



The Boy (Steamy Shorts #18)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: I'm Jordan Bates.

Class clown, life of the party, and the guy who turns even the most boring lecture into a comedy special.

I can make anyone laugh. And I mean anyone. Even the meanest, coldest, crankiest people on the planet. It's what I do. It's who I am. I am THAT boy. Funny is my middle name. I bring the fun, the energy, the chaos, the laughter.

I've never once stopped to wonder what my life would be without it.

Until her.

Shes Jordyn Lee.

She's quiet, unassuming, always with her head down, trying to blend in the background. She comes to class wrapped in baggy pants and oversized shirts, her long, dark hair shielding her face like she's trying to disappear. And maybe she is. She definitely doesn't look like someone who craves attention. On the contrary, she seems to hate it.

While I'm out here making a scene or two, she's slipping through the cracks unconcerned. Unnoticed.

But not by me. No, ma'am.

The first time I see her, something inside me burns and comes alive. I don't know why. It doesn't make sense. Suddenly, all the noise, all the parties, all the laughter—it isn't enough.

She's the one. I want her to notice me. So, I try. I want to make her laugh. Desperately.

But will she ever see me?

Will she ever think I'm worthy of her?

A short page-tuning love story. College romance. Opposites attract. Grumpy/Sunshine.

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JORDAN

“J ordan—”

I don't let the professor finish. Instead, I raise a hand and yell, “Here!” at the same time someone does the same. Someone up front. Someone with black hair in a ponytail. Someone who whips her head to me, her dark eyes widening when her gaze meets mine.

“—Bates,” the professor finishes, her forehead furrowing as she darts her eyes from me to the other student.

Even though my heart feels like a drum and my whole world shifts from under me, muscle memory kicks in, and I respond the way I always do in these situations.

“That's me.” I raise a brow and smirk at the way also-Jordan reddens. “Unless you want to take my last name, which I'm totally game for.”

As expected, the room erupts with chuckles. Also-Jordan turns back to face the professor, her head down. Ah, I see. From the way she doesn't laugh or rise to my bait, she's probably one of the shy ones. Judging by the way she makes herself smaller and pulls out her scrunchie to cover her face with her hair, I think I'm right.

I normally tune out the professor when it comes to roll calls, but I wait for her name. I can't even look away from her, even though all I can see is the long, shiny mane

cascading down her back.

“Jordyn Lee.”

“Here.” Her voice is so low I almost don’t hear it.

The professor nods. “Now I understand the confusion.”

“And here my mother said I was special,” I can’t help but add. As if on cue, they laugh. Even the unflappable professor, who always looks like she’s perpetually sucking a lemon, purses her lips to hold back a smile. The first day of school, and I already own this class. Too predictable.

Jordyn doesn’t even glance my way. She hunches her back and furiously writes on her tablet. For some odd reason, that deflates me. I’m used to the high I get when my jokes land perfectly. And yet, having zero effect on Jordyn kind of hurts my ego.

No.

Not just my ego. Something else. The moment our eyes met, an unfamiliar ache of longing knotted in my chest. If I weren’t sitting, I would have fallen to my knees. Me. Everyone’s golden boy, falling on his knees. There’s a joke there somewhere; I just know it.

It’s my last year at university, and no one has ever affected me this way. What is it about her? Is it the way she glared? The small dimple in her forehead when she scrunched it as she stared at me? The wide-eyed innocence I can sense all the way from here?

I’m five rows behind her, but it’s like no one else exists in this classroom except for me and her.

How the hell did I spend three years on campus and not see her? Where was she all this time?

“The last time I checked, Mr. Bates, you should be looking at the board in front and not at Ms. Lee.” Our professor crosses her arms over her chest and peers at me over the rim of her thick glasses.

For the first time, I’m at a loss for words. I’m usually sharp and quick-witted, and I’m known for having an answer to everything. Not this time. My thoughts are all over the place. No, that’s a lie. The only thing occupying my head is Jordyn.

All I can say is, “Oh, sorry.”

She gives me a tip of her head and goes back to the lecture. This time, my eyes are glued to the whiteboard behind her, but the words keep swimming. My brain feels like sludge, and it takes an insane amount of effort not to swing my gaze back to Jordyn.

This kind of magnetic draw is foreign to me.

Half an hour later, the sharp sound of the bell barely registers as I shoot up from my seat. My well-worn sneakers squeak against the polished floor while I bolt down the narrow aisle, weaving between the other students filing out and nodding to those who call my name. I spot her easily enough. Front row, fifth seat from the left. She’s still packing her tablet, a notebook, and a pencil case with a calm that feels at odds with my racing heart.

She stiffens when she feels me standing in front of her desk, my hands braced as I catch my breath, but she doesn’t lift her face and deliberately ignores me. At the back of my mind, I’m aware I’m about to make an idiot of myself. Surprisingly, I don’t give a fuck.

“Hi, I’d like to formally introduce myself. I’m Jordan.” I extend a hand to her, and she looks at it with so much disgust, I briefly wonder if I accidentally brushed against shit. Like, literal shit.

“I know.” Jordyn gives me a tight nod before zipping her bag and slinging it over her shoulder.

Her canvas backpack, the kind I used to lug around back in high school, is frayed at the edges. It’s pale pink now, but maybe it was crimson red when she first bought it. It definitely looks like it’s gone through so much.

“You carry that every day? It’s gonna hurt your back.”

Finally, she looks at me and pins a gaze at the small notebook in my hand with a pen clipped at the cover. “Okay, thanks. I’ll keep that in mind.”

I shrug and smile, not missing her judgmental tone. “I like minimalism.”

“So I see.”

She starts to head to the door, so I rush to keep up. “Are you heading for lunch?”

With a deep sigh, she grips one backpack strap and turns to me. She’s standing one row higher, so we’re almost at eye level. “Listen, Jordan. I don’t know what you’re up to, but I’m not interested.”

“It’s just lunch.”

“No.” She shakes her head, a guarded look on her face. Up close like this, she’s even more beautiful than I initially thought. Long lashes, soft cheekbones, and plump, pink lips. “Watching someone eat from across the table makes me lose my appetite.”

At first, I assume she's joking. Dry humor kind of stuff. Then, I realize she's telling the truth. This is a woman who's not used to lying. The kind who wears her heart on her sleeve. "Huh. A misanthrope." She does a double take, and I grin. "You think I don't know big words? Listen, sweetheart. I am more than my good looks."

"You better be. You don't look much to begin with," she says in a deadpan tone.

I dramatically stagger back and rest a palm over my chest. "Ouch. You wound me. Will you make up for it with lunch?"

"No. Over my dead body." She gives me her back and begins speed-walking with her short legs. Cute. I catch up with her in three long strides.

"One thing about me, Jordyn. I am nothing if not persistent."

Then I fall back and watch her go. Jordyn is wearing a loose gray shirt and loose denim jeans. But even those clothes couldn't hide the generous tits, small waist, wide hips, and big ass. Thinking of how I want to explore what's underneath the unflattering outfit has my cock roaring to attention, and I dig my shoes into the floor to calm myself down. Wow. I just went from having a crush to feeling that pulsing need in my loins.

Jordyn, Jordyn, Jordyn. What have you done to me?

Someone smacks my back hard enough to propel me forward. I turn to see one of my best friends, Toby. Apparently, he either heard or saw me basically begging Jordyn. "What the hell was that about? You never do that shit." He motions to Jordyn, his eyebrow lifted in confusion.

I scrub a hand across my forehead and let out a deep breath. "I don't know, man. I don't know."

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2

JORDYN

The white-haired boy with the same name as me wasn't kidding when he said he was persistent.

For the next two weeks, he kept asking to have lunch with me. I would say no, and he would stand to his full height, at least a foot taller than me, give me a salute, and grin. "Tomorrow again, then."

Today, he's not in class. I hate that I notice. I can't even name who else I'm sharing this class with, maybe except for three people. And yet, I notice him.

Whether I want to admit it or not, it feels weird not seeing him. The shock of white hair that falls to the top of his ears, his ever-present aviator sunglasses on the back of his head. The mocking, playful green eyes that remind me of pine trees. The generous smiles that oddly make my stomach flip.

He was spot-on when he called me a misanthrope. I have nothing against people, and I don't necessarily hate them, but I don't like their presence either. I prefer being by myself.

Someone once asked me if I ever got lonely, and no, I never did. I like my own company. By myself, I'm rarely disappointed, and that way, I never get hurt, either.

It has worked for me so far ... until now.

As I stuff my iPad and notebook into my bag, I realize with a pang that Jordan isn't as annoying as others. In fact, I usually find myself close to smiling whenever he does his usual spiel of, "Will you go to lunch with me?"

He also says it in a robotic voice that makes me want to laugh, like he's really just going through the motions.

Too many times, I wanted to say yes just to catch him off guard. I guess I didn't count on the fact that he could and would get tired of asking.

After all, he's the popular guy in school. Tall, lean, friendly, charming, and, I admit, devastatingly handsome. A deadly combination. One look, and I know he's the kind of guy who will break hearts, mine included, if I'm not careful. He's exactly the type I want to avoid as much as I can.

As I step out the door, the hallway buzzes with the usual post-class chaos, voices overlapping, and lockers clanging shut. I have my earphones halfway in, my backpack slung lazily over my shoulder, when I hear it.

"Jordyn, wait up!"

The voice cuts through the noise, and I pause mid-step, spinning on my heel and adjusting the strap digging into my shoulder. Jordan was right again. My back and shoulder hurt every day with all the things I carry around. This bag is more about sentimentality than convenience. The first bag I bought with my own money from a summer job, and it's far from ergonomic.

My eyes scan the crowd until I spot him. To be fair, I could just see his hair, and I'd know it was him. Not to mention, he towers above everyone else.

As he walks toward me, he keeps on stopping to wave at someone or smile and say

hello. Like I said, a popular guy. I could never.

He sprints and suddenly twists his body, planting one foot hard against the floor and the other dragging behind him. His sneakers screech against the tiled floor, a sharp, rubbery sound as he leans back, his arms out for balance. He rocks forward slightly before coming to a cocky stop, grinning like he's just pulled off the smoothest stunt of his life.

His hair is slightly mussed, and my heart flutters as I take him in his usual attire—a black Henley shirt, dark jeans, and black skater shoes. And, of course, the backward shades. The arms of his aviator sunglasses are hooked over his ears.

Those passing us by throw us furtive looks. I don't even miss a girl elbowing her friend and pointing her chin at me.

God, I've always hated attention.

“Here.” Jordan hands me a paper bag. “I got you coffee.”

I almost reach to take it on instinct, but I pull my hand back at the last minute. “I don't?—”

“It's hot caramel macchiato with an extra shot of espresso.”

The fluttery feeling in my belly intensifies. “How did you?—”

Jordan straightens and smiles. “I pay attention, love. I pay attention.”

I ignore the endearment, convincing myself he tells everyone this, but whatever words I have for him die on my tongue as I blink slowly and squint. Something's different with him today. “Your hair changed.”

His smile gets wider as he runs his fingers through his hair. “You noticed?”

I notice a lot of things, but I don’t tell him that. “I mean, it’s not as white-white anymore.”

He snaps a finger and nods enthusiastically, as though I just answered something no one else did. “Yes! I asked my hair stylist to add some gray undertones to give it a more frosted look.”

“I don’t understand any of that.”

“But you think it’s cool.”

“I said it’s different.”

“Same thing.” He steps beside me, and we start walking together. I don’t even know where we’re going, but I’m distracted by the little bounce in his steps, his arms swinging loosely on his sides. “I got held up at the salon, so I decided to grab you coffee.”

I scan his face, and I gape in disbelief. “You skipped class for a salon appointment?”

He juts out his chin. “Duh.” He clasps his hands behind him and leans his body toward me. “Did you miss me?”

“I didn’t.”

“But it bothered you that I wasn’t sitting behind you in class?”

It hits way too close to home that I jab a finger at his shirt. “Listen, you don’t?—”

My thoughts crumble into silence as he wraps a hand around the finger and presses it to his hard chest. I can feel his heartbeat, likely as fast as mine.

The whole world ceases to exist, and all I can see is his soft eyes, sharp jawline, high cheekbones, aquiline nose, and lips slightly upturned at the edges. Dammit. It would have helped if he didn't look this good! Resisting him would have been easier.

Meanwhile, there's me. The very definition of unremarkable and ordinary.

"Let go." My voice sounds foreign to my ears. It's getting increasingly difficult to speak with a lump in my throat.

The side of his mouth lifts higher. "You touched me first."

Despite myself, my gaze drops to his mouth. It's not even a second, but he realizes it at once. His face darkens, the hint of amusement disappearing.

I have never been kissed before. I wonder what it would feel like. Jordan seems like an expert. He'd know. I bet he has kissed more than a dozen girls already. If only I could be one of the lucky ones.

His grip on my finger loosens, and he grazes his thumb along the back of my hand. It's nothing more than that, but the way my body reacts, it's as if we're in foreplay and about to engage in wild, mind-blowing sex.

Oh, for Christ's sake. I should not have thought that because now, warmth settles in my core, threading through my legs. My breath hitches, and when Jordan sees, his mouth parts.

Something crackles in the air between us. I feel it along my skin, my nerve endings, and the junction between my thighs. This thing builds and builds until...

Jordan is yanked from me, and the spell breaks.

“Yo! You didn’t answer my calls. Where were you, man?” It’s his friend from class. Tristan? Theo? Tom?

Jordan’s eyes don’t leave me, neither does he answer Theo or Tristan or whoever he is. Disappointment crosses his features, and I’m pretty sure I mirror the emotion. I’m not used to seeing him without that goofy grin, and the effect is ... devastating. To my lady parts, at least.

He opens his mouth to say something, but I can’t take the rioting emotions within me, threatening to wash over and overwhelm me. Without another word, I whirl and run like the devil himself is on my heels.

The door to the girls’ bathroom swings open, and I slip inside. My heart continues to pound faster than it has any right to, and I barely glance around before ducking into the nearest open stall, the lock clicking into place.

I take out the coffee from the paper bag, the smell grounding me even as my heart feels like it’s about to burst out of my chest.

I cradle the cup in both hands, pressing my thumbs against the warm cardboard. I let out a shaky breath, my lips curving into a smile, warmth blooming within me.

I don’t know what’s happening to me, and I have no idea if this is supposed to scare the hell out of me.

But...

This is the first time I’ve ever felt this light, and I want to hold on to the feeling as long as I can.

3

JORDAN

Jordyn's been standing in front of the display window for a good fifteen minutes. She tilts her head slightly, staring at a short black dress on a mannequin. Even all the way from where I'm sitting—inside my car a few feet from her, watching her unnoticed—I can see her eyes lingering. It's soft and thoughtful, as if she's imagining herself wearing it.

Now I'm imagining her, too. My God. If she has that on, I won't be able to look away. That dress will hug her curves perfectly.

Jordyn does this sometimes—gets so lost in her own world that she forgets everything else. I saw it happen at the cafeteria, her favorite coffee shop, and the library. Sometimes, I even noticed her mentally debating with herself. Cute.

Then, something else happens.

One guy in the most preppy boy outfit I've ever seen—white skinny jeans, light yellow polo, and dark brown loafers—barrels past her. His shoulder clips hers, just hard enough to make her stumble back, and her backpack slips.

It hits the concrete ground with a soft thud, spilling its contents. Jordyn crouches quickly, her cheeks pink, fumbling to gather her things.

The asshole doesn't even apologize.

White-hot anger blazes through me. Without thinking, I step out of the car and shove the guy. His mouth falls open, but he catches himself. “What’s your problem, man?”

“You blind or something? You bumped into her. At least say sorry and help her.”

He casts a wary look over his shoulder and adjusts the sunglasses sliding down his nose. “I didn’t see her.”

“Blind it is.” I cross my arms and lift my chin. “Apologize.”

The asshole looks me up and down, decides I’m not worth his while, and slides his hands into his pockets. “No.”

“You got mommy issues, or are you generally rude to all women?”

He sighs dramatically. “Listen, this bitch is clumsy enough?—”

In one single motion, I grab his jaw and shove him to the wall beside the store, his head banging against the concrete. “Say that again. I’m afraid I didn’t hear you the first time.”

The color drains from his face, and his eyes flit from me to Jordyn, who has stopped picking her things and stares at us in horror.

If there’s one thing I learned, it’s that bullies are just cowards pretending to be brave. The moment someone stands up to them, they lose it. The mask slips.

The same thing happens to him. Predictable.

He raises both palms and swallows hard. “Okay, fine.” He turns to Jordyn. “Miss, I’m sorry.”

Jordyn gives a slight nod, and I take that as a cue to let him go, completely dismissing him from my mind and crossing the distance between Jordyn and me in seconds. I crouch beside her and begin putting things back into her backpack. “You okay?”

Relief flashes across her face, followed by a sheepish smile. “Yeah, thanks. You didn’t have to do that, though.”

“Why not? You don’t deserve the disrespect. Besides, you don’t let that shit fly. You shouldn’t.” I’m about to say more, but I see a burrito on the ground. My head snaps up. “Why do you have a burrito without a wrapper?”

Jordyn groans and grabs it, her cheeks turning a deeper shade of red. “It’s a pencil case, you moron.”

“No way!” I grab the other side and pull, curiosity getting the better of me. “Let me see.”

“Stop. We’re blocking the way.”

“Let me see just one sec.”

I try to grab the middle of the burrito at the same time as her, and the accidental touch sends a jolt of electricity down my spine. It happens again. The first time it did was when I handed her a coffee. When I felt the world slowing down and vanishing into thin air. When my entire body vibrated with awareness because she was near, so near I could pull her to me and kiss her.

Why does she have this kind of effect on me? It’s jarring and disorienting, like I’ve slipped inside the life of someone else.

Clearing my throat and the jumble of thoughts in my head, I smile at her. “So, how

about it, Jordyn? Will you let me have that lunch? Don't you think I finally deserve it? I'm a clean eater, and I keep my mouth closed when chewing. I promise."

The line between her eyebrows deepens, and I wonder what I've done to earn such mistrust. Or maybe that's just how she operates? Like mistrusting is her default and I need to prove I'm worthy of her trust.

She sucks the inside of her cheek, thinking. "How do I know you didn't set that up, and that guy isn't one of your friends?"

I burst out laughing. "My God. Someday, you and I are gonna need to talk about your trust issues and how you think everything's a conspiracy. But to answer your question, you don't know for sure. Now, will you go out for lunch with me?"

Jordyn rolls her eyes, but I see the answer even before she says it. "Fine. Yes. But the moment I hear you grind your food loudly, I'm out."

JORDYN

No restaurant or diner is available, which is not remotely surprising. It's lunchtime, and everyone's rushing to eat before they go back to school or their offices.

I don't even feel hungry anymore. Looking at a flustered and frustrated Jordan is amusing enough. I've never seen him this rattled or out of his element. And I shouldn't enjoy this as much as I do.

Today has been quite a revelation. For the first time since meeting him, he's not his usual funny self. Earlier, when he demanded the guy apologize, I saw a side of him I never knew existed—a protective, no-nonsense attitude that oddly turned me on.

People always say it's the quiet ones you need to look out for, but I disagree. It's also those who always appear unaffected by everything. Those who make jokes all the time. Those who breeze through things. Because when they snap, well, all hell breaks loose.

Jordan lets the glass door swing shut behind him, a look of dejection on his handsome face. He sucks his bottom lip between his teeth and drags his gaze toward me.

I know what he's going to say even before he opens his mouth. "I'm sorry. They're full."

I shrug. "Okay. Let's just buy pizza or burgers and eat by the quad."

“Su—” Jordan pauses mid-sentence, his eyes narrowing just a fraction. The corner of his mouth lifts, that familiar spark igniting behind his eyes. Then, his whole face lights up. His grin grows wider, boyish and unguarded, and it’s in that moment when I feel something deeper than physical attraction.

I am not someone who enjoys spending time with others, but with Jordan, I don’t mind. Odd, for sure, and it makes me feel like I’m standing in the middle of a rocking boat, ready to topple any time. This whole thing is weird from the start, but watching him this happy has just become one of my favorite things ever.

“I’ll do you one better,” he exclaims, his excitement contagious. “How about I cook for you? I’m a great cook. No, scratch that. I’m an amazing cook.”

I fold my arms over my chest and cock my head to the side. “Your confidence is really something else.”

“I know, right?”

“You wouldn’t know humility if it struck you in the face.”

“That’s because humility knows better than to mess with moi .” He emphasizes the last word by dragging his hands from his hair to his chest. “Besides, if something does hit me in the face, my hair will still be fabulous.”

I groan and give him the side eye. “Let’s go before your vanity makes me lose my appetite.”

I guess I should have expected it.

His two-bedroom apartment, which he shares with his friend Toby, is messy and chaotic. The moment I step inside, I’m hit by the smell of pizza and something burnt.

He probably sees me scrunching my nose because he says defensively, “That’s Toby. He burned his breakfast after reheating a slice of pizza on the pan.”

I turn to look at the kitchen. “You have a microwave?”

“Yeah, but he says it’s more delish when you put it on the pan, except he forgot he needed to put a bit of water on it.”

“Right.”

God, this living situation is an absolute nightmare. I would never want to live with someone who burned his pizza and left the whole place smelling like it. I mean, I live in a small space where I can go from the door to the porch in three seconds flat, but boy, I can never take this kind of mess.

The couch is half-buried under a pile of throw pillows, hoodies, and socks. Three empty coffee mugs are on the table, right beside two controllers and a tangle of wires.

Jordan grabs the hoodies and socks and throws them into the bedroom. He pats the cleared space and tells me, “Make yourself comfortable.”

So I do. I sit there and watch him darting around the room like a man on a mission. He grabs a couple of shirts from the floor and flings it to the same bedroom before quickly slamming it shut.

“That’s your bedroom, right?”

Jordan gives me a lopsided grin that makes my heart skip a beat. “No.”

He stuffs papers and small electronics into the cabinet under the TV. A stack of books topples over, and he catches them just in time, muttering a curse under his breath.

“If you throw those books, I’m going to leave.”

He blinks slowly. “I wouldn’t dare. I love books.”

“You only ever bring one notebook to class.”

“So you notice?”

Damn it. I walked in on that one, didn’t I? “I see it when you come to annoy me.”

He doesn’t believe me, if that shit-eating grin is any indication, and he whistles as he brings the books to a single-seater couch. Jordan looks around and sees one stray sock before shoving it into a drawer that doesn’t seem like it’s for socks. “Done. Now I’ll make you lunch.”

Jordan rolls his Henley shirt to his elbows and begins washing the dishes. His arms and back muscles stretch under the thin fabric, and I’m well aware I need to look away before he catches me and teases me again.

Yet, I can’t.

From the broad shoulders and chest tapering to a small waist, he is the very definition of sexy. He’s tall enough that his head reaches the overhead drawers. If I have to guess, I’d say he’s at least 6’2.

When he begins slicing the tomatoes, his arm flexes, and my eyes zero in on the corded forearms. With how vain he is, I don’t doubt he goes to the gym. He doesn’t look buff, but he’s lean and muscled, like a runner’s body.

The realization hits me like a freight train.

Jordan looks like that, and I look like me—frumpy, boring, and unremarkable. The only time I'll ever run is at PE ... and in the event of a zombie apocalypse where my life and brain are at stake.

My insecurities rush to the surface, and I stop staring at him.

"I saw you looking at the dress," he calls over his shoulder.

I bury my face in my hands, my skin warming from embarrassment. "Oh, yeah?"

"You like those dresses?"

"No." The lie comes easy enough. I stand and walk to the square dining table, sliding into one of the seats.

"I'll give you another chance to change your answer."

He has his back on me, and the desire to pour my heart out is overwhelming. I don't talk to anyone like this. Both my parents are in my hometown, and they call me maybe once a month to check whether I'm still alive. I have a couple of friends from high school, but we lost touch after college. At university, I have a few nodding acquaintances, but that's the extent of my socializing.

"Yes," I finally blurt out. I don't know why I'm telling him. All I know is I need this out of my chest.

"So why don't you ever wear them?"

He turns and leans his back against the counter, looking at me. The attention is too much, so I busy myself with the dried water spots on the table. "Because the last time I did, I glanced at someone for all of one second, and he thought it was an invitation

to follow me home.”

I get the courage to look up, only to find him gripping the edge of the counter, his nostrils flaring. “That fucker. Did he hurt you?”

“No, because I went straight to the police station.”

His face softens. “Shit, I’m sorry, Jordyn.”

“Not your fault a lot of men act like animals.”

He lifts both palms. “No argument from me on that.”

He serves me chicken pesto wraps and offers me an unopened Snapple with a post-it note that says, “Toby’s. Do not touch this, fucker.”

“Toby will be so mad when he gets home,” I tell him.

Jordan lifts one shoulder. “I’ll buy him a new one. He always takes my groceries, anyway.”

The food is delicious, and I’m torn between praising him, which will only feed his ego, and acting nonchalant. But one thing about Jordan is that he’s so damned observant and in tune with me. Eerily so.

“You like it?”

I sigh. “I do. It’s delicious. Don’t let that get to your head.”

“Too late.” He chuckles, his eyes glowing. “What’s your favorite food? So I’ll know what to make next time.”

“You think there will be a next time?”

His eyes darken, and he sweeps his tongue along his bottom lip, making me perk up in my seat and rub my thighs together. “I’d like to think so. After all, you did come home with me.” He drops his gaze to my mouth. “And I don’t think it’s because you really did believe I’m a fantastic cook.”

I’m someone who’s comfortable with silence, and I can hold it longer than anyone I know. I can go for hours sitting beside someone and not talking, filling the space where words are unnecessary.

With Jordan, it’s different.

The silence hums, charged with unspoken thoughts floating around us, charged with something heavy, pulsing, alive. My fingers twitch against my knee, and with our gazes locked, I catch myself holding my breath, the pounding in my temples getting louder every second.

My palms are sweaty despite the cool air, and my throat is dry. Tension hangs between us, fragile, ready to break, crackling with energy.

I don’t know who makes the first move, but one minute, we’re across each other at the dining table, and the next, we’re a tangle of limbs as Jordan backs me to the couch, his mouth claiming mine.

The backs of my knees hit the armrest, and my arms pinwheel when I lose my balance. Just then, Jordan’s arms wrap around me, and he pulls me to him so easily that it has me believing I’m lighter than I thought.

Jordan drags his mouth to my cheek, along my jawline, and my earlobe before he swipes the tip of his tongue along the shell of my ear. I have never felt the sensations

I'm feeling right now. I grip his arms and bite my lip. God, how good is this? I want more.

"We have to stop," Jordan whispers, his breath tickling my ear. "I'm losing control."

"No."

"Jordyn..." It comes both as a plea and a question. I have never done any of these before. Kissing boys, making out, sex—none of that ever appealed to me ... until now, until Jordan.

I pull back and search his face. "Do you want me?" The question comes from out of nowhere, but I need an answer. I long for him in a way that makes me ache.

"You have no idea." He grinds his jaw, eyes flaring with naked desire.

"Then let's not stop."

"Jordyn..." His neck flexes, his Adam's apple bobbing. Everything I've done thus far has been uncharacteristic of me, including planting a chaste kiss on his Adam's apple.

"The answer is yes, Jordan. Whatever your question is, and it better be a damned good question, it's a yes."

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JORDAN

J ordyn and I don't even reach the bedroom. I break the kiss only to unbutton her jeans and slide them down her legs. With her lying on the couch, she's a sight to behold. A feast. A dark-haired beauty I'm about to devour.

She only has her shirt and underwear on, and the only thing separating me and her pussy is a pair of thin cotton panties.

Jordyn is heavy-lidded as she lifts herself on her elbows and sits comfortably, me on my haunches. Trailing my hands along her creamy thighs, I spread her legs apart, swallowing back a groan at the small patch of wetness.

My fingers curl around the hem of her panties, but as I tug it down, Jordyn grabs me, her eyes wild. "Jordan, wait!"

Going against every instinct to simply continue, I force myself to oblige and stop. "Jordyn?"

"I ... I'm not good at this." Desire no longer darkens her eyes. Instead, it's replaced by raw fear.

"That's not possible."

"I'm not. I ... I have never done this before."

The confession slams into me, and blood roars in my ears. “You’re a virgin?”

“I am.” She swallows hard and studies my reaction. “Does it bother you?”

I can’t stop the grin on my face. “I’m honored.” Then, her hesitation pulls at me. “Do you want to stop? I don’t want your first time to be?—”

At the suggestion, she grabs my shoulders. “No. This is perfect. I just ... I just thought I’d let you know I wouldn’t be good at this.”

Affection makes my chest expand, and I run a thumb along her jaw. “Like I said, that’s not possible.”

“H-how do you know that?”

“Because I’ve only ever kissed you, and you already managed to set my body on fire.”

The next kiss is slow and unhurried, unlike the first, but it’s not any less passionate. With our lips locked together, I tug on her panties, and she shimmies off them.

Her arms are around me as I tentatively dip a finger in her pussy. “Fuck, Jordyn. You’re wet.”

“Y-you like that?”

“Baby, I love it.”

She barely has time to breathe before I lower myself and, without another word, drag my tongue along her soaked slit.

“Oh my God.” Jordyn throws her head back, her one hand digging into my scalp.

I smile at her response before opening her folds and doing the same thing. I worship her pussy with my mouth, planting open-mouthed kisses and sucking and licking. Jordyn wraps her thighs around me, instinctively pushing my tongue deep into her.

“Oh!” That’s my only warning as her body shakes, and her eyes roll to the back of her head. She hasn’t stopped shaking yet when I wrap her legs around my waist and take her to my bedroom, dropping her to the mattress and watching her slowly come back to earth.

Not yet.

I undress in record time, take off every piece of clothing in no more than ten seconds, and sit beside her, the mattress dipping under my weight.

“Baby?” I turn to watch her, still trying to catch her breath.

With her spread out in bed, I take advantage. I hover above her, lifting her shirt above her breasts. She helps me out, reaching behind her and unhooking her bra.

Her tits spill out, and Jesus fucking Christ, she’s as glorious as I expected.

I take one nipple into my mouth, sucking the taut bud and rolling it between my lips. My hand finds the other tit, squeezing and kneading until she moans again. Her sounds fill my ears, and it’s the sound I want to hear every day of my life.

I grip my cock, stroking it and wedging the tip at her entrance. I almost slip inside her before I realize how to make it less painful for her.

I sit back up again. “Ride me, baby. You’ll have control. You can stop if it gets

uncomfortable.”

Understanding dawns on her beautiful face, and she scrambles to straddle my lap. She pulls the shirt over her head, discarding her last piece of clothing.

Now we’re both naked, and nothing separates us.

Jordyn lowers herself to my throbbing cock slowly, stopping to hold her breath before taking more of me. I watch her face, but she watches me disappear inside her warm, tight walls. When I’m buried to the hilt, she lets out a long moan. “Oh God. You’re so big.”

“Does it hurt, baby?”

“Your cock feels so good.”

That’s the only thing I want to hear.

It doesn’t take her long before she works me in earnest. She bounces on my lap, her big tits swaying in my face. Her pussy only gets wetter, and she rounds her hips, her arms tight around my neck. Meanwhile, I’m fighting for my life, trying my damndest to sit still and not meet her drives. It drives me crazy, but I told her she’d be in control, so that’s that.

I can’t even stop looking at her face, the look of pure pleasure as she pants and snaps her eyes shut. She grinds like she’s possessed. “Jordan, God. I’m going to come.”

My body reacts to her words.

For the second time, she shatters in my arms, and my cock twitches at the same time, spilling thick, warm come inside her. It’s the most intense orgasm I’ve ever had, and

it feels like forever before I finally soften.

I'm pulling the sheets over us when the faint sound of the door unlocking makes us both tense. We hold our breaths as we listen to the quick, heavy footsteps. It takes me a few beats to realize what's about to happen when the bedroom door slams open.

My instinct is to make sure Jordyn is fully covered before I bellow, "Don't you know how to knock?!"

Toby has the grace to look embarrassed, and he spins around. "We never knock, you know that. I had no idea. Sorry!"

"Get out!"

"Fine. God, lock the doors next time."

The door closes behind him, and I brace myself before turning to Jordyn, my heart thudding in my chest for a different reason than last time. She has every right to be upset.

Her eyes aren't narrowed in anger like I expect, though. They widen, like she's trying hard not to smile. Her lips are pressed together, twitching at the sides. I continue watching her, and she inhales sharply.

That's the moment the dam breaks. She laughs and doubles over. The sound is contagious, and I laugh with her ... until I pull her to me and silence her with a kiss.

JORDYN

“ S ee you later, okay?” Jordan pulls me to him for a quick kiss and lets go, his wicked smile shooting straight to my core. After staying in his apartment last night, I woke up with the biggest, goofiest grin on my face, and I couldn’t stop smiling. I didn’t have anything else to wear, so I ended up borrowing his shirt, the hem of which he tied tightly around my midriff. It’s not my style, but when I looked in the mirror, I actually liked what I saw. I watch his retreating back before he whirls around and plants a kiss on my forehead. “Don’t miss me too much.”

Whatever lingering happiness I feel vanishes into thin air when I step into the classroom. The air shifts and the usual chatter softens, replaced by barely-muffled giggles and hushed whispers.

My stomach drops as I scan the room, the knot in my belly getting heavier when I realize several pairs of eyes are on me. Me, the invisible girl. Me, the nameless and faceless one. Me, the one everybody ignores.

A group of girls near the back dart quick, fleeting glances at me, their heads bending closer to each other. They’re not even trying to hide it. Their voices are just loud enough to let me and the rest of the class know who they’re talking about.

“He’s playing her, and she’s too blind to notice.”

“Didn’t he used to date a cheerleader?”

“I remember! God, what a downgrade.”

“Maybe it’s a charity thing? Or he lost a bet? That definitely sounds like something Jordan would do.”

“He’s way too hot for someone like her.”

I grip the strap of my bag and force myself to move, and look away. My heart sinks deeper as I walk toward my seat in the front row. I can feel their eyes on me, burning my back and suffocating me.

Sliding into my chair and ignoring the pitiful look my seatmate, Kaya, gives me, I set my bag down quietly on the floor. I keep my face blank and my movements deliberate, as though pretending not to notice might make it hurt less.

This is why I hate people. And why I made it my lifelong mission to avoid them.

One of the girls slides into the empty seat to my right, and I take out my notebook and pencil case just to have something to do.

“Hi, I’m Donna.” She doesn’t offer me her hand, just rests her chin on her palm and looks me up and down.

“Jordyn.”

“Oh, ha. Now I get it.”

I want her to leave me alone and go about her day. I don’t know her, and I haven’t done anything to deserve any of these. I don’t respond, but Donna seems like the type who loves the sound of her own voice.

“You know, we’ve been debating why Jordan’s going all PDA with you. That’s so not like him. Marianne thought he lost a bet with Toby. Dani’s money was on him taking you on as a charity case. I believed Jordan just wanted to have fun.”

I still haven’t said anything, but I wish the professor would be early for once and arrive right now. This is not a conversation I want to take part in.

“Now I know why. You have the same name.” I turn to see a triumphant smile on her face, like she has figured out the world’s most difficult riddle.

“So?” I ask despite myself.

“So if you know Jordan, you know he likes to do things for fun. He probably thought it would be funny if he said, ‘I slept with Jordyn.’ That’s so on-brand for him.”

I swallow past the lump in my throat, my insecurities and lack of self-esteem rearing their ugly heads. “He won’t do that.”

“Oh, honey. He’s slept with half the female population in this school, including some professors. You’re not that special.”

With that parting shot, she flicks her hair and strides toward her friends. I jump in my seat when Kaya reaches out and squeezes my hand, forcing me to blink quickly to stop the tears from falling.

This isn’t how I expected my day would go. As it turns out, it’s about to get worse.

I don’t have any appetite for lunch, so I decide to grab coffee and a croissant instead. The chill in the air bites at my skin as I stand frozen on the sidewalk across from my favorite cafe.

Jordan sits at a table by the window, but he's not alone.

He's with someone who looks my age, but the similarity stops there. This girl is beautiful, sexy, and confident—all the things I'm not, all the things I'll never be. She looks so at ease with him, like they've known each other for years. She fixes her short red bob in the reflection and leans in as she laughs at something he said.

He's laughing too. That loud, unguarded laugh I know so well.

A strange mix of hurt, betrayal, and disbelief swirls within me. I can't move. I can't even walk away. The wind whips at my face, and I finally blink. I run away before either of them can see me.

I rush back to the campus and bump into a guy in the hallway. "Oh, sorry," I mumble.

I look up and see Toby. He stares at my face, my tears falling freely now. With a scowl, he guides me to the nearest empty classroom. "Hey, you okay? Should I call Jordan?"

"No!"

His face hardens. "Did he do something to you? Did he hurt you in any way?"

He already saw me crying, so what the hell. The words tumble out of me before I even realize. "I saw him with someone."

His forehead creases. "Where? What were they doing?"

"At a coffee shop. She's hanging on to his arm, laughing."

"And him?"

Remembering what Jordan looked like brings fresh tears to my eyes. “He looked at her lovingly, also laughing.”

Toby scratches the back of his neck, doubt and confusion lining his forehead. “And you’re sure this is Jordan?”

“I’m not blind.”

He opens his mouth, then closes it, and opens it again. “I’m not saying you are. It’s just that ... he’s been obsessed with you since the semester started. You know, that first day in class when you both responded to his name. He charmed Mrs. Kim from the admin office so he could access the student files, and he printed your photo off it. He’s been keeping it in his wallet. Which I wasn’t on board with.”

“What?”

Toby smiles softly. “Creepy, right? I’ve known him for twelve years, and he’s never done that. Every time you said no to him, he would come home dejected. It was hella weird seeing him like that.”

I want to feel happy at this revelation, but I can’t. I’ve seen Jordan with my own eyes. That doesn’t explain any of this. “So why? Why would he do that?”

Toby pinches the bridge of his nose and sighs. “I don’t know. Listen, tell me what the girl looks like.”

Just like that, my gut clenches. “She’s beautiful, and they look like the perfect match.”

“Don’t say that.”

“I-I have to go. Thank you for whatever this is.”

“Jordyn... Talk to him, at least.”

“I will.”

For the record, I hate confrontations. I hate talking to someone when I’m still marinating in anger. I feel like if I open my mouth when I’m still seething, I will end up saying things I’m going to regret later.

This is going to suck; I just know it. The day will most likely end with me bawling my eyes out in bed and stuffing my face with ice cream and chips.

My palms are sweaty, and my jaw is clenched. The irrational part of my brain tells me to stop while I still have a chance and go home and sleep it off. The rational part screams at me to get this over with.

I have to knock on his door three times before I hear some scuffling inside, and the door opens. I suck in a sharp breath.

It’s her. The girl. Up close, she’s even more beautiful, with her long lashes, high cheekbones, and heart-shaped lips. Someone whose face should be on magazines or billboards. Someone those girls back in class would never snicker about.

I hate her so much. And I hate that I don’t look anywhere like her.

Jordan appears behind her, his hair damp from the shower as he towels it off. Our gazes lock, but instead of guilt, his face breaks into a smile.

Wait, what?

This throws me off and hurts me more than it should, like he lodged a hot knife into my chest and twisted it.

My vision narrows, and all I see are both of them—two perfect humans who look so good together. I stand there, hollow and aching, and try to breathe through it. Every inhale is heavier, and every exhale is shakier.

It's like watching a glass break in slow motion, knowing it will shatter into pieces, but I'm powerless to stop it.

It was good while it lasted. He was still worth giving my virginity to, for whatever it's worth.

JORDAN

I take back everything I ever said about being clingy because, right now, I'm acting like a lovesick teenager.

After dropping Jordyn off at her class, I started to miss her. The only reason I resisted the urge to sit beside her and take a class in my free time was the fact that I didn't want to scare her off. She wasn't fond of people in general, and I was the sole exception. I wasn't going to undo all my hard work by sticking to her side 24/7 like Velcro.

But she's here. Maybe she misses me as much as I miss her? Maybe we can be clingy together?

"Baby!" I call out even as something nags at me.

Something's wrong. I can't pinpoint it, but I know by the subtle expressions on her face and the way she shifts from one foot to the other.

She doesn't look happy. In fact, she looks far from happy. Her eyes are puffy, her nose red, and her freckles are more pronounced than ever. What the hell? A fierce surge of protectiveness thunders through me.

Forgetting Elena, I rush to Jordyn, only to see the exact moment she darts her eyes from Elena to me. In the space of a breath, I realize what it looks like to her,

internally groaning at how stupid I've been and waving my hands. "Baby, it's not what you think!"

"Ah, shit, no," Elena says from behind me, realizing the same thing. "Jordyn, right? Whatever is on your mind, it's not true. Come in, come in. Shit."

She ushers Jordyn inside, and the sight of Jordyn's tear-streaked face is like a gut punch. I don't know the full story yet, but I have a sinking feeling I caused her distress.

Goddammit. The last thing I want is to hurt her, and yet, that's apparently what happened.

After closing the door, I walk toward Jordyn, but she glares at me, stopping me in my tracks. "Explain, Jordan."

My own girl, who screamed my name last night and clawed my back, scares the hell out of me. Angry Jordyn is my least favorite version of her, and I swear I'd avoid anything like this in the future.

I open my mouth to speak, but Elena beats me to it. "No, let me. This is all my fault." She groans and scrubs a hand across her face, smearing her dark eyeliner to her temple. "My name's Elena and I'm Jordan's childhood friend."

"You're making it worse, El," I say, my eyes never leaving Jordyn.

"Ah, fuck." Elena, who has no concept of personal space, rests both hands on Jordyn's shoulders. Jordyn immediately stiffens and holds her breath. Elena, of course, doesn't notice and just stares at Jordyn a beat too long that I almost swat her hands off my girl. "Jordan is and will never be my type. If we got stranded on an island, just the two of us, I'd choose the chimpanzee or wild pig over him." Jordyn

just blinks, and Elena smiles sheepishly. I have never seen her sheepish ever. “I have a girlfriend back home.”

Jordyn rears her head back, her jaw hanging open, a flush of red creeping on her face and neck. “Oh. Oh.”

“I only came here because she’s on a vacation in Italy with her family, and I was bored to death.” Elena lets out a deep breath. “God, being so good-looking is such a curse. I always forget how hot I look and that everyone mistakes me for his girlfriend, which is eww, by the way.”

I shake my head in disgust. “Too much, El.”

“Okay, I’ll leave now. Please talk.” I have to bite my tongue when Elena takes Jordyn’s hands in hers. They’ve only just met, and she’s already touching my girl like they’re about to be the best of friends. “I’m so sorry, Jordyn. I saw you earlier but didn’t think too much of it. To be honest, we were talking about you—how he kept asking you out for lunch, and you kept saying no.” Elena drops Jordyn’s hands and points a thumb in my direction. “I’ve never seen this asshole this happy, so thank you. And I’m so, so sorry for the misunderstanding.”

Elena leaves without another word, and it’s just me and Jordyn.

A suffocating kind of quiet settles over us, thick with tension. I can’t stand it when she’s pissed at me. “Baby?—”

Jordyn holds up a hand, her gaze fixed on a spot over my shoulder. “Please let me talk first. I need to get this out of my chest. If you interrupt me, I might lose the courage to speak my mind.”

“Okay, do you want to sit down?”

She shakes her head, still not looking at me. “I’ve always wondered why you singled me out. It’s not because of my looks, obviously, because I can count more than ten girls who look ten times more beautiful than me.” I open my mouth to disagree, but she pins me with a gaze. “I buried those questions in the back of my mind, but they all came rushing back when this girl from class told me how you slept with ‘half of the female population in this school, including the professors.’” Jordyn lifts both hands to do air quotes, and anger shoots through me.

Who the fuck told her that? I sleep around? Since when? What other rumors are there about me that I don’t know about?

“And then,” Jordyn continues while I try to clear the fog of fury in my head, “I saw you with Elena.”

She doesn’t need to say more. I’ve gotten so used to how Elena and I behave with each other that I forget how it looks from the outside. She’s nothing more than an annoying sister, but that’s not what others see.

Jordyn’s shoulders slump, the confession taking so much from her. I can’t stop myself, so I wrap my arms around her and press my lips to her temple, her hair tickling my nose. “Baby, you are the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. If you can’t believe anything else, at least believe that. The first time I saw you, I was almost knocked down to my feet, except I was sitting. You’re smart, kind, sweet, and even though you don’t like people, you let me in. That’s something I’ll always be grateful for.”

Relief washes over me when she burrows her face into my chest. “I’m scared.”

“I know. I am, too, but we’ll make this work. I’m too far gone for you to back out now.”

The words barely leave my mouth before I cup her face and kiss her. It starts slow, like I'm exploring her mouth for the first time, but when she moans, my hands tighten, and I wrap a hand around the back of her neck to push her to me.

The kiss deepens, our tongues tangling, and I swallow every moan and whimper coming out of Jordyn. Those are the only things I hear, so when Toby walks in on us making out in the living room, I don't even stop as he yells, "Jesus Christ. Lock the fucking door!"

Jordyn pushes against my chest, but I still don't let up. I chuckle and continue kissing her.

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JORDAN

Jordyn is sitting cross-legged on my bedroom floor, a massive book on her lap, a cup of half-finished coffee by her thigh, and a small plate now filled with nothing but croissant crumbs.

I sit beside her and hand her a small white box.

She eyes me suspiciously. “What’s this?”

“I’m taking you out on a date tonight. It’s a little something to wear.”

“Do I embarrass you in my jeans and shirt?”

“No. You can wear rags for all I care. Just ... just open it, baby.” I nudge it closer to her.

A faint, nervous smile tugs on her lips. She tugs on the ribbon and lifts the lid. Her breath catches, and she freezes. Inside is the dress she’s been looking at the other day. Her hands hover over it. “Jordan...”

“You like it, baby?”

Her voice catches in her throat. “H-how did you?—”

“I pay attention, baby.” I trail kisses down the side of her face to her neck. “And I want to fuck you against the wall while you wear that.”

Jordyn's chuckle morphs into a moan. Goddammit, how can one guy be this lucky?

The End

Thanks for reading!