



The Players Next Door (Hotshot Harems)

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Category: Sport

Description: My brother's best friends live down the hall.

Towering hockey players with bodies chiseled from granite...I can't look away.

They all want me and they're willing to do anything to make me theirs.

I just landed my dream job as a sportscaster for the Minnesota Grizzlies.

While moving into my new apartment, my lacy unmentionables and nighttime toys tumble out of a box.

The three hockey gods arrive just in time to "help".

Jaxon, the cocky star player, always gets what he wants. He oozes masculine charm and enjoys flaunting his rule-breaker attitude.

Deacon is the brooding, silent heartthrob with the most intense gray eyes. He has a wild side that's impossible to resist.

And Cameron, the jacked goalie, sees right through my defenses. He comes off as brash and grumpy but he's a total teddy bear.

Being the team sportscaster means constant access...and temptation.

How can I stay professional while they're all vying for a shot?

And, if my brother finds out, he'll slice their balls off with his skate blade.

I agreed to just one night. How could I not?

But our chemistry is too strong to ignore.

And now I'm pregnant with their baby.

Indulge in this 'why choose' standalone novella for an escape with a

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 1

Holly

"Y eah, Sawyer, I'm at the apartment now," I huff into the phone, balancing one of my last moving boxes against my hip as I slam my car door closed. "Thank you for this, seriously."

"Well, I'm not going to toot my own horn, but I think this earns me the 'best brother ever' trophy, don't you?" Sawyer's voice crackles with static, but his teasing tone is clear as day.

"Right, I—" The box shifts and I scramble to get a better hold on it. "I'll get right on that."

I do my best not to roll my eyes...and fail. My fingers are numb from the endless parade of boxes and totes, and I almost drop my phone but I finally manage to hook it between my ear and shoulder.

"Seriously, Sawyer." I push through the lobby doors with my hip. The box in my arms teeters precariously as I edge toward the elevator. "I can't believe your place is like ten minutes from the arena. It's perfect."

"See? Told you, squirt. You'll do great things there." His confidence in me gives me a huge boost.

"I really hope so."

I press the call button with my elbow and listen as Sawyer chatters on about his new apartment out west. I hate that he got traded from the Grizzlies right as I'm getting started with the franchise, but this is a good move for him. And I got a great apartment out of it, so it can't be all that bad.

"Shit!" The box wobbles, but I manage to get a hand on it without dropping my phone.

"Everything okay?" Sawyer asks right as the elevator dings open.

"Uh, yeah. Just trying to juggle a few too many things."

"Hey, Hol, remember to check the—" Sawyer's voice cuts out, and I smack the phone against my cheek, trying to hear him more clearly.

"Check the what?" I grumble, shifting the box again. My heart races. This is my chance to step into the big leagues of sports broadcasting, and it's all thanks to my big brother. But man, this city feels so much bigger than back home.

Parking was an impossibility. And the cost of movers? Way out of my price range. Sawyer said some of his hockey buddies lived in the building, but I didn't want to bother a bunch of strangers to help me move in.

"Water pressure," he finishes as I step out onto my floor. "Shower can be kind of wonky."

"Got it, water pressure," I repeat, just as the box gives a sudden lurch. Fuck. A cascade of bras, lacy panties, and—crap, is that the vibrator my bestie got me for my birthday?—spills across the hallway floor.

"Damn it!" I hiss, squatting down to grab everything. The elevator dings.

As the elevator doors slide open, I freeze, my hand still clutching a pair of lacy panties. My eyes dart from one man to the next, each stepping out with a presence that commands attention, but in very different ways.

Of fucking course.

Sweet cheese and crackers, these men are gorgeous. And I mean drool-worthy . What perfect timing. I was just thinking I needed to meet the world's hottest men when I was at my sweatiest and most embarrassing.

The first one to step out rubs his chiseled jawline with one hand. His curly light brown hair, which is cropped short, catches the overhead lights, and his piercing brown eyes flicker with a knowing smirk. A delicious dimple appears in his cheek as he surveys the scene.

Broad shoulders and tattoos hint at a rough exterior, but the lazy arrogance in his stride makes him impossibly magnetic. I can almost feel the electricity from his smirk, and I have to force myself to look away.

A towering figure stalks out after the first guy and the contrast is striking. Where the first is all swagger and sharp edges, this guy is a calm mountain by comparison.

He has shoulder-length dirty blonde hair and piercing green eyes, which give him a look of quiet intensity. His reserved demeanor makes him seem almost aloof, but there's something undeniably endearing about the way his high cheekbones and thoughtful gaze soften his stern exterior.

The last man to step out would render me speechless if I wasn't already biting my tongue. Dark, wavy hair falls casually over his intense gray eyes, and a five-day beard surrounds his lush lips. He has a brooding presence, but the moment his lips curl into a smile, it's like the room is bathed in sunlight.

They freeze as they all catch sight of me and my predicament.

"Everything okay here?" a deep voice asks. Broody and Bright, as I've mentally dubbed them, start toward me before I can unswallow my tongue.

"Fine, fine." My face burns hotter than a sauna. "Just...moving in."

"Need a hand?" That's the gentle giant. His tone is quieter, more reserved.

"Please, don't worry about it." I snatch up a bra and shove it back into the box. If the floor could swallow me whole right now, that'd be great.

"You sure? Really looks like you could use a hand—or two," the tattooed god's dimpled smile doesn't help my blush.

"Got it!" I squeak, trying to snatch everything up at superhuman speed.

The gentle giant bends down, all focused energy and quiet intensity, and my pulse stutters. He's close—too close—and when he straightens, a lacy something dangles from his fingers. Mortification floods me. I'm about to make an even bigger fool of myself; I can feel it.

"Here." His voice is soft, barely above a whisper, but it rolls over me, warm and deep. He hands me the offending garment without so much as a smirk. Our fingers brush, and a jolt shoots through me. Green eyes lock onto mine, sparking with something that feels a lot like heat.

"Uh, thanks," I choke out, snatching the lingerie like it's a lifeline. But it's not, because now I'm drowning in those eyes, in the silent question they ask, the one I don't have an answer to.

"Anytime." There's a hint of a smile on his lips, but it doesn't reach those intense green eyes. They're still looking at me, seeing way too much. It's like he knows every secret I've ever kept, every thought I've never said out loud.

"Right." I stuff the lacy item into the box—trying to subtly shove the hot pink dildo back inside before anyone sees—slamming the lid shut. "Appreciate the help."

"Any time," Mr. Broody says again, and I don't miss the way his lips twitch, like he's fighting a smile too.

"Sure." The word comes out of my mouth breathy and light, fluttering around the hallway like a lost butterfly. I need to get out of here, away from their helpful hands and knowing looks.

"Welcome to the building," the gentle giant adds, sounding polite but distant. Like he's already put up a wall between us. I'm not sure if I want to tear it down or hide behind it myself.

"Thanks." I force a smile, hoping it doesn't look as shaky as it feels. "Guess I'll see you around."

"Looking forward to it," Broody replies with a grin that could melt the ice at the Grizzlies' home arena.

I nod, clutching the box to my chest like it's a shield, and rush toward my brother's old apartment. My new refuge. Away from embarrassing drops and smoldering neighborly assists. Because, of course, they're my neighbors, why wouldn't they be?

"See ya," I call over my shoulder, not daring to look back at them. Not yet. Not until my face stops feeling like a five-alarm fire.

As the door slams behind me, I lean against it, my heart pounding. New city, new job, and new neighbors who are way too handsome and way too close for comfort.

"Get it together, Holly," I mutter to myself. "It's just a couple of hot men who saw your unmentionables. No big deal."

But who am I kidding? It's a very big deal.

I catch my breath, back pressed against the door. That's when I notice it—my phone's not in my hand or my pocket. Panic spikes within me. A knock sounds on the door, the impact vibrating through my body.

"Looking for this?" The voice is deep, confident. It's the tattooed god.

I peel the door open a crack and peer back out. He's got my lifeline in his hand, and he's talking into it like it's his. I squint at him, trying to make sense of it all. Then it clicks. Sawyer's laugh filters through the speaker.

"Give me that!" I lunge for the phone, cheeks flaming.

"Whoa, easy tiger," he chuckles, handing it over.

"Who's that? Your boyfriend?" The tattooed god leans over my shoulder, looking at my phone where Sawyer is still waiting.

"Brother," I say sharply, glaring over my shoulder at the tattooed man, who has this look on his face like he knows something I don't. "Sawyer, I—stop laughing."

"Put me on speaker, Hol."

Sawyer's laughter continues to ring through the phone as I switch it to speaker. He's

clearly enjoying my discomfort.

"Having fun with the new neighbors?" Sawyer's voice crackles through the phone, still laced with amusement.

"Oh, loads. You know me. I always like to make a big splash." I roll my eyes, trying to play off my embarrassment. If only my cheeks would cooperate. I'm pretty sure they're as rosy as Santa's.

"Hey, fellas," Sawyer's voice booms through the phone, his tone easygoing and familiar. "I guess that's one way to meet my little sister." He snorts.

"Hey, Sawyer," Broody smiles mischievously.

"Deacon! Don't scare her off, okay? And don't worry about her. Her bark is much worse than her bite."

"Yeah, yeah. We know, Sawyer. You gave us all the 'watch out for my baby sister or you'll never play hockey again' speech before you left. And every day since."

I can feel my face heat up even more, my embarrassment reaching new levels. These men aren't just random neighbors—they're players from the team, and Sawyer knows them. How could I have missed this?

I want to disappear into the floor.

It's not too late to find a different, equally amazing job and a mostly free apartment, right?

"Jaxon," the tattooed guy says with that panty-melting smirk.

“Cameron,” the gentle giant offers with a soft smile.

“Deacon. And you must be Holly.”

"Uh, hi," I manage to squeak out, feeling utterly exposed under their amused gazes.

I can feel my cheeks burning hotter than ever. Of all the ways to meet Sawyer's old teammates—men I would now be working with. Dropping my unmentionables in front of them was not on my list of ways that I wanted to be introduced to them. How do I recover from this?

Sawyer's voice crackles through the phone again, clearly enjoying the events unfolding at his old apartment. "You're doing great, Hol. Just remember to breathe."

"Thanks, Sawyer," I mutter into the phone, trying to keep my composure. "Really appreciate the moral support."

"No problem," he replies cheerfully. "You got this. And don't forget to take your antibiotics!"

“Thanks, Mom,” I snark, cringing at what they must think I need the antibiotics for. With what I just spread out on the floor, I’m sure they’re thinking the worst. "I'll talk to you later, okay?"

"Sure thing, squirt. Don't let these guys scare you off," he teases. “They’re just a bunch of knuckleheads.”

Meanwhile, the three men in front of me exchange amused glances as if they're sharing some private joke that I'm not privy to. Great, now they're probably going to nickname me 'Panties' or something equally embarrassing.

"So, Holly," Jaxon starts, leaning casually against the wall, "welcome to the building."

"Yeah, welcome," Cameron adds with a friendly nod.

"Nice to meet you," Deacon says, his tone a curious mix of amusement and something I can't quite place.

"You too," I manage, hoping my voice doesn't betray the whirlwind of emotions swirling inside me—embarrassment, attraction, and the nagging feeling that something big has just happened.

I reach behind me, fumbling for the doorknob. Escape is the only thing on my mind. I'm pretty sure my mortified blush has spread from my cheeks to my chest and I don't think it's going away anytime soon. I've already given them a little peek at my unmentionables. There's no need to give them my best impression of a tomato on top of it.

"Thank you for the help," I say, because Mama Hawthorne raised me to be polite, even if I want to crawl into a hole right now.

"Anytime, neighbor." Jaxon nods, and I swear there's a hint of mischief in those brown eyes.

"We'll be seeing you around," I hear someone say just before the door cuts off the world outside. Great, Holly. Just great.

"First impression," I mutter to myself, sliding down the door. "Nailed it."

The pressure to make a good impression on the players who are also my neighbors just skyrocketed. How am I going to face them again after this?

With a sigh, I shake my head, reminding myself that everyone has embarrassing moments. This is one of mine, but hopefully it won't define my relationship with my new neighbors—or my new job.

But as I glance around my half-unpacked apartment, I can't help but wonder if things are about to get a lot more interesting than I ever bargained for.

I'm finally starting to feel settled here. It's been a few days since I moved into Sawyer's old place and I really feel like I'm getting the hang of things. But tonight has me on edge. It's my first game on the air while the Grizzlies are on the ice.

Please let this go well.

Stepping into the broadcast booth feels like stepping onto fresh ice—slippery and unfamiliar. Colton's already there, headset on, flipping through his own notes. He looks up when he sees me, his brown eyes crinkling at the corners.

"Hey, Holly, ready to make some magic?" he asks, his voice steady and warm.

"Sure," I say, but my hands tremble like rookie legs on the rink. If I stepped out onto the ice right now, I'd be a total bender. I set my notes down next to his, a neat stack of stats and player bios. I can pull most of the info up on my laptop, but I like having physical copies of the important stuff.

"First times are always rough," Colton says, leaning back in his chair. "But you know your stuff. Just follow my lead, and we'll have them eating out of our hands."

I nod, trying to believe him. My eyes dart over the notes, each line a potential trip-up. What if I choke? What if I can't find the words?

"Take deep breaths," Colton advises, noticing my nerves. "And remember, it's just

hockey. You grew up with this game."

"Right. Just hockey," I repeat, like a mantra. Maybe if I say it enough, it'll be true.

My phone buzzes in my pocket, making me jump. I fish it out and Sawyer's name lights up the screen. The text reads, "Knock 'em dead, Hol. I'll be listening."

A smile tugs at my lips. That's Sawyer, always there for me even when he's miles away on another team. I type back a quick "Thanks, big bro," and then silence the phone. Can't have distractions now, not when every second counts.

"Who's that?" Colton asks, nodding at my phone.

"My brother," I reply, slipping the device back into my pocket. "Sending luck from the enemy camp."

"Ah, family rivalries," Colton chuckles. "Adds spice to the game."

"Something like that." I glance at the clock. Showtime is closing in, fast and fierce.

"Let's do this," I say, more to myself than to Colton. But he nods, as if I've just said the magic words.

"Let's," he agrees, and suddenly, I'm not feeling quite as alone on this fresh ice. Maybe, just maybe, I can glide after all.

The buzzer sounds, and the players spill onto the ice. My heart's racing, but not with nerves anymore. It's excitement now, pure and electric.

"Looks like the Grizzlies are hungry for a win tonight," I say, my voice steady and clear in my own ears.

"Absolutely, Holly," Colson replies, his baritone a smooth contrast to my lighter tones. "But don't count the Sharks out just yet."

"I would never do that," I shoot back, grinning as the puck slides across the slick surface. The crowd roars, a wave of sound that crashes over us, but I'm riding it, not drowning.

"Smith passes to Kowalski," I narrate, eyes on the game, mind sharp. "He's been a force all season."

"Force is right," Colton says. "But the Grizzlies' defense isn't giving an inch, and Cam Porter has been strong in the goal tonight."

"Talk about an immovable object meeting an unstoppable force." I'm getting into this, the words coming as fast as the action on the ice.

"Classic physics," Colton quips.

"Only more bruising," I add, and we both laugh, the sound natural, easy.

Something warm blossoms inside me. Pride? Confidence? Both? As the third period ends, I lean back, surprised by how fast it's gone, by how right this feels.

"Great job, Holly," Colton says, and I beam at him.

"Thanks, Colton. You're not too shabby yourself."

"Years of practice," he admits with a wink.

"Guess what they say is true," I muse. "Practice makes perfect."

"Then you're well on your way."

"Thanks to a good coach." I nod at him, grateful beyond words.

"Team effort," he insists, and there it is again—that feeling of not being alone.

"Right you are," I agree, and as the lights shine down on the ice gleaming below, I know it deep in my bones—I can do this.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 2

Jaxon

The roar of the crowd from the Grizzlies game still echoes in my ears as we step into Blue Line, the bar's familiar musk and dim lights wrapping around us like a second skin. I'm surrounded by bunnies, and not the cute fluffy kind. No, these are the kind of bunnies who will do just about anything to get in your pants.

They're all vying for my attention with too-tight dresses and eager eyes. Normally I'd be all over that shit. Hell, I wouldn't even wait till I got home, probably taking one of them to the back hall or the storage room that's never locked. But not tonight.

None of them hold a candle to her—Holly Hawthorne.

"Jax, you're not even listening, man," Cameron laughs, nudging me with his elbow.

I flick my gaze to Cam, and then it goes right back to Holly. She's across the room, sipping on something that looks like liquid gold in the low light. The way she tosses her chin-length blond hair over her shoulder and laughs at something on her phone—it's like she's in slow motion and the rest of the world just blurs around her.

I can't take my eyes off her. I don't even want to.

"Can't blame him," Deacon chimes in, his voice smooth like whiskey. "She's got that vibe—like she's not even trying, and still, damn..."

"Sweet and sexy," I mutter, more to myself than to them.

"Got that innocent look that makes you think of...well, not-so-innocent things," Deacon adds with a smirk.

"Guys, we shouldn't be talking about her like that." Cam's the voice of reason, but even he can't peel his green eyes away from her.

"Can't help it," I admit without shame. Flashes of our flirty exchanges light up my brain—a touch here, a laugh there. It's like a game we've been playing, except none of us knows the rules or how to win.

All week, the three of us have been dancing around her trying to figure out this new dynamic. Sawyer asked me to watch out for her. I don't think this is what he had in mind. Fuck, he'd remove my balls with his skate blades if he knew half the shit running through my mind.

"Careful, man. You know she's Sawyer's sister." Cam's warning cuts through the hum of my thoughts. "She's off-limits, remember?"

"Tell me something I don't know," I say, frustration edging my words. It's wrong—God, it's so wrong. She's my best friend's little sister, and now she's the voice of our games. But damn if she isn't temptation personified. She's off-limits. As untouchable as a Stanley Cup dream—but just as alluring.

But I already have a Stanley Cup under my belt. Maybe I can have her too.

She takes another sip of her drink, her pouty lips wrapping around the glass, and I can't help but wonder what they would look like wrapped around my cock. I feel that familiar pull in my gut—that dangerous thrill of wanting what I shouldn't have.

"Rules are made to be broken, aren't they?" Deacon winks, but I can see the caution in his eyes.

"Damn right, they are," I murmur. But as the heat of the room presses in, the reality of our situation sets up like ice.

"Are you sure this is a good idea?"

"Jaxon Raleigh, king of bad ideas." I chuckle dryly, tossing back what's left of my drink.

I weave through the crowd, the buzz of post-game adrenaline still thick in the air. Blue Line's dim lights cast everyone in a forgiving sort of shadow, but Holly? She's all bright spots and clear lines, even from across the room.

I need a new drink. What a perfect excuse to sidle up next to the sexy little thing and see how this plays out.

"Bro, we need to talk," Deacon mutters, hooking an arm around my shoulders and steering me back toward a secluded corner where Cameron leans against the wall, his gaze following her like a hawk.

"About?" I play dumb, but the look Deacon gives me cuts through the crap.

"You know what: Holly," he says, and that one word is heavy with a thousand unspoken thoughts.

"Look, I know the deal with Sawyer..." My voice trails off as Cam runs a hand through his hair, a telltale sign of his own internal battle.

"We're all thinking it," Cam finally admits, eyes locked on mine then shifting to

Deacon's. "Sawyer is family, and we made him a promise. But damn man. I want her. I can't stop thinking about her."

"Cam's already one step ahead." Deacon laughs. "He got to touch her sexy little panties, didn't you, big guy?"

"So, we all want her?" I ask.

The three of us stand there, caught in an unspoken agreement. Holly Hawthorne is stunning—a walking contradiction that hooks you deep. And we're all snagged on the same line.

"Sharing's never been our issue. I know I've been jerking off to thoughts of her all week, so you'll get no complaints from me."

"It's Sawyer's sister. One night of debauchery with the three of us feels...wrong somehow. But I'm not sure I'm thinking with the right head here."

"Definitely not," Deacon agrees, a ghost of a smile lifting the corner of his mouth. "But she's...different."

"More than different," I counter, leaning back against the cool brick wall. "She's a game changer. Sawyer's sister. Our broadcaster. It's not just a bad idea—it's the worst."

I'd say I don't know what's gotten into me, but I do. It's desire—reckless, relentless desire. And it's leading me straight to Holly Hawthorne.

There is so much that can go wrong here, so much at stake. I should be running in the other direction. Instead, I'm adjusting my half-hard dick and debating if I can even wait until tomorrow to go after what I want.

Because I want her. Plain and simple.

"So what's our play?" Deacon's gray eyes are calculating, already plotting the moves he wants to take.

"Full offense," I say, pushing off from the wall. "We go in together. No secrets, no holding back."

"Are we seriously considering this?" Cam asks, but his eyes betray him; they're already lit up with the fire of the hunt.

"Looks like it." Deacon's voice is calm, a stark contrast to the beat of my heart, loud in my chest.

"Tonight?" There's a finality in my tone, a decision being made despite the alarm bells ringing loudly in my head. "One night. We get it all out of our system, and we all move on."

"Tonight," they echo, and we straighten up, a united front ready to face the most dangerous game we've ever played.

"Let's make our move," I say, and we step out of the shadows, drawn to the light that is Holly Hawthorne.

The bar's neon lights cast a kaleidoscope glow over Holly's face, her blue eyes sparkling like the ice back at the arena. She stands alone now, her laughter still ringing in my ears even though she's all the way across the crowded room. The beat of the music thrums through me as I take that first step, flanked by Cam and Deacon.

Fuck, she's beautiful. She's not like the puck bunnies hanging on our every word. There's no skin-tight dress or caked-on makeup. She's not begging to jump on my

dick in hopes she can ride it into a better life. This girl is real. And that should terrify me.

Instead, it just makes me want her more.

"Hey," I say, keeping it simple as we close the distance.

"Hi, Jaxon," Holly says, her smile warm, unaware of the storm she's about to be caught in. I see the flash of desire in her eyes before she shuts the emotion. Yeah, she's feeling this too. The question is, what's she going to do about it?

"Fun game tonight." Deacon leans against the bar casually, like he's talking about the weather instead of the firestorm inside us.

Fuck. Now that we're close enough, I can smell her. She has this sweet vanilla and cinnamon scent that I just can't get enough of. I shove my hands into my pockets to keep myself from reaching out for her. But I can't stop the way my body sways in her direction, desperate for just one touch.

"Your plays were...impressive," Holly adds, her cheeks flushing a delicate pink.

"Thanks, Hol," Cam chimes in, his grin easy but his eyes intense. "But we've got something more...exciting to discuss."

Her gaze flicks between us, curious, a touch of caution there too. Smart girl.

"We've been thinking—" I start.

"Fantasizing is more like it," Deacon corrects with a half-smirk.

"About what?" The question slips from Holly's lips, innocent but edged with the

knowledge that something is up.

"About you," Cam says bluntly. "About us."

"Us?" Her eyebrows knit together, the blush deepening.

"Here's the deal." I lean closer, lowering my voice. "We're into you, Holly. All three of us. And we know it's complicated. But we can't shake this...tension."

"Sexual tension," Deacon clarifies, as if it wasn't clear already.

"Right." Cam nods. "And we have a proposition for you."

"Go on..." she prompts, her breath catching slightly.

"One night," I say, watching her closely. "No strings, just us and you. Together. One night to get this crazy chemistry out of our system."

"Think of it as...an exclusive interview," Cam adds with a playful wink.

"Very exclusive," Deacon interjects.

Silence hangs for a heartbeat, two, three. Then Holly bites her lip, considering. Dangerous territory, but here we are, laying it all on the line.

"Are you sure? This could get messy," she says, eyes searching each of ours. "And, I've never..."

"Life's messy," I answer truthfully. "But this feels...right."

"Could be fun," Deacon says with a shrug, as if we're suggesting a midnight skate.

"Intense," Cam adds, his voice low.

"Intensely fun," I finish, hoping it sounds more convincing than desperate.

Holly looks at us, really looks at us, her gaze piercing. Then, slowly, the corner of her mouth lifts into a coy smile. "One night," she echoes, and it's like a green light flashing "go" in my head.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 3

Holly

I'm standing in the middle of the Blue Line bar, my heart hammering like it wants to burst through my ribcage. Jaxon's dark eyes bore into mine, filled with heat and promise. Cameron's soft smile tells me he doesn't doubt what my answer will be. And Deacon, oh God, Deacon is already prowling toward me like a lion who knows the kill is inevitable.

"Let me get this straight," I say, my voice surprisingly steady. "All three of you. One night. With me?"

Jaxon nods, the corner of his mouth ticking up. "That's the deal, Hol. We share more than just the ice." He winks.

My cheeks flame hot. This isn't me. I'm Holly Hawthorne, the girl from a Podunk town where everyone says please and thank you and no one would dream of such a...scandalous arrangement.

But...

"Look, I'm not usually into casual sex," I admit, fiddling with the hem of my sweater. "One-night stands? They've happened, but they never rocked my world."

Cameron leans against the wall, arms folded over his chest. "We're offering earthquakes, Holly."

"Life-altering," Deacon adds, his voice low and husky.

I can feel their eyes on me, stripping me down to nothing but raw desire and curiosity. It's overwhelming, intoxicating. One part of me screams to run for the hills, to cling to the good girl image I've always had. But another part—a new, daring part—whispers seductively that I might just regret saying no more than I'd regret saying yes.

"Earthquakes, huh?" I say, trying to sound light-hearted even though my stomach is doing backflips.

"Multiple. Guaranteed," Jaxon says, stepping closer.

And suddenly, I realize that this isn't just about sex. It's about breaking free, shattering the mold I've been poured into all my life. These men—these incredibly sexy hockey players—are offering me a chance to redefine myself. To discover who Holly Hawthorne really is when she steps off the beaten path.

And I can't pretend like I don't want them. Desperately. Because I do. I haven't stopped thinking about them since I met them. And, despite the mortifying start to our relationship, they seem to want me right back.

"Okay." The word slips out, quiet but certain. "One night."

Their grins are predatory but not frightening. There's excitement there, and something that feels a lot like victory. For them or for me, I'm not sure yet.

"On one condition," I add quickly. "This stays a secret. My brother can never know. The team can never know."

"Cross our hearts," Deacon promises, drawing an X over his chest.

"Hope to die," Cameron chimes in, dead serious despite the playful glint in his eyes.

"Stick a hockey stick in my eye," Jaxon finishes, and we all crack up.

The tension breaks, but the anticipation in the room builds into something tangible. I'm about to step into uncharted territory. I should be scared, but I'm mostly feeling exhilarated. Maybe this will change everything. Maybe it'll change nothing at all.

But one thing's for certain—tonight, Holly Hawthorne is playing a whole new game.

Cameron takes my hand, and I can't help but think that no matter how this ends, it's going to be one hell of a ride. And for one reckless, exhilarating night, we're willing to risk the fall.

Heat crawls up my neck, flushing my cheeks as Jaxon's car eats up the distance to our apartment building. I'm sandwiched in the back, Deacon's presence like a live wire beside me. The city lights blur past us. His touch makes me feel like my skin is on fire, and the chilly night air does little to soothe the ache tingling through my nerve endings.

"God, Holly," Deacon murmurs loud enough for the boys up front to hear. His fingers dance over my skin, bold and unapologetic.

My breath hitches, caught between embarrassment and raw need. In the rearview mirror, Jaxon's eyes meet mine. They're dark and heavy with promise. Cameron gives nothing away, but his jaw is tight, hands gripping the steering wheel like he's holding onto control by a thread.

Deacon's lips trace a path from my jawline to the sensitive area behind my ear. He presses a gentle kiss there, his stubble tickling my skin and sending shivers down my spine. I bite my lip to suppress the moan that threatens to escape, not wanting to give

away how much his touch affects me.

Deacon leans back but keeps his hand lingering tantalizingly close to my thigh, his gaze intense. "Is this okay?" Deacon whispers against my ear, his breath hot. He doesn't wait for my answer before pressing closer, his hand moving in slow, deliberate circles that draw a moan from deep within me.

His fingertips trace a tingling path up my stomach, slipping under the hem of my shirt until his hand rests firmly on my breast. His fingers squeeze gently, sending shivers through my body as I melt into his touch.

"More than okay," I manage to gasp out. My body is betraying every doubt with its eagerness, desire pooling low in my belly.

He presses his lips against mine, his gaze locking onto mine as his fingers fumble with the button on my pants and slides the zipper down. His hand slips beneath my lace panties, sending a shiver through my body.

"You're so wet for us."

Deacon's words send a jolt of electricity through me, my body responding to his touch in ways I never thought possible. The heat between my legs is real, a testament to how much I want them, how much I need their touch.

"Please."

"Fuck," Jaxon curses in the front seat, his eyes locked on mine in the rearview.

Deacon thrusts his fingers inside me, and I cry out, my hips bucking against his hand. The pleasure is intense, unbearable, but I want more. I need more. I want to feel them all.

He adds a second finger, his thumb circling my throbbing clit. It feels so fucking good. I'm making noises that should embarrass me beyond belief, but I'm beyond caring. A series of curses come from the front seat, but I don't have the ability to open my eyes and see who.

I'm climbing. The pressure is spreading until I can't take it anymore.

"Come for us, Holly," Cameron growls, and I can't hold back anymore. I come with a loud cry, my inner walls clenching on Deacon's fingers. Fuck, I wish it was something else.

I close my eyes, trying to steady my racing pulse as the car finally pulls up in front of the apartment building. Cameron makes a turn and the car slides smoothly into the parking garage. The space is dimly lit, casting shadows that feel like they're hiding us away from the world.

The engine cuts off, leaving a heavy silence in its wake. It's the calm before the storm, the calm before I step into a night that could shatter everything I thought I knew about myself. It's here, surrounded by concrete and steel, that I find my voice.

"Guys, wait." The words come out stronger than I expected.

The movement in the car stills. Three pairs of eyes—hungry, intense—lock onto me.

"I want this," I say, my heart hammering against my ribs. "I do. But I mean it. This has to be our secret. They can't know. The team can't know."

"Of course, Holly," Jaxon says, his voice a soothing rumble. "Your brother doesn't have to know a thing. No one does."

"Nobody will hear about it from us," Cameron adds, his green eyes serious, reflecting

the promise in his words.

"Your secrets safe with me, sweetheart," Deacon reassures me, his hand finally stilling against me, but the heat of him lingers like a brand.

"Good." Relief washes over me in an icy wave, but it's quickly consumed by the fire they've stoked inside me. "Then let's not keep the night waiting."

We spill out of the car, the cold snap of the air barely registering with any of us. Jaxon leads the way, a predator on the prowl. Cameron follows, silent and watchful. Deacon's hand finds the small of my back, a steady pressure that urges me forward.

The elevator doors close with a hushed ding, and I'm trapped in this small, moving box with three men who make my heart race. Deacon's fingers trace the bare skin of my arm, sending shivers cascading down my spine. He runs his fingers over my pebbled nipples beneath my shirt and down to cup my soaked mound. I'm writhing in his arms like some wanton hussy and I don't even care. His gray eyes are alight with mischief as he leans in, and whispers against my ear.

"Can't wait to see you come undone."

I swallow hard, the anticipation building like a crescendo. The elevator dings again, announcing our arrival. My legs feel like they're made of something lighter than air as we stride toward their apartment, my pulse drumming in my ears.

The door swings open and we step into the dimly lit space. It closes with a definitive click, and suddenly, those hungry eyes are all on me. Jaxon's gaze is intense, Cam's deep, Deacon's fiery.

"Are you ready for us, Holly?" Jaxon's voice is like velvet, dark and inviting.

I nod, words failing me. I'm so ready.

In perfect sync, they start peeling off their clothes. Jaxon's shirt hits the floor, revealing that chiseled chest I've fantasized about more times than I care to admit. Cameron's height seems even more imposing as he shrugs out of his jacket, muscles rippling. And Deacon—God, Deacon—his shirt clings to his torso before he discards it, exposing the lines of his inked flesh.

I can't tear my eyes away. They're each a masterpiece of masculinity, sculpted and gorgeous. I'm standing here, drinking them in, feeling the dampness between my thighs grow. Am I really doing this?

Fuck, yes.

"Like what you see?" Cameron's voice pulls me back, his green eyes burning with a heat that mirrors the blaze trapped beneath my skin.

"Very much," I manage, my voice barely above a whisper, but it's enough.

"Good." Jaxon's smile is dangerous, full of promise, as he steps closer. "Because we're just getting started, sweetheart."

Jaxon's grip is firm and electrifies me as he pulls me close. His lips crash against mine, hard and hungry. There's no gentleness, just raw need that mirrors the storm of desire inside me. I gasp into his mouth, and his tongue takes advantage, exploring, claiming.

"Let's get this off," Deacon murmurs, fingers deftly unbuttoning my blouse. It falls away, cool air kissing my heated skin. Cameron's hands are just as busy at the zipper of my skirt. It pools at my feet, leaving me bare except for the lace that barely covers what they all clearly want.

I'm sandwiched between them, Jaxon's mouth still devouring mine, Deacon's hands roaming over my hips, his breath hot against my belly as he dips lower. And then there's Cameron, his presence like a solid wall at my back, his lips tracing fire down my shoulder, igniting every nerve ending.

"Beautiful," Cameron breathes against my skin, and I shiver.

"Fuck, Holly...you're so wet," Deacon growls from below, and I can feel his smile against my inner thigh before his tongue flicks out. I jolt, a strangled cry escaping me at the first touch of his mouth where I'm the most sensitive.

"Deac, make her sing for us," Jaxon commands without breaking the kiss, his hand entangled in my hair holding me captive to his will.

"Trust me," Deacon replies, voice thick with lust. "She will."

Cameron's hands slide around to cup my breasts, thumbs brushing over nipples that are already tight with anticipation. Jaxon's kiss turns even more possessive, if possible, an unspoken promise that this is only the beginning. And as Deacon's mouth works its magic, drawing a chorus of moans from deep within me, I know one thing for certain:

I'm utterly and irrevocably theirs.

Sweat beads at my temples, and I can barely catch my breath. Jaxon's grip on me loosens, and his lips finally release mine. My head spins. I'm drunk on desire, and before I can even blink, Cameron is there. His kiss crashes into me—a wave of command and tenderness all at once. He tastes like mint and raw power, his tongue sliding against mine in a dance that leaves no room for doubt. I'm his to command, but he's worshiping me too.

"God, Holly," Cameron murmurs against my lips, and the sound of my name on his tongue sends a shiver down my spine. His hands are firm on my waist, grounding me in the whirlwind of sensation. I grind my hips, feeling his erection pressed into my back.

Deacon's mouth is relentless below, his tongue writing promises across my flesh that I'm aching for him to keep. Each graze of his tongue sends sparks shooting through me, building a fire that threatens to consume me whole. "Yes, Deac," I gasp, grasping at anything to steady myself—Cameron's hair, Jaxon's shoulder—anything.

"Come for me, Hol. Let go." Deacon's voice vibrates against me, a sinful incantation.

I'm close, so damn close, teetering on the edge of something monumental. And then it hits—a tidal wave of pleasure that obliterates thought, sense, everything but the here and now. Deacon's name is a benediction on my lips as I shatter, my body singing with release.

"Beautiful," Cameron whispers, his breath hot on my cheek.

Before the tremors even have a chance to subside, strong arms envelop me. Jaxon is lifting me, carrying me away from the living room as though I weigh nothing. His eyes lock onto mine, dark with promise. Without a word, he tosses me onto the bed, and I bounce, giggling despite myself—a wild, reckless sound that echoes off the walls.

"Ready for more, Holly?" Jaxon smirks, and there's that dimple, winking at me.

"Try and keep up," I challenge, my voice breathy but determined.

Their laughter is a song that wraps around me, full of heat and something dangerously close to love. But it can't be love, can it? I knock the crazy thought out

of my head.

The bedroom is a blur of motion and heat. Jaxon's hands roam over my body. His lips trail fire along my neck. Cameron's touch is gentle but insistent as he positions himself between my legs, his green eyes locked on mine. Deacon hovers close, his breath hot against my ear.

"Tell us what you want, Holly," Deacon murmurs, the vibration of his voice sending shivers down my spine.

"Everything," I manage to say, the word more gasp than speech. "I want everything. All of it. All of you."

A chorus of approving groans fills the room. Jaxon's mouth captures mine in a kiss that steals the air from my lungs. It's possessive, it's deep, it's everything. Meanwhile, Cameron teases me with the head of his cock, just at the entrance, making me squirm for more. Deacon watches, dark eyes glinting, before he guides his length to my lips.

"Open up, sweetheart." His tone is gentle yet commanding, and I obey without hesitation.

Cameron slides home, filling me completely, and I cry out onto Deacon's cock. The sensation is overwhelming, a stretch that's both sweet pain and divine pleasure. Jaxon pulls away to watch me, his gaze burning.

"Look at her, taking us like a champ," he says with a mixture of awe and lust. "So fucking beautiful."

Deacon's hand threads through my hair. He's setting a rhythm that I eagerly follow. I take him deeper, relishing the taste of him. Cameron sets a slow, deliberate pace, every thrust pushing me closer to the edge.

"Fuck, you feel amazing," Cameron breathes, his voice ragged.

"More," I plead, the word muffled around Deacon's girth.

"Give it to her," Jaxon encourages, his thumb circling my clit as I reach out and wrap my hand around his impressive girth. He grunts and presses his hips forward into my fingers.

"God, yes," Deacon groans as I suck him harder.

It's a dance of flesh and desire, each movement choreographed by primal need. The room spins, and the world narrows down to the three men worshiping my body. Jaxon's touch is electric on my skin, his kisses branding me. Cameron's steady pace becomes frantic, driving into me with a hunger that matches my own. Deacon's moans are music, spurring me on.

"Jaxon... Cam... Deac..." Their names become a mantra on my lips, a plea, a declaration.

And then it hits—a climax so intense that stars explode behind my closed eyelids. My body clenches around Cameron, milking him for all he's worth. Deacon spills into my mouth with a shout, and I savor him, the taste of salt and sin. Jaxon's fingers coax another wave of pleasure from me, relentless in their pursuit, as he spills over onto my fingers.

"Fuck, Holly!" Cameron curses as he finds his release, his voice laced with triumph.

"Good girl," Deacon praises, panting as he pulls back, looking down at me with eyes full of heat.

"Beautiful, just beautiful," Jaxon echoes softly, his thumb tracing my jawline.

As the waves recede, leaving me gasping and spent, one thought crystallizes in my mind: these boys have utterly and irrevocably ruined me for anyone else. And I don't regret it for a single second.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 4

Holly

The red glow of the "On Air" sign fades, and I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding. Adrenaline pumps through me like I'm the one out on the ice, not the one reporting from the sidelines. I turn to Colton, my heart still racing.

"Did I do okay?" My voice is hopeful, eager for his approval.

Colton glances at the monitors, then back at me, a grin spreading across his rugged face. "You killed it, Holly."

He offers me a fist bump, an easy camaraderie already forming between us. I can't help but smile back, feeling a sense of accomplishment mixed with relief. This is it. My first big break. Surrounded by the electric buzz of the Grizzlies' arena, I can't help but be grateful. This is everything I hoped it would be and more.

I'll have to thank Sawyer for the "in" until the end of time.

"Thanks, Colton. It means a lot coming from you." I tuck a loose strand of blonde hair behind my ear and glance around the broadcasting booth. It's cramped, littered with stat sheets and half-drunk cups of coffee, but it feels like it's where I'm meant to be.

"Listen, the first few broadcasts are always the toughest," Colton says as he starts packing away his notes. "But you've got the chops for this. Just keep your head in the

game, stay sharp, and don't let the boys rattle you."

"Boys?" I laugh. It's true though. The locker room interviews will always be a test of wills, a dance to maintain professionalism while the team scrutinizes the new girl. Not to mention that there are three I've already... interacted with.

"Yeah, the players, the fans, even the other journalists, they'll all try to throw you off. It's...I'm not gonna lie Holly. They'll be even harder on you because you're a female. But you're here because you're good. Remember that."

I nod, taking in his words. Small-town girl makes it to the big leagues—it's a narrative I want to live up to. And I know this is a male-dominated sport. I expect the sexism and misogyny I know I'll face. Still, Colton's advice is gold, and I'm grateful for it.

"Got any more pearls of wisdom?" I ask, only half-joking.

"Plenty. But for now, let's grab a drink. We can decompress." He slings his bag over his shoulder, looking every bit the seasoned pro who's seen it all.

"Lead the way." My feet are tired from standing during the whole game, but I'm ready to follow him to whatever lesson comes next.

"First tip," he says as we make our way down the corridor, his voice low and smooth. "Always keep them guessing. On air and off."

"Keep them guessing, huh?" I muse. "I think I can handle that."

"Good." Colton chuckles, pushing open the door to the outside world, where the city lights are just starting to twinkle. "Because around here, the game never really ends."

The next game will be an even bigger challenge because we're playing away from home. After that it's off to the next city and another after that. I'm one of the team, yet apart. I know the stats, the plays, their strengths and weaknesses. But it's their gazes that unsettle me, not the hard facts of hockey.

As we board the charter plane, my heart thumps against my ribs. The close quarters, the endless hours on the road—I wonder how much longer I can keep this up. How long until the line between professional and personal blurs into nothing?

After what I'd already done, I needed those lines to remain drawn in permanent ink, not chalk. Jaxon. Cameron. Deacon. They were everywhere I went. Literally. I saw them in the halls, at the arena, in my freaking dreams—and my fantasies.

Stepping onto the plane, my game plan is clear: sit with Colton, talk shop, and stay professional. But the universe—and Jaxon—seem to have other ideas.

"Hey, Holly," Jaxon calls out, that cocky grin plastered on his face like he's already won whatever game we're playing. His hand finds my waist, fingers gentle but insistent as he guides me down the aisle. I suppress the shiver that runs through me at the feel of him pressed against my skin. "You're with us."

"Actually, I—" My protest fades as I lock eyes with him, those brown orbs pulling me into a familiar dance of defiance and desire.

"Hey, Holly," Deacon calls, patting the seat across the aisle from him. His voice is deep, inviting.

"Come on," Cameron adds, his voice quiet but firm. "You know you want to sit with the cool kids."

"Come on, it'll be fun." Deacon nods, signaling his agreement with a tilt of his head

and a playful wink.

"Guys, I should really—" Again, my words trail off into nothingness. They're a trifecta of temptation, each one a different flavor of trouble.

"Sit down before you fall down," Jaxon teases, the warmth of his breath brushing my ear. It's an echo of that night, the heat, the passion, the memories that refuse to fade into the background.

"Fine," I relent, slipping into the seat with a huff, pretending my heart isn't racing.

My cheeks flush, and I let out a shaky laugh. "You guys are impossible," I say, even as I slide into the seat next to Jaxon.

Jaxon's thigh presses against mine, a silent reminder of what we have shared. That night was supposed to be a one-off, a way to quench this burning curiosity. Instead, it kindled something fiercer, more consuming.

Remember, keep it professional, I remind myself, though my inner voice is drowned out by the recollection of tangled sheets and whispered promises. It was a one-time thing, I lie to myself.

"Everything okay?" Deacon asks, eyebrow arched, a knowing look in his eyes.

"Perfect," I lie, flashing a smile that feels as flimsy as my resolve.

"Good," Cameron says, handing me a safety card. "Because you're going to need to buckle up."

It's not the flight that worries me. It's the turbulence in my own chest, the storm these three have conjured within me. I'm pretty sure I wore out the batteries on my vibrator

thinking about them, about us. How long am I going to be able to resist the temptation? Because the real thing? It's so much better than my fantasies.

Deep breaths, Holly. Just another day at the office .

But who am I kidding? When it comes to Jaxon, Cameron, and Deacon, it's never just another day.

I look out the window, watching the ground crew prepare for takeoff. This is my life now—constant travel, constant proximity to temptation. I'm not just reporting on the game; I'm living it, caught in a whirlwind of adrenaline and desire.

The jet engines roar to life, vibrating through the cabin and into my bones. It's nothing compared to the way Jaxon's hand on my thigh sends a tremor straight to my core. I grip the armrest, trying to anchor myself to something, anything that isn't the heat of his touch.

"Scared of flying?" he murmurs, his voice a low rumble over the sound of the plane picking up speed.

I shake my head, my voice a mere whisper. "Not the flying."

His fingers inch higher, emboldened by my answer. My breath hitches. This is bad. Very, very bad. Any semblance of professional distance is sprinting for the emergency exit.

"Jax," I warn, but it comes out all breathy, like an invitation.

"Relax, Hol," he says, that dimple making a brief appearance as he smirks. "Just making sure you're comfortable."

Comfortable is not the word I'd use. More like delirious. I close my eyes, trying to focus on anything other than the desire pooling in my belly.

"My brother's going to kill me," I manage to get out, half-joking, half-terrified.

"Only if he catches us," Cameron chimes in from my other side, never taking his eyes off his book. I'd almost forgotten he was there, which says a lot about my current state of mind.

"Us?" I echo, my attempt at sounding stern falling flat.

"Collective responsibility," Deacon adds with a wink.

"Great," I mutter. "I've turned my brother into a mass murderer."

"Sounds like a fun family reunion," Jaxon teases, his hand still dangerously high on my thigh.

"Stop," I plead, but we all know it's a feeble attempt I'm making to grab control. My body betrays me, leaning into his touch like a flower to sunlight.

"Make me," he challenges, his brown eyes locked onto mine, intense and unyielding.

The plane lifts off, peeling away from the ground, and with it, my last shred of self-control threatens to slip away. I'm in free fall, and these three men are the only thing keeping me aloft.

"Behave," I say, but it's less a command and more a plea.

"Where's the fun in that?" Jaxon's voice is a husky whisper against the shell of my ear now, his breath hot on my skin.

I don't have an answer because, God help me, I don't want him to behave. Not really.
Not at all.

But no matter how heated things get, I have a job to do. And I'll be damned if I let anything—or anyone—compromise that.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 5

Cameron

I slide across the ice, my leg pads scraping against the frozen surface as I follow the puck with laser focus. The Vipers are pressing hard, but they're not getting anything past me tonight. I'm a wall—a damn good one—and nothing's gonna dent my shutout.

"Cam! Left wing!" I hear my teammate yell.

I whip my head to the side, catching sight of the Viper's forward zeroing in. He thinks he's slick, but I've already read his intentions. My body moves on instinct, muscles coiling and then exploding outward as I thrust my glove hand up. The puck slams into it with a satisfying thud.

"Nice save, Porter!" comes another shout from the bench.

I nod, but the praise is background noise because my gaze drifts up. Up to the broadcasting box where Holly is watching us. I catch a glimpse of her blond hair, those big blue eyes probably tracking every player—me included. She's got that look, all intense concentration and professional poise. It's like she's still a part of the game, even from way up there.

We said it was a one-time thing. We all agreed. No strings, no distractions. But hell if I don't want more. Every time our eyes met that night—and every time since—something wild and electric passed between us. It wasn't just physical—it can't be just physical when I find myself scanning the crowd for her even now when I

should be shutting out the rest of the world.

"Focus, Cam," I mutter to myself, wrenching my gaze away from her and back to the circling Vipers.

My mind knows I should let it go, but my heart's stubborn. It's hooked on Holly, on the memory of her laughter, how she felt against me, how right it seemed even though it was all kinds of complicated. With Deacon and Jaxon in the mix, this whole situation could blow up like a bad play on the ice. I mean, she's Sawyer's sister.

But damn, do I want her.

"Porter! Focus!"

I snap back to reality. Another shot comes flying at me, and I drop down into a butterfly, feeling the puck smack against my pads. The crowd loses it, but the sound fades into a dull roar compared to the thunderous beat of my own heart.

"Nice work, Cam!" A defenseman taps my helmet as he skates by.

"Thanks," I reply, pushing back to my feet.

I steal another glance at the broadcasting box. I can't help it. She's got her headset on, probably talking stats and strategies. Does she ever think of me, of us, while she's working?

"Stay away," we'd said. "Just one night," we'd promised.

But I don't want that. I want Holly. And as the seconds tick down and the game wraps up, I know I've got a decision to make: keep playing by the rules or take a shot at something that might just be the biggest win of my life.

The puck slices through the air, a black blur against the gleaming ice. Instinct takes over; my body moves before my brain registers the Vipers' sniper winding up from the circle. Glove up—snap—the puck slams into the leather, and I hold it aloft like a trophy. The shrill whistle confirms the save as the final buzzer sounds, and the arena erupts.

"Porter! You're a wall, man!" someone yells, and a flood of Grizzlies jerseys converges on me. They pat my back, and my helmet, in a barrage of kudos. I nod and offer grunts of appreciation, but my gaze sneaks to the broadcasting box one more time. Is she impressed? Does she care?

We won. Grizzlies four, Vipers zero. The crowd is a living thing, cheering, chanting, vibrating with energy. And in that thunderous moment, all I can think is that—I want to see Holly.

"Unreal game, Cam!" That's Thompson, always the loudest. He's beaming, teeth bright against his playoff beard.

"Thanks, Thompson," I manage, still scanning the dimly lit press area for her face.

"Shutout, baby!" Deacon slaps me on the shoulder, nearly knocking me off balance. "You're a beast!"

"Good defense in front of me." I deflect the praise like I deflected pucks during the game. It's second nature.

"Still, you're the hero tonight," he insists, with a wink. "Let's celebrate."

I'd really rather not. My post-game ritual is relaxing with a good book and just winding down. Unfortunately for me, my teammates have very different ideas and I get dragged out more often than not. Tonight though? Tonight, I'll be joining them

willingly because I have a feeling a pretty little blonde will be there at the after-party.

"Hey, Cam!" Jaxon calls, voice cutting through the noise. "Great work out there. Get a shower. We're hitting the town!"

"Uh-huh," I say, already peeling off my gear. My head says strip down, get clean, shut off. But my heart twists with another plan. Holly will be there. How do I act? What do I say?

"Cam, you coming?" It's Jaxon again, eyebrows raised.

"Sure," I hear myself reply. "Wouldn't miss it."

I'm threading through the crowd, the noise of the bar pounding against my skull like a second heartbeat. I catch glimpses of her—Holly—laughing with the guys, hair catching the light like it did that first night. My fingers itch to touch those silky strands again.

I want to talk to her. Touch her. See if this chemistry is one-sided or if she feels this the way we do. But Colton-fucking-Shepherd hasn't left her side all damn night. My jaw clenches as I watch him put a hand on her lower back. Again.

My grip tightens around the bottle in my hand, the amber liquid inside sloshing as my emotions churn. I know Holly and Colton are just friends, but the sight of his familiar touch on her sends a surge of jealousy through me.

Mine. She's mine .

I take a deep breath, trying to quell the surge of possessiveness that grips my chest. Holly is not mine. We agreed on no strings. It was one night. But watching Colton's hand on her back, I feel a sharp pang of something that I can't quite place. I rub at the

sensation in my chest.

"Cam, you're zoning out, man." Deacon's voice pulls me back, his hand clapping on my shoulder. "You with us?"

"Yeah," I say, nodding. But am I really here? Or am I still back in our apartment on the night it all started?

The bartender slides a beer across the counter toward me. I take a long sip, letting the cold bitterness settle my thoughts. Jaxon is holding court, a group of admirers hanging on his every word. He's in his element, but he shoots glances at Holly, too. I can tell he remembers just like I do.

I know I should join the conversation, participate in the banter and jokes that fly back and forth. But my eyes keep drifting back to Holly. So do my thoughts. My eyes nearly roll back in my head as I remember the way it felt to sink into her slick, wet heat. The sounds she made that night are my favorite melody.

My heart beats a staccato rhythm in my chest as she glances my way for just a moment. I'm so gone for this girl.

"Hey, goalie boy!" Jaxon calls over, pointing at me with a sly grin. "You gonna come over here, or are you planning to play defense with your drink all night?"

"Maybe I am," I shoot back, but I move closer anyway. Holly turns, and our eyes lock. There's a spark there, a silent conversation that makes my chest tight.

My feet are moving before my brain even has time to make the decision. I lean on the bar, close enough to feel the warmth of her skin. "Having fun?" I ask, even though the answer is written all over her glowing face.

"Always," she replies, her eyes dancing with mischief. "Especially after a big win."

"Big wins are good," I agree, my voice dropping lower. "But some nights are better than others."

"True," she says, a flush creeping up her cheeks. "Some nights are...unforgettable."

"Unforgettable," I echo, my thoughts drifting back to the heat of her touch, the taste of her lips. Could we recreate that magic? Is it insane to think that one more night could turn into something...more?

"Cam," Holly leans in, her breath tickling my ear. "Are you okay? You seem miles away."

"Just thinking about how tonight could go," I admit, the words tumbling out before I can stop them.

"Any ideas?" Her gaze is steady, inviting.

"Maybe," I half-confess. "Might need your help to figure it out, though."

"Ask me," she whispers, a challenge in her eyes.

"Maybe later," I reply, my heart beating faster. "When we're not surrounded by the entire team."

"Maybe," she repeats, the word hanging between us like a promise.

I haven't been able to shake the memory of that first night—the way she moved, the sound of her laughter, the softness of her skin. Holly was everything I never knew I wanted until I had her. And now, I can't let her go. Not without trying for something

real.

"Let's make tonight another one for the books," Jaxon suddenly announces, raising his glass.

"To the Grizzlies," Deacon joins, lifting his own.

Our glasses clink together—a symphony of hope and possibility. I steal another glance at Holly. She smiles, and for a moment, it feels like it's just the two of us in the noisy room.

"Let's make it unforgettable," I say, my voice full of an intention that only Holly can hear.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 6

Deacon

The bar's buzzing, all noise and neon, but it's like I'm in a bubble. My gaze sticks to Holly as she moves through the crowd. She's all business tonight—sharp suit hugging her curves, blond hair shining under the dim lights. She's sexy as fuck. But who am I kidding? She could wear a burlap sack and still knock the air right out of me.

"Another round, Deacon?" a voice cuts through my focus. It's Jaxon, waving over a waitress with a tray of shots. I shake my head, eyes not leaving Holly as she laughs at something one of the staff members says to her.

I push away from the bar, my drink untouched. They say time heals or whatever, but every second since that night with Holly has been an itch I can't scratch. I've been playing the good guy, keeping my distance. But tonight's different. Tonight, the game changes.

I want her—no secret there. And I know sharing isn't ideal—we've shared for a night or two, but never like this, never with feelings. But if it's the only way to have her, then damn it, I'll deal. Maybe we all will.

Cameron finds his way to her side, no surprise there. His eyes are glued to the girl and I know he has it bad—maybe even worse than I do. It's not long before we're drifting over there too, caught in her gravitational pull as she draws us in over and over again.

I'm a religious man, so I know what it's like to worship at the altar of someone or something far greater than myself. She's a goddess in her own right. And I want to spend every damn day worshiping at this girl's feet.

Holly turns, her eyes meeting mine as I approach. There's a flicker of recognition there, a spark that ignites something deep within me. She offers a warm smile, but it's fleeting, her attention pulled back to Cameron and Jaxon as he joins us.

Conversation flows. So do the little touches as we all find excuses to be closer to her, letting her pull us in with every smile.

"Let's make tonight another one for the books," Jaxon raises his glass.

"To the Grizzlies," I join, lifting my own.

Cameron leans in and says something to Holly that I don't catch, but whatever it was, it has heat bubbling in her eyes.

She glances around at all of us, her smile turning mischievous. "To the Grizzlies," she echoes, raising her glass in a silent toast.

As we clink our glasses together, the atmosphere shifts, charged with unspoken tension. Holly's gaze lingers on each of us in turn, as if she's picturing that night too. I can't seem to stop. Images of her play in my mind over and over. This girl haunts my dreams and every waking moment.

We don't do repeats. We don't do serious. That isn't what we're about. The team takes up too much of our time for anything real and we've never found anyone who has held our attention long enough to want more than a few nights together—if that.

But Holly?

She's rewriting all the rules. This is a new game, and I have no idea where to begin, but I know I want to find my way to the finish line with her by my side.

Her gaze shifts back to me, a silent question hanging in the air. I can feel the weight of it, heavy and loaded with unspoken words. Cameron's subtle flirtation doesn't go unnoticed, but it's his nature to be indirect, unlike Jaxon's brazen advances.

I meet Holly's gaze head-on, my heart pounding in my chest as I try to convey everything I feel without words. The charged atmosphere crackles around us, enveloping me in a bubble of anticipation and desire.

It's as if we're standing on the edge of a cliff, overlooking a vast unknown abyss below. Jaxon's playful banter fades into background noise as my attention narrows to focus on her and her alone.

Then someone calls her name, and the spell is broken. She excuses herself as she makes her way to someone else who is desperate for her attention. I try to hold back; I really do. But I don't want to wait any longer. I want this girl. And I need to know where Jaxon and Cameron are on this.

I catch Jaxon's eye, motioning with a tilt of my head toward the back of the bar. It's a silent call to arms—or maybe it's a call to our hearts. Cameron sees it too and he's on our six without a word. We weave through the thumping music and clinking glasses, finding an empty stretch of wall away from the noise.

"Guys," I start, with no preamble, "I'm all in with Holly. I'm going after her, with or without you."

Cameron lets out a breath, his shoulders dropping like he's been holding them taut for hours. "Thank fuck. I'm in too, Deacon. I—I can't get her outta my head. She's everything I never knew I wanted and now that I've had a taste..." he stops talking

and shakes his head.

"I know exactly what you mean, big guy." I slap his shoulder in solidarity. Then, the two of us turn our eyes on Jaxon and wait.

Jaxon's quiet, his brow pinched as if every word we are speaking weighs a ton. Finally, he looks up from the scuffed floor, eyes meeting mine dead-on. "Dammit, I'm in too." His voice is rough, like it hurts him to speak the truth.

"Then it's settled." I clasp hands with each of them, sealing this pact that's crazier than any play we've ever drawn up on ice. "We go after her. Together."

"We're really doing this? Asking her to be ours?" Jaxon looks to both of us for confirmation. "And ours alone," he adds with a growl.

"Let's do it," Cameron says, a hint of his usual shyness breaking through his relief.

"Time to change the game," Jaxon adds, the corner of his mouth ticking up, his dimple making a rare appearance.

We're in sync, a unit ready to face whatever comes next. Because when it comes to Holly Hawthorne, playing solo isn't an option anymore. Not for me. Not for us.

Maybe not ever again.

The crowd parts like we're on a power play, and she's the net. She's back, leaning against the bar, sipping her drink, all business-sleek but with that wild spark in her blue eyes. She's got us skating circles, and she doesn't even know it.

"Looking good, Hol," I say when I finally reach her. Her smile is like a hit of adrenaline.

"Thanks, Deacon. You're not so bad yourself." Her eyes sparkle as she teases me.

"Been thinking about you," I tell her, low enough only she can hear. "A lot."

"Is that so?" She tilts her head, looking up at me through those big blue eyes.

"I've been thinking about how one night wasn't nearly enough." The words come out raw and honest. Holly's breath catches, and that's all the answer I need.

Jaxon leans closer, his voice low. "It's stuck with us. Like a highlight reel we can't stop replaying."

Her laugh is a clear note above the bar buzz. "That sounds...intense."

"Intense doesn't cover it," Cameron chimes in, his shyness shed like last season's stats. He's never been one for the spotlight, but Holly does something to him. To all of us.

"Here's the deal." Jaxon isn't dancing around it now. "One night wasn't enough. We want more. With you."

"More?" The word hangs between us, a puck mid-air before the faceoff.

"Another night." Jaxon's being bold as a breakaway.

"An unforgettable night," Cam hums.

"And another," I add. "All the nights."

"We want to date you, Holly."

"Date?" Her eyebrows shoot up, and I swear the whole room holds its breath. "All three of you? That's...how would that even work?"

I step closer, close enough that I can smell her perfume. It's sweet and spicy like cinnamon. "How's it any different from the first time? You, us—it worked."

"It is different." Now there's a flush creeping up her neck, and I'm not sure if it's from anger, embarrassment or excitement. Maybe it's all three.

"Sharing isn't a problem for us," I say, my heart hammering a slapshot rhythm.

"No, I don't imagine it is."

I can see it, the moment we start to lose her. Her eyes are shuttering, hiding all that emotion behind a thick wall. She thinks she's one of many, a commodity we trade in all the time. But she's so fucking wrong it's not even funny.

"We've shared plenty, Holly. Wins and losses. Our lives, our space. And, yes, girls. But we've never shared like this."

I step into her until we're chest to chest, and I can feel the heat of her skin against mine. It's intoxicating. I can feel her pulse quicken under my touch, her breath hitching as she meets my gaze. The air crackles with tension, a charged silence enveloping us like a warm embrace. I run my thumb gently over her bottom lip, the softness of it sending a shiver down my spine.

"I know this is a lot to take in," I murmur, trying to convey the depth of my feelings through the proximity of our bodies. Holly's gaze wavers, uncertain, but there's a flicker of curiosity in those bright blue eyes that gives me hope.

Jaxon and Cameron flank us, a united front as we finally find the courage to ask for

what we want: her.

"I know it isn't what we promised. But we want you. We want more than one night, Holly. We want all of the nights."

"Are you willing to take a chance on us?" Cameron's voice quivers with anxiety.

"Take a chance..." Holly trails off, her eyes darting from Jaxon's anticipation to Cameron's hopeful gaze and finally landing on me. Searching for an answer I don't have. I only know what I feel—what I want and need.

She bites her lip, and damn if that doesn't send my thoughts straight into the sin bin.

"Okay," Holly breathes, the word a promise that sends a charge through the thick bar air. It's a green light, and my heart races like I'm about to face off at center ice.

We surge forward, leaving the clinking glasses and the buzz of conversations behind. She said yes. She fucking said yes, and we're not waiting another moment to make this girl ours.

Ours.

The night wraps around us, just as charged as we are. The hotel looms—a beacon for our pent-up desires.

"Can't believe this is happening," Cameron mutters, his voice a low rumble of anticipation.

Holly's between us, her warmth infectious. Every brush of her arm against mine is electric. She stumbles slightly on her high heels, and my hand shoots out to steady her. But it's not just me—Jaxon's there too, and Cameron's hand finds the small of her

back.

"Easy there, Hol," I murmur, and she laughs, but there's an edge to it. Nerves, maybe? Excitement?

"Thanks, guys." Her smile lights up the night more than the streetlights outside ever could.

The elevator ride is a silent symphony of fidgeting fingers and shifting glances. Holly's close enough to touch, and damn, I want to. The door dings open, and we spill into the hallway.

Our suite door shuts with a click, and it's like a starting whistle. My lips find Holly's in a hungry kiss, and I groan at the contact. She tastes like the bourbon she's been sipping, sweet and fiery all at once.

"Deacon," she sighs into my mouth, and I'm lost.

Cameron's heat presses against her back, and her body arches instinctively. He buries his face in her hair, inhaling deeply.

"God, you smell good," he murmurs, and Holly's moan vibrates through me.

Jaxon watches us, dark eyes hooded and intense. He's not wasting any time. His dick is out, precum leaking from the tip. His hand moves from root to tip, slow and sure. The sight is raw, primal. It strikes a chord deep inside me, stoking the fire that's been simmering since the moment we sat down at that bar. Hell, since the moment we laid eyes on Holly in that hallway outside our apartments.

"Fuck, look at him," Holly gasps, catching sight of Jaxon. Her words sound breathless, laced with desire.

"Like what you see?" Jaxon's voice is a challenge, a dare.

"Yes," she answers without hesitation and something fierce and possessive roars to life within me.

Jaxon's voice slices through the tension like a skate blade on fresh ice. "She's mine first."

He's all grins and that dimple of his is in full sight as he sweeps Holly into his arms. She laughs, the sound mixing with surprise and anticipation, like she's both caught off guard and entirely at ease. That's Jax for you—always keeping us on our toes.

"Jax," she says, but it's not a protest. It's a surrender to the moment, one that is captured by his lips as he kisses her with all the emotions he's been holding in.

He doesn't walk. He strides, confident, straight to the nearest bed. His hands are busy with her clothes, and hers are eagerly working at removing his. The air grows thick with the heat of skin on skin, and when they're both bare, it's like some magnetic force pulls them together.

"Damn," I murmur, watching Jaxon sink into her. Her back arches beautifully, eyes closing, lips parting. The sight should be enough, but it's not. Not for me.

"Roll over," I say, my voice low and rough.

Jaxon complies without hesitation, flipping onto his back. I help Holly swing a leg over, settling her down so she's facing away from him, riding him reverse cowgirl style.

"Deacon..." Holly's voice is a needy whine now, reaching out to me.

"Right here, Hol." I drop to my knees, level with where they're joined. With a glance up at her, I lean in close and let my tongue find her clit. The first touch sends a shiver through her, and her fingers tangle in my hair, gripping tight.

"Fuck!" Jaxon curses beneath her. Even under these circumstances, Jaxon never loses that edge of control, but now his voice teeters on the brink of something raw.

Holly's moans grow louder, more frantic. She's beautiful like this, lost in sensation, her body moving instinctively between the two of us.

"Deacon!" she cries out, and that sound, that plea—it's everything.

"Give it to her, Jax," I grunt against her, my mouth still busy. "Make her feel it."

Jaxon thrusts up hard, and Holly's entire body rocks. She leans forward, bracing herself against the headboard, and I don't let up. Not for a second. I want her to come apart, and I want to watch it happen.

"More," she gasps, and who am I to deny her?

"Always more for you, baby," I promise. My own desire is a living thing, pushing me to take her higher, to give her everything she could possibly want. And right now, all she wants is us—all of us.

Cameron stands at the edge of the bed, his green eyes dark with lust. Holly's gaze locks on him, and she leans towards Cam like a siren luring her willing victims. Her lips part, and she takes him in, her moan vibrating against his length. The sight sends a surge of heat straight to my core.

"Damn, Hol," Cameron groans, his fingers weaving into her blond hair.

I can't help myself. I shove my pants down past my ass and wrap my hand around my cock. Watching Holly work Cameron while I taste her and Jaxon takes her, it's a kind of heaven. My tongue swirls, her hips buck, and her hands clench in my hair. It's wild. It's primal. And it's all for her.

"Has anyone ever taken your sweet little ass, Holly?" I murmur against her pussy.

She hums around Cameron, a sound of pure sin, and nods her head slightly. Jaxon stills behind her, and I know what's coming. He pulls back, and she gasps for air, releasing Cameron from the warmth of her mouth. Her blue eyes are wide, pupils blown, as Jaxon positions himself at her entrance.

"Easy, baby," Jaxon whispers, his voice rough with need.

Her breath catches, and then she's pushing back against him, taking him inch by excruciating inch. I watch the mix of pleasure and surprise dance across her face. Her nails dig into my scalp, and I double down on my efforts, wanting to distract her, to heighten every sensation.

"Deacon..." She doesn't finish, but she doesn't have to. I've got her. We've all got her. And we're not letting go.

Cameron's grip loosens, and he draws back, leaving Holly's lips free. I waste no time. I surge up, my lips capturing hers in a searing kiss, tasting the mix of Cameron and raw desire on her tongue.

"Can you take it, Holly?" My voice is a growl against her mouth. "My cock slamming into this pretty pink pussy while Jax stretches your tight little ass?"

Her moan vibrates through me, and she nods frantically, her eyes wild with lust. "Please, yes."

I don't wait for another word. I line myself up and thrust into her, groaning at the tightness that swallows me whole. She's wet, hot, and clenching around me like a vice.

"Fuck, you're so tight," I grunt, finding my rhythm. I glance at Cameron, his green eyes dark with need. "Cam, give her your cock. She wants it."

Holly reaches for him, her small hand wrapping around his shaft, guiding him to her waiting mouth. I can't stop the primal surge of possessiveness that rips through me as she takes him in, sucking hard.

"Good girl," I praise, my hips snapping forward relentlessly. Every time I drive into her, I push her onto Cameron's dick. Jaxon matches me stroke for stroke, creating a rhythm that has us all spiraling toward the edge.

"Please..." she mumbles around Cameron, her voice muffled but filled with pleasure.

"Take it all, Holly," I demand, my fingers digging into her hips. "Every inch, every thrust. You're ours."

My hips slam into Holly, hard and fast. The slick heat of her surrounds me. She's heaven and sin, all wrapped up in a perfect package that clenches around me like she never wants to let go.

"Please..." Her voice is a breathless whisper, a siren's call that pulls me deeper into the abyss of pleasure.

"Fuck, Holly," I manage to grunt out between thrusts. The sound of our skin slapping together fills the room, a testament to the raw, unfiltered desire we're drowning in.

Jaxon's hands grip her waist from beneath, guiding her down onto him with every

upward push. He's silent, but his eyes blaze with an intensity that speaks volumes.

"Come for us, Hol," Cameron murmurs, his voice strained as he watches her lips envelop him once more.

Her body tenses, and then I feel the ripple of her orgasm tear through her, triggering my own release. It crashes over me, a wave of pure bliss that obliterates thought, time and reason.

"God, yes..." I groan as I spill myself into her, my vision blurring with the force of my orgasm. Jaxon follows, his own groan muffled by the sounds of our collective climax.

And then there's silence, save for the panting breaths and the pounding of my heart. As the haze of ecstasy slowly fades, a single thought anchors itself in my mind. What would it be like to have this all the time? To truly have Holly?

Because it's not just about the sex. Not anymore. It's about the way she laughs, the sparkle in her big blue eyes when she talks about hockey, about anything, really. It's the warmth of her smile and the fierceness of her spirit. I want all of that. I want something real with her.

"Damn, Holly," I whisper against her ear as I pull her close, holding her tight against me. "That was...incredible."

"More than incredible," she agrees, her voice laced with satisfaction and a hint of something else—something tender. "Unforgettable."

"Does this mean you'll think about it?" Jaxon asks, his tone hopeful. "About being with us?"

She rolls her eyes, but there's no missing the affection in her gaze. "I'd say after tonight, I'm more than thinking about it."

"Good," Cameron says, grinning. "Because I don't think any of us are willing to give you up."

"Definitely not," I add, and it's true. I'm all in. Whatever it takes to have Holly, to make this work—I'll do it. Because she's worth it. She's everything.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 7

Holly

The locker room buzzes with post-game adrenaline. My heart beats in sync with the thud of hockey pads hitting the floor. I clutch my microphone like a lifeline. But it's not just another interview. Not anymore.

"Great game, Jax," I say, my voice steady despite the turmoil inside of me. His dimple flashes as he rakes his fingers through sweaty curls.

"Thanks, Hol." His gaze lingers a touch too long, electrifying and dangerous.

"Cam, those saves were unreal tonight," I turn to him, desperate to seem professional.

He nods, that intense green stare piercing through me. "Just doing my job."

And then there's Deacon, leaning against the lockers, all dark wavy hair and smoldering eyes. He winks, and my professionalism falters like thin ice beneath skates.

"Rhodes," I start, but words escape me.

"Looking for a quote, Holly?" he teases, voice low and thrilling.

"Something like that," I manage, swallowing hard.

They're close now, their physical presence an overwhelming force. I remind myself to breathe. This is my job. I have to keep it together.

"Let's wrap this up, boys," I say, even as Cameron brushes past, his arm grazing mine in a whisper of contact that sends shivers down my spine.

"Sure thing," Jaxon says, too close, his breath warm on my cheek.

"See you later?" Deacon asks, his question loaded with promises.

"Professionalism, Holly," I silently chastise myself. But their touches, their looks...they blur the lines.

"Later," I confirm, tucking away the mic, fleeing the heat of their gazes. My skin tingles where they've touched me, a reminder of the secret we're keeping. A secret that could burn my world to the ground.

The hum of the charter flight's engine is a gentle roar in my ears. But it's nothing compared to the thunder of my heartbeat, loud and insistent, as I sit sandwiched between Cameron and Deacon. The tight space of our seats doesn't allow for much distance, not that any of us seem to want it.

I can't believe that I agreed to this, to them. I'm risking my career, my reputation, everything. But I can't seem to walk away. I already tried that after we spent that first night together. Clearly, it didn't go so well.

"Comfortable?" Cameron's voice is soft, almost lost under the plane's steady drone.

"Very," I lie. Because comfortable isn't the word when every inch of me is hyperaware of their proximity. My skin buzzes where my arm brushes against his, and it's all I can do not to lean into the contact.

Deacon shifts on the other side of me, his leg pressing against mine. It's an innocent touch, friendly even, but it ignites fires deep within me. I've never been this on edge, this hungry for touch. What's happening to me?

"Long flight ahead," Deacon murmurs, his breath warm against the shell of my ear. "Hope you brought a good book."

I laugh, though it's more nerves than humor. Book? As if I could focus on reading with them so close.

"Forgot it," I confess. "Guess I'll just have to entertain myself."

"Sure, we can help with that," Jaxon says, leaning over from his seat across the aisle. His dimple flashes, and it's like a direct challenge to my self-control.

"Behave, Jax," I whisper, but my warning lacks bite.

Deacon chuckles softly, the sound low and reassuring. He presses a kiss to my temple, his hand finding mine, giving it a gentle squeeze.

"Boyfriends," I mumble, the word tasting strange on my tongue. It's such an inadequate descriptor for the chaos I've thrown myself into. Three men. All at once. My heart flutters like a trapped bird against my ribcage.

"Hey." Jaxon leans forward from the row beside us. "You okay?"

His concern pierces through the fog of my anxiety. I nod, managing a small smile. "Yeah, just...thinking."

"About?" His gaze is intense, searching.

"Everything," I admit. The risk. The thrill. Them.

"Stop thinking so much," Cameron advises with a playful nudge as he places a gentle hand on my thigh and squeezes. "It'll all work out."

"Easy for you to say," I quip, though the edges of my lips betray me, curving upward. The boys always know how to lighten the mood.

"Try this," Deacon suggests, tilting my chin up to meet his gaze. "Focus on the now. On us. On this crazy, amazing thing we have."

"Amazing and insane," I correct him, but there's truth in his words. After that first night, walking away had seemed possible in theory. But in practice, it was like trying to ignore the pull of gravity. Pointless. Impossible.

Jaxon's laugh comes from behind us again. "Insanity can be fun."

"Sure," I agree, "until it all comes crashing down."

"Then we pick up the pieces together," Cameron says firmly. "We're in this with you, Holly. All the way."

"Every step," Deacon adds confidently.

"Every breath," Jaxon finishes for them, his hand squeezing my shoulder in silent solidarity.

I let out a slow breath, feeling the weight of their words settle over me like a protective cloak. I'd signed up for this madness, hadn't I? For better or worse. And despite the fear, despite the very real possibility of losing everything... I can't find it in me to regret it. Not yet. Not with the way my heart races when they look at me like

I'm their entire world.

But I'm still scared. Terrified really.

"Okay," I whisper, mostly to myself. "Okay."

"How about a movie?" Cameron suggests, reaching for the screen embedded in the seat in front of him. He browses through the options, his fingers brushing against mine as I help him navigate the menu.

"Perfect," I sigh, grateful for the distraction.

"Got it," he announces, selecting a title at random.

I settle back, trying to focus on the film, but it's useless. Every time Cameron laughs at a scene, or Deacon makes a comment, I'm pulled back into our tangled web.

As the lights dim and the passengers flying with us quiet down, the weight of what we're doing settles heavy on my chest. This secret—us—it feels like a living thing, growing stronger every day.

With the lights lowered and less chance of being caught, Deacon grows bolder. His hand settles on my thigh as his lips press into the space behind my ear, sending a shiver down my spine.

Jaxon shoots me a knowing look from across the aisle, a mischievous glint in his eyes. I can practically feel his silent approval. Deacon's touch lingers, sending a rush of heat through me despite the chill of the airplane cabin. His warm breath tickles my skin, and I fight to keep my composure.

Every nerve in my body seems to fire at once, and my breath catches in my throat as

Deacon's touch sends a wave of electricity through me. His lips against my skin are both gentle and demanding, igniting a fierce longing deep within me.

I shouldn't be doing this. Not here. Not where we can get caught. But I can't find the words to make him stop because, deep down, I don't want him to.

My mind swirls with conflicting thoughts, the intensity of the moment almost overwhelming. Deacon's touch is both thrilling and dangerous, forbidden yet undeniably enticing. Beside me, Cameron seems engrossed in the movie, unaware of the covert intimacy unfolding in the dimly lit cabin.

But his hand lands heavily on my other knee, giving it a squeeze. The tension between us crackles like a live wire, the air heavy with unspoken desires. I want this, want more. I turn to face Deacon, capturing his lips as he leans forward to press them into my neck once more.

Cameron's hand squeezes my knee again as Deacon's starts sliding towards the place my thighs meet. I squirm, anticipating what's next when the plane jolts. A wave of dizziness and nausea sweeps through me as the plane does it again.

My stomach churns as the plane hits turbulence, mirroring the storm inside me. I grip the armrests, trying to steady my swirling thoughts. Sweat beads on my forehead, and I can't tell if it's from the bumpy flight or the anxiety eating at me.

The plane evens out, but my anxiety doesn't.

"Hey, you okay?" Cameron's voice is a soft hum beside me.

"Fine," I lie. The word feels like sandpaper in my throat. I'm not fine. Far from it.

"Here." Deacon presses a cold water bottle into my hand. "Drink up."

I nod, taking small sips, grateful for the distraction. But even the cool liquid can't wash away the worry gnawing at my insides.

The team. My job. My brother's trust. Everything could crumble because of what we're doing. Because of what I'm feeling for these three incredible, impossible men.

"Your hands are shaking," Jaxon notes from across the aisle. His frown lines are deep, eyes narrowed with concern.

"Hey," Deacon whispers, squeezing my hand. "We're here for you, Holly. You know that, right?"

"I know." And I do. Despite the fear, the risk, there's no denying the bond we share. They're more than just flings to me, more than forbidden fruit. I'm falling for each of them, and it terrifies me as much as it thrills me.

"Good," he smiles, the warmth of the expression chasing away the chill of doubt.

"Try to get some sleep," Cameron advises, his tone gentle.

I lean back, closing my eyes, trying to obey. But sleep proves elusive. I'm too caught up in the mess of emotions, the undeniable desire, and the deep, irrevocable connection that binds me to these three men.

"Thank you," I whisper, not sure if they hear me.

"Anytime," comes the chorus of replies, wrapping around me like a blanket.

And as I sit there, sandwiched between love and fear, I dare to hope that maybe I won't have to choose. Maybe, somehow, we can navigate this crazy game without losing everything.

I close my eyes, leaning into their strength, their warmth. For a moment, just a fleeting moment, I let myself believe that maybe, just maybe, we can have it all.

"Sleep, Hol," Deacon whispers again, and this time I drift off to the sound of his voice, their presence beside me my comfort and my curse.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 8:01 am

Chapter 8

Jaxon

The ice is mine. I skate, shoot, score. It's what I do. The crowd roars, but the sound fades to a buzz in my ears. One thought cuts through the noise—Holly. She's here somewhere, lost in the sea of cheering fans. Well, maybe not lost. I know she's either in the broadcast booth or waiting in the hall near the lockers for post-game interviews.

"Jax! Hell of a game!" Cameron slaps my shoulder as we glide off the ice, but my eyes scan the hall, hunting for her.

"Thanks, man," I grunt, not really feeling it. It's like my body's here, celebrating with the guys, but my mind's stuck on Holly.

"Earth to Jaxon," Deacon waves his hand in front of my face, and I blink him back into focus.

"Sorry, what?"

"Never seen you this distracted after a win," he says, eyebrows raised. "You good?"

"Fine," I lie, pushing past him toward the locker room. It's not their attention I want. It's hers.

I strip down, letting the steam from the shower fill the air, muscles relaxing, but my

gut twisted up tight. I throw on jeans and a tee, not bothering with anything else. The others are joking around, but I don't hear them. I'm listening for her laugh. It doesn't come.

Finally, she walks in, clipboard clutched like a shield. Her smile doesn't reach those big blue eyes. Something's eating at her, and it's gnawing holes into me too.

"Hey, Hol," I say, trying to keep it light. "What did you think of the game?"

"It was great, Jax." Her voice is flat, and she doesn't meet my gaze. "Good job out there."

"Thanks," I say, but it sounds hollow. We're both playing a part, pretending everything's cool when it's not.

"Something on your mind?" I ask, stepping closer. She shrugs, a small move that screams louder than any words.

"Nothing important," she says, but her eyes flick away. Liar.

"Come on, Hol. Spit it out."

"It's nothing, Jax. Really."

But I see it—the way her fingers twist together, the little crease between her brows. It's something alright. And it's killing me not knowing what. She's been pulling away from us. Subtly, little by little, we're losing her. And it fucking terrifies me.

"Talk to me," I urge, voice soft. This isn't just casual anymore, not for me. Maybe not for her, either.

"Let's just forget it," she says, forcing a smile. But it's like putting a band-aid on a bullet wound.

"Can't do that," I tell her, honestly. "Whatever it is, it's messing with you. And that messes with me."

She looks up finally, and there's a storm in those eyes. Fear, worry, a whole hurricane of emotions she's trying so damn hard to hide.

"Jax, I—" she starts, but the laughter and chatter from the guys cut her off.

"Later," she says with a finality that feels like a door slamming shut.

"Later," I agree, but I know we won't leave it at that. Not when she's got that look in her eyes—the one that says she's drowning in open water.

I watch her walk away, the weight in my chest pulling me down like an anchor. Whatever's got Holly spooked, we'll face it together. I'll make sure of it.

I pull out my phone, thumb hovering over the screen as I watch Holly disappear around the corner. Her troubled expression is etched into my mind, a puzzle begging to be solved. She might not want to talk now, but I'll make sure she knows she's got someone by her side.

Once she's out of sight, urgency makes my fingers move faster than usual. Deacon and Cameron look at me, eyebrows raised with unspoken questions. Without missing a beat, I dial the hotel where we're all staying, requesting a private dinner be set up in our suite.

Holly may be guarding her thoughts, but I know she's fighting a battle alone. If she won't open up, then I'll have to show her I'm serious about being there for her. This

isn't a fling. It's not just another game. She's the goal. And it's time she sees that.

When we get back to the hotel, Holly tries to head off to her own room, but I refuse to let that happen.

"Hol, wait up," I call, catching her by the arm. She looks at me, a mix of confusion and resignation in her eyes.

"Jax, I'm tired. Can we just do this another time?" she asks, but I shake my head.

"Nope. Tonight," I insist, steering her towards the suite I share with Deacon and Cameron. She resists for a moment but then falls into step beside me, clearly too weary to argue.

When we step inside, her eyes widen at the sight of the romantic dinner set up for us. Soft candlelight flickers, casting a warm glow over the table. It's simple but heartfelt—a gesture meant to show her I care.

"Jax, what is this?" Her voice is barely above a whisper, and I see her eyes welling up with unshed tears.

"You don't have to tell me what's wrong, Holly. Not if you're not ready. But I can see something is bothering you. I can feel you trying to pull away and I just...I need you to know we're here. You're not alone," I say, feeling a bit nervous now. "I might not know what's going on, but I'm—we're here for you. Always."

For a moment, she just stands there, speechless. I worry I've overstepped, but then she throws her arms around my neck, hugging me tightly. The breath I didn't know I was holding rushes out in relief as I wrap my arms around her.

"Thank you," she murmurs against my shoulder. "You have no idea how much this

means to me."

I pull back just enough to look into her eyes. "You don't have to go through this alone, Holly. Whatever it is, we'll face it together."

She nods, tears spilling over and streaming down her cheeks. And then, to my surprise, she leans in and gives me a sweet, lingering kiss. It's gentle and tender, filled with all the emotions she's been holding back.

When we finally pull apart, she gives me a small, watery smile. "You're amazing, Jax. I don't know what I did to deserve you."

I smile back, brushing a tear from her cheek. "We're in this together, remember? Now, let's sit down and enjoy this dinner. And whenever you're ready, I'm here to listen."

She nods again, a little more at ease now. We sit down at the table, and I can see the walls she's built around herself starting to crumble. It might take time, but we'll get through this. Together.

I clear the last of the dishes, the clink of cutlery a sharp contrast to the silence that's settled over us. The guys are lounging on the couches, but it's like we're all holding our breaths, waiting for something to snap. Cameron's gaze flits between Holly and me, his green eyes sharp with concern he doesn't voice. Deacon leans back, arms crossed, the shadow in his gray eyes saying that he hears the unspoken questions loud and clear.

She's here with us, but she's not. She barely touched her meal, and while she's answering our questions, she's not really having a conversation with us. I fucking hate it.

"Okay, what's next?" I ask, trying to sound casual as I toss a crumpled napkin into the trash. "Movie? Game?"

"Actually, I think I'm gonna turn in," Holly says, standing up too fast. Her voice is steady, but her eyes dart away, not meeting mine.

Deacon cocks an eyebrow, but remains silent. Cameron's lips press into a thin line before he nods slowly, giving her an out if she needs it. But I can't let it go, not when every instinct screams that she's not okay. That we're not okay. I need us to be okay.

"Hey, Hol, got a sec?" I say, touching her elbow lightly. She freezes, then nods, a small frown creasing her forehead.

We step into the quiet hallway, away from the others. It's just us now, and even the air feels heavy.

"Jax, I'm fine," she insists, but her smile is too tight. It doesn't reach those big blue eyes.

"Come on, Hol. You think I can't tell when something's eating at you?" I keep my voice low, trying to break through to her.

She sighs, a lock of blond hair falling into her face. She pushes it back, frustration clear in the way her fingers tremble.

"Jaxon, it's just been a long day. Let's not do this now."

But I need to know she's all right. I need to see that spark back in her eyes. "Talk to me. Please."

Her gaze flicks to the side, then back to me. She's fighting an internal battle, and

damn it, I want to fight it with her. But she has to let me in first.

"Everything's just...complicated." Her voice is barely above a whisper, and I strain to catch her words.

"Life's complicated," I agree, stepping closer. "But we can figure it out together, right?"

"Right," she echoes, but there's a tremor in her voice that tells me her storm isn't passing anytime soon.

"Whatever it is, Holly, you're not alone." I mean every word, and I hope she can see that. "Please, please don't walk away from this."

She nods, finally meeting my gaze dead-on. There's a raw honesty there that clenches my heart.

The door creaks open. Cameron's tall frame fills the space, his piercing green eyes flicking from Holly to me. Deacon's right behind him, the dark waves of hair a little tousled, like he's run his hands through it one too many times. There's no missing the worry creasing their brows.

"Everything okay?" Cam's voice is soft but cuts through the tension.

Holly bites her lip but doesn't say anything. I nod at the guys, silently asking for backup. They get it. They always do.

"Let's sit down," Deacon suggests and it's not an order. It's more like a lifeline thrown into choppy waters.

We sink onto the couches. Holly's between me and Cameron, her legs curled under

her. Deacon perches on the armrest beside me, close but not crowding us.

"Talk to us, Hol." Deacon's gray eyes lock on hers. Gentle. Steady.

She looks at each of us and hesitates. "It's just...what we have, it's not normal. People won't understand. And my job—" She swallows hard.

"You're worried about the backlash?" Cam's hand finds hers, his grip firm.

"Among other things." Holly's voice is a mere thread.

"Hey." I reach out, tucking a strand of her blonde hair behind her ear. "We knew this wasn't going to be easy, right?"

"Right," she echoes, and there it is again, that tremor from before.

"But we're in this together," Cam squeezes her hand.

"Whatever happens, we deal with it as a team." My words are a promise. An anchor.

"A team," she whispers, and the worry in her expression seems to relax a little.

"As a team," we affirm together.

Her blue eyes meet mine, and something unspoken passes between us. Relief. Gratitude. Trust. It's a start. We've got her back, and that's what counts.

The warmth from Holly's skin calls to me, and I can't resist any longer. My fingers trail a line of fire down her arm, feeling the goosebumps that rise in their wake. "This is real," I murmur against her ear, my breath hot. "We want this, Holly. We're ready for whatever comes. It's not going to be easy, and we'll likely need to hide it from

most of the people in our lives, but I don't fucking care. Not if it lets me be with you."

She shivers. Her eyes catch mine, and there's a storm brewing in those deep blue depths—a storm of need, of fear, of longing.

"Jax..." Her voice cracks, and that's all the permission I need.

"Let us show you," Cameron interjects, his voice like velvet smoothed over steel. He shifts, pulling Holly into his lap with an ease that speaks of his strength. She gasps, a sound swallowed by the room we've made our sanctuary.

"Cam," she whispers, but there's no protest there, just surprise edged with desire.

"Shh." I lean forward, lips traveling over the length of her neck, tasting the salt of her skin, the pulse throbbing beneath the surface. I'm drowning in the scent of her, the feel of her.

Cameron's hands are deft as they slip under her shirt, lifting the fabric over her head in one smooth motion. The sight of her, vulnerable and flushed, strikes something primitive inside me.

"Beautiful," Deacon says, his voice barely audible. His hands join the dance, fingers brushing against the clasp of her bra until it falls away.

I can't wait another second. My mouth finds her, drawing a nipple into the heat, hearing her sharp intake of breath, feeling her body arch into the twin sensations as Deacon mirrors my actions on her other side.

"Is this okay?" I whisper against her skin, even as my body screams for more.

"Yes," she breathes out, surrendering to the moment, to us.

"Good," I say, and I'm lost in the taste, the touch, the pure, unadulterated Holly.

Cameron's fingers move deftly, undoing the button of Holly's pants with a soft sound. I can't take my eyes off her. Everything else fades away. It's just us in this hotel room, our private world where nothing else matters but the here and now.

"Jax, help me," Deacon says, his voice low and urgent.

I snap back into action. Together, we slide the fabric down her legs, revealing more of Holly's skin inch by tantalizing inch. Her pants join the rest of the discarded clothing on the floor, a small testament to the urgency building between us.

"God, you're perfect," I murmur as I look at her, laid bare for us. The sight of her, so open and trusting, sends a jolt straight to my core.

Deacon gives me a nod, and I know what he wants me to do. I lower my head, the scent of her arousal filling my senses. It's intoxicating, a heady mix of need and Holly. I let out a groan that vibrates against her as I press my mouth to her, tasting her for the first time. She's sweet, she's heat, she's everything.

"Jaxon," Holly's voice is a breathy moan that urges me on.

"Relax, Hol," Cameron's voice is steady, grounding. "We've got you."

I glance up, and there's Cameron, watching me with a heated gaze as he holds Holly close. His large hands cup her breasts, thumbs brushing over her nipples in a rhythm that has her grinding back against him.

"More," she gasps, and I'm only too happy to comply.

Deacon slides his fingers under my chin, guiding my head just so. His other hand disappears between Holly's thighs, and I feel him push his fingers inside her, moving with a practiced ease that makes her body jolt in pleasure.

"Ah!" Holly's cry fills the room, a raw sound of pure ecstasy.

"Like that?" Deacon asks, his voice dark with lust.

"Perfect. Don't stop," she pleads, her hips bucking against us, seeking more.

"Never," I promise, diving back into her warmth, determined to draw every last shiver from her body with my tongue, my lips, my everything. We're in this together, all of us, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Desire pulses through the room—our breaths, our bodies, all mingling in a symphony of need. I worship her with my mouth, each lap against her slick folds an affirmation of how much she means to us.

"God, Holly," I murmur against her, feeling her quiver. My words are half-lost in the wetness, but she hears them. She always does.

Cameron's husky voice breaks through the fog of lust. "You're incredible." He rolls her nipple between his fingers, drawing a sharp gasp from her lips.

"Beautiful," Deacon adds, his gray eyes locked on where I'm feasting on her. His hand moves, fingers sliding deep and curling inside Holly, coaxing another cry from her throat.

"Jax... Cam... Deacon..." she chants our names like a prayer, her hands fisting in the sheets.

I pull back just enough to watch her face contort with pleasure. Cameron's hands are relentless, teasing and twisting, pushing her closer to the edge. Deacon's fingers dance inside her, finding that sweet spot that makes her back arch off the bed.

"Come for us, Holly," I growl, diving back in to suck on her clit.

"Ah—yes!" Her body tenses, and then she's shattering, coming apart under our hands and mouths. But we don't stop. We can't. Not when she's glowing like this, not when every moan is music to our ears.

"Again," Cameron commands softly, his lips at her ear. "Let go."

Deacon's fingers quicken their pace, and I double my efforts, desperate to taste every drop of her release.

"Jaxon..." Her voice is shaky, reaching for me even as wave after wave crashes over her.

"We've got you, Holly," I assure her, and I mean it. In this moment, with her surrounded by us, by love, nothing else matters.

"Mine," Deacon states, his thumb circling her clit in tandem with my tongue.

"Ours," Cameron corrects, and we all nod because it's true. She's ours, and we're hers.

"Yours," she whispers, her eyes meeting mine before fluttering closed as another orgasm rips through her.

We worship her body with reverence, with need. Our words, our lips, our fingers, our cocks—we use them all to show her just how special she is. And when she smiles, sated and content, we know we've done it right. Because Holly, our Holly, shines the

brightest when she's loved. And we have so much love to give.

Page 9

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Chapter 9

Holly

My stomach churns again, and I curse whatever bug has decided to make a home of my body. Stress, probably. The new job with the Grizzlies is no joke, and here I am, squatting on the cool tile of Sawyer's too-neat bathroom, rummaging for some aspirin under the sink.

"Come on," I mutter to myself, pushing aside bottles of fancy hair products that Sawyer never got around to packing. My hand brushes against a familiar box, and I freeze. Tampons. A whole unopened box just sitting there, mocking me.

"Wait." The word barely whispers past my lips as I sit back on my heels, my brain doing the math. Late. I'm late.

"Shit."

I push to my feet, feeling the room tilt a bit. It's stress. It has to be stress. Images flash through my mind—intimate moments, heat, and definitely not enough caution. God, how could I have been so careless? Condoms were an afterthought more often than not with the boys. It's ironic because I've always been the one preaching safe sex to my friends.

But I'm on birth control. And I'm religious about taking it. Hell, I set an alarm to make sure I not only remember to take it, but take it at the same time every day because it's more effective that way.

"Stress," I chide myself, pacing the small space. "It's just stress."

But then, another thought slams into me like a body check. Antibiotics. I was on them last month for that stupid sinus infection. The doctor even mentioned...something. What was it?

"Oh, fuck," I blurt out to the empty room. Antibiotics can mess with birth control, making them less effective. That's what she said. How could I forget that?

My hands are shaking now, and I lean against the sink, taking deep breaths. This is not happening. Not now. Not when everything else is finally falling into place.

"Okay, Holly, think." I need to know for sure. I need to...

"Later," I decide. "I'll deal with this later."

But deep down, I know it's not something that can wait.

I grab my keys and phone with a trembling hand, pausing only to shove my feet into the nearest pair of sneakers. My heart hammers against my ribs as I lock Sawyer's apartment behind me, descending the stairs two at a time. The cool air outside does nothing to calm my racing pulse.

"Focus," I whisper to myself.

The corner store is a blur of neon signs and last-minute shoppers. I dart through the aisles, zeroing in on the test kits. My fingers wrap around the first box I see, not bothering to check the brand. At the checkout, I avoid the clerk's eye, feeling like everyone must know why I'm there.

"Have a nice day," the clerk says, but I'm already halfway to the door.

"Thanks," I mumble, the automatic doors closing behind me.

Back at the apartment, I waste no time. I rip open the package, my hands clumsy, and read the instructions three times just to be sure. One line, not pregnant. Two lines, pregnant.

"Okay," I say aloud, steadying myself on the bathroom counter. "Okay."

I do what needs to be done, set the stick on the edge of the sink, and force myself to wait. Every tick of the clock is a thunderous beat in the silence. I close my eyes, bargaining with every god I know and even some I don't.

"Please," I beg the universe. "Please let it be stress."

But when I open my eyes, there are unmistakably two pink lines staring back at me. A positive. Pregnant.

"No, no, no," I chant, the sound a mantra of disbelief. This isn't happening. It can't be.

My phone rings, slicing through the fog of panic. Sawyer's face lights up the screen. My insides twist. How am I supposed to act normal?

"Hey, Sawyer," I answer, pressing the phone against my ear with a shaky hand.

"Hey, Hol. You sound...off. Everything okay?" His voice is laced with concern—it always is when it comes to me.

"Yeah, I'm fine." The lie tastes bitter. "Just tired from work."

"All right, if you're sure..." He trails off, obviously not convinced. "Listen, I've got a bit of downtime. Thought I'd call, catch up?"

"Uh, yeah. Sure." I struggle to keep my voice steady. "That sounds great."

"Switch to video."

I accept the video call and then scramble to hide the box of test kits under the sink just as my big brother's face takes over my screen. My heart hammers in my chest like it's trying to break free. I smooth down my hair and take a deep breath, hoping my face doesn't betray the chaos inside me.

Sawyer greets me with that familiar crinkled-eye smile, but his grin fades a touch. "You look pale. Sure you're okay?"

"Never better," I manage to say, even though my voice trembles.

"Okay..." He sounds skeptical and his eyes slide off my face, looking around as if he might find clues as to what's really eating at me.

"How—how have you been?"

"I've been good," Sawyer replies, his voice warm and comforting. "Just settling into the new team, you know how it is. I miss the Grizzlies, though. I'm pissed I can't be there to see you shine this season."

Sawyer's voice is warm and filled with genuine affection as he updates me on his recent games and the adjustments he's making on his new team. I listen, trying to focus on his words and not the life-changing discovery I just made moments ago.

He ruffles his wavy blonde hair, a sure sign he's worried about something. Probably me. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Really, Sawyer, I'm good. Just...work stuff, you know?" I offer the most convincing

smile I can muster. It feels fake even to me.

"Right." He nods, unconvinced, and leans back against the cushions. His protective gaze lingers a moment longer before he lets the subject drop. "So, tell me about the latest game. You were on fire with that commentary."

"Thanks," I reply, the compliment warming me like a shot of whiskey. We chat about hockey, about the team, and I almost forget the storm brewing in my own life. Almost.

The conversation shifts easily between us, as naturally as skating on fresh ice. But every laugh, every shared memory, is tinged with guilt. I'm keeping this massive secret, and it's building a wall between us.

"All right, Hol. I've gotta get back to it. But call me anytime, okay? I'm here for you."

"Will do," I promise. The call ends, and the weight of my secret presses down on me until I feel like I'm buried.

"Damn it," I mutter. Alone again, the full reality of my situation settles in. I want the guys. I want Cameron's calming presence, and Jaxon's worrying, and Deacon's control. But...I can't.

How will I tell them? What if they don't want this? What if...I don't even know whose baby this is.

No. Can't think about that now. I need a plan, but first, I need to breathe. I need to play this close to the chest until I figure out my next move. Until then, it's just me and this tiny, unexpected life we've created.

"Okay, baby," I whisper, placing a hand on my still-flat belly. "It's you and me

against the world."

For now.

It's two days later when a knock on the door startles me. I'm not expecting anyone, but the guys tend to show up whenever they want. I check the clock as I walk over. They should still be at practice. And I've been avoiding them like the plague.

So, who is at my door?

The apartment door swings open, and Sawyer steps inside, shaking snowflakes from his jacket. His hazel eyes scan the room, then land on me, huddled with a blanket cocooned around my shoulders.

"Hey, Hol," he greets me, but his smile falters as he takes in my pale face.

"Sawyer! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I have a break between games. And you're the worst liar I know. You're not okay. And you can't lie to my face. So, here's my face. For real this time. How are you?"

"Fine," I lie. The word feels like a stone in my throat.

"You don't look fine." He drops his bag and sits beside me, close enough for warmth but leaving space between us. He's respectful. Always respectful.

"Really, I'm—" I start, but the words die in my throat.

"Out with it." He gently nudges my knee with his own.

Deep breath. "I'm pregnant."

He blinks, once. Then stillness there's just stillness between us, like the world outside our window, frosted over and quiet.

"Okay," he finally says. Not mad. Not shouting. Just matter of fact. "What do you want to do?"

"I don't know." It's barely a whisper. "I'm scared."

"Scared of what?" His voice is soft, coaxing.

"Of telling the network. Of doing this alone." Tears prick my eyes. Stupid tears.

"Hey." He reaches over and tilts my chin up. "You're not alone. You have me."

"Thanks." A tear escapes. Then another.

"Whatever you decide, I've got your back. Always." His promise wraps around me, stronger than any blanket.

"Always," I echo, clinging to that single word like a lifeline.

"Always," he confirms, and even though nothing's fixed, it feels like maybe, just maybe, everything might be okay.

Then he asks a question I'm not prepared for. "Who's the father?"

Chapter 10

Cameron

I slump onto the couch, my muscles protesting after today's practice. It's brutal, but it's done. Now, there's only one thing on my mind: Holly. I can't shake her from my thoughts, no matter how hard I try.

My gaze drifts to the window. I could walk across the hall. I could knock. But will she be there? And if she is, will she even open the door? The silence between us lately feels like a wall I don't know how to climb over.

"Man, you look like hell," I mutter to myself, knowing the mirror would agree I it could.

I rub a hand over my face, the stubble scratching my palm. We laid everything bare at that away game. We're all in. She knew it, accepted it. We were good, moving forward. At least, that's what I thought.

"Dammit, Holly," I whisper, wishing she understood.

I stand up, pacing. Three steps forward. Two steps back. The distance to her door might as well be miles. My phone rests heavily in my pocket, tempting me. I want to text her, call her, show up with flowers or some other kind of grand gesture. But what if she's pulling away for good?

We were solid, unbreakable. Or so I believed. Each moment without her chips away

at my resolve. But I won't let it crumble. Not yet. I need to see her, hear her voice. I need to know we're still a team.

"Hey Cam, what's left in the fridge? I'm starving," Deacon calls out, his voice a low rumble from the hallway.

"Check for yourself," I reply, not taking my eyes off the door. Holly's silence is eating at me, and I'm seconds away from making the decision to go knock on her door when a sharp knock cuts through the tension.

"Got it," Jaxon says, swaggering to the door with that cocky confidence that only he can pull off. He swings it open, and bam! His head snaps back, a solid punch landing square on his jaw.

"Jaxon!" I shout, bolting up from the couch.

"Son of a..." Jaxon stumbles back, clutching his face. Sawyer Hawthorne storms in like a hurricane, fury blazing in his hazel eyes.

"You're dead!" Sawyer yells, lunging at Jaxon again.

"Whoa, hey!" Deacon and I leap into the fray, trying to wrestle Sawyer back. But the guy's a raging bull, all muscle and anger, barely noticing as we struggle to hold him.

"She's my sister, you bastards!" Sawyer keeps shouting, veins popping in his neck. "How could you?"

"Stop, Sawyer! Calm down!" I try to reason with him, but it's like talking to a brick wall. His fists are still flying, aiming for Jaxon, who's trying to shield his face.

"Easy, man!" Deacon grunts, his arms wrapped around Sawyer's waist. "Let's talk this

out."

"Talk?" Sawyer spits the word out like venom. "After what you did with Holly? You were all fucking my sister!"

"Sawyer, I can expl—" Jaxon starts, but another wild swing from Sawyer cuts him off.

"Damn it, Sawyer! Just stop and talk to us!" I'm shouting now, my own frustration mounting. We need to calm him down before someone gets seriously hurt.

The sound of a door slamming makes us all freeze. Holly's standing there, her hand still on the frame like she's keeping herself upright with its help. Shock paints her face. She looks haunted.

"What the hell, Sawyer?" Her voice is barely above a whisper, but it slices through the chaos.

I can't help myself; I drink her in. But then I notice that she's pale, almost ghostly, and it kills me.

"Nothing," I say, but it's a weak attempt. "Just working out some stuff."

"Working out some stuff?" Sawyer spits out, his eyes wild as he tries to free himself from Deacon's hold. "This—"

"Enough, Sawyer!" Jaxon barks, his back against the wall, his face twisted with frustration and something else. Something raw.

"Tell me what you were thinking, huh?" Sawyer snarls, his gaze fixed on Jaxon. "The three of you! With my sister! My sister, Jaxon! You're supposed to be my best

fucking friend."

Sawyer lunges for him again. Deacon and I surge forward, trying to get between them. Jaxon's eyes flicker over to Holly, and there's a beat, a single heartbeat, where everything hangs in the balance. Then it spills out of him, heavy and sure.

"I love her."

It's like someone sucked all the air out of the room. Silence, thick and heavy, settles on us.

"Jax..." Holly says the word like a breath, like a prayer that tugs at something deep in my chest.

"You love her?" Sawyer echoes, disbelief etching his features, the fight draining out of him like water from a pierced can.

"I love her." Jaxon's voice is a broken hush, but it carries, filling the space between us, binding and shattering us all at once.

"Wow," Deacon murmurs, and I nod because, yeah. Wow.

I step forward, my heart hammering against my ribs. "Holly," I start, my voice barely above a whisper but strong with the weight of what I'm about to say.

Jaxon's on my left, his tattooed arms crossed, a rare vulnerability in his eyes. Deacon's right beside me, quiet but his presence is like a comforting rock I can lean on.

"I love you, too," I say, and it feels like I'm shedding years of walls I've built around myself. "We're in this together—if you want us."

"Completely," Deacon adds, his voice low.

"Every damn part of me is yours if you'll have it," Jaxon says, his dimple showing despite the tension in the room.

Sawyer slumps down, the fierceness melting off him as he presses a towel against his eye. He looks up at Holly, his jaw working like he's chewing on glass.

"Tell them," he grinds out.

"Tell us what?" My mind races through a million scenarios, none of them good. Holly shakes her head, her blonde hair catching the light like a halo.

"It's not your business," she insists, her voice trembling.

"Tell. Them." Sawyer's voice is no longer a command; it's a plea.

My stomach drops. Tell us what?

The silence in the room hangs heavy like a wet jersey. Sawyer's glare pins Holly to the spot. He's waiting, we're all waiting.

Holly's eyes meet mine, those big blue pools of worry and something else—fear? She bites her lip, a nervous habit that I've come to find endearing. But now, it only twists my gut tighter.

"I, um," she starts, voice so soft it's nearly swallowed up by the tension surrounding us.

"What is it, Hol?" It's Jaxon's turn to coax her, his hand reaching out but not quite touching her.

My mind is reeling. I'm cycling through every worst-case scenario as the seconds stretch out. She's found someone else? She's leaving? What?

She takes a deep breath, and I swear I can hear her heart pounding from where I stand. Then she lets the breath out, along with words that hit me harder than any slapshot.

"I'm pregnant."

Deacon

Pregnant. The word echoes in my head, bouncing around like a puck in overtime.

"Jesus, Holly." Jaxon's words are a whisper, as if he's afraid to break whatever spell has been cast.

"Are you—" I start, but my voice cracks. Clearing my throat, I try again. "Are you sure?"

Her nod is small but certain. "I took three tests."

"Damn." That's Jaxon. Always straight to the point.

"Is it...?" I can't finish the question. Don't want to ask. But I need to know.

"Okay." That's me again. My brain's scrambling, trying to piece together a future that just got more complicated. "We'll figure this out."

"Figure what out?" Sawyer's up now, the towel dropping from his face, forgotten. "What's there to figure out?"

"Everything, man." That's Jaxon again. He steps closer to Holly. "This changes everything."

"But we're in this." Cameron moves too, flanking Holly like he's ready to protect her from the world.

"Right." I catch Holly's gaze and hold it. "We said we're all in. That hasn't changed."

"Hasn't it?" Holly's question floats over us like a feather. I feel it, light as can be, but still slicing right through me.

"Never," I say firmly. "We'll work through it. Together."

"Damn right," Jaxon adds. And just like that, the team's back together.

"We're a team," Cameron says with a small smile. It doesn't reach his eyes, but it's something.

I step forward, the distance between Holly and me disappearing like the final seconds of a game that's hanging in the balance. My hands are gentle as they find her face, holding it like she's the most precious trophy I've ever won. And she is.

"We're going to be dads?" The words tumble out, disbelief glazing every letter. Beside me, Cameron and Jaxon have closed in, forming a protective triangle around Holly.

She looks up at us with those big blue eyes, shimmering pools that always seem to see right through me. And now, they're filled with silent tears that spill over, carving wet tracks down her cheeks.

"Hey, no crying." I brush the tears away with my thumbs, trying to smile for her, trying to be strong. But inside, my heart is doing somersaults, and my mind races with a million thoughts about cribs and diapers and late-night feedings.

"Sorry, it's just... a lot," she whispers, her voice so small it nearly gets lost in the enormity of the moment.

"Understatement of the year," Cameron murmurs, his voice barely above a whisper,

but it's enough to draw a watery laugh from Holly.

"Okay, team." Jaxon's voice is steady, certain. "Looks like we've got a new player joining the lineup."

I snort out a laugh, grateful for his unwavering confidence. "You're not alone in this, Hol. We're here, all the way."

"Every step," Cameron adds, his hand finding its place on her shoulder, grounding her.

"Every heartbeat," I promise, feeling the truth of my words deep in my soul.

"Look, I don't expect anything. I can do this just fine on my own."

Sawyer growls from his spot slumped on the floor. "Bullshit."

I'm pretty sure my heart's pounding loud enough for the whole room to hear. Holly's eyes are like oceans, deep and blue and brimming with a storm of emotions. I take her hands in mine, feeling them shake. "You're not doing this solo, Holly. Not a chance."

She tries to pull away, the stubborn set to her jaw telling me she's ready for a fight. "I don't need—"

"Stop." Cameron's voice cuts through like a slapshot, fierce and fast. He towers over her, like a protective giant. I'm shocked at his tone. I would have expected it from Jaxon. But Cameron? "You think we'd let you do this alone? Bullshit."

Jaxon steps closer, his presence like a force field. "He's right. You're ours, Hol. And so is this little one." His hand rests on her still-flat belly, possessive and gentle all at once.

She sobs and nods her head in understanding. Thank fuck. Because I wasn't above kidnapping her and tying her to my bedpost to make sure she understood. She's ours. We're hers. And there is no way in fuck we would walk away from her and our child.

The weeks slide by like periods in a game, fast and full of change. We're at every doctor's appointment, every check-up. While the doc talks about folic acid and due dates, I watch Holly. She's strong, so damn strong, but I see the relief when Jaxon cracks a joke, or Cameron reaches out to squeeze her hand.

Work gets harder as her belly grows, but we're there. Jaxon takes over as usual, finagling the cameras to favor her good angles, and Cam's always hovering nearby, ready to fend off any stress or strain that might slip through the cracks. I handle the heavy lifting—literally and figuratively—making sure she never feels overwhelmed.

Leaning against the studio door frame, I watch Holly in her element, the glow of the camera lights casting a halo around her. She's talking with Colton about the upcoming season, and she's nailing it. She's not just getting by—she's owning the space confidently.

"Colton, what are your thoughts on the upcoming draft?" she asks, her voice smooth and assertive.

I can't help but smirk. Holly's not just good; she's made for this. The way she pauses to give room for his answers, her blue eyes locked on his, she's all business and it feels right. Colton respects her, values her insight. If only he knew the whole story. But that's our secret, our private play.

To the world, she's Cameron's. He always hated the attention from the puck bunnies, so it made sense he'd be the public face of our private relationship. Behind the scenes? It's still the four of us, always the four of us. Well, soon to be five.

Sawyer finally sold his apartment, and we sold ours too. We found a house just

outside the city. It's still close enough to the arena that it's not a hike to come to work, but it's a safer neighborhood. The schools are great, and the yard is big enough for our baby to play in.

Back at home, it's Jaxon who slides the envelope across the kitchen island to Holly. His brown eyes are serious but warm, a silent vow echoing in the silence.

"Doesn't matter what it says," Cameron states simply, leaning against the counter, arms crossed. It's rare when he speaks up first, but when he does, we listen.

"Damn right," Jaxon adds, his dimple flashing despite the tension. Holly takes a deep breath, her delicate fingers tearing open the envelope.

I watch her scan the contents, then let out a slow exhale. She doesn't say the words, doesn't need to. It never mattered to us which one was the father. Her eyes meet mine, then Jaxon's, then Cameron's. Relief, love, certainty—it's all there.

"Ours," she whispers, and that's everything.

"Ours," we affirm together, stepping close, our little huddle a fortress against any storm.

One Year Later...

Life is crazier, louder, better.

I'm rocking gently, my mind drifting. The scent of talcum powder fills my nose as I look down at the most precious gift I've ever been given. I wouldn't trade this for anything, even if I am exhausted.

The door creaks, and in comes Holly, laughter bubbling from her as she spots me trying to keep my eyes open. There's that glow about her, the kind that only

motherhood brings.

"Hey, sleepyhead," she teases, coming over to plant a kiss on my forehead.

"Hey yourself," I reply, my voice groggy, but I'm smiling just the same.

Jaxon follows right behind her, the warm bottle in his hand. His brown eyes meet mine, and we share a look that says we wouldn't change any of this for the world.

"Got the goods," he announces, handing over the bottle.

"Thanks, man," I say, grateful for more than just the bottle. For this—us, this bond, this family we've built. It's more than I ever knew I wanted.

"Anytime," he replies, that dimple showing itself off as he watches me take the bottle.

The soft weight of my little girl in my arms is a feeling I never want to let go. Her tiny fingers curl around mine, and it's like she's already got me wrapped around her little finger. Which she does. Completely. I look down into those eyes that are so much like Holly's and my heart just about bursts.

"Finally found them," Cameron grumbles as he steps into the room, his arms full of fluffy, white cloths. "Had to fight through a mountain of onesies and blankets."

"Sorry, man." Jaxon's voice is laced with amusement rather than remorse. He leans against the doorframe, the warm bottle still in his hand. "Laundry isn't exactly my forte."

"Understatement of the year," I tease. Cam rolls his eyes but the corner of his mouth twitches up, signaling that he's not really mad.

"Here, let me." Holly reaches for our daughter, her blue eyes shining with that mix of

love and exhaustion only a new mom knows. She gently takes her from me, cradling her close before accepting the bottle in my hands.

"Got it?" Jaxon asks, and Holly nods, her attention now fully on the baby.

"Like a pro," I say, watching Holly settle back into the rocking chair. She's a natural at this, soothing the little one with soft words as she starts to feed her.

I lean back, taking in the scene. Jaxon, with that dimpled smirk as he watches over Holly's shoulder. Cameron, still holding the burp cloths, but his irritation forgotten as he gazes at the baby—our baby. And Holly, the incredible woman who brought us all together, who made us more than just teammates—made us a family.

"Nothing could be better than this," I murmur, the peace of the moment settling deep in my bones. We're a team in every sense of the word. And this...this is what winning really looks like.

Simple, perfect, and so damn full of love.

Nanny For The Players is another spicy hot reverse harem story that you're going to love!