” she reminds me. “Remember those photos we found? The paparazzi shots? He often had two women on his arm, and an army trailing behind him. This isn’t a ‘going steady’ type of guy, Ally. He’s the kind who likes to sample women, and you were the flavor of last night,” she says in a low voice.

Her words cut me to the core but I try not to show it.

“Thanks,” is my stiff reply. “I’ll keep that in mind.” I begin walking to my room, but Haley stops me with a hand on my arm.

“I’m not saying this to make you feel bad, Ally,” she speaks. “I just don’t want you to get hurt, you know? You’re a really sensitive girl who believes the best about everyone and everything, and I don’t want you going into this with a blindfold over your eyes. He’s a billionaire, sweetheart, and all that Cinderella fantasy-stuff? That’s all it is. Fantasy. Guys like that don’t date girls like us. At least, not for the long-term.”

I nod and turn my head away so that she can’t see my eyes fill with tears.

“Thanks,” is my wooden reply as I step into my bedroom, softly shutting the door behind me. But once inside, I fall limply onto the mattress, and the tears slip hotly down my cheeks to dampen the bedspread. Is what Haley said accurate? Am I just a plaything for a billionaire? A one-night nothing?

I don’t want to believe it, but now that I think over our interactions, there’s a kernel of truth to her words. Rob didn’t ask for my phone number or any contact information. He didn’t plan a second date, or ask me out again. He didn’t even drop me off himself. He had his assistant do it for him.

Of course, none of these actions are definitive because they fall into a gray zone. After all, it's true that I've never dated a wealthy man. My usual type is a penniless artist barely scraping by with his music, books, or screenplay. So maybe things with Mr. Lockhart are different. Maybe what Haley said is true, but in a different sense. The usual signals aren't what I'm accustomed to, and I have to get used to a new way of operating.

With a tired swipe at my tears, I maneuver upright on the bedspread and take a deep breath. I should be elated from having a magical night with a handsome, charismatic billionaire who seems to like me. You can do this, the voice in my head encourages. The world always wants to pull you down, but that's not you, Ally. You're an optimist.

I cast a glance at myself in the mirror. The glow of last night has faded, but I force myself to pull my shoulders straight and let out a glimmer of a smile. I want to see where this goes with Rob Lockhart, and even words won't stop me.

10

Rob

The Annual Fair is going to be a fucking nightmare. I can already tell. My driver pulls up to the curb and opens the door of the black town car for me.

"Thanks Umberto," I grunt. "I'll probably only be here for an hour or so."

Umberto nods, tipping his black cap discreetly.

"Of course, Sir. I'll wait right around the corner. Just call when you need me."

I step out onto the sidewalk. Fuck, fuck, fuck. This is totally not my scene. There are

dozens of well-dressed parents streaming into the school wearing glittery gowns and penguin suits. This is a fucking day care event, for crying out loud. Why are they dressed to the nines?

But that's how it is in Manhattan, especially in the ritzier areas. People want to one-up one another and show off how much they have, even if it's something as humble as a school benefit. Thus, the women dripping with diamonds, and men in formal tuxedos. Me? I'm in a black suit with a white shirt. Dressed-up but not over the top.

My mood darkens even more when I catch sight of Meredith Petersen. She's a woman who came onto me non-stop when I was single, and even more so when I was married. After news about my divorce went public, Meredith double downed and has been leaving me messages at work with lots of not-so-subtle hints about "catching up" and "grabbing a night cap together." Bullshit. That woman wants my money and will stop at nothing to get it.

Fortunately, tonight she's hanging on to some old geezer's arm and laughing merrily into his face. The woman must have found new prey. Good. I don't want to fend off her advances in front of both my daughter and hers.

I stalk towards the entrance of the school, which today is festooned in red and black balloons, the official school colors of Ladybug Tots. Fuck. What preschool has school colors? My eyes glance over the sight inside, which makes my heart drop. Adults, standing around with champagne glasses in their hands, laughing and chatting as children dressed in their party-clothes scamper about. This could be a bar mitzvah except the stakes are much higher: who's going to outdo whom when it comes to donating the most money?

I'm just about to head off to the bar they've set up over in one corner, when suddenly a vision appears. Oh shit! It's Ally. She's impossibly gorgeous in a pink gown that reveals without being too revealing. Her enormous bust is demure in a sweetheart

neckline, and the dress hangs all the way to her ankles, showing off perfectly pedicured pink toenails in glittery sandals. She's insanely beautiful and this fundraiser just got ten times better.

"Hi Mr. Lockhart," she murmurs, coming close. "Glad you could make it."

My eyes gleam at her.

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“I’m glad I made it too, now that you’re here.”

She laughs merrily.

“I’ve been here the whole day setting up,” she says. “It’s part of being a pre-school teacher, you know. Folding paper napkins and making sure we have enough red Solo cups.”

That’s true. The school can’t afford the finer things, so a lot of the decorations are paper mache flowers mixed with children’s artwork.

“It’s fine,” I growl, pulling her into my arms. “This place looks fantastic. You did an amazing job.”

She blushes and grows pink under my gaze.

“Maybe later you could reward me?” she asks teasingly, slowly running a finger up my chest and over my starched white dress shirt. “I’ve been workingreallyhard on the Fair lately.”

Oh shit. I’m ready to throw this woman over my shoulder and bolt to the car. I’mthatready to take her. But at that moment, my darling daughter skips up.

“Hi Miss Summers,” she giggles. “Hi Daddy. What are you doing?”

I realize this the perfect opportunity to introduce Katie to the new dynamic between me and her teacher.

“Daddy is dating someone, and that someone is Miss Summers. Remember how I told you Katie? Daddy sometimes goes out with other ladies, and in this particular case, it’s Miss Summers.”

Katie’s face darkens for a moment.

“Will you still have time for me?” she asks in a careful voice. Her tone almost breaks my heart and I bend down to gather my daughter in my arms.

“Of course, sweetheart. You’ll always be my number one, no matter what happens,” I say comfortingly. “You’ve always been my number one.”

Her mood immediately shifts.

“Oh good!” she calls, skipping away. “You have fun then! I see Lizzie over there, I’m going to go say hi!”

I stand back up, my eyes still following the bouncing ringlets of my daughter’s blonde curls. She’s absolutely adorable and means the world to me. But I’m a man with needs, and nobody said I had to be a monk just because I’m a father. In fact, if anything, that need’s been raging even more ever since I met Ally.

The beautiful day care provider pulls me back to the present with the tinkle of her laugh.

“I didn’t know you were going to tell your daughter about us,” she says carelessly. But there’s a tone of caution to her voice. “Didn’t we just start dating? It seems a little soon, doesn’t it?”

I know where this is coming from. My mom had so many boyfriends when I was growing up, and it was often too soon, too fast. Sometimes I met a dude, and then

he'd be gone by the next week. I got whiplash watching them go in and out the revolving door. So I look seriously into her big brown eyes.

"Ally, I know this is fast, but it feels right. I've learned in a long business career that when the time is right, you jump at the opportunity because it might never come again."

Ally stares at me like I'm crazy.

"But still," she says slowly. "We only went on one date. And this is the Annual Fair, which is a semi-public event. Why didn't you wait until we had some privacy?"

Good point, but I've been a CEO a long time. I know how to answer questions without quite answering questions.

"Hey, let's look at the bigger picture. So we're in public. And you're right, you're my date. But if everyone can already see us, then why keep it from Katie? Besides, children are smart. Aren't you the one who told me that? We can't hide it from her, so we might as well come right out and say it."

Her expression is thoughtful.

"You're right," she says. "Ididsay that kids are intelligent, and your daughter is one of the most intelligent little girls I've ever met. I guess ... well, I'm not sure what I thought," she confesses. "I guess I could have figured that you would introduce me to Katie that way, but ... well, I guess I just wasn't thinking."

I smile.

"No worries, sweetheart. It's fine. To be honest, I didn't exactly have a game plan myself. It just felt right to tell my daughter, and when it feels right, it feels right," I

say.

“But still,” she says softly, cheeks tingeing a slight pink. “It’s moving really fast. You have to admit that.”

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I don't hesitate this time. I pull her into my arms again, that curvy form driving me nuts as it presses up against my bulk.

"Fast is good," I growl into her ear. "Fast is real fucking good, and that's how I move all the time, sweetheart. So you better learn sooner rather than later."

I can tell she's scandalized but at the same time, hugely turned on. Her breasts are heaving, the tips poking against my hard chest as she looks deep into my eyes. I can almost smell the musky scent of her cunt and the realization that there's a hungry pussy within inches of my dick makes him go hard at once. Oh shit. I pull my suit jacket forwards to hide the bulge, but not before Ally catches sight of it.

"Mr. Lockhart!" she gasps, scandalized. "We're at school!" But I know she loves it too.

"Shhh, sweetheart," I rumble. "Just give me a minute. You can't look like that and expect my body not to react."

Heat floods her face, staining that beautiful décolletage a slight pink. I desperately want to bury my face in her boobs right now and to nuzzle the crevice in between, but it's not right. We're around children, for crying out loud. I can't go all caveman on her right here, in her place of employment.

Fortunately, I'm saved by a middle-aged woman standing at the front of the room merrily tapping the side of a vase with a fork.

"Hellooooo!" she cries out with a smile. "Hello, and welcome to Ladybug Tots'

Annual Fair! I'm Karen Gillen, principal of this esteemed establishment, and I want to thank you personally for taking time out of your busy schedule to attend this fundraiser. But before I begin, let me thank the generous donors we have in the crowd today."

Oh fuck. The woman puts on her reading glasses and fumbles in her suit pocket for a moment before withdrawing a piece of paper. She unfolds it, clears her throat, and begins to read.

"Well, let's start with the A's," she begins merrily. "Mr. and Mrs. Joel Adams. Mr. and Mrs. Kirby Appleby. Doctor and Mrs"

My eyes almost glaze over. It seems that we're going to go through an entire half hour listening to this woman chant names as if she were reading prayers. Oh shit. Only the knowledge that my beautiful girl is next to me keeps me on my toes. Stealthily, I reach over and put an arm around her waist, drawing that curvy form close to mine. Ally raises brown eyes to me in shock, but then melts against my side with a smile. Good. I'm glad she's just as bored as I am, although feeling that voluptuous form against mine is starting to get distracting. Down boy, the voice in my head speaks. Get yourself together. It's right. This is a school, for crying out loud, and I can't be a lech in public in front of these people.

Finally, the recitation is over and we move onto an overview of the day care.

"As you know, Ladybug Tots accomplishes many wonderful things every hour of every school day," says Principal Gillen seriously, pushing her reading glasses up higher on her nose. "To demonstrate our accomplishments, the staff at Ladybug Tots has prepared a slideshow of our teaching techniques. It's a mixture of fun, games, and serious pedagogical methods, starring your children at work and play. Priscilla! Lights please!"

With that, the room goes dark and a laptop begins to hum. Sure enough, we've transitioned from a boring speech into an even more boring slideshow. Shit. How in the world am I going to keep myself awake for this? Fortunately, I have Ally's curvy body next to me, and suddenly an idea flashes to life in my mind. It's dirty and scandalous, but it's exactly what I need from this beautiful girl.

11

Rob

My fingers curve around Ally's waist, pulling her voluptuous form close. She turns and shoots me a smile, so sweet that my heart practically melts. Shit, Ally doesn't deserve this, so I hold myself still for the time being, attempting to be a gentleman. It's not going to work, but I have to make an effort at least. My chest feels constricted and I can barely breathe from the arousal rushing through my veins.

Principal Gillen drones on and on as slides begin to flash on-screen, accompanied by jazzy music and colorful, block letter captions. How can she think that this is what parents want to see? But sure enough, as the slideshow begins, the adults around me begin to coo.

"Oooh, look Bob, there's little Jaden!" squeals one woman, pointing at a little boy on screen standing in a sandbox with a pail upside down on his head. "Isn't he darling?"

The proud papa nods and smiles as Principal Gillen begins to speak in a monotone once more. She's practically reading straight from her note cards now.

"As you can see, this child is playing in a sandbox. Standard pedagogical methods would dictate that we teach this child to build sand castles, and to explore his architectural fantasies. But instead, Ladybug Tots uses the inverted pail on his head to teach shapes. Specifically, the inverted pail is known as a truncated cone. Jaden

Warmby, age 4, now knows what a truncated cone is!” she trumpets proudly.

I can’t believe what I’m hearing. A truncated cone? Who cares? Besides, what normal human being uses the word “truncated,” much less a four year-old? If anything, I’m beginning to think this day care isn’t right for my daughter.

But the other parents around me are oohing and ahing, delighted to see photos of their tots on the screen even if the principal is an airheaded lunatic. I just shake my head in the darkness. Go figure. You can’t buy common sense, that’s for sure.

A soft giggle catches my attention, and I tug Ally closer. My control is breaking.

“You getting a kick out of this?” I murmur into the perfect seashell of her ear.

She sighs a bit, her laughter commingled with ruefulness.

“Yes and no,” she whispers. “I mean yes, because Principal Gillen is ridiculous. Flat out batshit crazy. It’s so hard to do what she wants sometimes because her requests can be far-out. But at the same time, sometimes I really try my best to listen and absorb what she’s saying because she’s so earnest. She really believes this stuff, and you have to give someone that committed a chance.”

I merely shake my head again, pulling her closer. By now, Ally’s no longer melded against my side. Instead, she’s pulled against my front, her back to my chest, and I wrap both my arms around her mid-section. This is nice. Real nice. The softness of her heaving tits just grazes the top of my forearm, and I like having the curvy girl close to me like this. I rest one chin on her shoulder, watching as more slides go by. The principal’s voice drones on and on as I whisper.

“But would you want this for your child?” I ask softly in her ear. “Knowing that he or she was learning according to these bizarre teaching methods that make no sense?”

Ally giggles while trying to shush me.

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“They’re not bizarre,” she scolds softly. “They’re cutting edge.”

I growl in my throat then, pulling her even closer to me in the darkness of the room.

“Euphemisms,” is my whisper in her ear. “By the way, I kind of like the way we’re standing,” I say. “It’s nice being here with you like this. Makes it bearable.”

“Mmm,” she hums back, shooting me a teasing look over her shoulder. “Just bearable hmm?” she asks. “Why don’t I believe you?”

The answer is obvious. It’s because I have a stiffy that’s huge and aroused, pressing into the woman’s soft bottom. This is so fucking wrong. We’re in her workplace, which is a fucking day care center. There are children in the next room playing innocently as their parents gaze raptly at a slide show of their rug rats. And we’re surrounded on all sides by people, did I mention that?

But my girl is a dirty one because she shoots me another teasing look over her shoulder and playfully rubs her butt up against me, teasing my cock with those huge, soft mounds.

“Two can play at this game,” she breathes almost inaudibly. “Try it Mr. Lockhart.”

Oh shit, oh shit. Is this really happening? Is Ally inviting me to be bad? Never one to lose an opportunity, I groan silently into her ear and begin grinding against the soft form in front of me.

“You like that?” I murmur rawly. “You like feeling my big dick pressed up against

those ass cheeks?”

Ally giggles and slowly moves her hands behind her so that they're hidden behind her back, in the crevice between our bodies. Thank god no one can see. Or at least I hope they can't see because right now, the little girl is stroking my hard cock through the thin fabric of my trousers.

“I do like it,” she giggles in return with a hitch to her breath. “I love feeling this, especially when it's raw, Mr. Lockhart.”

And to my surprise, with nimble fingers the woman pulls down my zip discreetly, and slides my cock out so that she's gripping it in one small fist. Oh shit. It feels so good. My cock throbs and pulses and she squeezes it playfully.

“Wet already, aren't we?” she mewls, so soft that only I can hear. It's true because I've been leaking pre-cum and right now, the sticky goo is coating her fingers and making everything slick and wet. She giggles again and slowly begins stroking her hand up and down my shaft, pulling me all the way to heaven.

“Oh shit, baby girl,” I grunt, trying not to move a bone in my body. “Oh fuck fuck fuck.”

“Shhhhh,” she admonishes me. “Shhhhh, we're at school,” she scolds even as she jacks me off with her hand.

But two can play at this game. Breaking out of my blissful stupor, I reach around and gently caress her décolletage before gripping the sweetheart neckline of her pink dress and pulling it gently so that her two huge boobs pop out. “Pop” wouldn't be an understatement. They're so huge that they bounce and roll, even as Ally lets out a slight squeal of surprise.

“Mr. Lockhart!” she gasps. “People will see!”

It’s true. Any of these parents could view her lushness, if they bothered to turn their heads to look at us. After all, she’s facing away from me, her bottom pressed against my cock, and those two giant breasts are fleshy and huge, impossible to miss out in the open. In fact, her creamy skin is almost fluorescent in the icy glare of the laptop.

But I don’t care. Tit for tat is how I play the game, and Ally’s the one who started it. So not missing a beat, I begin to stroke her breasts, first cupping the creamy curves before moving to those hard nipples.

“So fucking hard,” I whisper in her ear, rolling one pink bud between my fingers before pulling off it with an audible pop. “I’m going to fuck these when I get home, don’t you worry,” I rasp.

Ally lets out a rapturous moan, and I clap a hand over her mouth to make sure no one hears. Shit this is wrong. Her huge breasts are swaying this way and that as I play with the nipples, pinching and rubbing. The girl is writhing against me now and making muffled mewling noises from behind the hand I have clapped over her mouth. Shit. This is so bad, and yet also so good.

But I can’t stop. Ally’s gotten me going, and there’s no way I’m going to end this at some lame half-way point. So letting go of her tits, I reach one hand back and begin slipping her dress up her thighs. There’s a lot of material but I won’t be deterred. Finally, the pink material’s gathered around her waist in back, although in the front, it looks undisturbed.

“Rob!” she breathes heavily against my hand. “Oh god!”

I lean forward and rasp against her ear. “Relax, sweetheart. I’m going to make you feel good.” With one big hand, I push down on her back so that her butt’s jutting out

a bit and nudge those long legs apart with my knee. She lets out a slight moan. Oh shit. I can feel the heat of her cunt almost frying my cock, and the discreet scent of damp female petals beckon to me. Slowly, I slip one hand down to stroke that glistening pink cunt. Damn, she's drenched.

"So wet," I rasp. "You're always so soaked for me."

She mewls helplessly, a shiver running down her spine as I gently rub against the bottom of her clit.

"Oh Rob," she sighs. "Yes, that feels good."

Slowly, I squeeze a finger into her channel. She's so hot and tight and wet that I almost lose it right there. But knowing that she needs this just as badly as I do makes me keep it together. Instead, I run my digit in and out of her a few times before bringing it to my mouth for a suck.

"Shit you taste good," I rasp. "Like honey, sweetheart. You've been eating well."

But Ally can't wait either. She needs dick so bad that she bumps her butt against me, turning to look at me over her shoulder with pleading eyes. We're ensconced in darkness and yet I can't believe we're really doing this with the other parents mere feet away.

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But Ally has other ideas.

“Please Rob,” she breathes. “Now. Now.”

Who am I to say no? I grab my thick shaft with one hand and gently run the head up and down over her pink petals. She’s so wet and hot, and the girl lets out a little moan as her eyes drift shut. But I underestimated Ally because my sweet innocent is sly. As my thickness passes her tight little hole, she thrusts back just a bit and catches the glans in her wetness.

“Oh!” we both cry out. “Fuck!”

Fortunately, the parents are clapping about something or other in the slideshow, and don’t notice in the least. Good, because I take the opportunity to slide a couple inches into her wet warmth, reveling in the squeeze. I’m so big that she’s literally lifted onto her toes a bit while trying to accommodate me.

“Rob,” she moans quietly. “Oh yes, like that.”

That’s what I love hearing. Slowly, I push all the way into her tight channel so that my entire dick is caught in those heavenly walls, before pulling out again. The sight is fucking disgusting, and it turns me on.

“You’re drenched, sweetheart, and you’re getting me so wet with your juices,” I rasp. “My cock is fucking shiny now, and there’s pussy juice running down my balls because you’re leaking so much.”

She mewls quietly, twisting around to look at me over her shoulder.

“I can’t help it, Mr. Lockhart,” she whispers. “You turn me on so much. Now use my body,” she murmurs with a hitch to her voice. “The slideshow’s almost over.”

Oh fuck. I’m in Heaven, but she’s right. We ain’t got all day. So I begin sliding in and out of that tight cunt, barely able to believe we’re doing this. My shaft reappears from between those big white cheeks dripping and glistening with her female need, and the sight is practically enough alone to make me jet. But Ally pushes me to my limits because the girl leans forward a bit as I dick her hard, and reaches two small hands back to pull her ass cheeks apart, offering me her all.

“Yes,” she sighs, eyes closed. “Yes, yes, oh god!”

With a breathless cry, the girl freezes and then her cunt goes ballistic on me. It clamps and snaps, dissolving on my hot shaft she mewls and gushes. The sweet juice sends me over the edge and I feel hot liquid pour from my balls, shooting down my shaft and into her welcoming pussy.

“Unnnh,” is my heartfelt groan. “Oh fuck baby. Oh fuck.”

We stand locked together, both our bodies pulsing as the orgasm binds us together, making two into one. But I can’t stop. There’s so much seed that I keep pumping and pumping, emptying every last drop into her curvy body.

“Yessss,” she hisses, absorbing it all. “Yes.”

And that’s how I know this woman is right for me. Any other date would have been scandalized. They would have never let me touch them in a public setting, much less with other parents just an arm’s length away. But not only did my sassy girl let me stroke her, but she brought me to the highest heavens with her body. She was with me

every step of the way, savoring my sperm and allowing me to decant into the sheer bliss of her wet pussy.

So am I wrong for being head over heels? Some people would say this is fast. But I'm a man of strong convictions, and I've seen a lot in life. It doesn't take me long to make a decision, and in this case, the case was crystal clear. Ally is the one for me. This beautiful brunette with the giving nature, the sweet, generous smile, and intelligent, inquisitive mind is all mine. The only question is, does she know it yet?

12

Ally

The phone rings and I stare at it from where I'm sitting on the living room couch.

"Ally," says my roommate while rolling her eyes. "Hello, it's your cell."

Abruptly, I jump into motion.

"Oh right, sorry," is my mumble. In an instant, I'm picking up. Sure enough Rob's voice greets me.

"How do you feel about carnivals?" he growls. "I feel like taking you to one."

Haley, sitting beside me on the couch, starts gesturing in excitement. "Is that him?" she whispers.

I poke her in the ribs and give her a look. She should be over this by now. Rob and I have been going out for almost three months but Haley is still so shocked by the whole thing that she acts like a teenager whenever I tell her about my dates. Of course, I don't tell her everything. Not the way that Rob and I had sex at a school

function, with other parents standing mere feet away. Not the way we're in bed all the time, the billionaire making me come again and again with the magnificence of his body. And definitely not the way I've fallen head over heels for this man.

I guess it makes sense, but it also doesn't make sense. After all, he's a billionaire with everything, whereas I'm a day care provider. Sure, there are stories of the Cinderella who meets a prince and is swept away despite the fact that she's poor and he's rich. But in real life, how often does that truly happen? I'm under no illusions that he and I are from different socio-economic classes.

But at the same time, Rob doesn't seem to care at all. He treats me like a princess, and it makes me go warm and fuzzy all over (not to mention wet and swollen somewhere in particular). He looks at me a lot, absorbing every inch from the top of my head to the tips of my toes, and of course, everywhere in between. Even if we're from different strata of life, I don't think the billionaire cares at all. Take this carnival for instance. It's a no-name thing out in the middle of a field. It's bound to be corny with silly kid roller coasters and cheap stuffed animals hanging off of metal grates. Yet, Rob wants to go. He's not gunning for some prestigious museum opening or charity circuit ball, although there are plenty of those as well. Instead, he's down to Earth and wants to take me.

It's part of why I love him. It's his way of seeing straight to what matters, even if other people get caught on the sidelines. Rob has an uncanny ability for making good decisions, and his value system meshes perfectly with mine. We treasure family. Time spent with his daughter. Being together, and enjoying the small things like a hot cappuccino. Of course, sure, he's rich and gorgeous, but that's not why I love him. At least, it's not the only reason why I love him. I adore this man for his intelligence and judgment; for how he's such a caring dad; and how safe and comfortable I feel around him.

So I smile into the phone.

“I’m not sure if I have much of an opinion about carnivals,” I murmur.

“Katie thinks very highly of them,” he growls. “There’s this big one going on in Jersey right now, and she’s been bothering me to take her. Supposedly, they have the world’s biggest Ferris wheel. Would you like to come with?”

I grin, although he can’t see it.

“Absolutely,” I say. Like I mentioned, Rob has taken me on a bunch of crazy dates to expensive restaurants and Broadway shows but honestly, the world’s biggest Ferris wheel is just my style. I relish the chance to just hang out with him like normal people, and I love spending time with his daughter.

When the day comes, I get dressed in jeans and a sweater, and put on a little bit of makeup. Rob has told me that he prefers me without makeup, but I least want to pump my lashes up with a little bit of mascara. Guys don’t know what “natural” really looks like, and besides, nature can always be improved upon, right?

Unfortunately, Haley’s home that day as well and she trails me around the apartment as I get ready with tons of annoying questions. “He’s taking you to a carnival? I didn’t know CEOs did that sort of thing,” she remarks.

I shrug. “He’s a person, you know. At first Rob seems like this intimidating figure, but once you get to know him, he’s really pretty chill. The man likes reading and good food and he’s amazing with kids. He works a lot, and his job is really stressful,

so when he gets off work he just wants to be a human being sometimes.”

Haley rolls her eyes and flips a lock of long red hair over one shoulder.

“Well, if I was dating a billionaire, I’d want to, like, fly to the Bahamas on a private jet and take a bath in champagne,” she says. “He could dress you in designer everything, but you’re going out in freaking Levi’s.”

I laugh because it’s so silly. A bath in champagne? She’s been reading too many silly girlie magazines. I think it’s part of what Rob likes about me: that I’m so down to Earth, happy to just hang out with him without all the crazy trappings.

“Well, good thing I’m going and not you,” I remark to her archly with a sweet smile while tossing my purse over my shoulder. “See ya.”

Haley watches me leave, her expression one of bewilderment. I know she’s still a little confused about what Rob sees in me, but my roomie needs to get over it. Enough is enough. It’s been three months, and I’m not that unlovable am I?

Skipping out to the curb, I jump into the car Rob’s sent over and meet up with him and Katie at their place. We all squish into the back of the town car, with his arm companionably thrown over my shoulders. Katie’s excitedly talking about the carnival and all the clowns she’ll see. The little girl knows that I’m with her dad, but it hasn’t really rung any bells because she doesn’t know what “dating” or “boyfriend” mean.

“Let’s play a game,” I suggest during the long ride to Central Jersey.

“I love games!” Katie squeals. She’s holding a purple stuffed tiger in her lap.

“Ok,” I smile at her. “Do you remember your ABCs?”

She nods, and proceeds to sing the entire alphabet song without missing a beat, flashing me a huge self-satisfied smile when she's finished.

"Good girl," I say. "So, the game is that each person is going to name an animal that starts with a letter of the alphabet. So if I say 'A' you say..."

"Umm... Animal!" she says, shaking the purple tiger.

"That's really good, but how about a type of animal?"

"Ant!" she offers.

"Good," I say. "Now I'll do B. Buffalo."

Katie claps her hands. "Daddy's turn," she says.

"You get C," I say to Rob.

"How about cat?" is his move.

"Yay!" says Katie, waving the tiger again.

We get through the whole alphabet, although we have to cheat with X and go with ox because none of us can think of any animals that start with X. But it's a fun time, and my heart beats with pleasure that's almost painful. We're a little family, and I love the man's daughter as much as I love him.

At last, we arrive at the carnival. Parking is as much of a zoo as the game we played in the car, but fortunately we don't have to worry about that because we have a driver. I may not want diamonds and baths in champagne, but I do love how effortless everything is when I hang out with him.

We strap Katie in the stroller and join the carnival. It's a lively atmosphere, filled with the smells of cotton candy and funnel cake, the sounds of children playing and midway operators calling out to the crowd.

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We take a ride on the huge Ferris wheel, the three of us snuggled together in our seat. Katie squeals with joy as we ride around and around. Her energy is infectious. I throw my arms up as we ride up into the sky, towering over the crowd that's receded to the size of ants. Rob tries to keep his steely cool, but even he succumbs, laughing along with us.

"Wasn't that fun, sweetheart?" I ask the little girl once we're safely back on the ground. But there's no answer because Katie's already run over to the next attraction.

"Step right up, try your hand at a game of strength. You look like a big strong man. Win the big prize!" one of the carnival barkers calls out to us as Rob and I stroll after her. The game station is decked out with giant stuffed animals. There are lions and tigers and bears. The point seems to involve hitting a moving target with an enormous mallet.

Rob doesn't show much interest, but Katie is seduced by the giant stuffed animals. "I want a lion, Daddy!" she calls out.

"No sweetheart," he says. "You know what these games are. No one ever wins. They're just ways to make a man part with his money."

Now I mock-glare at him.

"Rob Lockhart," I scold lightly. "What happened to being an optimist?"

Katie joins in, her bottom lip stuck out in a pout. "Please Daddy," she wails. "Please, please, please!"

Rob sighs. “Alright, I’ll try to win you a lion. How does this game work?”

The game operator is a pimple faced teenage boy, dressed in a brightly colored striped uniform. His voice cracks as he explains the rules. “You just need to hit that target hard enough to make this bell go all the way to the top. You get three tries.”

“And if I win,” Rob asks. “I can get one of these giant lions?”

The kid shakes his head. “If you hit the target once, you can choose from one of these mini animals. If you want the giant lion, you have to hit it three times and get a perfect score.”

Rob nods, totally convinced he’s right. “These games are rigged, you know,” he whispers to me.

“I know,” I whisper back. “But optimist, remember? Plus, Katie doesn’t understand that yet.”

My man’s face takes on a serious expression. I don’t think he wants his daughter to know about the unfairness of the world yet. She still thinks of her dad as a hero, and he wants to keep it that way.

“Let’s see that mallet,” he rumbles, taking off his jacket and handing it to me. He rolls up his sleeves, as if readying himself for battle. He takes the big rubber mallet in his hands. I can tell that it’s heavy, by the way he holds it, shoulder muscles bulging. He winces a bit, and I know it’s not the heavy weight of the hammer. It’s the fact that last time we made love, I bit him on the shoulder while in the throes of passion, marking my man with my possession.

But then the kid hits a button, and the targets start moving. Rob stands there, watching the motion, stalking the targets like a lion in the grass. He’s perfectly still,

an alpha male patiently waiting his opportunity.

“You only have ten seconds left,” the kid warns, and the machine starts to beep out a countdown.

Rob takes no notice of the kid or the machine. Then at the last second, he strikes, hitting the target full on. The machine chimes, a sound sort of like the one a slot machine makes when you hit a jackpot.

“Nice,” says the kid grudgingly.

Rob just nods silently, holding the mallet, his knees bent slightly like a fighter, his expression deadly serious. It’s just a stupid game, but I’m waiting with bated breath and so is Katie.

He strikes again, right at the last second, making the machine chime a second time. The kid’s eyes widen. I doubt many people win the large animals from these games.

Lo and behold, Rob’s third shot is another winner. This time, the machine goes crazy with flashing lights and clanging bells. A robot voice calls out, “We have a winner! Winner! Winner!”

“Wow, man,” says the kid grudgingly. “Good job. No one ever wins this game. At least not since I’ve been here.”

Rob shrugs. “I’ll have a lion, please,” he rumbles.

Katie throws her arms around her Dad in glee before he hands her the giant lion. She tries to carry it, but it’s too big for her, so we put it in the stroller. She wants to push it, treating the big stuffed cat like it’s her baby. We walk along slowly, going at Katie’s pace.

I feel so relaxed and happy, my mind nowhere else but the present. It feels like we're a real family, and my heart almost breaks with joy. Rob puts his heavy arm around my shoulder, whispering against my hair.

“Are you happy?” he asks in a low voice.

I know he's not asking about winning the giant stuffed lion. I look directly into those blue eyes and melt.

“Yes,” is my honest answer.

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“Good,” he replies, pulling my curvy form against his hard body as we trail his daughter around the carnival grounds. “I like hearing that.” I snuggle closer to him, feeling warm and safe.

The rest of the carnival passes in a blur. We ride a couple more rides, playing with bumper cars and shooting aliens in an arcade. Rob wins a small bear and some kind of glow in the dark creature, which we tuck into Katie’s backpack. I feel completely carefree. It’s been a long time since I’ve had so much fun and felt so much love too.

Lunch time rolls around and Katie complains that she’s hungry. I break out the snacks we’ve packed for her, but she wants to sample the carnival’s wares. At first, Rob refuses, saying that this kind of food isn’t healthy for a growing child, but the little girl seems to have inherited his gift of persuasion, and he relents.

“Alright, Katie, you can choose one treat, but only one,” he warns.

She walks along the aisles, taking a long time with the decision, asking the different vendors why their food is the best. The lady who sells funnel cakes gives a good spiel, explaining that the cake is not only tasty, but comes with a special boysenberry jam. The little girl nods.

“I want that one,” she says, pulling on Rob’s sleeve.

We buy a funnel cake and share it. Katie gets covered in powdered sugar and jam. I wash her up so she doesn’t get the lion all sticky too, and soon afterwards, she falls asleep in the stroller, snuggled up with her prize.

“She’s so precious,” I say to Rob as we keep strolling along, pushing the sleeping little girl.

“You’re so good with her,” he says. “I think you’d make an amazing mom.”

Of course, my cheeks flush bright red because I’ve always wanted to be a mom. I can’t hide my emotions from him, and never have been able to. Still, it’s too early. I feel like I want to spend the rest of my life with Rob, but I know that rushing into things leads to bad decisions. After all, I don’t really know him yet. We’ve never even had a fight.

So I go the teasing route instead. “I’m going to end up a mother if you’re not careful. We’re supposed to be using protection, but there have been so many times when we’ve forgotten,” I admonish him.

He nods and laughs, all masculine satisfaction. “I know,” he says, as if it’s no big deal.

I can’t believe he’s being so flippant about it. He’s not the one who has to deal with the consequences. I shove his shoulder. “Be serious,” I say.

“I am being serious,” he says, his expression more thoughtful. “I genuinely think you’d make an amazing mother. I’d love to see you pregnant because I’d love to be a father again.”

I almost can’t believe he’s saying this. I don’t know how to respond. I would love to have a child with him, but I’m scared to admit it. It would mean so many different things. Being together ... maybe permanently. Is that what he’s asking? I’m so stunned that I can’t even breathe. But Rob is completely at ease.

“I just bought a new apartment,” he goes on. “It’s in the same building as my current

place, but it's even bigger so we'll have plenty of room. Plus, I just got a new SUV that has nine seats."

Why is he telling me all this? I feel myself flushing. Wow. I didn't expect things to get so serious so soon. Is he buying a new penthouse so I can move in and have his baby? Or babies, plural? Is he getting a huge SUV so we can fill it with kids and cart them around? Does this mean he wants to marry me? Is he being for real or just talking? I feel a rush of hope, but I'm too shy to put words to what I'm feeling.

I open my mouth to ask, but it's too late. Rob's looking into my eyes, that blue gaze swallowing me whole. He pulls me close and kisses me. I taste the heat and promise of his lips. I feel secure and safe in his strong arms. I feel such a profound sense of trust, my heart reaching towards his. I've never felt this way about any other man, and I would love nothing more than to be the mother of his children. I don't know what the future holds, but I'm ready to follow wherever he wants to go.

13

Ally

Another day at Ladybug Tots goes by like any other, filled with the laughter of children and the tea-cup dramas that seem so big to little people. I break up a fight over the sharing of some blocks. I kiss two boo boos and make them better. I help some kids create art with macaroni and glitter. I get through my day with my usual cheeriness, knowing soon I'll be back in Rob's arms. My life has never been so perfect.

The day at the carnival blew me away because Rob and I have never talked again about starting a family together. There were multiple times when the subject was on the tip of my tongue, but I always held back. I don't know what it is. Fear of ruining something that's perfect? Fear of losing him if I ask too many questions?

It's silly, I know, but I've never been so happy before, and I don't want to screw it up. So I carry around the thought of a family with this man like a treasured gift, cradling it in my heart. An opportunity to ask Rob about it again will come again, and this time, I'll be ready. I'll know exactly what to say, and we'll waltz off into the future while dancing on rosy clouds. It makes me incredibly happy, and I'm positively glowing with good vibes.

But still, there's work to be done at Ladybug Tots and someone's got to do it. I'm cleaning up a huge paste spill, humming to myself, when Rob's ex Lindsay arrives. It's early, only four thirty in the afternoon, so I'm not expecting any parents to come by yet. I'm on my hands and knees, with a sponge and bucket. I put down the sponge, wipe my hands on my apron, and push an escaped tendril of hair behind my ears. Great, I'm sweaty and hot, and covered with grime. Lindsay, by contrast, is dressed to the nines. She's wearing a all-khaki outfit and heels to match, with her hair expertly styled and her face contoured within an inch of its life. She looks like she has somewhere to be that's definitely not Ladybug Tots. I wonder about it, but I'm too polite to say anything.

"Hello, Mrs. Sty," I say to her, my tone as polite as possible. I try not to think about how terrible I look next to her perfectly put together self.

She makes a little sound in her throat, and gives me a fake smile, as if she just wants to show me her teeth.

"Hi," she says in a falsely friendly tone. "How are you today?"

I smile back, not letting her cruel tone get to me.

"Very well, thank you."

She doesn't hesitate.

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“I know who you are,” she says. In her heels, she towers over me almost as much as Rob does. The blonde stares down at me, her voice and eyes judging. “You’re that little something my ex-husband is dating.”

She probably detects the widening of my gaze, but that’s the worst of it. It’s the closest I get to letting her know she’s gotten to me. For the most part, I keep my composure. I don’t like being called a “little something” but I’ve been called worse. I remind myself that name calling reflects upon the name caller, and not the person who gets called the name. I think about Lindsay as if she were a child, because she is acting like one, and keep my cool.

She sneers again, with a toss of her blonde head.

“You poor thing,” she says in a condescending tone. “You think it’s real don’t you?”

“What do you mean?” I say slowly.

She shakes her head.

“You and Rob. You think you have something. You think he loves you.”

I don’t want to let her get to me, but she is getting to me. I feel a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. I have no doubts about the way Rob feels about me, but then again, I’ve only known him for a few months. By contrast, this woman was married to him for years. She’s the mother of his child. Their child. I feel myself withering under her condescension even as I try to keep my chin up.

“He does love me,” I say, with as much conviction as I can muster.

She laughs, heartlessly.

“You poor little dear. You’re just a prop to him. When he’s done with you, he’ll toss you aside like every other silly little girl who thinks she can keep him.”

“That’s not true,” I say, setting my jaw.

“Please. Grow up, sweetheart, and smell the roses. You’re the rebound girl, and that’s all. Don’t you know what happens to rebound girls?”

I donotknow what happens to rebound girls, but the look in her eyes tells me it’s nothing good.

“It’s not like that,” I say, firmly.

She shrugs.

“Believe what you want. I’m just trying to warn you, woman to woman. I was married to the man. I think I know him a little better than you do.”

The barb strikes me in the heart.

“It doesn’t matter,” I say. “It’s none of your business. You and Rob are divorced.”

She shrugs, those bony shoulders going up and down.

“I’m just telling you how it is. I think I owe you that at least because I don’t like the way he uses women. You’re no one to me, but you’re a person. A human being. At the very least, you deserve some honesty, since you won’t be getting it fromhim. I’m

sure you know that Rob gets around. Besides, have you seen the women he normally dates? And have you looked at yourself in the mirror lately?"

Her barbed words draw blood, even though I try not to show it. The sting of her words makes my eyes go hot but I tilt my head back so that tears don't fall. After all, I don't want to measure myself by those other women, those supermodel blondes. I know I'm curvy and short and kind of average-looking by most people's standards. But it doesn't matter because he tells me he thinks I'm beautiful. He tells me I'm gorgeous, and shaped exactly the way he likes it. I take a deep breath.

"Rob likes what he sees," I say neutrally. "Now, I'd prefer to stick to issues related to Katie, if you don't mind. Did you have a question or concern about your daughter's education?"

But the other woman won't let go. She's already drawn blood and can't wait to go in for the kill.

"I'm sure he thinks you're so grateful for male attention, that you'll take anything," she sneers with a smile. "Scraps, really. You're like a peasant to him, so he thinks he can do whatever he wants. Don't you get it? The only reason that he asked you out at all was that he didn't want to show up the school's fundraiser alone, because he knew I would be there with my new husband. Sheldon is ten times richer and more powerful than Rob, and Rob knows it," she boasts. "He desperately wants to measure up, but it's hopeless. No one's as rich as Sheldon," she cackles.

What? I don't want to believe her. Rob has always been so confident and self-assured. Why would he care about measuring up to Lindsay's bald eighty-year old husband? What difference does more money make, when everyone's already a billionaire?

But Lindsay just keeps cackling, and the doubts keep creeping in. What if she's right?

Hedidask me out right before the fair. He did tell me how impressed he was that I could “handle” Lindsay. What if he is just using me to play out some stupid drama with his bitchy ex? What if our “relationship” has been based some horrible manipulation?

My heart sinks into the widening pit in my stomach. I feel like the air has become suddenly heavy, pressing down on my chest so hard that I can barely breathe. I feel as if I have grown even smaller beneath Lindsay’s condescending gaze.

I shake my head.

“You’re wrong,” I manage in a shaky voice. “Rob’s not like that. He doesn’t need to compare himself to your husband. He doesn’t need to compare himself to anyone.”

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“Then why did he buy the new penthouse?” she shrugs.

I pause for a moment. This is true. Last week, Rob closed on a penthouse just a block away from his old one. This one is bigger and grander, with unobstructed views of both Central Park and the Hudson River. I asked him why he bought it when he already had so much space, and the billionaire merely smiled with a secret look in his eye. So I take a deep breath.

“He bought it because he can? Why not, if you have the money?”

She rolls her eyes.

“Please, you silly girl. He only bought it because Sheldon and I just bought a new trophy penthouse. He’s jealous of us, can’t you see it? Sheldon bought a new Rolls Royce, and the next day, Rob’s down at the dealership test driving Lamborghinis. Sheldon buys something, and Rob’s at the store the next day asking for the same model. My ex just can’t handle that my new husband is more of a man than he is. Sad, isn’t it?”

My mind whirls. Rob did just bring home a new Aventador, a flashy red sports car that looks like something out of a superhero movie, with acceleration so crazy quick it makes my head spin. He told me he got the car on a whim, because he felt like it. I told him I was worried he’d crash it, and he laughed, promising to be careful.

I didn’t think anything of it at the time, but now, I can’t but help wonder. Was there some ulterior motive to buying that car? After all, Rob’s got a fleet of luxury vehicles already. Why did he buy this one just recently? Did it have something to do with

Sheldon and Lindsay?

As if reading my mind, his ex holds up her keys. Sure enough, there's the telltale Aventador logo on her car key.

"See?" she says smugly. "Sheldon got one, so Rob had to get one too. That man has no imagination."

I swallow, fighting the lump forming in my throat. I try to breathe through the compression in my chest. I feel like I'm one of those cartoon animals who has walked out into mid-air with nothing beneath its feet, and hasn't yet noticed. So I long I don't look down, I can stay standing even if my legs are treading air.

But Lindsay's on a roll and not about to give up her lead.

"Don't you get it?" she yawns, feigning boredom. "He's just trying to keep up with the Joneses, except in this case, the Joneses are the Stys. Don't get caught up in his little game. You think he's so charming. Trust me, I thought so too. But all he cares about is himself. He's a sick man, sick in the head. He's using you, like he uses everybody in his life. Has he told you he wants a baby yet?" she asks casually, tapping her red nails together. "It's hismodus operandi, if you will. He says that he wants a baby with you, and that you'll be a happy family together. Don't fall for it, sweetheart. I gave him that baby, and look where I am now: married to another man."

I don't know what to say. I just stand there, staring, like a deer caught in a car's headlights.

Lindsay stretches a hand towards me, as if she might touch me. She stops just short, flicking her hand away. "I'm sorry," she purrs. "I don't mean to judge or anything like that. He is a very attractive man, and I can understand why you'd be blown away. Plus, I quite loved him once myself, or at least I thought I loved him. I just want to

save you from what happened to me, that's all."

This is too much. In a strangled tone, I manage to say, "Would you like to take Katie now? I'll go look for her." I feel like everything is moving in slow motion and that I'm trying to fight my way through a heavy fog of misery.

She laughs again, just two beats.

"Ha ha." She tosses her head again. "Yes, where is my little angel?"

Just keep moving, I tell myself. I find Katie playing with the twins in the next room.

"Katie, honey, your mom is here early to pick you up," I say.

Katie, thankfully, remains oblivious to the tension between us. I help her to get her backpack and gather her things. When she sees her mom, she runs over, squealing. "Mommy! Mommy!"

She tries to give Lindsay a kiss, but the blonde dodges the contact.

"What did I tell you about messing up Mommy's makeup?" she scolds. Immediately, the little girl hangs her head and looks at the floor.

"Oh, sorry Mommy," Katie mumbles, shuffling her feet.

"Thanks for taking such good care of her," Lindsay says to me, her fake smile in full force. "I'll see you later. Bye now!"

"Bye Ally," mumbles Katie, her little form small and dejected with one hand caught in her mother's clasp.

I watch them walk away. When they've left the building, the force of gravity at last overcomes me. I sink to the ground, unable to stand anymore.

My whole world is spinning, like I'm drunk. I'm in shock, like I've just been hit by a car. Is it true? Is Rob engaged in some twisted game of one-upsmanship with his ex? Is our whole relationship just a sham to get back at her? Am I just a pawn in his schemes?

I don't want to believe Lindsay, but she makes a convincing case. And she knows him so much better than I do. Plus, the baby thing, or maybe I should call it the babyscheme. Was it just a practiced move on his part, designed to make me feel safe and secure? I feel so stupid, and utterly, absolutely devastated too.

Lindsay's right. I don't measure up. Rob could have any woman he wants, so why would he pick some day care attendant who already has the mom body without even being a mom? He's a billionaire, and I'm poor, pathetic nobody.

This whole thing, this whole fairy tale romance, has seemed like something that couldn't possibly be real. It all happened so fast, and it was so perfect too. I went from being a girl no one noticed to being the girl on the arm of one of the world's most powerful men. I should have known it was too good to be true.

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Tears gather at the corners of my eyes, but I fight them back. I have to get through the rest of my day. My co-worker Emma steps out of the bathroom, whistling and blissfully unaware of the wretched interaction that just occurred. I'm glad that she didn't watch my confrontation with Lindsay. It was bad enough without having a witness and I paste a smile on my face. But Emma can see that something's definitely wrong.

"Oh my god, Ally, are you okay?" she asks, running over.

Slowly, I pick myself off the ground, ruefully trying to dust myself off.

"Nothing," I say. "I'm O.K. Just a little dizzy for a moment, but it's nothing," I offer as a lame excuse.

Emma shoots me a look.

"You don't look O.K." she says darkly.

I hate that she can tell when I just want to suffer in silence. I look up at her, my eyes pleading. "Please, Emma. Don't worry about me. It's nothing. There's just a big paste spill and I got overwhelmed trying to clean it up. I swear."

She nods, gravely. I think she gets it, that I'm not O.K. at all but I want her to pretend. "I can work on cleaning it. I don't mind," she offers. "Come on, I'll get some paper towels."

"Thanks," I say. My voice in my own ears sounds small and far away.

I know this feeling. It's heartbreak. I've felt it once before, when my college boyfriend left for Europe, but it's ten times worse this time. The other breakup was a natural thing. I felt wistful but not destroyed. After all, the guy was joining the Peace Corps in some remote rural area. The separation was just what had to happen at that point in our lives.

But this time, my heart feels like a gaping wound, bleeding out inside my chest. I don't know how I'm going to get through the rest of the day. I just want to run away and hide somewhere, but I have to keep it together for the kids and their parents.

I shut myself into the bathroom and splash water on my face desperately. I look at myself in the mirror. The girl that stares back at me is fat and dirty, covered in paste with her hair a mess and no makeup. I can't hold a candle to glamorous Lindsay Sty.

What a silly girl I've been, living in a fantasy land. What a dumb, delusional girl. Rob Lockhart played me for a good one, and it took his exit to show me the light. Sure, the relationship was good while it lasted, but only before I realized that it wasn't real. I take a deep breath, standing up tall and straightening myself out. I'm not all here, but I can get through this. It's just a few more hours before I can go home and cry myself to sleep with the memories of what might have been but never actually were.

14

Rob

It's a beautiful day, the sun peeking through the gaps between the skyscrapers and shining through the windows of my top floor office. But on the inside, I feel as gloomy as the worst rainy day. Outside my window, pigeons are cooing as they walk around on the window ledge. I watch two of them snuggling, preening each other's feathers. I feel a pang of jealousy. Those winged rats are doing better than I am right now.

A week ago, I was thinking about a second marriage and another chance at fatherhood. A week ago, everything was right with my world. I felt like a king, but now I feel like shit. I'm trying to keep it together, because I can't have my office staff noticing that their boss is falling apart. On the outside, I look my usual self: dominating and handsome in a sharp suit. On the inside, I'm an utter mess.

In a daze, I try calling Ally again, and once again, she doesn't answer. What the fuck? The phone clatters onto my desk, my fingers numb. It's been a week, and she hasn't returned any of my calls or texts. I know she's alive, because I've seen the notification that she's read my texts. I've tried calling her from my cell and the phone at my house and the phone at my office, with no luck.

I'm so confused. Everything was going so well. One moment I was taking her out in my new sports car and introducing her to all the best spots in the city, and the next moment: radio silence. It just doesn't make any sense to me.

I'll confess, sometimes I really don't understand women. They keep so much on the inside, and their motivations can be tangled like crossed wires. I think I have a firm grasp on how their bodies work, but their minds can be a mystery. I suspect I have done something to offend Ally, but I have no idea what it was. Really no clue. So what do I do now? I'm trying to get a hold of her to have a talk, but if the girl won't answer, then what am I left with?

Was I too cavalier about the issue of birth control? Did I scare her away by suggesting I wanted to get her pregnant? I wasn't being flippant. I really do want to have a family with Ally. I bought that new penthouse down the street in anticipation of us, and the children we're going to have together. Nothing would be better than watching her grow pregnant again and again, that curvy body getting heavier still. She's so amazing with the child I already have, and I know she's going to make a wonderful mother.

But did it all come too fast? She didn't really reply when I brought it up at the carnival, and I was nervous about pushing the issue. After all, my lover is quite a bit younger than me. Maybe she's not ready. Maybe she wants to wait. You never know with women in New York City. They all have high-powered careers and seem to want to make a mark on the world before settling down to start a family.

Shit. That must be it. I must have underestimated her career aspirations. After all, I was somewhat nonchalant about her job at Ladybug Tots, and I did fuck her during a school event. Goddamn. Maybe I should have taken things slower. She did tell me that she wanted a Master's in Education, and don't those degrees take years to get? Goddamit. The talk of starting a family together must have put her off.

Shit shit shit. Or maybe it wasn't that. Did I make some random, offensive off-hand comment? I just don't know. I hate this feeling of uncertainty. If I knew what the problem was, I could fix it, but the communication breakdown is impossible, and I have no idea where to even start. I'm worried that I'm making it worse by continuing to call her, but I don't know what else to do.

This fucked up situation drives me crazy, and I sink back into my chair with a hand over my eyes. I'm used to getting what I want, but a woman is not like a company. I can't just acquire her. There are women who can be bought, but Ally is not one of those. It's part of what I loved about her, that she doesn't seem terribly concerned with the material things in life. I have to charm her. I have to pay attention to her needs. I have to earn her love and respect. In fact, there's nothing I want to do more in life, but now we've totally gone off the rails because I thought I was doing a great job, but obviously not.

I'm trying to focus on work, but all I can think about is how much I miss Ally as my mind spins out different scenarios to explain what might have gone wrong. I feel cold on the inside, worried that I've somehow managed to ruin such a good thing.

My secretary's voice interrupts my thoughts. "Mr. Lockhart, your eleven a.m. is here."

I notice that Ann is standing in front of my desk, looking sharp in a blue skirt suit. She's a very tall woman with her light brown hair tied back in a tight bun, her expression expectant. Fuck. I'm so distracted that I didn't even notice her entrance. This isn't good.

"Um, excellent. Send him in," I clear my throat, not feeling at all excellent. I gather myself, focusing on the task at hand instead of thinking about the girl I've somehow managed to lose.

Mr. Fred Hwaung is a businessman from Hong Kong, and a billionaire in his own right. His line of work revolves around setting up shell companies, getting them listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, and then selling them to other companies who want to get listed quickly. I need one of those companies, for an Eastern subsidiary of Lockhart Industries. This is an important meeting, which I can't fuck up.

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Mr. Hwaung walks into the office. He's a portly guy with a smiling, sweaty face and a very expensive suit. I shake his hand, ushering him in to sit down. "I'm so glad you could make it today," I say.

"I squeezed you in," he wheezes. "I have to fly back to Hong Kong in four hours, so let's make this quick. You want to buy. I want to sell. This should be easy."

I am grateful for the urgency. I'm not in the mood for small talk right now. The truth is, finding out what's going on with Ally is more important to me than this meeting, but I can't let Hwaung know that. Business has to come first, or the empire I've worked so hard to build over the course of my life will collapse like a fucking tower of twigs.

"Yes, Mr. Hwaung. It should be easy," I say smoothly, spreading some papers out on the desk. "Let's go over these figures."

The meeting proceeds. It's tough to focus, but I make myself hone in on these negotiations. It takes perhaps half an hour to hammer out the details of our transaction. We agree on a price of \$20 million for the company, and shake hands on the deal. We put our respective signatures to some important paperwork and shake hands again after he hoists himself to his feet. Was it a good deal? A bad one? Probably something in the middle given how thoughts of Ally kept running around the back of my mind even as I crunched numbers with Hwaung.

"Would you like me to have my driver drop you off at the airport?" I offer courteously.

“No, I have my own driver,” the fat man says. “My car is waiting outside.”

I watch him walk away, escorted by my secretary. I sit back down and make like I’m going to get to work, but of course, my fingers don’t obey. Instead, to my mortification, I try calling Ally from my office phone again. What the fuck is wrong with me? I’m like a fucking fifteen year old boy caught in the throes of some hopeless unrequited crush. It’s embarrassing to be honest.

And yet, as I press the phone to my ear, my heart beats with rapid thumps. I hold out hope that she will answer, but it rings straight to voicemail. Fuck! I’m so fucking pathetic! I’ve already left Ally a bunch of messages, so I just hang up. I’ve never felt so powerless as I do right now.

Viciously, I pull up a shareholders’ report from one of my investment holdings. I read the same page about five times, taking nothing in. The words crawl before my eyes like tiny ants. I tell myself to get it together and focus, but it’s no use. I can’t do this. I’m too distracted by worrying about what has happened with Ally and it’s affecting my ability to get my work done. I’d fire myself, if it was possible.

I push the button on the intercom and page my secretary. She comes rushing in, her heels clicking on the hardwood floor. “How can I help you, Mr. Lockhart?”

“I want you to clear my schedule for the rest of the day,” I growl.

“Are you sure, Mr. Lockhart?” Her face flashes concern. “You have several more meetings today.” Not to mention that Inevercancel work. But desperate times call for desperate measures.

“It’s a family emergency, Ann. Reschedule what you can, and have Robert Johnson deal with whatever you can’t reschedule. I think he’s ready for the responsibility.” My voice is hard, my mind having already been made up.

She nods. "Of course, Sir. I'll get right on it."

I call up Bernard next and ask him for Ally's address. He's picked her up and dropped her off a couple times by now, so he rattles it off with no problem. Good. I've never been to her apartment before, but there's a first time for everything. I'm not going to let the girl slip through my fingers, not without an explanation at least.

I don't even bother with a driver. I don't want any middle men in the way right now. This is my problem, and I'm going to fix it. I take the wheel of my Rolls Royce, and plot a course for Brooklyn, my hands gripping the steering wheel in frustration. Ally better be ready because a fucking monster hurricane's coming her way, and there ain't nothing that's going to stop her from being mine.

15

Ally

I get through the next two days at work, barely conscious. The only thing that keeps me going is the knowledge that the children need me. Their sweet smiles and tender hearts remind me that there is still good in the world while I spend my nights despondent, trying to dodge my roommate's attempts to get me to talk about it.

I spend the weekend holed up in my apartment, under a blanket. I watch a marathon of sad movies, one after the other, crying along with the characters which is better than crying about my own situation. I pass out on the couch on Saturday night and wake up Sunday morning to watch more sad movies. It's pathetic honestly. There's *The Notebook*, a perennial favorite, as well as *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Well, *Bridget Jones* has a happy ending, but it just makes me sad because I know there will be no happy ending for me.

I buy myself three cartons of chocolate ice cream and make my way steadily through

them, doing whatever I can to soothe my pain. I need more than ice cream. I need him. I need Rob's strong hands, the wide shoulders and the broad chest to lean on. But he's not here, and I've been ignoring him because what would we say to one another? Words can't encapsulate how utterly wretched I feel. As a result, the sugar is all I've got. The velvety softness of the chocolate sweetness melts in my mouth, but I don't feel better at all.

My phone rings again, and I pick it up, blinking at the screen with bleary eyes. It's Rob. Jesus. Can't he just leave me alone? Hasn't he hurt me enough? I let it ring and refuse to answer. He's called me a bunch of times and left me at least a dozen voicemails and texts. I don't want to talk to him. Nothing he could say right now could make this better. I can't face him, knowing what I know now.

But at the same time, I miss him desperately. I feel like there's a hole where my heart used to be. It sounds dumb, but sometimes I literally get chest pains, I miss him so much. But I have to stay strong because the Rob I miss was nothing but a fantasy. I feel so stupid for thinking he wanted to have a family with me, when all he really wanted was to get back at his ex. All those sweet words were just that: sugar. All fluff and no filling. What a dumb, naïve girl.

I lose myself in the movies, grateful that Netflix has an unlimited supply of sad films to make me feel a little bit better about my own life because no matter how shitty I feel, it's nothing compared to the horror in store for the characters in *Life is Beautiful*. My heart hurts for the little boy and for his father who does everything he can not to let his child know that they are in a concentration camp. It's heavy stuff, and far worse than a breakup. At least that's what I tell myself, but somehow, my heart still longs for Rob even as the characters run around on screen. When the movie finally ends, my face is streaked with tears and my nose is running, although I don't know if it's because of the movie, or because I feel so sorry for myself. Probably both. I wipe the snot off on the blanket, not even caring that it's disgusting.

Suddenly, my doorbell rings. The last thing I want to do right now is talk to someone. I look like a complete mess and feel like a pile of shit. But whoever it is won't stop. Ding ding ding! Jesus Christ, it's so annoying! Why won't this person just go away already?

I cover my face with the blanket, hoping whoever it is will give up and leave, but the doorbell just keeps buzzing. I sigh, forcing myself to get off the couch. I look like shit, but whatever. If this person wants a response, they're going to deal with me in this messed up state.

I swing open the door, half-expecting to see Mr. Limey from downstairs. He's our elderly neighbor who likes to cook, and always seems to be short a few ingredients. Sometimes it's a cup of sugar or a splash of milk. One time, it was the steak for his steak frites. Go figure.

I'm ready to bite off Mr. Limey's head, but my mouth falls open when I see who it is, because it's my lover. He's massive, dark and angry looking in a black suit. His expression is one of thunderclouds, and the man bursts through the door while letting out a growl, wild-eyed and crazy. I stare at him, gaping as he barges into my apartment.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" he demands, his imposing figure casting a shadow over me. I'm silent, merely staring at him for a few minutes before the words come rushing out.

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“What the hell is wrong with me? What the hell is wrong with you?” I volley back, putting my hands on my hips and staring him down. I don’t care how rich and powerful he is. He can’t just barge into my place acting like a lunatic. “This is my apartment. What do you think you’re doing?”

“What the hell was I supposed to do?” he roars. “You wouldn’t answer any of my calls or texts. I’ve been trying to reach you for days.”

“I don’t have to answer your calls,” I say, my voice low. “You are not entitled to a response from me.”

He takes a deep breath.

“Fair enough, Ally. You’re right. You don’t owe me a response, but I hope at least you’d feel that I deserved one.”

It hurts to look at him because he’s so handsome. Just for a moment, I let myself take in the physicality of Rob, from the deep black hair to the piercing blue eyes. I let my eyes run over those broad shoulders and wide chest, mentally imprinting him in my mind’s eye in case I never get the chance to see him again. The thought alone is so painful that a sharp stab hits my belly, leaving me slightly bent over. He’s everything to me, but he used me too. In a low voice, I say, “I think you should go.”

The billionaire just looks at me, immobile, those blue eyes making me sob internally.

“If that’s really what you want, fine, I’ll go, but I don’t understand what’s going on. Please just tell me what’s on your mind.” His voice is rough and soft at once, begging

me to open up. The expression on his face seems genuine, but I don't trust him. I can't afford to.

I'm having a hard time forming the words, but I make myself say something.

"I'm not going to let you play with my heart anymore," is my stiff reply.

He's genuinely bewildered. "What?"

"I know what you're really up to," I say, holding back my tears. I don't want to cry in front of him, so I tilt my head back once more, hoping the angle will keep the hot tears in my eyes.

But Rob is really perplexed. He sits down on the couch, his big form occupying most of the space and taking over the spot where I've spent the last two days hiding from the world.

"Ally, I have no idea what you're talking about. What is it you think is going on?"

He really doesn't know? He thinks I'm so dumb that I can't figure it out? I guess I'll have to spell it out in detail.

"I saw Lindsay the other day. She told me everything."

The agitation in his voice rises.

"What? Lindsay? Why would you talk to my ex?"

"She came by to pick up Katie. She told me all about how you're trying to keep up with her and her husband. She told me that you only asked me out because you didn't want to go solo to the fundraiser. She told me that you only bought a new apartment

because she bought a new apartment. Look, Rob, I get it but I don't want to be a part of the twisted game of one-upmanship that you're playing with your ex-wife. I thought it was real between us, but evidently not. You're just messing around with me because you can." By the time I'm done getting all of it off my chest, tears are streaming down my cheeks.

Rob doesn't say anything. He just sits there, staring at me, his mouth hanging open.

Suddenly, anger suffuses my form. I shove his chest, not very hard, but enough to let him know that I mean business.

"Just go home. Can't you muster a little bit of respect? You made me believe that you loved me but you've just been using me this whole time. I don't want anything to do with your games!" My wail comes out pathetic and I almost drop to my knees, I'm so hurt. But it's too late. My pain is out in the open, a shimmering mass between us and Rob's expression is a mixture of pain and concern.

His brow knits.

"Ally, please stop this. I'm not playing games with you. I love you. Do you hear me? I love you. This is all some giant clusterfuck because my ex is a horrible person who's twisting things. She's been feeding you lies, and sweetheart, you can't believe what she says. Listen to me, Ally. Trust me."

I want to believe him. I really do. But there's so much about what Lindsay said to me that hit right to the core of my insecurities. "I don't know Rob. You did ask me out right before the Annual Fair, and you did just buy a new house and a new car right after Lindsay and Sheldon did. Doesn't the timing mean something? That's three events. Coincidence all three times? I want to be real, but I ... I just don't know."

Rob shakes his head, reaching out to cup my face. His hand is so big and warm, and I

fight every urge to sink into touch, to let him take care of me and make the hurt go away.

He growls again.

“Baby, I’m so sorry that she made you feel like this. Please believe me. I had no idea why you were upset and I’ve spent every waking moment since you stopped talking to me trying to figure it out. Full confession: yes, I did ask you out because I wanted a date to the fundraiser so I wouldn’t look like a chump in front of Lindsay and her new husband. Maybe that makes me pathetic and weak and an asshole, but it’s not the whole story. I kept going out with you because I think you’re amazing. I’ve never met a girl like you. I love your body and your gentle heart and the way you take care of my daughter and the way you make me feel. Do you hear me Ally? I love you.”

This is the third time he’s used the L-word, and my heart turns over in my chest, making me catch my breath.

“But why then? Why did you buy all those things? You definitely don’t need them.”

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He's silent for a moment, staring off into the distance before shaking his head.

"Aw, fuck baby. I just ... I don't know, I'm afraid I'm coming on too hard and fast with you sometimes, and I'm afraid of scaring you away. You're young, and you're not ready for this."

"I like it hard and fast," I whisper. "Tell me."

He looks away again before taking a huge breath and meeting my eyes straight. The blue blazes so hot that I'm singed even from where I sit, a few feet away. The air positively crackles with electricity.

"The reason I bought that new larger apartment and the big new car is because I want to have children with you, after we get married. That's why," he says simply. "I want to be with you Ally. I did it because of us."

Whoa. What? I'm dumbstruck, wondering if I've somehow managed to imagine the words that just came out of his mouth. I can barely process this information. "What?" I ask him.

Suddenly, the billionaire's moving fast. One moment he's sitting on the couch, and the next he's down on the floor by my side on one knee. Oh my god. Is this really happening? Indeed it is.

Rob takes a deep breath, looking at me with those intense blue eyes that make me so, so happy. He takes my hand in his.

“Ally,” he says, in his deep, melodious voice. “Will you marry me? Will you be my wife until the end of days, bear my children, and make me the happiest man in the world?”

Oh my god. I can barely breathe. It’s all so sudden, but all so right too. The hole in my heart fills with joy and light, and my tears of pain start to turn to tears of joy.

“Yes, Rob,” I blurt. “Oh yes. I will marry you.”

He wipes the tears from my eyes and kisses me, rough yet soft at once. He devours my mouth and I devour his in return, our hunger meeting at the fore. I’ve never been so happy in my whole life. All the pain of the last few days has been washed away by the outpouring of his love. I never want to be without him again because this man is my home. My heart’s quested so long, and it’s finally found where it begins. Withhim.

“I’m sorry I didn’t bring a ring,” he growls, breaking off the kiss. Our foreheads are still touching and our hot breaths mingle. “I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

“I don’t care about the ring,” I murmur. “It doesn’t matter.”

“You don’t want to wear my ring?” he teases, pretending at offense. “You don’t want to show your friends? I knew you were down to Earth, but come on. At least let me take you to my jewelers.”

I laugh. I must look like such a mess right now after the tornado of emotions I’ve been through today, but my lover doesn’t seem to mind. He wants me to be his wife, and I’m over the moon with joy and ecstasy. My heart soars, and I smile a little tearfully at him.

“I didn’t mean it like that. You know that. Of course I’d love to wear your ring! I just

meant it's not about the diamond for me. It's about you. Us. Being together."

He's silent, those blue eyes devouring me.

"How did I get so lucky?" he asks on a whisper. "They broke the mold when they made you, you know that right?" he says.

I mull the phrase over, but I don't understand.

"What do you mean?"

He kisses me on the forehead. "You're one of kind," he growls. "You're the most perfect girl in the whole world. I want you to be the mother of my child. My children. I want a dozen rug rats, and I want to start immediately because I know you're going to be the most amazing mom."

"Stop it," I say, but I don't really want him to stop.

He kisses me deeply, his tongue darting into my mouth, pulling me closer to him.

"I love you so much, Ally Summers," he says. "Tell me you love me too."

I adore his commands, and smile sweetly at him as my heart does another somersault.

"I love you too, Mr. Lockhart," I say. "Always and forever."

That does it. He scoops me off the couch.

"Come on, I'm getting you out of here."

"Where are we going?" I giggle as he turns sharply to the right, barreling towards the

door. He's so strong that I seem weightless in his arms, despite my generous curves.

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“To our new home,” he growls. “I almost lost you and I’m not going to let you slip away again. Besides, you deserve to see your new apartment because I bought it with us in mind. I want you to see where you’re going to live, and where our kids are going to grow up.”

Oh my god. A family with this man. Nothing would make me happier, and I positively melt against his chest, turning into a puddle of warm, feminine need.

“Yes, Mr. Lockhart,” I say softly, stroking that hard, masculine chin. “I’d like that.”

He looks at me and growls once more, those blue eyes blazing. “I can’t get you home soon enough, sweetheart, because that’s where we belong. Together. Our home.”

Once again, my heart soars and I burrow into his arms as if seeking shelter and safety that only he can provide. But when Rob steps outside onto the landing, I see that it’s a surprisingly beautiful day, sunny and warm with a gentle breeze blowing. The sky is brilliant blue, with a few fluffy clouds floating peacefully by.

He carries me to his Rolls, which he’s left double parked in front of my apartment. It looks so out of place in my run-down neighborhood, but the billionaire doesn’t care. I slide into the passenger seat beside him, holding onto his arm because I can’t stand to spend another moment without feeling his body next to mine.

Once the door closes, I’m alone in the plush luxury for an instant. I should never have doubted Rob. He really does love me. It’s as clear as day to me now, and I was silly and misguided to listen to his ex. Sure, there were some coincidences, but I completely misunderstood the underlying reason behind the purchase of the car and

the apartment.

Now I know better, and I suppose that's what life does. It teaches you hard lessons, but once you absorb them, the outcome can be incredibly rewarding. I lean back against the white leather, basking in the security of Rob's love, and knowing that my future with him is as bright as the sun.

"You good, sweetheart?" he asks, getting into the car and turning my way. Those blue eyes are the answer to my everything, and I nod and smile.

"As long as I'm with you, then always," is my answer. After all, my dreams have come true. I'm with the man of my fantasies, and I lay my head on his shoulder as he pilots the car, dreaming new dreams of wedding dresses and gurgling babies with his black hair and my brown eyes. I'll make a big happy family with the man I love, and we'll grow old together with grace and passion intertwined in our lives. After all, this isn't the end of our story. It's only the beginning of the next beautiful chapter, and I can't wait to see what lies ahead.

Epilogue

Rob

My wife has never looked so beautiful. The last six months have been a whirlwind what with us getting married before a small circle of family and friends, and both of us moving into the new penthouse. But it's worth it because my wife has a glow to her skin, and a certain peace and loveliness that entrances me from across the room.

After all, my beautiful wife is pregnant now, and the bump is visible beneath her semi-sheer blouse. Ally's curves have become more generous, and as if she knows what I'm thinking, she reaches two hands down to smooth over her stomach, smiling to herself as she says a mental hello to the baby.

I can't resist. I walk over to where she's standing next to the window and I press a kiss to that elegant swan neck.

"You're gorgeous," I whisper in her ear. "I can't stop myself."

She knows what I want and immediately turns to latch both her arms around my neck while offering her lips for a kiss.

"Then don't hold back," she murmurs, "Just because I'm pregnant doesn't mean I don't want it too. In fact, I want it even more."

I growl, laughing and groaning at once because this is why Ally's perfect for me. She's hot, and so wet and ready even though just seconds ago, we were standing across the room from one another. But now, it's now. I sweep her into my arms and stride into the bedroom before setting her gently down on the king-size bed. It's decorated for Christmas, and Ally's put a miniature Christmas tree in the corner. Icicle lights cast a glow on her sweetly pregnant tummy, and I smile down at her. How did I get so lucky?

"Are you ready?" I growl, pulling her dress off in one fell swoop. My fingers dip between her legs, and her panties are already soaked. "Fuck. So wet for me, just like always."

She mewls and sighs, tossing her head as her legs spread wantonly, giving me access.

"I'm always ready for you, Robert," she agrees. "Always."

It's too much for me. After all, Ally is my fantasy come to life. She's intelligent, motivated, and fertile as hell. The girl has left Ladybug Tots to pursue a Master's in Education, and insists on going to class even though she's getting rounder by the day.

“At least let me drive you to school,” I rumbled. “I don’t want you walking while you’re carrying my baby.”

Ally lets out a musical laugh.

“Rob, Rob, Rob,” she giggles. “Of course I’m going to walk to class. After all, it’s only one block away.”

I have to give her that. Ally’s enrolled at Central Institute, which conveniently is located only two hundred feet from our building.

“Well, let me know if you want me to walk with you to class,” I growl. “I’m not too busy.”

She smiles.

“Of course you’re not, my gorgeous husband. But I’m okay, I swear. Plus, classes are ending soon for holiday break, so there won’t be too much walking anymore.”

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And that's why this woman is perfect for me. Ally gives as good as she gets. When you're a billionaire, it's easy to surround yourself with yes-men and people who agree to anything you say. But my wife isn't like that. She calls me out on my shit, and stands up for herself. Her sassy spirit and feisty ways drive me crazy sometimes, but they're also part of what I love most about her.

Plus, she's good with children, did I mention? Katie absolutely adores her, and calls Ally "Mommy" now. I'm not sure what my daughter calls Lindsay, as we're no longer in touch. It's sad but all of my interactions with my ex are conducted through lawyers. It's just easier this way.

But back to the present. There are many parts of my wife that I adore, and right now, her delectable pussy and heaving breasts are definitely part of the equation. I bend my head to kiss that glistening pink slit, and she lets out a delighted squeal as her clit throbs.

"Rob," she moans. "More. Please, yes. More."

I give her more. I rear up to stand before her, my giant rod erect and absolutely enormous. But Ally shows no fear. Instead, she smiles and pulls me closer. The woman is so slick that I slip in easily, almost by accident. But this is no accident because she lets out another moan as I sink deep into her tight hole, her eyes closing as her back arches a bit.

"Oh god, yes," she breathes. "Sogood."

I nod, my heart pumping furiously as I watch the curvy brunette laid out like a feast

before me. What did I do to deserve this woman? Here she is, heavily pregnant with my child, giving me what I need even though it can't possibly be comfortable with her growing belly. But I'm an asshole, so I take every opportunity available, and that includes loving her right here, right now.

Slowly, I slip my shaft out of her sweet slit. She groans, and I get even harder watching as my pole reappears from between those swollen pink lips. I'm drenched, and my hard rod is shiny with the evidence of her need.

"You got me all lubed up sweetheart, so we're going to move to stage two. What do you say?"

Her eyes fly open, but it's too late. I've already shifted downwards a bit and now the head of my dick is nudging her dark star.

"Oh!" is her surprised yelp as I press a bit, spreading her tight pleats with my massive head. "Oh god. Yes!"

Again, I'm reminded of why she's perfect for me. Ally's offered every part of her body to me with no shame, and I've loved every inch of that beautiful form. As a result, this isn't my first time taking her in her back end, and it won't be the last. She moans again as I sink deeper into her bottom, while pushing her knees up so that I can get better access to every inch of this beautiful girl.

"Yes," I growl. "Yes, come with me sweetheart. I want you to."

Ally's eyes are dazed now but her body responds. After a few slow strokes in and out of her behind, I reach one hand down to tap her clit a few times, and she positively explodes on my cock. A long, guttural growl escapes her throat as her ass clamps down, and then begins a series of shudders.

"Oh!" is her delighted squeal. "Oh god, Rob. Yes!"

I'm lost too. The feel of her bottom squeezing my hardness as her swollen folds gush wetly shoots me to the stars, and the virility comes boiling out of my shaft rapid-fire to fill her back end.

"Fuuuuck," is my low grunt. "Oh shit baby."

Afterwards, we lay together, panting and spent on the bed. Slowly, I lever myself up and watch with satisfaction as white fluid leaks from her back door. This is what I love about my wife. She's so dirty, and it's all for me. With one finger, I reach up and push the liquid back into her bottom, where it belongs, stopping to stroke her pleats a bit.

"Mmm, Robert," she murmurs with a sleepy smile. "That feels good."

"Excellent," I say with a growl. "Because give me five minutes, and we can do this all over again."

She giggles.

"Five minutes? That's all you need?"

That's all I'll ever need with this woman. I bend down and take her hand, pressing it to my lips for a moment.

"I need this," I say, kissing her palm. "I need this," I repeat, pressing a soft kiss to one nipple. "And I need this," I finish, capturing her mouth with mine. The contact is electric: the kiss is deep, passionate, and loving at once because she is mine, and I am hers. Our hearts have found each other through the thicket called life, and although our union was unlikely, it's here to last. This woman is my everything, and she means the world to me. I know this in my heart of hearts, but somehow, I have to hear her say it too.

“Say you love me,” I command against her lips. “Tell me you do.”

Ally’s smile is as bright as the sunshine, her glow suffusing my heart and warming me from the inside out.

“I love you Robert Lockhart. Now you say it too,” she invites with a sweet smile.

How can I resist?

“I love you. I love you. I love you,” is my chant, punctuated with kisses to her cheek, chin, and mouth. “I love everything about you, and always will. You and the baby are the best Christmas gifts a man could ask for.”

She sighs and presses her mouth to mine.

“I love you,” she breathes again.

“Always,” I echo. Our mouths fuse, and again, I’m reminded of how lucky I am. The day care provider met the billionaire, and he swept her off her feet. We learned a few lessons along the way, but all’s well that ends well, and now that my wife has said that she loves me, I can take those words and cherish them in my heart forever.

THE END