



Texting Dad's Best Friend (The Right Wrong Number)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Meet Rayna and Rhett..

At forty-three, I'm surrounded by friends who've settled down, urging me to follow suit. But there's one glaring issue: the only woman I crave is completely off-limits—my best friend's daughter, Rayna.

Despite my best efforts to suppress my feelings, late-night texts from her—filled with flirty photos and playful banter—shatter my resolve. Each message pulls me deeper into a whirlwind of desire I can no longer ignore.

Rayna Baker is everything I've ever wanted, and it turns out she's been wanting me just as fiercely. As we embark on a passionate journey, we know we can't keep our love a secret forever.

The stakes are high, and the risk of losing everything looms large.

But one thing is certain:

Rayna is mine, and nothing—absolutely nothing—will tear us apart.

Not even my best friend, her father.

Join us as we navigate the highs and lows of a love that defies boundaries.

Will we find the courage to embrace our feelings, or will the weight of our secrets crush us?

****Get ready for a romance that will leave you breathless!****

Texting Dads Best Friend is a short, steamy, insta-everything romance.

Each book in the series can be read as a standalone story. No OM / OW drama and no cliffhangers.

No ddlg kink. Virgin MFC. Age-gap. Always a sweet HEA!

Total Pages (Source): 8

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RHETT

Fifteen years ago, when I first started this company, I'd never have been caught dead leaving the office at five o'clock. For years, this place was essentially my home—I've slept on the couch in my office more times than I would like to admit. But now, with the clock reading three minutes past five, I'm already shrugging my jacket on and leaving.

It's a Friday evening, which means it's time for my weekly drinks with Paul. We've been best friends for God knows how long, and somewhere along the way, we fell into the routine of after-work drinks at the local bar every Friday, with an unspoken rule not to miss it. I'm glad for it, truthfully, because if it wasn't for this routine, I'd probably never socialize.

Given I'm in my early forties, most of my friends and acquaintances are married and settled down, some with kids. Christ, Paul's daughter, is in her twenties. But I've spent so long married to my work, this company that I built from the ground up, that I haven't had any time or energy left to find the person to spend my life with.

It hasn't bothered me ... until recently. Now that the company has been well established for so long, and I'm lucky to have an incredibly talented and capable team who knows the business almost as well as I do, and there's less need for me to work myself half to death, I'm beginning to become all too aware of how quiet and cold my house is when I come home for the night.

I try to shake that depressing thought out of my head and continue my walk towards the doors, saying goodbye to the few employees still here on my way.

“Have a good night, Mina!” I call out to the receptionist as she closes down her computers and finishes up. She smiles at me, wishing me the same as I stroll out the doors and into the fresh evening air.

By the time I make it to my car, I’m failing miserably at not thinking about the desire to find somebody to settle down with. It should be easy, right? Find a nice girl—God knows my friends have plenty of people they’ve been trying to set me up with over the years—get married and maybe have a couple of kids. There’s only one problem, and it’s a big fucking problem—nobody appeals to me except the one person I’m definitely not supposed to want. The one person who is absolutely, surely, totally off-limits.

Rayna Baker.

My best friend’s daughter.

At twenty-three, she’s twenty years younger than me, full of life, determined, sweet, and so fucking gorgeous I’d have to be blind not to find her attractive. But it’s more than that; it’s her heart and personality that got me. She’s had me wrapped around her finger for three years, not that she knows it, and I go to lengths to make sure nobody else does, either.

She can’t find out because then Paul would find out, and he’d never forgive me. Besides, there’s no way my feelings are reciprocated. I’ve tried to avoid my own feelings, tried to ignore and deny them, but it’s impossible. So instead, I’ve vowed to myself to suffer in silence, wanting her from a distance but pretending like I don’t, for everyone’s sake.

Still, the whole drive to the bar, Rayna's in my mind. Her blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and glittery makeup that makes her shine on the outside just as much as she does inside. Her laugh, her smile, the way she shimmies along to music when she thinks nobody's watching.

Fuck.

I need to get a goddamn grip. I pull into the parking lot, forcing myself to take deep breaths to clear my mind before seeing Paul.

When I've gotten ahold of myself, I put on my best normal expression and head into the bar. Lionel's Dive Bar is far from fancy, and though Paul and I could afford a high-end place now, we wouldn't change this place for the world. The lighting inside is dim, and the noise of chatter and glasses clinking combines with the thud of pool balls cueing off as people play a round in the corner. The familiar environment relaxes me a little, and I head over to our usual spot at the bar on the far left.

Paul's already there waiting for me, two drinks in front of him. He slides one over to me as I take the seat next to him, and I nod in thanks as I take a sip. The liquor burns its way down my throat, and I focus on the sensation instead of the treacherous thoughts in my mind.

For a few hours, we chat about the usual things—work and vacation plans and mutual friends. But soon enough, Paul brings up the one thing I was hoping to avoid as the bar begins to fill around us.

“So, when are you gonna leave your bachelor life behind, huh? You're not getting any younger,” he says, elbowing me in the ribs good-naturedly as our third round of drinks arrives.

I force my expression to stay neutral, taking a long sip of my whiskey. I have no

choice but to lie. “When I find someone who makes me want to settle down,” I answer. I already have, I just can’t have her, is what I don’t say.

Paul rolls his eyes. “Well, you’re not going to find anyone sitting around talking to me and ignoring the women in the bar,” he says, shaking his head. He looks around, then grabs my shoulder to encourage me to look with him, gesturing discreetly at a woman on the other side of the bar. “Send a drink over to her, go flirt, get her number!”

I’m sure she’s a perfectly lovely person, but there’s not a single part of me that’s interested. Nobody will ever hold a candle to the girl I really want.

“Maybe later,” I deflect, quickly changing the subject. “Hey, whatever happened to that guy, the one from your rival company that was trying to recruit your employee from under your nose?”

I know that’s a sensitive subject for Paul, and sure enough, it triggers a long rant about his hatred for the rival and how disrespectful and unprofessional he is. I nod along, just thankful he took my bait and stopped asking questions he really doesn’t want the truthful answer to.

My phone chimes in my pocket as Paul’s still ranting, and I take a sip of my drink and check it quickly.

The second I see who’s texted me and what they’ve texted me, I choke. Sputtering, I slam the glass back onto the bar and gasp for breath. Paul stops mid-sentence and pats me hard on the back as I reel, chuckling.

“Christ, what’s got you flustered?” he laughs, trying to grab my phone to see for himself why I’m suddenly struggling to function.

Shit! I move fast, leaping off my chair and shoving my phone back in my pocket, too aggressively for it not to be suspicious, but fuck, I can barely think straight.

“Back in a minute,” I call out, turning on my heel and making straight for the bathrooms. I can hear Paul’s laughter following me through the bar, but thank God, he doesn’t try to stop me.

The bathrooms here are single stalls, and I’m thankful for the privacy as I slam the door closed behind me and lock it. I yank my phone out of my pocket, half convinced that I’ve imagined the whole thing.

But no. The texts are still there.

I want you so bad .

Sent by none other than the girl who hasn’t left my mind in years. Rayna.

Worse, or better, than the message is the photos she sent with it.

Multiple photos, each one making my blood heat and my cock harden in my suit trousers. Photos of her in a scarlet red lingerie set that hugs her lush curves, with fine lace and straps that I want to tear off with my teeth. She’s posing in a mirror, her lips parted and cheeks flushed like she’s as desperate for this as I am.

All logic flies out the window, all thoughts of being sensible and responsible evaporate, impossible to even attempt to grab hold of.

I feel feral, a man going mad, desperate to claim her. I don’t give a fuck about right or wrong, can’t bring myself to care about the age difference or the fact that her father is my best friend. None of it matters, not now.

God save me, but there's nothing that can keep me from her now.

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RAYNA

The heavy beats of the music make the floor thump beneath my feet. People in varying stages of drunkenness sway and dance around me, and it takes me a few minutes to find my best friend, Serena, in the crowd. She's making out with a guy I've never seen before as they dance together, and I can't help but laugh to myself. Serena never has any issues finding someone to spend the night with, claiming she's just living her twenties to the full. While I admire and respect her having fun, no amount of her trying to get me to have the same type of fun ever works.

I'm only twenty-three. I know I should be out meeting guys and having one-night stands and living it up like my friends are but, no matter how many men offer to buy me drinks or chat me up or ask for my number, I can't bring myself to begin to want them. Even as I have that thought, I feel someone try to put their arms around my waist to dance with me and step to the side, shaking my head at the man who looks at me with a frown.

I sigh, tipsy and frustrated, pushing my way off the dance floor to the bar. I probably shouldn't have any more to drink, but with Serena occupied and my own thoughts driving me crazy, I need something to take the edge off. I order another vodka coke and down it, cringing at the taste of the cheap alcohol. Even that does nothing to shove away the thoughts of the one man I do want. The one man I can't have, the only man I've ever truly wanted.

Rhett is everything I can't have. Twenty years older than me, a well-off professional

who surely doesn't want anything to do with a girl my age who's just barely starting in her career. Oh yeah, and then there's the teeny tiny problem of the fact that he's my dad's best friend.

But God, for years now, he's all I want. I can't even bring myself to kiss someone else, can't bring myself to show interest in anyone else but him. God, I'm still a virgin because the thought of sleeping with someone else makes me cringe. He's the only one I want, but with my luck, I'll die a virgin before he ever notices me.

The club feels too loud and too crowded, and I stumble out the door, needing to leave. I text Serena—telling her I'm on my way home and to let me know when she gets home safe and having to concentrate very hard to type because the letters are dancing about—and order a taxi. My flat isn't far away, and it takes no time at all before I stumble up my stairs and fight to unlock my front door. Thankfully, it clicks itself locked behind me as I fall inside, kicking off my heels and groaning.

I don't want to be alone, and tears sting my eyes as I picture having Rhett here with me. His fancy suits would look so good on my bedroom floor, and if the outline of muscles I get glimpses of through the fabric is anything to go by, I could trace his abs with my tongue. The picture of us tangled up in my bed together is so real in my head that, for a second, I forget it can never happen.

My pity party gives way to frustration as I slump on my bed, turned on by the images and thoroughly annoyed by the fact that every time I've seen Rhett, he seems completely oblivious to the burning attraction between us. Surely, it's not just me who feels it? Then why has he never given me even a single sign he feels it, too?

The frustration bleeds into determination and, fueled by drunken confidence, I launch to my feet, yanking my clothes off. I have to wrestle to get the tight sequin dress over my head, and it messes up my hair in the process, but I'm too focused on my genius plan to care. I rifle through my drawers until I find the deep scarlet lace lingerie set I

bought last year and have never worn because I've been saving it for him. Except I've never had the chance to show him.

Until now.

The alcohol gives me confidence I've never had before, and I dress in a lacy outfit that barely covers anything. My curves are fully exposed, and even in the dim lighting of my bedroom, if you look closely, you can see my nipples through the fabric. A rush of adrenaline fills me, even as my head spins, drunkenness taking over fully.

I sit on the edge of my bed and grab my phone. My dad gave me Rhett's number years ago in case of an emergency, but I've never used it before. I can't help but grin as I open up a new text thread and click on the camera button, snapping shots of myself in the mirror, trying to pose as seductively as possible. I've never done anything like this before, but I want so badly to push him to see me, to see if he's noticed me the way I notice him, that I don't even feel nervous, just determined. And horny. Fuck, I wish he was here with me. I want him to show me what it's like to have sex, to give me pleasure the way I just know he's capable of. I want to make him feel so good he forgets any other woman exists but me.

If this doesn't work, nothing will.

I send the photos, then tap out a message. I make three spelling mistakes that I have to focus really hard on through the blurry haze to correct, and when I hit send, I feel as smug as ever.

I want you so bad.

"Hah, that'll show him!" I mutter to myself, but my voice comes out slurred, and the room around me tips sideways. I giggle as I flop back on my bed, my phone falling to

the mattress beside me.

“Ugh,” I groan, throwing my arm over my eyes as bright light assaults my vision and rudely yanks me from my sleep. Groggy and confused, I sit up, frowning at the offending sunlight as I realize I’ve left the windows wide open. It’s the sunrise that’s woken me, which means it’s still early as all hell, and I grimace as I force my body to wake up properly.

My mouth is dry as the desert, but I’ve somehow managed to escape a hangover headache, and despite feeling blurry and tired, the worst of the effects of overdrinking seem to have avoided me for now. Thank God.

I rub my eyes and reach for my water bottle on my nightstand, chugging the contents. Usually, my phone is charging beside it, but today, it’s not there. Crap, what did I do with it? My memories from the night before are blurry at best, and I look wildly around my room before realizing my phone is tangled up in my bed sheets. I free it from its prison, and, blessedly, it somehow has twenty percent battery left.

“What the hell?” I mutter to myself when I open it and see the sheer amount of notifications I have. There’s a text from Serena confirming she got home safe, but there are also dozens of texts and tens of missed calls from... “Oh my God ... Rhett!”

It all comes flooding back at once, everything I did the night before. Horrified, I look down at myself, realizing I’m still in the lingerie set that I sent photos to Rhett in. Oh my God.

I SENT PHOTOS OF MYSELF TO HIM!

Panic washes over me as I frantically open the texts, scrolling through messages of him demanding to know where I am, what I’m doing, if I meant to send those to him

or if they were meant for someone else.

I have no idea how to respond, especially not at seven in the morning and barely awake, so all I can do is stare at the screen in shock. I can't believe I sent him those photos, but there's a part of me who can't help but wonder if he liked them.

I nearly jump out of my skin as a loud knock echoes through the apartment. I scramble out of bed as someone knocks on the door again, grabbing a robe to hide the fact I'm wearing practically nothing. Pulling the robe tight around me, I rush to answer the door, though I have no idea who the hell could be here this early. Maybe it's Serena coming around to debrief? But she normally texts before she arrives.

I unlock the door quickly, yanking it open with an apology for taking so long to answer on the tip of my tongue. All my words dry up in my throat as I make eye contact with the person on the other side.

"Rhett," I breathe, stunned.

"Rayna," he says back, his voice low and verging on a growl. I shudder at the way my name sounds in that tone, like he wants to eat me whole.

God, I want him to eat me whole!

"W-what are you doing here?" I stutter out, suddenly very aware that I'm in nothing but lingerie and a robe in front of the man I've been dreaming of for years.

Rhett steps closer, but I'm frozen to the spot, so now we're so close I have to tilt my head back to look up at him.

"You didn't answer my calls. I couldn't stay away any longer," he says, his voice still low and rough. I squeeze my thighs together, trying to hide exactly what his tone and

closeness are doing to me. “Tell me the truth, Rayna. Were those messages meant for me?”

It doesn’t even occur to me to lie. I’m too wrapped up in him. “Yes,” I answer, the truth coming out in a soft breath, a whisper between us that makes this seem all the more forbidden. “There’s nobody else I’d ever want to see me ... like that. There’s nobody else I’ve ever wanted.”

Rhett moves so fast that I can’t process it in real time. One second, he’s standing in my doorway. The next, he’s inside, slamming the door behind him, his hands on my waist. I gasp, but before any sound can escape, his mouth is on mine, stealing every word I’ve ever known.

RHETT

The self-control I've prided myself on for so long evaporates into nothing the second Rayna admits she wants me. All night, I've been tormented by those photos of her, restless and feral for this girl. When she didn't answer any of my texts or calls, I physically couldn't wait any longer to see her, to know if she meant what she said in that message.

The door slams loudly behind me, but nothing else matters except her and the need that's consuming me for her. I kiss her the way I've been imagining kissing her all night, claiming her lips with mine as I tighten my hold around her waist. My cock has been hard since I saw those photos, and it fights against my zipper now, painfully hard for her. She tastes of toothpaste and something uniquely Rayna, and fuck, I never want to pull away from her again.

I nip her bottom lip, drinking in the way she gasps and whimpers against me, making me groan.

"Fuck, gorgeous," I growl as she presses closer, going up on her tiptoes to wrap her arms around my neck. The position presses her breasts against my chest, and the robe parts, revealing the very lingerie set that she teased me with. "I need you."

"Yes, yes," she pants, her voice all breathy and needy. "Please, Rhett, please."

God above, I love the sound of her begging for me like that. "Tell me exactly what

you need, baby,” I say, wanting to make sure I don’t push her too far if she’s not ready. The things I want to do to her are so fucking filthy, almost without limits.

Rayna’s cheeks go bright pink, and she glances down, almost as though she’s ... unsure? I pause, momentarily worried that I’ve fucked this up somehow.

“Rayna, gorgeous,” I murmur, capturing her gaze again. “We don’t have to do?—”

“No, I want to!” she interrupts immediately, eyes wide. “It’s just, uh. Well, I don’t know exactly what I want or need or anything because I’ve never done this before.”

I swear my whole world narrows down to the way her lips form around those words. My mind goes blank with everything except what she just admitted to me.

“Are you telling me you’re a virgin?” I ask, unable to keep the raw lust out of my voice.

“Yes,” she whispers, chewing on her bottom lip. “Is that a problem? I just ... I never wanted anyone else but you. I waited for you, I wanted you to be my first...”

“Fuck, baby,” I curse, my blood burning as hot as lava. “That’s the furthest fucking thing from a problem. I’m just trying to find some shred of self-control, so I don’t move too fast, especially for your first time. Fuck, Rayna, if only you knew how long I’d been wanting to make you mine.”

“You don’t need self-control,” Rayna insists, leaning up so her breath skims across my lips. “I want to be yours. Make me yours, please, Rhett, any way you want.”

Before the last word has even left her lips, I have Rayna in my arms. She wraps her legs around me instinctively, and I cup her ass, holding her close, as our lips crash together again. Luckily, her apartment is small, and it’s pretty obvious which room is

her bedroom, so I manage to storm into her room without pausing in kissing her.

Unwilling to let her go, I lay her on the bed on her back and follow her so I'm leaning over her, boxing her in on the mattress. Her sheets are all rumpled, and the room smells like her perfume, intoxicating me even more than I already am. Her robe is open completely now, and I help her shrug her arms out of it, leaving her in nothing but that lacy red lingerie that makes me salivate. I kiss down her throat, feeling her pulse thrum rapidly beneath my mouth, then to her chest, where her nipples are peaked and pleading through the thin material. I capture one in my mouth, playing with her as she mewls and pants beneath me.

I trail my hand up her thigh, feeling her soft skin beneath my touch until I reach her center. Lightly, I run my finger over where the lace barely covers her, feeling the material already growing damp with her need.

"I've dreamt about making you come for me, Rayna," I admit, slipping two fingers beneath the edge of her panties. She's so fucking soft all over, and my cock is painfully hard as my fingers tease her wet heat. "I can't wait a second longer to make those dreams a reality."

"Rhett!" she gasps as I ease one finger inside of her, going slowly so I don't hurt her.

"That's it, baby," I praise as I begin to fuck her, adding a second finger when she's ready, feeling her inner muscles squeeze me tight. God, she's going to feel fucking incredible around my cock. "Scream my name, just like that."

Her thighs shake as I circle her clit with my thumb, and her back arches up off the bed.

"Rhett," she pants, pupils wide as her eyes meet mine. "W-what..."

I grin down at her, lost in her reactions and the feel of her, a dream come true. “Don’t fight it, baby,” I encourage, keeping up the rhythm that has her walls fluttering around my fingers. “Give into the feeling. Give in to me.”

She follows my instructions so well, her mouth parting in a soft gasp as her orgasm takes over her. She tries to say my name, but pleasure steals the sound, and I want to replay this moment over and over because nothing has ever been this perfect in all my life.

I expect her to collapse into the bed as she comes back to reality, but instead, she sits bolt upright and reaches for me.

“More,” she pants, kissing me wildly. “Show me more.”

Her hand trails down my chest to where my cock is straining desperately against my pants, her palm cupping and rubbing me eagerly. I curse, wanting to give her everything she asks for.

“I’ll show you everything,” I promise, reaching up and unfastening the clip at the back of her lingerie set, allowing the top to fall away. Dragging the straps down her arms, the lace falls away, exposing her breasts fully. Beating me to it, Rayna stands, hooking her thumbs in the side of her panties and stepping out of them, leaving her utterly naked for me. “Fuck, baby, you’re so goddamn perfect.”

Wasting no time now, Rayna helps me undress, both of us stealing kisses and touches, driven wild by our mutual need. Rayna straddles me, her arms wrapped around my neck, letting me feel just how wet she is for me as her core slides over my cock.

“Please,” she whimpers. “Fuck me. I can’t wait any longer.”

I hold her hips, keeping her still as I line my cock up with her pussy, clenching my jaw to force myself to go slow enough that I don't hurt her. "It might hurt a little for a second," I warn her, stroking my thumb over the soft skin at the top of her thigh, "but I'll make it feel so good, baby, I promise."

"I know, I know," she rushes to say, wiggling in my hold. "Please, Rhett, just make me yours. Claim me."

"So wet and ready for me," I groan as I let her lower herself down, taking the first inch of me as I talk her through it. "This perfect little pussy has been waiting for me, hasn't it, baby? All mine, forever. Nobody else will ever touch you like this, will they?"

"Nobody but you," she agrees, her chest rising and falling with fast breaths as she takes all of me. I know the moment she feels that pinch of pain, her eyebrows drawing together tightly, and I'm quick to stroke her clit to ease her past it and focus her in on the pleasure instead. "Fuck," she moans. "I didn't know it would be like this..."

"You good, baby?" I check, fighting my instincts to fuck her into the mattress just long enough to check in with her.

"So good," she breathes, and I smile before I steal both our breaths away by kissing her deeply.

"Tell me you're mine, Rayna," I say as I flip us, laying her down on the bed and bracing myself over her once more, setting a steady rhythm with my thrusts. Rayna's eyes flutter, but she fights to keep them open and locked on mine.

"I'm yours, Rhett," she says through moans. "I always have been."

“That’s right,” I growl, driving our pleasure higher and higher. “Mine. Now. Forever. Always.”

We lose ourselves in each other until Rayna’s clawing at my back and crying out my name. I kiss her, fighting to hold back my own release until she finds hers, and with every whimper and moan and barely understandable plea that falls from her lips, bliss shoots up my spine.

“That’s it, baby. Come around my cock. Let me feel you,” I praise as she screams in pleasure, tightening around me as she comes. I curse, burying my face in the crook of her shoulder, kissing her neck as her orgasm triggers mine.

For a while, we both stay tangled together, breathing hard. Rayna’s eyes are closed and her face is flushed, her skin shiny with sweat, her hair wild around her face. She’s always stunning, but right now, sated and half-awake from pleasure, she’s a work of goddamn art. I try to memorize every detail of this moment, wanting to keep it stored forever.

When I’ve recovered enough from the best orgasm of my life to move, I ease away from her, murmuring reassurances that I’ll be right back when she protests sleepily. I find her linen cupboard and grab a small washcloth and wet it with warm water, returning to her to clean her up enough that she can relax in bed a little longer before we shower.

With her wrapped in my arms again, I pull a blanket over us, ensuring she doesn’t get cold since there’s no way I want her putting any clothes on. I’m nowhere near done with her yet.

“How are you feeling, baby girl?” I ask, smoothing her hair away from her face.

She prises her eyes open and blinks up at me, smiling sweetly. “So happy I’m

worried I'm dreaming this whole thing."

I can't help but grin at that. "It's all real, gorgeous," I assure her. "But I'm more than happy to prove it to you some more."

She laughs. "Let me recover first," she teases, and I dip my head to kiss her again.

We lie there, soaking in the moment a little while longer, before she says, "What do we do now, Rhett?"

I pause, a little confused by her question. Haven't I made it clear enough that she's mine now, forever? "What do you mean, baby?"

She chews her bottom lip, looking at me with something like nervousness in her eyes. "Well, I mean ... What do we do about my dad?"

Ah. I nod, understanding her concern now. I've been so caught up in her that I haven't even let myself consider how this will affect both our lives and how it'll affect Paul. God, he's going to kill me.

I can't bring myself to care. He'd have to literally murder me to get me to let go of Rayna now, and even then, I'm stubborn enough to come back as a ghost just to haunt her forever.

"Whatever happens, I'm not letting you go," I assure her, and she nods, cuddling in closer to soak up the comfort I'm offering.

Still, her question has my mind reeling.

Sooner or later, Paul's going to find out that we're together.

We need to have a plan before he does.

RAYNA

“O h my God, you slept with Rhett?!” Serena shrieks down the phone, and I wince from the sheer high-pitched volume of her excitement.

Serena’s the only person who knows how much I’ve pined for Rhett over the years, how deep my desire for him goes. As my best friend, I’ve confided everything in her, so I know her excitement for me is real. She wants me to be happy just as much as I do.

“I know, I know. I feel like it’s some sort of dream, except I’ve never had a dream that good,” I gush, telling her everything.

Serena squeals again, and I can practically see her doing her happy dance in her kitchen. I grin. “And my best friend is finally not a virgin!”

I laugh, my cheeks burning even though I’m alone in my apartment. Rhett had to leave yesterday, but he promised me he had something planned for today. It’s mid-morning, and I’m equal parts excited and nervous for what he’s got planned. I’ve never been on a proper date before, and the fact that the first one I’m going on is with the man of my dreams is incredible. My arm is a little red from pinching myself, but nope, this is all real.

“So, where’s he taking you today?” Serena asks as I finish applying my lipstick and fixing my hair.

“I don’t know. He just told me to be ready at eleven and let him take care of everything,” I tell her, butterflies fluttering in my stomach at the memory of his words.

“What a gentleman,” Serena croons, giggling like we’re school girls again. “Honestly, Ray, I’m so happy for you. You deserve to be this happy, truly.”

My heart’s all warm and fuzzy as I say, “Thank you, Serena. I’ll text you later to tell you how it goes, yeah?”

“I can’t wait! Have fun!” she sing-songs before we hang up, just in time for a knock on my door.

I scramble to shove my feet into a pair of cute but comfortable flats, aiming for a cute but casual vibe since it’s a Sunday morning, but still wanting to be dressed up enough to look nice for Rhett. Even though I just saw him yesterday, I can’t contain my excitement as I rush to answer the door, a huge grin on my face that only grows wider when I yank the door open and see him on the other side.

“Good morning, gorgeous,” he says, and my heart thunks rapidly in my chest.

“Morning,” I answer, a bit breathless with excitement. The second I see him, everything we did yesterday comes flooding back to the forefront of my mind, and my whole body lights up.

“You ready?” he asks, holding out his hand for me to take. I nod, slipping my hand in his, pausing to lock the door behind us before he leads me out to his car. He opens the door for me, waiting for me to get myself settled in the passenger seat before closing it and slipping into the driver's side.

I can’t focus on how fancy his car is or how it smells like his cologne and my body’s

response to that because Rhett drives the short distance with one hand on the wheel and the other on my thigh. The casual yet intimate touch is so consuming that it takes me a minute to realize when we get to our destination, and I startle a little when Rhett moves and comes to open my door for me again.

Rhett's brought me to a cute brunch spot downtown, and the smell of coffee and pastries warms me as we enter. We're quickly shown to a corner booth with a cute floral arrangement in the center of the table, and I slide onto the leather seat across from Rhett, our legs touching beneath the table as though neither of us can bear not to be touching, for even a second.

"Everything looks so good," I say as I look over the menu, drooling over the pancake stacks and selection of pastries available. I've always had a sweet tooth, after all.

"It does indeed," Rhett agrees, the tone of his voice making me look up to find him staring directly at me, not at the menu.

I blush, squirming and trying to remind myself of the importance of eating breakfast to avoid just grabbing his hand and rushing us out of here so he can eat me instead. My thoughts must be written all over my face because he chuckles. "Later, baby. Let me feed you first."

I finally decide on a strawberry and white chocolate pancake stack, with a fruit smoothie to drink, and Rhett and I chat about life until the waitress brings our order over. I've known Rhett for years, but I've never allowed myself to get close to him, to truly listen to him speak about his passions and career, because it was too painful to know I could never have him. But now, I listen eagerly, devouring all the information he gives me, wanting to know everything I can about the man I've claimed as my own.

The pancakes are the best I've ever had, and so is the company. When the loud

ringing of a phone interrupts our happy bubble, I jump so hard that some of my smoothie spills over the rim of the glass.

Rhett gives me an apologetic look, pulling out his phone to check who's calling. His eyes widen, and he curses under his breath.

"Sorry, baby, I need to take this. I'll only be a moment," he explains, and I nod, trying to be understanding but also a little worried as to who put that look on his face.

He stands and moves to take the call outside, and I focus on my food, savoring my meal. Unfortunately, the universe seems to have decided I'm not allowed a second of peace because a new voice interrupts me mid-bite.

"What's a pretty girl like you doing with an old guy like that?" a male voice asks, tone teasing and making my hair stand on end. I bristle, swallowing thickly, and turn to find a man from the table beside us leaning over to speak to me. He's around my age, if I had to guess, and well-built. I'm sure he'd be considered handsome by anyone else, but to me, he looks as bland as the cereal I usually eat for breakfast before work.

"Excuse me?" I ask, my tone sharp.

"Oh come on, you know what I mean," the man leers. "What's the deal? Is he, like, your sugar daddy or something?"

I gape at the stranger, wondering where the hell he got the audacity to say such a thing. "What?! No!"

The man just smirks. "That's a shame, you deserve to be spoiled. I could treat you right, you know..."

My delicious food turns to lead in my stomach as the man tries to flirt with me, insulting Rhett as he does. Now I'm mad for multiple reasons because how dare he try to ruin my pancakes and my relationship?!

"I'm not interested," I snipe, hoping he'll leave me alone.

"Give me a chance," he pushes, leaning closer and nearly knocking his glass of water to the floor. "I'll treat you so good?—"

I can't help but laugh, shaking my head at him. "You're delusional," I inform him, furious. "You could never, in a million years or in your wildest dreams, ever treat me as good as Rhett does. How many ways do I have to tell you? I. Am. Not. Interested!"

The man's face morphs from gross leering to outright rage. His cheeks redden, and his thick brows draw together as his mouth sets in a hard line. A beat of panic rings in my chest, realizing I've just antagonized an unknown man when I'm alone and know approximately zero self-defense.

Just great!

"What did you just say?" the man seethes as he pushes to his feet. I lean back in my booth, trying to put distance between us. "How dare you! You bitch?—"

"What did you just call her?" a cold yet comforting voice asks. My heart leaps with relief as Rhett comes into view, standing protectively between me and the stranger.

I peer around Rhett's arm, thoroughly enjoying the way the other man's face pales. "Hey, look, it wasn't?—"

"Do you want to repeat what you just said?" Rhett asks, his tone dark and menacing. I can't deny the fact that it's heating my blood, watching him stand up for me like this.

It's as if every time I think I can't get more attracted to him, he proves me wrong.

"I...I..." the man stammers, clearly not in control of the situation anymore.

"I suggest you stop talking to or even looking in the direction of my girl," Rhett presses, and I swear I'd have swooned if I wasn't already sitting down.

The other man musters enough bravado to snark back, "Oh yeah? Or what?"

I can hear the challenging grin in Rhett's voice when he answers, "Or else you'll see just how much this old man can do." He rolls up his sleeve, making the muscles in his arm flex. My mouth waters and I can't wait to get out of here to show him my gratitude.

The other man sputters, backing away while muttering under his breath, trying to save face with empty threats but too much of a coward to say them to Rhett's face. When he's gone, Rhett turns to me, immediately pulling me into his arms.

"Are you okay, baby?" he asks, concern filling his voice.

I sigh against his chest, savoring the feeling of his strong arms wrapped around me. "I'm fine," I promise him. "He was just an asshole, but he didn't hurt me or anything."

Despite my assurances, Rhett looks ready to chase after the man and give him another talking to with his fists, so I try to de-escalate the situation.

"Who called you?" I ask as we sit back down to finish our food. My pancakes have gone a little cold, but they're still delicious.

Rhett grimaces, running his hand through his hair. "Your dad."

I wince, understanding Rhett's reaction to seeing the caller ID now.

"Dare I ask why?" I press, mildly terrified my dad has somehow figured out what happened between his best friend and me yesterday.

"He wanted to check that I was all right after I left our Friday night drinks in a rush," Rhett explains.

"Oh God," I groan, resting my head in my hands and sighing. "What did you say? I'm assuming you didn't tell him it's because I got drunk and sent you nudes?"

Rhett chokes on his sip of water, laughing. "No, weirdly enough, I did not tell him that," he chuckles. "I made up some excuse about feeling ill, and he bought it, I think. But I've known that man for years, baby, and I don't think we can keep up the lies without him knowing something's going on."

"You're right," I agree, knowing what my father's like. He cares about his people and has always been annoyingly astute when it comes to sniffing out lies, which meant my attempts at sneaking out to go to parties with Serena when we were teenagers were never successful. "But how the hell are we supposed to tell him? 'Hey Dad, you know your best friend, Rhett? Yeah, we're together now. Surprise!'"

Rhett reaches across the table, taking my hand and squeezing. "Not exactly like that," he says, humor in his warm voice. "But I'm all in with this, baby, and I'm not ashamed of what we share."

I nod, utterly in agreement. "Me, too. It'll all be fine, right?"

Rhett nods, and I know that whatever happens and however my dad reacts, I'll still have Rhett by my side.

With both of our breakfasts finished, Rhett pays, and we head out. Neither of us wants to leave each other yet, so instead of driving me home, Rhett takes me back to his.

“This place makes my apartment look like a cupboard!” I laugh as we pull up to his house. It’s on the outskirts of the city, in a nice neighborhood filled with other houses just as beautiful as his. It’s a two-story red brick house that could fit my apartment inside of it probably about ten times. It reminds me of where I grew up, though, and for a second, I picture us both here, kids running around our feet and maybe even a crazy dog joining in the chaos. The perfect vision of our future stops me in my tracks, and I jolt when Rhett’s hand strokes my back.

“You okay, baby?” he asks, wrapping his arm around my waist as we walk up the path to his door.

“Yeah, better than ever,” I say, smiling wildly as excitement and love bubbles in my chest. Love. That’s what this is, isn’t it? I can’t deny it. I’ve been in love with Rhett for years, and now that we’re actually together, the feeling is overwhelming.

I don’t even take a second to look around his house when we enter, needing to be closer to Rhett like I need air. I practically pounce on him as soon as the door closes, kissing him deeply.

His arms wrap around me immediately, pulling me closer as his tongue sweeps against mine. I melt against him, an ache quickly building between my legs that only he can help.

We don’t make it to the bedroom. Instead, he walks me backward into what must be his lounge, and when the backs of my legs hit the sofa, he eases me down onto the soft cushions. I expect him to follow me and cover my body with his, but instead, he kneels on the floor, pushing my knees apart to make space for himself between my

thighs.

“What are you doing?” I ask, looking down at him as he runs his hands up my thighs, pushing my skirt up to reveal my panties. I’ve already ordered more cute lingerie sets online because my collection of cute underwear is sorely lacking, given that nobody was ever seeing them before. Now, though, I have a reason to wear them, and I can’t wait to find out what set makes him lose his mind the most.

Rhett’s fingers slip into the sides of the underwear, and I lift my hips to help him slide them off me. “Looking at what’s mine,” he says, voice thick with desire. I shudder, anticipation building low in my stomach.

“Oh,” I whisper, not knowing what else to say as he leans closer to my center. It’s a new feeling, being on display like this, but I don’t feel self-conscious like I thought I might. Rhett has made me feel so treasured, proved how much he wants me, that covering myself doesn’t even come to mind.

“Oh!” I gasp as he kisses my inner thigh, then trails soft, open-mouthed kisses up to where I’m desperate for him. His tongue sweeps through my folds, the sensation new and utterly addictive, and the air rushes from my lungs.

“So fucking sweet, baby,” Rhett murmurs, looking up at me with so much heat in his gaze, I flush red hot.

“Rhett,” I breathe, barely able to speak as he kisses me there again, this time tracing his tongue over my clit and sending bolts of bliss through me. My head hits the back of the sofa as pleasure makes me limp, and Rhett fucks me with his tongue, doing things to me I didn’t know were possible. I feel like I’m floating, burning up, and ready to explode with absolute pleasure as Rhett makes it his mission to make me lose my mind.

“Mine to touch, mine to taste, mine to fuck,” Rhett says against my flesh, his words only driving me higher. “Come all over my tongue like the good girl you are, Rayna.”

I can’t help but obey him, the combination of his rough, need-filled demand and the way he’s eating me out pushing me quickly over the edge. I cry out his name as pleasure overwhelms me, my thighs tightening around his face. I worry briefly that I’m hurting him, but I’m too lost in the feeling of bliss to do anything about it.

I’m panting heavily when the orgasm wanes, and I crack my eyes open to find Rhett grinning and licking me off his lips.

“Did I hurt you?” I ask.

Rhett laughs. “Baby, you could suffocate me with your thighs, and I’d say thank you for it,” he tells me, and just like that, my need for him is reignited.

I want to make him feel the way he just made me feel, and though I have no idea what I’m doing, I’ve always been a pretty quick learner. When Rhett stands, I shuffle forward and reach for the zipper on his pants.

“What are you doing, baby?” he asks, amusement and lust coating the words.

I grin, trying to muster some confidence, as he helps me undress him, stepping out of his pants and underwear and tugging his shirt off. For a second, I forget his question, too busy drinking in the sight of him. Suddenly, my plan feels a lot less intimidating as my mouth waters over the sight of his muscles and the veins flexing on his arms when he reaches for me, tucking my hair behind my ears.

“Returning the favor,” I finally answer, my eyes dropping to his cock, hard and ready. Thankfully, with him standing and me sitting on the edge of the sofa, I’m at the perfect height for this.

“There’s no press—” Rhett begins to say, but I cut him short by leaning forward and taking him in my mouth. The groan he makes as I sweep my tongue over him sends a burning hot thrill through me that spurs me on. His hands fly to my hair, and I moan as he tugs a little at the strands. “Fuck, baby,” he grunts as I take him deeper, learning what he likes.

Rhett guides me, helping me set a rhythm as I bob my head on his length, gagging a little when he hits the back of my throat.

“God, Rayna, you look so fucking pretty swallowing my cock like that,” he groans, and I whimper around him, doubling my efforts. “That’s it, such a good fucking girl. You feel fucking incredible, baby.”

All his praise and encouragement light me up inside, and I feel like I could float with how satisfied it makes me feel.

“Fuck, just like that,” he groans as I hollow my cheeks around him. “I’m gonna come, baby.”

I swallow, savoring the way he cups my face and stares down at me with so much heat in his eyes as he comes undone. I let him catch his breath, licking my lips to make sure I got every drop.

“Was that okay?” I ask after a second, giving him a smile. “I’ve never done that before.”

Rhett shakes his head at me. “Okay? Baby, you’re fucking perfect,” he reassures me, making me grin wider. He leans down and kisses me, and I sigh, melting against him, absolutely certain that this man is the one I’m meant to spend forever with.

RHETT

It's barely been a week since Rayna and I officially got together, and we haven't been able to keep our hands off each other since. It's like we're making up for lost time, both of us drawn to each other in a primal way. There's no doubt in my mind that she's the girl for me, the one I'll spend forever with, the one I'll never let go. Rayna is everything I've ever wanted, and I want to spend as much time with her as possible. Perhaps that would be weird to others, but when you've spent as much time wanting each other as we have, nothing feels more natural than this.

"I have something to show you," Rayna calls out from the bathroom.

I turn my head just in time to see her walking out to the living room, looking like a goddamn dream. She's dressed in white lingerie, a strappy bodysuit with see-through lace that's equally as angelic as it is devilish. Instantly, my blood heats for her, and my cock hardens.

"God, baby, you're fucking stunning," I groan, holding my arms out so she can step closer to me. Wrapping my arms around her, I tug her down so she's straddling my lap. The top of the bodysuit pushes her breasts up, and I dip my head, unable to resist giving them the attention they deserve.

"Do you like it?" she pants, her fingers running through my hair as I tease her nipple with my teeth through the lace. "I figure I have a reason now to buy pretty underwear, so I went shopping."

“You’d look incredible in anything,” I tell her, “but yes, I fucking love it. You’re so gorgeous.”

“I’m gonna get an ego if you keep showering me with compliments,” Rayna laughs, arching her back as I stroke my hand down her stomach.

“Fuck,” I curse as I realize the bodysuit is crotchless, leaving her exposed and accessible. “I need you, baby.”

“Yes,” she pants, nodding eagerly.

She’s already wet for me, and I can’t resist fucking her with my fingers as I use my other hand to free my cock from my jeans. I’m too caught up in her to bother undressing fully, needing her too fast to risk moving her even an inch away from me.

“Rhett,” Rayna moans as I slip my fingers out of her and replace them with my cock, helping her sink down on me as her thighs shake. “You feel so good.”

The way her voice shakes with desire is like an addictive drug, and I want more of it. She’s heaven around my cock, and I know for a fact nothing in this world will ever feel as good as being inside my girl like this.

I wrap my hands around her waist, helping her move and find her rhythm. She rocks on top of me, her hands braced on my shoulders and her head falling back as her breaths come fast and heavy.

I kiss her neck, groaning against her soft skin, needing to feel her fall apart around me. I fit one hand between us, pressing my thumb against her clit so with every movement of her hips, she grinds against me.

“Rhett!” she cries out, her nails digging into my shoulders and back through my shirt

as she clings to me.

I nip the thrumming pulse point on her throat with my teeth, not enough to hurt her, just enough to add to the sensations. She's so reactive, and finding more ways to send her spiraling is my favorite hobby.

Just as Rayna begins to fall apart around me, dragging me over the edge with her, a loud knock rattles my front door. We both freeze, panting and flushed, as another knock comes, more insistent this time.

"Oi, Rhett. I know you're in there, mate!" a very familiar voice calls out.

"Fuck!" Rayna curses under her breath, scrambling off me frantically.

I shoot to my feet, suddenly very thankful I didn't get undressed fully, yanking my pants back up as Rayna rushes out of the room. I hear the sound of the bathroom door closing and the lock sliding into place just as Paul shouts through the door, "I'll just let myself in with the spare key if you're too lazy to come open the door!"

I throw myself in the direction of the front door, yanking it open but standing in the doorway so he can't come in. "Don't do that," I say, realizing too late how incriminating that sounds and how out of breath I am. I clear my throat and run my hand through my undoubtedly messy hair, trying to regain some composure.

Paul looks at me with confusion and suspicion all over his face. I force myself to meet his eyes, as though I wasn't just inside his daughter two minutes ago. God, this is awkward.

"What's wrong with you?" Paul asks, craning his head to peer over my shoulder with narrowed eyes. He goes to step forward for me to let him in, but I stand firm, refusing to move.

“Uh, nothing,” I lie, cursing myself for not being a better liar in the one moment it matters most.

“Is there a body or something on your couch you don’t want me to see?” he jokes, and honestly, that might be easier to explain than the truth.

“No bodies,” I say, trying to laugh.

Paul casts his gaze over me, and then his eyes widen almost comically. “Rhett Collins, do you have a girl over?”

“Yes,” I say, grateful to be able to tell a little bit of the truth. “Yeah, I have a girl over.”

Bet you can’t guess who?

“Why didn’t you just say that?!” Paul laughs, slapping me on the shoulder as his suspicion turns into a huge grin. “Fucking finally, mate. It’s about time!”

I force myself to smile back, trying to relax my posture but failing miserably. Lying to my best friend is not something I’m accustomed to, and it feels like shit. But I care about Rayna far too much to blurt our secret out to her father like this. She matters more than anything or anyone else in my life.

I love her, and I will never do anything to jeopardize how safe she feels with me.

“Yeah, yeah,” I snark back, rolling my eyes at him. “You’re kind of ruining the mood, though.”

Paul laughs again, and the guilt doubles. “Fair enough,” he agrees, backing up as though in surrender. “We on for Friday, yeah?”

“As always,” I agree, giving him a wave as he turns to go to give me and my girl privacy.

The second he’s out of sight, I close the front door and triple-check the locks.

“He’s gone, baby!” I call out, giving Rayna the all-clear.

She appears from the bathroom, wrapped in a towel to cover her lingerie, her eyes wide like a deer in headlights. I walk up to her, wrapping her in my arms, offering her comfort while needing it in return. The second she’s in my arms, the stress melts away from my body a little, making everything feel better.

“Fuck that was like something out of a horror movie,” Rayna murmurs, shaking her head as she pulls back a little to look up at me.

I laugh, for real this time, and drop a kiss on her lips, unable to resist her. “I know, I thought I was gonna have a heart attack,” I admit, leading Rayna over to the recliner and pulling her onto my lap.

“We nearly got caught,” she breathes, cuddling up to me.

“We did,” I echo, blowing out a breath. “Are you okay?”

Rayna nods, chewing her bottom lip. “Yeah, I’m alright, but we need to tell him soon. I can’t go through that panic anymore.”

I nod, knowing she’s right. “We’re meeting up as usual on Friday. What if you come with me, and we tell him then?” I suggest.

“Let’s do that,” Rayna nods, her shoulders relaxing a little. “It’ll all work out, right?”

I hold her close, kissing her as I promise, “Yeah, baby, everything will work out just fine.”

The bar is busier than usual at this time when Rayna and I walk in. Immediately, I spot Paul in his usual place and give Rayna a reassuring smile as we make our way through the tables towards the bar. Both of us know that this is the right thing to do, and we’re both in agreement that we don’t want to keep hiding our love, but that doesn’t mean we’re not both nervous as fuck for what’s about to happen.

“Got your usual,” Paul greets as we get closer, sliding a drink towards me. I don’t sit, though, instead standing by Rayna, who clearly is even more nervous than me from the way she’s half hiding behind me. I clear my throat, mustering courage, and Paul frowns. “What’s going on?”

Rip the band-aid off, Rhett , I tell myself, meeting my best friend’s eyes. “I thought you should meet the woman I’m in love with,” I say as matter-of-factly as possible.

Paul looks around comically. “Well, where is she?” he asks happily before his eyes land on his daughter. “Oh, hi darling, what are you doing here? Lovely to see you but you didn’t text me saying you were coming!”

I glance at Rayna, her cheeks bright pink and her gaze flicking from me to her dad over and over. I take her hand, encouraging her to lean against me, entwining our fingers and squeezing her hand, hoping to reassure her.

For a long, drawn-out moment, nobody says anything. Paul blinks at us, his gaze dropping to our hands, taking in how his daughter leans against me in a way that’s far more than just friendly. His eyes widen, and he takes a long gulp of his drink, coughing a little as he sets the glass down.

Before he can say anything, Rayna starts rambling. Pride sweeps through me as she

defends herself and us, standing up to her dad.

“We didn’t want to keep hiding it anymore. I love Rhett, Dad, and he treats me better than I ever imagined,” she rushes out, clearly nervous. “This isn’t just a fling or whatever you’re probably thinking. We’re really committed to each other. I want you to be happy for us and give us your blessing and all but, to be honest, Dad, even if you disapprove, it won’t change anything between Rhett and me. I’m his, he’s mine, and that’s that?—”

“Woah, woah, woah,” Paul interrupts, trying to calm his daughter down. “Just take a breath, darling. I’m just shocked, that’s all. I’m not mad.”

“Oh,” Rayna breathes, relaxing a little. Relief sweeps through me at the fact Paul isn’t telling me to meet him outside or trying to stop me from seeing his daughter. Not that any of his efforts would work, but it would suck to lose my best friend.

“I mean, there’s nobody in the world I trust more than Rhett,” Paul continues, looking between us. “And, yes, this” —he gestures to my arms around Rayna— “is going to take some serious getting used to, but you have my support as long as you’re happy.”

“Really?” Rayna checks, her eyes wide and hope filling her voice.

“Really,” Paul promises, opening his arms to give his daughter a reassuring hug. He meets my gaze, holding my eyes as he says, “And I don’t think I need to tell you to make sure you never ever hurt my little girl, do I?”

I can’t help but chuckle at that. The idea of doing anything to hurt or upset Rayna is absolutely insane to me. “No, you don’t,” I agree, giving him a grateful smile.

Rayna steps away from her dad, and Paul pats me on the shoulder, showing us that he truly means what he said.

“Now, let’s get you a drink,” Paul declares, waving down the bartender.

Rayna sits with us, and the three of us drink and chat for hours, learning to settle into this new normal. I’ve never been happier, and the plans I have for our future are brighter than ever.

6

RAYNA

“Y ou absolutely need that! It would look so freaking good on you!” Serena gushes, pulling a cute red crop top off the rack.

I laugh, her enthusiasm for shopping is truly contagious. “I thought we were done?” I tease her, earning myself a roll of her eyes.

“Last thing!” she promises. “It’s your twenty-fourth birthday. You deserve to be spoiled.”

I know Serena well enough to know there’s no point in arguing, so I let her buy me the top that, admittedly, will compliment my coloring really well, and add it to our giant pile of bags before we leave the mall. We’ve been out shopping all day and grabbing coffee and treats from the food court when we need a break, and it’s been the best way to spend my birthday with my best friend. I’m already trying to figure out how to add all these new editions to my half of Rhett’s and my shared wardrobe. Maybe it’s time to subtly move his clothes to a smaller section...

Serena plays our favorite artist’s newest album as she drives me home, and we sing at the top of our lungs, laughing our heads off when we can’t hit the high notes. She helps me carry the bags into the hallway of the house Rhett and I share, and then gives me a kiss on the cheek and says, “Have fun!”

Confused, I ask her what she means, but she’s already skipping out of my house and

to her car, laughing to herself about whatever plans I'm clearly in the dark about. I wave her off and then realize that Rhett's car is gone from the driveway.

"That's weird," I murmur to myself as I walk through the house, searching for my boyfriend even though it's clear he's not here. If he were, he'd have already carried all my shopping for me like the gentleman he is. We moved in together a month or so ago, and it's been like living in a dream ever since. He truly treats me like a total princess, and I love him so much for it.

I reach the bedroom, and while I don't find Rhett, I do find a surprise laid out for me on the bed. I squeal in excitement, rushing over to the new dress and shoes that have been laid out for me. Not only that, there's a box of new makeup from my favorite brands, and I could cry over just how well this man knows me.

Truly, how did I get so lucky?

"Oh my God..." I whisper as I pick up the dress, loving the way it shimmers in the late afternoon sunlight streaming in through the windows. It's a sky blue color, short enough to show off my legs without showing my ass, with thin straps and a scooped neckline. It's beautiful and will go perfectly with the silver, red-bottomed heels he's picked to go with it.

Noticing a piece of paper tucked under the shoebox, I set down the dress and snatch it up.

Get ready and meet me at La Luna at seven.

There are details of the time a car will come to pick me up, too, and my heart swells with so much love I can't contain it. I do a little happy dance, grinning from ear to ear. Time and time again, Rhett has proven just how much I mean to him and how much he means it when he says he's going to take care of me, but every time, it

makes me well up with adoration. I can't wait to see what he has planned, and the anticipation has me knowing this will be the best birthday of my life, no matter what his plans are.

I take my time playing with my new makeup, settling on a pretty pink sparkly eyeshadow and a darker pink lip to complement, thinking about how I need to recommend my new blush to Serena because it would suit her, too.

I keep an eye on the time to make sure I'm not late for the car, but take a second to admire my outfit in the mirror. Of course, the dress and shoes fit me like a glove. Rhett really has thought of everything.

Just like he said in his note, a car is waiting for me outside at twenty minutes to seven, bang on time. I greet the driver as I slide in, making small talk on the way to the venue.

I haven't been to La Luna before, but I know it's a fancy restaurant and event space in the city. I admire the classy, luxurious style of the place as I walk up to the entrance, surprised when someone opens the door for me and greets me by name.

How does he know who I am?

I don't get time to ask that question, though, because I'm immediately shown to a private room, escorted like royalty or something.

My jaw drops as I walk in.

It's like something out of the romance movies Serena and I binge during our girls' nights.

"Surprise!" the gathering of my friends and family call out as I enter. They line up on

either side of the room to make a pathway to the huge French doors at the back, which open wide and lead to a beautiful garden beyond.

I can barely see through a mist of tears, overwhelmed by the fact Rhett's thrown me a surprise party with all my favorite people here.

"Go on outside, darling. You'll want to see this," my dad whispers to me, coming up on my left and giving me a nudge with his arm to start me forward again.

I blink to clear my vision, walking as steadily as I can down the middle of the guests, smiling at everyone as I go. When I step outside, I realize why my dad said what he said.

Rhett is waiting for me in front of a flower patch, as handsome as ever in his fitted suit. I'm so caught up in him that it takes me a minute to see the huge, lit-up sign behind him that spells out:

Will You Marry Me?

"Oh my God," I breathe, half a second away from pinching myself to make sure this is actually real. "Am I dreaming?"

Rhett chuckles, stepping towards me to take my hands in his, pulling me close. "This is very real, baby," he assures me, placing a soft kiss on my lips before he drops down to one knee.

"Rhett," I blubber, already a mess despite the fact he hasn't asked the question yet. "I love you so much."

He grins up at me. "I love you endlessly, Rayna," he says back. "I love your beauty, inside and out, your passion and spark, your confidence and your determination. You

are incredible, and I am so damn lucky to call you mine.”

I can feel our family and friends gathered behind me, but in this moment, the world disappears until nothing exists but Rhett and me. He lets go of my hand to open a ring box, the diamond inside sparkling in the orange glow of the sunset around us.

“Rayna Baker, will you marry me?” Rhett asks, and I can’t hold back my happy tears a second longer.

“Of course, yes, yes, yes!” I shout, throwing myself at him before he can even attempt to put the ring on my finger.

He stands, grabs me in his arms, and spins me around. The cheering of our family and friends fills the air around us, lifting my spirits even higher as Rhett and I kiss.

“I love you so much, baby,” Rhett repeats against my lips, and I smile so wide our teeth click together, making me laugh.

“I love you,” I whisper back, my voice all hoarse from my happy crying.

“Do you want to put the ring on now?” he asks, grinning just as wide as I am.

I nod eagerly as he sets me down, and gasp when I get my first good look at the ring. It’s perfect, classy but unique, the diamonds making me drool. He slides it onto my ring finger, and just like the dress and the man, it’s the perfect fit.

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RHETT

Two Years Later

“Papa!” Roman shouts out as Paul comes through the front door, running down the hallway in his little footie pajamas right into his grandad’s arms. Paul laughs as he scoops him up, spinning him around as he giggles wildly, the sound infectious.

“You’re supposed to be tired at this time, little man,” I tease, shaking my head lovingly as my one-and-a-half-year-old son ignores me in favor of trying to yank Paul’s glasses off his face.

“Don’t let him fool you. He’s been yawning for the past twenty minutes,” Rayna says as she strolls into the hallway from our bedroom, putting her earrings in as she goes.

I have to bite my tongue so I don’t make a comment about how edible she looks in that slinky black dress and sparkly heels, given that her dad’s right there. Paul and I are still best friends—hell, he was the best man at our wedding—but I think I might be pushing it if I tell my wife how hot she looks right in front of him.

“He can chill on the couch and watch the game rerun with me until he falls asleep,” Paul decides, making me chuckle and Rayna roll her eyes.

“Be good for Papa,” Rayna tells Roman, giving him a cuddle and kiss on the cheek. She goes to hand him back to Paul, but I swoop in and snatch him up, making him giggle as I kiss his chubby cheeks. Being a dad is truly one of the most amazing things that has ever happened to me, and seeing Rayna grow into the amazing mother

she is only makes me love her even more. There are no words for how grateful I am to her for making us a family.

When we're finally finished saying goodbye to our son, Rayna and I head out. Despite the fact that I get behind the wheel, I have no idea where exactly we're going. Since it's my birthday, Rayna's set up our plans for the evening, refusing to tell me anything except that she has a special surprise. It's not in my nature to give up control like this, but she's excited about it, and I can't help but be curious about what the surprise is.

"You gonna tell me where we're going, or are we going to sit in the drive all night?" I ask, teasing her.

She grins, practically bouncing in the passenger seat with excitement. "Fine, fine," she relents, finally telling me the name of one of our favorite restaurants.

The drive there is short, and no amount of questions is getting Rayna to budge on whatever has her so excited. My suspicions and curiosity are through the roof by the time we get shown to our table, and the wide grin my wife is giving me isn't helping.

"You look gorgeous, baby," I tell her, admiring her in the low lighting.

"You're not too bad yourself," she says back, winking at me. I laugh, so in love with her it's overwhelming. "Ooh, they've added new starters since last time!"

We order our food, multiple dishes to share so Rayna can try a bit of everything as always, and despite how delicious it all is, it's clear Rayna's a little distracted the whole time.

Finally, just after we finish our main meal and order dessert, I can't take the anticipation anymore.

“All right, baby. Spill,” I say, pinning my wife with a look. “What’s going on?”

Rayna shifts in her seat, biting her bottom lip. “I was trying to wait until after we were done to tell you,” she says, unable to hide her smile from me. “But I can’t wait anymore.” She reaches for her bag, pulling out a present wrapped in paper that I distinctly remember being used for Roman’s first birthday, one with cartoon dogs all over it. She catches me laughing and grins. “I didn’t have time to grab new wrapping paper!”

“God, I love you,” I chuckle, taking the present as she holds it out to me.

“Yeah, yeah. I love you, too. Now open it!” she demands, bouncing in her seat as her eyes light up.

Not one to deny my wife what she wants, I dutifully open up my gift. Inside is a little babygrow, and I hold it up to read the words My Daddy Loves Me on the front.

Confused, I look at Rayna and joke, “I don’t think Rome is going to fit into this anymore.”

“You’re right, Roman won’t,” she agrees, her words buoyed by joy. “But his little brother or sister will.”

“Are you serious?” I ask, shocked and absolutely thrilled at the same time.

Rayna nods, bringing up a picture on her phone that shows multiple positive pregnancy tests. “I only found out a few days ago. I couldn’t wait to tell you.”

Uncaring of the fact that other people’s eyes are on us, I shoot to my feet and grab my wife, hugging her tightly. “This is amazing, baby,” I murmur as I kiss her deeply.

“Are you ready for even more chaos in nine months?” she laughs, looking up at me with sparkling eyes.

“Bring it on,” I reply, unbelievably excited for what’s to come.

There’s nothing I love more than my wife and the family we’re creating, and I can’t wait to grow it together.

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RAYNA

Five Years Later

If you'd told me ten years ago that Rhett and I would be celebrating our seventh wedding anniversary on holiday in the Caribbean with two, nearly three, kids in tow, past me probably would have fainted in excitement. Sometimes, I still can't believe this is my life, a life I dreamed of but never thought I could have.

Now, as I watch Rhett try to wrangle our six-year-old and four-year-old into putting sunscreen on, I'm filled with total and utter gratitude and love. Oh, and amusement.

Roman squeals and runs away, slippery with sunscreen and fueled by childhood cheekiness. His little brother tries to follow suit, but Rhett is ahead of him this time, wrapping both arms around Ryder and picking him up, leaving him nowhere to run. Ryder shrieks, laughing loudly as Rhett tickles him, managing to use the distraction to cover him in the sun protectant.

Roman, however, is now on the other side of the private villa garden, barefoot and sprinting, clearly having no plans of protecting his skin from the hot sun.

"Do you want some help?" I ask from my lounge chair, unable to keep the laughter out of my voice.

Rhett releases Ryder, who goes running off after his big brother, and turns to me with a huge grin on his face. My heart skips a beat at the sight of him, so damn handsome and absolutely made for fatherhood.

“No, baby. You’re already taking care of one kid. Let me get the others,” he says, walking over to kiss me and then kiss my belly. “I’ll get the boys. You just keep growing our little girl, yeah?”

I’m not about to argue with that plan, so I just kiss him again, reveling in how spoiled he makes me feel. He made a promise years ago to take care of me and treat me like a princess, and he’s done just that every single day since. The luxury hotel villa we’re staying in just shows one side of it, but the way he looks after our children and makes sure none of us want for anything is what fills my heart with adoration for him.

I watch as Rhett jogs over to where the boys are hiding and calls out, “I bet I can hug Mommy before Roman and Ryder can!”

Instantly, our two giggly little boys rush out of their hiding place, never able to turn down a competition. Though I know they get that competitive streak from Rhett, he will always let them win, even when it pains him.

I push myself up to sit, holding my arms out as my family runs into them. My boys practically tackle their little sister in my belly with how eager they are, and Rhett wraps his arms around us all, encasing us in love. The baby kicks wildly, making Ryder giggle where he’s pressed against my bump.

“Got you!” Rhett shouts in victory as he scoops Roman up, finishing getting his sunscreen on while I push myself to stand and get Ryder’s pool shoes on his feet.

Rhett is an incredible dad, and I can’t wait to see how our little girl has him wrapped around her pinky finger, just like the boys do. Sure, we’re going to be outnumbered soon, but I’m not worried about it at all. I know that when we’re together, there’s no challenge we can’t face, and that no matter how hard things might get, we’ll have each other to lean on.

“Pool time!” I call out, nearly getting bowled over by a very excited Roman rushing

to show us that he's memorized the way to the pool.

The second we get to the poolside and find the private cabana we've booked to guarantee some shade, the boys rush to the water. Rhett goes with them, getting splashed immediately as Ryder jumps into the pool, soaking his brother and dad.

I set our towels down then join them, floating under the warm sun with my family around me, knowing there's nowhere else in the world I'd rather be.

The End

Thanks for reading!