



# Under My Skin (Skin Deep #2)

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**Category:** Romance, Young Adult

**Description:** Under My Skin (Skin Deep #2)

One little piercing. That's all Allie wanted when she dragged her best friend into Skin Deep. She never imagined that it would result in a busted lip and an engagement ring for Emma, or that it would come with a double side of six-foot plus, tattooed, sexy-as-sin, H.O.T. maleness for her! Now she's torn because Brandon and Jackson have both let it be known that they want her. And both are used to getting what they want. But what about what Allie wants?

Brandon is hot for Allie. So is Jackson. Neither of them are willing to step aside for the other and they're tired of Allie running. So they hatch a plan...

Add in wedding bells, a dog named Doug, and you've got a recipe for a good time. Or a disaster.

Recommended for readers 18+ due to HOT sexual encounters, adult situations, and language. This is book two of the Skin Deep Series; recommended to read after Skin Deep, book one of the series.

**Total Pages (Source):** 52

# Page 1

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## Chapter 1

I blinked my eyes, my mouth gaping open. I was completely shocked, flabbergasted, astonished. Whatever you wanted to call it, that was me. I could not wrap my mind around what I'd just heard, let alone try to come up with some sort of sensible answer.

But let's back up for a second. Over a year ago, I conned my best friend, Emma, into going to a tattoo shop so I could get my tongue pierced. She ended up getting a tattoo, the first of the three she's now sporting, but more importantly, she ended up meeting Luke, the man she's going to marry next spring. Me? I did end up with the tongue ring, but that only lasted about six months, especially after I ripped it. Now, I actually have my own ink, drawn up specially by Brandon, Luke's brother. They own Skin Deep together, and they do very well.

It's a very cute little tattoo; just a small hot pink flower with a tribal design on my front right hip. Brandon was also the one who pierced my tongue, so I figured he should be the one to do my tattoo, too. Honestly, he didn't really give me a choice. He said he was going to do it, so why argue?

I didn't want anything big because I'm a small woman. I'm only 5'2, size 3/4, but what I lack in size, I make up for in boobs and attitude.

But right now I'm still stuck on the fact that Jackson, who is Luke and Brandon's best friend that is moving here from L.A. (who the hell moves from L.A. to Phillus, Ohio?), is standing here in front of me having said what he just did.

“Allie? Did you hear me?” Jacks asked patiently.

I personally wouldn't have been patient if I'd asked someone what he just asked me. But then again, I don't know if I'd ever ask someone what he did.

“Allie, seriously. Are you ever going to give us a chance to really be with you? You've been teasing us for months now, and while I love your few and far between kisses, I want more. I want you lying in my arms at night, waking up beside me, making love in the morning...hell, anytime I want!”

I gasped. “But, Jackson! You...I...you don't know that you want that! You can't know that you want that. And what about-” I stopped as he cut me off.

“What about Brandon, right? You don't have to worry about that. In fact, he and I have already discussed this. We're willing to work it out, to try it, at least. We want it to work because we both want more from you.”

A warm, deep voice chimed in from behind me. “He's right. We did discuss this, Allie, because we both want to be with you, and we know that you want to be with us. Both of us. We also know that being with both of us is not conventional, and it might be frowned upon by people, but who gives a fuck? If we're happy, isn't that all that matters? What's holding you back, Allie?”

Brandon walked around the couch and plopped down on the other side of me, leaving me pressed between two hard, very warm male bodies. I wasn't complaining about it, but...I still had no idea what to say to them, how to answer Brandon's question.

Emma had called me at the store today and asked if I wanted to come have dinner and hang out tonight, maybe watch one of the hundreds of movies that Luke and Brandon had collected over the years, but when I'd gotten here, she'd told me she forgot that she and Luke were going out for a date night. They were going to go get dinner and a

movie, but she told me that Brandon and Jacks were going to order pizza and chill at home, so they asked me to stay and hang out. I agreed, not realizing that I'd been set up. That didn't come until about ten seconds ago when Brandon joined our discussion.

"Wait. You guys planned this little thing tonight to talk to me?" I asked. "And Emma was in on it? Seriously? You couldn't just pick up a phone and talk to me like normal people do? And Jesus, Jacks, why'd you wait until Brandon left the room to start in on this whole thing?" I could hear my voice rising, but I couldn't help it. Everything was feeling so surreal to me.

"He left so I could talk to you about this. We figured you might be a little more receptive if you didn't feel like you were getting ganged up on," Jacks said quietly.

"But why now? You know, I was a little confused by the fact that Emma supposedly forgot a date night with Luke, but I let it go. I mean, no big deal. But then Jacks...you drop this in my lap out of nowhere and I'm...I...I don't know what the hell to say!" I dropped my head back and closed my eyes, feeling like I was hanging on by a thread.

"Allie, come on. You know this isn't out of nowhere. Jackson and I have made it clear that we're into you. You've kissed us both, and wanted to do more. The only one holding back in this situation is you, and well, we're done waiting. In fact, we both asked Emma what she thought because she knows you best." Jackson kept his voice gentle, obviously trying to placate me.

I snorted. "Oh, and what'd she do? Declare open season on me for the two of you?"

Brandon answered this time. "No. All she said was 'it's about damn time'! But even she couldn't tell us why you're holding back."

Good question. I mean, it's not that I hated the thought of being unconventional,

because, let's face it, I was completely unconventional on my own. A self-proclaimed free spirit...I really just enjoy being myself, who I am, and I don't care what people think. Usually. But this...this was a little different. I mean, isn't it a little greedy to want or have two gorgeous men in your bed every night? And what about kids?

Don't get me wrong; growing up with my parents being how they are, I've seen some shit that most kids would be traumatized by. Like when 'Aunt' Sherry would come to stay for a weekend and after I'd go to bed, she, Mom, and Dad would smoke these funny smelling cigarettes, and then Sherry would be in bed with them in the morning when I woke up. Of course, as I got older, I realized what that funny smell was, and exactly why Mom and Dad were sharing a bed with 'Aunt' Sherry.

And that doesn't mean that my parents were bad people, or bad parents. They loved me, provided for me, and taught me right from wrong just like any other parents would do. They just made things a little more fun than some, and were very...open about other things.

The more I thought about it, though, I realized that none of my arguments were very convincing as to why I should fight it. What's the harm in trying? At least we'd know then if it wouldn't work. But would my heart be able to handle it if it didn't? Or, God forbid, what happened if there was something more with one than the other?

I sat up, shaking my head at the turn my thoughts were taking. I noticed that the room had gotten very silent, and two pairs of eyes were trained on my face, watching intently for any sign of what I was thinking. I looked at them, studying each one in turn.

Brandon was 29, my age, stood about 6'3, had gorgeous blue-grey eyes, and closely cropped black hair. He was muscular but lean, tattooed, and had that unshaven, kind of scruffy look going for him that made me want to lick him. He was also the jokester of the group; always ready with a quick comeback, loved to make people laugh. I

almost think he does it to hide how intelligent he really is. He isn't usually very forthcoming when it comes to details about his past, but one drunken night loosened his tongue and he let it out. Let's just say it wasn't the easiest for him, but he and Luke are doing quite well for themselves now.

## Page 2

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Jackson was 32, the same age as Luke, but he was taller than both of the other two, topping out at 6'4. I had to crane my neck to look up at him (well, any of them, for that matter). He was broad shouldered and, just like Brandon, muscular but lean, tattooed, although he has quite a few less than Brandon, but his eyes were a deep, warm brown with the longest eyelashes I'd ever seen on a man, let alone a woman. Thank God, that didn't detract from his masculinity in any way. In fact, it made you want to melt when he turned those babies on you. His hair was also dark, close cropped to his head, but he was clean shaven. And when he smiled? Holy Mother of Mary Kate, if that didn't want to make me drop my drawers. He had the cutest little dimple in the side of his cheek that got me every time.

So, really...what the hell was my problem? It wasn't as if I was unattracted to them; in fact, it was the polar opposite. Maybe I was too attracted to them.

Brandon broke into my thoughts. "Allie?"

I gave them both a small smile. "I honestly have no answer for you. I don't know why I've been fight-"

My words were cut off by a harsh groan. I don't know who's mouth it came from, but what I do know is that I was suddenly crushed to Jackson's chest and his lips were on mine, nipping at my bottom lip until I gave in and opened for him. He thrust his tongue between my lips, kissing me deeply, thoroughly. After a minute, he pulled back, kissed me gently one last time before I found myself being turned and then Brandon was there, wrapping me up in his arms.

His lips caressed mine tenderly, his tongue dancing softly over mine, asking for more

rather than taking like Jackson had. The difference in their kisses was like night and day, although I knew Brandon could be just as intense as Jacks. But now, in this moment, the contrast just served to make my pulse pound, to make the ache building between my thighs spread through my body until I wanted nothing more than to be lost between the two of them.

Brandon's kiss didn't last nearly as long as Jackson's, and I found myself sitting between them again, panting slightly for breath.

"Wow," I muttered. "Okay then." I blew out a breath, trying to get my thoughts back in order. "Back to what I was saying..."

Again, I was interrupted. "You don't need to say anything more, babe," Jackson replied. "You said yourself that there's no reason to fight what we all want. It's settled. We're giving this a go."

Brandon chimed in, "Yep. No use in fighting it anymore, Allie. Just give in and let it happen. It's all going to work out just fine."

I eyed them suspiciously. "Why are you both so convinced this is going to work? I mean, have you ever tried something like this before? I know, Jacks, you had that thing...yeah. Umm..."

Brandon chuckled, laughing at Jackson's face turning red, and then replied, sheepishly, "Well, actually, I, uh...had my own apartment for a while after high school. You know, wanted to try the whole on my own thing. My roommate and I both dated this girl at the same time. Like...together."

I stared at him, completely taken by surprise by this. "What happened then?" I asked.

"Well, actually, they started to get really serious about each other, like marriage



serious. It wasn't like that for me; I liked her and all, but I wasn't in love. So, it was done for me, but last I heard, they got married and are working on their fourth kid."

I nodded slowly, taking it all in. "What about you, Jackson? Anything you want to let me know about this type of situation?" I raised my eyebrows, waiting for his answer.

He cleared his throat before saying, "Luke and I used to do the same thing with girls. Nothing serious, ever. In fact, we'd always said that when we found that special one that we were meant to be with, it would never happen unless it was discussed and rules were put into place; but even then, it was probably never going to happen. That thing with Emma...that was kind of a fluke." He flinched, rushing to finish quickly, "I never touched her! I swear to you!"

"I know. Emma told me about it. It was an...interesting...conversation. But if you had that kind of pact with Luke and now you're telling me you're in this because you want to be with me, how is that any different? Why are you willing to do this with Brandon?" I asked.

Seriously, it was a good question, at least to my mind. It almost made me think that this was something that they were just trying to get out of their system, that they weren't that serious about me. And if I was honest with myself, I could definitely see myself getting serious with them. Yes, I said them. Geez, what am I getting myself into?

I've never been one to seriously date, because I don't want to settle for just anyone. I want that toe-curling, butterfly stomach, melt-at-his-kisses kind of love. And none of the guys I'd dated in the past had made it past the first or second date. If they did, it always turned into more of a booty call situation than anything.

Jackson cocked his head, looking at me almost as if he didn't know what to say. But he must have because he replied, "Well, I'm not willing to stand aside so Brandon

can have you.” He turned to Brandon. “No offense, man.”

“None taken,” Brandon replied. “We really did discuss this, Allie. Jackson and I both know what we are getting into, we both are coming in with eyes wide open. I wasn’t standing aside for Jackson to have you, either. We both want you and we’re willing to do what it takes in order to make you happy. And, since we’ve both done it before, we’re not averse to sharing.” He grinned widely at me after saying that. “Just means that you’re that much happier, getting twice the lovin’!”

Oh, Lord.

## Chapter 2

I yawned, blinking my eyes as I tried to wake up. I moved to stretch but found that my mobility was severely hampered at the moment, due to the fact that I was surrounded by hot, bare male flesh. A moment of panic zinged through me before I realized that I hadn’t gotten drunk and blacked out the night before.

Last night came flooding back; the talk we had, after which we ordered pizza and cuddled on the couch while we watched some weird ass movie the guys had picked out...And then they convinced me to stay the night. I’d done that before, sharing Brandon’s bed with him. But it was strictly platonic. Okay, well not strictly platonic because he’d always managed to sneak in some kissing and mild petting, but nothing beyond that. Plus, Jackson had never been in the bed with us.

I’d kissed Jackson before, too. We’d done about the same amount of making out and petting that Brandon and I had, but I’d never slept in a bed with him. For one thing, he currently doesn’t have a bed to sleep in. The one time they tried to get me in Brandon’s bed with both of them, had been the night of the Halloween party, and I ended up sleeping on the couch while they shared Brandon’s bed.

Jackson is some hot shot architect on the west coast, and his mom and sister live out there still. They'd moved there when Jackson was fresh out of college and got a job for a firm there. He worked there for a few years and then opened his own firm. He's been working from home and flying back when the occasion calls for it, and he apparently does very well for himself considering he's been scouting in Cincinnati to find a place to open a satellite office. Then he could appoint someone to run the L.A. office and he'd have only about a thirty to forty-five minute commute to the office.

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I haven't seen the plans for his house yet, but Emma said they're amazing. I've only seen the framework and bits and pieces that have been done from afar because I've never really wandered over there to check it out. Probably should do that sometime soon; especially now, given the circumstances I find myself in.

They'd convinced me. Actually, they really hadn't given me a choice, but whatever. I'd agreed to give it a chance, so here I am, Allison Anne McCormick, in bed between my two...boyfriends? Lovers? What the hell do I call them?

They'd dragged me off to bed, laid me between them, and both proceeded to kiss me senseless, their hands roaming my body and making me writhe with want, but neither of them allowing their hands to touch anywhere near the parts of me aching so bad for it. I'd finally smacked them both away from me and curled up, refusing to talk to them or even touch them anymore. Then they'd both laughed and cuddled up to me, Brandon holding me against his chest while Jackson spooned me from behind. I have to admit that it was pretty nice...

I laid there for a minute, smiling at both of them snoring softly. In the night we must have moved around a bit, because Brandon was now flat on his back, my head pillowed on his chest. Jackson was still at my back but he'd turned the opposite way, his back pressed to mine. I realized I wouldn't be going back to sleep, and other matters were becoming more urgent the longer I laid there, so I carefully maneuvered my way out from between the two of them.

I stood at the foot of the bed, feeling quite accomplished at having gotten out of the bed without waking them when Jackson rolled over. I waited for him to look at me, but realized that he was still asleep when he reached out his arm, apparently

searching for me. When his hand hit Brandon, he shifted closer and threw his arm around his waist, holding him close and sighing in contentment.

O.M.G. I had to clap my hand on my mouth to keep from laughing out loud. I didn't want to wake them up before I managed to get to my phone and get a picture of this. It was too good to pass up! I tiptoed out of the room, carefully opening and closing the door behind me, made a pit stop in the bathroom, and then headed out to the living room to grab my phone from the coffee table where I'd left it. I turned to head back in there when I heard a voice behind me.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?"

I turned back to see Emma standing at the kitchen counter, a cup of coffee in one hand and the newspaper in the other. I felt my cheeks flood with heat, but they quickly cooled when I reminded myself that the little witch had been in on the whole setup.

"Oh no, no, no, Miss Emma Marie Jensen. You don't get to stand there with that smug look on your face like you caught me red-handed. You set me up, you bitch!" I said, giving her the evil eye. It didn't last long though, because I couldn't contain my smile.

"Okay, we can talk about this in a minute, but right now there's a more pressing matter at hand," I told her. She looked confused for a minute until I held up my phone, shook it at her and said, simply, "Blackmail time."

In a move so fast it made me jump, she'd slammed her cup down on the counter and was at my side, ready for action. She really is the best friend in the world.

We crept down the hall, trying not to giggle and wake them up before we could get in there and take a picture. We got to the bedroom door and heard a faint click, click,

click coming down the hall toward us. I shot a panicked look over my shoulder at Emma who's own eyes were screaming 'oh, shit!' before she wheeled around to head Doug off. I didn't want the huge yellow lab to jump in and ruin my photo-op. Because he'd be through that door and would Superman himself into that bed with them in a heartbeat.

Emma was back shortly, giving me a thumbs up. I nodded once and started pushing the door open again. Yes! They were still snuggled up together where I'd left them, only it was ten times better than before. Brandon had turned over and Jackson was now completely spooning him, his arm thrown over his waist and curled up around Brandon's chest. If he would have been holding me that way in the bed, his hand would have been cupping my breast.

I looked at Emma, who was struggling to hold her laughter in, and grinned. It was taking everything I had in me not to bust a gut laughing, but I managed to bring my phone up and tap on my camera icon. I felt Emma move up to my side and noticed that she had her phone out, as well. I nodded to her and we both pressed the button to snap the pictures on our phones. I had my camera setting on silent, so there was no sound; however, Emma's made a very loud snap/snick sound that I swear echoed in the silence.

She looked at me, wide-eyed, before high-tailing it from the room at a dead run, abandoning me without a thought. Humph. Maybe I take back what I said about her being the best friend in the world...

I slowly looked back at the bed, frozen where I stood, and saw Jackson's head raised slightly off the pillow. He started to smile at me sleepily before he froze, and I could see the wheels almost turning in his mind. In slow motion, he turned his head to look beside him at who he had his arms wrapped around. I couldn't help it anymore; I lost it, laughing so hard that I had tears pouring down my cheeks.

Jackson jerked back away from Brandon like he'd been burned, shoving him away in the process. Poor Brandon, still asleep (how I have no clue), went flying off the side of the bed and landed in a heap on the floor.

His head popped up over the side of the bed, his eyes narrowed and glaring at Jackson. "You dick! What the fuck was that for?" he yelled.

Jackson glared back at Brandon and yelled, "You were cuddling me, you asshat!"

Brandon looked confused and a little scared at this point as he got to his feet and sat on the side of the bed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He glanced over at me and his eyes narrowed again as I wiped tears away, still chuckling with glee. "Where were you, then? Was I seriously cuddling him?"

I opened my photo gallery and moved up to the side of the bed to show him the picture I'd snapped. I jumped back away when he jerked back, leaned over, and slugged Jackson in the arm. "No way, you sick fuck! YOU were cuddling ME! Oh, God!"

I started laughing again when Brandon shuddered, and then heard muffled laughter just outside the door in the hallway. I walked over and opened the door wider to see Emma standing there with Luke, both of them shaking with amusement and staring at Emma's phone.

Luke shook his head, his shoulders still shaking, when he poked his head around the door frame and looked at Brandon and Jackson, who were both sitting on opposite sides of the bed, glaring at each other. "There something you need to tell us, guys?"

Brandon jumped up off the bed and ran for Luke, who had enough sense to take off running, pulling Emma behind him. Brandon shook his head, stopped beside me, pecked my lips with his, and headed into the bathroom.

I turned to find Jackson still sitting there, looking a little dazed and disgusted all at once. I couldn't help it; he was too cute to ignore. I walked over to him and sat down on the edge of the bed facing him, leaning in and touching my lips to his.

"I'm sorry, Jacks," I whispered. Of course, I had to go and ruin it by giggling again.

His eyes narrowed and he shifted, snatching me up and into his lap before I could move. "Really? You're sorry?" he growled, lowering his lips to mine. He kissed me softly for a second before pulling back. "You're gonna delete that picture, right, Allie?" he asked, threateningly.



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I smiled innocently. And didn't say a word.

We both looked up as we heard Brandon come back into the room and all of a sudden I was airborne, coming to rest against Brandon's chest as Jackson stood and passed me to him.

"Hey!" I cried. "I'm not a freakin' rag doll you guys can just pick up and toss around, you know!"

Brandon muttered, "Don't we know it," before his lips descended and found mine as Jackson left the room, headed for the bathroom, I would assume.

He kissed me deeply and I shifted in his arms, moving so that my chest was against his and I could wrap my arms around his neck. He, realizing what I was trying to do, helped move me so that my legs ended up wrapped around his waist, locked behind his back, my feet pressing against his tight ass to pull him closer to me. I moaned into his mouth as I felt his hardness press firmly between my thighs. I shifted against him, pulling away from his kiss to press hot, open-mouthed kisses along his jaw and down his throat before nipping at his shoulder with my teeth.

My eyes flew open and I gasped as I felt a wall of heat move up behind me. I turned my head to meet Jackson's gaze over my shoulder, my breath coming faster as I got a glimpse of the heat burning there. His hands came up and lightly slid up my back and over my shoulders before he pulled me back against him. Brandon's hands shifted slightly, sliding to cup the backs of my thighs. I loosened my arms from around Brandon's neck and leaned back more fully against Jacks, his heat branding me through the thin material of my t-shirt.

Jackson's hands moved again, sliding down from my shoulders and around, stopping just beneath my breasts. He nuzzled my throat with his lips and I turned to meet his kiss, moaning against his mouth as Brandon shifted again, rubbing me more firmly against his hardness. Jackson pulled away from the kiss on a groan, dropping his forehead to rest on my shoulder. Brandon's fingers tightened on my thighs, but he stilled, no longer moving against me.

I was shaking, almost dizzy with the overwhelming desire crashing over me in waves as I was held between them, breathless with need, and confused as hell that they had stopped. Brandon shifted his grip again, making sure he had me securely within his arms as Jacks stepped back. He turned and moved us both onto the bed, sliding toward the middle before they both crawled in beside me, one on either side.

I looked at them, unsure what to say, or hell, what to even think at their abrupt about-face, but my confusion dissolved into a small, shy smile as they both grinned at me.

I heard Jackson murmur, "Good morning, baby," as he pressed his lips against my shoulder, his head propped up on his hand, his body pressed along my left side, looking down at me as I lay on my back.

On my other side, Brandon mirrored Jackson's position and movement, only he said, as his lips brushed my right shoulder, "Now THAT is definitely a good morning!"

I shook my head at them.

We laid there together for a while, me trying to come to grips with the fact that I'd actually taken that step last night and finally gave in to what I knew would have happened eventually, and them...well, if I had to guess, trying to get themselves under control. I mean, it had ended up being a pretty happy morning for them...but it was their fault that they'd be walking around with certain parts of their anatomy decidedly Smurf-colored today. I didn't make them stop, they had on their own! And

they can't blame me for the date I'd already scheduled in my head with BOB later that night, either. Those asses left me hanging!

We finally got up and went out to the kitchen when Brandon's stomach very loudly announced that it wanted fed. Jackson ran over to his place to check on a couple things while Brandon and I sat at the table with Emma and Luke. We talked with them, or tried to, anyway (neither one of which could keep a straight face every time they looked at Brandon) for a while before I got up and grabbed my keys.

I needed to head home so I could get some things done before tomorrow. I usually spent most of my Sundays catching up on paperwork when I got back from breakfast at Emma's mom and dad's house. It was tradition, but we missed out on it today because they'd decided on the spur of the moment to go and visit Emma's mom's sister and brother-in-law in Texas.

"Where do you think you're going?" Brandon asked me.

"Home," I replied. "Why?"

He shrugged. "Just wondered. Got any plans tonight?"

Ummm...yes. Finishing what you guys started. "Not that I know of. Do you?"

He stretched, leaning back in his chair as he answered, "Yeah, I'm assuming Jackson and I will be over in a little while. Are we staying at your house tonight? Hey! What size bed do you have anyway?"

I rolled my eyes at him. "King size, and do I get a choice if you stay or not?"

"Nope."

Didn't think so.

I finally got to leave about fifteen minutes later, but only after promising that they could come stay with me tonight, AND that I would cook them dinner. Oh yeah, did I mention that I had to kiss him like twenty times before he let me go? I could get used to that.

I headed home, shaking my head as I passed the welcome sign heading into town. It'd been changed again, but this time the lovely misguided youth completing the defacement of public property had added a drawing of a large, misshapen penis at the top. I'm assuming it was a penis, anyway.

I pulled my car into the garage and headed inside. I love my house; it's cute, comfortable, and most importantly, mine! It looks like a cottage but it's got a wide front porch, and a screened in back porch with a fenced in yard. It seems small from the outside, but it's surprisingly roomy on the inside with three bedrooms and two baths.

It was perfect for me to have an office in one of the rooms, an extra guest room, and then, of course, my bedroom that I've decked out with a huge four-poster canopy bed and lots of pillows! I'd forgone the typical heavy drapery around the bed, and instead had draped it with white tulle netting, gathering it around all of the posts. It looked like a fantasy all in white and I loved it.

With a sigh, I threw my keys on the kitchen counter as I passed through, making a beeline for my office so I could get a head start on the paperwork I needed to get done before tomorrow. I own my own thrift store in a quaint little strip mall in town. I named it Twice As Nice, and I think the name fit it perfectly. I do take in donations, and I carry the usual thrift store items, but my inventory tended to lean more toward vintage and unique.

I worked in my office for a while and by the time I got it all finished, Brandon and Jackson were pulling up. They each had a small duffel with them and I couldn't help but tease them as they walked into the house.

“You guys moving in or something?” I asked, smirking.

Jackson and Brandon both grinned at me and nodded. I rolled my eyes at them and shut the door behind them. I barely got turned around when I heard the thump thump of two duffels hitting the floor and I was surrounded. Jacks claimed my lips, kissing me deeply for a minute before Brandon, who was at my back, cupped the back of my head in his hand and turned my face to meet his kiss over my shoulder. They released me after one last peck each, and I had to lean against the door for a second to compose myself.

“Well, hello to you, too...” I mumbled, still halfway dazed.

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“So,” Brandon said cheerfully. “What’s for dinner, dear?”

### Chapter 3

“Whoa...who pissed in your oatmeal this morning, sweetie?”

I turned from where I’d just slammed the register drawer shut to see my mom coming in the door of my store, holding a large, oddly shaped piece of wood. I moved quickly out from behind the counter to take it from her.

“What is that, Mom?” I asked her, choosing to avoid her question.

“It’s a quilt hanger rack thingy,” she replied with a smug smile.

“Is that the technical term for it?” I asked, being a smart ass on purpose.

I leaned over to kiss her cheek and laid the rack across the counter to check it out. It was a decent piece, no cracks or splinters, so I went back behind the counter to get a tag for it before moving it to the back counter out of the way. I’d find somewhere to hang it after a bit.

Turning, I spied my mom thumbing through a rack of old romance novels I had set up by the counter. “See something you like, Momma?” I asked.

She sighed and shook her head, turning around to look at me. “Nah...who needs romance books when I have your father at home?” She grinned at me as I pretended to gag, holding up my hand in the universal sign for ‘Stop! Don’t say another word!’

“TMI, Mom, TMI. So what are you up to today?”

Mom shrugged. “Just out and about, thought I’d stop by on the way to your grandparent’s house. And I wanted to drop that off, see if you could sell it. Bernice next door brought it over to me to see if I would bring it in. Well, I’ve got to get over there. You know how they are...” she rolled her eyes and blew out a breath.

I laughed at her. “Yes, I know how they are, and we all completely love them anyway. Nanny being ‘Tank’ again?”

Mom nodded. ‘Tank’ is what we call my grandmother; she’s cantankerous sometimes, hence the name. Poor Poppy has learned just to turn his hearing aids down and nod when she says something to him. He seems to stay out of trouble that way.

“Did you go to Sunday breakfast with Emma’s family yesterday?” Mom asked.

“No, Jan and Ben took off to visit Jan’s sister in Texas on the spur of the moment,” I replied.

Mom cocked her head and made a pouty face. “Awww...my poor baby didn’t get to eat breakfast yesterday? You should have come see us! I would have cooked for you.”

I rolled my eyes at her. “Mom, in case you failed to realize it, I am a grown woman with my own house. I am perfectly capable of cooking breakfast for myself. Besides, I spent the night out at Emma and Luke’s.”

Mom’s cell phone chimed. Without even looking at it, she groaned. “There’s your Nanny now. I swear she times me and if I’m ten seconds outside of the time she thinks it takes to get there, she’s calling me and cussing me up one side and down the

other.” She shook her head at me and gave me the same line she always does. “I’m saying sorry now just in case I get that like down the road. Always remember that I love you!”

I smiled at her, nodding in agreement, and gave her a big hug. She waved as she barreled towards the door, rushing to get to my grandparent’s house before they called out the search party.

I leaned against the counter when she left, a little relieved that she was distracted so quickly. I really didn’t want to answer her as to why I was out of sorts this morning. Brandon and Jackson had stayed with me last night, but it might as well have been Emma and her sister, Leah, in bed with me for all the good it did me.

Meh...okay, maybe not Emma and Leah. That might have ended up a little awkward! Brandon and Jackson cuddled me and kissed me and got me all hot and bothered again before they wrapped themselves around me and ordered me to go to sleep.

No, I didn’t stutter. I said ordered. They’re lucky they woke up this morning with all of their appendages attached. I don’t know what the hell their problem is. They wanted to give this thing a try and I agreed, but now they’re playing hot and cold? What the fuck?

I straightened as the bell above the door to the store chimed, signaling a customer’s entrance and got back to work. My day passed pretty quickly, even though I was still fuming in the back of my mind. I kept replaying this morning over and over in my mind...

They leaned over me, one on each side, both snuggled right up against my hips. And from the feel of things, they were both wide awake now! I took a deep breath and it shuddered out of me as their gazes both traveled south, roaming over the length of me pressed between them.



“So,” Brandon began. “This is how it’s supposed to be. You here, nice and soft and warm between us.” He leaned in and softly pressed his lips against mine, silently entreating me to open for him.

My lips parted on a sigh when I felt a hand stroke up my thigh to rest lightly on my bare stomach where my shirt had ridden up. Brandon took advantage of the moment and slipped his tongue between my lips to dance with mine. The hand on my stomach slid higher, stopping at the underside of my breast, and I squirmed.

I broke the kiss Brandon and I were sharing and turned my head to the other side, taking in the heat blazing in Jackson’s dark eyes. He leaned in and, not bothering to be gentle about it, nipped at my bottom lip before thrusting his tongue inside, kissing me deeply.

I felt Brandon shift a bit before his hand was sliding up my thigh, caressing the other side of my body at the same time that Jackson’s hand began moving again. They slid their hands up and down my stomach and sides, lightly over my thighs and back up, neither venturing anywhere near the areas now aching to be touched.

They were torturing me...doing nothing more than caressing my body and kissing me, and I felt like I was going insane.

After a while, they’d kissed me goodbye before leaving, Brandon to head to the shop and Jackson to his house to oversee something the contractors were doing today. Neither of them mentioned getting together tonight, or staying again...frankly, I was completely confused at this whole relationship thing. It was not going anything like I imagined it would.

When they said they wanted to try it, that they wanted me and basically wouldn’t give up until they got me, I figured I was about to get the smack down put on me. I was ready for the mind-blowing, toe curling, hair pulling, ass slapping, screaming out

until I passed out moments that I thought for sure were headed my way. So what gives? I wanted to stomp my feet and scream in frustration, but managed to contain myself. Barely.

I got home about six-thirty and, since I still hadn't heard from Brandon and Jacks, I decided to soak in my tub. The whirlpool jets and detachable shower head were calling my name, if you know what I mean...wink wink!

Twenty minutes later, I was very engrossed in my 'relaxing', not bothering to suppress the moans and gasps emanating from my lips.

"Mmmm...yessss..." I hissed through my teeth, not caring that my voice echoed through the room.

"Yeah, baby...keep going...oh, God," a deep, male voice said breathlessly. "Do you want some help with that?"

I shrieked, bolting upright in the tub and holding the shower head protectively in front of me, water spraying out all over the floor and Brandon, who just so happened to be standing in my bathroom. Where I was naked in the tub. And masturbating!!!

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All of a sudden the bathroom door crashed open and Jacks filled the doorway, his eyes wild, panting as he yelled, “What? What’s wrong? Allie!”

I finally found my voice. And let it rip. “GET OUT! Oh, my God! Just go! What the hell are you doing here?” But my words echoed ineffectively through the room because they just stood there, both of their gazes locked on my wet, naked body. Did I mention I was NAKED?

The irony of the situation hit me suddenly and I started laughing uncontrollably, even if a little bitterly, dropping the showerhead into the tub and reaching to shut the water and the jets off. Here I am, trying to finally get some relief from the sexual tension the two asses standing in front of me had ramped up, and I’m STILL not getting any relief BECAUSE OF THEM! Argh!

But enough is enough! Their time of controlling the situation is done; I’m taking control now, and judging by the way their eyes are roving over my bare skin, it’s not going to be too hard to do.

I stood up after pulling the plug on the tub, reaching out for the towel I’d left on the counter before stepping out. Brandon was so close that the tips of my breasts grazed his chest before he swallowed loudly and took a step back.

Glancing over to the door where Jacks was still standing, frozen, I licked my lips as I started running the towel down the length of my body, deliberately turning slightly away from them as I bent at the waist to dry my legs. I heard twin gasps as my position afforded them a view of bare, tender pink folds peeking out from between my thighs and the soft globes of my ass cheeks, both begging for their touch.

‘In for a penny, in for a pound, right?’ I thought to myself as I dropped the towel, all pretense, and, still bent over, ran my hand up my leg until I touched that tender flesh, running my fingers lightly back and forth over my slit. I widened my stance and allowed the tip of my middle finger to slide between my nether lips, moaning softly as I encountered the wetness seeping from my flesh.

I heard a harsh groan behind me, followed by a low growl, and then I was being lifted into the air against the hard wall of Brandon’s chest, my fingers slipping away from the apex of my thighs. My hand was instantly caught and my head spun when Jackson stepped forward and slid my finger deep into his mouth, sucking off my juices.

I went limp against Brandon as he swung around and headed for my bedroom, Jacks following close behind. He’d lost his grip on my hand when Brandon had moved, but the heat in his eyes as they locked on mine over Brandon’s shoulder made me shiver in anticipation.

Finally! Yes! This was happening...no way in hell were they stopping before we were all a breathless, tangled mess on my mattress, or so help me God, there would be fucking hell to pay.

Brandon dumped me unceremoniously on my bed and I bounced once before I was surrounded by the unwavering heat of two pumped up, sexy, alpha-males, one on each side. I sat up, finding Jackson’s lips with mine and kissing him wildly as I blindly reached out to grab for Brandon’s shirt, desperately tugging at it, wanting it off and his bare skin against mine. He complied immediately and my hand was suddenly tracing the hard muscles of his chest. I moaned and broke the kiss with Jacks, tugging at his shirt with my free hand, wanting him bare to me as well.

Panting, I moaned, “Clothes off, NOW!”

Both of them sprang into action, jumping off the bed and shucking their jeans in an instant. I learned rather quickly that neither of them bothered with underwear apparently, so they were bared to my gaze, and sweet baby Jesus, what a sight! The Hallelujah chorus began blaring in my mind and my mouth watered.

Blinking, I sucked in a breath, taking in the beauty of them. Both of them were very well endowed, Brandon just a tiny bit longer than Jacks, but Jackson's girth more than made up for that. Both were also clean-shaven...score!

"You sure about this, baby?" Jackson asked me, his voice ragged and low.

"You stop and I'll castrate you both. You both wanted this relationship and you have not held up your end. You've only tortured me," I growled, narrowing my eyes at them.

Jackson chuckled and held up his hands in surrender; Brandon shook his head and grinned at me. They were both so amenable to this now that I had to open my mouth and ask.

"Why the hell haven't you touched me, then? How the hell can you sleep next to me and not want to do more? You guys said you wanted me so bad, but..." I broke off, my voice cracking and surprising me. Damn it! I didn't want to turn into an emotional wreck, begging for attention.

Brandon's grin slipped off his face immediately, and he was beside me in an instant, Jacks right behind him.

"No, baby, no..." Brandon soothed. "We want you. So bad. Seriously bad, to the point that we were afraid we'd scare you off. And we wanted to be sure that this is what you really want, that we're not forcing you into anything."

“Why didn’t you say anything, sweetheart?” Jackson asked. “The last thing we want is for you to pull away from us. And before you say a word, I know that’s what you were doing. You didn’t call or text me today, and I’m pretty sure it’s a no for Brandon, as well.”

I shook my head, done with the conversation. I wanted to get back to the good stuff, because I seriously was about to go postal if I didn’t get my rocks off! “Less talking, more touching,” I said, firmly.

I didn’t give them a chance to say anything more, reaching out and encircling both of them with my fingers. I heard Brandon gasp and he jerked slightly in my grip. Jackson inhaled sharply before releasing his breath on a groan.

Without stopping the smooth glide of my fingers up and down the smooth, hot, hard flesh jutting from each of their bodies, I slipped off the edge of the bed to my knees in front of them. I’d never dreamed of doing something like this in my life...well, okay, maybe dreamed about it, but never imagined that it would come to fruition. A headiness coursed through my veins, making me bold, and I felt sexier than I’d ever felt in my life as I leaned in and kissed the tip of each of them in turn.

Twin moans sounded softly above my head and I smiled secretively to myself. Never stopping the motion of my fingers on Brandon’s shaft, I shifted slightly and closed my lips around Jackson’s taut, heated flesh. Sucking him deep in my mouth, I slid my hand down and cupped the heavy sac resting between his thighs, tugging gently as I flattened my tongue against him on the way up, swirling it against the head, flicking the small slit there.

I moved my hand back up to his shaft, encircling it and resuming the smooth pumping motion I’d used before. I shifted to the other side and did the same for Brandon, smiling against his flesh as he growled at the feel of my mouth surrounding him. I switched back and forth between them for a while, reveling in the differences I

noted; their distinctive, intoxicating scents, the taste of them, the slight difference in their sizes.

Moaning deeply in my throat, I released them and stood, pressing myself between them, begging for their bodies to encompass me in their heat. I ran my hands through Brandon's hair, tipping my face up and begging silently for his kiss. I expected hesitation on his part simply because of where my mouth had been, but there was none. He immediately took my lips in a deep kiss, thrusting his tongue between my lips when I gasped as Jackson's hands came up and cupped my breasts from behind.

I thrust my hips back, my ass rubbing against the velvet covered steel springing forth between Jackson's thighs. His fingers pinched my nipples, tweaking them roughly, and I let loose a low growl, that edge of pain shifting me a little closer to going over the edge of wildness I was teetering on.

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I released Brandon's lips from mine, nipping at his bottom lip, before turning in Jackson's arms, jerking his head down to me, and thrusting my tongue into his mouth without preamble. He opened to me, kissing me back just as ferociously as I was kissing him. I reached behind me and pulled Brandon into my back, nestling the hardness of him between my thighs until I felt the tip of him slide through the wetness gathered there.

Oh, holy fuck! The feel of them both wrapped around me was like nirvana...my own personal slice of heaven. I wanted to be possessed completely by them, to ride this out until I exploded into a million little pieces that would probably never fit back together the same way again. I already knew I was hanging by a thread and falling fast; I had been for months. But now there was nothing holding me back.

Pulling away from them, panting, I moved toward the bed, pushing Brandon ahead of me until he fell onto it, sliding to the middle and then reclining against the headboard. I climbed on the bed, following him until I was on all fours between his thighs. I wiggled my ass at Jackson, asking wordlessly for him to come behind me. He came to the bed but stopped suddenly, turning and grabbing his jeans off the floor, removing a strip of foil-wrapped squares from the back pocket. He ripped one off the strip and had it open and on before I could blink.

Without warning, I felt him, thick and heavy, probing into the drenched flesh between my thighs. He hesitated as if he was unsure. I thrust my hips back, his fullness stretching me, stinging a bit as I bore down, not stopping until he was buried deep.

"Oh, fucking hell," he groaned, his hands gripping my hips tightly.



I wiggled against him a bit before turning my attention to the man sitting so patiently in front of me. His eyes had darkened, the gorgeous color of them turning stormy. His lips were parted, his breathing heavy as I took him in my hand and brought him to my lips. I moaned as I closed my mouth around him because Jackson had chosen that moment to start moving, sliding in and out of me with fluid movements, filling me so deeply on every thrust that it felt like he was hitting things inside that had never been touched before.

I lost myself to the moment, floating away on the feel of Jackson hard between my thighs, of Brandon hard between my lips, the salty-sweet tang of him on my tongue, the bite of Jackson's teeth on that tender spot where my neck and shoulder meet, Brandon's hands fisting in my hair.

The crescendo built and built, winding its way through the symphony of passion coursing through every fiber of my being, until all at once it let loose, crashing over me, sucking me down just as surely as I swallowed down every drop of Brandon's release, licking my lips and releasing him as a scream tore from my throat. I came and came as Brandon growled and Jackson lost his smooth rhythm, pounded himself mercilessly into me, my inner muscles milking him as he spurted and shook, gasping, the heat of his release burning me even through the thin latex sheathing him.

When the tremors finally ceased, he carefully slid himself out of me and left to dispose of the condom. Brandon reached down and pulled me up over him. He cupped my cheek and, looking into my eyes, lowered his lips to mine, kissing me softly. I sighed and melted into him, loving the tenderness with which he held me.

I felt the bed depress behind me and shifted to look at Jackson as he laid down. I smiled at him and met his lips, kissing him sweetly before sliding down in the bed to lay flat on my back between them. They both moved to lay on their sides, propping their heads up on their fists to look down at me.

I grinned, unable to hold it in anymore. “So, was it good for you?” I asked, knowing the answer but still wanting the affirmation.

Jackson rolled his eyes and Brandon let out a laugh.

“Who’s hungry?” Brandon asked as he lightly slapped my thigh, rolled off the bed, and strode out of the room, completely uncaring of his nudity.

Jackson and I looked at each other and laughed before getting up to follow him. Of course, I stopped to grab my robe first, and Jackson grabbed his jeans, sliding them on. When we got to the kitchen, Brandon was standing in front of the open fridge, rummaging around.

Hearing us walk in, he turned and scowled at me. “You have no food in here, woman!” he growled.

I shook my head at him, laughing. “Yes, I know. I need to go to the store. Why don’t you go get some clothes on and we’ll go grab something to eat? Griff’s sound good?”

Jackson and Brandon both nodded and took off to get clothes. I followed behind a little slower, finding that I was actually a little tender in places that hadn’t been worked that well in a long time.

We all piled into Jackson’s car and headed downtown to Griff’s. We sat, ate, and talked for a while before going back to my house to go to bed. It was getting late and I needed to be at the store early in the morning because I had a lady bringing me some stuff to look at.

By unspoken agreement, we stayed at my house, tumbling naked into my bed to sleep, our limbs all tangled together.

In the morning, before my alarm had even had a chance to go off, I was woken by Jackson's mouth on my nipple, suckling and nipping, and then jerked even more awake when Brandon's mouth opened over my wet heat, his tongue spearing through the soft folds, flicking over my clit rapidly before lavng me from top to bottom. I writhed between them, moaning and gasping, drowning in pleasure. I stiffened, my back arching as Brandon's tongue thrust inside me, fucking me as deeply as his tongue would reach. Between that and Jackson's mouth on my breasts, his hands squeezing and kneading them as he sucked and licked and bit, I was fast approaching the edge.

Brandon's tongue moved back to flick over my clit again and he thrust two fingers into me, curling them up to hit that elusive spot that only I'd been able to find in the past. No one else had ever made me as wild, had known how to bring me to that peak so fast, so completely. He stroked in again, his tongue moving faster, and when Jackson latched onto my nipple again, that was it. I was flying, leaping off that edge into the abyss of seemingly never-ending ecstasy.

Breathless, I lay there, my body thrumming and clenching with aftershocks, unable to move. I heard rustling movements and, unable to do more than open my eyes to see what it was, I did, gasping at what I saw. Brandon and Jackson were both on their knees beside me, each of them fisting their rods, their eyes locked on my naked body sprawled out before them.

I felt my body shift into overdrive, my inner muscles clenching again at the sight of their hands moving on themselves, jerking faster and faster, each of them panting as they reached for completion.

I moaned, long and drawn out, and whispered, "Yes, oh God, please...come for me. Come on me...Jacks...Brandon...mmmmm..."

At once, they both exploded, my words taking them over the top, their groans and

growls mingling with my gasps as Brandon spilled himself across my stomach, Jackson across my breasts. When the last drops of their release was wrung from them, they collapsed beside me, each taking my lips in turn, kissing me gently.

## Chapter 4

Halfway through eating my lunch at the counter in my store a couple days later, I heard my phone chime in my purse. I grabbed it to see who had texted and had to laugh out loud.

Allison Anne McCormick, you are a horrible best friend! Pick up your phone and call a bitch, bitch!

I hadn't talked to Emma in a few days, which, now that I think about it, is pretty unusual. But then again, I'd been a little preoccupied. And I was loving it!

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I hit the reply button and typed: What's wrong with your fingers, Jensen? Forget how to push the dial key?

No, but I figured you must have been busy if you'd forgotten to call your best friend. Who is trying to plan her wedding. AND NEEDS HER MAID OF HONOR!

I rolled my eyes at her. I didn't forget that I was supposed to meet her at the bridal store on Saturday to try to find a wedding dress for her, and bridesmaid dresses for me, Leah, and Jenna, and a flower girl dress for Hayden. Emma had already bought her shoes, and the girls and I had ordered ours finally. We'd managed to find shoes that were similar to Emma's, only ours were studded down the stiletto heel, and the shoes themselves were black with white skulls wearing hot pink bows on their heads, instead of the hot pink of Emma's.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're just fishing for details.

My phone chimed again with her immediate reply.

No shit, Sherlock. So????????? Spill it, woman!

I laughed before replying. I think we need a special sundae night for this one! How about Sat. after we do the dress thing? My place or yours?

Yours. No guys allowed, so you better tell them to get lost now. Lol!

I shook my head at her, smiling to myself. I have missed Emma, even though it's only been a few days since I'd seen her last. But what could I say? Jacks and Brandon

had been keeping me busy ever since they finally got it through their heads that I was serious when I said I'd give it a shot.

Things have been going great; they go do whatever they need to do in the morning, come back to me in the evening and, more often than not, wear me out completely before we finally all fall asleep.

We all went grocery shopping together the night before last because Brandon kept whining that he'd waste away if I didn't get some food in my fridge. Jacks and I could only laugh as he filled the cart with more food than I've ever bought at one time in my life. I can't complain, though, because he actually has cooked up a couple great dinners for us. Jackson, surprisingly, doesn't do too bad in the kitchen himself. I get by, but I'm no Paula Deen.

Yet, even though things are going so well, there's still that niggling doubt in the back of my mind.

Dragging myself out of my thoughts, I grabbed the duster and started around the store, dusting and straightening shelves and displays as I went. I stopped here and there to greet customers that wandered in, and I even sold the quilt hanger my mom had brought in the other day.

When six o'clock rolled around, I went through my closing routine and headed out the door, stopping in surprise when I saw Jackson leaning against my car. I look around, searching for Brandon, but didn't see him anywhere.

I quirked my eyebrow as I walked toward him, leaning in and giving him a brief kiss before asking, "Where's Brandon? And where's your car? How'd you get here?"

Jackson smiled and kissed me again before answering. "Brandon actually dropped me off. He's got some late appointments at the shop, so I figured I would take my girl out

on a date.”

Huh. Wasn't expecting that one!

“Sure...that sounds good?” I said, though it sounded more like a question. It did sound good; I was pretty stoked to spend some time with him, but I was just surprised, pleasantly so. We'd never been on a date; nor had Brandon and I.

He smiled at me again. Gah! That damn dimple...I swear it makes my stomach drop and my lady parts moisten every time! The corner of my mouth kicked up in a half-smile and I handed him my keys wordlessly. He took them with a wink and, taking my elbow, actually walked me around the car and opened my door for me. His momma must have raised him right!

I settled in the seat of my car and put a hand to my stomach. I mean, I've had this man rubbing his naked body all over me, I've had his penis in my mouth, he's been inside me...why am I suddenly nervous? I have no idea why, but I was. It felt like I swallowed a pound of butterflies, and my heart was pounding out of my chest.

I looked over and then quickly away as Jacks got in and started the car, pulling out of the lot and taking me to wherever he wanted to go, and I was okay with that. I didn't think I could make a decision like that to save my life at the moment.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that he kept glancing my way, his beautiful lips curved in a smile that looked like it was permanently plastered across his face. Which didn't help my nerves one bit.

He reached over and grabbed my hand, lacing his fingers through mine and stroking my hand with his thumb.

“Did you have a good day at the store?” he asked.

I nodded at first, then cleared my throat and replied. “Yeah, it was okay. Sold an antique lamp that I got at an auction and someone brought me in some kickass old records.”

“Nice,” he said. “My mom actually had a huge collection of records at one time. She used to get them out and play them on this old record player...then she’d grab us up and start dancing around the living room. It was great...” His voice trailed off and he didn’t say anything more.

“Does she still have them?” I asked.

He shook his head no, but didn’t offer any further information.

“So, who’s us? You and your sister?” I asked him. I knew he had a sister and it was just the two of them with their mom. He never mentioned his dad, and I didn’t know how he’d take my asking about it.

“Yeah,” Jacks replied. “That was after the divorce. Mom always seemed to be a lot happier after Dad left. I think we all were, you know?” he asked, glancing at me before turning back to the road.

I looked out the window, furrowing my brow in confusion as we pulled into a long gravel drive that looked a lot like the one beside Brandon and Luke’s house. I turned to look at Jackson, the question evident in my eyes.

“I wanted to show you something, so I figured I’d surprise you a little. Yeah?” he asked, his voice husky.

I nodded at him and started to get out but stopped when he said, “Uh-uh...let me.” I sat back and waited for him to come around and let me out.



“Thank you,” I told him.

He smiled and leaned in, kissing me sweetly. He pulled back, but his hand came up to cup my cheek, his fingers caressing my skin tenderly. He was being so attentive I wanted to melt into a puddle right there in the drive. Instead, I turned my head and laid my lips against the palm of his hand, kissing it before I nipped it gently with my teeth. I smiled at his gasp and looked up to meet his darkening gaze.

“Allie, baby...God, you’re almost too much,” he whispered. Then he grabbed my hand and tugged me toward the structure coming to life.

I took in my first real look at what was going to be Jackson’s house. It was really big, but not over the top. They were a lot further along with it than I thought; they’d already started finishing the exterior with a gorgeous charcoal colored siding. The front porch was wrap-around, wide and inviting and I could picture some ferns and rocking chairs there, maybe even a swing. The front door was black with a large beveled window. It looked sophisticated yet inviting.

Jacks led me up the stairs and opened the door, ushering me inside. He closed the door behind me and took my hand, leading me through the house. He showed me where the kitchen would be, with a large walk-in pantry, the laundry room off the mudroom where the door to the large back deck area. He indicated that he’d be putting an in-ground pool and hot tub in back there, too, which I definitely could see myself putting to good use!

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He showed me where the living room would be, and then the rest of the first floor that consisted of a bathroom, a guestroom with it's own bath, and an office. Afterwards, he pulled me to the stairs and nodded with his head for me to precede him. I shook my head at him and complied, smiling when I heard his sharp intake of breath as he watched my ass sway in front of him. When I got to the top, there was a sitting/loft area that I hadn't realized looked over the living room and foyer.

Jackson turned to the left and led me through a doorway into a huge room that I had to assume was to be the master bedroom. In the middle of the floor, he had spread out a large, thick comforter and had laid out a picnic complete with wine, fruit, cheeses, crackers, and bite sized meats. The sun was still shining through the windows, giving a warm glow to the room.

To the left of the doorway was another door that, upon inspection, turned out to be a large, double walk-in closet. There was another door a little further to the right of the closet that opened up beside a glass fronted gas fireplace. When I walked through that door into a large bathroom, I didn't want to ever leave. The fireplace was double-sided; the fire was visible through the glass front on either side, in the bathroom

or the bedroom. There was a marble-topped, double sink vanity to the left, a separate toilet area to the rear that had it's own door, a walk-in shower with a tiled bench seat and multiple shower heads beside that, and then to the right, in a little alcove that was perfectly placed to enjoy the fireplace at the same time, was a large garden tub with whirlpool jets.

That did it. I wasn't leaving. I'm a bathroom whore and this one made me want to take up residence ten minutes ago.

I heard Jackson chuckling at me and glanced at the doorway where he stood. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders at him. “What can I say? This bathroom is the shit!”

“I’m pretty fond of it myself. But, I can’t take all the credit for the design. I had a little help,” he said.

“Okay?” I said. “Who helped?” I asked, curious to see who it was and why he would have even asked for their help. He’s the architect, so...

“Emma helped me,” he said, taking me by surprise.

“Em? Why would you ask for her help?” I asked him, definitely wanting to know the answer to this one.

“Because I wanted to know what you would like, what would make you happy here.”

Uh...huh? ‘Scuse me? I shook my head, sure I didn’t hear him right. “What?”

He reached out for my hand, pulling me into the bedroom area saying, “Let me show you the rest of the house up here first, then we’ll come in here and sit down. Okay?”

I let him lead me back through the loft, into a short hallway that had a bathroom to the right, a bedroom beside it, and another bedroom to the left. I looked at each room, taking them in but not fully aware of what I was doing, still stuck on the words that Jacks had uttered.

We walked back into the master bedroom and both sat on the blanket covered floor. He opened the wine and poured me a glass. I didn’t hesitate, throwing it back in two gulps and holding my glass out for another. He refilled it with a raised eyebrow, but didn’t say anything.

I took my time with this one, sipping a couple times before addressing the elephant in the room. “Jackson...why would you even try to make your house suit me, to make me happy? It’s your house, so you should do it to suit you. “

“I did, Allie. It suits me to please you. I sat back for all these months, not really sure of the welcome I would get from you. I thought you and Brandon had a thing going and I didn’t have a chance, but Emma told me not to give up just yet. And then I started noticing the way you looked at me...I realized that I didn’t want to give up on it. I wanted you, Allie...hell, there’s no past tense to it, I want you. Even when I have you, I want you,” he said, matter-of-factly.

“But, Jacks-” I began, stopping when he interrupted me.

“No, Allie, let me finish. I’m willing to do whatever it takes to have you, and I’m telling you now, regardless of what happens, you’re mine. Mine and Brandon’s, but he’s not here to give you his own words. But these are mine; yeah, we may not have known each other for years, but there’s something there. I know you feel it when you look at me. And then the last few days since you’ve finally given in...I’m falling for you, Allie. Fuck, if I’m being honest, I’ve already fallen for you,” he said raggedly.

I could see the effort it took for him to open up and let me see his vulnerability and it felled me. I was completely floored by his words, my first instinct to tell him that it’s too soon, too early; he can’t feel that way about me already. But looking at him, really seeing him, I could tell that he was absolutely telling me the truth. It made my heart swell, and, if I was honest with myself, fall a little deeper for him than I already had.

I sat my glass down beside me and moved towards him, leaning over him and tossing my right leg over his legs until I was straddling his lap. Looking directly into his eyes, I kissed him, trying to tell him with my lips just a sliver of what I wasn’t ready to say with words.

We stayed like that, kissing for a while, before he moved me back and started feeding me. I reciprocated, laughing when his teeth nipped the tip of my fingers as I fed him a grape. I felt a lightness that I hadn't realized was missing spread through me, and I relaxed into the moment, enjoying Jackson's company. There was a part of me that felt slightly guilty for doing this without Brandon, but surely that's how this whole thing works. I'd have alone time with him as well, right?

When both of us were replete and my head was swimming mildly with the wine, Jackson cleared everything off the blanket and pushed me down, covering my body with his as he kissed me deeply. Moaning, I parted my lips for him, relishing the taste of wine on his tongue.

His hands roamed my body, sliding up under my shirt to unsnap my bra and then pulling me up to remove both. I laid back down, staring up at him as he sat there unmoving, taking in the sight of me displayed before him. Slowly I raised my hands, cupping my own breasts before sliding them down my stomach to the fly of my jeans. A quick jerk and unzip and they were open, showing a pale triangle of flesh framed in the v created there.

Jackson's breath left him in a rush and he came alive, curling his fingers into the waistband of my jeans and jerking them down my legs. I had barely kicked free of them, toeing them off at the same time as my shoes, before his mouth was hot on me, his tongue parting my slick folds, tasting every inch of me. I arched my back and fisted my hands as best I could in his hair, pulling his face tighter against me, grinding my wetness into his mouth.

He pushed his face into me even harder, flattening his tongue and rubbing it roughly against the hard bud of my clit, sending me flying without warning. I screamed out into the empty room, flooding his mouth with my release and shuddering as he licked every drop from me. When he raised his head, he stole my breath with the wildness blazing in his eyes.

I'd never felt more wanted than right then and it made me even wetter than I'd been when I'd come. Using my fingers still entwined in his hair, I pulled him up and over me, meeting his lips with mine in a frenzied kiss, groaning at the taste of myself on his lips, his tongue, everywhere in his mouth. I pushed against his chest, rolling with him until I was straddled across his hips, tearing at his clothes in the process. I wanted him as naked as me so I could feel every inch of him against me.

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He sat up and helped me, moving me to the side in order to shove his jeans down and off, and then barely having time to lie back again before I mounted him again, sliding that dripping wet part of me against his straining hardness. The tip of him slid along my folds, parting around the blunt head until he was nestled between them. I could feel his pulse thrumming along my clit, and it was driving me insane.

Without wasting another moment, I slid myself forward again until I felt the tip of him nudge against my opening, and then I was taking him deep, not stopping until I felt his balls slap against my ass.

“Jesus, Allie...” Jacks moaned. “Baby, I don’t think I’m gonna last...you feel too good...oh, God, Allie...”

“Just enjoy the ride, lover...yes...” I growled as I began moving on him. I didn’t bother moving up and down him; I wanted him to stay as deep as possible inside me. I began sliding myself back and forth, circling and rocking my hips against him, grinding my hips against his, which rubbed my clit perfectly against his pelvis. I braced my hands on his chest and arched my back, circling my hips faster and grinding harder against him until I imploded, feeling like every inch of myself was sucked into an abyss before exploding outward into a million pieces.

I screamed, long and loud, the sound wrenched from me as I felt Jacks follow me down, the hard column of him buried deep between my thighs spasming inside me, filling me up with his release.

I collapsed against his chest, panting heavily and peppering his chest, neck, and face with kisses. “Fucking hell, Jackson!” I panted. “I don’t think I can move.”

Jacks didn't say a word, just wrapped his arms around me, holding me close against him. He was still buried deep inside me, but I could feel his hardness waning. I squirmed against him and smiled as I felt him jerk inside me, his breath coming out on a groan. "Oh, baby...don't move yet. Give me a minute," he mumbled.

We laid like that for a time, coming down from the heights we'd ascended, watching the shadows grow around us. Finally he kissed the top of my head and patted my ass, signaling that our private moment was coming to a close.

We got up and got dressed, cleaning up the picnic remains and returning to the car. I let Jacks drive again, and I loved that neither one of us could seem to stop touching the other all the way to my house.

When we pulled up and went inside, Brandon was sitting on the couch.

He smiled as I walked into the room, standing immediately and pulling me into his arms, kissing me thoroughly before asking, "Hey, baby. Did you have a good time on your date with Jacks?"

I nodded and hugged him back, meeting his kiss as he dipped his head toward me again. "Yeah, I finally saw his house...it's going to be gorgeous!" I said, grinning over at Jackson when I said it.

"That's cool," Brandon said. "So, since tonight is Friday night, what do you guys say to going out and doing something?"

His face lit up like a little kid's, but that's just Brandon. He's always excited, always finds the fun in everything. I really love that about him.

I shrugged and looked over at Jacks. "I don't care. What do you think? We could call Emma and Luke and see if they want to go? Maybe hit up that new dance club that



opened up a couple weeks ago?” I’m a sucker for dancing and, once you get a couple drinks in me, I could dance all night!

Jacks nodded, but I think he saw how antsy I got when we talked about going dancing, so he was good with whatever as long as it made me happy. Brandon saw the nod and grabbed his phone to call Luke. I wasn’t leaving it to chance, though, so I pulled out my phone and dialed Emma.

She answered on the second ring. “Hi, stranger! What’s up?” she asked. Then I heard her gasp. “Oh no, Allie, you are NOT calling to cancel out on me tomorrow. You absolutely HAVE to go with me because you have to find a dress for the wedding, and I have to find a dress for the wedding, and you have to be there because you’re my best friend, and Jenna is driving me nuts and...”

“Emma! Shut up!” I yelled into the phone, trying to stop her panicked tirade. “What the hell has gotten into you, chick? Of course I’m not calling to cancel!” I tried to soothe her, curious as to why she’s starting to freak out.

She took a deep breath and blew it out, directly into the mouthpiece of her phone and I laughed. “Geez, Em. Trying to turn me on blowing in my ear like that?” I teased.

“Allie...you’re a dipshit, you know that?” she asked, laughing.

“Yes, but you love me,” I replied. “Anyway, I was calling to see if you and Luke wanted to go down to that new club with us? I wouldn’t mind checking it out, and you know I love to dance! There’s some melon sours with your name on them...” I said in a sing-song voice to her.

She humphed. “Fuck melon sours...I need some liquid cocaine!” she exclaimed.

Ooh...that did sound good. “Well, I’d have to make a run to the liquor store on the

way, but I'm okay with that. Alright, it's on. Go get ready, I'm gonna jump in the shower real quick and get the guys moving. Yay! Party night!" I shrieked, purposely making myself sound like a ditzy ass valley girl.

She laughed, which is what I wanted, said okay, and hung up on me. I turned to Jacks and Brandon, who'd just hung up the phone from his own phone conversation with Luke, and told them, "Yup! They're in. Get ready and we have to hit the liquor store up on the way to their house. Is that okay?"

They both nodded and said they'd get ready at Luke and Brandon's house when we got there. Duh moment for me. They'd been at my house every night, so it completely slipped my mind that they wouldn't have going out clothes at my house.

I hurried through a shower but took a little more time with my makeup after running some gel through my hair and spiking it up in the back. I'd let it grow out some in the front, so I smoothed the longer pieces around my face, my side-swept bangs dipping over my eye. Satisfied that I looked pretty good, I grabbed my black skinny jeans and a black and silver halter top from my closet, dressed quickly, and shoved my feet into my black peep toe stilettos before heading back into the living room where the guys were waiting.

When I walked into the room, Jackson and Brandon both sat up, their eyes raking up and down my body. Brandon let out a low wolf whistle and I smiled. "Ready?" I asked them.

They nodded and we headed out the door.

## Chapter 5

We pulled up to the house to see Emma waiting on the front porch. I jumped out of the car and reached in to lug all of the various bottles of alcohol and fillers I'd bought

to make the liquid cocaine. I turned to walk toward the house and before I could take a step, the bags were pulled from my fingers and the guys took off inside.

Shaking my head, I mounted the steps to stand beside Emma. “So, were you that anxious to see me? What are you doing out here?” I asked, smiling.

She scowled. “Waiting on Doug to finish. I swear to God, that dog purposely takes his time. Did I tell you he came home smelling like a fucking skunk again last week? It’s like he seeks them out and taunts them like, ‘hey guys! C’mon, spray me! The bitch at home LOVES taking tomato juice baths!’ And I think he has a girlfriend. There’s a little black lab that I saw chasing him the other day, but I don’t know where she came from or where she went. If he comes home with puppies in tow, I’m gonna castrate him!”

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Doug chose that moment to come trotting up the steps. He stopped and licked my toes where they peeked out the peep-toe of my shoes, and I patted his head. He turned and looked at Emma, and if I didn't see it with my own eyes, I'd never believed it, but he opened up that doggy mouth of his and grinned at her!

I laughed as Emma muttered, 'smart ass' under her breath while glaring at him. Still laughing, I shook my head and we went inside to see the guys standing around the counter, eyeballing all the liquor.

"Oh, no no no! Don't even think about touching any of it!" I shouted.

Luke threw his hands up and yelled, "Not touching! I'm not touching it!"

I heard Emma laugh and Brandon groaned, throwing his head back and moaning, "Oh, God...he's pussy whipped! He won't even touch the liquor!"

I cocked my eyebrow at him and tried to look serious but couldn't help but smile back at him as he grinned at me, completely unashamed at his part in trying to get into the booze. Jackson just stood there grinning at everyone, but I think he had a pretty good reason to be in a good mood. I know I did...

"Just give me a few minutes and then you guys can take off with whatever is left. But who's DD tonight?" I asked.

Jackson spoke up. "I'll do it. That way we can drop Emma and Luke off here before we go back to your house. Unless you want to just crash here tonight in Brandon's bed?" He looked at me questioningly.

I shrugged and asked Brandon, “Do you want to sleep in your bed for a change or go to my house?”

“Your house, definitely. My mattress squeaks. And I don’t want to hear all the ‘Oh, God’s and ooh, yes, harder’s later coming from upstairs,” Brandon said, smirking at Emma.

I laughed as I watched Emma’s face turn bright red. It doesn’t matter how often we tease her, she still gets embarrassed. I took the big pitcher of ice she held out to me and began cracking open bottles, pouring each into it in turn. I grabbed the long handled spoon she handed me and stirred to mix the vodka, amaretto, Southern Comfort, Grand Marnier, pineapple juice, sweet & sour mix, and 7up all together.

When it was all mixed, I poured a glass of it for everyone except Jacks, and then raised my glass, the others following suit without question.

Without even thinking, I gave my customary girl’s night toast. “Here’s to a good night with plenty of booze, good music to dance to, and lots of hot dudes!” As soon as the words left my mouth, Emma cringed and then busted out laughing at the horrified look I know how to be plastered across my face.

Luke looked like he was trying to choke back the laughter, and Brandon didn’t even try.

Jackson just shook his head and said, “Might want to work on a new toast there, babe.”

Oy.

We hung out and drank a bit more before piling into Brandon’s Expedition because it was the biggest vehicle. About twenty minutes later we pulled up to new club that

had opened in town, The Dungeon. I was really curious to see what kind of club it was. I'd heard a few people talk about it in passing and how much fun it was to go there and dance, so I was definitely excited to get in and have a good time. About the best place to go dancing before the new one came in was Shimbot's on Main, but a lot of people don't want to go there because it's a "gay bar". Gay or not, I've always had a blast there!

There was no horrendously long line to get in (come on, it's Ohio, not Hollywood), so we made it into the dimness of what looked to be a lobby area fairly quickly. There was a gorgeous woman standing at a podium, dancing to the heavy beat of the music flooding the room while she was checking ID's and taking the cover charge. She was wearing a tight black and hot pink corset with black boy short panties, fishnet stockings, and six inch stiletto-heeled fuck-me shoes. I think we all drooled.

We paid the cover and pushed our way through the heavy black curtains separating the lobby from the actual club. It. Was. Awesome. The décor was predominantly black with splashes of red and silver throughout. The lighting was even dimmer than usual for a club, and the dance floor was packed. I gasped as I noticed two cages on either side of a stage area along the back wall; in each one was a woman dressed similarly to the one in the lobby, dancing seductively. One of them held a whip, the other what looked to be a riding crop. Yikes.

And by yikes, I mean, oh-holy-shit-how-hot-is-that?!

The bar, a long expanse of glossy black wood, was situated along the far right wall. There were black booths with blood red cushions along the left and front walls, with some tables and chairs placed around the perimeter of the dance floor. They were separated by a half-wall that almost enclosed the dance area. There was also a staircase that I noticed led up to a loft area with more tables, chairs, and booths.

I looked over at Emma, whose eyes were sparkling and her lips were stretched in a

wide smile, and raised my eyebrows. Without hesitation, she nodded and we took off, grinning as we heard the guys start to protest behind us. We ignored them and made a bee-line for the dance floor, shrieking when the song changed and the speakers began belting out AC/DC's Shook Me All Night Long. I don't care how old or young you are, when that song plays, you dance!

We rushed the floor, pushing our way in and then started to dance, shaking our hips and asses as we bounced around. I love to dance (I mentioned this before) and Emma, though you won't get her to really admit it, does too. She's pretty decent when she lets loose, and I can hold my own for sure, if I do say so myself. In fact, back in the day, that's how Emma and I managed to drink for free pretty much every night we went out, even when we went to Shimbot's on Main. I'd grab Emma and start grinding on her and soon enough, we'd have an audience panting around us and would be making steady trips to the bar, accompanying the buyer of the moment. (Give us some credit, we knew better than to wait for them to bring the drinks to us; never know what the hell they might have tried to pull!) God, those were the good ol' days...

Still dancing, I looked around to see where the guys had went since we'd left them. I spotted Luke and Jacks sitting in a booth not too far from the bar, but didn't see Brandon anywhere. I danced in a circle, turning to see if I could find him and stopped dead in my tracks when I finally did. I felt Emma bump against me, dancing like a maniac, but she froze when she saw what had me staring.

Brandon was standing at the bar, but he was leaning down so he could hear the slutty little skank currently talking in his ear. Her hand was pressed to his arm, fingers squeezing his bicep. I don't think so, whore-bag...

I strode off the dance floor, Emma holding onto my shirt so she didn't lose me, headed straight for Brandon. Emma knew better than to try to stop me, but as I got closer, I did notice that she broke away from me and made her way toward Luke and

Jacks. Calling in the big guns to stop me in case I do something stupid. Not that I would...I think.

I didn't stop until I reached Brandon's side, purposefully sliding under his arm and wrapping both of my arms around his waist, which knocked the skank's hand away. Oops...my bad. Ha! Yeah, right...

I pressed myself tight to him and tipped my head back, meeting his amused gaze with mine. I smiled sweetly at him and asked, "What are you getting me to drink, baby?"



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He chuckled and squeezed me, not bothering to reply. He did, however, look back at Skank and say, “Sorry, as I was saying, I’m not interested. I’ve got all the woman I need right here.”

Gah...I melted into him, unable to help myself. He made things down low clench and become suspiciously damp.

I straightened a bit when I felt someone walk up behind me and noticed that Skank’s eyes were locking onto a new target. Turning my head, I smirked as Jackson slid his hand down my side, stopping possessively on my hip.

“Brandon getting you a drink, baby?” he asked.

“Sure is, lover,” I replied with relish.

I watched Skank’s eyes widen and her mouth open and close, her face becoming decidedly redder and redder, even in the dim lighting of the room. “You...you...whore!” she sputtered. “Both of them? You greedy ass bitch!” she shrieked.

I opened my mouth but didn’t get a chance to say a word. Brandon growled, “I suggest you walk away now and it’d be in your best interest to keep your mouth shut while you do it. And don’t you ever call my woman names again. Trust me, she’s better than you’ll ever dream of being.”

I gawked at him, and then at Jacks as well, as he nodded and shooed her away with his hand. I shook my head at them, grinning. “I could have handled that, you know.”

Brandon shrugged. “Yeah, I know. But I’d hate to get kicked out of here for you beating that bitch’s ass before I even get to dance with you.”

I laughed and hugged him, then turned and hugged Jackson before leaving them at the bar and making my way to the booth where Luke and Emma sat. Emma was laughing as I sat down and Luke was shaking his head.

“I swear, Allie, you cause trouble everywhere you go!” Luke said affectionately.

I glared at him, knowing that he was referencing the time I bitch-slapped a guy down at Skin Deep. Seriously, though, the dude had it coming. If he’d have groped my ass one more time, he probably would have went home wearing his ball-sac as a hat. He’s lucky all he was wearing was my hand print on his cheek.

Brandon and Jackson came back to the table then carrying drinks for us. Brandon had so kindly gotten a couple melon sours for us (frou-frou, yes, but so damn good!) and had also brought us a couple Three Wise Men, which are shots made of Johnnie Walker, Jim Beam, and Jack Daniels. Guaranteed to mess your world up!

Which is why, an hour and countless dances with my guys later, I was now kneeling on the bar, leaned backwards as the bartender poured a shot of tequila straight into my mouth. I got to my feet, still surprisingly steady, and started busting a move as Prince’s Pussy Control started playing. I heard Emma hoot and then she hopped up beside me, both of us dancing our asses off. She was laughing at me like crazy because I couldn’t help but belt out every single word as I dipped and rolled and basically humped the air.

Aaaand cue the big gulp and wide-eyed look from both me and Emma as we noticed halfway through the song that we’d gathered an audience. And fuck me running...front and center of that group were three drop-dead gorgeous males who did NOT look happy. At all.

Emma and I looked at each other again for a beat and then scrambled to get down. She shrieked beside me as Luke wasted no time in reaching up and lifting her down before she could do it herself, then without a word turned and left, Emma still held in his arms.

I remained standing there, frozen, until Jackson's deep voice broke in above the music. "If you don't get your happy ass off that bar right now, Allie, I won't be held responsible for what happens next."

Brandon nodded seriously beside Jackson and I couldn't help it. I tried, I seriously did, but I guess I'm too much of a smart ass for my own good. "Threats, Jacks?" I said, saucily. "You should know better than that. I LIKE being punished..."

I let out my own loud squeak, my words cutting off sharply as Brandon grabbed me down the same as Luke had Emma, and headed toward the door. I turned my head in time to see Jackson throw a couple bills down on the bar before nodding at the bartender and following us out.

Oh, hell. I was in for it now. Unless...

Light bulb! I can't get yelled at if they're busy doing other things, right? With that in mind, I tightened my arms around Brandon and nuzzled my lips against his throat. I trailed kisses up his neck to his ear, taking the lobe in my teeth and nipping before whispering, "I want you inside me, Brandon."

I felt a slight shudder run through him and his arms tightened even more around me, but he didn't say a word. I darted my tongue out to taste him and continued to rain hot, open-mouthed kisses down his neck and jaw, moving swiftly toward his lips. I grunted when he turned his mouth away so I couldn't reach it, pulling back slightly and scowling at him. He just shook his head and when we reached his SUV, he slid me down his chest and sat me on my feet before opening the back door for me to get

in.

I shot him one more dirty look before crawling into the middle of the backseat, expecting him to follow me in. He didn't; he got up front with Jacks and Emma and Luke got in on either side of me.

Emma looked at me and grinned, clearly feeling no pain. My head was swimming and I was more than a little...okay, a lot, buzzed, so I just shook my head and grinned back at her before laying my head on her shoulder. I felt her head lean against mine and then it was lights out.

In the morning, I blinked open eyelids that felt like they weighed twenty pounds each and flailed around, trying to turn off the alarm that was rattling my brain with every obnoxious beep. Why the hell had I set the alarm on a Saturday morning anyway?

Oh, shit! Today was the day we were doing the whole dress thing for Emma's wedding. I groaned as I moved to sit up. First things first, though. I needed the bathroom and some Tylenol, stat!

Strike that—first things first; I wasn't going anywhere until I managed to get out from between the two solid walls of hot, nude male flesh wrapped around me.

"Mmmfff...quit moving," Brandon grumbled.

I pushed against his chest and said, "I have to get up so I have to move. Just let me up and go back to sleep. I have to go meet Emma and the other girls at the dress shop," I replied softly to him.

Jackson's arm tightened around me, pulling me back against his chest and Brandon slid even closer until I was completely pressed between them. Brandon's head came up and his lips met mine in a brief kiss as I felt Jackson's lips nuzzle the curve of my

neck and shoulder. I wiggled, loving the feel of them wrapped around me.

“How’s your head?” Jackson asked. I could hear the laughter in his words.

“Ehhh...got a bit of a headache, but I’ll be fine once I get some Tylenol in me. Why?” I asked him.

He shrugged, but Brandon is the one who answered. “You definitely knocked back some drinks last night, babe. So, did you have fun dancing on the bar?”

Eek. “Ummm...yes?” I squeaked out and then laughed as he growled and dug his fingers into my sides, tickling me.

I couldn’t get away because Jackson was still holding me tight against him. “Okay! I give up! I’m sorry...No! I didn’t have fun dancing on the bar! Stop!” I yelled, still laughing.

Brandon let his hands drop and he kissed me one more time. I turned toward Jackson when he started speaking so I could look at him.

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“You were driving us crazy up there...and all those guys were crowding around staring. I thought Brandon was going to murder one of the dumb bastards because he kept saying how hot you were and that he was gonna try to ‘tap ‘dat ass’ once you came down. God, you’re so fuckin’ sexy, sweetheart...I wanted nothing more than to rip you down and bury my dick in you as deep as I could.” The last words came out on a growl.

My mouth went dry at his words, and desire curled heavily in the pit of my stomach as Brandon chimed in, “We got plans for you tonight, babe. A little bit of punishment that you like so much.”

### Chapter 6

“Oh, come on, Allie. Don’t tell me that you have nothing to say. You’re fucking two of the hottest guys in town, at the same time, I might add, so you’re gonna tell us exactly what’s been going down. Besides you!”

Leah delivered the last dig with a flourish, grinning and cackling along with Jenna and Emma. Emma’s mom, Jan, even lost it, bending over in half and crossing her legs like she was about to piss herself.

I glowered at her for a minute but couldn’t contain my laughter anymore. Grinning, I crowed, “It’s fucking awesome!”

“Oh God,” Leah groaned, “I’m so jealous!” She flopped down on the couch and flung her head back with her arm over her face in a pretty good woe-is-me moment.

Jenna's face turned serious all of a sudden before she asked, "So, how does it work? I mean, do they both like...put it in? At the same time?"

"JENNA!" Jan hollered, her face blood red. "OH MY GOD!"

I stood there in the middle of the bridal store, my jaw on the floor because I seriously could not believe she'd just asked that. We'd only been there for about thirty minutes just looking around, and I know my face was probably even redder than Emma's mom's!

I turned my head slightly and noticed that two of the employees and another bridal party were looking pretty interested in the current conversation so I shook my head and sliced my hand across my throat in the universal signal for 'Enough' and walked away, heading towards another rack of dresses.

I felt someone come up behind me and looked over my shoulder to see Emma, her face contrite.

"Don't even apologize for her, Em," I said before she got a chance to say anything. "Seriously, it's fine and I'm not mad. In fact, I probably would have answered her if it wasn't for the audience we were drawing!" I smiled at her and she laughed.

"It's not anything I haven't wondered about myself, you know. So are we still on for our girl's night after this?" Emma asked.

"Hell, yes!" I said, nodding vigorously. "I've been missing you!"

"I know, I've been missing you, too! But sheesh, Brandon and Jackson must be keeping you busy since they're always there. The house almost feels lonely without you guys all there all the time," she said.

“Yeah, right. You forget that I know it’s only you and Luke there most of the time now, and you can’t go ten minutes without jumping each other. You’ve probably christened every room of the house by now, except for Brandon’s!” I laughed.

Her face flushed and I gasped. “Ohmigod, Emma. Please tell me you didn’t!”

She shook her head half-heartedly before dropping her head and mumbling, “It wasn’t really in his room...more like up against the door!”

“You dirty little thing, Emma!” I told her, grinning when she looked back up with a grin of her own.

“Let’s go find you a dress, hooker.” I grabbed her hand and pulled her toward a rack full of gorgeous wedding gowns along the back wall.

We sorted through dresses for a minute, pointing different ones out to each other, and to Jan, Leah, and Jenna who had made their way back to us. I ran my hand down the skirt of one and pulled it out so I could see it better. When I did, I gasped and hollered at Emma.

“Emma! Look at this one!”

She came over, followed by her mom and sisters and watched as I pulled the dress from the rack, holding it in front of me to let them see it. Every single one of them gasped and Emma grabbed it, heading off at almost a dead run for the fitting rooms. We chased after her, arranging ourselves on the chairs and sofas positioned in the center of the area with mirrors all around and little round platforms to stand on for optimum viewing.

One of the dress consultants came over to Emma’s fitting room door and asked her if she needed help with anything. Emma opened the door slightly and ushered her in to



help with the zipper, I'm assuming. I would have helped her, just the same as her family, but I'm guessing she wanted the surprise factor still.

We waited anxiously for her to come out. The bridal consultant stepped out of the room and held the door wide for Emma. She walked out of the room and stepped up on the platform, turning in a slow circle before looking at us and saying, "Well?"

I felt tears well in my eyes. She'd lost a little bit of weight in the past months, but then again, she'd been through hell. But damned if she didn't look absolutely amazing. I heard sniffing and turned to see that Jan, Leah, and Jenna all had tears in their eyes, as well.

"Emma..." I breathed. "That's the one. That's it."

She nodded and turned in a slow circle again, watching herself in the mirror with an amazed look on her face. The dress was simply gorgeous, and it fit her like a dream. It was white, high-necked in the front, but it was sleeveless and fitted through the bust and waist, covered with a gorgeous lace pattern. The skirt was solid satin, but there were lace cutouts all around the hem. When she turned, the straps of the dress actually criss-crossed and met with a lace placket in the center of her back, leaving her shoulders and most of her back bare to the waist. There were three diamond shaped lace cutouts going up the back of the train and skirt, surrounded with a pattern of smaller lace cutouts around each.

It was simple, elegant, and absolutely breathtaking.

Emma faced us again, her face alight, and she nodded, saying, "This one. This is my dress."

We all squealed and hugged her carefully before she retreated to the dressing room to take it off and have it packaged up into a protective bag. She decided against a veil,

not wanting anything to cover up the back of the dress, and we all went back to browsing the racks for bridesmaid dresses.

I was on one side of the store when I heard Jenna holler for Emma. We all met where she was standing, holding a black chiffon bridesmaid dress. We all dug through the rack and grabbed our respective sizes before we headed to the fitting rooms. I was the first one out, standing up on the platform for Emma to look the dress over. Personally, I loved it. It was solid black except for a thin line of hot pink along the top of the dress, strapless, and knee length, very light and flowing. The under-layer of the skirt was hot pink, too, offering a flash of color when we moved.

When the other girls came out and stood beside me, Emma clapped her hands and shrieked. “Yay! Those are perfect and they’re gonna match the shoes perfectly!”

An hour later, we had even found Hayden’s flower girl dress (Jenna had left her at home rather than having to chase her around the store) and were all piled into Brandon’s SUV, which he had let me borrow for the day so we didn’t all have to drive separately. We headed to Beck’s for some lunch and were sitting there chatting when Jenna’s phone rang.

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“Hello?” she said as she answered. “WHAT?” she shouted, ignoring us as we all stared.

“Son of a motherless goat, Noah. How the hell did she get ahold of the clippers in the first place?” she paused, listening for a minute. “Seriously? You didn’t know better than to unplug them and put them away after you cut Jarrod’s hair? ”

Every single one of us gasped at her words, each of us picturing her four year old daughter, Hayden, with a bald patch where she’d most likely shaved her own head.

“I’ll be home in a minute. How much of it is gone?” she asked, warily. Another pause before she sighed heavily and dropped her head to the table, banging it gently against it a few times. She was muttering, “Why me? Seriously, why?” as she did it.

She finally raised her head, registering the silence around the table. She mumbled into the phone again, “I’m on my way,” before ending the call and standing, asking if I could take her home.

I nodded and we all paid our checks, piling into Brandon’s SUV again before I couldn’t take it anymore. “Jenna? Did Hayden shave her head or what?” I asked.

She was silent for a moment and then her shoulders started shaking. I was scared to death that she was losing it and breaking down on us but I realized she was laughing. Amid chuckles she gasped out, “The CAT! She shaved the fucking CAT!”

We all busted out laughing, but didn’t say a word when Jenna’s eyes started looking suspiciously damp. We pulled up outside Skin Deep where everyone had met since

Emma had gone in with Luke this morning to do a little bit of ordering. Jenna got in her car and sped off after promising to send us all pictures of the poor cat.

Emma's mom, Jan, gave us all hugs and left, also, saying she needed to go home because they were meeting friends for dinner.

Emma, Leah, and I decided to go inside and see what the guys were up to. I knew Brandon was working, but I hadn't heard from Jacks, so I assume he was at his house working on it. When we walked in, the lobby was empty except for Luke, Brandon, and some frizzy headed bimbo that was bouncing around and screaming like a banshee. And if she didn't watch the bouncing, we'd be seeing (unfortunately) a lot more of her than we'd ever want to!

"I said, you stupid ass bastard, that you ARE going to FIX MY TATTOO! I'm NOT leaving until you do!" Frizzy was yelling.

Luke shook his head silently, standing beside Brandon calmly with his arms crossed. Brandon was leaning against the counter nonchalantly, looking every bit as delicious as an ice cream cone. No, seriously. I want to lick every inch of him. Mmmm.

"Look, ma'am," Luke began. "I don't know how many times I can tell you, but we are not touching you. Ever. Have a nice day."

He sounded so calm, but his eyes were flashing. Brandon was looking pretty amused, but I could feel Emma tensing beside me. So, me being me, I started letting my flip-flops slap my feet loudly with every step I took closer to the counter.

"Hey, guys!" I said brightly. "What's going on?"

Brandon flashed a grin at me and Luke barely glanced my way, instead, reaching out for Emma as she drew closer to him. He was so sweet that way, always touching her

whenever he could.

Then Frizzy spoke up. “I’ll tell you what’s going on here! These ASSHOLES are refusing to fix the tattoo they messed up on!” With that, she pulled her already dangerously low riding shirt down even more and flashed me pretty much her whole damned titty.

I squinted, trying to make out what she was pointing at. “What the hell is that?” I asked, not trying to be funny. I seriously couldn’t tell what it was supposed to be.

“That,” she said snidely, “was supposed to be a unicorn with my initials under it.”

I walked closer, peering more intently at the squiggled mess of lines on her saggy, over inflated flesh. If you squinted just right, maybe crossed your eyes a little, you could almost make out the unicorn. If you didn’t it actually vaguely resembled a wavy, three-eared dog with shaggy hair. And the initials? Well, Karma is a bitch, and she is definitely letting herself be known on this one.

“Does that say ASS?” I asked her incredulously. “Your initials are A-S-S?” I snorted unintentionally, trying to smother my laughter.

She huffed and drew herself up (making me back up quickly as her nipple almost poked my eye out), before shrieking, “NO THEY AREN’T! My initials are S-A-S! For Sasha Ann Stanley!”

I snorted again, earning another glare, before asking, “So why does it say A-S-S? Were you drunk when you got it? Or better yet, was the tattoo guy drunk?” I laughed as I asked, not able to help it anymore. Luke cleared his throat behind me and I looked over to see Emma giving me a knowing look. And then it hit me like a lightning bolt out of left field.

“Oh, SHIT!” I yelled. “You’re that chick that Luke busted fuckin’ old dude in Brandon’s chair! Aren’t you!?”

Frizzy didn’t like that much. My bad. Or not...

“R-E-S-P-E-T, you little bitch. You know what that spells?” she screeched. “That spells respect, and as someone who has been given a bad tattoo by this shop, I not only deserve respect, but I DEMAND IT! Now tell that smug bastard behind the counter to FIX THIS SHIT!” She stomped her foot for good measure.

I saw Brandon draw himself up straight behind the counter and heard Emma gasp. Luke dropped his arms down to his sides, but I knew he was tense and ready to grab someone if something went down.

Unable to resist the opening she’d left, I leaned on the counter, forcing myself to look bored, even though I was dying to drop on the ground and laugh my ass off. “Actually, Aretha,” I drawled, “that spells respet. Which, by the way, is not a word. At least not in the English language, anyway.” Going for broke, I lifted a hand and pretended to inspect my nails. “So, next time you want to go spelling things and demanding things, you might want to check yourself. As for the tattoo, well, honey you’re shit outta luck. We all know who you are, and we know how you got that...that...whatever the hell it is on your chest, and no one in this shop is gonna touch you with a twenty foot pole. Mmm ‘kay?”

She narrowed her eyes at me and I straightened away from the counter just in case. “You don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about, bitch, and you for damn sure don’t know who I am!” she all but growled at me, cocking her head back and forth like a chicken.

I stepped forward again, smiling when she stepped back away from me, even though she had a couple inches and about 50 pounds on me. “I know exactly who you are.

You're the hoe who let a drunk and high dumbass fuck her in exchange for free ink. Bad ink, I might add, because you let said dumbass stick his dick in you while he was doing it. So, because you were bouncing on his balls, it's your own fault that you have an unfinished, awful looking mess on your titty. So, do you want to leave it at that and get the hell out now? Or would you rather discuss the broken equipment that Brandon never got paid for?"

And then while she stood there gaping at me, I might have yelled something about bitches moving and getting out of the way, and then stood there laughing as she finally huffed and puffed herself up before turning and stomping out, her titty, that she didn't bother putting back in her shirt, flopping in the wind with every step.

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I heard clapping start behind me and turned to see Emma, Luke, and Brandon all staring at me, clapping their hands and grinning.

Emma cocked her head, quirking her eyebrow at me as she asked, “Ludacris, Allie? Really?”

I shrugged and then let out a small squeak when Brandon moved suddenly and grabbed me up in his arms, his lips finding mine unerringly. I melted into his kiss, parting my lips immediately for his thrusting tongue. His hands roamed my back, finally coming to rest on the swell of my ass, squeezing me tight against him as he devoured my mouth. After a moment, we broke away, both breathing hard. He squeezed me one more time before sliding me down his body, making sure that I felt his hardness pressing into me along the way.

He didn’t release me once I was on my feet; instead, he spoke to Luke without taking his eyes off me.

“You got this, man?”

“Go,” Luke said, laughing.

I heard Emma giggle behind me, but I was a little preoccupied with the man towering over me who was steering me toward the front door of the shop. “Bye, Allie!” she called out. I could hear the smile in her voice as she finished, “Thank you for everything today! I’ll see you later for our girls night. Oh! And don’t forget, you promised to come with me to the florist on Tuesday!”



I didn't get a chance to reply. Instead, I found myself out the door and sitting, belted securely, in the front seat of Brandon's SUV. Without a word, he jumped in the driver's side, fastened his own seatbelt, and pulled away from the shop.

As he drove, I let my eyes drink him in. He looked so sexy and almost dangerous with his dark hair, smoky eyes, and swirls of dark ink peeking out from the sleeves of his t-shirt and wrapping down around both arms.

I knew they were mostly tribal, like Luke's, but he also had other designs interspersed into them. The designs crested over his shoulders and across the top of his back. He's got a shit ton more of them, but I've never really taken the time to look at them. I'm going to have to remedy that rather quickly.

We pulled into my driveway in what seemed like a blink of an eye. Brandon was out and around to my side before I could do anything more than remove my seat belt, scooping me up in his arms and carrying me to the door. He paused long enough for me to pull out my keys so I could unlock the door (a little awkward with him holding me) and then we were inside.

I looked at him in confusion when he didn't head immediately for the bedroom; instead, he went directly into the kitchen and sat me on my kitchen table, leaning down to fuse his mouth with mine in a deep, hot, wet kiss. Our tongues tangled and tasted, both of us nipping at each other's lips, only parting when he grabbed the hem of my tank and pulled it up and off in one quick movement.

Once it was gone, he pressed against my shoulders until I was lying flat on the table, then he wrapped his fingers inside the waistband of my jeans, peeling them off my legs along with my panties until I was bare-assed on my kitchen table.

I leaned up on my elbows to see what he was doing and moaned as he spread my legs wide, his heated gaze taking in the glistening pink folds nestled there. Without letting

go of my thighs, he hooked a foot around the leg of a chair and pulled it to him, settling himself onto it as he jerked me toward the edge of the table where he was seated.

I gasped and it turned into a long, drawn out moan as he leaned in and fastened his mouth over me, sucking and licking and twirling his tongue over every inch of my wetness. He ate at me like a starving man with a feast before him, his hands holding my thighs spread high and wide, every inch of my most private flesh open to his unwavering assault.

I laid back on the table again, unable to hold myself up any longer as he dipped his tongue inside me, thrusting in and out with firm, sure strokes, as deep as he could get. I reached up and wrapped my arms around my own thighs, my knees almost touching my chest, shivering and shuddering as wave after wave of pleasure crashed over me.

He moved back up, flicking his tongue rapidly against the swollen bud nestled at the top of my slit, and I arched into his face, starting to come apart. I shattered, screaming out as he thrust two of his fingers deep into me, twisting them and curling them up until he was rubbing and thrusting against that perfect spot, his tongue dancing endlessly over my clit, drawing out my orgasm until I was gasping and limp, my arms above my head, my legs draped uselessly over his shoulders.

I moaned softly as he pulled his fingers free but continued to drag his tongue through my folds from top to bottom, licking away every drop of wetness wrung out by my release. When he was done, he placed a tender kiss at the top of my mound before sitting back, a satisfied smirk creeping across his handsome face.

“Holy fucking hell...what the hell was that for?” I groaned, still unable to move.

He chuckled as he moved my legs down from his shoulders, placing each of my feet flat on his rock hard thighs, making sure his legs were spread enough to ensure mine

were, too. I started to sit up but stopped when he growled.

“Don’t move, Allie. Stay just like you are.” His words were soft but commanding, and I couldn’t help but obey.

I felt myself growing wet again and instinctively tried to close my thighs some to ease the ache building there. I gasped as Brandon moved quickly, delivering a quick, stinging slap to the inside of my thigh.

“I said don’t move, Allie.” He ran his hand soothingly over the spot he’d slapped, crooning softly to me. “Mmmm...look how wet you are now, baby. You like when I get a little rough with you?” I felt his breath blow hotly over me with every word and I squirmed, the aching pressure building again.

“Brandon...” I gasped, pleading. I don’t really know what I was pleading for, but I needed it bad.

I jolted when I felt his fingers slide through my folds, circling my clit before plunging inside me once, twice, and then pulling out, leaving me breathless and aching even worse than before. I felt his fingers, soaked in my wetness, slide down lower, and I tensed as he brushed them over the puckered flesh there.

“Remember when we said we had plans for you tonight, baby?” Brandon said, his voice deep and raspy. “This is what we’re talking about. We’re gonna fill you so full, and I’m gonna fuck this tight little hole while Jackson’s pounding into the other one.”

I moaned at his words even while I tensed as he gently pushed his fingertip against that puckered flesh, barely letting it slip inside. “Oh, God...”

“You ever been taken here, Allie?” Brandon asked, pushing a little further against the tight ring of muscle.

I gasped out, “Not...not really.”

His head came up and he smiled at me, a dangerous, fucking sexy smile. “Oh, yeah? No one’s been inside you here before? God, that’s fucking hot, Allie, baby.”

I shook my head. “No, no one...just...oh, God...just fingers.”

Brandon groaned harshly before his hand jerked back and he was up off the chair, standing over me as he spread my legs even wider with his hips as his hands worked frantically at this jeans, ripping them open and shoving them down his hips just far enough to release the hard column straining against the denim. He reached into his back pocket at the last second, pulling out a condom and sheathing himself in record time before slamming into me, grunting at the sound of his skin slapping hard against mine.

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“Oh, fuck...yes!” I cried, holding on to the sides of the table as he set a punishing rhythm, his hands gripping my hips tightly to hold me still. He took me over the edge quickly and I screamed, the muscles of my sex squeezing him tightly, milking him even as he still pounded into me.

Another orgasm was rushing up fast on the heels of the last one and I was screaming non-stop now, the pleasure taking me under, drowning me as I came and came hard around him until he slammed home one last time, growling loudly, holding me tightly, our bodies fused together with him buried as deep inside as he could get, pulsing and jerking as he flooded the condom, the heat of him burning me through the thin covering.

He slumped forward, gasping as he laid his head between my breasts, still buried deep inside me. We laid like that for a second, both trying to catch our breath before he raised up and pulled out of me, helping me sit up and kissing me sweetly before he left the room to dispose of the condom.

I sat there on the edge of the table, trying to will my jello-legs to quit shaking enough to hold me. I gasped and froze when I heard the front door open before scrambling off the table to cover myself. Shit, shit, shit...

### Chapter 7

“Allie?” I heard a voice call from the living room. “Emma said we were doing girl’s night here tonight and to just head on over when I was done. Jenna’s with me, too. Where are you?” Leah asked.

I was frantically trying to get my clothes on when I heard twin female gasps and then Brandon yell, “Oh, shit! Sorry! Sorry! Oh, God, I didn’t know anyone was here...where’s Allie? You know what? Nevermind, I’m naked...I’m just gonna...go...yeah.”

I finally managed to pull my jeans on, not even bothering with my panties, and yanked my tank over my head on a run, flying into the living room to see a very shocked Leah and Jenna standing there, staring down the hallway.

“Uh...hi, guys!” I stuttered. “Umm...I just left Emma at the shop, didn’t think you guys would be here for a couple hours.” My face was beet red, and I didn’t see it going away for a while.

Jenna grinned. “Emma said you’d been gone for two hours and when we talked to her, she said to head on over because it should be all clear by now. Damn, girl!”

My front door opened again (we’re all close enough that no one knocks anymore) and Emma stood there, her face split almost in half by a gleeful grin. “Did we give you enough time?”

I shook my head in exasperation, not only at the situation, but at the fact that two hours had flown by while I was...er...otherwise occupied. Before I could say anything, Jackson walked through the door. I threw my hands up in the air as all three of the girls laughed and then patted him on the back, saying different variations of the phrase, ‘Aww, poor Jacks...didn’t make it in time...finished without him.’

He looked at me with his head cocked, a smile slowly spreading across his face. “Did I miss something, baby?”

I kept my mouth shut.

Brandon came out of the back (dressed this time, thank God) and slapped Jackson on the back before pecking my lips, waving at the girls, and walking out the door.

Jackson chuckled as he moved toward me, pulling me up against his chest and kissing me deeply. With one last, lingering kiss, he moved away, patting my ass. “Brandon and I are gonna go do a couple things at my new place. We’ll come back when Emma gets home so we know it’s safe,” he said with a smirk.

He left, closing the door, and then I was surrounded. Questions flew at me from every side and I held up my hands, shouting over them, “Okay, okay! Jesus, shut up for a second!”

Their mouths all closed with a snap and I motioned for them to sit down, flopping myself down in the chaise lounge on the end of my sectional. I waved my hand at Emma, indicating that she could go ahead with her question, but Jenna ignored it.

“Before we get into this, I need to place an order for some new shave junk. That shit is amazing! Noah even let me shave his balls with it, and let me tell you, that’s the first hummer I’ve ever enjoyed giving!”

“Jenna!” I yelled, a little disgusted but also a little happy that she liked the stuff she’d bought at the last Down & Dirty party I’d done. That was my side business and it kept me well stocked in anything my little heart might desire, from handcuffs, to lotions, to toys...whatever!

Emma held her hand up while Leah covered her ears and said, “Jenna! No! I don’t need to know about Noah’s balls!”

Emma’s phone beeped and she picked it up, rolling her eyes when she saw who it was. “Calland is texting me, God only knows what he wants.” She read the text and looked up with a surprised shrug. “He said he has an extra ticket to some UFC thingy

coming up and wanted to know if one of us or the guys want to go with him.”

“Oooh,” Leah squealed, yanking her phone out and calling Calland. “Hey!” she said when answered. “I want to go with you!” She listened for a second and then said, “Yes, dumbass, I know it’s basically two guys beating the shit out of each other.” She listened again and rolled her eyes again before replying, “Okay, I promise not to cock-block you if you promise not to ‘gina block me!” She laughed again at something he said, then hung up after telling him bye.

“Okay, I’m going! Now, where were we? Oh!” She turned to me with an evil grin and I prepared myself for whatever was coming. “Now, how about you answer that question that Jenna asked at the bridal store?”

“Oh my God, Leah! Can’t we start with something else?” I wailed.

“Nope.” She popped the ‘p’ with finality, sitting back with a smug grin.

“Fine,” I muttered. “No, I haven’t had both of them at once...like that. Not yet, anyway!”

“Allie, I’m just so happy that you finally gave in and put them out of their misery,” Emma said. “God, they were driving me nuts, constantly asking me if you were coming over or where you were or whatever. I did have a lot of fun teasing them, telling them you were out on a date or something. I even had to ‘fess up at one point because Jackson was literally on his way out the door to go get you.” She busted out laughing, shaking her head at the memory. “Who knew what we would get into the day I let you drag me into Skin Deep!”

I smiled at her, completely in agreement. I never imagined that my life would be the way it is now just from a trip to a tattoo shop.



“So,” Jenna broke in. “Please tell me their bodies are as hot as I imagine them to be? Er, I guess just Jackson’s because we saw Brandon’s for ourselves. Holy hotness, woman!”

I laughed and nodded, replying with a hearty, “Hell yes!”

We all got up and headed into the kitchen to get the stuff for our special sundaes, chatting away about everything to catch up on, and about the wedding.

Two hours later, we were still laughing at the pictures Jenna had on her phone of the poor cat that Hayden had shaved. It had one long bald stripe down it’s back, but, luckily, that was it. I guess Tom had run gotten away after that first swipe with the clippers down her spine.

When our laughter died down a bit, Jenna stood up and stretched, saying, “Well, it’s been fun, girls, but I gotta go. Oh! Allie, I still need that stuff! Do you have it here in stock or am I going to have to order it?”

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“Let me check. I have a couple parties booked in the next week or two, and I stocked up on some of my best sellers, so I should have it,” I replied, getting up and motioning for her to follow me into my office. Emma and Leah tagged along so I went ahead and pulled out a couple catalogs and handed them around, asking, “Anyone else need or want anything while we’re in here?”

Leah started thumbing through the pages of the catalog, stopping here and there to ask a couple questions before stopping on one page that had about a dozen dildos and vibrators on it. She pointed at one with wide eyes and whispered, “Holy shit! Please tell me women don’t actually buy this to use it...?”

I laughed, not even bothering to look at the picture. I knew exactly what she was talking about.

Emma, laughing because she knew what it was as well, turned to Leah and said, “Oh, my God, I know, right? The first time I helped Allie with a party she had one of those with her and I about fell over when I saw it!” She turned to me, asking, “Do you still have that thing?”

I grinned and nodded, pointing her to the closet in the office. She strode over to it and opened the door, bending down to heft the object of the current discussion up in her arms. When she turned around, I swear I thought Leah was going to pass out.

“Seriously?” she shrieked. “People really buy this thing and USE it?” She shuddered dramatically as Emma sat it down in front of her.

‘It’ was an eighteen inch tall, ten inch diameter jelly-type dildo, complete with veins

and balls. It was one of the first things I bought to add to my kit when I started doing the Down & Dirty parties just because I, for one, had to see it for myself, and two, knew that it would be a kickass ice breaker. The woman that made me want to become a consultant actually had one in her kit, but she didn't put it out. Instead, while we were going through the catalog, when we came to that page and all the women started commenting on it and saying that there was no way it was actually that big, she whipped that puppy out and thumped it down on the table in front of us. And when I say thumped, I mean it. It weighs about ten pounds, I swear!

I shook my head at Leah, laughing. "No, people don't actually buy it to use...at least I don't think so. If they do, they don't get it from me and I don't want to hear about it! It's not even available anymore, but I think they keep it in the catalog for shock value. I've always used it as a door-stopper...makes a great one!"

Jenna and Emma busted out laughing as well, and Emma broke in, shouting, "She calls it 'Big Kirky'!"

"Oh, my God!" Leah yelled, falling back into my computer chair, literally rolling with laughter. "Why the fuck would you call it that?"

I shrugged, still chuckling. "I don't know. The shipment came in and I had it sitting in the living room with me. I turned on the t.v. and Star Trek was on; that captain dude was talking, and I saw his bald head and that's all she wrote!"

"OH MY FUCKING... WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?"

We all jumped and spun toward the door where Brandon and Jackson were standing, identical expressions of horror, disgust, and even morbid fascination on their faces. None of us could help it, we lost it again, gasping for breath and holding our stomachs.

“Well,” Jackson said wryly. “Guess we don’t want to know what the hell you guys were doing while we were gone.”

“Maybe you don’t, but I do!” Brandon said, grinning lasciviously.

I smacked at him playfully, shoving him back as Emma hefted Big Kirky up and locked him back in the closet. I grabbed the shave lotion Jenna wanted and wrote up a receipt for her before closing everything back up and putting away the catalogs. Leah said she wanted to see about maybe having a party, so I told her just to get back with me whenever she decided she wanted to do it and a few minutes later, they all headed out, hugging me, Brandon, and Jackson in turn before they went.

Once they’d left, we decided to order pizza and watch a movie, which was becoming our go-to lazy night routine. Brandon decided to jump in the shower while we were waiting for the pizza to come, so Jackson and I were curled up on the couch together.

He leaned down and kissed me softly before asking, “Did you have fun today, baby?”

I nodded, swallowing hard at the memory of what happened on my kitchen table.

Jackson dipped his head and kissed me below my ear, murmuring, “Brandon told me. Did you like it, Allie? Did you come hard for him all spread out on that table?”

I shivered and melted into him, burying my face into his neck as I nodded.

He pulled back a little from me and forced me to look him in the eye, cupping my chin in his hand. “Hey...it’s okay, baby. You’re in this with both of us, and we know there has to be alone time with you and I, and you and Brandon. I’m not going to get mad, just as he’s not going to get mad. That’s what we talked about it all for, you know?” He kissed me softly again before continuing. “And if you’re ever uncomfortable or anything, talk to us, Okay?”

I nodded again, smiling up at him.

He blew out a breath, not taking his eyes off of mine, and then looked away, shaking his head. “Don’t even realize...” he muttered under his breath.

“What?” I asked.

He shook his head again and I prompted him, not letting it go.

“What don’t I realize?” I asked.

He pushed back again, slightly turning away, rubbing his hands briskly over his face. He blew out a heavy breath and looked up, staring me directly in the eyes as he said, “You don’t realize how fucking beautiful you are to me. How fucking crazy I am about you...God, Allie. I’ve never wanted anyone as much as I want you.”

“Jacks...” I whispered, totally at a loss for words.

“You don’t have to say anything, Allie. I...it just gets hard trying to hide how I really feel,” he said softly.

The moment was broken when the doorbell rang. Jackson got up to pay for the pizza and then Brandon came into the room wearing a pair of basketball shorts and nothing else, making me drool for more than dinner.

We sat on the living room floor eating pizza and watching Hot Tub Time Machine (hilariously stupid), and generally just relaxing, enjoying each other’s company. When the movie was over, I stood up, stretching before I grabbed the now empty pizza box and took it into the kitchen.

I returned to the living room to find it dark and empty. I turned to make my way into

the bedroom but stopped, swallowing thickly at the sight in front of me. Brandon and Jackson both were standing there, as naked as the day they were born, their eyes darkened and trained on me. I let my eyes roam their bodies, taking in the taut muscles of their chests and abdomens, that sexy-as-hell v at their hips, and then the jutting thickness of each of their erections, rock hard and begging for my touch.

“We told you we had plans for you tonight, didn’t we, baby,” Jackson said. He made it a statement more than a question, and his voice was low, sending tingles down my spine.

I nodded briefly, knowing it was expected of me.

Jackson dipped his head, acknowledging my answer before he continued. “Strip.”

I let out a ragged breath and moved to comply, shucking my jeans down my legs and stripping my tank top quickly over my head.

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Brandon looked over at Jacks and asked, “Fucking perfect, isn’t she?”

Jackson nodded his head silently.

Reaching down, Brandon fisted himself, slowly stroking up and down. “Come here, Allie.”

I didn’t hesitate, walking to him and dropping to my knees in front of him. Before I could touch him, he tangled his other hand in my hair and tugged, letting me know that’s not where he wanted me. I sat back on my heels and looked up at him, his hand still wrapped in the silky strands of my hair.

“Get up. I want you on the lounge,” Brandon said.

I got up slowly and walked over to the chaise lounge on the end of my couch to sit on the edge, but before I could, Jackson was there, leaning back into the cushion. He reached up and pulled me down on him, straddling me over his hips and crushing his lips to mine. I felt Brandon move up and stand beside me; I reached out with my hand and stroked it up and down his thigh before cupping him in my hand.

Jackson broke from the kiss on a moan as I ground my hips against the hardness of him beneath me, the hot, hard length of him parting the soft dampness of my sex and gliding along every sensitized nerve. I pushed myself up away from his chest with my free hand and when I did, I felt the head of him prodding my entrance. I shifted and took him deep inside me, feeling every inch of him fill me up. I threw my head back and let out a breathy moan that was cut off when Brandon caught my mouth with his, kissing me deeply and roughly, biting at my lips, sucking the bottom one between his

teeth.

Jackson's hands came up and grabbed desperately at my hips, lifting and lowering me in a slow and steady rhythm. I jerked my head back from Brandon and slammed myself down on Jackson, crying out as the slap of our flesh rang out through the room. I started riding him hard, driving myself recklessly to the edge and pulling him along with me.

His hands tightened on my hips again as he gasped out, "No...slow down, Allie..."

I shook my head at him and then cried out as fingers tangled themselves in my hair again, roughly pulling me back against Brandon's chest and effectively stilling my hips. Brandon's fingers tightened slightly before releasing and I heard him murmur 'sorry' as he dropped a kiss to the top of my head.

I tilted my face up to him and breathed, "You didn't hurt me...I like it when you get rough."

He growled and took my lips in a rough kiss again before pushing me forward until I was pressed flat against Jackson's chest, his hardness still buried deep inside me. He turned his face to mine and kissed me, his tongue darting out to trace my lower lip and the curve of my jaw before nipping at my neck, the sharp bite causing me to moan.

I felt Brandon lean over my back and begin kissing and nipping down my spine, his hands roaming my skin and making me shiver. I felt myself tense when his finger dipped into the crevice at the base of my spine, parting the pale globes of my ass until his fingertip rubbed over the tender, puckered flesh there. He pressed in slightly, just enough for me to feel the pressure and read his intent.

I let out a low moan as Jackson lightly nipped my ear lobe before whispering harshly,



“Brandon is gonna fuck that tight little ass of yours, baby. He’s gonna fuck it while I’m buried deep inside your tight, hot little body. Is that what you want? Can you take us both, Allie?”

I could hear Brandon’s breath coming faster with every word Jackson growled and I wiggled against the hardness impaling me, feeling myself grow even wetter around it. I gasped as I felt a chilly wetness drip down the crack of my ass, and then Brandon’s hot fingers followed, spreading the lube over and around that tender part of me.

“Is this alright, Allie?” Brandon asked softly, his fingers pressing against my opening gently.

I nodded but that wasn’t good enough. “No, baby, I need to hear you say it. Are you okay with this?” he asked.

Jackson reached up and grasped my chin, turning my face toward his to look me in the eyes. “Seriously, Allie. We stop now if this isn’t what you want. It’s all about you, babe, not us.”

“I know,” I said softly. “I want this, though. I want to feel you both inside me...at the same time.”

At my words, Brandon and Jackson both moaned and Jackson kissed me again as Brandon’s finger began to breach the tight ring of muscles.

“Push against the pressure a little bit, Allie, and breathe. Just relax, baby.” Brandon pressed in firmly and I forced myself to relax and push against the pressure like he’d said, letting out a breathy sigh as his finger finally slid all the way in. He worked it in and out a few times as Jackson released my lips and held me tight against his chest, running his hands soothingly down my sides and back.

I lost myself to the pleasure of it, the feel of the heat of their bodies surrounding me, making me feel like there was nothing and no one else in the world. Just this. Just us.

Jackson began sliding his thickness against me in short, sure strokes that rubbed the base of him perfectly against my clit, sending streamers of white hot pleasure pulsing through me. I moaned as Brandon added another finger and scissored them inside me before adding another. Jackson shifted until his legs were draped over the sides of the lounge, feet planted on the floor. Brandon shifted again and I felt him kneel behind me; he pressed his hand firmly between my shoulder blades, trapping me against Jackson's chest. Jackson's hands moved down and gripped my thighs, splaying them wider over his hips. Brandon palmed the tender globes of my ass and spread them, nestling the thick head of his hardness against my slick back entrance.

"Oh, God!" I cried as he began pushing himself inside of me, both of them holding me so tightly I couldn't move. The burning and stinging grew until I felt the knob of him pop through the tight ring of muscles and he thrust firmly forward, burying himself as deeply in me as he could go.

I held still, not that I had a choice, and reveled in the fullness of them buried balls deep inside me, stretching me, filling me so completely. I clenched and let out a gasping laugh as they both jerked and moaned.

I wiggled a bit, stopping when Jackson lightly slapped my thigh in warning and growled, "Don't fucking move. Got...to get control...not...gonna last."

Brandon leaned his forehead on my back and nodded, apparently in full agreement with Jacks. I wasn't though; I wanted them to move, wanted them to pound into me. I wiggled again, clenching around them and shifting until I could move just enough to slide slightly up their shafts. Brandon let out a ragged moan and finally moved, beginning to thrust slowly, dragging himself out almost all the way before gliding back in. Jackson countered his thrusts, pushing in as Brandon pulled out, pulling out

as Brandon pushed in, on and on in a maddeningly slow rhythm.

“Fuck me harder!” I shouted as I gave in to the wildness building inside me. I sank my teeth into Jackson’s shoulder and felt him shudder underneath me, his hips bucking up sharply, filling me at the same time Brandon thrust home. “Yes! Yes!” I screamed, feeling myself climbing the peak quickly as their control broke, both pounding into my willing body while they held me trapped between them. I felt my release rushing through me, shattering me into a million pieces as I came, my body clenching around them until with one last pounding thrust, they both shouted their release, spurting hot, pulsating streams inside my shivering body.

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Brandon pulled himself out of me on a moan, causing me to wince slightly. He kissed my shoulder before carefully grasping my waist and lifting me off of Jacks. He held me against his chest as Jacks got to his feet unsteadily and by some unspoken agreement, headed for the bathroom. Brandon followed, still carrying me.

Not wanting to break the spell of the moment, I laid my head against his shoulder with a sigh, content to let them take care of me. I smiled as Jackson ran bath water, adding my favorite bubble bath and letting the tub fill before Brandon carefully lowered me into the water.

“You okay?” he murmured in my ear before he pulled away.

I nodded and relaxed into the hot water, letting it soothe the aches beginning to set in.

### Chapter 8

The next week flew by in a flurry of wedding plans and steamy nights spent in ecstasy with the two gorgeous men who decided to claim me for their own. I couldn't complain about it, though, unless you count muscles being sore in places I never thought could be sore. Even then, I really didn't want to complain when I thought about how they got sore in the first place...

It was Sunday morning and Emma's mom had called to say that Sunday brunch was on as usual since they were back home. Emma had told me that they'd already hijacked Doug and took him to the “doggy spa” in Cincinnati a couple days after they got back. I swear they treat him just like another of their grandchildren. I think it's because they missed their labs that they used to have, but then again, we all missed

those dogs. Emma and I used to dress them up in baby doll clothes when they (and we) were younger and they'd do nothing but lay there and let us. Ah...good times.

Jackson, Brandon, and I got up and headed over to Jan and Ben's house, ready to brave the craziness that always happens there. We pulled up just in time to see Calland come flying out of the house, looking like he was seriously running for his life, even though he was laughing his ass off. I shook my head and got out, walking into the house to find out what the hell was going on.

I made it to the front door, the guys trailing behind me, before I stopped dead in my tracks. I stood there, gaping at Jan who was standing there wielding a cracked wooden spoon and a satisfied expression.

I smiled widely at her before asking, "What'd he do now?"

She grinned at me, her eyes twinkling. "He cracked my wooden spoon."

I knew better than to ask anything more. And more than likely, she cracked her wooden spoon on his head. Or ass. Or whatever part of him she could reach. She's scary like that sometimes...got those ninja mom moves.

She motioned us in and I waved to Ben who was sitting in his chair, watching the news. I could see Noah out back with the kids, standing on the deck and trying to catch frogs in the small pond Ben had dug years ago. Luke was on the opposite side of the pond, holding on to Doug's collar for all he was worth in order to keep him from scaring the frogs away, or out of the water at least.

Brandon and Jackson went out the back door toward Luke and I headed into the kitchen where Jenna, Leah, and Emma were finishing up the cooking.

"So how did Calland break your mom's wooden spoon?" I asked.

They all started laughing and Jenna said, “Being a smart ass to her. She whipped that puppy out and clocked him with it quicker than he could get away!”

I laughed with them and helped get things ready to serve. We talked a little about wedding plans as we got everything ready and called everybody in to eat. Halfway through breakfast, we were all laughing at the story Ben was relaying about poor Doug’s trip the ‘spa’.

“And then the poor bastard was violated by that Chihuahua with the little sweater on!” Ben roared, his face red from laughing so hard. “Seriously, the little shit couldn’t have been more than six pounds soaking wet and he sure as hell jumped right up on Doug’s ass as he lay there and humped for all he was worth! Doug got up like his tail was on fire but that fucker dug his claws in and kept on going ‘til he was done.”

Luke was looking at Doug with a horrified expression on his face, and Doug was giving him a sad, poor me look right back. We laughed even harder when he slipped him a slice of bacon under the table and whispered to him, “Don’t worry, buddy...I’ll never let them take you there again.”

Surprisingly, that was the highlight of breakfast; Calland actually behaved for once, though Emma did put her hand to his forehead to see if he had a fever because he didn’t steal anything from her plate. After breakfast was done and everything cleaned up, Brandon and Luke said they needed to go to the shop to do a couple things. Jackson said he’d tag along, so Emma and I took Luke’s car and went back to their house to hang out until they were done.

Before they took off, Luke rolled his window down and smiled sweetly at Emma.

“Yes, my love?” she asked, making her voice match the sweetness of his look, before she looked at me and rolled her eyes, whispering to me, “He wants something...bet

me.”

I shook my head and grinned, not wanting to take that bet because I could see that coming from a mile away.

“Will you please get the stuff to make tequila lime chicken for dinner tonight? You haven’t made it in a while and you mentioned it the other night,” Luke asked.

Brandon hooted from the driver’s seat and shouted, “Yes! We’re coming for dinner, too!” while Jackson nodded vigorously from behind Luke.

Emma looked over at me and I gave her puppy dog eyes and a pouty lip, because that’s my favorite thing she makes, besides buffalo chicken dip and our other girl’s night staples, and she really hadn’t made it in a while.

“Yes,” she said exasperatedly, “I’ll make it-” She didn’t get anything more out before Luke smiled, shouted ‘Thanks!’ and they took off. She shook her head and looked at me again before saying, “Guess we have to go drop Doug off and then go to the store.”

“I’m good with that!” I told her.

We made our way to their house and let Doug out to do his business before putting him inside and heading back in town to go to the store. We talked about little things on the way and then she mentioned that Floyd, her old boss, had called and asked her to help him out for a couple weeks while his new secretary dealt with a family emergency. Which made me think of something I wanted to ask her about, even though I was worried about mentioning it.

“So...I hate to bring it up, Em, but have you gotten a court date yet for Creepy?” I asked her as she drove.

She nodded and sighed. “Yeah. I hadn’t said anything really to anyone yet. I just got it Friday but I don’t even want to have to think about facing him again. I don’t want to have to go back there...you know?”

“I know,” I said softly. “But you know we’re all here for you and I’ll be right there in the court room with you.”

She sniffed and nodded, reaching up quickly to swipe at a tear that had started down her cheek.

“God, Emma, I’m so sorry! Don’t cry! I didn’t want to bring it up and upset you, but you just hadn’t said anything lately and I didn’t want to miss being there for you. I’m such a moron to bring that up out of nowhere!” I shook my head at myself, disgusted for upsetting her.

“Stop, Allie! It’s okay! I was planning on telling you today anyway, I just didn’t have a chance yet. I didn’t want to say anything at breakfast and Luke and Noah are the only ones that know right now. And no, before you say anything, I’m not keeping it from anyone like before. I just didn’t want to upset my parents at breakfast!” Emma said firmly.



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“Well, when is it set for trial?” I asked.

“Two weeks from now. He’s already had his preliminary and everything since he was indicted by the Grand Jury. Floyd has been keeping me up to date because he talks to the prosecutor about it. Creepy had to find an attorney to come in from Cincinnati because no one here wanted to represent him.” She snorted before saying, “And the one he came up with is so full of himself and ostentatious in his court appearances that no one in this county can hardly stand him.”

I laughed. “That’s a good thing, right?”

She shook her head vigorously for a second and then sighed. “I almost hope that he plea bargains before then just so I don’t have to see him again.”

“Well, we’ll keep our fingers crossed. Okay, so we’ve talked about it, and now moving on. Right?” I asked.

“Right,” she said with a nod.

“Well...I think I have something to talk about,” I said tentatively.

She turned into the parking lot of the store and parked before turning to me and saying, “Okay. Spill. You don’t hesitate to tell me things so this has gotta be good!”

“I actually...finally...did...you know,” I whispered.

“What? You finally did what?” she asked.

I cocked my head and nodded, prompting her silently to figure it out.

“Allie, I don’t know what you are talking...oh. OH! You did it...THEM! You did THEM!” she shouted, her face lighting up with surprise. “I just have one question...was it good?”

I nodded, grinning at her. I don’t know why I was a little hesitant to tell her, but I was. I shouldn’t have been because she knows everything about me anyway. “It was amazing, Em. They both make me feel so special, not like I’ve ever felt before about anyone. Why the hell did I fight it for so long?” I asked, musing to myself out loud.

“Because you’re stupid,” Emma said bluntly. “Those two, especially Jackson, have been head over heels for you for so long. I can’t believe it really took them this long to get through to your dumbass. So is this something you see...I mean is it for good?”

I shrugged, not really sure how to answer that. “I think so...at least I hope so, anyway. I really don’t know where Brandon’s head is at because he’s not a big talker. He’s more of a doer, if that makes sense.”

Emma shut off the car and we got out to go in to the store. Grabbing a cart, Emma said, “It does make sense, you know. I think he’s big on that because of how they grew up. The whole actions speak louder than words thing...”

“Yeah, but...I don’t know. I just don’t really know where I stand with him. He says he’s wanted me and he wasn’t willing to step aside for Jacks, which, by the way, is the same thing Jacks said about Brandon, but that’s it.” I sighed.

We walked through the store, gathering the ingredients Emma needed to make dinner tonight. She was quiet for a few minutes before she said, “Talk to him about it. You and I both know that he can be serious and there’s definitely a very deep man in there hiding behind all the joking. You may be surprised at what you find.”

Twenty minutes later we were pulling into their driveway when I saw Emma tense and frown. I followed her gaze to see a woman sitting on the porch steps leaning against the railing with her knees drawn up. Her blonde hair was covering her face so I couldn't tell if she was someone we knew or not.

Emma threw the car into park and got out, her voice ringing out with a slight cautious edge. "Is there something I can help you with?"

I got out and stood beside Emma, waiting for a response. The woman took a deep breath that almost looked pained before she slowly raised her head. Emma and I both gasped and went running toward her when we saw her face.

"Ohmigod!" Emma breathed as she knelt beside the woman on the steps.

I knelt on the other side of her and gently laid my palm against the woman's knee. She flinched a little and we backed up just a bit, giving her some space.

"What happened? Is there something we can do, someone we can call? Were you in an accident and walked here for help?" Emma's questions were coming fast, not even giving the poor woman time to speak.

She blinked up at us and opened her mouth to speak. Her voice was very soft, almost apologetic. "I...I'm sorry, I'm looking for my brother."

"Sweetie, who's your brother?" I asked gently.

"Jackson."

Her reply floored me. There was no way in hell that I was expecting that response, even though now I could see a resemblance. She was beautiful, there was no mistaking that; however, the black eye, split lip, scratches, and other various bruises

marring her otherwise flawless skin stood out in shockingly stark relief.

I glanced at Emma and saw that she was just as shocked by the answer as I was. “Does he know you’re here?” she asked.

The woman shook her head imperceptibly.

“Okay,” Emma said, getting to her feet. “Come inside and let’s get you somewhere comfortable while Allie calls Jacks to get his ass home.” Emma’s tone brooked no argument, and the woman didn’t even try.

She winced and whimpered as she began to rise and I quickly got to my feet and put my arm around her gently, trying to help. She steadied herself against me briefly before pulling away and walking slowly into the house. I noticed that she only used her right arm, holding her left crooked tightly against her stomach, and she flinched with every step.

Once we got her settled on the couch, I ran back out into the car and grabbed my purse, and as many bags of groceries as I could. I took them into the kitchen and headed back out for the rest, grabbing my phone on the way. Emma was sitting beside the woman on the couch, wringing her hands, clearly at a loss as to what to do next. I heard her asking questions as I closed the door behind me, my fingers already tapping out Jackson’s number on my screen.

“Hey, babe,” Jackson answered, his deep, sinful voice making me smile and sending shivers down my spine like always.

“Hey,” I said, softly, my smile fading away because of what I was about to say.

“What’s wrong.” He said it as a statement, not a question. He could read me so well.

“Um...your sister is here.” I said, not knowing how else to put it.

“What? What do you mean, my sister’s there?” He sounded very confused. “Chloe?”

“I didn’t get a chance to ask her name...she just said she was your sister. Where are you?” I asked him, really not wanting to have to go into all the details over the phone. Better yet, “Where’s Brandon?”

“We’re at the shop but...what’s going on? Why is my sister there, Allie?” His voice was dangerously soft, and I knew that he could tell I wasn’t telling him everything.

“Lemme talk to Brandon real quick, okay?” I asked, knowing that I was probably pissing him off.

I heard him swear under his breath and then Brandon’s voice came on. “What’s going on, Allie? Why’d Jacks just basically throw the phone at me?”

“Brandon, I don’t know what to do...how to tell him this. You just need to get him home. Chloe was sitting on the front porch of your house when Emma and I pulled up. She’s...hurt.”

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He growled in my ear, “Allie, I don’t know what the fuck is going on, but you better explain yourself very quickly right now.”

His words rendered me speechless for a second, not only what he said, but the razor sharp tone of his voice. “I...Brandon, I’m sorry, but I don’t know. I’m standing outside, Emma is in the house with her. We pulled up from the grocery store and there was a woman sitting on the porch. We had no idea who she was...I didn’t even know her name when I called Jacks!”

“Okay, but why did you say...what you said?” Brandon caught himself before he repeated what I’d told him.

“Something has obviously happened to her, so just get here. You might want to prepare him a bit...she looks pretty bad-” I cut off as Emma opened the front door, calling out to me to see what was taking so long. I held up my finger, giving her the universal ‘gimme a sec’ sign and she nodded before going back in a closing the door behind her. “I gotta go, I have to get the rest of the groceries out of the car and get back in there with Em. I’ll see you when you get here...hurry!” I hung up on him without saying goodbye and grabbed the last few bags from the car before going back inside with Emma and Chloe.

When I got inside, Emma was standing at the kitchen counter, making a sandwich and plating it with some chips. She grabbed a can of pop from the fridge and brought everything to the living room, sitting it down on the coffee table in front of the now empty couch.

“Where’d she go?” I asked Emma.

“She’s in the bathroom. Allie, she won’t talk to me...and I don’t want to pry but, son of a bitch, someone did a number on her!” Emma shook her head sadly.

I nodded in agreement. “I know. I called Jacks and he was getting upset with me, but I didn’t want to blurt it out over the phone. I told Brandon, so I’m assuming they should be pulling up any time now. Especially if Jackson gets to the keys before they do.”

Chloe came out of the bathroom and cautiously made her way back to the couch, thanking Emma for the food she’d made her. Still keeping her left arm cradled against her stomach, she gingerly picked up the sandwich and took a very small bite, grimacing when the cut on her lip pulled.

She chewed and once she swallowed, she cleared her throat and said, softly, “So you’re Allie, huh?”

I blinked at her, taken aback by her question. “Yeah...I’m Allie. And you’re Chloe?”

She nodded briefly. “Jackson’s talked about you like crazy since you met. He’s completely head over heels in love with you, you know that right?”

My jaw dropped and I could feel my face getting red. “Wha-I...huh?” I stammered, unable to find any words.

The corner of her lips quirked up in a small smile and nodded again. “I take it he hasn’t said the words yet, huh? Trust me to be the one to put my foot in it,” she said wryly.

“No, you’re fine. It’s something we’ve all been able to see...Allie has just been a little slow on the uptake for some reason!” Emma said.

I shook my head and then jumped, as did the other girls, when the front door flew open and footsteps came pounding toward us like a runaway freight train.

Emma and I jumped out of the way as Jackson skidded to a stop and dropped to his knees in front of his sister where she sat on the edge of the couch.

“Chloe! Sweetheart are you okay? Let me see...” Jackson gently lifted her chin with his fingers and swore loudly when he took in the view. His voice dropped to a dangerously low growl as he said, “Where is the mother fucker that did this to you, Chloe? Was it Chris? Was it? I swear on fucking everything and everyone that I will bury that fucker so deep he’ll never be seen again.”

“Jackson, stop.” Chloe broke into his tirade and pulled her chin back from his fingers. “It wasn’t Chris. I broke up with him eight months ago, if you’d ever pay attention.” She sighed before continuing, “I-it was this guy I met. His name is Greg and I thought he was everything I wanted. Turned out, I was more of a punching bag for him because I’m not the perfect Stepford Wife he wanted me to be.”

“You married that fucker?” Jackson yelled incredulously.

“NO! Jesus...hell no! It’s a figure of speech, Jacks. I did get pretty serious with him and then once I moved into his house with him, he started changing. He...he raped me one night when I didn’t want to...you know.” She looked up quickly when she heard me and Emma both gasp and her face paled even further. “Oh, God. I’m so sorry, I forgot you guys were even there...I-just-I gotta go.”

“No!” I cried out quickly. “No, you and Jackson just sit here and talk. You need to talk to him and we’re just gonna go sit out back, okay?”

I grabbed Emma and jerked my head toward the back door, indicating that I wanted Brandon and Luke to follow and leave Jackson and Chloe alone to talk. Luke



followed without a word, stopping briefly to cup Chloe's shoulder in his hand and to gently kiss the top of her head. He murmured something to her and then grabbed Emma's hand, pulling her with him through the kitchen and out the back door.

I followed them, slowing when I saw Brandon drop to his knees beside Jackson and reach up to cup Chloe's face in his hand. His face was ravaged with pain as he traced the line of dark bruising down her cheek. I turned away, strangely hurt by the tenderness he was showing with her.

I stepped outside and immediately came face to face with Emma, her expression worried and almost fearful. She quickly grabbed my hand and said, "They've just known each other a long time, Allie, you don't have anything to worry about."

I blinked at her in surprise, then realized I shouldn't have been surprised in the least. She's my best friend; of course she can read me. I shook my head slightly at her and moved to sit on the steps. Luke came and sat beside me, nudging me with his shoulder.

"Emma's right, you know," he said softly. "My brother had his sights set on you since you dragged that one into our shop. Which, by the way, have I ever thanked you for that? I don't think I have, so thank you. Seriously." He looked over his shoulder as he continued speaking. "She's absolutely the best thing that ever happened to me and I love her with everything that I am." He nudged my shoulder with his again as he said, "Love you, too...you know, just for the record. Now, since I have you here, let's just go ahead right now and agree that there will be no male strippers at her bachelorette party. Right?"

I laughed out loud and shook my head. "Nope, no promises. I haven't even started planning it yet, actually!" I turned around and grinned at Emma when I heard her gasp behind us.

“You are a bad maid of honor! For shame, Allie!” she screeched in mock anger.

Our laughter faded away when Brandon walked out of the door and strode past us without saying a word. I looked up at Luke again and he just shrugged, patted my arm, and got up to follow him. Emma came and took his place beside me.

“It really sucks seeing someone beat up like that,” she said softly. “Reminds me of looking at myself in the mirror for the first time after...” She trailed off, her voice catching on the last word.

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I reached over and took her hand and we sat there in silence, leaning on each other and giving comfort without the necessity of words. After a while, the back door opened and Chloe stood there, giving us a watery smile.

“Thank you guys for being so nice to me. We’re done now, and I’m sorry for making you leave your own house, Emma-”

“It’s okay, Chloe,” Emma said, cutting off her apology. “You have nothing to apologize for. We completely understand. You needed to talk to your brother and you didn’t need us hovering over you while you did. Now,” she clapped her hands and stood up, brushing off her jeans as she did so. “Are you hungry? Because I make some killer tequila lime chicken and that’s what we’re having for dinner.”

Chloe looked uncertain but when Emma mentioned that she’d noticed she’d only managed one bite of the sandwich she’d made for her earlier, she finally nodded and smiled gratefully. I stood up and walked closer to her, adding in my two cents. “And you’re staying at my house. I have an extra room and Jackson will be there. Brandon too,” I added as an afterthought. Though I wasn’t quite sure why.

The rest of the evening passed uneventfully. We helped Emma make dinner and then clean up after we all ate. The guys had come back into the house right before dinner (Jackson had gone out the front door to take a few minutes to himself when Chloe had come to get us) and we’d all made small talk throughout.

Brandon drove us to my house later that night and, following my directive, Chloe came with us. Jackson carried in her small bag that she brought with her and we got her settled into the spare room for the night and we all headed off to my room to get

ready for bed ourselves.

## Chapter 9

I woke up the next morning wrapped up in Brandon. I say that because his arms were completely wrapped around me, and his legs were tangled with mine. He'd scooped me close to his chest and my head was nestled under his chin. I snuggled even closer to him for a second before I leaned away slightly, reaching out with my arm behind me, searching for the other warm body that was usually wrapped around me as well.

My hand encountered cold sheets and it took a second for my fuzzy brain to register that Jackson had probably already gotten up with his sister. I nestled back against Brandon again, reveling in his warmth and the strength of his arms around me. I stayed that way for a while until he shifted in his sleep, removing his arm from over top of me and rolling onto his back. His other arm tightened and pulled me into his side and I smiled. Even in his sleep he held me so tight and I loved it.

I kissed his chest gently and traced the lines of ink written across the upper left side of his chest, over his heart. This tattoo was my favorite of his. It was scripted words that I knew he'd written himself that read:

Love is but a thousand blades

That cuts the heart to shreds

But I'll bleed for love a thousand times

To feel before I'm dead.

The rest of his tattoos were, like his brother, mostly tribal with other elements thrown in. He had a line of kanji characters down the inside of his left forearm that he had

told me stood for strength, courage, honor, loyalty, and love. On left side, he had additional script that said:

Drink me down, but I remain

An endless thirst, a spreading stain

I'll eat you up and spit you free

But you'll still crave the taste of me

The stinging bite of bitterness

It's only pain, no more, no less.

I continued to trace the lines of his tattoos gently with the tips of my fingers, my eyes following every dip and curl of my hand. I gasped softly when Brandon's hand came up and closed over my fingers, trapping them against his chest and holding them still. I tilted my head back and smiled up into the gorgeous smoky blue-grey eyes staring down at me. His lips curled into a tender smile and he dipped his head to lightly kiss the tip of my upturned nose.

"Morning, baby," he said, his voice rough with sleep.

I kissed his chest once more and answered him in kind, smiling widely when he shifted to wrap me in his arms again. I felt the hardness of his erection press into the soft flesh of my belly and, giving into the instant desire that crashed through me, pulled myself back out of his arms and rolled him onto his back again before I slid on top of him. I let my legs drape over his hips, bringing my hot, wet folds into direct contact with the hard length of him. He moaned deeply at the feel of my wetness coating him. I sat up and moved forward just enough to bring the head of him to my

entrance.

He gasped again and stilled me with his hands on my hips, panting out, “Wait...condom, baby.”

I leaned over him again and reached into the drawer of my nightstand, fumbling until my fingers closed around a familiar square shaped foil packet. I brought it out and in an instant, Brandon had taken it from my fingers, had it opened and rolled on, and was impaling me on his length.

I let out a long, low moan as he filled me, his hands tightening on my hips and using them to rock me against him. He slipped one hand down and pressed his thumb against the hardened nub of my clit, rubbing it in lazy circles as I continued to rock myself over him, keeping my pelvis pressed tightly to his. I could feel my orgasm building, layer upon layer of ecstasy that was taking me higher and higher. I clenched my inner muscles around him and he let out a growl, moving his hand away from my clit to grab at both my hips again before he began thrusting his hips up roughly and pulling me down to him, slamming himself into me over and over again.

I could hear myself gasping out, “I’m...so...close...oh, God!” The sounds of our bodies slapping together added to the pleasure coursing through me, making the edge I was clinging to razor sharp until Brandon released his hands from my hips, reaching around to palm the soft globes of my ass, squeezing and spreading them roughly. I shattered, a high keening scream ripping from my throat as he sharply smacked the right cheek of my ass then rubbed it soothingly before smacking the other side with his other hand. The bite of his hands against my tender flesh just flat did it for me, shoving me over that edge into a freefall of bliss. I came and came, my body quivering and clenching around him as he thrust wildly into me, lost in his own seemingly never-ending orgasm, shouting as he pumped and jerked inside me.

I collapsed onto his chest, peppering it with tiny, soft kisses as I panted, trying to

catch my breath. I felt him tangle his fingers in my hair, something I'd noticed is a favorite of his, and pulled my lips to his, tangling his tongue with mine as he kissed me deeply.

He released my lips on a sigh. "God, every time with you is just as intense. You fucking rock my world, Allie!"

I giggled. I couldn't help it. And then, heaven help me, a little bit of the green eyed monster came out and there was nothing I could do about it. I scowled and asked, "You sure there's no one else you'd rather rock your world instead?"

He grabbed my shoulders and eased me back to look me in the eyes. "Where the hell is that coming from, babe?"

I shrugged and shook my head, wishing like hell I hadn't said anything.

"No, tell me. Are you worried about Chloe?" he asked, his voice soft.

I shrugged one shoulder and shook my head again, leaning down to kiss him. "No, it's nothing. Don't even worry about it," I said. I kissed his lips gently again and lifted myself off of him, moving to his side so he could get up and dispose of the condom.

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He came back into the bedroom and laid beside me again, pulling me close to him and holding me tight. He kissed the top of my head and then, after looking over at the clock on the nightstand, asked, “What time do you have to open the store?”

“Oh, shit!” I cried, jumping up and running into the bathroom to get ready. I took a shower in record time and, toweling off as I went, headed to the closet to grab clothes to put on. I heard a noise behind me and turned to see that Brandon was still laying naked in my bed, nothing covering even an inch of that sexy ass body of his.

Quirking my eyebrow at him I asked, “Don’t you have to work today, too?”

He nodded and grinned at me before saying, “Yeah, but seeing as how it’s only 6:30, we’ve got plenty of time.”

I looked over at the clock and scowled at him, stalking toward the bed and letting my towel drop in the process. “You ASS!” I growled. “Why did you make me think I was running late?”

He kept on grinning as he replied, “All I did was look to see what time it was and ask what time you had to open the store. You’re the one who ran off like a mad woman. A naked mad woman...and it was pretty hot, too, by the way.”

I reached out and smacked his shoulder but he snagged my arm and pulled me down on top of him. He rolled quickly over, pinning me to the mattress, somehow managing to get both of my arms over my head and locking them together in one of his hands. He ran the other hand down my side before cupping my breast and then pinching the nipple, making me arch into him and moan softly.



“You know,” Brandon began, lowering himself until he was speaking directly in my ear. “I think I’m gonna tie you up, baby. Maybe on the kitchen table again. Tie you up all spread out and leave you there. What do you think about that?”

I gasped, my breath becoming ragged as desire curled heavily through me. He opened his mouth to say something else but his words cut off when the bedroom door opened and Jackson came in. He looked exhausted and Brandon released me quickly, sitting up on the edge of the bed and grabbing the sheet to cover his hips.

I jumped up and went to Jackson, wrapping my arms around him and holding him close. His arms came around me and he bent to kiss the top of my head before releasing me and sitting heavily on the other side of the bed.

“Is Chloe okay?” I asked.

He nodded. “Sorry I wasn’t in bed with you. I couldn’t sleep and when I got up, Chloe was whimpering in the other room so I went in and sat with her. I just...it’s fucking killing me to know that that bastard put his fucking hands on her! And I wasn’t there for her!” His voice broke even as it rose until he was almost shouting.

I moved to embrace him again, smiling sadly as Brandon, wrapping the sheet around his waist, also moved over and draped an arm around Jackson’s shoulders.

“Dude, it’s not your fault. And it’s not Chloe’s fault either. You know that. She’s smart and strong and tough and she got away as soon as she could. She’s here now and safe, so just focus on that,” Brandon stated firmly.

I sank to my knees in front of Jackson and placed my hands on his thighs. He looked down at me and the corner of his mouth curved up with a hint of a smile.

“He’s right. She’s safe here now, and she can stay here for as long as she needs to.

And then you've got plenty of room in your house so she can stay with you--"

"NO!" Jackson said roughly. He shook his head as I stared at him in shock. "No, I mean, yes, she can stay with me there but I...I know I've said it before, but Allie, I built that house hoping that you'd live there with me. That you'd be happy there. You and Brandon." He turned his head to look at Brandon who was looking back at him in surprise.

Jackson nodded seriously at him before turning back to me. "Is that something you think could do? Would you want to live there?"

I opened my mouth to answer and then laughed when he cut me off again to say, "Or I guess I could take a page out of Luke's book and TELL you that you're moving in with me..."

I smacked him lightly on his leg and leaned up to kiss him before getting to my feet and heading back to the closet to actually get dressed this time.

It never occurred to me until about halfway through the day that I never did answer him...

The bell on the door of my store tinkled and chimed and I looked up to greet the customer coming through.

"Hi, Nanny!" I exclaimed, completely taken by surprise that my grandmother was walking through the door, followed by my harried looking mother. "Hi, Momma!"

She waved and my grandma huffed and scowled. "Damn fool children don't even know how to pick up a Goddamned phone anymore to check on anyone these days," Nanny grumbled.

I rolled my eyes as I came out from behind the counter to hug them both. “What are you guys doing here?” I asked.

“Well, Nanny had an appointment this morning and Poppy didn’t feel up to taking her, so she called me!” my mom said brightly, though her face was telling a different story.

I smiled at her and nodded, knowing that she meant that my grandmother was being extra “tank” today. Now, we love her so very dearly, but I swear sometimes she’d try the patience of a saint. Even then, she’s so much fun regardless of her cranky mood because you never know what she’s going to say or do.

“So what did the doctor say, Nanny?” I asked her.

She cocked her head and gave me a sweet smile as she said, “I’m alive.”

I snorted. Smart ass old woman. “Well, that’s a good thing, right?”

She rolled her eyes at me and wandered off to a display of old-fashioned quilts I had hung using an old coat hanger.

I turned to my mom and asked her, wanting the real answer, “What’d she go to the doctor for?”

Mom shook her head and said, “Just a check up. He says she’s healthy as a horse. I think she’s just too stubborn to get sick or anything. Again, Allie, I’m sorry in advance if I ever start acting that way.” She patted my arm and then, trying to be nonchalant, meandered over to the book display to see the new romance books I’d put out this morning.

“Allie!” my grandma yelled and I jumped, quickly making my way over to where she

was standing.

I groaned under my breath when I noticed that she had stopped in front of the display of vintage lingerie I had toward the back of the store. I lost it, snorting with laughter when she turned and I saw that she had wrapped an old silk corset around her skinny little chest and was wiggling herself back and forth cackling with laughter.

“See, Allie-girl, you wear stuff like this and you just might land you a hottie!” she crowed.

I gasped and chuckled at her, glad she’d given me this opening. “Well actually, Nanny, I just so happened to have landed me a good one. Two of ‘em, in fact.”

She raised her eyebrow at me and lifted her hand for a high-five, but she froze in mid-air. “Two?”

I nodded and noticed that my mom had worked her way over to us and was standing there grinning like a loon, wagging her eyebrows at me. I rolled my eyes at her again (I seem to do this a lot with my family) and smiled at my Nanny.

“Two?” she repeated. At my nod again, she screeched, “Why you little slut! When do we get to meet them?” Before I could answer she kept going. “You know, back in my day I actually was quite the catch myself. I had a few of them ol’ dogs sniffing after my skirts. And then there was this one time that I actually let two of ‘em-”

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“Wow, Nanny!” I exclaimed loudly, cutting her off. “Cool story! Did you see the weather report for this week?” She nodded and she was off on a tirade about the ‘damn Ohio weather’ and I breathed a sigh of relief. That is something I didn’t need to know about, or to ever have a mental image of. Yeesh.

They stayed for a few minutes longer, leaving only when a couple more customers came into the store to browse. Before she walked out the door my mom made sure to let me know that dinner was Wednesday at seven, and it was non-negotiable. Be there with the guys or I was in a shit-load of trouble.

I acknowledged her in exasperation, waving and shaking my head at them fondly as they walked out with my Nanny grumping at my mom that she always takes too long.

The rest of the day went fairly quickly and just before I left the store, I heard a voice yelling at me from across the parking lot. I looked up and around, trying to determine where it was coming from when I saw Calland, Emma’s brother, running toward me.

He stopped in front of me, panting like he’d just run a marathon and I couldn’t help but pick at him like he always does everyone else.

“Getting a little out of shape there, buddy?” I asked with a smirk, reaching out to poke him in his stomach.

He glared at me, saying, “You’re a pain in the ass,” and then got down to the reason he had sought me out. “So do you know if Jackson or Brandon are planning on doing Luke’s bachelor party?”

I grinned at him and shook my head. “No, no one has mentioned anything. Why?”

“Cause I have got to get in on that shit!” he exclaimed.

I laughed and told him, “Well, come on over to the house and talk to them, then.”

He said he would and then jogged back to his car, hollering back over his shoulder that he’d stop by after he got something to eat.

## Chapter 10

Wednesday snuck up on me so quickly that I didn’t have time to worry about it, let alone to prepare the guys for it. I did remember to call my mom and let her know that Jackson’s sister would be there, too. No way in hell was I gonna leave her sitting alone at my house while we all went for dinner.

We pulled up at my parent’s house a little early and I led everyone into the house. Something I regretted almost immediately.

“MOM! DAD! OH, GOD!” I yelled as I stopped so quickly that Jackson and Brandon both rammed into me from behind, and then poor Chloe let out an ‘oomf’ as she hit Brandon’s back . I threw my hands up, waving them around like a crazy woman as I tried to back up and get the guys back out the door to protect them from the shudder-inducing sight that is now seared into my eyeballs.

It didn’t do me any good because they were like a solid brick wall behind me, stunned into complete silence, their bodies frozen and unmovable. Chloe was trying to peek around them but couldn’t see anything, which I was grateful for. I gave up shoving at them and turned, resigned to dealing with what we’d walked in on. Thank fuck my parents had actually stopped the semi-horizontal mambo they were doing on the couch and were casually grabbing up their clothing and stepping into it like they

had all the time in the world and I wasn't standing there with guests waiting to be introduced.

"Allie! Honey, we didn't expect you until later!" my mom said brightly. Clearly being caught in flagrante delicto posed no embarrassment for them.

"Mom, you said seven, it's seven and we're here! What...why...ugh!" I shook my head and threw my hands up, completely at a loss as to what to do or say at this point.

I felt movement behind me and noticed that the guys had finally unfrozen enough to have turned their heads and were now nervously looking everywhere but in front of them, and Chloe had pushed her way to the front, her eyes wide as she took in my parents dressing in front of us.

"Well, I guess we let time get away from us!" my mom said, laughing. My dad looked at her with a doting expression before turning to us, grinning.

"So these are your guys?" he asked in his booming voice. He moved to walk toward us with his hand outstretched, clearly intending to shake hands with them.

He stopped and inclined his head, acknowledging the small shake of my head I gave. I really didn't want the guys and Chloe to have to shake the hand that was just...where it was on my mother. He smiled again, this time sheepishly and grabbed my mother's hand, pulling her down the hallway.

When they left the room, I turned back to the three who were standing there behind me, all with expressions of confusion, shock, amusement, and a hint of disgust on their faces. "I'm sorry..." I trailed off, pretty much at a loss as to what to say. There was really nothing I could say to make them unsee the things that they'd seen. I, myself, wish I could rinse my eyeballs with bleach to rid myself of the image. Seriously, though, I should have been used to it by now. This wasn't the first time I'd

walked in on things like this. “Well, I told you my family was unconventional...worse than me! I warned you! So now you know!”

They all laughed and I felt the shock of the moment dissipate some. My parents came back into the room and Mom led us out to the back patio where she had a cooler full of beer on ice before she ran back inside and came back out with a veggie and dip tray for us to munch on while dinner was finishing up in the oven. She’d made lasagna and garlic bread and we ate and drank beer and generally had a pretty good time.

Brandon and Jackson took everything in stride, answering my parents’ off the wall and probing questions with ease and laughing at the stories they told about me growing up.

“So,” Jackson said a little later, “You’re okay with Allie being with both of us?”

I’d been waiting on that subject to come up all night and, frankly, I figured it would have been Brandon that would have asked it.

My parents both shrugged and Mom said, “As long as she’s happy, that’s all that matters. Now, what happened to you, missy?” She turned and pinned Chloe with a motherly look.

Chloe just waved her hand and offered a short, terse answer. “Bad decision that I rectified as soon as I could and won’t be revisiting again.”

My mom shot a worried look my way and shook my head slightly, pleading silently with her to let it drop. Chloe hadn’t really offered any information to us about what happened, and Jackson hadn’t said much about it either.

“Oh!” my mom shouted out of the blue, thankfully changing the subject. “I have



pictures!”

I groaned as the guys both grinned at me, their eyes sparkling in the waning evening light. My mom jumped up and went inside, flipping on the porch lights as she lugged out four huge photo albums spilling over with pictures.

She took great pride in going through all of them, and we all laughed our asses off at the various crazy poses and outfits I’d sported throughout my life. Brandon found a picture of me and Emma standing together, me in a sport coat of my father’s and an old top hat, Emma wearing an old white lace dress of my mother’s and her oversized heels. Emma was holding a bouquet of wildflowers and we were arm in arm in front of my old teddy bear that had a big book propped up in it’s arms. We were grinning into the camera, both of us missing front teeth and looking so cute and innocent.

“Holy shit!” Brandon crowed, laughing. “Does Luke know that Emma’s a bigamist?”

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“Ha ha, very funny, Brandon,” I said sarcastically, giggling over the picture myself. “I forgot about that! God, we were obsessed with everything wedding back then...” I sighed wistfully and then doubled over again when Jackson pointed out a picture of me sitting on my potty chair with the newspaper spread out over my lap, pretending to read it. In the picture, I was scowling at my mother or whoever was taking the picture, obviously not impressed with being interrupted.

We stayed until almost eleven, finally getting up and saying goodbye to my parents after my dad got into a discussion with Brandon and Jackson about Luke’s bachelor party. They started talking about ideas that Calland had thrown out when he’d come by the house the other night and I called an end to it when they started whispering to each other and shooting suspicious looks over their shoulders at us. We walked to the door and my mom wrapped Chloe in a gentle hug and told her to come back anytime, especially if she ever needed to talk. She then hugged both the guys, kissing their cheeks and then laughing hysterically when they both jumped as she goosed them. I just sighed and shook my head. Mothers.

I was woken up at three in the morning by my bladder, who was protesting the four beers I’d consumed at dinner. I stretched and started to wiggle my way out from between the bodies wrapped around me but found that I didn’t have to because Brandon wasn’t in bed with us. I shook it off and stumbled up out of the bed, headed into my bathroom to take care of pressing matters. When I was done, I moved to get back in bed but stopped as I heard soft voices in another room. I quietly slipped into the hall and padded toward the spare bedroom. The door was cracked open and a faint light was coming from a nightlight that I’d put in there for Chloe at her request. I peeked through the opening and tensed when I saw Brandon lying in bed with her, one of his arms wrapped loosely around her while the other gently stroked her hair.

He was murmuring to her soothingly, trying to calm the whimpering sounds coming from her throat.

I took a breath and when I did, the door moved, creaking slightly. I winced and peeked back through to see that Brandon was watching me. He smiled at me and motioned me into the room. I mentally berated myself for being nosy and being caught at it as I slowly pushed my way into the room and padded toward the bed as quietly as I could. He held his arm out to me and I shook my head, backing away again. No way in hell was I getting in bed with them and being all lovey-dovey while the poor thing was bawling her eyes out.

I heard a small snuffle and then Chloe's head lifted. I saw surprise flash across her face before she'd schooled her expression again, giving me a guarded and slightly guilty look.

"Hey," I said softly. "Sorry...I just...I heard you and just wanted to see if you needed anything, or if there was something I could do?"

She shook her head at me and gave me a watery smile. I could see her eyes filling back up again and Brandon wrapped her in his arms again. She buried her face against his chest and cuddled closer. A feeling that I swore I'd never feel in my life settled darkly in my chest, squeezing around my heart. Jealousy doesn't sit well with me, especially when there is absolutely no reason for it....right?

Swallowing the nasty feeling down, I gave Brandon a small smile in response to the rueful one he shot me and turned and left the room. I made my way back into my bedroom and sank down on the bed beside Jackson. He stirred and turned over, reaching for me blindly in the darkness. I allowed him to pull me into his body, letting the comforting warmth of him soothe me.

"What's wrong, baby?" he asked, his deep voice sleep-roughened and soft.

I shook my head, not caring that he couldn't see it. No way in hell was I telling him what was really wrong.

"Where's Brandon?" he asked suddenly, sounding more awake.

"Chloe had a nightmare and he heard her," I replied. I felt him lean down and then his lips were on mine, kissing me sweetly before he sat up and swung his legs off the bed.

"I'll be right back. I just want to check on her, okay?" Without waiting for my answer, he fumbled in the dark for his shorts, pulled them on, and left the room.

I heard faint voices down the hall and flopped myself over onto my back, my breath leaving me on an exasperated huff. I laid there in the darkness, lost in my own thoughts until sleep pulled me under again.

My alarm woke me in the morning and I reached over and thumped it off. My eyelids felt like they weighed twenty pounds and were lined with sandpaper as I blinked and rubbed at them, trying to wake up. The alarm started going off again and I leaned over Brandon to shut it off but the damn thing kept going. I pounded on it once more and it bounced off the nightstand, crashing to the floor, which made Brandon jerk straight up in bed, sending me tumbling in a heap off the end of the bed. I swore loudly as I laid there on the floor, realizing it was my cell phone ringing and not the alarm.

I heard the bed rustle above me and looked up to see Brandon and Jackson peering down at me, Brandon with an almost crazed, scared look, and Jackson mildly amused and curious.

"What are you doing down there, baby?" Jackson asked, his voice laced with barely suppressed laughter.

I rolled my eyes and stretched, trying to look nonchalant but failing miserably. “Ahh...you know. Just hanging out.”

Brandon reached down and grabbed my hand, pulling on it until I sat up. “Sorry...”

I smiled at him and shrugged before getting to my feet. He grabbed for my hand again and pulled me onto the bed across his body, wrapping his arms around me and squeezing. His lips found mine and he kissed me softly before apologizing again for dumping me off the bed. I smiled again and found myself lifted away from him and wrapped in Jackson’s arms with his lips on mine. I sighed contentedly and then groaned as my phone rang again. Brandon reached over and snagged it, holding it out to me.

I glanced at the display as I answered, surprised to see that Emma was calling this early. “Hey, what’s up?” I asked.

“It’s me,” a deep voice said in my ear. “Emma wanted me to call you.”

I shot up in bed, not even wincing when I elbowed Jackson in the stomach in my scramble to sit up.

“Luke? What’s going on? What’s wrong? Where’s Emma? ” My questions came fast, not even giving him enough time to answer.

“Nothing’s wrong and she’s right here. We were just talking about something and wanted to run it by you,” he said, laughing at my tone.

“Really? At...” I craned my neck looking for the alarm clock to check the time before I remembered that it was on the floor where I’d dropped it. “Whatever time it is?” I asked him grouchy. “Why didn’t Emma call, then?”

“Jesus, Allie, just listen to him!” I head Emma yell in the background, laughter ringing out in her words.

“Okay, okay...get to it!” I growled, still irritated by them laughing at me when he just about scared the piss out of me by calling this early from Emma’s phone.

“We’re going to move up the wedding.” He said it firmly and then fell silent, I guess waiting for my response.

“Okay? That’s it? That’s what you were calling for at the crack of dawn, trying to scare the life out of me? Ugh...tell Emma I’m going to kill her. I love her, congrats, I’m all for it, but I’m hanging up now. I’ll be there tonight to kill her. Text me the date.” I huffed out a breath and tapped the end key on the screen of my phone before dropping it and flopping back on the bed between Brandon and Jackson who were both looking at me expectantly.

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“That was Luke. They’re moving up the wedding date,” I said. Then a thought occurred to me and I fumbled around on my mattress, sitting up again as I hit Emma’s contact info on the screen. It rang three times before she answered, still laughing.

“Yes, Allie?”

“Are you pregnant?” I blurted out.

“Oh my God! Seriously, Allie?” she cried, laughing even harder. “No, damnit, I’m not pregnant! I just don’t want to wait any longer to have the wedding. Why should we wait until next spring when I’m ahead of schedule on planning everything? I’m just ready to do it but I can’t elope because my parents would kill me!”

“Oh. Well, I just...you sprung it on me and that was the first thing that popped in my head,” I said defensively. “So how much sooner are we talking?” I asked.

“Well, you’d better get to writing your speech and planning your little party. You’ve got about two months,” she said with satisfaction.

“Two months?” I shrieked. “Seriously, you’re pregnant, aren’t you?!”

“No, Allie! I’m not pregnant! Geez woman...I swear. We were just talking and we’ve got everything under control and I don’t want to wait anymore. I’m living with him, and it’s just time. I don’t want to wait until next spring. Does that make sense to you? Or do you think we’re crazy?” Her voice dropped a little at the end and I could hear her worry.

“No, I don’t think you’re crazy. I think it’s cute that you guys don’t want to wait anymore. What did your mom and dad say?” I asked her.

“I haven’t told them, yet. You were the first one we told. We were just lying there in bed this morning after he woke me up with his-”

“Em, no. Don’t go there. I can imagine just fine how he woke you up, and that’s not something I should be able to do!” I laughed as I said it because I couldn’t help it. Emma and I both knew more about the other than our own doctors did.

She laughed with me and then I heard a breathy moan come through the phone before she quickly said, “Gotta go, talk later. Love you bye!” and hung up on me.

I chuckled and put my phone back down on the bed beside me, sighing when Jackson’s arms came back around me and Brandon cuddled up to my front.

“What was all that about?” Brandon asked, his words muffled by my breasts.

“Just a thought that popped into my head when they said they were moving everything up.”

Brandon’s head popped up and he quirked his eyebrow at me, asking silently for more details. I obliged, telling him about the conversation. “So,” he began when I was done, “we have two months to get ready for this whole wedding thing, huh?”

I nodded and Jackson and I both laughed at Brandon’s expression. He grabbed my face and kissed me absent-mindedly and then jumped off the bed, mumbling, “Need to call Calland...definitely need to rework the plans...” as he headed into the bathroom.

Jackson twisted me around to face him and proceeded to kiss me breathless. “Good



morning,” he said softly when he pulled back from me.

“Mmmm...good morning to you, too!” I murmured. “I have to get up and get ready for work. What do you have going today?”

He stretched before answering, “Got a couple things to do at the office today so I’ll be heading to Cincinnati in an hour or so.” He’d finally found an office building that worked perfectly for him and had already gotten it up and running. He’s pretty amazing like that. “I’ll be back around three or so to do some more work on the house after that. Why? Got plans tonight?” He waggled his brows at me and I laughed at him.

I shook my head and said, “No, nothing going on but I have a feeling we’re going to end up at Emma and Luke’s tonight to discuss wedding stuff. And I probably need to get ahold of Jenna and Leah to start making plans for the bachelorette party.”

He nodded at me and then grimaced. “Yeah, the last thing I heard about the bachelor party for Luke involved strippers and copious amounts of whipped cream,” he said, shuddering dramatically.

My lips twisted into a wry smile and I told him, “Uh-huh, sure...that is completely out of the realm of comfort for you, right?”

He grinned at me and kissed me again quickly before getting up out of bed. I laid there for a minute more and then crawled off the bed, heading toward the closet for start getting ready for the day.

## Chapter 11

Work was pretty uneventful at the store that day, and evening found me, where else? At Emma’s. Brandon was still at work since he had the late shift and had a few

appointments but Luke, Emma, Jackson, Chloe, and I were all sitting around the kitchen table, munching on some snacks that Emma had set out and discussing wedding plans.

“Did you tell your mom and dad and everyone finally?” I asked Emma. She opened her mouth to reply but a weird, almost horrified expression crossed her face and then she gagged. “Emma? Are you--oh, holy shit! What the fuck is that?” I jumped away from the table, pulling my shirt up over the lower half of my face to block the God-awful stench that started to waft through the room.

Everyone else was following suit, covering their faces with whatever they could find and looking around to try to figure out where the smell was coming from. I saw Luke bend slightly and look under the table, doing the same when I heard him groan and mutter under his breath.

When I peeked under there, I noticed a very large canine sitting calmly with a very large canine smile stretched across his lips, his tail wagging a mile a minute. “Seriously, Doug?” I groaned. “Jesus, Luke! What the hell did you feed him?”

Luke shook his head and threw his hands up. “I didn’t give him anything, I swear! God it smells like death in here!” With that he walked to the back door, swung it open, and yelled at Doug to go outside. Doug, clearly still enjoying his act of doggy-terrorism on our group, trotted outside with his tongue lolling out the side of his mouth.

Emma jumped into the laundry room and came out with an industrial sized can of Lysol, spraying like a mad-woman, which left us all choking and spitting. Seriously, it was so thick in the room you could taste that shit on your tongue! I finally gave up and started toward the front door, shaking my head and laughing as Chloe and Jackson trailed after me, and Luke followed behind, but not before he wrestled the can out of Emma’s hand and scowled at her. She scowled back at him and stuck her

tongue out childishly, making us laugh even harder when her face screwed up as she got a taste of the cloud of Lysol hovering in the air.

When we were all safely on the porch, I heard Chloe turn to Jackson and say, “Is it always like this?”

I could hear the smile in her voice and knew Jackson was grinning when he replied, “Yep.”

We were all still sitting outside, this time in the back around the fire pit, when Brandon got there. Emma, Chloe, and I were roasting marshmallows and getting to eat maybe one out of every three because they were either stolen by the guys or we were talking and laughing too much and didn’t pay enough attention to what we were doing, so they fell off the campfire forks we were using into the fire.

After a while, Jackson stood up and stretched, yawning loudly. I looked up at him and he winked at me. I grinned back because, well, I just couldn’t help it (God, he’s so hot) and because I knew what that twinkle in his eyes meant. He came and stood in front of me, reaching his hand down to help me up off the bench I was sitting on and wrapped me in a hug before releasing me. I saw him glance over at Brandon who nodded at him and got to his feet, as well. Chloe followed and we all said our goodbyes.

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When we got home, I headed toward my bathroom to take a long, hot bath. Before I reached the doorway to my room, I heard Chloe behind me.

“Ummm...Allie? Do you think...could I talk to you for a second?” she asked, hesitantly.

I nodded at her, curious to see what she wanted to talk about. I motioned for her to follow me, noticing that Brandon and Jackson were also watching very curiously. She came into the room behind me and sat cautiously on the edge of my bed. “What’s up?” I asked.

She swallowed audibly. “Well, I just don’t want you to think that I’m...I don’t want to be in your way.”

“Chloe where the hell would you get an idea like that? You’re Jackson’s sister, where else would you go?” I shook my head. “I’m sorry if I gave you that impression, because that’s not it at all. I just wish there was something more I could do, something I could say to make it better for you. I don’t even really know the whole story, just the little bits you told me and Emma. Jackson hasn’t said anything, so you don’t have to worry about that, and I’m not going to pry into your business,” I said firmly.

“I really don’t want to talk about it. I haven’t even really said much more about anything to Jackson, though I know it pisses him off every time he looks at me. I’m just glad the bruises are fading. But, it’s just...well, the other night you came by the room and saw Brandon in bed with me. I was so scared that you were going to hate me...think that I was trying something with him. I’ve known him for a very long

time, him and Luke, and-”

I cut her off with a wave. Time to eat some crow. (Or something like that) “I don’t think you’re trying anything with him. You have nightmares, he heard you and wanted to help. I don’t have a problem with that at all. And if I gave you that impression, then I’m sorry. That’s my fault. This whole relationship thing with your brother and Brandon is so new to me...I...yeah, I don’t know. I’m sorry if I upset you.”

She shook her head at me vehemently. “You didn’t upset me at all! I just was so scared that you were mad. And I haven’t really taken the time to tell you thank you for everything you’ve done for me. You took me in when I showed up on Luke and Emma’s doorstep looking like I’d gone twelve rounds with Mike Tyson.” She chuckled wryly at her own small attempt at humor before continuing. “You let me tag along with you guys and you’ve been so nice...everyone has been so great about everything.”

I moved closer to the bed and leaned in to give her a hug. She wrapped her arms around me and held on tightly for a moment. I could feel her take a deep, shuddering breath and knew that I’d just taken a weight off of her shoulders. Which made me feel like an ass.

At that moment, my bedroom door opened and Brandon popped his head in. I watched his lips stretch into a wide grin, his eyes twinkling devilishly and groaned because I knew what was coming.

“Ooohh...going for some girl on girl? I’m down with that! Just let me get rid of Jackson...” he said loudly before breaking down with laughter, wincing when Jackson, who was standing right behind him, smacked him in the back of his head.

Jacks pushed past him, shaking his head in part annoyance, part amusement. He

stopped by where we were standing, our arms still wrapped around each other loosely, and asked his sister, “You okay?”

She nodded and smiled at me again before saying, “Well, I guess that’s my cue!” She hugged her brother and slugged Brandon’s arm as she went by him on her way out of the room.

I sighed and shook my head at Brandon, which I seem to find myself doing a lot, and then walked into the bathroom to take my bath. I’d been in there for a good fifteen minutes when the door opened and the doorway was filled with mouth-wateringly delicious nakedness of the male variety. I watched as Brandon ran his hand down his chest, my eyes watching every move, until he reached that special, perfect part of him that was rapidly rising to meet the occasion. I gasped as he wrapped his fingers around the considerable girth of himself, stroking firmly from root to tip.

“You gonna be in here all night?” he asked, the deep, husky, rich tone of his voice making me shiver as it washed over me like a caress.

I didn’t answer him, just pulled the plug on the tub and stood without a word, stepping out and reaching for my towel. He watched every move I made, the intensity in his eyes making my fingers fumble as I dried myself. Finally giving up, I just wrapped the towel around me and moved to where he was still standing motionless in the doorway, stroking himself. I reached out my hand to touch him and he stopped me with a terse, “No.”

I stopped, my hand hanging frozen in mid-air. The uncertainty I knew was written across my face must have gotten to him because his features softened for a second before he commanded, “Drop the towel, Allie.”

I let the towel drop from my body, standing naked before him. Without another word, he turned away and walked back into the bedroom, which was dark except for the soft

glow emanating from my bedside lamp. I followed him, a little perturbed by the fact that he still hadn't touched me or done anything except order me around. I paused for a moment to take in the sight stretched out in front of me.

Brandon was standing beside the bed with one knee propped up on it, and his hand was still fisting the rock-hard length jutting from the juncture of his thighs. Jackson was laying on the other side of the bed, propped up with pillows against the headboard. He was also naked, but his hands were tucked behind his head, leaving everything open to my greedy eyes. The thick hardness of his erection stood up from his body, slightly curving towards the sculpted lines of his stomach. I blinked slowly, in awe of all that hot male flesh just waiting for my touch.

"Do you have your iPod back here?" Brandon asked me softly. I nodded silently and pointed to where it was resting on its dock. He moved away from the bed and grabbed it, turning it on and thumbing through my playlists. I saw him raise an eyebrow at me before he smiled, replaced it onto the dock and hit play. He turned up the volume enough to fill the room, but not so loud that it would disturb Chloe in the other room.

I grinned back at him when I heard the strains of Delilah's Go begin. I knew that he'd found my playlist I'd jokingly titled 'sexy-time'. My smile faded as he crooked his finger at me, his face dark with lust and something else. That something else had me a little nervous, but mostly intrigued. I could tell that things were going to go a little differently tonight.

I moved to stand in front of him and heard the bed shift behind me, signaling that Jackson was no longer lounging there. I saw Brandon glance over my shoulder at him and nod. I swallowed as I felt the heat of Jackson's chest against my back before something soft dropped over my eyes. I felt him carefully tie whatever it was at the back of my head, not too tight, but tight enough that I was completely blindfolded. I could feel my breath coming faster and my heart felt like it would pound out of my

chest.

I felt the soft, fleeting touch of lips against the curve of my shoulder where it met my neck and gasped, shivering when the feel of fingertips traced my spine before dipping into the cleft at the base of it. I moaned loudly, unable to help it, when lips closed over my nipple, nipping and sucking roughly. All of a sudden I was alone, all traces of their touch gone. I whimpered in my throat and heard a whispered, 'shhhh, baby its okay' somewhere to the side of me. Turning my head toward the voice, I strained to listen, wanting to hear some clue as to what would happen next.



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I got my answer when fingers traced down my arms, pulling my hands together and clasping them in front of my body before something silky began winding around my wrists, effectively binding them together tightly. Dark desire, shot with a fine edge of trepidation, curled low in my belly and I felt the soft flesh between my thighs grow even wetter than it had been, wetter than I think I'd ever been before. I jumped slightly when a hand touched the inside of my thigh lightly, moving upward. I could feel my cheeks heat as I felt trails of wetness beneath the hand stroking me.

“Mmmm...” I heard Jackson say in a low voice. “Dripping wet, baby. So wet it’s running down your thighs...” he broke off on a groan when I hissed as his fingers brushed against the swollen, heated folds nestled at the juncture of my thighs, my hips jerking forward instinctively, seeking out his touch.

I let out a small squeak when a hand roughly slapped me on my ass and Brandon growled, “No.”

I could feel my muscles tighten and a shudder wracked my body at the tone of his voice. He sounded dangerous and wild and I wanted to see him like that, because he was showing me a side that he had hinted at but never shown. I felt Jackson drop his hand from my leg and then a hand slowly slid up my chest, between my breasts, and closed gently around my throat. I felt my breath coming even faster and swallowed against the slight pressure. I wasn’t scared; I trusted them beyond anything or anyone, and I knew they’d never hurt me. At least not in a bad way...

Hot breath tickled my ear and Jackson’s voice whispered deeply, “We’re gonna take you higher than you’ve ever been, baby.” In the silence that followed, I vaguely registered the song changing and Gorilla by Bruno Mars began playing.

I gasped as the hand around my throat shifted and a thumb slid up over my jaw and pressed against my lips before sliding inside. I closed my lips around it and sucked hard, reveling in the harsh growl that burst forth from Jackson's mouth which was still hovering by my ear.

In a heartbeat they were gone again but then I was being lifted and laid gently on the bed. I felt two pairs of hands maneuvering me until I was lying diagonally across the bottom corner of the bed. In that position, my head hung off the edge of the bed, and my legs hung off the other side so that I was supported by the mattress from shoulder to hip. It would have been uncomfortable if they'd let my legs dangle, but one of them held them up, spreading them widely and standing between them. I wrapped them around his waist, humming in appreciation when the hot, hard length of him nestled between the silky, wet lips of my sex.

When he thrust against me I gasped again, then moaned as the hot hardness of who I determined to be Brandon thrust between my lips, feeding the length of himself into my mouth deeply before pulling back immediately. I knew that he was afraid of overwhelming me or choking me and I struggled against the binding on my hands, wanting to pull him into me again. At this angle, I knew that I could take him all the way in, especially since I didn't have much of a gag reflex.

I whimpered again before crying out. "Brandon, please!"

I heard him chuckle before he pressed himself against my lips. I opened wide, flattening my tongue along the length of him as he slid in, slowly filling my mouth until I could feel the tip of him in the back of my throat. I swallowed convulsively around him, breathing through my nose deeply in order to fight against what little gag reflex I did have. I felt him twitch in my mouth and then he was sliding back out, pulling free of my mouth with a pop. I heard him murmur something and I cried out again as he started sliding into my mouth once more as Jackson thrust himself to the hilt inside me.

They rode me, Jackson buried deep between my legs, Brandon deep in my mouth, maddeningly slow, keeping their thrusts in time with the music, pumping into me at the same time so that I was, in turn, filled so full and then left empty. Brandon had his hands fisted in my hair on either side of my head holding me still while he pulsed between my lips. Jackson pinched my nipples roughly, kneading my breasts with his hands while he thrust hot and heavy into the clenching tightness of me. I could hear myself whimpering and pleading with them to move faster because the pleasure was building and building, coursing through every inch of me but keeping me from falling over the edge.

When the song changed again and Weeknd's Wicked Games began playing, they both pulled away from me. I shook my head in denial at them, pleading for them not to stop. I cursed the blindfold because I wanted to see them, see what they were going to do next, but at the same time, I loved not knowing. I loved the game of figuring out which one was doing what, loved that I knew the differences in their bodies.

They moved, a silent dance that I couldn't see, shifting me around until I was braced on my knees, leaning forward on my forearms, hands still bound. More shifting and I felt weight settle between my wide-spread thighs before a tongue made a lazy sweep through my folds. Hands grasped my waist and pulled me up until I was sitting on a face, a tongue buried deep inside me, flicking and thrusting until I was grinding my hips down on that mouth, riding it with everything I had. I could feel my orgasm rushing up and flung myself headlong into it.

I screamed in frustration as I was denied my release once more, those hands lifting me and that tongue ceasing its carnal dance along my most intimate flesh. I felt the bed dip in front of me and hands roughly grabbed me before a mouth crashed down on mine, thrusting a tongue between my lips and tangling with mine. I moaned as the scent and taste of Brandon swept me along, filling all my senses as he ate at my mouth, nipping, sucking, biting, and licking.

He pulled away from me on a groan and then I was shifted again, lost in the quick movements as they positioned me. I ended up straddling Jackson while Brandon trailed his fingers through the wetness still seeping down my thighs and slid them up to the puckered flesh between my ass cheeks. He slicked them over and over that tight ring of muscle, preparing me to take him. I lost myself to the pleasure screaming through me with every touch of their hands on my body, floating away as they both worked themselves into me, Jackson deep inside my sex while Brandon buried himself in the tightness of my ass.

They made love to me...fucked me...rode me...destroyed me until I was shuddering and gasping with the overwhelming ecstasy crashing over me as they brought me screaming again and again and again before they finally let themselves go, jerking and swearing as they each came, spurting uncontrollably inside me as I spasmed around them once more.

I felt like I was floating as I collapsed, boneless and breathless, and let the darkness claim me just as Knockin' da boots by H-Town began playing.

## Chapter 12

“Okay. Now, this is the Turtle Tool. Yes, it looks like a weird microphone or back massager, but let me tell ya-turn this baby on and touch it to your tiny little soldier and Bam! One orgasm, coming right up! Or more...but that's all up to you. It has multiple speeds so you set the pace, just a little buzz or a whole hornet's nest, you decide.” I smiled brightly around the room at the hodge-podge group of women scattered in a semi-circle before me.

It'd actually been a few weeks since I'd done a party and I was finding it rather difficult to keep my mind on the task at hand, rather than that amazing night that I couldn't stop thinking about. And don't get me wrong, sex with the guys is always amazing but that night...wow. It's been three days since they had knocked me out

with the best sex of my life and I was still feeling it in my muscles. But, oh God, was it worth it. Even now, I had to fight back the smug smile that wanted to plaster itself over my face. Instead, I handed my Turtle Tool off to the first woman sitting beside where I was standing.

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She took it carefully like it was a snake about to strike, barely holding it between two fingers. Since it's a little heavy for that, I grabbed for it as it started to fall. I held it out to her again and, trying to be patient (this was the fifth time this had happened) told her again, "This is only a demo. It has never been used by me or anyone else. I have it only to demonstrate it during parties so you can see the real thing, rather than a picture in a catalog. Pass it on when you're done."

I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket and while the women were passing the wand-like vibrator around, I discreetly palmed it to see who it was. It was a text from Brandon.

Sold any anal beads or butt plugs yet? What about that virgin cream stuff?

I shook my head and put my phone back in my pocket, not even bothering to respond to his off the wall questions. Apparently he had been snooping through the catalogs in my office. Looking back up I saw that the Turtle Tool was almost back around to me. I walked over to the last woman and waited while she looked it over, turned it on, held it against her hand, and then giggled before she handed it to me.

I put it back in its container and set it back in the tub it came from. I grabbed the jelly-coated, egg-shaped bullet with the small finger-like protrusion at the top and turned back to the women. Holding it up, I started in on my spiel.

"Alrighty then. This, ladies, is my best friend. One of them, anyway." I paused to smile good naturedly at the laughter that always came with that line. "This is the Super Egg. It's basically an over-sized, jelly-coated bullet. This little puppy can be inserted or used for outside stimulation. The little finger at the top here," I pointed to

it with one finger while holding it up in my other hand for them to see, “is for clitoral stimulation. When you turn it on, the whole egg vibrates because, like I said, it’s just a big ol’ bullet.”

I turned the egg on and held it up again, stretching the cord out between the egg and the battery/power box. “It does have a cord, but it’s thin and not too long, not too short. Can you see the finger doing it’s thing?” I asked the ladies who were all watching, enraptured by the tiny, waving little finger. They nodded. I definitely had all of their attention.

I passed it around when I was done talking about it, and so went the next hour. We’d already gone through the lotions, creams, paints, and all that shit earlier, so when I got back the last dildo I’d sent around (which happened to be Big Kirky’s ‘cousin’, a much more reasonably, though still large-sized jelly dong with a suction-cup bottom), I was ready to pack up and go home. Instead, I sat in the chair beside my display table and waited while the women all left the room to adjourn in the kitchen while they came back in, one by one to place their orders.

Thankfully, I’d replenished most of my stock as far as the creams and things went. I had a few basic bullets and a couple of the more popular vibrators in stock, as well, so quite a few of the women went home with their complete orders in their discreet brown paper sacks. I’d gone back to using them instead of the sweet hot pink plastic shopping bags that had Down & Dirty scrawled across them because so many women were so embarrassed to be seen leaving with them. Yeah, I don’t get it either.

Once everyone had ordered, I packed up my stuff, loaded up, and headed home. When I got there, Jackson was sprawled across the couch with the remote in his hand, watching TV. Brandon and Chloe were nowhere in sight.

Jackson sat up and paused the show he was watching, smiling at me as I sat down beside him. He pulled me onto his lap and cuddled me close, kissing my lips softly. I

smiled back at him and melted into his kiss again until we finally separated, both of us breathless.

“Well hello to you, too!” I said.

He chuckled and asked me how my party went. I hit him with some highlights before asking, “Where’s Brandon and Chloe?”

He shrugged. “Chloe needed some things from the store and Brandon was headed into town to grab us some dinner, so she just rode with him to have him swing her by Walmart on the way.”

I nodded, even as a green-eyed monster seemed to invade my body and settle in with a sneer. Damn female hormones!

“You okay, baby?” Jackson asked me softly. His deep brown eyes gazed at me with concern.

I pasted on a smile and kissed him gently before jumping up and asking him to help me unload my car. He got up with no hesitation and helped me unload every bit of my naughty things; he even scrambled to catch ‘Big Kirky’ when he tumbled out of the tub that I tote him around in for parties. Now that was a sight!

After everything was unloaded and put away, we cuddled back up on the couch and started watching a movie. We did the whole ‘rock, paper, scissors’ thing to see who got to pick the movie. I won (for once) so I’d put in Identity Thief, which since Jackson likes it, didn’t faze him at all. We were almost all the way through the movie when Brandon and Chloe got back, walking in the door laughing, their arms laden with plastic bags.

Brandon’s smile stretched into a grin when he saw me and Chloe was right behind



him, smiling just as warmly. I smiled back, glad to see her smiling genuinely and feeling better. She looked so much better than the first time I saw her, but then again, some asshole had used her for a punching bag, so...

They disappeared into the kitchen with the bags and I could hear them slamming around in there and then throughout the house, putting things away where they belong. When they were done, Brandon came and sat down on my other side, reaching for me and pulling me onto his lap. His lips met mine and I moaned softly when his tongue speared between them to tease and tangle with mine. We stayed that way for pretty much the rest of the night, cuddled up together on the couch and watching movies until I was yawning every two seconds and could hardly keep my eyes open.

The next couple of weeks settled into a pattern. I'd actually taken Chloe into the store with me and had given her a job. I'd been looking into getting someone in there that could handle things if I wasn't there. Usually the only other person that worked in my store was my mom. Working with me seemed to make her even happier, although I drew the line when she tried to pay me rent for staying with me. So she came to work with me every day, and every night, we all had dinner, hung out either at home or with Emma and Luke, and then went to bed where Brandon and Jackson proved time and time again, together and separately, how exceedingly talented they are in the bedroom.

Brandon, Jackson, and I had had a chat about something sort of like that a couple days ago. Jackson's house was almost done and ready to move in. He approached the subject with Brandon and let him know that he wanted the three of us to live there together. The master bedroom would be mine, but all three of us would share it. They would each still get their own room, just somewhere to call their own and to get away to if they needed some space.

As for Chloe, since she was planning on living here and not going back to California,

I brought up the subject of letting her stay at my place. Emma had actually done that for her sister, Leah, and it worked out perfectly. I figured Chloe would enjoy having her own place, and, believe it or not, Leah and Chloe had met last week and were practically inseparable now. All they'd been talking about is the UFC thing that Calland had invited Leah to and somehow managed to score an extra ticket so Chloe could go, too.

I'd been busy planning Emma's bachelorette party, while fielding calls from Luke, who was trying to get details from me, not only about Emma's party, but his own, too. He'd given in and Brandon and Calland were planning the whole thing. They'd managed to keep it secret so far, too, shockingly. I have to admit that I was pretty intrigued about it myself.

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Between Emma and the store, I was running around like a chicken with my head cut off, trying to get everything done at the store and last minute wedding things for Emma. I think we finally had everything ready to go and she was going to be an amazingly beautiful bride, especially because she had essentially had a weight lifted off of her shoulders.

Creepy's trial date had come and gone and, just as Emma wanted, he accepted a plea bargain prior to the hearing so she didn't have to go through the trial. The photos and recorded statements they had of Emma right after the incident painted very graphic and damning picture; so much so that his attorney was bending over backwards trying avoid the trial to keep him away from a jury. He pled guilty to felonious assault with a deadly weapon, weapons under disability, kidnapping, and gross sexual imposition in exchange for them dropping the attempted murder charge.

All in all, he'll be in prison for a about 15 years with no parole, will have to register as a sex offender, and will be put on community control after his release, as well. Emma was relieved that it was over and, now that it wasn't hanging over her anymore, she glowed with happiness, ready to get hitched and make babies!

But first...we had one hell of a party to throw!

### Chapter 13

The day of the party dawned bright and beautiful. Yes, weather-wise it was, too, but when you wake up being loved from top to bottom by four hands, two mouths, and two...well, you know where I'm going with that...it would make anyone's day better. Seriously, I've been smiling non-stop since I woke up.

Brandon and Jackson kissed me goodbye and headed out to meet Calland for a little last minute shopping. What they needed to shop for, I was a little scared to think about, but whatever. I had made a trip down towards Cincinnati to the Hustler store and got a nice little stash of party favors and pretty much anything I could find penis shaped. I had a crystal penis-encrusted mini veil for Emma to wear on her head, headbands with wiggly penises for the rest of us, penis-shaped shot glasses on beaded necklaces for us to wear around our necks, and even drink glasses that had flashing lights in the bottom, plus penis shaped straws for us to drink out of. I got Emma a sash to wear that proclaimed her as the bride-to-be, but sadly, they didn't have any with penises on them.

I know it seems tacky and very classless to walk around bedazzled in penises, but come on. I think it's a prerequisite to a kickass bachelorette party. That and at least one stripper, but I'd left that out of the public plans so Luke wouldn't find out and kill me beforehand. I also had a list of things that we all had to complete before the night was over, as well as a 'suck for a buck' t-shirt for her to wear.

It was more of a 'bite for a buck' though, because I was nice and just tacked a bunch of wrapped flavored Lifesavers to a plain white t-shirt; no sense in making people pay to suck unsanitary candy. This way, they get to bite off the candy and be able to actually eat it, and Emma doesn't have to stand there awkwardly while a creeper takes his time sucking off the candy.

Jenna and Leah pitched in and we all rented a limo for the night so we didn't have to worry about needing a DD because we were definitely making the rounds tonight. I was standing in my office at home gathering everything into a couple large totes to take with me since we were all meeting at Emma's for the limo to pick us up when someone tapped lightly on the door. I yelled for whoever it was to come in and smiled as Chloe pushed through the door.

"Hey!" I said. "You coming with us tonight, still?" I asked her. Emma had invited her

and Chloe had tried to decline, stating that we didn't want some stranger hanging out on our fun night. Emma and I both had waved her protests off and told her she was more than welcome. Frankly, I thought she needed at least one night out to cut loose and have fun for once.

She nodded slightly and then opened her mouth, to protest I'm sure, but I cut her off. "You're coming with me, no excuses. You need to get out and have some fun. I promise, it will be worth it! Now, come help me grab everything and haul it to the car."

"Oh...okay..." she stuttered. She reached down to grab a bag by my leg and I froze.

"Wait, wait, wait. Nu-uh. You can't go like that," I said firmly, getting a real good look at her. She was wearing a pair of baggy old sweat pants and a t-shirt.

"Well, just give me a second to change. I'm sure I can find something..." she said.

I shook my head. "You know what? I have something perfect for you at the shop. You don't mind, do you?" I asked her.

She shook her head. I nodded once, motioned for her to go ahead and grab bags and we loaded the car on the run. We made a quick stop by the store, spent about twenty minutes getting her all dolled up, and rolled out, giggling like little school girls on the way to Emma's house.

We pulled up right as the guys were leaving. I got out and waved, shaking my head exasperatedly when Luke started yelling out the window, "You take care of my woman, you hear me, Allie?!"

"Yo, bitches!" Emma yelled behind us.

She was standing on the front step holding up a champagne glass that was filled to the brim. Well, it would have been if she'd kept it still. As it was, it kept sloshing over the sides as she waved her hands around dramatically.

I glanced over to Jenna who was standing beside her, looking up to the sky like she'd get some type of answer or help from that quarter. Leah was standing behind her, either dancing or trying to hold Emma still. I quirked my brow at her, silently asking for an explanation as to why the bride was already half-shit-faced.

"Luke kept asking questions. And then she got nervous, so every time he looked at her, she'd gulp her champagne. Brandon and Jacks finally took pity on her and made him leave, but...well...you see what we're dealing with now," she said.

"Allie!" Emma crowed.

"Emma," I shrieked back before replying to Leah, "Well, good thing we're going to dinner first. Geez."

Everybody finally showed up, including Emma's mom, my mom, and the limo driver. I passed out all my penis stuff and we all piled into the limo. We were all laughing at each other because, let's face it, we looked ridiculous. Really, that many penises probably were overkill, but...it sure made one hell of an impact when we all stood together!

We started out with a champagne toast (not that Emma needed more, but hey, it was her bachelorette party!) in the limo while we headed towards dinner. I'd made special arrangements at Manny's because that was Emma's favorite restaurant. They set up a back room for us so we didn't scare anyone or scar any children for life from seeing us all 'pe-dazzled'.

An hour and a half later, we were all stuffed from too much Italian food and sangria

and piled back into the limo. Emma was well on her way to being blitzed, and her mom was already there. Funny thing about Jan when she's drunk? She gets quite philosophical and lovey. Like seriously lovey. She was currently cuddled up to Emma, kissing her cheek and telling her over and over how much she loved her.

I couldn't help but shake my head and smile at my own mother who was sitting on the other side of Emma and interjecting her own two cents every other five seconds. Guess she hit the sangria harder than I thought...

Now, don't judge me. I may have promised Luke that there would be no male strippers involved in the night's plans. So we were going to The Back Room, which...ok, yes, is a strip club. But the dancers are female. And it's totally not my fault that I 'didn't realize' that there was a male review on the main stage that 'just happened' to be scheduled for the night we would be there. Tonight. Oops. (Evil grin...)

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We pulled up to the club, but before we headed inside, Emma and I facilitated the quick change that was my concession to getting around Luke's no stripper rule. Even though I told her I had it covered (see aforementioned evil grin), Emma came up with her own plan. She removed anything remotely pointing her out to as the bride-to-be and switched it out with Leah's bridesmaid get-up. That done, we moved the party into the club, settling around a long table set up by the side of the stage.

The room was getting pretty full, women beginning to crowd around the stage area, packing into tables by the dozens while men were getting an eyeful on the small stage and catwalk area by the bar. Emma sat on one side of me while I maneuvered so Chloe was on my other side. I didn't want her to feel uncomfortable sitting with people she really didn't know. Okay, and I didn't want her sitting with either my mom or Emma's mom. Then she'd really think we were loco!

The dancers were slated to begin doing their thing at ten and we had arrived precisely in enough time to get drinks and to kick back and enjoy the show. The lights dimmed a bit and cute little woman stepped up onto the stage.

"Hey, ladies!" she hollered. "Are you ready to see some sexy ass men get naked?"

The room shook (or maybe it was just my eardrums bursting) with the screams and catcalls of the women all around us, most of which I swear came from Emma's mom, Jan, and my mom.

The woman shook her head in mock disappointment and yelled again, "Are you ready to see some sexy ass men get naked? Lemme hear you this time!"



I couldn't refuse a direct order, you know, so I added my voice to the others, letting out the loudest whoop I was capable of, which, let's be honest, was probably the loudest one in the room. I may be little, but damn I'm loud and proud of it!

"Alright, that's more like it!" the woman yelled. "Let's get this night started...put your hands together and give it up for our first performer, Evan!" She threw her arm up as the spotlight moved to the center of the stage and she ran off just as a man dressed in a tight fitting rocker t-shirt and tight ripped up jeans jumped on stage and made a bee-line for the front edge.

I jumped up out of my seat, unable to help myself as Casual Sex by My Darkest Days began playing. I LOVE that song! Emma jumped up and grabbed my hand, dancing beside me as Evan started rocking his hips and moving to the beat. I think what made him even ten times hotter (in my book, at least, even besides the fact that he was tatted up and H.O.T.; I mean he seriously looked like a rock star) is the fact that he was lip syncing the words as he danced, thrusting and gyrating his hips suggestively. When the chorus hit, he reached up and literally tore the shirt he was wearing right down the middle and flung it into the crowd, then dropped to his knees and crawled...well, shit! He was crawling our way!

Emma let out a shriek as Evan came up on his knees in front of her, thrusting his pelvis forward as he slid his knees apart, leaning back to ensure every eye caught the rather impressive bulge straining the denim of his jeans. She leaned into me, and I wasn't sure if it was the alcohol or the fact that he was dancing directly in front of her, so I grabbed her and made her dance with me again.

As we danced, Evan jumped to his feet and ripped his jeans away, leaving himself clad in only a teeny-tiny scrap of material that was trying it's best to contain the semi-erect flesh straining against it's every boundary. He danced away, making his way around the stage and giving the maximum show he could to every woman dancing around the edge.

Once he'd made the rounds around the stage, he moved back to the pole and did some pretty impressive tricks that had all of us fanning ourselves and blushing, even with the amount of booze running through our veins at the moment. When the song wound down, he ended on his knees back in front of us, crooking his finger at Leah and motioning her towards him. She looked at me, wide-eyed and flushed, half panicked but whole drunk!

“Go on, Leah! What the fuck, woman? It's your bachelorette party, we're wasted, and Hottie McBody up here is calling you home! GET UP THERE!” Emma screamed.

Leah and I both looked at Emma in shock for about point-two-three seconds before Leah shrugged, giggled and moved toward the stage. Evan reached out and helped her up, leading her to a single seat that had been placed in the center of the stage. She was flushed and almost too appreciative of Evan's 'Hottie McBody', as Emma so eloquently put it, darting her hand out and tracing a finger down his wash-board abs. Evan grinned, wagged his finger in her face in a no-no-no way, and tucked both her hands beneath her thighs, palm down on the seat.

Once he had her situated, he grabbed the mic that the chick who'd announced him handed over and yelled, “We got ourselves a bachelorette party going on tonight, and here's the blushing bride-to-be! Well, as a wedding present, we've got a little something special planned for our girl. Are you ready?”

The crowd went crazy, our group included, getting caught up in the energy of a couple hundred drunk chicks. Evan handed the mic back over to the woman and took something else from her hand, which turned out to be a silk tie. He took Leah's hands and tied them gently behind her back, whispering something to her as he did so. She shook her head and smiled as he stepped back. I caught her eye briefly and gave her the eye, trying to remind her that she's supposed to be the bride, not a single, horny bridesmaid!

All of a sudden he raised his hands, catching our attention again, and pivoted his hips as the music blared and another one of My Darkest Days songs began. This one was Move Your Body, and lemme tell you, he listened! We watched as Evan danced the hell out of the song, grinding against Leah, running his hands down her arms and up her thighs, sliding himself up her body and nuzzling her neck. Emma, Chloe, and I were all laughing uncontrollably at poor Leah's visible struggle to restrain herself from moving her hands and grabbing everything Evan was thrusting at her.

I looked over at Chloe and caught her in mid-laugh, her face completely care-free for once, and I was struck by how much she favored her brother, but it was more than that. She was absolutely stunning. And for her to be a genuine soul, to boot? I was a total ass for ever feeling jealous. Right?

I worried at my lip with my teeth and then gave her a bright smile when she caught me staring. She lifted one perfectly sculpted eyebrow in question at me and I just shook my head, smiling even bigger, before turning my attention back to the stage. Leah was now panting and her eyes were glazed over, her arms almost visibly shaking. Her hands had been moved to the top of her thighs, and she had her fingers dug into the denim of her jeans like it was the only thing keeping her grounded.

I nudged Emma and nodded towards the stage, silently asking if we needed to intervene to save the poor woman from attacking Evan. Emma just laughed gleefully and shook her head, winking at me. I realized that the song was drawing to a close, and then laughed even harder as Evan led Leah back to her seat, looking wrung out and drunker than she'd been when she went up there!

As the night progressed, we all let loose, dancing, drinking, and just generally having the best time we could. At one point, I about pissed my pants from laughing so hard when one of the dancers came down and grabbed Emma's mom's legs, sliding her down in her seat while lifting her legs above her head. Jan was shrieking as he ground against her, using her legs as some kind of weird living prop. I thought Emma's eyes

were going to pop out of her head while watching this, but good old Jenna had her camera out, snapping away. (God, we were going to regret those pictures later!)

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When the show was done, we all stumbled back to the limo and headed down to The Dungeon. While we were all together before we got out, I got in my bag and passed around the list of “dares” that we all had to complete while Emma and Leah switched out their bride/bridesmaid getups. We all got out and went into the club, whooping and hollering, and I’m not a hundred percent sure, but I think Emma actually screamed out, ‘Let’s do this shit! Party’s here!’ before she stumbled onto the dance floor.

Fade to black. Cause everything got pretty damn blurry after that.

### Chapter 14

“Oh my fucking GOD!” I moaned at the incessant pounding splitting apart my head. Cracking open one eye, I hurriedly slammed it shut again as the sunlight sharpened like a blade and speared violently into my brain. “Sweet baby Jesus, what the hell did I do?” I asked myself on a groan, slowly attempting to roll over from where I was, apparently, lying face down. It seriously felt like I was sleeping on a wooden board that was in no way, shape, or form comfortable.

Once I got halfway to my back, I let out a scream as I went crashing down to what I determined to be the floor. Shit! Finally gathering my nerve, I opened my eyes to find that I was lying on Emma’s kitchen floor, right beside the table, which was where I was sleeping? What the fuck?

Slowly getting to my feet, I took stock of the situation. Hangover, check. Clothes? Patting myself down and double checking with my eyes, I determined that, yes, I did have clothes on.

I did a double take when I got to my hips. It felt like I was wearing way too many clothes. Like an abnormal amount of clothes. Shaking my head at myself, I gave up trying to piece it together, telling myself I'd figure it out later. I leaned heavily on the table and let out a shockingly loud snort as I took in the sight stretching out before me in the kitchen AND the living room.

Emma was passed out, snoring heavily, on the kitchen counter, her head resting on a pillow stuffed into the sink. She was wearing her Suck for a Buck shirt, still, but all of the life savers were gone. She did have a rather large wad of ones pinned to her shirt, so obviously she got paid for every one of them sucks. Huh. She also looked like she'd gotten into Luke's underwear drawer and was wearing about three pairs of his boxer briefs. Over top of her jeans. Didn't look very comfortable to me, but what the hell?

In the living room, Jan, Emma's mom, was curled up in the corner of the couch with my mom's head resting in her lap. My mom's feet were propped up on a sleeping Chloe, who looked like a hooker from the eighties. No, seriously. Her lips were neon pink, her eyelids were electric blue, and her hair was teased to heights I'd never seen before. Which was scary, because I grew up in the eighties!

Leah was on the floor and I snorted again when I noticed that she was actually laying in Doug's bed. Once I realized she was in Doug's bed, I looked around for Doug, but didn't see him anywhere. Until I stumbled into the living room and saw him. Sleeping dead center on top of Jenna. Who was sleeping halfway under the coffee table.

Okay, seriously. What the hell happened last night?!

I made my way slowly down the hall to the bathroom and had to do another double take when I looked at myself in the mirror. Apparently Chloe wasn't the only one who got a makeover. My face was made up like Kiss on crack. And I was wearing a hodge-podge of men's boxers, boxer-briefs, and even (shudder) one pair of tightie-

whities. Well, more like dirty-loosies...oh, gross!

I frantically shucked all of the underwear off my hips, even taking my pants off for good measure. After scrubbing all the make-up from my face, I padded down the hall toward Brandon's room in nothing but my cutesy little party top and my panties, intending to raid his closet for something to wear, when I heard a gasp behind me.

"Jesus, Allie! What the...what are you...where are your clothes?" a male voice stammered behind me.

I whirled around in a panic, my hands flying every which way to cover whatever they could cover as I blushed and fumbled out, "Luke!" Oh, God. I could feel my face burning, which isn't saying much considering the deep blood red that was creeping up Luke's face at an alarming rate.

Without stammering out another word, I turned and ran like the devil himself was on my ass, slamming Brandon's door behind me. Shaking my head (and then cursing myself for that as my head started pounding again), I got to my feet and rummaged through Brandon's dresser, coming up with an old pair of sweats that I had to roll about a zillion times. Oh, well. At least I was covered.

I shrugged and walked back out of the room, snorting loudly in laughter as I entered the living room and saw Luke standing with his hands on his hips, staring in some combination of amusement, concern, and confusion at Emma. She was still passed out, snoring away.

Doug was now sitting on top of Jenna (still asleep), smiling his goofy doggie grin at us and wagging his tail so hard it's a wonder Jenna was actually still sleeping. And everyone else was still out of it, too.

Luke turned around and threw his hands up. "So, how the hell are you up and

moving?” he asked.

I shrugged. And then tilted my head to amend my answer. “Well, actually it’s because I was, apparently, sleeping on the kitchen table. I fell off. Woke me up. Painfully.”

He shook his head, but I could see his shoulders shaking with the laughter he was trying to suppress. “Alright, so now, wanna explain to me why Emma’s wearing approximately a week’s worth of men’s underwear?”

I gulped because he wasn’t really laughing anymore. I nervously chuckled, wracking my brain to come up with some plausible reason that wouldn’t sound awful. And then I remembered!

“Oh, yeah!” I chirped. Well, chirped as much as a hungover person could chirp. I made a dash for the bathroom and grabbed up the mess that I had dumped on the bathroom floor, taking care not to touch the ‘dirty-loosies’ and plodded back into the kitchen.

Luke looked at me like I’d lost my mind and, frankly, I was probably going to make it worse for at least the next few seconds. I held up the pairs of men’s underwear that I’d been wearing myself after fishing around in the pocket of my jeans for the crumpled up paper I’d stuffed in there.

“So, as you can see, I came home wearing men’s underwear, too-” I started, but he cut me off.

“This isn’t really helping your explanation any, Allie. I mean seriously, you don’t think Brandon or Jackson would be a little worried by the fact that you had men’s underwear on, too? And,” he paused, looking over said undergarments hanging from my fingers with a grimace, “they’ve clearly been worn.”



I rolled my eyes at him. “If you’d let me FINISH!” I said, maybe a little more loudly than necessary. But that loudness could have all been in my head. I mean, the Trans Siberian Orchestra was already in there gearing up for their tour, so it’s a wonder I could hear anything over that.

“This is a list of dare-type things that we had to complete for the bachelorette party. See? Number 15, get a guy to take his underwear off for you and hand them over. We were very clearly overachievers. And before you ask, no, we didn’t see anything we weren’t supposed to. At least Emma and I didn’t. I can’t say the same for Leah, because the last I remember seeing her, she was headed into the men’s room to assist.” I shook my head.

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Luke reached for the list and read some off. “Number 1, get someone to buy you a shot. Number 2, dance on the bar...” he looked at me and quirked his eyebrow. “Did she dance on the bar?”

I shook my head in the negative. “No, actually, Chloe did that one. Shocked the shit out of us.”

Luke’s eyes went wide but he didn’t say anything else. He continued reading the list, chuckling at a couple and then reading them aloud when he came to ones he apparently found most interesting.

“Give a lap dance? Get five phone numbers? Jesus, Allie, were you trying to set her up?” Luke asked, his hand raking through his hair in agitatedly.

I gasped and snatched the paper out of his hand, glowering at him. “Seriously? I know you didn’t even ask me that. Chloe and Leah split the phone number dare, and believe it or not, my mother did the lap dance.” I held up my hand. “Please, don’t ask. It was bad enough to see with my own eyes.”

“Hey!” I exclaimed suddenly. “What’s the deal? How are you not passed out somewhere? It was your bachelor party last night, too!”

He shrugged. “Oh, don’t worry. I’ve got a workshop going on in my head right now, but I wanted to come home and sleep in my own bed with my future wife. Couldn’t take anymore snoring.”

I giggled. “Brandon and Jacks?” I asked.

“Nope,” he answered. “Calland. I swear to God, if I didn’t know it was Emma’s brother there on the couch, I would have thought there was a grizzly bear in the living room. We dropped her dad off at home and the rest of us crashed at your place. When I left, Brandon was in your bed and I think Jacks was in the bathtub. Could have been the other way around. And I’m pretty sure Calland was wearing a bra. Didn’t want to examine that one too closely, you know. Self-preservation and plausible deniability and all.”

I nodded. Maybe I shouldn’t mention all the times Emma and I had dressed Calland and his friends up when we were growing up. Ever see some dragged out thirteen/fourteen year olds with hooker make-up and padded bras riding a modified grocery cart into a ditch at the end of a driveway? Well, it’s pretty fuckin’ hilarious, lemme tell ya.

“So what did you guys do last night?” I asked Luke.

His face turned red again and I had my answer. “You went to a strip club!” I crowed. “HA! I thought you said no strip clubs!”

“Like I had a choice!” he hollered at me. “Calland, Brandon, and Jackson planned the whole thing. Do you think I got to have a say in anything? With CALLAND making most of the decisions!? And don’t you dare give me any grief over it, because I KNOW you took Emma to a strip club!”

I blinked. “N-no, I didn’t,” I stammered.

“Busted!” Luke said. “Which strip club do you think we ended up at?” he asked.

Oh. Well, shit.

“How the hell did we not see you?” I asked. I shook my head before he could answer.

“Nevermind. We were all pretty wasted by that point. Although, I do pride myself on handling my alcohol better than most, so I just can’t believe I didn’t see any of you.”

“Your mom did. She did the whole zipping motion across her lips and then mimed throwing away the key. She’s a trip,” he said, laughing. “Honestly, though, the guys threw a great party for me, just as, obviously, you girls did for Emma.” He smiled fondly at Emma, still snoring away on the counter.

I cocked my head and couldn’t help but smile. “You really love her.” It was a statement, and it wasn’t like I was just figuring it out. But sometimes it was just so...heart warming to see that I couldn’t help but comment.

He nodded, not taking his eyes off of her. He laughed as she shifted in her sleep and let out a huge belch that would have put a grown man to shame. “How could I not?” he said, grinning.

Luke and I talked for a little longer and then I left, heading home to my guys and whoever else was left crashed out there. I did wake up my mom before I left to see if she wanted a ride, but she decided to drive herself home. She’s a party beast, what can I say?

We left pretty much everyone else passed out where they were, but I made Chloe get up and come home with me. She was still pretty out of it. Guess that could have come from all the shots I kept handing her all night. But I won’t feel bad about it. She’s a kickass chick when she comes out of her shell.

By the time I got home, there was no one left at my house with the exception of my guys. I did see a bra mysteriously lying in the middle of my living room floor, but there was no sign of it’s previous wearer. Although I definitely would be revisiting that issue later with Calland. Especially once I filled Emma in on it.

I went into my bedroom after putting Chloe back to bed and saw that whoever had been crashed out in the bathtub was no longer there because both Brandon and Jackson were in my bed. Jackson was on the right side of the bed, Brandon was on the left, and they'd left room for me right in the middle, whether out of habit or what, I didn't know, but I was thankful for it. I stripped off and crawled into bed, snuggling down between them and let sleep take me back under.

## Chapter 15

"Who's idea was it to take cameras with us during the parties?" Emma moaned, thumping her head down on the kitchen table.

It was Sunday and we were all over at her mom and dad's house for breakfast, minus Chloe, who said she had some errands to run, and Jackson, who was going to take Chloe wherever she needed to go. We had just got done eating and the kids were in the living room playing a video game. My parents and even my grandparents had shown up (it wasn't that uncommon; they'd been to quite a few breakfasts with me over the years) so it was boisterous and crowded, but I wouldn't change it for anything. Most of my favorite people in one place...that's what I call perfect! The fact that Leah had taken the cameras in and had all the pictures from the bachelor and bachelorette parties printed out just made it that much better, especially because there was some blackmail GOLD in there!

"Oh, dear, come on! They aren't that bad!" Jan said, patting her daughter's shoulder briefly before snatching the pictures out of Emma's hand.

I grinned when she gasped as she started browsing through them. Her face was turning red and then she lost it, laughing so hard that tears started streaming down her face.

"Oh! Oh, God, Daisy!" she cackled to my mom.

My mom just grinned and shook her head because she'd already gone through them. My grandma shuffled over behind Jan so she could look over her shoulder.

“Daisy Mae!” she exclaimed, her gravelly voice cutting above everyone else. “Lord, child, does George know some naked guy is grinding his ugly stick all over your ass?”

“Mom!” my mother exclaimed at the exact same time I hollered, “Nanny!”

I turned to look at my grandma and, being the smart ass I usually am, said, “Ugly stick, Nanny? No one calls a man's penis that.”

She shook her head at me in exasperation. “Don't ya know anything, lily girl? Ugly Stik, you know, as in a brand of fishing pole. Seriously, look at that thing! It's huge even covered by it's banana hammock!”

I just groaned and covered my face with my hands, shaking my head as my mom jumped in, berating and then agreeing with my grandma. Geesh.

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Jan just shook her head and moved on, losing it even more when the next picture was my dad giving a thumbs up as two busty strippers surrounded him. After that was a picture of Ben, Emma's dad, smiling dazedly into the camera, holding up a bottle of beer in one hand and a mini blow up doll in the other.

Picture after picture went and we all cracked up, laughing until we were literally holding our stomachs, tears pouring down our faces; there were pictures of random people biting candy off of Emma's shirt, ones of Chloe and Leah dancing on the bar, ones of me and Emma dirty dancing with an alien...wait, what? What the hell was up with the blow ups?

Jan flipped one more and I grabbed it, exclaiming, "Hey!" I turned it around so Emma, Jenna, and Leah could get a better look at it. "What happened to our friend?" I asked, laughing.

The picture showed Emma handcuffed to an almost life-sized blow up neon green alien, which she had sitting on her lap, kissing it's cheek. Emma grabbed the picture out of my hand to see and handed it to Luke, who was sitting beside her.

"Sorry, honey," she said sweetly. "Looks like someone else might have stolen my heart at the bar!" She giggled and winked at him.

Luke guffawed and kissed Emma's head, saying, "I'll forgive you this one time, sugar, but I'm telling you what; if our first child comes out neon green, he and I are gonna have to have a talk!"

We all busted out laughing again, with the exception of Emma's dad, who just shook

his head and grunted. Typical Ben.

When the laughter died down again and Jan continued flipping through the pictures, I took that opportunity to bust Calland's balls a little.

"So... 'little brother', wanna tell me why you were crashed out on my couch wearing a bra?"

His face turned beet red for a second before his ever-present cockiness asserted itself again. "I'm secure in my masculinity...and besides, you never asked what happened to the woman who was wearing it before me!" He winked and waggled his eyebrows at me exaggeratedly.

"Calland, you ass, tell me you didn't do the nasty at my house!" I screeched, reaching out to slap him. He jumped away and I missed, my hand accidentally tagging Brandon in the junk. I clapped my hand over my mouth, apologizing profusely as he bent in half, blowing out a deep breath on a groan. Flustered, I didn't think first and dropped to my knees, hell bent on doing something, anything, to alleviate the pain I'd caused.

"Oh, fuck me sideways, Allie, baby, please stop, please stop, please stop..." Brandon mumbled, his words trailing off on a moan that sounded about a hundred times different than the in-pain one he'd just emitted a few seconds ago.

I blinked up at him and then down at where he held my wrist, fighting to stop my hand from rubbing over the...wow...now suddenly much larger and umm...harder part of him that I just so happened to be on eye level with and let out a little 'eeek!' as I realized what I had been doing. I scrambled away from him, mumbling 'oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God' under my breath in mortification.

I jerked myself up and sat down at the table again, risking a glance around the now



completely silent kitchen. I winced as I noticed the wide-eyed stares of shock everyone was sending my way until, one by one, they started laughing even harder than they had while looking at the pictures. My grandma even slapped her knee. Face. Palm.

After a while, Brandon and I said our goodbyes to everyone, promising my grandparents that we would come visit soon, and headed home. When we got in the car, Brandon looked over at me and grinned while he reached over and rubbed my thigh.

“Don’t even start!” I snapped, trying to keep from grinning back even while I could feel my face heating up again.

He just grinned even bigger. “It’s okay, baby. You didn’t even think about it, but I seriously had to stop you before I embarrassed myself in front of everyone, and not in a way that anyone would laugh at!”

I covered my face with my hands. “I can’t believe I did that...” I sighed.

We pulled up at my house after a few more minutes of idle chat and went inside. Brandon pulled me into his arms and kissed me sweetly before setting me back away from him.

“I have to run down to the shop for a bit to work on a design. Wanna come with me?” he asked.

I shook my head. “Nah...I have a couple orders I have to put in for my Down & Dirty stuff and then a few things to work on for the store. See you when you get back?” I asked, leaning against his chest and offering my lips up for a kiss again.

“Of course,” he replied before obliging me, capturing my mouth in a hot, tongue

tangling kiss that left me panting for more when he pulled away. He gave me that sexy smirk of his and added, “And we’ll continue this kiss and that little rub down you started earlier when I get back.” He winked, kissed me hard on my lips one more time, and jumped away as I swatted at him.

I managed to get my orders in and the things done that I needed to finish for the store before I heard the door open and Jackson came strolling in, making a beeline for where I was sitting. I smiled up at him as he leaned in, kissing my lips gently with his before taking it a little bit deeper, stroking my bottom lip with his tongue before sweeping inside. He kissed me like he hadn’t seen me in a month, and he did it like that every time he kissed me. Which is just one of the things I loved about him.

“Hey,” he said when the kiss ended. “Did you have a good time at breakfast?” he asked, the slight smile on his face giving him away.

“Been talking to Brandon?” I asked him, smartly. I crossed my arms and gave a small harrumph.

He grabbed my arms gently and pulled me up out of my chair, enfolding me into his arms and holding me tightly. I sighed and wrapped my arms around him, pressing my body even tighter against his.

“I’m just teasing, baby, you know that,” he said gently.

I nodded against his chest. “I know, but I have to pretend to be put out about it just a little. Save face. Not that I’m not mortified that I did that in front of my whole family and Emma’s...” I broke off when I felt his chest start bouncing under my cheek with silent laughter.

I growled and pinched his ass, making him jerk and yelp before he gave in a laughed out loud. I pulled back and smiled up at him, sighing when he leaned down for

another soft kiss.

“So,” I began when he pulled away again. “Did you guys get everything done that Chloe needed to do?” I asked lightly. Yeah, sue me...I was fishing a little because she didn’t say what kind of errands she had to do.

“Yeah, I think so. She actually just left to go somewhere with Leah. Do you think I should be worried about those two being out together?” he asked, his voice a mixture of amusement and concern.

I shook my head. “No, I don’t think you’d need to worry on a Sunday. Now, on a Friday...” I shrugged my shoulders and gave him my best ‘oh-God-who-knows’ look, laughing when he growled playfully at me before he grabbed me up and threw me over his shoulder in a fireman’s hold.

I gave a small oomph and a squeal that turned into a giggle as he headed down the hallway toward the bedroom. I slapped his ass and let out an even bigger squeal when he reciprocated, his large hand firmly smacking against my unprotected backside swaying in the air, and then nipped my thigh with his teeth.

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My breath caught in my throat at the slight sting and desire curled heavily in my stomach. He dropped me gently onto the bed and followed me down, pressing every single delectable inch of his gorgeous hard body against me as his mouth sought and claimed mine. He kissed me hard, biting at my lips and exploring every inch of my mouth with his tongue.

I moaned as heat suffused every inch of my body and shifted so I could cradle him closer between my thighs. He responded with his own muffled groan and rocked his hips against me, hitting that perfect sweet spot, which caused me to arch off the bed as pleasure shot through me from head to toe.

Jacks broke the kiss and braced himself on his hands over me, leaving his lower body snugged tight against mine. He rocked into me again, his eyes darkening and gleaming as they watched my face, my reaction. Then he smiled-a devilish, wicked smile- and I was lost.

“Jacks, please...” I entreated softly, my eyes pleading just as my hands were, smoothing firmly down his back and hooking over his delicious, jean-clad ass, pulling it even tighter against me, making myself writhe with want.

“Shit,” he muttered, shifting against me again and letting his eyes slowly close.

In a second he was off of me and the bed, both, stripping his clothes off in a hurry. I sat up and began doing the same, but before I could even my shirt completely off, he was back, and his hands make quick work of removing every stitch of clothing I had on. My breath escaped on a sigh as he levered himself back over me and, taking my lips in a ferocious kiss again, he swiftly parted my thighs and slammed home.

I moaned, long and low, at the feel of him buried so deep inside me. Without wasting a second, he began moving, deep, hard, fast strokes that had me on a razor's edge of release, breathlessly reaching for that shimmering explosion. Goaded by the heat spiraling out of control, I pumped my hips up, meeting every thrust of him, clenching my inner muscles around the hard length piercing me so sweetly. The thick, heavy sound of flesh smacking solidly against flesh echoed through the room and pushed me even closer to the edge.

Jackson suddenly shifted, melding our bodies together, his hands sliding under my body and up to cup my shoulders in his hands. Instead of thrusting, he began grinding against me, sliding the hard length of himself over and over that secret place inside me, even as his pelvis ground against my clit, and on a scream, I hurdled over the edge I'd been clinging to.

Clawing, my nails biting into the taut flesh of his back, I screamed again as he ground down on me once more, a harsh groan breaking from his throat as he spilled himself inside me. We laid there, chests heaving, trying to catch our breath, and I could feel my whole body shaking.

After a minute, Jackson rolled off of me onto his back, blowing out a deep breath before looking at me and grinning. I smiled back and rolled onto my side to snuggle into him.

"Wow." I said softly, feathering soft kisses along his chest.

"Hell, yeah," he said. "Sorry I didn't take my time...I just needed to get inside you." His smile faded and his face turned serious. "Allie, I know I don't really tell you-that I haven't really told you...but I love you. I'm so in love with you and I swear I want to spend the rest of my life proving it to you."

I felt tears threaten, and my throat tightened with emotion. "I...I love you, too,

Jackson.” And I did. I knew I did, had known for a while, but you know how something just kind of overwhelms you at a certain point? Well, this was that moment for me. I burrowed closer into him and sighed, the sweetness of the moment a perfect counterpoint to the sharp, all-encompassing desire that had just taken us over.

We stayed wrapped up in each other, not speaking, watching as the shadows lengthened across the room, until we both succumbed to sleep.

## Chapter 16

“Emma. I never imagined that I’d be standing here a year after you literally fell into my life...saying these words to you, and meaning every single one of them more than you will ever know. I know I was an overbearing ass-” Luke broke off, grunting as Emma wacked him across his mid-section, whispering ‘church, remember?’ and giving him the evil eye.

He cleared his throat and continued, grinning down at his breathtakingly beautiful bride. “As I was saying, at first I was overbearing,” he paused to make sure she wasn’t going to hit him again, “but you stuck it out. You bewitched me from the beginning and I quickly learned that I couldn’t live without you. I need you waking up beside me every morning; cuddling close to me in bed every night. I want to watch your belly grow full with our children, who I will love unconditionally and irrevocably, even more so because they will have come from you, from our love, but I want to grow old with you, as well. I want to be that old couple sitting in the rocking chairs on the porch, our grandchildren crowded around us as we regale them with tales of everything we’ve done and everything we’ll do...” He paused again.

“Well, maybe not everything,” he said, chuckling along with the rest of the congregation crowded into the church to witness Luke and Emma’s wedding. He smiled tenderly at Emma. “When you smile at me, it warms my heart. When you kiss

me, you make me feel invincible. And when you hold me in your arms, you make me feel like I'm home. And you know what home is to me...and to Brandon. You've given me and my brother the family that we never had, and there's no way I could ever repay you for that."

I watched Emma reach up and brush a tear away as Luke took a shuddering breath, visibly trying keep it together in order to finish his vows.

"And so, Emma Marie Jensen, I promise to love you today, and every day for the rest of our lives. You are my heart and soul, and I will spend every day showing you how much I love you. These are the vows I make to you, sugar. Always ever."

A little voice piped up behind me exclaiming, "Hey!" in surprise. Jenna quickly shushed Hayden, who was apparently having a hard time figuring out whether or not to be mad or ecstatic that her 'Unca Wuke' had just said her special phrase. She'd had a hard time saying always and forever when she was younger, so it came out always ever, and it stuck.

Hearing Hayden, her niece, yell out, Emma turned and winked at her, grinning back when Hayden decided she was happy and giggled like crazy, before turning back to the ceremony and her rather handsome groom.

I blinked tears away, wishing I had had the foresight to hide tissues somewhere on my person. I moved Emma's bouquet to my other hand, clutching it together with mine, and I reached up to cautiously wipe the moisture away.

It had been a journey, that's for sure, but the day was finally here. I glanced around the church, packed with family and friends, decorated simply but elegantly. It was beautiful. But nothing held a candle to my best friend. Emma was absolutely radiant in her gown, and the look on Luke's face when she started down the aisle was priceless. I don't think there was a dry eye in the area after that, and especially not

after Luke's vows.

When Luke had been speaking, I'd snuck a look and saw Jackson, looking delicious in his tux, staring at me. He'd winked and I couldn't help but blush, reading his feelings and intent clearly in his eyes. Brandon, also looking absolutely hotter-than-hell (and I don't mean heat-wise) in his tux, had smiled wickedly at me when I looked at him, and between the two, I was fidgeting more than the four year old standing next to me.



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I snapped my attention back to the wedding when Emma's voice rang out clearly.

"A year ago, I let my best friend talk me into accompanying her to the tattoo shop so she could get her tongue pierced. Today, I stand before all of the people I love, my friends and family, and I have to thank Allie for that. So, Allie," she looked over her shoulder at me, "Thank you."

I winked at her and inclined my head.

"That day was the day that I met the man standing before me. A man that I never in a million years imagined would ever speak to me, let alone order me to go on a date with him. Yes, I said order! Seriously, though, I felt like everyone I knew was finding their true loves, getting married, or at least had boyfriends, while I was sitting at home like 'I like food'!"

Everyone laughed at that except for Luke, who gave her a stern look. She just smiled up at him and kept going. "I'm not perfect; I'm stubborn and crazy and so is pretty much everyone in my life. You've been my rock through so much, and put up with me when I've been irrational. But you, Luke, you made me- make me- feel like I am the most perfect and sane thing in this world. You look at me like I'm the most beautiful woman in the world. You hold me like you never want to let me go, and I fit perfectly in your arms.

Taking her own shaky breath and wiping away more tears, Emma continued. "And so I make my vows to you, Lucas Tyler Crimshaw. I promise that I will love you more today than I did yesterday. And I promise that that love won't even come close to the love I'll have for you tomorrow, because I fall in love with you more and more each

day. I promise to give you as many babies as you want, and grow old with you so we can rock on the porch together, just like you said.”

“You are my everything, and you have all of me, every day for the rest of our lives. I love you, Luke. Always Ever.”

By the time the last word had left her lips, Lucas had her in a lip-lock so solidly that her feet weren’t even touching the floor. It went on for a minute until the minister cleared his throat, chuckling good naturedly when Luke finally set Emma back on her feet. He smiled sheepishly at the minister and steadied his suddenly dazed looking bride.

With a smile and a shake of his head, the minister began speaking, finishing up the ceremony and then introducing the beaming couple to everyone, who began clapping, cheering, and hollering. We made our way down the aisle behind them and took our places in the receiving line, all of us wiping tears away and laughing like school girls.

The rest of the night passed in a blur of champagne toasts and dancing. Everything turned out so perfectly; I couldn’t have asked for anything better for Emma. And to think, it all started with a little piercing...

It was almost two in the morning by the time we got everything cleaned up and packed away from the reception hall. We’d sent Luke and Emma off on their honeymoon around midnight, more because we were getting a little worried that Emma wouldn’t be able to contain herself any longer. Usually it’s the groom that’s itching to get to the wedding night fun, but given five seconds alone, I’m betting Emma would have had her dress hiked up to her ears and jumped Luke in the coat closet. I’m still not convinced it didn’t happen anyway...

We got home and Jackson and Brandon carried Chloe and Leah into the house, depositing them both into Chloe’s bed. I’d only had a couple glasses of champagne,

but those two girls...wow. That's all I could say. Of course, they weren't the only ones. Jenna had let loose more than she ever had and poor Noah had to practically tie a rope around her to keep her dress on. Thank God Noah's parents had taken the kids home with them earlier in the evening!

Jenna was also the one who started the table dancing movement, too, although I can't really say anything about that one. Pretty much everyone in the wedding party did that, including my mom and Jan. Nanny had tried to get up there, but I'd managed to get Brandon to grab her down before she got more than one little chicken leg up on a chair.

As the guys were settling the girls in, I made a beeline for the bathroom to remove my makeup and get ready for bed. I was exhausted, but it was a very satisfying exhaustion. I heard the guys come into the bedroom so I went out, turning my back to Brandon, who was standing by the dresser. He unzipped my dress and I let it fall to the floor, kicking it out of the way as I hooked my thumbs in the waistband of my panties, shucking them down my thighs and off. My strapless bra quickly went the same way.

Fully undressed, I turned as I stretched, smiling as I took in the glazed eyes of both my sexy ass men. I knew what that look meant; but it didn't mean that I was going to make it easy on them.

Slowly and deliberately, I arched my back and stretched even more, pushing my full, hard-tipped breasts forward, the soft, full, firmness of them swaying with my movement. Pivoting delicately, I made my way to the bed, crawling onto it languidly. Every move I made was precise, designed to maximize the tease factor.

Behind me, I heard clothes falling rapidly and I smiled as I felt the bed dip of either side of me. Hands slid up my spine, smoothing over my skin soothingly, and I sighed in pleasure. I turned over, laying on my back and smiling at them towering over me. I

reached out my hands and put on each of their thighs as they knelt on either side of me.

“Kiss me,” I whispered, turning my head toward Brandon first. He obliged, leaning down and pressing his lips to mine gently before moving back. He sat there quietly, unmoving, as did Jackson. I got the message pretty quickly.

This was all about me. Like it had always been, but this time, they were gonna make me ask for what I wanted.

I turned my head towards Jackson and pleaded with my eyes, wanting him to kiss me. He gave a slow shake of his head, the corner of his mouth turning up in a sexy little smirk. I huffed out a breath and glared for a second, pouting.

“Kiss me,” I growled.

As soon as I asked, he did the same thing Brandon had, leaning in and pressing his lips to mine sweetly and altogether too briefly before sitting back on his knees again.

I sat up and shifted between them, situating myself and then reaching out with both of my hands, each one seeking and finding a length of heated, velvety steel. Twin gasps sounded on either side of me as I began stroking them in tandem, squeezing them gently and twisting my hands on the upstroke. After just a few strokes, they both grasped my wrists, stopping me with gentle pressure.

I scowled up at both of them as they rose above me. Brandon grinned and shook his head at me, and Jackson smirked again. I blinked and they were off the bed, moving away from me.

“Hey!” I exclaimed in frustration, throwing myself off the side of the bed and standing in front of them. I gulped as I took in their gorgeous, lean, perfectly muscled

and tattooed bodies, my mouth watering, and heat pooling between my thighs.

“What do you want, baby?” Brandon asked, his voice low.

“You. Both of you,” I replied.

“Where do you want us?” Jackson asked, moving around in front of me as Brandon circled behind.

“Inside me,” I gasped as Jackson pushed me back against Brandon, my back flush to his chest. His head dipped and he took my left nipple in his mouth, nipping with his teeth sharply before laving it with the flat of his tongue.

Brandon’s hands encircled my waist, pulling my hips back and up until the length of him prodded between the fleshy cheeks of my ass. I moaned softly, willingly conceding my control to them, thrusting my hips back against Brandon harder even as my hand rose up to pull Jackson in closer to me.

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His lips blazed a fiery path between my breasts before closing over my right nipple, treating it to the same sweet torture as he did the other. I moaned again, louder than before, as pleasure burst through me when his hands came up and massaged the tender globes roughly at the same time that Brandon tangled his hand in my hair and pulled my head back, sinking his teeth into the side of my neck.

Sensation flooded me and I closed my eyes, letting myself fall under the wicked spell they were weaving around me with every touch...kiss...breath...against my body. They knew how to play me; they were rough but not too rough, walking that fine line between pleasure-pain and outright pain with perfection. They pushed me when they knew I could take it and brought me down when they knew I was flying too high. I loved it...I loved them.

A sudden cool breeze down my body snapped me back from the haze settling over me and I opened my eyes to see that they had both stepped away from me. They moved in tandem, like a well-oiled machine, moving me to the bed and making short work of positioning me. I ended up on my hands and knees, Brandon reclining against the headboard, his thighs bracketing my hands. The hot, hard length of him bobbed softly against my lips, begging me to taste him while Jackson slid his head between my thighs, his breath searing the tender, dripping wet folds of pink flesh hovering inches from his mouth.

I licked my lips in anticipation, gazing up at Brandon with a heavy-lidded glance before I flicked my tongue quickly over the bead of moisture gathering at the tip of him. He gasped and then moaned as I took him deep in my mouth, holding him there for a second before moving back up the length of him, sucking and scraping my teeth lightly.

Before I could take him in my mouth again, I let out a long, breathy moan as Jackson seized my hips and brought my sex down on his mouth, his tongue spearing into me without prelude, thrusting in and out before tracing a wet line of heat to my clit. He circled the engorged nub, teasing but not touching, making me wild.

I braced myself with one hand on the bed and wrapped the other around Brandon's girth, squeezing lightly, and then leaned down to take him in my mouth again, even as I shifted, grinding my hips down on Jackson's mouth. He gave up teasing and plunged his tongue deep inside me once more. He fucked me with his mouth, making me whimper around the thickness sliding between my lips.

I worked Brandon over frantically, losing control quickly as my hips bucked against Jackson's mouth. I felt him begin to swell and I whimpered again, wanting the taste of him on my tongue; but he had other ideas. I growled as he sat forward and pushed me away, his other hand automatically moving to stave off his release. My growl turned into a sound of disbelief as Jackson deftly maneuvered himself out from between my thighs.

He knelt on the bed and reached for me, spinning me until I was facing him, still kneeling on the bed. He wrapped his fingers in the silky strands of my hair and guided my head down, pressing his rock hard length against my lips, seeking entrance into the hot cavern of my mouth. My jaw yielded and opened wide, allowing him to slide the silky length of himself fully inside, the head of him nudging the back of my throat. I fought my automatic reaction and swallowed, loving the low, raw sound he made.

He held me there for a second, his hand tightening in my hair reflexively before he gently tugged, pulling me back. He sprang free of my lips and I captured him again, sucking lightly on the head of him while my tongue massaged the underside.

I felt Brandon's hand begin to massage the globes of my ass and I jerked away from

Jackson on a cry when his hand rose and fell, delivering a sharp, stinging slap to the tender flesh. Jackson leaned forward and captured my lips in a bruising kiss as Brandon meted out carefully placed smacks, setting every inch of my ass on fire in a beautiful, mind-blowing way.

I hummed out a sigh as I sucked on Jackson's tongue, kissing him back with everything I had, biting his full lower lip until he gasped, growled, and returned the favor. Behind me, Brandon massaged my reddened skin, soothing away the sting.

"Oh, GOD!" I screamed suddenly as fingers plunged into my soaked folds from behind, sliding deep and sending me flying into an orgasm that I hadn't even realized was so close. My body clenched around Brandon's fingers as I rode them, shuddering and screaming into Jackson's chest until I was spent, but they weren't done with me.

Brandon slowly slid his fingers out of me, gathering my wetness and spreading it up and over my puckered, secret entrance. "I'm going to fuck you here now, baby. You want it?" he asked me darkly.

"Yes," I gasped out, pressing back against his seeking finger, breathing through the small pinch as he breached me and began preparing me to take him. Once he decided I was ready, he pulled me back against his chest, spreading my legs over his thighs and pressing slowly into me from behind.

"Breathe, baby...yes, that's it. That's my girl...fuck yeah!" he growled as he pumped in and out sharply, seating himself even deeper with every thrust until he was buried to the hilt.

I shifted and moaned at the fullness of him, arching my hips and allowing him to slide just that much deeper as he reclined back against the headboard again, leaving me laid out on top of him, his chest pressed to my back. He moved his legs, sliding them apart with mine hooked over them, leaving my thighs spread wide open. My



breath began coming faster in anticipation as Jackson moved into place, kneeling on the bed between my thighs. Reclined back against Brandon's chest like this was hedonistic; I could see the silky smooth expanse of my naked, sweat sheened body...my breasts, hard-tipped and heavy, swaying with every panting breath...the flat expanse of my tummy,...the curve of my hips...the glistening pink folds nestled between my thighs...and the shadow of Brandon underneath me, buried so deep inside that forbidden place.

And I could see Jackson. I could see the swollen, heated length of him standing at perfect attention, the tip gleaming with drops of restrained passion. I could see him wrap his hand around that gorgeous hardness, his other hand sliding down to cup the heavy sac hanging just below.

Brandon grunted underneath me as my body clenched on his unwittingly, his hands coming up to palm my breasts as he gasped out, "Holy fuck...Jackson, quit playing around and let's fuck our girl. I don't know how much longer I can hold out with her squeezing me like this."

Jackson chuckled and grinned wickedly, his eyes gleaming. His hand moved again and my eyes followed, captivated as he stroked himself again. He slid his thumb over the moisture pooling in the slit at the tip of him, collecting it. I hissed out a wild 'yessss' as he brought his hand up toward my mouth, capturing his hand in mine and sucking his thumb into my mouth, groaning as the salty-sweet taste of him hit my tongue.

"Like that, huh?" he murmured, pulling his hand free of my grip and using it to stroke himself again. He shifted closer and slid the head of himself through my wetness, rubbing it over my clit before slapping it against that hardened nub, sending white-hot pleasure shooting through my body.

I shivered and clenched again, causing Brandon to swear underneath me again, and

Jackson finally relented, working himself inside me until both of them were there, stretching me so fully, filling me so deeply that I didn't know where I ended and they began. Finally they began to move in a carnal dance, gliding smoothly in and out of me in counterpoint, driving me wild. With pleasure washing over every inch of my body I arched, my arms moving up and over my head to grab blindly at the headboard, needing something to ground me just a little.

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Their thrusts became quicker, harder, until both of them were pounding into me relentlessly, swelling even more inside me, causing the dam to break and I came, screaming and sobbing their names, my body jerking with uncontrollable spasms. My orgasm seemed to go on and on, fed gluttonously by the thick sounds of flesh slapping flesh, the wild, almost animalistic thrusts of them into my quivering body...and then I was turned inside out as they both growled and shouted as they came, flooding my body with scalding heat and sending me headlong into another mind-numbing release.

### Chapter 17

A pounding broke into my orgasm-induced stupor and I pushed weakly against Jackson's chest, which was still heaving against mine. Brandon was panting at my back and the movement of their breathing, combined with my still ragged breaths, was causing little jostling movements in my nether regions where both of them still resided. And I was so sensitive at the moment, I think I would literally die if I came again.

"Get. Off," I wheezed tiredly, giving one more small attempt to dislodge Jackson. He disengaged slowly, causing me to clench around him, which caused all three of us to twitch and moan again. The pounding started again and Jackson rolled to his back, collecting himself for a second before he rolled off the bed and grabbed his pants off the floor, pulling them on clumsily as Brandon and I separated, going through the whole clenchy, jerky, moany thing again.

I reached down and flipped the comforter over us as Jackson opened the door a crack and peered out. He stepped back in surprise as Leah shoved through the door, looking

like a crazed, cranky cavewoman. A dazed Chloe followed behind her, looking like she wasn't altogether with it.

“LEAH!” I yelled, clutching the blanket to my chest and sitting up. Brandon scrambled frantically beside me and I realized too late that I'd pulled the cover off of him.

“ALLIE!” Brandon yelled, yanking the blanket back over him to cover the most important bits which, in turn, pulled it away from where it was clutched over my breasts.

“JESUS, BRANDON!” I yelled, finally covering my chest with my hands and diving down for a free corner of the blanket.

Jackson was laughing hysterically over by the door by this point while Chloe blinked in confusion, mumbling under her breath about crazy people, and Leah was glaring at us evilly.

I blew out a breath and asked Leah in exasperation, “What the hell are you doing? What do you want?”

“Well, for starters,” she began, her tone scathing, “I wanted to make sure you weren't killing each other with all the screaming going on in here. Other than that, it was basically to ask you if you would quiet it down because you are being loud enough to wake the dead-or at least the severely hung-over/feels-like-we're dead. ‘Kay?” She smiled sweetly (completely sarcastically, trust me), turned on her heel and started marching out, grabbing Chloe's arm and dragging her along.

I laughed as I heard her grumble, ‘And I thought my sisters were loud. That's it, I'm not sleeping over anywhere anymore without ear plugs.’

Jackson closed the door behind them and he, Brandon, and I all busted out laughing at the absurdity of the situation before Jackson crawled back in bed and I snuggled down between my guys, kissed them each sweetly, closed my eyes, and let sleep take me under.

I woke up the next morning in a rather good mood (go figure), so I got up and made breakfast for everyone. We had initially talked about doing a morning after the wedding brunch at Ben and Jan's, but decided that we'd all probably be too hung over to do it. So my guys, Leah, and Chloe got chocolate chip pancakes, sausage, and bacon. Simple but not too shabby, if I do say so myself...

I had just finished sliding the last of the pancakes onto a plate and sat it in the middle of the table when I felt muscular arms slide around my waist from behind, pulling me back against a hard chest...among other things. I sighed and burrowed into the embrace, wriggling against the hardness poking me in the small of my back.

A deep groan emanated from above my head and teeth nipped gently at the side of my neck before Jackson turned me in his arms and leaned in to take my lips in a searing kiss. When our lips parted, I smiled and patted his chest, completely feeling content. It was a sort of new feeling...I mean, yeah, I was pretty content with my life before, don't get me wrong. But there was something totally satisfying when you go to bed wrapped up in delicious male, and wake up the same way each morning. Not to mention the decadent lovin' I get...mmmm.

I pulled out of his arms and walked into the outstretched arms of a very sleepy Brandon, smiling when he bent almost in half to burrow into my arms rather than wrap me in his. I kissed the side of his head and rubbed his back, giggling when he rasped his stubble over my sensitive skin.

He moved enough to kiss me briefly before turning and stumbling out of the kitchen toward the bathroom. I heard him grunt as he passed Leah and Chloe, who were

walking like zombies out of Chloe's room.

Grinning hugely, I called out as chipper as I could, "Well, good morning ladies! Did you sleep well?"

The evil looks I got from both of them made Jackson crack up, earning him twin looks that promised swift retribution if they could get to him quick enough. I wasn't holding my breath on that one.

Brandon made his way back into the kitchen and we all sat down to eat. Once they got some food into them, Chloe and Leah started to perk up a little. Well, that and the Tylenol I handed them with their OJ. We ate pretty much in silence, everyone too intent on stuffing their face or lost in thought. The silence was broken only by Leah asking if I would take her to Jenna's house to pick up her car where she left it before the wedding.

Once everyone was done eating and the guys were ensconced on the couch flipping channels, trying to find some kind of organized sport to watch, Chloe, Leah, and I piled into my car to head over to Jenna's.

We walked into Jenna's house and I was surprised by the fact that it wasn't a chaotic mess like it usually is. And I say that because in addition to the craziness of her two kids and her poor female cat that Hayden named Tom, she had agreed to keep Doug for Luke and Emma while they went on their honeymoon. She definitely was gonna have her hands full.

As for the chaotic mess? I think I might have spoke too soon. A scream ripped through the house; we looked at each other for a split second and took off upstairs, heading for the sound.

We got to the top of the stairs just in time to hear Jarrod yell, "OH MY GOD! He's

done something BAD!”

I pushed past Leah and Chloe and peeked into Jarrod’s room to see him shaking his head violently from side to side and pointing to the dog. Jenna was standing in the middle of the room, but she wasn’t moving. I think she was in shock. And I guess I would be too, if a hundred pound lab was standing in my son’s room with a rather good-sized, life-like, flesh colored dildo hanging out of his mouth.

“Holy sh-nikes!” I whispered, remembering at the last second to censor myself. “Jenna?” I still whispered, not wanting to scare her. She jerked, whipped her head around to look at me, and I could see the gleam of panicked resolve in her eyes before she threw herself sideways at Doug in an attempt to wrestle the dildo away from him.

Doug, being the smart ass he is, dodged her easily and made a beeline for the door, taking me out at the kneecaps in the process. Dildos, when used as weapons, surprisingly hurt a lot more than you’d think, and the one flapping from the dog’s jaws was no exception. I got to my feet just as Chloe and Leah jumped out of his way to avoid getting hit with either the dog or the dong.

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“GET HIM!” I heard Jenna battle-cry behind me, which spurred me into immediate action. We raced from the room and followed the dog who turned into Jenna and Noah’s room. He ran back out before we could even get there, but his mouth was empty.

Jenna ran into the room and I heard her pant out, “Thank God!”

The girls and I stepped into the room to see her bent over with her hands on her knees, shaking her head. The dildo was laid out on the bed, pretty as you please.

“How the hell did he even get that?” I asked Jenna.

“That’s what I wanna know!” Leah exclaimed behind me. Chloe stood behind her, nodding, eyes huge. I swear that woman is going to think that all of my friends and family are crazy...she wouldn’t be wrong though. Geez.

Just then, Jenna’s cat, Tom, came creeping out from under the bed. Jenna made a growling sound of frustration in her throat before she answered, “Well, the damn dog had to have chased the stupid cat under the bed and knocked over my box.” She dropped to her knees and started rooting around under the bed. She came up with the lid to a shoe-box type container, and then produced the almost empty box it belonged to.

“Is there anything left under the bed? Is that the only thing he took?” I asked as she began mumbling to herself about ‘damn dogs’ and ‘murder by shooting’.

She peeked under the bed again and came back out with a tube of lube, a set of anal



beads (I choked a little at the sight of those...she never ordered those from me!), and two pairs of handcuffs. She threw everything back into the box and put the lid on it again before looking up at us. “Nope. That’s not the only thing he took. Now we get to go on a fucking treasure hunt for my sex toys before my kids see the goddamned things!”

Chloe, Leah, and I all looked at each other, definitely taking note of the ‘we’ that Jenna used. I cleared my throat and asked again, “Okay, well, what else is missing?”

“I don’t even know!” she wailed, burying her head in the carpet. She sat up suddenly with her head cocked and then jumped to her feet.

I heard Noah call her again and we all followed her as she made her way toward Hayden’s room. When we got in there, Noah was standing beside Hayden’s dresser, looking decidedly puzzled as he looked at Doug, who was sitting there pretty as you please while Hayden brushed him with a Barbie brush.

He blinked distractedly at me and the girls, nodding his head slightly in acknowledgment, and then said, “I, uh...I followed the dog in here because he’s, uh...yeah. He’s right there.”

We all looked at the dog, trying to figure out what had Noah so addled. And then I looked closer and noticed it. Yup. Dear God, the dog was wearing a blue jelly-type cock ring around his front paw.

Hayden glanced up and noticed what we were all staring at. “Oh! I found a bracewet for Doug! Him wikes it!” She grinned gleefully and then waved at me, her Aunt Leah, and Chloe.

Jenna was muttering under her breath again, and then Noah opened his mouth to speak, shut it, cleared his throat, and tried again.

His voice came out a little strangled as he asked, “Ummm...Hayden? Where did you...what’s this? And where did you get Doug’s, uh...bracelet?”

He was pointing to an opened package laying on the dresser. I looked closer and realized it was the packaging to a silver bullet vibrator, with the actual bullet laying beside it. My hand came up to cover my mouth because I just couldn’t believe this was happening. I mean, seriously...does this happen in real life?

(Obviously it does...)

Hayden frowned and answered, “I foun’ it in the haw-way. It don’ work. And Doug brought me the bracewet in his mouf.” Her face brightened again and she popped up, pushing past the now-lounging Doug to rush toward her toy box. She dug through it for a second before coming up with a hot pink butterfly vibrator. “Doug brought me ‘dis one, too, an’ it works! See, Daddy? Mommy? You push the button and the butterfwy’s wings fwap and it makes me waugh!”

‘Oh, Jesus, NO!” Jenna yelled when Hayden brought it up like she would touch it to her cheek. She startled the poor child who dropped the vibrator immediately, and then her face screwed up into the most pitiful expression before she let out a wail louder than anything I’d ever heard before.

Top that with the fact that Doug sat up as soon as he heard her wailing, threw his head back, and began howling just as loud.

Jenna shook her head, grabbed the butterfly out of Hayden’s hand, the bullet off the dresser, and then bent down to pull the cock ring off of Doug’s paw (he didn’t even pause in his howling), before she turned on her heel and stomped from the room hollering, “I need a freakin’ drink!”

Noah knelt beside Hayden and spoke to her quietly for a second. Her wails slowed to

soft hiccupy sobs and then stopped altogether when she grinned at her father from whatever he said to her. Doug still hadn't let up, but stopped when Noah just shouted, "Doug! Enough!"

Hayden, crisis forgotten, began brushing the dog again, talking to him a mile a minute. Noah stood, looked at us standing there again, and said, "I'm sorry. We live in a nuthouse. But you should know that by now. Beer anyone?"

Jarrold, who until now had gone unnoticed standing beside Chloe, piped up, "Can I have one, Dad?"

Noah sighed, shook his head, and walked out of the room.

Chloe, Leah, and I all shrugged at each other and followed. Never a dull moment at Jenna's house. Ever.

## Chapter 18

Tomorrow. That's what I told myself. Over and over again as I emptied the contents of my stomach endlessly into the toilet. I would get up and go to the store tomorrow. But until then, I was just going to lay on the tile floor in the bathroom and die. And thank God that Chloe was around.

She'd been a Godsend, going into my thrift store and opening it every morning for the last week, working every day, even on the days when my mom went in to run it for me. Every night she came home and made sure that there was something to eat for the guys, even if it was a bucket of chicken from the KFC down the street.

As for me, she'd checked on me in the mornings before leaving, made sure I had plenty of chicken soup, crackers, and 7up; not that I kept much of it down. Jackson had been busy at the new house, putting the final touches on it so that we could

actually move into it within the next month or so. Brandon had been busy at the shop, and both of them called to check on me whenever they could.

It'd been a month since Emma and Luke's wedding and I thought my life was perfect until I contracted the flu-bug from hell. You think I'm joking...but I'm not. I swear to you that this illness was sent up from Satan himself. And it had been ongoing for a week now.

No, I hadn't gone to the doctor yet, namely because I couldn't remove myself from the bathroom for very long, and because I'd refused to let anyone take care of me. Especially Emma, who had called and begged me every day to let her come take care of me. But I couldn't, because I didn't want her to catch the hell-virus.

No matter, because tomorrow I was taking back my life if it killed me. I knew that there were so many things I needed to do at the store, and my poor guys were probably dying from blue-balls. Okay, not really, because who would want to have sex with a little green-looking woman that puked every five minutes? Hell, even thinking about sex made me shudder because it made me think of the way things get all shook and bounced around and that made my stomach curdle even more. Ew.

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Stomach emptied for the moment, I sat back and leaned my head against the coolness of the bathtub. My eyes closed of their own volition, the exhaustion weighing heavily on even that part of my poor abused body.

I heard the bathroom door open and barely got my eyes open before I heard Emma's no-nonsense voice barking orders to me and...Chloe? I think that's who was standing behind her. What was she wanting me to do? Get dressed? Pshaw. Yeah, right.

Half an hour later found me sulking in the passenger seat of Emma's car, taking turns glaring at Emma who was driving, and Chloe, who was sitting in the backseat. I had my arms wrapped tight around my bathroom trashcan which, thankfully, I hadn't had to use yet.

"Glare at me all you want, you little asshat. You're going to the doctor and that's that," Emma said firmly.

I growled at her. She rolled her eyes. And kept driving my unhappy ass to the doctor.

Two hours later, prescriptions in hand and silence reigning, we pulled into my driveway. Home sweet home! Thankfully, the shot the doctor gave me helped immensely with the nausea, and the prescription should help keep it away.

Emma wanted to stay but I wouldn't let her, and after she finally left, Chloe kept watching me like I was about to pass out on her until I finally shooed her away, too. She left me and went to the store to relieve my mom. Everyone else was gone, too, so I blessedly had the house to myself. It felt nice to be able to relax without throwing up every five minutes, and I took full advantage and scarfed down a few crackers

with some 7Up. Yeah, it's not gourmet, but it's more than I'd been able to actually keep down in a while and it tasted pretty fuckin' good to me. And yes, that warranted the strong wording. Trust me.

I managed to sleep for most of the day until Chloe came back. I looked at my phone and saw that Emma had texted me, as did Brandon, Jackson, my mom, and my Nanny had called three times.

I sighed and started texting everyone back, waiting to call my Nanny until I was done.

"Minnie's pool hall, eight ball speaking!"

Yep. That's my Nanny. Cantankerous and crazy. Bodes well for me in my old age, huh?

"Hey, Nanny. What are you doing?" I asked her.

"Oh, Allie-girl! How are you feeling?" she asked me.

"Alright. How are you guys doing? I saw you called three times; sorry it took me a while to call you back, but I actually got to sleep today."

I heard her yelling at my Poppy to turn the damn t.v. down before she answered me. "I only called that many times 'cause I was checking on you. We're fine. I suppose. That damn no good doctor said he wants to have my eyes checked for glaucoma. I don't have no damn glaucoma, and if I did, I told him I wanted some of that wacky weed to smoke. You think he'll give it to me?" She cackled for a second, breaking off on a cough.

I sighed. "Nanny, you know he isn't going to give you anything like that, and you

don't need it anyway. You're loopier than loopy as is!"

"And you're gonna be just like me when you grow up. You know it and I know it. Now, if we can just get your momma up to par, we'd be good," she grumbled.

"What's wrong with Mom?" I asked.

"Well, nothing's wrong with her...she just says that I'm on her nerves. I can't help it if she says she'll be here to get me and it takes twenty minutes. She lives ten minutes away, so what's the hold up? You know I gotta get home and take my pills." She harrumphed. "Damn kids anyway. Carry 'em your body for nine goddamn long months and they give you nothing but hemorrhoids and heartache."

I rolled my eyes, thankful she couldn't see me 'cause it would have gotten me slapped. "Alright, Nanny, I'm gonna go lay down again, while I can. I'll check back in with you soon, okay?"

"Okay, Allie-girl. I love you!" she crooned in her gravelly voice.

"Love you, too, Nanny. Bye."

I hung up the phone on a rueful laugh and settled myself onto the couch in the living room with a fresh glass of 7Up and a few crackers. Maybe if I managed not to be sick again for a while, I'd move up to chicken noodle soup. Or maybe a Big Mac. That sounded pretty good, too.

I was half asleep on the couch watching the end of some sappy, sobby Lifetime movie when Chloe came back home. I blinked at the clock, astonished to see that it was almost seven. I grabbed my phone and looked at it to see if I'd missed any more calls; nothing.

I sat up as Chloe walked toward me, her hand automatically reaching for my forehead.

“I don’t have a fever. Haven’t even been sick since the doctor gave me that shot,” I told her.

“Good. Then we won’t have to drag you back to the doctor again,” she said smartly. “Have you heard from my brother? I thought he’d be home by now.”

I shook my head. “He texted earlier, said he had to go to Cincy to handle some paperwork.”

“Well, he’ll be home soon, then. Brandon?” she asked.

“He texted, too, said he was working late. Why?”

She shrugged. “Just wondered if I needed to fix dinner or whatever. Did you eat?”

I rolled my eyes at her and sighed. “Yes, mother, I did. Some 7Up and some crackers.”

She smacked my thigh lightly and scolded, “Don’t you roll your eyes at me, young lady!”

We both laughed,

but I could see the relief plain as day in her face. I guess I scared her being so sick like that.

“You know, Chloe, I haven’t really had a chance to thank you for everything you’ve done while I’ve been sick. So thanks...you know, for taking care of me and my store.



And...well, just everything.”

She nodded and smiled at me. “It’s okay. Actually, I should be the one thanking you for opening your home to me and giving me a job. I know I’ve said it before, but I still don’t think I’ve said it enough. You really have made me feel like I’m family.”

“You are,” I said simply.

She smiled at me and we spoke about lighter things for a while before I started to feel sick again. I groaned and she jumped up, running out of the room. She came back almost immediately with an ice cold glass of water and my nausea pill, but she still pushed my little trashcan closer to me, just in case.

Miraculously, I staved off the sickness long enough for the pill to kick in and by the time Brandon walked in the door, I was feeling a little bit more like myself.

He came toward me, a look of surprise sweeping across his face. “Holy shit! You’re up off the bathroom floor...and you look alive!” he said, grinning.

I crossed my arms and pretended to glare at him, giving up and laughing with him as he leaned in and kissed my forehead.

Chloe asked Brandon, “Did you get something to eat?”

He nodded. “Yeah, Emma picked up some food from Griff’s for us since we were booked solid, and still had walk-ins. Luckily they were all for piercing, because we’ve been so crazy busy that we’ve had to stop doing walk in tattoos. Need an appointment for ink, now.”

“Look at you, big, bad, busy tattoo-man,” I said, teasingly.

Now it was his turn to pretend to glare at me but it didn't last long. Instead, he kissed me on the forehead again and went to change. He came back shortly wearing basketball shorts and nothing else. Sick or not, that still made my pulse pick up and my body flush with heat.

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I saw Chloe glance at me, double take, and then she was up and by my side in an instant, her hand going to my head to check for fever. “Allie, you’re all flushed! Is your fever coming back?”

I shook my head and pushed her hand away, glancing guiltily at Brandon, who was laughing.

“No, Chloe, I think she just likes what I’m wearing,” he said, his tone sliding like silk over my skin.

Chloe looked up at him and I swear I saw her gulp as she registered that he was standing there in nothing but shorts. Couldn’t blame her; the man is hot.

“Alright, babe, I’m gonna go hop in the shower real quick, okay?”

I nodded, lifted my face for his kiss, and watched him walk away.

Chloe and I were laughing at something she had said when my cell phone rang. I picked it up, smiling when I saw the name.

“Hey, Jacks!” I said happily into the phone, glad I could actually communicate with him for once, rather than just moan and groan in misery.

But it wasn’t Jackson on the other end of the line.

I could feel all the blood drain from my face. I could almost swear that it was draining from my entire body. I started shaking my head no, the words I’d just heard

reverberating throughout every inch of my brain. ‘No, no, no, no, no, no’...I didn’t realize I was whispering the word out loud. I didn’t feel the phone slip from my suddenly numb fingers.

I didn’t hear Chloe’s cry of concern, didn’t see her leap forward to grab the phone up, speaking quickly to try to figure out what the hell was going on. And I didn’t flinch when she screamed Brandon’s name brokenly, her face dissolving into a mask of panicked pain, tears pouring from her eyes as she collapsed beside me.

Because I couldn’t stop saying no...and the only other words that I could think of were the ones that were echoing in my ears.

“I’m so sorry, Ms. McCormick.”

## Chapter 19

The opening notes of Kelly Clarkson’s Stronger played softly over my headphones and I ripped them away from my ears. I swore under my breath and deleted the song from my playlist, like I thought I had done over an hour ago after hearing it three times.

I used to like that song. Now, I want to scream when I hear it because, trust me, I’m not stronger from what hasn’t killed me. Because I am dying every fucking day that I have to sit here beside the quietly beeping machines keeping my heart alive.

I say my heart because it’s true. I don’t mean the actual organ pumping away in my chest; I’m talking about one of the men I love, lying in a hospital bed a foot from me. For four weeks now, I’ve sat here, day in and day out, hoping...praying...begging that something will change and he’ll wake up. That he’ll open those beautiful, deep brown eyes that I love so much. That he’ll smile, hold out his arms for me, and I’ll be able to crawl into them and hold him just as tightly as I want him to hold me.

And every day, those hopes and prayers go unanswered.

My mom has taken over my store for the moment, but at this point I really didn't even care about it. I know I probably should, but my priorities are a little different right now. Don't get me wrong, I'm grateful for everything she's done and is doing for me. She makes sure that I have clean clothes at the hospital, and they bring me food and make sure I eat it. My illness had gone away, but my appetite was severely lacking. I showered and slept at the hospital, and they let me because the first (and only) time they'd told me I needed to go home and rest, I'd gone a little crazy on them.

Chloe has pretty much been with me the whole time, too, only she's gone home to sleep every night now.

Jackson's and her mom flew in as quickly as she could once Brandon had called her. She'd been staying at my house with Chloe and Brandon. I just couldn't make myself leave him. I'd told the hospital staff I was his fiancée the day we'd come to the hospital, the day of the accident. Chloe and Sarah, their mom, had backed me up. Talk about a bad way to meet the mother of the man you're in love with.

I felt bad, too, because I knew I'd been a real bitch to Brandon lately. I've pushed him away and it's not his fault. He's been there for me every step of the way, holding me close when I've just needed to be held. Kissing my forehead and whispering empty reassurances that sounded pretty, but didn't really help. And I loved him for it, I really did. But I still couldn't bring myself to leave Jackson's side.

I've seen the pictures of Jackson's car now; the mangled metal painting a horrific image that burned itself into my mind and won't let go. It was a hit and run, I've been told. The police have said they're investigating, but they have nothing and I really don't see them ever finding the asshole that did it. From what they could piece together from the scene, a car travelling in the southbound lane of the road crossed

the line into Jackson's lane. He was northbound, but the car didn't hit him head on.

Instead, it had hit the driver's side rear quarter of the car, causing it to go into a spin, which sent it off the road, over the embankment, and flipped it. Apparently it rolled twice, and landed on the roof. Jacks had to be cut from the car and he wasn't breathing when they found him. They also said they'd lost him on the way to the hospital, but were able to bring him back.

He'd been in a coma ever since, machines performing every necessary function to keep him alive. He'd had head trauma, including a concussion and a laceration that required twenty stitches. His brain had swelled slightly initially, but thankfully had went down and they didn't have to do any kind of surgery for that. They did have to do surgery to repair his punctured lung and his ruptured spleen.

He had a broken nose, four broken ribs, a broken leg (clean break, thank God), a cut above his eyebrow that needed ten stitches, and a slew of other cuts, scratches, and bruises. The cuts and bruises had mostly healed in the month since the accident. His leg was healing nicely, as were his ribs, and they'd managed to set his nose so perfectly, you could barely tell it had been broken.

But he still wouldn't breathe on his own. Or wake up. His scans weren't showing any major sign of brain damage, but the doctors weren't optimistic about it. They did say his brain activity was slower and not showing signs of improvement. They had indicated that the longer he stayed out, the more chance he stood of either not waking up, or, in the event he would, he would need to relearn simple things that we all take for granted.

There were whispers around me...those three dreaded words. Pull. The. Plug. They were talking about turning off the machines. Of him dying. So, here I sat, stoically watching the love of my life lying lifelessly in the hospital bed a foot away from me.

I tossed my iPod onto the bed beside his leg, giving up on listening to music. Kelly had irritated me enough that I didn't want to bother trying to find something else, something more soothing.

I reached out and took Jackson's hand in mine, and I sat there, stroking it gently with my fingers and urging him silently, like I did every minute of every day, to wake up.

I heard a noise and glanced up at the door to see Brandon standing there, watching me with an unreadable look. I held his gaze, unblinking, silently speaking with our eyes that nothing had changed, but there was an undertone to that look that I just didn't want to analyze right now.

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Movement at his side suddenly caught my eye and I broke our stare to see Chloe standing there. She peered in at her brother, and I smiled sadly at her, shaking my head. Her eyes filled with tears and Brandon wrapped his arm around her shoulders, pulling her into his side.

I was grateful at that moment that he was there, being strong for her. Honestly, I couldn't do it. I was being selfish in my grief, and she deserved better than that. Especially with everything the poor thing had been through. First being beaten by her ex, now this...

Chloe leaned into Brandon and they stood there, just watching over Jackson as I sat by his side, each of us lost in our own thoughts.

After a few minutes, Chloe broke away from Brandon, made her way over to me, knelt beside my chair, and laid her hand on my shoulder.

Softly she said, "Allie, why don't you go get some rest for a little bit? Let Brandon take you home and take care of YOU for a bit. I'll sit right here, I promise, and I will call you if there's any change, whatsoever."

Before she'd even gotten the words out all the way, I'd begun shaking my head. It was a force of habit by now; I didn't want to leave him, and I wasn't going to.

Chloe sighed, and then her next words made my jaw drop, literally. All trace of softness was gone from her voice when she said, "Don't take this the wrong way, Allie, but GO HOME. I want to sit with my brother for a while, and I want to do it ALONE."



I closed my mouth with a snap and stood, drawing myself up indignantly. I could feel my eyes burning with tears and my anger was rising, seeping up from a simmer but I didn't stick around for it to reach full-on boil. With a hard look at her, I stomped from the room, pushing past Brandon who just sighed and followed quietly.

I jabbed my finger into the elevator button repeatedly, shooting murderous glances over my shoulder towards Jackson's room.

"That's not going to make it come any faster, baby," Brandon said behind me.

I whirled on him. "I know it isn't...thank you for pointing that out. You know, you don't need to come with me. I'm just fine on my own-"

"Stop it, Allie. Just stop!" His words were sharp, even though they were delivered quietly.

But they had the intended effect. They shut me up rather quickly, more from shock than from anything else, I think. Brandon had never talked to me like that before. I stared at him, waiting for him to say something more, but the elevator dinged and the doors opened, revealing Emma and Sarah, Jackson's mom.

"Oh, Allie!" Emma gasped. "Honey, are you finally going to go get some rest? Thank God!"

I opened my mouth and shut it again quickly, casting a sidelong glance at Sarah who looked just as relieved as Emma. And then I could do nothing more than nod, because I could see the worry etched across both of their faces. Worry for me...and I hated myself for it. What right did I have to make them worry when their son and friend was lying in a hospital bed down the hall? None, that's for damn sure.

I pasted a smile on my face and hugged them both. "Yeah, I'm pretty beat, so I'm

gonna go home, get some food, and lay down for a while. I'll come back later tonight, okay?"

Emma shook her head no and Sarah agreed. "No, honey, you need to stay home and get some rest. It's important that you take care of you for a while. I'll stay tonight and I promise, we'll call you if there's any change, any change at all. Even if he just farts, I will call you, I swear!"

I smiled at her, as she intended. "Okay, Sarah. And...thank you. You know, for everything." I waved my head in the air vaguely.

She nodded, stepped forward, and hugged me tight. Before she let me go, she whispered in my ear, "I'm glad I finally got to meet you, regardless. He loves you so much and so does Chloe. I love you, too, you know. How could I not?"

I squeezed her a little tighter for a second, humbled by her words. I sighed and let her go, pulling away and turning towards Brandon. "Ready?"

He nodded and I hit the button on the elevator that had come and gone a couple times while we were standing there talking. Emma patted me on my back and smiled at me, and I knew that I had lifted a weight off their shoulders.

We left the hospital and I realized that it had gotten dark. I didn't even know what time it was, but I should have realized it was late enough that Brandon was done working since he came up there. Which meant Luke should be showing up there soon enough, too.

When we got into Brandon's SUV and headed home, I watched his profile in the street lights. His handsome face looked tired and it hit me even harder that I had honestly made things worse on everyone by being a selfish little bitch. Oh, GOD I was an asshole!

I closed my eyes and laid my head back, swallowing audibly. How could I fix this?

A few hours later, laying in the darkness wrapped up in Brandon's arms, I felt my tears well up again. But this time, they weren't only for Jackson.

"I...I'm so sorry for being so closed off, Brandon. I really feel like a Grade A Bitch, pushing everyone away-"

"It's okay, baby. Don't worry about it. We understand-all of us." He squeezed me a little tighter before saying, "Just get some sleep and I'll take you back up there before I go to work in the morning, okay?"

I nodded against his chest and snuggled into him, and it hit me just how much I'd missed the feel of him beside me at night. "Love you, Brandon..." I murmured tiredly as exhaustion hit me like a ton of bricks, and then slipped into a deep, dreamless sleep.

## Chapter 20

It'd been two days since I'd gone home and slept for the first time since Jackson's accident. Two days that had gone by with no change. Chloe had apologized to me when I'd walked into the room the next morning. She'd been frantic with worry that she'd pissed me off beyond forgiveness for talking to me like that, but she'd explained she just wanted me to get at least one good night's sleep. I forgave her for it...I understood her motive and, now that I look back on it, I was pretty impressed that she was that forceful.

I was alone with Jackson...it wasn't that I hadn't been alone with him before, but this time...I was feeling a little frantic. They'd been talking again. Talking about things that I didn't want to talk about, because that could not happen. **COULD NOT!**

I'd been talking to him every day but today, now, I felt like I was racing against time and there was so much I needed to tell him. It poured out of me and I couldn't have stopped it if I wanted to.

"Jackson, you've been gone for way too long. I need you...I need you to open your eyes and come back to me, to us. WE need you...all of us." I cleared my throat.

"Especially me. I love you, Jackson. I love you with every breath in my body, and I need you to hear this. I need to hear how much you mean to me...because you are everything. Everything! But it's not even all about me. Your mom is here, Jacks, and she misses you like crazy. I met her finally, and I love her to pieces. She's great, but she'd have to be because of how great YOU are. But you would get that from her, but..."

I shook my head, disgusted with my own ramblings when there was so much else left to say. "Anyway, I just needed you to hear how much I love you. You've shown me how much you love me, and I can't thank you enough for that. And if that's what I have to live on for the rest of my life- the memories of your love- then I'll live the rest of my life knowing what it was to be truly loved, and I'll be thankful for that."

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My voice cracked as emotion clogged my throat. Tears filled my eyes and began streaming down my cheeks as I continued pouring my heart out to the silent form lying so still in front of me. “Oh God, Jacks...I just...I can’t do this without you. You need to wake up! WAKE UP!” I sobbed, my words echoing in the room.

“I- there’s more- and-” I started, haltingly. And then I said the words that I’d been keeping bottled up inside. The words that I had wanted to say while looking into those deep brown eyes that I love so much, while that dimple that makes me weak in the knees flashed with that smile I’d give anything to see again. “I’m pregnant, Jackson.”

A choked gasp came from the doorway and I jerked my gaze up to see Brandon standing there, a shocked but rueful expression on his face.

I stood quickly, reaching out for him, stumbling over the words to make him understand why I hadn’t told him, especially given the fact that we were together... “Brandon, I’m so so sorry...I wanted to tell you but I just couldn’t bring myself to say anything with things so up in the air about Jacks-”

He cut me off, as he’s been doing quite a bit lately. “Allie, it’s okay. You don’t have to explain. I understand.” He ran his hand over his hair agitatedly, blowing out a breath. “You know that no matter what happens, I’ll be here for you, right? For you and the baby?”

“Yes, but Brandon, it’s-”

“I know it’s his,” he cut in again.

“How did you...what?” I stuttered then flushed as I realized that he knew exactly the same way I did.

“Force of habit, baby. I always wore a condom, he didn’t.” He froze and then backpedaled, not wanting me to get the wrong impression. “It’s not that I never wanted to go without, or that he always did go without, I know that he didn’t. But with me, it’s just, like I said, a force of habit. I’ve never gone without one with anyone...not under any circumstances. Well, with you there was a couple times that I...you know.”

I nodded...yeah, I knew. But it was never in a place that he’d get me pregnant. I sat down in the chair beside Jackson’s bed again.

Brandon crossed the room and knelt beside me, grabbing my chin and forcing me to meet his gaze. “Things are going to be okay. I swear it. Regardless of what happens.” He leaned forward and kissed me on my forehead before gathering me in his arms, holding tight when the dam burst again.

I cried for what seemed like an eternity, soaking his shirt with my tears until I couldn’t cry anymore, only small, hiccupping sobs remaining. I finally pulled away from him, murmuring an apology when he got to his feet slowly, his poor knees obviously killing him from kneeling on the linoleum floor like that for so long.

A nurse bustled in and shot me a look of sympathy as she took in my tear-stained face and obviously bedraggled appearance. “Need anything, honey?” she asked me as she passed, moving to check the machines beeping around the bed and the man lying in it.

“No, thank you. I’m good,” I said.

She finished her check-up and patted first me, then Brandon, on the arm as she passed

by. "I'll be back in a while to check on him again. If you need anything, you know where to find me." With a kind smile, she walked out the door, leaving us alone again.

I sighed and glanced up at Brandon again. "Want to sit with me for a while?" I asked him.

He smiled and nodded before grabbing the other chair in the room and pulling it over beside me. He sat and reached out to pat Jackson's good leg. "Hey, man," he said to him. Then he looked at me as he said, "You know, you're a lucky bastard, Jackson. And by lucky I mean that you have gorgeous woman sitting here bawling her eyes out over you because she loves you so much and because you knocked her up."

He winked at me and continued, this time looking at Jackson as he spoke. "But you gotta wake up, man. You kid is gonna need someone to teach him all that fancy house building shit you do so he can build a killer tattoo shop to work in on the side."

I giggled at that, reaching out to take Brandon's hand in one of mine and Jackson's with the other.

"But no, really, man. We miss you. So come home, buddy." The last words sounded choked and he cleared his throat.

He glanced back at me and I gave him a watery smile. "Allie," he said tentatively, "Are you happy? About the baby, I mean?"

I blew out a breath and nodded, placing my other hand protectively over my belly. "I really am, Brandon. I was shocked at first, but...I'm going to be a mom. And I'm going to love him or her with all my heart. WE will."

He nodded, clasping my hand a little tighter. We didn't say much after that, just sat in

silence with his hand resting on Jackson's leg while I held their hands in each of mine, lost in our own thoughts.

And then I felt it. A tiny little flutter against my hand.

I sat up, jerking my hand out of Brandon's and clasping both of them around Jackson's good one. I held my breath, willing it to happen again. Brandon started to ask me what was wrong but stopped when I shook my head rapidly not to speak.

There! Again! I grinned, the waterworks starting again as I turned to Brandon excitedly saying, "He moved! His hand-it MOVED!"

Brandon jumped up and raced from the room as I pleaded with Jackson to move his fingers again, to wake up, open his eyes, anything! In a second he was back, nurse in tow. She moved around the bed quickly, checking his monitors, his vitals, and then gently opening each of his eyelids to shine a light into his eyes to check reaction.

There was no real reaction from Jackson until she shined the light into his second eye and he gave the slightest flinch. She looked over at me and then Brandon, grinning as she said, "I'll call the doctor." She rushed out of the room again and I laughed as Brandon came over to me, grabbed me up and kissed me quickly, grinning at me like a kid on Christmas day.

"I'm gonna go call his mom and everyone," he said.

I turned back to look at Jackson and gasped, tears pouring freely down my face as I looked into deep brown eyes...eyes that were open and looking at me.

"Ohmigod, ohmigod, OHMIGOD! Thank fuck! Oh, Jesus, you're awake! JACKSON!" I cried, squeezing his hand in mine and leaning down to kiss his fingers. I could feel my hands shaking around his...hell, my whole body was shaking. I let go



with one of my hands and reached for the call button, frantically telling the nurse who answered, “He’s awake! His eyes are open!”

I heard footsteps running in the hallway outside the room and all of sudden there was frantic movement everywhere as people flooded in. Nurses and doctors surrounded the bed and I was pushed back a little, my grip on Jackson’s hand coming loose. I stepped back, not really wanting to lose that connection with him, but knowing that I was in the way, and watched as they asked questions, poked, prodded, and wrote notes.

Brandon skidded back into the room and came to me saying, breathlessly, “They’re all on the way. I called your parents and they’re coming, too.”

“Thank you,” I whispered, leaning against him as we watched, waiting to hear some kind of information out of the cluster of white coats and scrubs. Bits and pieces of conversation floated by us; ‘pupil reaction good...eyes clear...lungs sound good...let’s try taking him off the vent...good...good...’

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Finally, one of the doctors stepped back to talk to us. Before he could say anything, though, Sarah and Chloe came rushing through the door, Emma, Luke, and my parents hot on their heels. Damn, they'd gotten here fast!

“Okay, folks. I’m Dr. Michaels. I’ve examined Mr. Matthews and have some good news. Yes, he did, in fact, wake up from his coma and I’m confident we’re on the road to recovery. So far his lungs sound good and we’re taking him off the ventilator; the puncture has healed very nicely with no complications as far as I can tell. We’ll do some scans to be sure, though. We’re going to keep a close eye on him to see if there are any lasting effects from the head trauma; we’ve been rather worried about the slowing of his brain activity, but only time and testing will tell what we’re dealing with.”

He glanced around at everyone and said, “Since he’s just waking up, we’ll let you all see him briefly, two at a time, and then we’ll be taking him to get started on running the tests and scans. Try not to excite him or we’ll have to kick you all out. Okay?”

We all nodded and Sarah asked a few questions of the doctor as I sidled away from the group, moving closer to the bed. I could see Jackson’s eyes searching the room and they widened when they landed on my face. One of the nurses followed his eyes and motioned me over. I went, taking his hand in mine once more, and smiling like crazy when he gave it a small squeeze.

And just like that, my world began to right itself...

The last few days had been crazy since Jackson woke up and he was definitely on the mend. They’d moved him out of ICU last night, and so far everything was checking

out great; no lasting brain damage or anything, the cast on his leg was getting ready to come off. He wasn't one hundred percent, but he was alive and that's more than I could ask for.

He was getting restless, but then again, who wouldn't? He'd already been told that he'd need to do some therapy just to get back up to speed from being out for so long, but he didn't bat an eye at it; he'd only asked when he could start. I hadn't told him the news yet about the baby...but I think it might be about time. Brandon and I had been sitting there talking to him for a while, Emma and Luke had just left, and Sarah and Chloe were on their way. I hadn't told anyone else just yet; I wanted to tell Jackson first. I took a deep breath and grabbed for Brandon's hand. He held it, bringing it up to his lips for a kiss, and then nodded at me to go ahead.

"So..." I began, not really sure how to approach the subject.

"That sounds serious," Jackson quipped, a smile quirking the corner of his full, kissable lips.

"Well, it is...sort of." I sighed and decided to just blurt it out. "I'm pregnant."

Jackson shifted in his bed, straightening up a bit, and then fiddling with the blanket. "That's...wow. Are you...is it a good thing? I mean, how do we...?"

Brandon took pity on him and clapped him on his shoulder. "Dude...it's a good thing. She's happy, we're happy, you're gonna be a dad, man!"

Jackson caught my eyes, his brows raising in question. I nodded and he grinned, then hooted loudly and reached for me, capturing my face between his palms when I moved toward him, kissing me gently. When he finally let me go, I turned to Brandon and my smile slipped when I saw the sadness in his eyes. It was gone so fast that I wondered if I was mistaken, but my gut said I wasn't.

Jackson's voice broke into my thoughts. "How far along are you?" he asked excitedly.

I smiled at him and answered, "About a month and a half, two months? I found out the day..." My smile fell and my words trailed off. The day of the accident was the day I'd found out at the doctor's office Emma had dragged me to.

His smile faded and a look of concern replaced it. "Allie, baby, I'm so sorry!" he said quietly.

I gasped and smacked his arm lightly. "No! You don't apologize! It wasn't your fault and you know it!"

He nodded, but I could still see the regret and sadness swimming in his gaze. I clapped my hands together and smiled, trying to lighten the mood. "Well, isn't it about time for your sponge bath?"

Brandon laughed as Jackson's face brightened and a grin split his face. He threw up his hands and said, "I'm outta here! Gonna go get some food, you want anything?" He patted Jackson's shoulder, kissed me briefly, and left the room without waiting for an answer.

I watched him go, still smiling until Jackson cleared his throat and said, "Ahem. I'm waiting...get your sponge, woman!"

## Chapter 21

"Daisy, Jr."

I groaned. "No, Mom, I am not naming my child Daisy, Jr."

“Okay, then how about Georgina after your father?”

“Don’t you have somewhere to be? And what if it’s a boy?” I asked her, shaking my head in exasperation. This wasn’t what I had pictured when I asked her if she wanted to go to my first doctor appointment with me. Jackson had wanted to go but, for obvious reasons, couldn’t. He would still be in the hospital for at least another few days, barring any complications.

My mom clucked her tongue at me and swatted my arm. “You wanted me to come and you know it!”

“Ughhhh...” I moaned, hiding my head in my hands. “Where’s Emma? She was supposed to be here by now...”

See? I’m no dummy. I figured my mom would end up driving me nuts, so I asked Emma to come, too. She was running late, but I knew she’d get here...she had to!

Finally, I heard the door to the office open and Emma came striding in, sitting beside me in the waiting room. “Hey! I’m so excited! Do we get to see the little peanut today?”

I laughed at her description of the baby and shrugged. “I don’t know, guess we’ll find out.”

“So, Emma dear, how’s married life?” my mom asked her.

Emma grinned and sighed, her eyes going all dreamy. “It’s great. It’s the same as it’s been since we started living together, but I get to call him husband now!” She giggled and I rolled my eyes.

A little while later, I was holding a picture of my baby. It literally looked like a little

peanut sitting in my uterus, so I guess Emma had been right with her nickname. But the doctor and the tech told me everything checked out fine, that I was progressing nicely, and I was about ten weeks along, which is a little further than I thought. So, in about six and a half months, I'd be holding a squirming little bundle of joy.

Whoa. Six months. That's not a lot of time...God, I have a lot to do!

After running some errands to pick up some stuff Jackson had asked for, I headed back to the hospital, pictures in hand to show him. When I got in the room, Brandon was standing beside his bed and they both had serious expressions on their faces.

"What's wrong?" I asked, picking up on the tension in the room.

Brandon turned his head away but Jacks gave me a smile and said, "Well? What did the doctor say?"

"I'm fine," I said, brushing his question away. "Now tell me what's going on with you two. What were you talking about when I came in?"

Brandon ran a shaking hand over his head roughly and blew out a long breath. "Allie, you know I love you, right?"

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I nodded, but I could feel my stomach drop to my toes...and it had nothing to do with the baby.

He walked over to me, cupping my face in his hands. I felt tears threaten at the soft, sad look in his eyes. I shook my head no, because I knew something was coming that I wasn't going to like.

"Baby, I love you...I do. And I know you love me. But...what you and Jacks have is something special. You love each other so much more than you and I love each other. No," he cut me off when I tried to speak. "I'm not saying you don't love me, and I'm definitely not saying I don't love you. But the love we feel for each other isn't even close to what you and Jackson share. If you're really true to yourself, and to me, Allie, you'll agree with me. You know it's true. And now you're having a kid together...and...I think it's best if I bow out."

"No," I choked out, the tears falling faster now, dripping down my cheeks. "Why? Why would you do this now?"

He kissed my lips sweetly, the briefest of touches, and then sighed, pressing his forehead against mine and staring into my eyes. "This is for the best, Allie. I know it doesn't feel like it right now, and trust me...it hurts me. God, does it hurt. And don't think that Jacks didn't try to talk me out of this, too, because he did. That's why we were arguing when you came in."

I could do nothing but shake my head. I squeezed my eyes shut and wanted to plug my ears. I didn't want to hear this...this couldn't be happening. "I'm so sorry I pushed you away when Jackson was hurt...I apologized for that, Brandon! Please,

don't do this!"

"Shhh...Allie...calm down, baby. I've already made up my mind," he said gently. "Trust me, I think this is best for us all. But I'll still be here for you and for the little one here." He pulled one hand away from my cheek and laid it against my belly. "And for Jacks. Always."

He took a deep breath, kissed my forehead, and pulled away. "There's a big tattoo convention out in L.A. that Luke and I have been toying with the idea of attending. I told him today that I wanted to go. I'll be gone for two weeks or so because Chloe is going with me and we're going to get her stuff packed up and brought back. I already hired a moving company for you two; they're coming this weekend to move Allie's stuff into the new house. I left you a present in one of the rooms, too."

He turned to Jackson. "Take care of our girl."

Jackson nodded, but his eyes were sparkling with emotion. "Take care of my sister...and you always have a home with us, Brandon. No matter what."

Brandon inclined his head, but we all knew that it would never happen. Not now that Brandon was walking away.

"This isn't goodbye. Not by a long shot. Let's just say we're closing a chapter of our lives and moving on to the next. Okay?" he asked. "Take care, baby." He reached his hand out to run it down my arm, and the minute his hand fell away from mine, I felt him distancing himself- physically and emotionally. Without another word, he turned and left.

The door closed softly behind him and the finality of that movement pierced my heart. I watched Jackson's face, his emotions playing across his face; regret, sympathy, sadness...and love. I wiped my tears and climbed carefully into the bed



beside him, sinking into his embrace with a small sob.

He held me quietly, soothing me with his presence. After a minute, I reached out for my purse and pulled out the strip of photos the ultrasound tech had printed for me. I handed them over to him and watched his smile grow until he was beaming with pride.

“This is our baby?” he asked reverently.

I nodded, smiling back at him. “Yep. That’s our little peanut. And he or she will be here in about six and a half months.”

“Six months?” he asked, his eyes widening.

I nodded again and he laughed in joy. “That’s great! God, Allie, I love you!”

“I love you, too, Jackson. I really do...”

My words got cut off by his lips, kissing me deeply and thoroughly until I was breathless. We broke apart only when we heard an ‘oops!’, my face flushing in embarrassment. The nurse that had popped in flushed, too, and laughed nervously until Jackson told her it was fine.

She made quick work of her rounds, excusing herself with a wry smile, and we were alone again. The silence grew and I could feel the melancholy settle over me again. Determined not to let anything bring Jackson down, I pushed it deep and forced myself to smile, saying lightly, “Well, I guess I’m moving in with you!”

Jackson smiled at me, but it was an uncertain smile. I did my best to let him know that I was good with moving in there. After all, it was what we had discussed to begin with, along with Chloe taking my house. The only difference was that Brandon would

have been moving into Jackson's house with us and now...I guess he'd be going back home with Luke and Emma.

Jackson and I made small talk for the rest of the evening and then I curled up with him in his bed and we fell asleep, only to be woken up early in the morning by Chloe peeking into the room. I sat up, stretching and waving her in.

She tiptoed in like she wasn't certain of her welcome, but she'd done nothing wrong. No one had really done anything wrong, unless you count breaking up with someone out of the blue for no real reason as something wrong. Which I might...just a little.

"Good morning," I yawned.

"Morning," she whispered.

"Chloe, you don't have to whisper- I'm awake," Jackson said, smiling and winking at his sister.

She sat down beside the bed and didn't wait for any opening. She just blurted out, "I'm so sorry, Allie. I didn't know that Brandon was going to break things off with you and then just tell you he was taking me to L.A. to get my stuff. I didn't mean anything by it when I asked him if he wanted to go with me, and it's not like he's actually taking me, but he said that he was going to go to the tattoo convention out there and I need to get my stuff, and there's really no way in hell that I want to go by myself because I'm so worried that-"

"Jesus, Chloe! Breathe!" I interjected, trying to get her to slow down.

I could see the panic in her eyes and I reached out and grabbed her hand, jerking it a little until she met my eyes. Slowly, so she for sure got what I was saying, I told her, "It is not your fault. Brandon made his choice and we're going to respect that. It

hurts; Goddamnit it hurts a lot because he did this without even really talking to me about it, but it is what it is and I'm not going dwell on it. Right now I have your brother to worry about so we can get him out of this fucking hospital and back home where he belongs. And I have your little niece or nephew to worry about. Okay?"

She nodded, I think a little taken aback by my little tirade, but then she smiled. "Did you have an ultrasound? Did you get to see the baby?"

I laughed and got up off the bed to grab the pictures from my purse. I handed them to her and laughed even harder when she squealed with excitement, bouncing up and down as she looked at them.

"Mom's going to be so excited to see these!" she said. "Have you thought about names? When will you find out what you're having? Do you even want to know?"

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Jackson chuckled and took over answering the barrage of questions she was throwing out. “No, we haven’t really had a chance to talk much about the baby beyond the fact that we are both very happy about it. I don’t know what the timeline is for finding out the sex of a baby, but I assure you that I want to know!”

“Hey!” I cried. “I want to know, too! You don’t get to be the only one to know, buster...” I mock-growled.

We had a nice visit with Chloe, but after a while she said she needed to get going. Before she left, Jackson asked if he could talk with her for a bit. I nodded and kissed him, letting him know that I was going to run home and get a shower and make sure things were going to be ready for the movers. Since Brandon was nice enough to do that for us, I wasn’t going to turn it down. I hated moving!

Once I checked on everything at home, making a list of things I’d need to do before the movers came, I headed over to Jackson’s house to see what Brandon had left there. I walked into the empty house, moving from room to room and taking in the finished product of what Jackson had worked so hard on. With the accident and spending all my time at the hospital, I hadn’t thought much about what was happening at the house. The foreman had finished everything to Jackson’s specifications and it was gorgeous. Even empty, the house had a warm, inviting feel to it, and it felt like home.

I found Brandon’s present in the bedroom beside the master bedroom. Sitting in the middle of the room, there was a beautiful espresso-colored wooden baby crib with matching changing table and dresser. I ran my hand over the smooth railing, smiling as I imagined the nursery all put together and ready for my baby...and then I sank to

my knees on the plush carpet and, finally, where no one could see me, I dropped my head in my hands and sobbed.

## Chapter 22

Emma walked beside me, laughing as she took in the huge grin plastered across my face.

“What?” I asked her, giggling at her amused expression.

“You...I swear you have sunshine rays and rainbows shooting out your ass right now!” Emma said.

“I’m happy! Is that a bad thing? Jackson gets to come home tonight!” I squealed like a school girl, bouncing all around as we got into Emma’s car.

She’d come by the new house and picked me up to go to the hospital. Luke, Sarah, and Chloe were all meeting us there, but I wanted to get a few things done so the house would look perfect when we got home. The move had gone off without a hitch, made better by the fact that I really didn’t have to lift a finger. Emma, Chloe, Sarah, Leah, Jenna, Jan, and my mom had all come over and help me get things unpacked and situated as best as we could. I couldn’t really lift anything too heavy, just because I didn’t want to risk anything with the baby, but between the girls and then, surprisingly, the guys including Brandon, it got done a hell of a lot faster than it would have otherwise.

But now that the house was pretty much done and Jackson was coming home, it gave me the perfect excuse to throw up a few decorations for a small welcome home party. And yes, Brandon was coming to that, too. We talked a little bit...I missed him. I really did. It was hard not to run into his arms and kiss him when I saw him, and I know he struggled with it a little bit, but I wasn’t going to push it. Hopefully things

will get easier because, like he'd said, we were going to be in each other's life for a very long time.

Emma plugged her phone in to the car and turned on her music. I laughed at her when Billy Idol's White Wedding began playing. "Old school, much? We can listen to this any time, but I have a new song for you. Check this one out!" I unplugged her phone and switched it out with mine, turning on the song that I'd stumbled upon by accident the other day.

"You know how much we love Halestorm..." I told her. She nodded because yes, we definitely sported girly wood for Lzzy Hale, the front woman for Halestorm. She's badass and she's hot, and most importantly, she fucking ROCKS!

"Well, this is Adrenalize by In This Moment. They're like Halestorm on crack and not in a bad way. This bitch is badass and if you think we have girl crushes on Lzzy, just wait til you see Maria Brink in action!" I crowed, clapping my hands together.

Emma's brows raised and I knew I'd caught her full attention. She pulled out onto the street as the song began and halfway through she handed me her phone to download it for her. "Love it!" she yelled.

We rocked out all the way to the hospital but when we pulled in, Emma looked a little bit guilty. She just shook her head when I asked her what was wrong, so I shrugged and brushed it off.

I practically skipped into the hospital, groaning in frustration when Emma told me to slow down and wait for her. She was walking like an old woman! We got into the hospital (finally) and eventually stepped into the elevator. We heard a shout and had to hold the elevator for a man rushing toward us with a huge bouquet of flowers.

I sighed as he took his time getting situated behind the flowers and then pushed no

less than three buttons as he looked at the card on the flowers again and again, muttering beneath his breath when he hit the wrong ones. I rolled my eyes at Emma who smiled and started tapping her toes to the song playing. I found myself singing along in my head with Bruno Mars' Marry You. The song lasted through two of the three floors we had to stop at, and a new song had started when we finally got rid of flower guy and were on our way to our floor.

I glanced at Emma in surprise when the new song turned out to be Marry Me by Jason Derulo. I was a little confused when her eyes looked suspiciously misty, but then she started singing along to the beautiful lyrics. The elevator dinged and the doors opened; I gasped. The music was louder here, and there was a line of nurses stretching down the hallway.

Each of them held a single flower, alternating between star gazer lilies and red roses, both of my favorite flowers. They were all grinning and holding out the flowers for me to take as Emma, tears now freely flowing, pulled me down the hall toward Jackson's room. I took the flowers, thanking the women distractedly as we walked until we turned into the doorway of his room.

The door was open and Emma pushed me through to see Brandon, Luke, Sarah, and Chloe standing in a line, but I didn't see Jackson anywhere. As the chorus started again, each of them held up a sign with one word on it as it was being sung...

Brandon's: Will; Luke's: You; Sarah's: Marry; and Chloe's: Me?

OHMIGOD! I clapped a hand over my mouth in shock and my eyes welled with tears.

As soon as Chloe's sign went up, they parted in the middle and there was Jackson, sitting in a wheelchair and holding up a ring box...

Emma pushed me forward and I spared her a glance, my eyes widening and more tears flowing as I noticed that my parents, my grandparents, and Emma's whole family were crowding the room behind me. I turned back to Jackson and stepped towards him on unsteady feet. The song finished and silence fell. It was so quiet that it seemed like everyone was holding their breath to hear what would happen next.

"Allie..." Jackson said. "I love you. We've known each other for a relatively short time, and have been together even shorter...but I know you're it for me. You are The One. We've had an unconventional relationship-" he paused when a couple people hooted over that (namely Calland and my Nanny), "but I wouldn't change a thing. Everything that has happened with the accident and all, well, it made me realize that tomorrow isn't promised. But if I were to die tomorrow, God forbid, I would go happy knowing that I've loved and been loved perfectly. Because that's what I have with you. A love that's messy, fun, true, and so imperfect...that it's perfect. We fit. And you're having my baby!"



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He grinned up at me and I dropped to my knees in front of him, careful of his still casted leg.

“So, Allison Anne McCormick, would you do me the honor of becoming my wife?” he asked, the hope and love he felt shining so brightly in his face that it took my breath away.

I couldn’t help but glance at Brandon before I answered...and I smiled softly at him when he nodded and winked, his face showing just a hint of sadness, but it was overshadowed greatly by the happiness and yes, even love I saw there.

I turned back to Jackson and gave him the only answer there could ever possibly be. “Yes. YES!” I cried, laughing through my tears as the room erupted with cheers and applause. My hand shook as I held it out for him to slip the ring on my finger, and I gasped as I finally paid attention to what it looked like. It had a good size cushion cut center diamond surrounded by small round diamonds, with two smaller cushion cut diamonds on either side of that, and the whole band was set with a double row of small round diamonds. It was absolutely breathtaking.

Once the ring was on my finger, Jackson hauled me into his lap, settling me carefully before he kissed me deeply, pulling back only to whisper, “I love you, Allie.”

“I love you, too, Jackson,” I whispered back, claiming his lips with my own.

Later that night, after the welcome home party, Jacks and I were cuddling on my couch now situated in our new living room in front of the stone fireplace and I was holding my finger up, completely infatuated with staring at my ring.

Jackson chuckled and hugged me close to him, kissing the side of my head. "I'm glad you like it, baby."

"I do! But how the hell did you pull all that off?" I asked him.

"Well, I said I wanted to talk to Chloe the other day..." he shrugged. "She helped me set it up. But, ah...Brandon picked out the ring and got it for me."

My jaw dropped, literally, brows raised until they probably met my hairline (not really, but that's how surprised I was). "What?" I gasped.

Jackson nodded. "I called him and talked to him about what I wanted to do. It didn't feel right, you know, wanting to propose with everything that had just happened, but...I didn't want to wait anymore. He and I had talked about what would happen in the future with the three of us and I had told him then I wanted to marry you. I...I know that him breaking things off was sudden and out of the blue, but I did talk to him about that, too. That's what we were arguing about the day it happened. I didn't want him to do it, because I know you love him. And I know it wasn't easy to move so fast with all this, especially with him standing there but not being a part of it. I'm so sorry for that, baby."

He sighed, and his tone was resigned when he continued. "He wasn't going to change his mind, but he wanted to be there for when I asked you. He said he'd need to be there to show you that it was okay."

"He was right. I don't think I would have been able to do that without him there. It's so weird, isn't it? That he's not here with us? I mean, we didn't all spend all of our time together all the time anyway, but...it was just us. We were happy, right?" I asked cautiously.

I had been happy...was happy. Am happy. But I still wondered if maybe there was

something I had missed that made Brandon walk away from me, something I had done.

“Yeah, baby, we were happy. He was happy, I promise. But now we’ll just have to concentrate on other things...” He waggled his eyebrows exaggeratedly, which made me laugh.

“Oh, yeah?” I asked, still laughing. “And just what else are we supposed to be concentrating on?”

He shrugged and replied, “Oh, I don’t know...wedding bells, baby names...and hot monkey sex!”

Did he just? Yup, he did. I lost it, laughing so hard I snorted. “Hot monkey sex?” I cried. “Jesus, Jackson what a way to turn someone on!”

He narrowed his eyes at me and growled before his hands were on my sides, tickling me mercilessly. “Okay! Okay! Ohmigod! Stop!” I barked out between bouts of laughter. I could hardly catch my breath and my stomach hurt from laughing.

I ended up sprawled across his lap, trying to breath normally again as he looked down at me fondly. He softly traced his fingers across my forehead, pushing my hair out of my face as he smiled tenderly at me. And just like that, the mood changed...desire pooled between my thighs, and my body ached for his touch.

It had been so long since we’d been together like this and I wanted him more than I wanted my next breath. I carefully sat up, maneuvering around until I straddled his thighs, taking care not to put too much weight on the casted leg propped up on the ottoman in front of him. “You sure you’re up to this?” I asked him softly.

He nodded and I leaned in to trace his bottom lip with my tongue. He moaned as I

nipped his lip with my teeth and the sound set me off. The kiss turned wild, tongues, teeth, and lips tangling as we ate at each other's mouths. Hands flew in a frenzied rush to remove clothing until I was naked and straddling his lap again, although we compromised on Jackson's basketball shorts and just shoved them down far enough to let his jutting hardness spring free.

I wrapped my hand around him, stroking him firmly before teasing him by rubbing the head of him over my slick folds, shivering at the feel of his silken, heated flesh against mine.

"Inside," he gasped, the rock hard length of him throbbing in my hand.

I moved my hand, dragging the tip of him through my wetness and positioning him at my entrance, sinking down slightly. We both groaned as he breached me, and I pushed myself down to take him deep inside my body. When I was fully seated on him, I brought my hands up and braced them on the back of the couch, arching my back and grinding against him.

"Are you okay?" I gasped, wanting to make sure I wasn't hurting him.

He nodded, his hands grasping my waist and grinding me even harder against him. When I let out a guttural cry, his fingers tightened, gripping my hips almost painfully as he began to move me up and down on his shaft. I let him move me for a minute before I took over, rolling my hips as I moved up and slamming myself back down, loving the gratifying sound of flesh slapping flesh, the feel of the heavy sac hanging between his thighs smacking against my ass.

I felt that familiar wave building, taking me higher and higher as I moved faster and faster over him; I knew this time wouldn't last very long for either of us because we were wound so tightly with desire, and two thrusts later, Jackson was spilling himself inside me, triggering my own toe-curling orgasm.

I collapsed forward, leaning heavily into his chest and burying my face in the crook of his neck as I tried to catch my breath. He peppered the side of my neck and the curve of my shoulder with kisses and small love bites as his hands smoothed down the bare expanse of my back.

“Fuck, I missed that!” Jackson growled.

“Hey!” I cried, sitting back to look him in the eye. “Is that all you missed?”

He leaned in and kissed the tip of my nose. “No, baby. I missed all of you, but I especially missed the feel of your tight, hot, wet little-”

“Jackson!” I interrupted him, laughing at his words even as my face turned red.

He chuckled and kissed me again before asking me if I was okay, making sure I wasn't uncomfortable or that we didn't anything to hurt the baby. I assured him that we didn't (trust me, I asked the doctor about sex during pregnancy) which made him kiss me again and before long, we'd started all over.

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I wasn't complaining about it...but poor Jackson's leg was throbbing when we were done, so I felt bad. But not bad enough that I let him sleep when I woke up in the middle of the night wanting him again...

The next morning, I was crying again. Of course, I seemed to be doing a lot of that lately, but this time I had a reason.

I'd been in the kitchen making breakfast when the doorbell rang. I answered it, surprised to see a woman standing there with a bouquet of lilies and roses, a long envelope in her hand.

"Allie?" she'd asked.

I had nodded and she had smiled, handed me the flowers and the envelope, and turned to leave. I had thanked her and made my way back into the kitchen so I could see what was in the envelope.

And what was in the envelope is what made me cry. It turned out to be a letter from Brandon, telling me he was leaving, among other things. This is what it said:

Dear Allie,

I know I told you goodbye yesterday at the welcome home party for Jackson, but I just couldn't leave things like that. I need you to know that I'm completely good with you and Jacks getting married. He asked me about doing that whole thing at the hospital and I told him to go for it. I'm even going to be his best man, unless Luke throws a fit cause he's supposed to be his best friend...But anyway, I'm sure he's told

you by now, because he really can't keep anything from you (not that it's a bad thing) but I even went out and picked out your engagement ring. So, in a way, it was from both of us, even though it is definitely an indicator that you will be marrying Jacks and more of a 'one last thing' from me. I shouldn't have even said it like that because I don't want you to think that I'm going away to lick my wounds and this isn't what I really want. It is. I know I sprung it on you out of nowhere, but I knew it was time that I made the break. If not, it would have been that much harder than it already was. My timing was shitty; I know that. I also know that, knowing you, you think that you pushed me away, especially by staying at Jackson's side every night. You didn't push me away, Allie. I do think that the time we spent apart when you stayed at the hospital and I was working and then went home without you did give me time to think. That's when I realized that the love you and Jackson shared, like I said that night at the hospital, is something special. I do love you, Allie, but my love for you pales in comparison to the love that Jackson has for you, and you for him. I don't say that to hurt your feelings or to sound like I'm whining because I'm not. But I know that, in time, I probably would have ended up resenting the relationship you have together. I know we said in the beginning that we were good with the whole sharing thing, but...I watched you two together and I know now that I want that for myself and I don't want to be a third thrown in. I hope you understand what I'm saying, and I really hope I'm not making a mess of this. Regardless, by the time you read this, I'll already be gone. I'll be back in a couple of weeks but I didn't want to leave this until then. I'll see you when I get back, but until then, take care of yourself, Jackson, and the little peanut. He and Uncle Brandon have some future plans to see to.

Brandon

The steady thump-step-thump-step coming towards me indicated that Jackson was up and making his way to the living room on his crutches. He came around the corner into the kitchen and stopped dead when he saw me.

"What's wrong? What happened?" he asked me frantically.

I gave him a shaky smile and shook my head. “Nothing is wrong, I promise. Brandon sent flowers and a letter to me and it just made me cry.”

“You sure?” Jackson asked.

I nodded again and showed him the letter. Jackson read it and then held his arms open for me; I moved into his embrace and hugged him tight. He pulled away after a second and asked if I was okay.

“Yeah...I am,” I said. And I was. It still hurt that Brandon broke things off the way he did, and that he just plain broke things off, but I understood. If I was honest with myself, I knew that what I felt for Jackson had overshadowed what I felt for Brandon just a bit...but I also think that Jackson showed his hand emotionally a lot sooner than Brandon did, and maybe that made all the difference.

Now, we’ll never know because things happened the way they did and, as the old saying goes, everything happens for a reason. So I guess we’ll have to see how it all plays out...

## Chapter 23

“Shut up! Are you serious? You aren’t fucking with me, are you?”

I yelled the words into the phone at Emma, who did nothing but laugh. I could tell she’d been crying, too, and I was initially worried but when she told me what she told me, I quit being worried. Now I was simply in shock.

“Well, you are my best friend, so I guess we’re destined to go through everything together!” she said, still laughing.

Emma was pregnant! Holy shit! Both of us, pregnant at the same time...how crazy is



that?

“How far along are you?” I asked her, betting in my head that she’s probably a week or so behind me if not due at the same time. As far as I can tell, I conceived the night of Luke and Emma’s wedding so it stands to reason that maybe she did, too. “And what did Luke say when you told him?”

“I don’t know yet, I’ve only taken a home test. But if I calculated correctly, then I got pregnant either on my wedding night or sometime during the honeymoon. Our kids are going to grow up together, like we did! That’s so fucking cool!” she shouted gleefully. “And Luke was over the moon. He called Brandon immediately and ever since we’ve gotten into the shop this morning, he’s been telling everyone that comes through the door. I swear, you’d think he’d won a Nobel Peace Prize or found a solution to end world hunger rather than just knock me up!”

I laughed. “I can imagine!” The bell dinged over top of my door at my store. “Gotta go, Em. Someone just came in but we seriously have to celebrate! I can’t wait to tell Jackson!” I quickly promised to call her later and hung up, turning to greet my customer.

I stayed pretty busy for the rest of the day and by closing time, I was exhausted. These damn pregnancy hormones were hitting me hard and I found myself wanting to take naps all the time. I headed home once everything was done and found myself wishing that Chloe was back.

She was a big help in the store and my Nanny was driving my mom nuts again because she’d had a fainting spell and now had a bunch of doctor appointments to go to, so Mom wasn’t able to come in and help. The last time Mom had tried to tell Nanny that she couldn’t go with her and Poppy to the doctor’s office, Nanny had laid a guilt trip on her big time, telling her, ‘Well, okay if you don’t want to help your elderly parent go to the doctor. I guess you don’t owe me anything for carrying you

for nine months, birthing you, and then raising your ass for eighteen years...We'll be fine. I just hope we don't get lost...'

That conversation had prompted another phone call to me from my mom doing her whole apology bit again. Truthfully, I think she's just trying to make sure she stays on my good side so I don't put her and Dad in a home when they're old. Really.

Mom had opened the store for me the first week Jackson was home just so I didn't have to leave him alone in case he fell or something. But then that whole thing happened with my Nanny so I had to go in the following week because I didn't have anyone else. Emma had come over and worked long enough for me to take Jackson to his appointment to have his cast removed, but now I was all by my lonesome again. I guess I just got used to Chloe working with me every day before the accident.

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Chloe was due back in a couple days; she was bringing her car with her this time, so she and Brandon were driving from L.A. They'd left, from what I'd heard, this morning to head back to Ohio, but that trip is going to take them a couple days, because I can't imagine that they'd try to drive straight through. That would be ridiculous!

The house was dark when I pulled into the driveway, which scared me. I parked my car and rushed in, yelling Jackson's name. I got no answer and the kitchen was empty. I headed for the living room to check there, planning to go room by room until I found him or figured out what the hell was going on. He wasn't on the first floor, so I headed up to the master bedroom, hoping and praying that nothing was wrong. I skidded to a stop in our bedroom doorway when I saw dozens of tea light candles flickering throughout the room from every available surface.

I looked to see Jackson standing on the far side of the glass fireplace looking positively edible in a black fitted button down and sharply creased smoke-grey dress pants. Pushing away from the wall he was leaning on, he sauntered toward me with a sly half-smile creeping across his face.

With a huff I drew myself up, bracing my hands on my hips. More shrilly than I intended, I asked, "What the hell are you doing? You scared the hell out of me with the lights off and you not answering when I yelled!"

Jacks stopped in front of me, his hand coming up to softly cup my cheek. "Sorry baby," he murmured, running the pad of his thumb lightly over my bottom lip.

I nipped at it as he made a second pass and he chuckled quietly, the low, deep sound

sending a shiver up my spine. Dropping my hands from my hips and stepping away from him to take in the room, I noticed that not only were there candles everywhere, there were rose petals strewn across the bedspread with a single red rose laying across my pillow, and a trail of rose petals leading to the bathroom. I followed it to see that he'd drawn me a bath, complete with rose petals floating on top of the water, and a bucket of sparkling cider chilling on the counter.

I looked at him in confusion and he drew me into his arms, capturing my lips in a sweet, altogether too brief kiss before he knelt before me, taking my hand in his.

"Jacks..." I whispered, but he just shook his head, stopping my words.

"I didn't get to do this part. I know the whole candlelight, rose petals thing is pretty clichéd, but I just wanted to do something romantic and special for you. And I wanted to ask you again, this time on bended knee, if you would please do me the honor of becoming my wife. So, Allie...will you marry me? Still?"

I laughed and nodded, charmed and completely falling in love all over again. "Yes!" I said out loud, and then tugged at his hands until he rose and pulled me into his arms again. He kissed me breathless as he stripped me out of my clothes and then pulled me into the bathroom.

"I wanted to carry you in here, but I'm not allowed to lift heavy objects quite yet," he said in complete seriousness.

I gasped, "Jacks!" and laughed as he stumbled over himself trying to apologize. "I know what you mean, silly man. It's okay...this is perfect." I smiled up at him and stepped into the tub, sinking down into the blissfully hot, scented water with a sigh. I took a sip from the icy glass of crisp, bubbly cider that he handed me, and then sat up when he knelt beside the tub, still fully dressed with the exception of his dress shirt, which he'd taken off and hung on the back of the door.

“Aren’t you getting in with me?” I asked.

“Nope. This is just for you baby...let me pamper you a bit.”

With that he pushed me down gently by my shoulders until I was lounging in the tub once more. With slow, methodical movements, he carefully and tenderly washed and conditioned my hair before moving on to my body. But, instead of washing me, his hands smoothed down my shoulders, massaging all the way to my fingertips before lifting my legs one by one and doing the same to them. I moaned as he continued his ministrations all over my body, caressing me...teasing me mercilessly.

“Jackson...” I groaned, arching my hips as he studiously ignored those specific parts that were aching the most for his touch.

He didn’t say a word, just smiled and continued to run his hands over my body, soothing yet building the anticipation, heightening my senses. I was writhing in the water, chasing his hands, trying to make him touch me where I needed it the most but he still refused, driving me crazy with want.

I finally had enough of his torture and, grabbing my loofah and my favorite body wash, I made short work of cleaning my body and standing, the water sluicing off my body and splashing Jackson.

“Impatient much?” he said sardonically, standing and brushing the water droplets from his face and arms. He grabbed a large, fluffy towel and wrapped it around me as I stepped out of the tub. I dried myself off as he let the water out of the tub and grabbed the cider, taking it into the bedroom.

I followed him, intending to get him onto the bed and torture him for teasing me like that...but he had other ideas. Before I could move, he jerked the towel away and pulled me against him, cradling my naked softness against the still-clothed hardness

of his body. He walked me backward until the backs of my knees hit the edge of the bed and then pushed me gently so that I fell onto the bed, the silky, soft feel of rose petals surrounding me.

He stood by the side of the bed, slowly stripping his clothes off, eyes roaming over every bare inch of my body. Wanting to tease him a little I laid back on the bed, parting my thighs just a bit as I arched my back, thrusting my breasts forward, the heavy weight of them swaying with my movement. I hid a smile as Jackson's jaw clenched, his breath hissing through his teeth on a sharp inhale. His slow, deliberate moves became hurried until his clothes were strewn across the floor and he was as naked as I was.

He put one knee up on the bed and I parted my thighs as wide as I could, baring the glistening pink flesh of my sex. His breath came faster and he groaned as I moved my hand down my stomach, the tip of my middle finger nudging the swollen nubbin of my clit, circling it once...twice...three times, before I slid my finger through my wetness and pushed it inside.

"Jesus..." Jackson bit out harshly on a moan. He surged forward onto the bed, moving over me as he grabbed my hand and tugged, removing it from the warmth between my thighs. He brought my fingers to his mouth and slid them between his lips, licking away the liquid proof of my desire. "Mmmm..." he whispered. "I love how you taste, Allie...but we're doing this my way."

Without another word he laid beside me, our bodies close but not touching. I whimpered, wanting to feel him, and he shushed me as he reached out for the single rose still lying on my pillow. He brought it up to my nose and I inhaled the heady scent, gasping as he brushed the velvety soft bud over my lips and down my throat. He stroked the flower lightly over my body...my nipples, down my stomach, up my sides, over and over again, goosebumps trailing in the wake of the feathery touch. A shuddering sob escaped my lips as he stroked the delicate petals over the bare flesh of

my sex, and that finally broke him.

He shifted suddenly, tossing the rose away and moving down my body until his mouth was level with my mound, sliding his hands beneath my ass, lifting me up as his mouth came down.

My brain short circuited as he buried his face between my thighs, his tongue lapping at my clit before plunging inside. He fucked me with his tongue, using every part of his mouth in a relentless assault on my most tender flesh that had me bucking and screaming beneath him. He brought me to the brink again and again but refused to let me go over.

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I tangled my fingers in his thick hair and held his mouth against me, thrusting against his tongue in a frantic race to finally finish but he fought me, wrenching himself away as I cried out. “Please! PLEASE!” I cried, wanting, no needing him to continue.

“Up.”

It was a short, harsh command but his tone brooked no argument. I scrambled to obey, mindless with lust and wanting nothing more than to have his hands and mouth on me again, kneeling on the bed beside him. He moved to lie on his back, his hands beckoning for me to straddle him. I complied, positioning myself over his hips but he shook his head, giving me a devilish grin. He crooked a finger at me and, giving him an answering grin, I moved to straddle his head, instead, and before I even got situated he grasped my hips in an almost punishing grip and pulled me down onto his face, his mouth sealing over my clit and sucking it roughly.

I tried to brace myself, not wanting to smother him with my lady parts, but he wasn’t having it. He went wild, eating at me with abandon, lips, tongue, and teeth plying my tender flesh with precision, every move designed to make me lose my mind. In the end, I could do nothing but ride his mouth, fucking his tongue as it thrust and parried inside me, dragging over every sensitive nerve ending until I was coming, screaming out my orgasm until I was hoarse, shuddering as he lapped every drop of my release from my folds.

I collapsed to the side of him, barely wincing at his grunt when my knee connected with the side of his jaw. I mumbled an almost incoherent apology to him and then whimpered when he moved over me, kneeling between my thighs. I peered up at him through bleary eyes that widened as he dragged the head of the searing hot, swollen



hardness jutting from his body through my already drenched nether lips, circling my clit before slapping against it gently but rapidly, sending me into overdrive.

A high-pitched, keening wail ripped from my lips as he slid the length of himself down and pushed inside me, the walls of my sex clenching around him with greediness as he hit my sweet spot hidden there. He pushed in, balls deep, holding himself still for just a second before pulling almost all the way out and sliding back in, moving in and out with smooth, gliding thrusts that steadily built the waves again until he shouted, spurting inside me as I soared into the crescendo, a perfect, shining moment of pure ecstasy that left both of us boneless, breathless, and completely satiated.

## Chapter 24

### Two Months Later

“NO! Aw, come on man...Grady...No, no, NO!”

I ran toward the kitchen and stopped in the doorway, unable to help the laughter that bubbled up and burst free when I saw my big, strong, hotter than sin fiancé standing by the French doors leading outside to the back deck, scowling at the squirming bundle of damp black fur he was holding in his outstretched arms.

Grady came to live with us about two weeks ago, and he was growing like a weed already. Now, the funny thing about how we got him...well, let's just say that Doug got really friendly with the black lab he had been chasing. The black lab, whose name turned out to be Diva- apparently she was one- and her owner, who figured out the baby daddy by following the dog one day when she got out again, showed up on Emma's front porch with a basket full of wriggling little yellow and black bodies, saying she didn't want to give all the puppies away without at least offering pick of the litter to Emma and Luke.

By some lucky strike of fate, I just happened to be at Emma's house hanging out with her. When Doug, faced with eight, yes EIGHT, little versions of himself and his little doggie lover, sat down on his haunches and howled, two of the pups had immediately sat up and began howling/yipping right along with him. One of them was a little yellow pup who looked like his father. His name is D.J., which stands for Doug, Jr. He's very happy living in his new home and takes great pride in driving his father nuts. The other one was my little black pup. I couldn't resist him- he was just like his father...and who doesn't love Doug?

Jackson turned and I saw the reason for the scowl. A rather large wet spot spread out across his stomach, the saturated material of his shirt sticking to his skin. Jackson glared at me for laughing and, as he stomped by me, deposited the pup in my arms as he went to change. I followed, grabbing the towel hanging on the back of a kitchen chair to dry him with, cradling the solid weight of the dog and cooing to him as he sweetly licked my chin and I dried him off.

"Awww...poor baby must have had to go so bad...didn't you take him out?" I asked, knowing I was egging him on but I just couldn't help it.

"Woman!" Jackson warned. "Yes I took him out! You think I don't know how to handle a damned dog? We were coming in and he pissed all down the front of me when I picked him up!" He scowled at the puppy again, muttering, "Little bastard."

"Hey!" I shouted, shielding the puppy's ears with my hand as I cradled him to my chest. "He has a mom and a dad! Don't call him names!" I giggled at Jackson's exasperated expression and tipped my face up to receive the chaste kiss he planted on my lips.

He sighed and rubbed the top of Grady's head good-naturedly. "You about ready?"

I nodded, grabbing my sweater with one hand, still holding the pup with the other.

Jackson took him from me and I wrapped my sweater around my ever-expanding waistline, smoothing my hands down the full curve of my belly. It seemed like the moment I hit my second trimester, I just popped, looking like I was smuggling a small basketball under my shirt. I shoved my feet into a pair of boots, shaking my head when Jackson double checked to make sure they didn't have a heel on them.

I rolled my eyes and he just shrugged. He was so protective of me and, not that I would have anyway, but he didn't want me wearing 'insensible' (his word, not mine...I swear we'd gone back to the stone ages because of this pregnancy) shoes in the snow.

Christmas was right around the corner, roughly two weeks away. We were going to Luke and Emma's house tonight for a Christmas party. We'd had a blast at the Halloween party (not quite as much fun as the last one) and Thanksgiving was a hoot, but we'd decided to combine Christmas and our new tradition of the "Adult Slumber Party." Of course, this time it wasn't going to be a drunken one...at least not for me and Emma.

I took Grady back from Jackson and bundled him up in his little doggy sweater (don't judge me) and carried him out to Jackson's new SUV while Jackson followed, his arms overflowing with board games and our overnight bags. He loaded everything into the vehicle and went back inside to get the cake box, one of the most important items of the night.

When we got to their house, Luke and Brandon came out to help Jackson grab everything while I took Grady inside. We were greeted by a yellow blur that sped past me through the door and out into the snow, where he promptly laid down at the bottom of the stairs. Doug woofed once and I swear he was smiling the most smug smile I'd ever seen. I saw why when D.J. ran out the door and skidded to a stop at the top of the stairs, too afraid to go down them. He sat down and barked, howled, and whined his discontent until Emma came out with a long-suffering sigh and picked

him up, kissing his little head.

Shaking our heads at the dogs' antics, we went inside and put the puppies into a gated off area Emma had set up for them. It was one of those octagonal play yard things that worked perfectly for keeping them out of trouble...most of the time.

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The guys came in, followed by Leah and Chloe who had just gotten there.

I turned to Emma asking, “Well? Did you find out?”

She nodded, her eyes sparkling. I clapped my hands excitedly and she squealed, both of us giddy with anticipation.

Once everyone had gotten there for the party, including my parents, Emma’s parents, Jenna, Noah and the kids, and Calland and his new...whatever she was...Katie (at least this one had a decent name rather than Buffy), Emma and I stood up by the kitchen counter, waving to get everyone’s attention.

When it got quiet, Emma said, “Welcome to the second annual Adult Slumber Party, Pregnancy-Friendly Edition!” Everyone laughed and she continued. “Well, first off, we just wanted to have a get together because honestly, I have the best friends and family on the face of the planet and I don’t need any other excuse to have a get together. But, Allie and I had so much fun with the last slumber party that we wanted to do it again and Christmas time just sounded perfect!”

She paused dramatically and turned it over to me without another word. I nodded at Jackson and Luke who came forward and stood beside us, Jackson holding the cake box we’d brought and Luke holding a big cardboard box. The cake box and the box Luke was holding both had huge question marks decorating them and I could hear Emma’s mom getting extremely excited as she realized what we were about to do.

“I’m sorry I’ve been so secretive but Emma and I wanted to do this together and surprise all of you. I went to the doctor last week and Emma went yesterday and we

found out what we're having. Neither one of us even knows what the other is having yet...and it's been driving us crazy!"

Everyone was fidgeting, smiling, and laughing, and there were tears beginning to make appearances, as well. I pointed a finger at Jan and my mom, scolding them jokingly, "No crying allowed!"

We motioned everyone into the kitchen to crowd around the table and I took the cake out of the box, sitting it down in the center of the table. It was decorated with little pink and blue question marks on top of white icing, but the surprise would be revealed as soon as I cut into it.

Luke sat the box he had in his hands down beside it, but didn't open it. Instead, he taped a sign to it that read, 'We're Having A:', and stepped back, letting Emma come stand beside me. I was curious to see how they were going to do this because she hadn't told me anything. She handed me a knife and grabbed the top lid of the box.

"Wait, wait, wait!" I cried, waving my hands.

She flinched and cautiously removed the knife I'd forgotten about from my hand, laying it down beside the cake. "What?"

I grabbed her by the shoulders and moved her behind the cake, sliding over to stand behind the box. "I want to be able to be really surprised along with everyone else," I told her. "So you do mine and I'll do yours."

She grinned at me and nodded, picking up the knife she'd just laid down.

"Okay...one...two...three!"

Emma cut a chunk away from my cake as I ripped the lid off her box and we both

squealed with happiness and everyone began shouting and cheering and jumping around as everyone saw that the inside of my cake was blue and the balloons that popped up out of Emma's box were pink.

We turned to each other, jumping up and down and hugging, crying all over each other before we were grabbed and passed around to everyone, receiving hugs and kisses and enthusiastic congratulations as our men clapped each other on the back like they'd done something special. Well...I guess they kind of did!

A little while later, after we'd all eaten pizza and cake and Emma's parents had taken Jenna and Noah's kids home with them and my parents had taken their leave as well, we were sitting at the table engaged in the most intense game of Monopoly I'd ever been party to in my life. It wasn't too long before me, Emma, Jenna, Noah, Chloe, Katie, and Jackson were out, leaving Calland, Luke, and Brandon fighting for the win. Leah had already tapped out and left, mysteriously claiming that she had a date.

"Oh, yeah! Pay up, bitch!" Brandon crowed as Luke landed on Park Place.

"Dude! Seriously, did you need the third hotel on there?" Luke grouched, counting out his money. "I don't even have enough to pay you!"

Brandon laughed evilly, rubbing his hands together in glee. "Then give me all your property and your money, too!"

"I don't even have anything left! Asshole, you took it all last turn!" Luke was glaring, knowing that Brandon was going to tell him he was done.

"Then you're out, baby!" Brandon shouted, dancing in his chair.

After Luke was cut, it was short work for Brandon to clear out Calland and Jackson, claiming the title of winner. He stood, fist pumping the air and strutting like a

peacock around the kitchen.

That pretty much was the theme for the night as we played game after game with the same results. Brandon would win, dance around and rub it in our faces, and then we'd challenge him to a different game, each of us hoping to be the one to take him down!

About the third game, Jenna had produced an over-sized bottle of wine and she, Chloe, and Katie killed it in no time. After three glasses, Katie was becoming quite eager to get Calland alone. At least that's what it seemed like when Calland started jumping in his seat, fidgeting like crazy while trying to fend her off.

We were halfway through a game of Trivial Pursuit when he pushed back from the table yelling, "Jesus, woman! How many fucking arms do you have? You're like a fuckin' octopus!"

Katie, too far gone on the wine (lightweight, geez) could do nothing but giggle, looking up at him from under her lashes. She was trying to be coy and bat her eyelashes at him but the result was just laughable. She looked like an owl, eyes round and huge while she blinked exaggeratedly, her whole face scrunching up every time she did it.

We were snickering at her, and then...well...right there in front of everyone, she reached out her hand and molded it over Calland's crotch, gripping it through his pants and beginning to rub over it. Calland let out a weird sound, somewhere between a choked gasp, a painful cry, and a pleasure-filled moan, his eyes rolling back in his head before he grabbed her wrist and pulled her hand away, face flaming red.

"We're, uh...we're gonna go now!" Calland stammered, pulling Katie to her feet, bundling her into her coat, and pushing her out the door, hollering his goodbyes as he slammed it shut behind them.



After a beat of disbelieving silence, we all cracked up, laughing until we were holding our stomachs with tears running down our faces. When the laughter finally died down, we continued our game until it was after midnight, Jenna and Noah had left, and Emma and I were yawning like crazy.

Jackson finally stood as I finished another jaw-cracking yawn. “Alright, that’s it. Bed time!”

I nodded, smiling up at him. “Oh! I forgot my body pillow!” I whined, the thought suddenly popping into my head.

I heard Jackson sigh and he shook his head. “Well, I guess we’ll just go home. I mean, it’s not like we live far away...we could have walked over if it weren’t for the snow.”

I stuck my tongue out at him childishly, laughing when he didn’t say anything, just raised an eyebrow. I turned to tell Emma and Luke goodnight and bumped into Brandon, who I didn’t realize was standing behind me.

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He opened his arms and I stepped into them, hugging him goodbye. He kissed the top of my head and released me, moving past me to clap Jackson on the shoulder and do the half-assed man-hug thing that guys always do.

Ever since Brandon had come back from L.A., things between us had gotten easier. It still hurt sometimes, more in the beginning after he'd broken it off than now, but we'd talked over everything in depth when he'd gotten back, both of us being completely candid with each other. It helped a lot, lessening the ache, mending our friendship, and we'd even come to the realization that yes, we loved each other, but neither of us was able to say with absolute certainty that we had been in love. Not the way we should have been...

I wouldn't change a thing, though. Not one bit of it, because now I can honestly say that Brandon and I are closer than we'd ever been, and he'll always have a special place in my heart and in my life. I will say that I pity the next woman to take him on because she's going to have a formidable enemy in me unless she proves herself...and is strong enough to realize that the bonds we've formed...between ALL of us, Emma, Luke, and everyone else...are unbreakable.

We'd forged a family...and it was perfect.

Jackson gathered up our bags and took them out the truck and started it to warm it up, even though we literally were driving two seconds down the road. I stopped to pick up my little sleeping baby, laughing as I heard the pint size snores coming from both the puppies that went right along with the deep, grizzly bear sounding snores coming from Doug, who had jumped into the gated area and curled up next to them.

I noticed Chloe was a little unsteady on her feet from the wine she'd been throwing back with Jenna and Katie and asked if she wanted to come home with us. She hiccupped and cocked her head, weighing her options which, to me, were come with us and have a bed, or crash on the couch at Luke and Emma's. Unless Brandon was a gentleman and let her have his bed.

I was a little leery about him being a gentleman to her because, while they'd always been friends, there'd been something a little...strained between them since they'd been back from L.A. I'd never come out and asked her about it, but I had a feeling I'd be doing that very soon.

A few days later, it turned out I didn't need to ask at all. We were working, sorting through a delivery that had just come in when Chloe turned to me.

Her brows drew together in a frown and, with a whispered apology preceding it, she blurted out...

"I kissed Brandon..."