



The Guest (Steamy Shorts #16)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: I'm supposed to discuss business affairs and attend a party at an associate's beach vacation home over the weekend.

For the life of me, I can't pretend I'm even remotely looking forward to it.

This is the part of the business I absolutely abhor—socializing and pretending we want to discuss mundane things when we can just get down to money talk because, at the end of the day, it's why we're here, right? But.....It is what it is. I just have to suffer three days of fake smiling and fake interest in what the other is saying.

What I'm not prepared for when I arrive, however, is meeting the man's daughter.

Kara.

A twenty-something girl who's still in university. With a face men would fight for. A body that begs to be explored. A smile that reaches parts of me I'd forgotten, bringing warmth to the coldest corners of my soul.

It's not right for so many reasons.

These thoughts drive me crazy.

1. I should be discussing business with her father, not acting like a hormonal teenager.

2. I am more than a decade older than her.

3. She is way too innocent for me.

All these things fly out the window the moment she shows me an ounce of attraction.

Because who the hell am I to resist when she's serving herself on a silver platter before me?

It's a tricky situation to navigate, but I've never been surer of one

1

KEVIN

“ I am so sorry, Kevin. Your bedroom is prepared, but the chef and his team are stranded in the next city two hours away. The five drivers just left to pick up the other guests, and they won’t be back until tomorrow.” Craig Rodriguez runs a hand through his hair, clearly flustered and stressed. He draws a breath and releases it. “I won’t take more than five hours, hopefully. Kara here will keep you entertained in the meantime. The other staff will arrive later, too.”

He motions for his daughter to step forward, and my breath stutters in my chest when I lay eyes on her. Bells ring inside my head, reaching a point where it becomes too loud to even think of anything or anyone but her. Craig’s voice becomes muffled, and I can no longer hear him.

Despite myself, I stiffen, my shoulders tensing as something crackles in the space between me and this beautiful, beautiful woman, electricity dancing on my nerve endings. Maybe this is what it’s like being hit by lightning.

A wave of desire so intense washes over me. It’s intensely palpable, and if I reach out and try to hold it, I can. Maybe. Possibly.

She has a small face framed by long, straight black hair that reaches her tiny waist. Her smooth olive skin is glowing, and her chocolate-brown eyes slowly draw me in.

Kara Rodriguez is pretty tall. I’d say somewhere between five-seven and five-nine.

Since she's wearing Daisy Dukes shorts that barely cover her ass, my heart slams at the sight of her legs that go on for miles. Then there's that tiny hot pink bikini top, her nipples pushing against the thin fabric.

Holy fuck. This isn't what I expected when I came here.

For a moment, I wonder if Craig is playing me. Trying to mess with my mind to get the upper hand in our negotiations later. But the panicked look on his face convinces me he's telling the truth. He doesn't want to leave his daughter with me, but he can't have me tagging along as he fetches the staff. I can tell he knows the task is beneath him; he just doesn't have much choice right now, especially with more guests coming in tomorrow.

"Hi, Kevin. I'm Kara." A playful smirk tugs on the corner of her full lips. She knows I'm checking her out, and she knows I like what I see.

"Nice to meet you, Kara."

The handshake is supposed to be quick, impersonal, and professional. It's anything but. A jolt of electricity travels down my spine, forcing me to stand straighter. Blood rushes from my thighs to my balls and my cock.

I'm wearing dress pants. Fortunately for me, I untucked my button-down white shirt during the drive, so now I have it covering my pretty embarrassing erection. Barely.

"That's settled." Craig claps once and starts pointing around his house. "We have the cellar in the basement, the fridge is fully stocked with drinks, microwavables, and fresh fruits, you can swim in the pool or the beach. Just do whatever you want. I'll be quick."

I nod, and he rushes off to his car, leaving last-minute instructions to Kara as though

she's babysitting a child, not a grown thirty-five-year-old man.

I look around the massive beach house. It's modern, all whitewashed wood and glass, with a wraparound porch that seems to stretch forever. When I arrived, I saw a balcony in every room, and there must have been at least twenty bedrooms.

It's safe to assume this was built to hold gatherings because, as far as I know, Kara is an only child, and her mother divorced her dad and was remarried to a Hollywood star, leaving just her and Craig. They don't need this big of a home unless he's always inviting friends and business partners over.

I continue scanning the space. The polished wood floors gleam in the midday sunlight pouring through the floor-to-ceiling windows. The open living room spills onto a vast area where a dozen matching lounge chairs face the ocean.

This place is relaxing, I'll give it that. I can't remember the last time I took a vacation, let alone enjoyed one.

"I'll give you a tour of the house." Kara's voice pulls me out of my head, and I nod. She beams at me, and my heart races. "Follow me."

It's hard to hear a word she says because my eyes are glued to her ass hanging out of the poor excuse of shorts. My mind strays to dangerous territories, and as much as I want to tamp down the lurid visions parading in my brain, I keep on wondering how those glorious globes would feel on my hands or those tits on my mouth.

Fucking hell. What am I doing? This is a young woman. I'm way too old for her, not to mention that I'm here at her father's invitation.

"Dad bought the land as a gift to my mom for their honeymoon. Instead of taking her to Paris, where she wants to go, he brought her here."

“Well, that’s romantic.”

Kara doesn’t miss the sarcasm in my voice, and she casts me a sly grin over her shoulder. “That’s exactly what I told him. I mean, I get he wants to go the extra mile and gift her a vacation mansion, but the girl wants Paris, so give her Paris.”

“Do you like Paris?”

We walk upstairs, her hips swaying, and all I can think about is burying my face in between those thighs and relishing the heaven she has hidden there.

“I’ve been there too many times, it’s lost its appeal.” She stops in the middle of the stairs and turns to me. “For my honeymoon, I really don’t care where we are as long as my husband fucks me against every wall and in every corner.”

I choke on my own saliva, coughing and smacking my chest. “Jesus Christ.”

“So, anyway,” she continues as though she hasn’t just said something inappropriate, “there are twelve bedrooms, each with its own balcony, bathroom, and minibar. The second floor is divided into a right and left wing. Dad is on the far right, and I’m on the far left, my room facing the ocean.”

“Where’s my room?”

We reach the second-floor landing, and she turns so abruptly that I almost fall down the stairs. “Right beside mine,” she says as she drags a finger from the column of my throat to my chest, my skin burning under her touch.

“What are you doing?” My voice is hoarse even to my own ears.

“Making sure the guest feels welcomed.”

“Do you do this to every guest, then?”

She moves so close that her breath tickles my throat. “No. You’re the only one who gets this special treatment.”

It’s wrong, and I should stop this. Instead, I meet her gaze. “What else does this special treatment include?”

“Anything you want. That’s what Dad said.”

My cock is about to explode in my pants just by her nearness. I still have some brain function, so I shake my head to clear the fog. “Can you please show me to my room?”

She steps back and shrugs. “With pleasure.”

The moment the door swings open, I’m impressed. Craig definitely went all-out.

A king-sized bed with a crisp white duvet and gray throws sits in the center of the massive room, flanked by driftwood nightstands. The headboard is upholstered in black faux leather with diamond stitching.

The sliding doors opposite the bed open to a balcony with a fantastic view of the ocean. There are a pair of cushioned lounge chairs and a glass-topped table.

In the corner of the room, there’s the mini-bar Kara mentioned, complete with sparkling water, champagne, wine, and some snacks.

It feels like I’ve checked into a five-star hotel in the Maldives.

“I take it you’re impressed?” Kara asks, her hands intertwined behind her.

God, I can never get used to how beautiful she is. “It’s not bad.”

“Ah, a man with high standards.”

That’s so far from the truth that I chuckle before I can check myself. “No, I’m not.”

“What kind of a man are you then, Kevin?”

My name on her tongue elicits all sorts of reactions from me—surprise, delight, and the primal need to take her right here and right now. The need to claim her. Possess her. Make her mine. “Just another boring businessman.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t call you boring. More like reserved. I wonder what it will take to crack those walls you’ve erected around yourself.”

I don’t have an answer, and she doesn’t wait for one. She whirls around and closes the door behind her. Now I’m left with just me and my boner.

God, this is going to be one hell of a weekend. I wasn’t excited to be here, but now that I am, I can’t imagine ever going through life without meeting Kara.

These feelings are sudden and intense, and I’m not someone who gets knocked off his feet by a woman. Yet, that’s exactly what she did to me. And I can say I don’t mind at all.

With a deep breath, I step outside, the warm breeze brushing my face. Part of the reason I agreed to this was to clear my head. Life in the city could be suffocating. Add in my father’s expectations, and my stress levels were bordering on unhealthy.

Right now, though, I don’t think I can relax. Relaxing is the furthest thing from my mind.

“Oh, hi. I didn’t see you there,” Kara calls out from her glass balcony. Her eyes glint with mischief, the freckles across her cheeks more prominent.

“Hey. Long time no see.”

Her smile grows wider as she mouths, “Watch me.”

As if I can look away.

Kara shimmies out of her shorts, leaving her in a pair of bikinis. She moves the lounge so it faces me and lies down. Kara splays her leg and runs a manicured hand along her bare thigh, then the other.

My breath hitches, and my groin tightens. I don’t even notice I’ve switched places, so I can take a closer look.

With a dramatic flair, she unties the ribbon on one side of the bikini bottom and the other, the small fabric pooling under her pussy.

And what a fucking beautiful pussy. Pink and glistening.

Wait.

Is she wet for me? But I haven’t touched her yet. I haven’t even kissed her.

She touches her clit and runs a finger along her slit. Her back arches, and she bites on her bottom lip. I’m in a trance. I can’t move or do anything but watch.

When Kara slips a finger inside her pussy, a groan rumbles in my chest, and I palm my erection. I want to be inside her so bad that I ache. It’s almost painful, and I’m desperate for relief.

Kara plays with herself, slipping one finger and two and three while her other hand teases her sensitive button.

“Kevin, fuck.”

Again with my name on her tongue. I’m about to reach into my pants when her body trembles, and she lets out a stuttering gasp. By the time she’s back on earth, she lifts her heavy-lidded gaze to me and licks her fingers clean.

So fucking filthy, and I love it.

She stands, her pussy still bare and dripping, and props both elbows on the balcony railing, her eyes dropping to my hand on my cock. “You might want to hide that bad boy before Dad gets back.”

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KARA

I have never felt this horny ever. It took me one look at Kevin, and I was desperate for him to fill the empty ache within me.

I don't know what it is about him. I've seen my fair share of hot men, but no one ever comes close to him.

As a fairly tall woman, he towers over me. He's not massive, like the gym bros I usually see, but he has a runner's body. Tall and lean and someone who can lift me off my feet and fuck me against the wall with no problem.

I'm not even into dark blonde, but crap, he's so handsome I'm willing to make an exception. And those piercing blue eyes? They do something to me, and I want his gaze to never leave me.

It's crazy, I know, but this magnetic draw is so new and unfamiliar to me. At twenty-one years old, all I've ever known was pleasuring myself. After meeting Kevin, I just want him to take me whenever and wherever he wants. I'll be wet and ready for him.

With the way his eyes darken, I'm convinced whatever this is isn't one way. He feels it, too.

"I hope your father is doing better," Dad tells him.

It's already past seven, and we're only eating dinner now. He returned a little later because of the traffic, and I didn't think he would appreciate it if Kevin and I ate without him.

Kevin has showered and changed into something more comfortable—a button-down, plain white short-sleeved shirt and khaki shorts. I also changed into something more presentable for dinner—a soft cotton yellow maxi dress, which highlights my skin. Yes, I want to look good and irresistible for him. Sue me.

“He is. He's stubborn as a mule, though, and refuses to fully step back from the business,” Kevin says as he slices a piece of steak on his plate. He refuses to meet my eyes and doesn't acknowledge my existence even as I sit right across from him. If I hadn't seen how he reacted earlier, I might have thought he disliked me.

“Ah, that's Ellis Watson for you. I've known him for almost two decades, and he always works like he's living from paycheck to paycheck. It must have taken a lot for him to announce his retirement last Christmas.”

“It did, but I kept him in the loop because he hates doing nothing at home.”

“That would probably be me too in a few years if Kara takes pity on me and helps me.”

Unexpectedly, Kevin turns to me. “You're not interested in your father's business?”

I smile, knowing exactly the kind of game he's playing. “No. I'm going to strike out on my own.”

“And how do you plan on doing that?”

“Oh, I have some plans. This and that.” I play with the broccoli on my plate, feeling

uneasy because this conversation never ends well with my own father, and Kevin is putting me on the spot. “The fashion industry is a bit saturated, but my target market is pretty niche.”

“Fashion, huh?”

“Yup.” I put my fork down while sliding a bare foot to his calf. He jerks in his seat and coughs in his hand, flitting a gaze to Dad, who’s busy cutting into his garlic potato. “You think I’m not cut out for it?”

Kevin’s eyes are wild and unfocused, and he’s breathing hard. He grabs the nearest glass and finishes it in three gulps. “I’m pretty sure you’ll make it.”

“You are? I like the vote of confidence, unlike Dad...”

Dad perks up in his seat and looks at me over the rim of his eyeglasses. “I never said you weren’t cut out for it.”

“But you never gave me your approval, either.”

“You don’t look like someone who needs approval,” Kevin interrupts, trying to act nonchalant even as my toe travels higher and higher up his muscular thigh.

“I don’t, but it would be nice to have some support.”

Dad sighs. “I just don’t see a lot of market for custom-made bikinis.”

“You’d be surprised. Women have different bodies, different shapes. And yet, we have such limited options that it’s not fair.” I turn to Kevin, who looks at me with surprise and ... is that awe and respect? “No one wants to walk around the beach in an ill-fitting bikini. We want something we know we look good in. Like me, I have

what others call an athletic body, but it's just a nice way of saying shapeless, and most bikinis are designed toward women with generous curves."

Kevin nods slowly. "I didn't know that, and I agree. That does have potential."

My toe is now on his inner thigh. Too bad he's wearing shorts. "Would you invest in it?"

"Depends on how you make your case. You told me the bare bones of the business, but I would need a solid plan."

I lean back and rest both elbows on the armchair. God, how can he be sexier? I thought he was hot, but this side of him? The smart, calculating side? I almost come again just listening to him. "I'll do that."

Dad furrows his forehead. "Are you sure, Kevin? That doesn't sound like something Watson Industries would be interested in."

"No, but I am. It's going to be a personal investment. My money, not the company's." His hand disappears under the tablecloth and rests on my foot, bringing it to his crotch. "But, like I said, she has to make her case. She needs to convince me to take a risk."

Oh God. What is he saying? Are we still talking about the business or something else? He begins to massage my foot and presses it against his hard dick. I almost forget myself and squirm in my seat, seeking the friction I so desperately need.

"You hear that, Kara? He's giving you a chance. Don't squander it." Dad goes back to his steak and steers the conversation in a different direction—his business with the Watsons.

But Kevin isn't listening. He lets his gaze drop to my lips and my chest, all the while rubbing my foot against his cock.

For a good hour, it's torture. I'm so wet that I thought I'd leave a spot on the chair. Kevin stays seated as Dad stretches and declares he's going for a long, hot shower and sleeping early. After all, the party is tomorrow, and he expects no fewer than thirty guests.

I stand after him, leaving Kevin on the dining table, but as I pass him, I lower my head and nip his earlobe. "I'm not locking the door."

I'm not sure he will take the bait, but I had to try. Now the ball is in his court.

In the bathroom, I step out of my clothes, light two of my favorite scented candles—lavender and vanilla—and drop a bath bomb in the clawfoot tub.

I inhale the aroma and let it wash over me. Soft, instrumental versions of my favorite Disney tunes play from the vanity speaker, and I dip my hand into the water to test the temperature.

It's perfect.

I twist my hair in a loose bun and slide into the water, moaning at how heat wraps around me, soothing my sore muscles. It's been a long day. I'm not complaining since I got the most wonderful surprise, but this is definitely a much-needed me time.

Closing my eyes, I lean against the cushioned headrest, my fingers brushing against the edge of the tub. When my body is fully relaxed, my thoughts stray to Kevin. Never have I felt so strongly attracted to anyone. Not like this, for sure.

Both in high school and college, the strongest I felt toward boys was, "He's okay.

Looks good, but that's it."

Kevin? I yearn for him enough that I'm willing to tease him in front of my father. A risk I'm willing to take, and I know deep down, it's worth it.

He's worth it.

A few minutes later, I hear the door creak. It must be Marianne, bringing me a new set of clothes.

But the figure standing in front of the slightly open bathroom door isn't a girl. It's Kevin.

Dear Lord.

Just looking at him makes my breath hitch and my core tighten.

He's in a loose white shirt and black sweatpants, his hair damp from the shower. The door swings open slowly as he enters, and it feels like the floor has vanished from under me. If I wasn't already sitting, my knees might have buckled.

"Hey," he says. His voice is low and deep, and my eyes immediately go to the tent in his pants.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

"I thought I got an invite."

"You did."

He lifts his face to the ceiling and takes a deep breath. "What are you doing, Kara?"

What are we doing? Your father?—”

“I’m a grown woman who makes her own decisions. He is my father, but this is my life.”

“Why me? You said you don’t do this to others. Why me?”

I pull the drain stopper, and the soft gurgle of water draining echoes on the walls. The music continues to play in the background, but my heart is beating so loud that it’s the only thing I hear. That and my heavy breathing. “Because I felt something the first time I saw you. Almost like I found someone I didn’t know I was looking for.”

His neck flexes, his eyes turning half-mast. “I felt that too.”

“So what now?”

Kevin steps into the now-empty tub. Good thing it’s big enough for two.

He locks eyes with me as he crouches down, his hand grazing my skin and lighting my body on fire. He lifts my leg, rests my ankle on the edge, and does the same to the other.

I’m now fully exposed to him, and I don’t even know what he plans to do. One thing’s for sure. I won’t say no. I’m too desperate for him to do so.

He drags his gaze all over my body, feasting on me, and while it’s supposed to make me feel self-conscious, it doesn’t. With his fingers digging into my thighs, he drops his head and sweeps a tongue along my pussy.

Oh, dear God.

It feels so good that I let out a sound that's part-animal, part-human.

He tightens his grip on me. "Stay quiet, Kara, or I will stop."

I slap both hands to my mouth as Kevin gives my pussy slow, open-mouthed kisses. He flattens his tongue on my clit, and I clench my jaw so tightly, it begins to hurt.

Just when I thought I'd go crazy with want, he slips a finger inside me as he grabs my neck with the other hand and slams his lips to mine.

The kiss sets off an explosion in my head. I can taste myself on him, and when he drives his tongue into my mouth, I feel myself getting closer to the edge. He adds a finger, and I bow off the porcelain tub, rolling my hips to take the finger deeper.

"Miss Kara? I'm coming in. I got your clothes."

Kevin and I freeze at the sound of Marianne's voice. He's left the bathroom door open, and I can see directly to my bed, which is where Marianne will go. "S-sure, Marianne. Just leave it on the bed. Thank you."

I left the sliding doors open when I seduced Kevin on the balcony, and a wind sweeps through the room, opening the bathroom door further. Kevin ducks so fast and just in time because Marianne steps into my view. If I can see her, she can definitely see me, too.

"Oof, let me fix the bed for you," she declares.

I open my mouth to tell her there's no need when I feel Kevin's tongue slide inside my pussy. His tongue! It takes every ounce of effort I have to swallow back a whimper. I want to tell Marianne to go and leave it alone, but I can't form the words. I lean back and pretend I'm still having a bath when Kevin is down and eating me

like I'm his last meal.

"I'll close the doors so you won't get cold when you leave the bath," Marianne says.

I only make a soft sound of agreement and close my eyes. If she looks at me, she'll see me relaxing in my tub. But I'm actually fighting for my life.

Kevin drapes my leg over his shoulder and circles his tongue on my clit while sliding two fingers in and out of me, and when he curls them inside me, my whole world shatters, and a moan escapes from my mouth. "Oh, God. This is too good."

"A good bath will always do you wonders." Marianne closes the door as I come hard. And by hard, I mean I'm shaking, and Kevin is lapping up my juices.

When I slump back, my strength sapped, Kevin lifts me in his arms, wraps a robe around me, and deposits me gently on the bed. I'm still in a daze, wondering what the hell was that, but as he kisses me, my body comes alive again.

My arms go around his neck, but he shakes his head and plants a kiss on my forehead.

"Good night, Kara. I'll see you tomorrow." He heads for the door and stops with his hand on the brass knob. "And know I'll sleep tonight with the taste of your pussy on my tongue."

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3

KEVIN

The lawn buzzes with conversation, glasses clinking, laughter, and the soft music of the string quartet by the podium. I stand to the side, surrounded by four men who seem to be talking all at once.

One pitches a new business idea, while the other argues the feasibility and profitability. The third leans in with a comment I don't understand, and the fourth laughs loudly at something I didn't hear. With a glass of red wine in one hand, I nod and murmur something noncommittal, my perfect practiced smile in place.

This is a necessary evil, I get that, but it never gets easier. I hate socializing, small talk, and endless posturing. Everyone beats around the bush like it's their favorite game.

My gaze wanders as I nod again and pretend to listen.

Then I see her.

Kara stands by the dessert table, her red dress catching the light. She has a plate in one hand as she surveys all the pastries on display. Her laughter floats across the space as she exchanges a joke with a woman at least three times older than her.

The tightness in my chest eases, and I breathe easier.

“Excuse me,” I say, cutting through their chatter.

I cross the lawn, ignoring those calling my name, and approach her. She looks up, and her smile widens. “Hey, stranger.”

“Hello, Kara.” I eye her half-full plate of two cookies, a slice of chocolate cake, macarons, some kind of apple pie, and souffle. “You have a sweet tooth, huh?”

“I do. Here, try this tart.”

“I don’t really—” She shoves a forkful into my mouth, and my eyebrows lift to my hairline. “Oh, wow. Not bad.”

She points the fork at me and grins. “Right? It’s so good. They’re my favorite caterers, by the way. They have a restaurant, but it’s way too far for me.”

“Which one is your favorite?” I ask and borrow the fork from her to take another bite.

“That’s a hard one.” Her forehead scrunches as she thinks. “They have this white chocolate panna cotta with strawberries, which I’m obsessed with, but I also love their chocolate mousse and cream puff.”

“Okay, give me one of each.”

She does, and I spend the next few minutes tasting each dessert. I’m not even a dessert guy, but hearing her talk animatedly about something she likes whets my appetite. Before I know it, we’re sharing one plate and ignoring the other guests.

This is my kind of party. Just her and me. Screw everyone else.

“Were you serious about what you said yesterday?” she asks, adding a custard tart to

the plate.

“Which one?”

“The business.”

“Of course. I wasn’t pulling your leg. It has potential.” Doubt crosses her features, and I put the fork down. “What is it?”

“I haven’t worked out everything yet. What I told you, that was all. I don’t have plans for the marketing and designs, but I know what I want—the vision, the branding, even the name.”

“That’s good enough. Besides, you’re still in college, right?”

“I will graduate next year.”

“So you still have time.”

“But I still don’t know a lot of things, Kevin. I was confident last night because I wanted to piss off my dad.” She goes quiet, her eyebrows drawing together.

“Kara, you don’t need to know everything. That’s why you hire brilliant people. You delegate. You have a vision, and you know how to get there. That’s enough for now. You’ll learn as you go. If you’re not good with marketing, hire someone who can help your brand take off. The same thing goes for the logistics and other technical aspects.”

“God, I wish I could be like you.”

“No, you don’t. I wasn’t given a choice with my future. It was a given that I would

take over one day, so I just did my best to learn all I could.”

“You don’t like it?”

I think for a moment and shake my head once. “I do. I learned to like it eventually. All I’m saying is, take it easy. Rome wasn’t built in a day.”

She gives me a lopsided grin. “You know, your hot meter goes up ten times when you go all-businesslike.”

“Then maybe we can?—”

“Kara, baby. I’ve been looking for you.”

“Oh my God,” Kara groans and rolls her eyes. “Are you kidding me?”

A young man staggers through the crowd. His black suit jacket hangs open, one side slipping off his shoulder, and his black bowtie dangles loosely around his neck.

“Hey, Kara.” His speech is slurred, his voice louder than necessary. He points a glass to Kara, splashing a few drops on the grass. “There’s my girl!”

I step in front of Kara, shielding her from him. She holds my arm and hisses at the other guy, “Why are you already drunk?”

“I may have discovered your wine cellar. Your dad is there right now, showing us his collection. I took the taste testing too seriously.” His words are slow, and each syllable is stretched. “Did you miss me?”

Before Kara can answer, I square my shoulders and pin him with a look. “Go sober up. This is not that kind of party.”

He stumbles closer, and I gently push Kara behind me. “Who are you? Why are you with Kara?” He doesn’t wait for me to respond and instead whines, “Baby, who is this? Why won’t you talk to me?”

“God, Kent. I don’t want to talk to you, and stop calling me baby.”

“Why? You don’t like me anymore?”

“I have never liked you. Now leave me alone.”

He steps to me, his breath reeking of whiskey. His bloodshot eyes flick to her. “Who the fuck are you?”

“Her future husband.”

The words don’t register immediately, and he blinks repeatedly. Before he can respond, Kara tugs on my hand and pulls me back inside the house and toward her bedroom.

She semi-sprints, and if my brain weren’t fogged up by lust, I would’ve been impressed with how she does it, given her sky-high heels.

The door closes behind me, and she whirls around, snaking her arms around my neck. “I’m so hot for you right now, future husband.”

“Are you?” I trail light kisses along her jaw.

Her breath comes in short pants as she digs her nails into my scalp. “Fuck me, Kev. Now.”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

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4

KARA

Downstairs, the night is alive.

The sounds of the party are muffled in my bedroom. In here, it feels far away. Everyone feels far away.

Closer is the steady rhythm of the waves crashing against the shore, the salty breeze from the ocean finding its way through the open windows, and the pulse pounding in my core.

My heartbeat drowns out the pull of everything else.

Kevin hooks a finger under my chin and lifts my face before brushing his lips against mine. I want him to be rough, hurried, and intense, but this will do ... for now.

This kiss feels different than last time. It's slow and languid like he's taking his sweet time with me because he knows I'm not going anywhere, that I belong only to him. Lust pools in my belly, hot and insistent, and as he breaks the kiss, his eyes go a little hazy.

He lifts me only to toss me to the bed, and the sudden playfulness is so out of character for him that I giggle. The silk of my dress shifts as I scoot to the bedpost, but he doesn't let me get far.

He wraps his hands around my ankles and pulls me back to him, resting my ankle on his shoulder as he undoes the straps of my heel and drops the shoe to the carpeted floor with a soft thud. He does the same to the other, and just watching him makes me throb with raw need.

Kevin turns to my leg, kissing my ankle, scorching a hot trail over my skin as his mouth travels to my calf, the side of my knee, and the inside of my thigh. He pushes my dress and bunches them around my waist, his nostrils flaring as his face is mere inches from my pussy.

“I’ll take this,” he says, ripping my pink lace panties and shoving them into his pocket.

“You’re cr?—”

The knock on the door makes us freeze. For God’s sake. Why are there so many interruptions? It’s like the universe wants to keep toying with us.

My heart races, for different reasons this time, as we both turn in unison at the sound, my father’s voice cutting through the muffled noises of the party.

“Kara, are you in there?”

Kevin meets my gaze, and without so much as a word, we dart toward the walk-in closet. The plush carpet mutes our hurried steps, and we slip inside, pulling the door shut just as the bedroom door creaks open.

“Kara? Are you here? I need you to go back to the party and chat with Andrea’s daughters.” His voice is closer, and I step backward, my back hitting Kevin’s chest. His arms go around my body, settling on my stomach.

My breathing turns shallow as he slides his hands along my body and lifts my dress. I almost stop breathing when he dips a finger inside me.

He hikes my dress to my waist, and I hear the sound of him unzipping. The next thing I know, the stiff spear of his erection is between my legs.

With my hands cupped against my mouth to stifle any sound I make, he nudges my foot to the side, so I'm more open to him. Dad's footsteps move across the room, but still, Kevin doesn't stop.

He slides into me inch by freaking inch, pressing his hard shaft flush to me until his pelvis rests against my butt. God, it's so good, and he's so big. I'm going to lose my mind if he doesn't move, even though I feel so full.

I wiggle my ass, and he digs his fingers into my waist. Slowly, he draws out of me and slides back in. The way he stretches me open only makes me wetter.

Dad sighs and mutters something under his breath as Kevin grips my thighs and fucks me with slow, purposeful strokes. He hunches over my back and brings his fingers between my legs to stroke my clit.

It doesn't take me long to see stars.

My orgasm rushes to the surface just as the bedroom door clicks shut. My lips part on unsteady inhales, and Kevin's thrusts begin to increase in speed and intensity.

He pulls out of me, only to lift me onto the wardrobe island and sink into me again. He lets out a gruff grunt of pure starvation as he pistons his hips, pounding into me like a beast.

I feel my belly getting warm again, and as he drapes my foot over his shoulder so he

can go deeper, a knot of tension winds tighter and tighter within me.

Pleasure wracks me in waves all over again, and I whimper his name. Seeing me come apart and feeling my pussy fluttering around him, Kevin groans raggedly and drives into me one more time.

Pulse after pulse of his warmth fills me, spilling out of me and onto the island. We take a moment to catch our breaths, and he leans to give me a soft kiss. “You drive me crazy, Kara.”

I turn into a lusty pile of mush. “In a good way?”

He kisses me again. “In the best way.”

5

KEVIN

“Where’s Craig?” I ask as I sink on the cushioned seat at the dining table.

Kara is glowing today, even more so than yesterday. She has her hair in a loose bun at her nape, no makeup on, and she’s in a pink floral dress. “Hungover. He’s trying to sleep it off.”

I eye the plates before me. Most of the guests eat either on their balconies or on a long table set up outside. Only Kara and I are here at the kitchen island.

I’m not exactly a breakfast person, but it’s like I woke up to a different life, and everything looks delicious.

For way too long, one day bled into the next, a dark smear of routine, obligations, and expectations. But today, everything is sharper and brighter. I can’t stop smiling, even as I drink my coffee, the bitterness tasting oddly comforting.

I know why.

It’s her.

She’s the reason the world feels new again.

“Is your coffee funny?” Kara asks, running a finger along the rim of her cup.

“What?”

“You’ve been smiling into it.”

“Oh, nothing.”

“You also look awfully chirpy.” Images of last night shuffle through my mind’s eye at her teasing tone.

“Well, you are glowing.”

“I was glowing yesterday, too.”

“Fair point.” I put down my cup and interlock my fingers on the marble table. “But there’s something different about you. Almost like?—”

“Like I got a huge cock shoved into me last night?”

My head automatically swivels, glancing around to see if anyone heard that.

“Kara...”

She widens her eyes, her pretend innocence only making me laugh. “What? You started it. Aren’t you too old for innuendoes?”

“That’s not an innuendo. That’s a straight-up explicit summary of last night.”

Kara smiles and takes a sip of her coffee. “I have a question.”

“Shoot.”

“What happens tomorrow?”

“What do you mean?”

“I go back to uni, and you go back home.”

I raise a brow at her. “So?”

The unspoken question hangs between us, and the fleeting sadness in her eyes pierce through me.

“Be honest with me. Is this nothing more than a weekend fling to you?” she asks, her voice losing its usual cadence.

“You think I go to business events and bed every woman I meet? No, Kara. This is far from being a fling.”

“So what should we do ... after? I’m three thousand miles away from you.”

“You forget who you’re talking to, Kara. I have a private plane. I can go to you for breakfast, fuck you at lunch, and leave after dinner.”

She laughs, her head tilted back. “You’d do that for me?”

The ground shifts under me. Something warm and unfamiliar unfurls in my chest, and I feel an ache, sharp but sweet. “There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”

Her eyes soften. “We’ve only met yesterday.”

“But you felt it, right?” I take her hands in mine and stare at her left ring finger, already imagining what kind of stone would best suit her. “Tell me you felt it too. The first time I saw you, it was like something clicked in me. Like my whole being lit up for you.”

“Kev...”

I make my way to her, no longer caring if anyone sees. We’re not doing anything wrong, so why shouldn’t I show her what I feel every chance I get?

She sits on the stool, and I cup her face in my hands, blush blooming on her cheeks. “Tell me you want this, Kara, because me? I’m all in. You own every part of me.”

Her eyes flutter, and she kisses my palm. “I’m all in for you.”

That’s the only thing I want to hear. The only thing that matters.

Pleasure sings through my nerves as I kiss her—not just fueled by lust. This time, it’s passionate, my lips molding to hers, our tongues tangling.

“What is the meaning of this?!”

Someone yanks me from her, and Kara sucks in a sharp breath, her face a mask of pure terror.

Craig’s jaw tightens, the muscle jerking as he clenches his teeth. His hands hang at his sides, his fists half-formed, fingers flexing as he glares at me.

His eyes burn. They lock onto me with an intensity that sucks the oxygen out of the room, making the air feel heavier.

I lift both palms, my gaze flicking to Kara. “If you’re going to be angry, be angry at me.”

He jabs a finger at me. “Of course, it’s you! You’re thirty-five, she’s just twenty-one!”

“Stop talking about me like I’m a child, Dad,” Kara says, trying to come between us.

“You are a child! He’s more than a decade older than you.”

“Just like you and Mom, then.”

“She was old enough.”

“Mom was twenty-six, and you were almost forty when you got married.”

“That’s not the same thing, Kara.” Craig suddenly looks like he’s aged ten years, and I can’t help but feel bad for the man.

“How is it not the same? Kevin and I aren’t doing anything wrong.”

“I was in love with her,” Craig says, his voice low, his shoulders sagging, even as he throws murderous looks my way.

“So am I with your daughter, Craig,” I tell him, threading my fingers through Kara’s. It feels a little weird saying it out loud, but it’s the truth. Nothing but the bloody truth.

“You just met her yesterday.”

“You married Mom two weeks after meeting her, and your marriage lasted three decades,” Kara says, tears springing to her eyes.

“Yeah, and look where we are now.”

“You were happy, Dad.”

“Until we weren’t.” Craig slumps on the nearest chair and rubs his forehead. “Kara,

listen.”

The silence stretches in the kitchen. We can hear the laughter and chatter of the guests outside, but the mood here is different, tense. One staff member walks toward the sink, sees our expressions, and spins on his heel, pretending he didn’t see anything.

Craig pinches the bridge of his nose and lets out a long breath before swinging his gaze to me. “If you mess with her, I don’t care if Ellis and I have been partners for years. I will cut both of you off without a second thought.”

I nod solemnly. “Understood.”

He breathes deeply and stands, scratching his head as he walks out, probably to check on the other guests or take a moment to wrap his mind around what just happened. Well, at least he no longer seems angry. He’s more likely resigned to the fact that he can’t do anything about us now.

The moment he’s out of our view, Kara grabs my forearm and forces me to look at her. “You’re in love with me?”

I release the breath I didn’t know I was holding. “What do you think this is all about, Kara? I told you I’m not into hookups and flings, and I sure as hell wouldn’t face your father’s wrath if I wasn’t serious with you.”

She beams at me, and I smile back. “Then how about we discuss our travel plans for the next few months?”

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6

KARA

Three Weeks Later

“Hi. Can I buy you a drink?”

I don't even spare him a glance as I scroll at my phone. “No, thanks. I'm not interested.”

Maybe he's deaf or an idiot, but he takes that as an invitation to slide into the seat across from me. “Let me guess. I bet you're a Margarita kind of gal.”

I lift my eyes to him, his features not even registering on me because whatever he looks like, he pales in comparison to Kevin. Every man pales in comparison to him. “Let me guess. I bet you're the kind who thinks 'no' means 'yes'.”

He bursts out laughing. “Feisty. I like it.”

“Please leave. I'm meeting my boyfriend.” I go back to my phone to check some initial designs for the first bikini collection. Thanks to Kevin's encouragement and advice, I'm now closer to realizing my dream.

“You shouldn't be here if you're gonna be this cold.”

Anger surges within me, and I give him the most sarcastic smile I can muster. “Oh,

I'm sorry. I didn't realize any woman who came here was fair game to every asshole who wants to score."

He leans forward and rests a hand on my shoulder, which I quickly brush off. "Come on, beautiful. You're just playing hard to get. This game can get old real quick."

"Don't ever touch me, you piece of shit." I don't want to make a scene, but if he continues with this, I will scream as loud as I can. "I have a date. So if I were you, I'd leave before he gets here."

He laughs that grating laugh again. "No, you don't. You're just saying that. Come on, beautiful. I promise you'll have a good time."

"I'm giving you five seconds to vacate that seat and stay away from her."

Warmth radiates from my chest to my fingers when I spot Kevin behind him. He's wearing a crisp white shirt, black dress pants, and a suit jacket slung over his forearm.

God, he's so handsome and hot.

And he's mine.

And he's furious.

He looks at me, and his gaze softens. "Are you okay, baby?"

I nod, then smirk at the asshole. "You're in big trouble."

The asshole puffs out his chest and stands, trying to intimidate Kevin, who's a few inches taller than him. He points his thumb at Kevin. "You with this guy? Damn. I didn't peg you for a social climbing b?—"

Kevin swings a fist and clocks him in the jaw. The asshole, for all his bragging, is unprepared for the hit, and he ends up sprawled on the table beside mine, his eyebrows squishing together.

Kevin removes his cufflinks and rolls his sleeves to his elbows. “She can buy your entire existence with her money.” He glares at the asshole. “Her own money.”

The guards finally arrive, and the asshole has the audacity to point at Kevin while clutching his face. “Grab that guy. He hit me first. I’m pressing charges.”

The guards don’t do anything, and Kevin casts them a look over his shoulder. “The CCTVs can pick up audio, right? You recorded him harassing her?”

One of the guards nods. “Yes, sir. Sorry, we didn’t notice them earlier.”

“It’s fine. Just be more mindful next time, especially if we have female customers.”

The asshole glances around as if he’s looking for answers. His gaze finally settles on Kevin, who has stepped beside me. “Who are you?”

Kevin kisses the top of my head. “I own this place, and I’m her boyfriend. I’m giving you another five seconds to leave. If you want to press charges, then, by all means, do it. Just remember I have you on record forcing yourself on her.”

The asshole’s earlier smugness is gone and replaced by fear. Serves him just right.

Kevin's voice carries an edge of finality, and the other guy stiffens, color draining from his face.

He shoots to his feet, knocking the table slightly, and scrambles to the door, almost tripping several times.

We watch him leave, and the hum of conversation returns. Kevin drags the chair beside me and runs his knuckles along the side of my face. “You okay? Sorry, I got held up at the meeting.”

I’m so happy and full of love, I feel like I’m going to burst. “It’s fine. I didn’t wait long.” I lean into his hand and search his handsome features. “I also didn’t think you were the jealous type.”

His gaze drops to my mouth. “I’m not.”

“Oh? Could’ve fooled me.”

His knuckle trails down my neck, and I stop breathing, wet heat blooming in my thighs. “No one touches what’s mine.”

“Possessive, then.”

“You don’t like it?”

“I like it. I like it so much.”

He lowers his voice and coasts his lips over mine. “Show me.”

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EPILOGUE

KEVIN

My father has officially handed the empire to me, and this is his long-overdue retirement party. Both of us know he won't be quitting, though. He'll be on the sidelines, listening, observing, and giving unsolicited advice.

The men before me won't stop talking. I stopped listening a few minutes ago when they wanted to discuss business at a time when I just wanted to relax. I'm going to have to get used to it, I know, but not today.

Today, I have more important things to do.

I focus on Kara, holding onto my arm, smiling politely at one of the Board of Directors. She's stunning in her deep red dress, her hair down just the way I like it. She only has a pair of earrings and a thin bracelet, but it doesn't matter.

She glows.

I lean in close, my voice steady even though my heart is about to jump out of my chest. "Let's step outside for a minute." Turning to the others, I give them a sharp nod. "Excuse us, gentlemen."

Kara lets me guide her toward the balcony, and the glass door closes softly behind us. Inside, there are at least three hundred guests. Here, it's just her and me. Just the way I like it.

Before she can say anything, I take both of her hands in mine and kiss them. “Kara, I fell for you the first time I saw you. I fell deep and hard. It was like a part of me said, ‘It’s you. Finally, you’re here.’ I didn’t even know you were what was missing from my life until you arrived.”

A tear spills down her cheek, and I wipe it before sinking to one knee. I pull out a small velvet box from my breast pocket, and her hands fly to her mouth.

This is it. It’s the moment I couldn’t stop thinking about from the first time I laid eyes on her.

I open the box and show her the diamond ring inside. “Will you marry me, Kara?”

Her lips quiver as she nods. “I will. I will marry you.”

Happiness cracks me open as I slide the ring onto her finger and stand to pull her into my arms. She buries her face in my chest, and I lift her chin to me and seal this moment with a kiss.

“I love you, Kara. You make me whole.”

“I love you too, Kevin. I’m yours, always.”

Damn right.

Kara is mine, and I am hers. That’s the way it will be until my last breath.