



Mrs. Robin's  
Sons

Kori Roberts

Loose Id

# MRS. ROBIN'S SONS

Kori Roberts

LooseId®

[www.loose-id.com](http://www.loose-id.com)

## Warning

This e-book contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language and may be considered offensive to some readers. Loose Id® e-books are for sale to adults ONLY, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

# Mrs. Robin's Sons

Kori Roberts

This e-book is a work of fiction. While reference might be made to actual historical events or existing locations, the names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Published by  
Loose Id LLC  
1802 N Carson Street, Suite 212-2924  
Carson City NV 89701-1215  
[www.loose-id.com](http://www.loose-id.com)

Copyright © February 2008 by Kori Roberts

All rights reserved. This copy is intended for the purchaser of this e-book ONLY. No part of this e-book may be reproduced or shared in any form, including, but not limited to printing, photocopying, faxing, or emailing without prior written permission from Loose Id LLC.

ISBN 978-1-59632-633-0

Available in Adobe PDF, HTML, MobiPocket, and MS Reader

Printed in the United States of America

Editor: Ann M. Curtis  
Cover Artist: Christine M. Griffin

# Loowis



The Loose Id

[www.loose-id.com](http://www.loose-id.com)

## Chapter One

Rylee Putnam sat at the bar and watched as her best friend, Drew, looked at her like he was about to explode.

“So, you’re telling me that you came home and found Ethan in your apartment...”

“In your *bed*,” her other best friend, Mya, interjected, looking equally as pissed.

“And his head was buried between another woman’s legs?” Drew continued, his voice getting louder and louder as he spoke.

“Shh!” Rylee hissed and glanced around the bar to see if anyone had overheard. Leave it to Drew to almost cause a scene. He definitely did indignation well. Thank God it was Friday night, and the restaurant was packed with people too busy having fun to pay him any attention other than to get their next drink.

“Yes, I did, and yes, he was.” In spite of her anger, she couldn’t help but wince at the memory of her ex-fiancé going down on the other woman. Ethan had been a decent lover, but oral sex was definitely *not* one of his strengths. The man was forty years old, and he still hadn’t figured out that eating a woman’s pussy didn’t involve actual *chewing*.

“Well? What happened?” Mya demanded as she practically bounced up and down in anticipation.

“He invited me to help her suck him off,” she told her friends and braced for the eruption she knew would follow.

“What?!” they both screeched at the same time.

“Shush!” Rylee slapped a hand over each of their mouths. “See? This is why I didn’t want to tell the two of you!”

“That fucking asshole!” Mya’s pretty Asian face was twisted into a scowl, her almond-shaped eyes flashed, and her petite five-foot frame practically vibrated with anger.

“Oh, I would have joined in, and walked away with his balls between my teeth!” The look on Drew’s face was fierce, and Rylee had no doubt he meant every word. The image made her cringe.

“Well, I chose the latter -- minus the whole balls part,” she said dryly.

“This is what happens when you decide to run off and marry the same bastard that your best friends warned you about.” Drew’s voice was filled with disgust.

“Well, thankfully this happened before I said ‘I do.’” Every time Rylee thought about how close she’d gotten to being “Mrs. Ethan Ferguson,” she shuddered.

“If you had just broken up with that prick when we told you to, you could have avoided this entire situation.” Mya was nodding her head, reminding Rylee of a bobblehead doll.

“Don’t start,” she warned in exasperation. This conversation was *definitely* old territory.

“Fine.” Drew threw his hands up in resignation. “It’s not like you would have listened to us anyway,” he grumbled. “We’ve only known you since you were in braces and pigtails, but what do we know?” He finished grumbling and moved right on to pouting before heading down the bar to make another customer’s drink.

When he came back Rylee reached across the bar and playfully ran her fingers through his thick black hair. “You were right.” She turned to Mya and put an arm around her

shoulder. "You two are always right about these things. And, I'm sorry that I didn't listen to you."

"*Again*," they both responded in unison.

She sighed. "I know. But I really thought Ethan was the one." Even as she said it, Rylee knew that wasn't true. And, from the looks on her friends' faces, it was obvious that they knew it, too.

Mya snorted. "Right. Just like you thought Michael was the one...and Kyle was the one...and Eric was the one..."

"Oh, all right, already!" she huffed, glaring at them. She was so not in the mood to be reminded of all her past relationship failures. "Not everyone is lucky enough to have men like Tom and Jacob in their lives." Drew's face lit up at the mention of his partner, Jacob, and Mya's hand immediately went to her stomach, rubbing the slightly rounded mound, her face taking on that dreamy, faraway expression she got whenever she thought about her husband, Tom, and their first baby she was carrying.

Rylee looked at her two best friends, loving them both, and the fact that they had someone in their lives who made them so happy. She secretly wondered what it felt like to get so excited at just the mention of her man's name or to have a life growing inside her belly.

*Yeah, right. Like that's happening any time soon.* Rylee sighed inwardly at the voice intruding into her thoughts, refusing to think about how true it was, trying not to dwell on the fact that she was already thirty-six, and at the rate she was going, she'd probably never know.

"Oh, God, I just suck at relationships," she groaned.

"Apparently not well enough, or you probably wouldn't go through so many of them," Drew quipped.

Mya burst into laughter as Rylee stuck her tongue out at him.



## Chapter Two

Nicholas Robin stood by the bar in the crowded restaurant of the hotel, waiting for his brother, Noah, to arrive when a flash of color caught his attention. He glanced in that direction and saw long auburn tresses that cascaded just past a woman's slim shoulders. Her back was to him, and she was seated at the other end of the bar, talking to the bartender and another woman.

He loved red hair, and hers was one of the most beautiful shades he'd ever seen. Nick continued to watch her, hoping she would turn around. When she finally did and he saw the face that went with that hair, his jaw dropped. Her gaze suddenly met and held his for several long heartbeats before she finally looked away.

Nick couldn't take his eyes off her. She looked so damn amazing sitting there on the barstool, her slender but shapely body making his mouth water; the simple business clothes she wore were sexier than any of the barely-there outfits adorning the other women in the room. Her mane of hair softly framed her face; the rich red color accentuated her honey-colored skin and gorgeous eyes.

Oh, man, a woman like her was *so* out of his league. Even from where he stood, Nick could tell that she was a lot classier than the women he was used to dating. But that didn't stop him from wanting her.

Nick didn't know how long he'd been standing there staring, so wrapped up in his thoughts about her that he never saw her get up, never saw her move through the crowd, never saw her head in his direction until she was standing in front of him.

"Hasn't anyone ever told you it's not polite to stare?" God, she was even more beautiful than he thought. Not to mention older.

"Once or twice," he admitted with a smile. "But there are just some things that can't be helped, and staring at you is one of them." His voice sounded raspy, and he couldn't tear his eyes away from her face. It was obvious from her coloring, features, and hair texture that she was of mixed race, but Nick couldn't determine her exact nationality. Not that it mattered. She was still the most incredible sight he'd ever seen.

She laughed, and the sound was soft and feminine and sexy. Just hearing it made his cock jerk in his pants.

"Good answer." She smiled at him and held out her hand. "I'm Rylee."

Nick reached for her hand. "It's nice to meet you, Rylee. I'm Nick." His fingers held and caressed hers for a moment before he released them completely. Her skin was as soft as he'd imagined. And she smelled good, too, a sexy combination of floral and sweet that made his head spin and his cock rock hard in his jeans.

"So, Nick, other than staring at me, what are you doing standing here at the bar all alone?" The smile on her face told him she wasn't bothered by his inability to keep his eyes to himself.

"I'm supposed to be meeting my brother, but he hasn't gotten into town yet. I decided to come down to the bar and have a drink while I wait for him."

"Where does he live?" Rylee asked.

“Wisconsin,” he said. “We both do. We’re going to be in town for the next couple of days.”

“Well, you picked a nice city and an even nicer hotel to spend your weekend.”

Nick chuckled. “This place should hire you. You’d make a great spokesperson.”

A small smile graced her lips. “I couldn’t agree more,” she murmured.

Nick still couldn’t believe he was standing there having a conversation with this incredible woman. He could see her bartender friend keeping one eye on them the entire time he moved around the bar serving drinks. And her other friend kept shooting glances in their direction as she talked on her cell phone. Nick was sure they were both trying to figure out why she was wasting her time with him.

“Have a drink with me,” he said suddenly. When she seemed to hesitate, he said, “Come on, it’s my birthday.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Now, how do I know that you’re not just saying that to get me to have a drink with you?”

“I’ll prove it.” Nick grinned and reached into his pocket for his wallet. He pulled out his license and handed it to her. She studied it for a moment before she handed it back to him.

“So, Nicholas Robin of Wisconsin, since it truly is your birthday, the drinks are on me.” She turned and looked down the bar. “Hey, Drew” -- she motioned for the bartender -- “we have a birthday boy here who needs a drink.”

Drew looked up and headed back in their direction. “What would you like?” he asked when he reached Nick.

*Rylee with whipped cream and a cherry on top.* “Another beer,” he said instead, and held up his empty bottle. Drew looked at Rylee. “Merlot?” At her nod, Drew moved down the bar and returned a few minutes later with their drinks.

Rylee reached for her glass and raised it in the air. She waited as Nick joined her in the toast. "Happy Birthday, Nick," she murmured, before taking a sip. "Did you make a wish?"

"Oh, I've been making wishes all night." He gave her a long, heated look.

"Have any of them come true?" she asked, sounding a little breathless, her honey skin taking on a soft rosy glow.

"A few." Nick leaned in closer, one hand rested on the bar, the other gripped the back of her chair. He stared back at her intently, his lips mere inches from hers. "But the night's still young, and I'm still wishing."

### Chapter Three

*Talk about eye candy.* Rylee couldn't help but admire Nick. He was just over six feet of hotness personified. Blond hair, intense hazel eyes, sexy-as-hell full lips surrounded by a hint of a goatee, and a strong, square jawline with a cute little cleft in the chin. And judging from the way he filled out his white, button-down shirt and faded jeans, the rest of him wasn't too shabby, either.

He was definitely easy on the eyes, not to mention incredibly young. Rylee couldn't believe her eyes when she looked at his license and saw that he was only twenty-two years old. Hell, she barely even remembered being that age, let alone having ever dated someone that young.

But, in spite of his age, there was something about Nick that was so sexy, so good, so...right. And if he was willing to spend his evening flirting with her, Rylee was more than happy to oblige him.

Thankfully, Drew had been busy making drinks, and Mya was busy talking on her cell phone. Otherwise they would have been all over her for abandoning them in the middle of their conversation in favor of a total stranger.

And, if the looks they kept giving her were any indication, Rylee knew they would give her hell for it later. Until then, she was determined to enjoy herself for a little longer. Enjoy Nick for a little longer.

Mya suddenly began to squeal with excitement. Rylee didn't even need to turn around to know that her husband, Tom, had arrived. Seeing the two of them together always made her smile. Mya was a petite little thing, and Tom was a huge bear of a man, with hair even redder than Rylee's. Tom made Mya look like a little girl when she stood next to him. And, he worshipped the ground she walked on. They walked down the bar to where she stood with Nick.

"Hey, Red." Tom pulled her into a hug, "You staying out of trouble?"

"You know me." She smiled and kissed him on the cheek.

"Yeah, I do." He laughed. "That's why I'm asking." Rylee saw him glance over at Nick, and she introduced them.

"We're out of here," Mya announced, and she gave Rylee a hug. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do," Mya whispered in her ear.

"And what exactly *wouldn't* you do?" Rylee drawled.

"Oh...right. I see your point." Mya gave her a wicked grin. "In that case, try not to hurt him too bad." Mya began laughing hysterically as she and Tom left the restaurant. Rylee smiled in spite of herself, and she turned back to Nick and Drew.

"Well," Drew began removing his apron. "As fun as this has been for me, my shift is officially over."

The new bartender, Sean, was behind the bar and had already begun working. Drew's partner, Jacob, walked in just as he rounded the bar. Rylee couldn't help but chuckle at the way Drew practically vibrated at the sight of him.

"Hi, beautiful." Jacob walked up and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

“Hi, yourself, handsome.” Rylee took a moment to admire the two of them. Drew’s pale skin was a perfect complement to Jacob’s rich chocolate complexion. Just like Mya and Tom, they looked good together. And happy.

Rylee glanced at Nick, who looked on with a mixture of interest and curiosity. That was a good thing; she had no patience for other people’s stupid hang-ups and prejudices, and anybody who couldn’t deal with Drew and Jacob’s relationship, couldn’t deal with her.

Rylee had just introduced Jacob and Nick when Drew’s hand landed on her arm.

“Rylee, you got a moment?” *Here it comes.* Rylee stepped off to the side to speak to Drew.

“Listen,” she started before he had a chance to say anything, “I already know what you’re going to say, but this is no big deal.” She ignored the fact that it felt like a *very* big deal. “We’re just having a drink and talking, so there’s nothing for you to worry about.”

Drew sighed and tucked a wayward lock of hair behind her ear. “I can’t help but worry about you, sweetie. You have a tendency to go from zero to love in less than sixty seconds. And after this whole thing with Ethan, I just don’t want you to get hurt again.” He wrapped his arms around her and gave her a tight hug.

“Now, go on and enjoy your boy toy. Just do me a favor and be careful, okay?”

“Don’t worry. I will,” she promised.

## Chapter Four

Nick watched Rylee walk away to talk to Drew, and his gaze soaked in the shapely lines of her body. She was slender, but she definitely didn't lack any curves. The fitted blouse she wore outlined her slim back and narrow waist, and the tight, straight skirt clung nicely to her rounded hips and ass. In heels, she was only a couple of inches shorter than his six-one frame, and he guessed she was probably around five feet eight in her bare feet.

Just when he'd finally managed to beat his cock into submission, she headed back in his direction. Her hips swayed back and forth, and her blouse was unbuttoned just far enough to reveal a hint of cleavage covered in black lace. When she looked at him, her mouth curved into a sexy smile, and he was suddenly as hard as stone again.

And from the looks she was getting from way too many other men in the room, he suspected he wasn't the only one feeling the effects of Rylee.

"Alone at last," he murmured near Rylee's ear as she slid past him to get to her seat.

"It appears so." She looked up at him. "So, what are you doing for the rest of your birthday?"

*You, if I'm lucky.* He decided to keep that thought to himself. As much as he wanted it to happen, Nick wasn't going to push his luck. The fact that Rylee was still sitting there with



him, instead of leaving once her friends had gone, was a miracle in and of itself, and he refused to mess things up now that he had her all alone.

"I was just going to hang out and enjoy the city for the rest of the weekend. My brother and I are going to a White Sox game on Sunday before we head back to Wisconsin. Otherwise, I don't have any specific plans." Nick gave her a meaningful look. "Although, I'm hoping that might change."

"Well, I'd love to give you a tour of the city, but I'm on call this weekend, so I need to stay close to home in case I have to work." Rylee looked apologetic, her words filled with regret.

"I understand. I know how it is to work on weekends." Nick tried not to sound as disappointed as he felt. "So, what kind of work do you do?"

A slow smile spread across Rylee's face. "I work for a hotel."

"Really?" Nick began to laugh, suddenly understanding her glowing endorsement of the hotel earlier. "It wouldn't happen to be this hotel, would it?"

"Maybe." Her laughter joined his. "What about you? What is it that you do up in Wisconsin?"

Nick paused as the bartender placed a fresh bowl of bar nuts in front of them. He was grateful for the interruption, because it gave him a chance to think about his response.

He loved his work. It was something he'd been doing since he was a kid. He really didn't know how to do anything else, had never wanted to do anything else. Thankfully, he was damn good at it, and the money he made was decent.

Despite all of that, Nick knew Rylee was probably used to dating men much older than him, with pockets much deeper than his. And he couldn't help but wonder what she would think about how he earned his living.

Nick wasn't exactly sure what Rylee did at the hotel, but he suspected it was something important. And the last thing he wanted was for her to think that he was just another kid who didn't have his shit together, with no real job or focus in life.

Rylee still looked at him questioningly, and Nick realized that he hadn't answered her question.

"I work with dogs." In spite of his reservations about what she would think, Nick couldn't stop the grin that stretched his face. He loved working with the animals. "My brother and I have a training facility up there, and we breed and train dogs."

"Oh, yeah?" Rylee smiled, her expression filled with genuine interest. "Somehow, when I think of Wisconsin, I don't picture dog breeding."

"Most people don't." He laughed. "But, trust me; the only four-legged animals you'll see on our land are of the canine variety."

"Wow, I guess you would have to really like dogs to have a job like that."

"Oh," Nick clutched his chest, "please don't wound me by telling me that the most beautiful woman in the room is a cat lover." His theatrical display had the desired effect as Rylee began to laugh.

"Hey, I'm an equal opportunity lover of cats *and* dogs. I've just never spent a lot of time around either." She shrugged. "My father was a musician. We traveled a lot and moved even more when I was a kid. It's hard to have pets when you're on the road all the time."

"So, did you ever travel to Wisconsin?" Nick asked.

Rylee seemed to think about it for a moment. "You know, I think Wisconsin is one of the few states that I've never visited." She chuckled in embarrassment. "And it's one of the closest."

"Well, I think we should fix that," Nick told her. "You're more than welcome to visit me in Wisconsin anytime. I'm sure my dogs would love you."

“Thanks...I’ll keep that in mind.” God, he wanted to kiss her so badly. Wanted to hold, and touch, and... At some point, Nick realized that he’d begun to lean closer and closer to Rylee, their mouths separated by less than an inch of space. All he had to do was pucker, and they’d be kissing.

“So, when is your brother getting here?” Rylee’s warm, sweet breath feathered across his face.

“Good question.” Nick reluctantly pulled his gaze away from her and looked down at his watch. He was shocked to see how much time had passed. It had been two hours since he’d met Rylee, and nearly three hours since he’d last spoken to Noah, so he figured his brother would be arriving soon. Regardless, he wasn’t going to worry about it at the moment.

“I’m sure he’ll be here soon,” Nick told her. “Besides, I’m enjoying my birthday just fine right here.”

Before Rylee could respond, a hand landed on Nick’s shoulder. “Here you are. Sorry it took me so long to get here.” He turned around and looked into familiar hazel eyes.

“Hey, you made it. We were just talking about you.” Nick saw Noah zoom in on Rylee, watched his eyes go wide in shock. Yeah, he knew the feeling. He made the introductions.

“Hi, Rylee.” Noah reached past him to shake Rylee’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Same here, Noah.” She smiled warmly, shaking his hand.

“Do you mind if I steal Nick away for a minute?” Noah asked her.

“Not at all.” She smiled.

Nick looked at Rylee. “Sorry. I’ll be right back, okay?” When she nodded, he walked away to speak to his brother.

“She’s beautiful,” Noah said approvingly, his gaze wandering back to where Rylee sat. He gave Nick a knowing smile. “So, I guess this means I’m going solo tonight.”

Nick’s gaze followed Noah’s back to the bar. “If I’m lucky, you will.”

"That's cool," Noah said. "I saw a club down the street on my way here that I think I'll go and check out."

"Well, enjoy yourself, because I plan to." Nick walked back to the bar, and Noah followed behind him. When he got there, Rylee was gone. "What the hell..." Nick looked around the crowded room, but couldn't see that red head anywhere. "Hey" -- he tried to catch the bartender's attention -- "The lady sitting here? Where did she go?"

"You mean Rylee? She left, man," he said distractedly, as he continued to make drinks.

Nick stood there in shock, trying to figure out what went wrong. He would have sworn that Rylee was into him as much as he was into her, and he couldn't believe that she would just leave without saying good-bye.

"Damn, Nick. Sorry about that," Noah said. "Hey, don't sweat it. You can come to the club with me."

Nick sighed as disappointment weighed heavily on him. "Nah, it's cool. You go enjoy yourself. I'm gonna hang out here for a little while."

"Then I'm staying, too." Noah's voice was adamant. "This is *your* birthday, Nick. If anybody's supposed to have fun this weekend, it's you."

"Don't worry about me." Nick found a smile for him. "I'll be fine. Go have some fun."

Noah still stood there, the look on his face letting Nick know he was unconvinced. "It's cool...really," Nick finally said.

Noah sighed and nodded reluctantly. He gave Nick a brief hug. "Happy Birthday, bro. If you change your mind, call me, and I'll let you know where to find me," he said, before he headed off.

Nick waited until Noah left before he blew out an agitated breath. He couldn't help feeling seriously played as he tried to figure out how in the hell he'd managed to misread Rylee's signals so badly.

Finally, he just shook his head. Who the fuck was he kidding, anyway? He never really stood a chance with a woman like Rylee anyway. He should just be happy that she even bothered to kill a couple hours of her time with him to begin with.

“Hey, is your name Nick?” He turned at the sound of the bartender’s voice.

“What?”

“You...are you Nick?” he said again. At Nick’s nod, he pulled a folded piece of paper out of his pocket.

“I almost forgot. Rylee left this for you.” Nick reached across the bar and grabbed the paper. The message inside was short and simple: *Room 2618, 10 minutes.*

“Oh, *hell* yeah!” His face split into a huge grin. “Happy Birthday to me!”

## Chapter Five

*He's not coming.* Rylee paced around the room and cast glances at the clock on the wall. She'd left Nick in the restaurant downstairs almost a half hour ago, and she hadn't heard from him since then.

She threw herself on the couch. This was such a stupid ass idea. What in the hell was she thinking to try and pick up some guy in the hotel where she worked? She was the *hotel manager*, for God's sake! She knew better than to mix business with pleasure; knew hotel guests were off limits. In fact, she talked to the staff about that exact thing all the time. And look at her, practically handing out pussy at the bar -- and to a kid of all people!

Rylee groaned and rolled onto her stomach, her eyes tightly closed, her face buried in the cushions. She let the silence of the empty room soothe her as she wondered for the thousandth time how a supposedly intelligent woman could be so successful in her professional life, but completely incompetent when it came to her personal relationships.

She was embarrassed to admit that ending her engagement with Ethan a month ago was probably the smartest decision she'd made in her personal life in nearly a decade.

And now that she was single once again, Rylee knew that she needed to spend some time focusing on herself and figuring out exactly what she wanted in her life, instead of considering a relationship with someone else so soon. Especially someone like Nick.

Hell, she barely understood men her own age, the last thing she needed was to start something with a man nearly half her age. No matter how good he looked, or how much he turned her on, or how wet she got at just the thought of him.

It was just that Nick had seemed so different, so sincere, so... “Jesus,” she muttered out loud, feeling completely disgusted with herself. “I am so pathetic.”

She needed to have her fucking head examined, carrying on about some guy, who was probably sitting back right now, laughing with his equally as fine brother, about how he had this older woman thinking that he was actually interested in her.

It was said there was no fool like an old fool, and she was certainly proving that theory correct. Apparently, when it came to sex, men weren’t the only ones who allowed their genitals to dictate their common sense.

Rylee jumped off the couch. She needed to get out of here. Go for a walk. Take a drive. Buy new batteries for her vibrator. Anything to help distract her from the overwhelming embarrassment, disappointment, and need she felt at the moment.

She grabbed her purse, snatched the door open...and came face-to-face with the person she was trying to forget.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick’s hand froze in midair when the door he was about to knock on suddenly swung open. Rylee stood there, her expression a mixture of surprise, irritation, and excitement. She’d changed her clothes and now wore a pair of jeans that molded to her long, toned legs, and a fitted T-shirt that showed just a peek of her smooth, flat belly.

They stared at each other for what felt like forever. “You’re late,” she finally said.

"I'm sorry," he started. "I didn't know --"

"Shut up," she interrupted, grabbing him by the shirt and pulling him into her room. The door had barely closed before she was all over him, her mouth finding his, her tongue teasing, probing, seeking entry; her taste hot and sweet exploding on his tongue.

He groaned deeply, leaning against the door for support. One hand wrapped around her waist, pulling her tightly against him; the other held onto that glorious red hair, tilting her head just enough to deepen the kiss. His tongue slid into her mouth, tangled with hers, took the kiss from wanting and needy to urgent and demanding in the span of a heartbeat.

Rylee made sweet whimpering sounds that sent chills through him. "Fuck. Rylee..." He shuddered. His hands moved down her spine and slid into the back of her jeans to cup that fine ass. He kneaded the rounded globes before he lifted her off the floor to grind his thick, hard shaft against her pussy.

"Nick!" Rylee cried out, "God...please." Her long legs locked around his waist, and she gyrated against him.

Nick's mind tried to convince him to take this slow, to savor the moment. But his body wasn't having any of it. His cock was heavy and aching, ready to explode at any second with need. Rylee's soft, warm body wrapped around him like a blanket; her full, luscious lips kissed a path up his neck. Her teeth nibbled along his jaw until she reached his ear, and her tongue darted inside before she sucked the lobe into her mouth.

"Goddamn, baby," he moaned, searching for her lips and kissing her deeply. "Feels so fucking good. Want you so bad..." One hand continued to hold her against him, and the other slid under her shirt.

"Oh, Christ..." She wasn't wearing a bra, and the feel of her bare flesh in his hand was nearly enough to make him come. Her breasts were firm and full; not overly big, but a nice handful. He leaned down and took a nipple into his mouth. His tongue swirled around the tip, his teeth nipped at the hard pebble before he gently sucked on it again.



“God, baby...more. Please...” Rylee gasped; her body arched against him.

“Yeah...so good.” Nick bent, licking and sucking at each nipple, then suddenly spun around, placing Rylee’s back against the door. Tugging, pulling, twisting on the zipper of her jeans, he maneuvered it enough to get his hand inside; his fingers slid past the silky material of her panties and into her slick folds.

“Oh, yeah, baby...so wet for me.” His voice was rough and close, rasping over her skin, two fingers pushing inside, slowly thrusting into her warm, tight heat, his thumb teasing her swollen clit.

“Oh, fuck...Nick...I...gonna make me...” Rylee’s head fell back, and she moaned loudly.

“Uh-huh...yeah,” Nick panted, “wanna see you.” He licked along the column of her exposed neck, his fingers buried inside her.

Rylee bucked wildly against him, fucking herself on his fingers. “Oh...Nick...yes!” she screamed out, and her entire body shook as her climax poured over her.

“That’s it, baby...let me feel it,” Nick whispered hoarsely against her lips, encouraging her, his fingers still moving inside, loving how she pulsed around him, her juices freely flowing down his hand.

Nick continued to hold her and placed soothing kisses along her face, in her hair. His cock was rubbing against her, hard and insistent in his jeans, seeking satisfaction.

“I need...” he whispered raggedly, and Rylee nodded, as if understanding exactly what he needed, in spite of his inability to say it. Her hand moved down his chest and stomach until she reached his erection, so aching, so hard, and so ready.

Rylee unlocked her legs from around his waist, and slowly stood on her feet. She turned him, placing his back against the door again, before slithering down his body to her knees in front of him. She buried her face in his crotch, nuzzling him through his jeans.

Nick leaned against the door, legs parted, stomach muscles taut, cock filled to bursting as Rylee opened his pants, her slender fingers reaching in to touch before pulling him out. She pumped up and down his thick shaft for several moments.

Nick groaned. His eyes fluttered closed and his body shivered at the feel of her hands on his skin. He heard the familiar sound of foil tearing and looked down to see Rylee lean forward to take him right into her waiting mouth, those lips working the condom over his cock before that sweet mouth proceeded to blow his mind.

The sensation of his shaft sliding on the smooth, velvet heat of Rylee's tongue had his hips driving forward, seeking more. Those lips pulled at him, that wicked tongue swirled around him, as Rylee's head bobbed up and down and she took him deep into the back of her throat.

His eyes rolled back into his head, and he inhaled with a hiss. "Oh, fuck, yeah. Right. Fucking. There." Rylee kept moving on him, lips tight, tongue rubbing along the underside of his cock.

"Goddamn, baby. Soon..." His hands twined in her hair and held her steady, pushing even deeper, fucking her mouth, his hips pumping in short bursts, yelling out as his orgasm ripped through him, and he shot, filling the condom.

Rylee continued to suck him. She finally pulled back, removing the used condom as she went. She looked up at him; her amber eyes shone, her swollen lips glistened.

Nick slid down the wall and reached for her. "You...fuck, you're amazing." His lips crashed down on hers, his hands cupping her head to hold her close.

They writhed against each other on the carpet. Rylee wrapped one leg around his hips and planted the other on the floor as she thrust up against him. In no time at all Nick's cock was raging again.

They were all over each other, needy hands groping, touching, feeling; moving fast and frantic, attacking each other's clothes, desperate and anxious for the feel of skin against skin.

Finally, bare bodies came together. Heat poured off their skin, lips locked, limbs tangled. Nick moved down her and settled between her legs. He feasted on the sight of her spread open for him, her mound completely bare except for a strip of neatly trimmed dark red hair, her dusky pink lips coated with her cream.

Nick's thumbs held her folds open as his tongue licked from her crease to her clit. His lips latched onto the swollen, sensitive bud and sucked it into his mouth.

"Oh...God, yes," Rylee cried out sharply, her fingers clutching in his hair, her hips lifting off the floor, pushing her pussy toward his face. Nick gripped her ass, burying his face in her cunt, tongue fucking her, loving the sweet, spicy taste.

With a final lick, Nick sat back, panting harshly, unable to take it a moment longer. He leaned down and kissed her deeply, letting her taste herself on his lips.

"Can't wait...need to be inside of you." His voice a deep growl, he groped for his pants, searching the pockets for a condom. Fingers trembling, he struggled to open the package, barely containing his overwhelming lust long enough to get it over his aching shaft.

He came down on top of her. "Gonna fuck you now," he warned. "Can't go slow...can't be gentle."

"Yes. Hard and fast." Those amber eyes stared back at him, clear and sure, her skin flushed a deep honey brown.

He lined his cock up with her pussy and pushed inside with one long thrust, the sensation explosive and breathtaking, their twin gasps echoing through the room. They lay locked together for a moment, the rise and fall of their chests the only movement in the room, and he could see in her eyes that she felt the same undeniable connection between them that he did. Except it was so much more than physical.

With a groan, Nick began to move, fucking her with deep, hard strokes, his hips snapping back and forth, one hand reaching out and gripping the arm of the couch in front of him for leverage, the fingers of his other hand digging into her hip bone. His knees were

planted on the carpet as he pulled sweet sounds from her while he plunged in and out of her wet heat.

“Don’t stop. Please, please. Harder...” She was begging for it, making him moan and move faster, his heart pumping in time with the thrust of his cock. He felt Rylee ripple, felt the tension squeeze his cock as she climaxed, heard her wails of pleasure as heat poured over his cock, and that was all it took to send him over the edge. He shot so hard it almost hurt: his back arched, his mouth opened as he yelled, the sound torn from him, and he thought his lungs would burst through his chest.

He collapsed on Rylee, her body pinned beneath his weight as his breath huffed from him. “Damn, I could so get used to doing that every day for the rest of my life,” he finally managed to pant out.

Rylee chuckled softly, placing kisses along his neck. “Maybe we’ll even make it to the bed next time.”

## Chapter Six

Nick lay in the bed and watched Rylee as she slept. He couldn't believe it was Sunday all ready, and the weekend was almost over. He wasn't ready for it to end, wasn't ready to say good-bye, wasn't ready to walk away and never see her again.

When he'd first come to Rylee's room, Nick had no idea that he'd still be there nearly forty-eight hours later. When they hadn't been all over each other, they'd talked, laughed, and simply enjoyed each other's presence.

Nick was amazed at how much he'd learned about Rylee in such a short period of time. He would never have imagined that they would have so much in common, and he wished he had more time to spend with her before he had to return to Wisconsin.

He sighed, knowing that wasn't an option. Rylee had to work, and he was supposed to attend the baseball game with Noah. He hadn't seen his brother all weekend, had only spoken to him once on the phone, and Nick knew his little disappearing act had Noah less than pleased with him at the moment.

"Are you just going to stare at me all morning, or are you going to come over here and give me a proper wake-up?"

Nick had been so lost in his thoughts he hadn't even noticed Rylee was awake and was watching him as he watched her.

"Come here." He smiled, reaching for her and pulling her close, their bodies and their mouths coming together at the same time. They shared a kiss that seemed to go on forever, before Nick finally found the strength to pull away.

He looked down into her face, practically drowning in her eyes as all types of unfamiliar and unnamed emotions raced through him.

"I don't want this to end," he said suddenly, putting a voice to his thoughts. "This isn't just about sex for me, Rylee. I've never...God..." he closed his eyes, and sighed. He opened them again, and searched her face.

"Please...tell me I'm not crazy...tell me I'm not the only one who feels something special between us."

Rylee was silent for a long moment. "You're not crazy," she finally whispered. "I feel it, too."

"Oh, thank God." Nick released the breath he'd been holding before kissing her deeply.

It was Rylee's turn to pull away. Her hand reached out to caress his face. "But, it's not that simple, Nick. This thing between us is...complicated."

Nick frowned. "I don't understand. Do you want to be with me?" At her nod, he said, "I want to be with you, too. What's so complicated about that?"

"For one thing, we don't even live in the same state --"

"It's only a few hours drive," he interrupted. "That's not a big deal. People have long distance relationships every day."

She released a frustrated breath. "We both know there's a bigger issue here than just distance, Nick."

"What do you mean, 'bigger issue'?" he asked. "I don't see any other issues."

“Are you kidding me?” She looked incredulous. “Are you trying to tell me that you seriously don’t see the fact that I’m thirty-six, and you being twenty-two, not an issue?”

“Not for me.” Nick shrugged dismissively. When he met Rylee, he knew she was older than him, but he figured she was in her mid-twenties, like his cousin, Leslie. He definitely wouldn’t have guessed she was older than thirty, and certainly would never have imagined that she was anywhere near thirty-six. She looked great for her age. Hell, she was, by far, the finest woman of *any* age he’d ever met. It made him want her even more.

“It doesn’t bother me at all,” he told her truthfully.

“Really?” She just stared at him. “What about your family? You don’t think they would see it as an issue? How about your brother, Noah? What do you think he’d say? Oh, and I’m sure your mother would be thrilled --”

Nick’s lips came down on hers, kissing her hard, cutting off her words, silencing her concerns, not letting up until she lay moaning against him. He pulled back to look at her, and his hand cupped her jaw.

“Listen to me, Rylee. I don’t care how old you are, and I don’t give a fuck about what anybody else thinks of our age difference.”

Rylee still looked unconvinced. “I don’t have the best luck when it comes to relationships, Nick. I don’t want to be hurt again, and I don’t want to hurt you, either.” Her fingers trailed along his jaw.

“I know you think you want me right now, but what about later? What happens if this actually does turn into something long-term, and you look up in a few years and wonder what you’re doing with a forty-something-year-old girlfriend?”

“Are you going to stop being the woman that I’m looking at right now? The woman I’ve come to know and care about these past couple of days?”

Rylee shook her head. “But, let’s face it; I’m not always going to look like I do now. What happens when I start to look old? Are you still going to want me then?”

"Do you honestly think that I only want to be with you because of how you look?" Nick looked at her in disbelief. "You gotta know that it's deeper than that...that *I'm* deeper than that." He shook his head a moment. "And, what about you? What if I'm in an accident tomorrow and end up permanently scarred? Are you telling me that you wouldn't want me anymore if I didn't look the same way I do right now?"

"Of course not..."

"Then stop trying to find excuses for why we shouldn't be together and admit to all of the reasons why we should." His voice was adamant. "You are the most beautiful woman I've ever known, Rylee. But I don't just see how beautiful you are here," Nick stroked her cheek. "I see how beautiful you are here as well." His hand slid downward until it rested against her chest, over her heart.

"I have no idea what might happen between us a few years from now." He gave her a small smile. "I'm not even sure about what's going to happen a few hours from now. But what I do know is that in this short time we've been together, I've started to care about you -- a lot. And I want to be with you, get to know you more, and see where this relationship could lead."

His thumb rubbed across her bottom lip. "I'm not trying to pressure you, baby. I'm just asking you to give this a chance, give us a chance. You think you can handle that?"

He tried to breathe while he waited for her to respond. Finally, she nodded, and a smile spread across her face. "Yeah," she said softly, "I think I can handle that."

Nick hugged her tight, and his mouth captured hers in a kiss filled with happiness and relief. They'd gotten over the first hurdle. Everything else they could work out later.



## Chapter Seven

“Hey, Nick! Wait up.” Nick glanced over his shoulder to see Noah walking toward him. He made sure the lock was secure on Mandi’s cage and reached inside to pet her for a moment.

“What’s up?” he asked when Noah finally reached him.

“Leslie says you’re taking the Chicago job.” Noah glanced at the German shepherd in the back of the truck.

“Yeah, I am. Why?”

“Nothing.” Noah shrugged. “I just know you usually don’t take jobs to deliver dogs that are going out of state. And Leslie said you volunteered for this one, so I was kinda surprised.”

“Well, this one didn’t start off as an out-of-state job.” Nick forced his voice to sound casual. “Mr. Erickson was living down in Beloit until a few weeks ago.”

Nick finished packing up the truck, avoiding eye contact with Noah, hating that he wasn’t being completely honest with his brother.

“Besides,” he continued, “I’ve been training Mandi since she was a puppy. I figured the least I could do is see her off to her new home. Right, Mandi girl?”

That much was true. Everybody knew Mandi was one of his favorites out of all the dogs they currently had at the training facility, and he was going to miss her. He reached in to pet the dog again. She made little whimpering barking noises, nuzzling and licking his hand.

He turned to see Noah still watching him closely. Finally, Noah sighed. "Well, I don't have another training session or a client until tomorrow afternoon. You want some company?"

"No, I'm good," Nick said quickly. "I'm just dropping her off and heading right back."

He climbed into the truck and tried not to seem too anxious to leave. "Listen bro, I gotta go. I got a client coming to see one of the dogs first thing in the morning, so I need to get out of here if I'm going to make it back in time."

Noah just looked at him for a moment before he finally backed away from the truck. "Yeah...okay. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Cool. Later." Nick drove off down the road, glancing in his rearview mirror at Noah, who was still standing there watching him. Noah knew him too well, and Nick was sure that he suspected something was up. Nick just wasn't ready to tell him yet.

Hell, what was he going to say, anyway? That he'd met a woman who was so incredible, so unbelievable, that she had completely and thoroughly turned him inside out and ruined him for anybody else?

Nick snorted. Not likely. Noah would probably never let him hear the end of how he'd gotten himself pussy whipped by a woman.

And that's exactly what he was. It had been three weeks since he'd met Rylee. Although their schedules had been so busy they hadn't had a chance to see each other again, they'd talked to each other on the phone every night since that first weekend together.

When Nick heard about this delivery to Chicago, he jumped at it. It gave him the chance to finally see Rylee again, and the perfect excuse to be in Chicago without feeling like

he needed to explain himself to Noah, from whom he'd just end up hearing a lot of shit about him being stupid for chasing a piece of ass.

Not that Noah could say anything that would change his mind. Nick had spent that weekend having the best sex of his life with the most amazing woman he'd ever met. He knew after only being around her for a couple of days that Rylee was a woman who had her shit together. And the time they'd spent talking together since then only confirmed his beliefs.

A woman like Rylee could have any man she wanted, and Nick knew that he probably had no right to think he was anywhere near good enough for anything serious with her. But it didn't stop him from wanting to be with her all the same.

Nick didn't know what type of sorry assholes Rylee had dated in the past, couldn't comprehend how they could let a woman like her get away. But as far as he was concerned, their loss was his gain, and he had no intention of repeating their mistakes. They may have been too dumb to see it, but Nick knew that Rylee was a woman of worth; someone he wanted to be with long-term.

No, Nick definitely wasn't over Rylee, and he had no intention of trying to get over her. In fact, he was on his way to Chicago to make sure that a certain redhead knew exactly how he felt.

## Chapter Eight

The past week had been pure hell for Rylee. The hotel was packed with guests attending two large conventions in town, and Murphy's Law had been in full effect, causing one catastrophe after another.

She'd been running around putting out so many fires, it had been three days since she'd seen her bed for more than hour-long catnaps.

Finally, she'd gotten the chance to be away from work for longer than it took to use the toilet, feeling thankful for the first time ever that she was so pathetic that she actually lived in the same hotel where she worked. She only had to ride up the elevator a few floors to get home.

When she got there, however, the last thing she'd expected -- or wanted -- was to have to stand in the middle of her living room floor and explain to her ex-fiancé, yet again, why she'd rather step into oncoming traffic than get back together with him.

"Dammit, Rylee, I just don't get it." Ethan's expression was a mixture of confusion and irritation. "You're acting like I asked you to do something that you'd never done before. We included other people during sex many times, and you never seemed to have a problem with it before. I can't understand why it was such an issue for you this time."

*And that's the problem.* Rylee just stared at Ethan. She was fresh out of ways to explain to someone who was more than old enough to know better that there was a time and a place for most things, and there was some shit that should just never happen at all.

Rylee knew that when it came to sex, she would never be mistaken for a prude. She was the first to admit that she'd enjoyed the sex games she and Ethan had played with each other, and with others during the two years they'd been together.

But even she had limits. Some things just went too far and crossed too many lines. And finding her fiancé tongue fucking another woman the night before they were supposed to get married was one of them.

"Ethan, listen to me." She struggled to stay calm. "I haven't slept in days. I have a headache, I'm hungry..."

"You know, I can help you with all of those if you just give me a chance." Ethan gave her what was supposed to be his most charming smile, and it only managed to piss her off even more.

"You know what? You can save your caring routine for somebody who gives a shit, okay?" she finally snapped. "You never worried about my needs before, so do us both a favor and don't act like you give a damn now."

"Fine." He glared at her. "If that's how you feel, I'll just get my things and be on my way." He headed toward the bedroom, and Rylee stepped in his path.

"All of your crap is in boxes in there." She pointed to the hall closet. "You can take it, or I can trash it. It makes no difference to me. Either way, you're out of here in ten minutes." She turned and walked back to her bedroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick knocked on the door, trying to control his rising anxiety, suddenly rethinking his decision to show up, uninvited, on Rylee's doorstep. He knew he was taking a chance, but he'd just wanted to see her so damn bad that he decided it was worth the risk.

The front desk clerk had already told him that Rylee was off duty, and he just hoped that she was home. He was about to knock again when the door suddenly opened, and he found himself staring into the face of some pissed-off looking man.

"What do you want?" The man demanded. His cool, gray eyes were sizing Nick up.

"I'm looking for Rylee." Nick tried hard not to get a little pissy himself.

The man's eyes narrowed at the mention of Rylee's name. "What do you want with my fiancée? Oh, wait. You must be a new employee here, right?"

He didn't wait for Nick's response before he continued, his tone cold and condescending.

"Well, let me explain something to you. Her name is *Ms. Putnam* to you, not Rylee. And these are Ms. Putnam's personal living quarters. Staff is not to disturb her when she's here, unless it's an emergency. Understood?"

Nick was thankful that he'd gone into shock after he'd heard the word 'fiancée,' otherwise, he'd be beating this motherfucker into the carpet. Rylee was engaged? And to this asswipe? No. She couldn't be. He refused to believe that she would spend nearly an entire month lying about wanting to build a relationship with him when she was already engaged to someone else.

"Hey! Are you listening to me?" One finger poked him in the chest, and he just lost it. Before he knew it, he'd grabbed the prick by the throat and slammed him against the door.

"You put that fucking finger anywhere near me again, and I will chew it off and spit it down your goddamned throat. Got it, pussy?"

Gurgling sounds poured from the man's lips, his face changing from red to purple in mere seconds, his fingers frantically struggling to loosen Nick's hold on him.

“Nick! Let him go! You’re going to kill him!”

The sound of Rylee’s voice, filled with shock and fear, finally made him release the man, who promptly collapsed to the floor and gasped for air.

“I’m going to make sure you’re fired after this,” he managed to choke out.

Nick laughed bitterly, looking into Rylee’s terror-stricken face. “Don’t bother. I was just the weekend coverage anyway.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Shortly after Rylee had left Ethan to collect his things, she heard voices coming from the living room. She couldn’t believe her eyes when she walked out to find Nick with his hand wrapped around Ethan’s throat. Ethan’s feet dangled a good three inches off the floor, and his face had turned a deep shade of purple.

She didn’t want to imagine what would have happened if she hadn’t come out of her room when she did. It didn’t look like Nick had any intention of letting Ethan go anytime soon.

Before she even had a chance to feel excited that the man who had consumed her every thought, dream, and fantasy during the last three weeks was finally standing in her living room again, he turned to walk out, without so much as acknowledging her.

“Nick, wait!” She started toward him, but he turned around and gave her a look filled with so much contempt, hurt, and anger, it froze her in place and damn near stopped her heart, before he stormed out the door.

“That crazy bastard.” Ethan struggled to stand up, his voice sounded raw and hoarse. “I should fucking press charges.”

She whirled on him. “What the fuck did you say to him, Ethan?” She yelled, her fury barely contained, her hands itching to beat the shit out of him.

"You're worried about *him*? I'm the one he almost killed. What kind of people are you hiring at this damn hotel, anyway?"

"Nick doesn't work here, and you damn well know it!"

Ethan looked at her in shock for a moment. "Oh, my God!" His head fell back in laughter. "Are you kidding me? You're fucking that *kid*?"

"That *kid* gave me more orgasms in two days than you *ever* did in the entire *two years* we were together. Fucking asshole!" She grabbed her purse and keys off the table by the door.

"Be gone by the time I get back," she told him, seething, as she walked out the door, "or I'll finish what Nick started myself."



## Chapter Nine

Nick walked down the street, too overwhelmed to focus long enough to figure out where he was going. He just needed to put as much space as possible between him, that hotel, that woman, and her asshole man. He must have been out of his fucking mind to have come here.

He turned the corner when he got to Wacker Drive, and he could see the Merchandise Mart a few blocks away. He remembered going with Noah to a bar across the street from there. The place had good food and even better drinks, and he headed in that direction. He needed a drink in the worst way at the moment.

“Nick!” He tensed at the sound of Rylee’s voice behind him, but kept walking.

“Nick, please!” He could tell she was getting closer, could hear the sound of her heels against the pavement, but he ignored it; ignored her.

“Goddammit Nick, would you just wait a moment!” Rylee ran up behind him and grabbed him by the arm.

She huffed out a breath. “Listen, I’m sorry about what happened back there, okay? I don’t know what Ethan said to you --”

"Oh, your *fiancé* made it perfectly clear that I had no business bothering you." He glared down at her.

"Is that what he told you?" She looked incredulous. "He's lying. He's not my fiancé!"

"Oh, yeah? Does he know that? Because he seemed pretty fucking sure that you were!" He was yelling, so angry that he was oblivious to the scene they were causing in the middle of the sidewalk.

"Damn, Rylee, I never would have thought you were the type who was so desperate for a man that you'd be willing to settle for a piece of shit like that."

He looked her up and down, his expression filled with disdain. "But then, you gave it up to me after only a couple of hours, so I guess I shouldn't be too surprised."

Rylee's hand whipped out and slapped him hard across the face.

"Fuck you!" She slapped him again. "Who in the hell do you think you are? Just because we fucked and talk on the phone, you suddenly think you know me well enough to pass judgment on me? You don't know shit!"

Nick regretted his words as soon as they left his mouth. Seeing the anguished look on Rylee's face, watching those beautiful amber eyes fill with tears, hurt him more than her hand ever could. He felt sick, knowing he'd gone too far.

Rylee turned to walk away, and he reached for her arm. "Rylee, wait. I --"

"Don't!" Rylee snatched her arm away. "I have enough shit in my life, Nick. I don't need more from you." She turned and headed back toward the hotel.

"Rylee, please." Nick caught up with her and pulled her back against his chest. His arms wrapped tightly around her and refused to let go, even as she struggled against him.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered into her hair, repeating the apology over and over again, holding onto her until she finally calmed down.

"I didn't lie to you, Nick," she said softly, her response barely audible over the noise around them. "I broke up with Ethan a month before I met you."

Nick turned her to face him and cupped her face with his hands. He rested his forehead against hers. "You still love him?" He looked directly into her eyes, almost afraid of her answer.

"No." Her response was immediate, without any hesitation, her gaze never looking away from his.

"I believe you." They just stood there, each drinking in the sight of the other, his thumbs caressing her jawline. Finally, he tilted her head up and kissed her, slow and easy, reveling in the feel of her, the taste of her again.

Rylee moaned softly, just melting against him, her arms wrapping around his neck, pulling him closer to her. Nick held the back of her head as he kissed her, hard and deep, as if he were trying to crawl inside of her, his cock throbbing hard in his jeans.

They were both gasping for air, inhaling with deep shuddering breaths, before finally separating from each other.

"Missed you," he whispered against her lips. "Can't stop thinking about you...had to see you again."

Rylee nodded; making little whimpering sounds. "Me too...I dream about you, about that weekend...couldn't wait to see you again."

She leaned up and kissed him again, stealing his breath away, and he lost himself in her kiss. A car drove by, honking wildly, and he finally pulled back, his thumb rubbing across her swollen lips.

"We should go back to the room, baby. I want you. Wanna feel you. Wanna touch you everywhere...been wanting you so bad."

"Yes...please. Need to feel you, too." She nuzzled into his touch.

He put his arm around her and held her close as they walked back toward the hotel.

"I just hope Ethan is gone by the time we get back," Rylee said.

"God help him if he's not," he growled.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick barely registered that Ethan was gone before he was all over Rylee. He pulled her to him, his mouth devouring hers, his kiss desperate and needy.

She clung to him, giving as good as she got, her hands cupping him, massaging his erection through his jeans. They stumbled toward the bedroom but only managed to get as far as the couch. Nick pushed her forward and positioned her over the arm of the couch.

"Gotta have you now, baby. I can't wait."

"Yes. Please, fuck me, Nick." She begged, her ass pressed against him.

Nick slid her skirt up and over her hips until it bunched around her waist, and his hands caressed her ass through her sheer pantyhose. He worked her pantyhose and thong down her legs, went to his knees behind her, and kissed each globe before he spread her cheeks apart and tongued her hole.

Rylee moaned softly and, body trembling slightly, spread her legs farther apart. Nick continued to lick her, and his need grew more intense by the second, until it threatened to overwhelm him.

He stood up and winced, his cock so hard it throbbed and ached with need. "Need you, baby," he groaned, his hands gripping her hips. "Want you right now...right here." He rubbed his erection up and down the crease of her ass. "Have you ever done that? Have you ever let someone fuck you here?"

Nick could see Rylee nodding her head. "Yes," she whispered softly against the sofa cushion as she pressed her ass against his groin. "I want to feel you there. Please..."

He released her and stepped away. "Be right back," Nick told her when she began to whimper. He went to her bathroom and quickly searched around until he found a bottle of baby oil in her cabinet. He headed back to the living room with the baby oil in one hand and used his other hand to open his zipper and unleash his cock as he went.

Rylee hadn't moved from her position on the couch, her ass still pointed up in the air, and her legs spread wide open, waiting for him. He opened the oil and poured a generous amount on his fingers before he carefully inserted one, then two into the tight rosette of her anus.

He heard Rylee gasp when his fingers started moving inside her, scissoring back and forth, stretching her hole for him.

She writhed against him. Her moans grew louder. Nick removed his fingers, reached for the condom he'd left on the table, and quickly sheathed his cock.

Rylee cried out when Nick pressed his hips forward and slowly worked his cock inside her ass.

"That's it. Take me in, baby." Nick pushed his thick length all the way in, his hips resting against her ass, and leaned forward to kiss her on the neck.

"I'm gonna fuck you, baby. Nice and hard. Make you scream my name," he whispered in her ear.

Then he started to move, rocking her with the force of it. Rylee met each of his thrusts with a low moan, her body taking him deep and hard.

"God, Nick. Feels so good."

"Yeah. Need to..." Nick leaned forward. One hand moved around her hip, his fingers sliding into her wet pussy and massaging her swollen clit.

"Nick!" She jerked, riding him hard now, her mouth open wide, her cries echoing in the room.

They moved faster, Nick stroking her, pushing into her, their bodies working together in rhythm.

"Need you to come on my cock, baby. So tight. Wanna feel you."

"Oh, yes. Please..." She screamed his name as she came, and her body clenched tight around his cock.

“Rylee!” Nick’s cock jerked inside of her, and his seed filled the condom.

He collapsed, and his body came down on top of hers, his heart beat furiously in his chest, his ragged breaths feathered across her skin.

He finally managed to push himself off her. Rising unsteadily to his feet, he groaned when their bodies separated. He removed the condom and threw it in a nearby trashcan, then helped Rylee stand, pulled her into his arms, and carried her into the bedroom.

They lay together on the bed, holding and exploring each other and sharing leisurely, heat-filled kisses. Nick finally pulled back and looked into her eyes.

“Thank you,” he said softly. At her confused expression, he said, “You could have picked any man you wanted that night we met, but you picked me. You could have walked away after that first weekend and never given me a second thought, but you still agreed to see me again.” He gave her a smile. “Hell, you could have sent my sorry ass home tonight after the way I acted, but you let me stay.”

“Nick...”

“No, let me finish.” He swallowed hard. “I know I’m probably nothing like the usual type of men that you’re used to dating, and I know that you’re worried about having a relationship with a guy who’s so much younger than you, and who lives so far away. But, despite all of that, you’re still here with me right now.”

He leaned down and kissed her. “When I came to Chicago for my birthday, I never expected to leave with a gift as priceless as you. So, thank you for giving me a chance...for giving us a chance.”

## Chapter Ten

Rylee woke to the distant sounds of barking. She rolled over, more than a little disoriented, and tried to figure out how in the hell dogs got into the hotel.

She opened her eyes and looked around at a room that was definitely not part of the hotel. She sat up as memories of the previous night came back to her. She and Nick had talked for a long time about their relationship before spending the next several hours celebrating in bed and then drifting off to sleep.

Nick woke her a few hours later and told her he had to head back home. The disappointment she'd felt about him leaving was quickly replaced with excitement when he'd asked her to spend the weekend with him in Wisconsin.

Now, here she was in his house, in his room, in his bed, feeling happier than she would ever have imagined at being able to spend the next couple of days with him.

She stretched and glanced at the clock on the table. It was just after nine o'clock in the morning. Nick wouldn't finish up with work for another hour, so she still had a little time to kill.

Rylee climbed out of bed and went in search of the bathroom. She walked out of the bedroom and was surprised by the sight of him, bent over with his back to her, as he searched through the refrigerator.

She couldn't help smiling as she stood there, admiring the view of his ass, looking so good in his jeans. Quietly, she tiptoed over to him.

"Hey, sexy." She wrapped her arms around his waist, and one hand slid down and cupped him through his pants. "I missed you."

"What the fuck?!" He jerked, rising suddenly, and banged his head against the top of the refrigerator. "Shit!" he yelled and stumbled backward. Rylee gave a startled screech as she tried to move out of his way. He spun around, and the glare on his face quickly turned to shock. They stood there and stared at each other, both of them speechless for a moment, before he finally spoke.

"Uh...hi. You're Rylee, right?"

"Yeah...I am. How are you, Noah?" Rylee said, feeling mortified and embarrassed that she'd just felt up her boyfriend's brother.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick waved at the car as it drove away, breathing a sigh of relief that his clients were finally leaving, and he was free for the rest of the weekend. He'd barely been able to concentrate on work because his mind was too occupied with seeing Rylee.

After last night, the last thing he wanted to do was leave her again. But his clients wanted to purchase their dog today, so he knew he didn't have a choice.

When he'd asked Rylee to come with him, he hadn't expected her to say yes. And now that she was actually here, waiting for him in his bed, he couldn't get back to her fast enough.



The sounds of laughter and the smell of food greeted him when he walked into the house. The sight of Rylee, sitting at the counter in the kitchen, watching Noah cook breakfast, made him pause and blink. He'd never seen Noah cook for a woman before.

Noah looked up. "Hey, Nick. How'd the appointment go?"

"Good." His eyes were on Rylee, who turned around and smiled when she saw him. He walked over, put his arms around her, and gave her a lingering kiss on the lips. He looked at Noah over her head.

"They bought Pike," he continued. "I told them that in a few weeks we'd arrange for some additional in-house security training at their place, once Pike had a chance to get acclimated to his new home."

"Good deal." Noah smiled, looking between him and Rylee. "You're just in time. Rylee and I were getting ready to have breakfast. There's enough here for you, if you're hungry." He filled a plate with eggs, bacon, and toast, and placed it in front of Rylee.

"So I see." Nick couldn't hide the smirk on his face. "Since when did you learn to cook?"

"Hey! Comments like that will get your breakfast fed to the dogs," Noah warned.

"Better them than me," he whispered loudly in Rylee's ear, and she started laughing.

"See, now you're gonna have Rylee worried about my cooking skills."

"What cooking skills?" His laughter joined Rylee's.

"Smartass," Noah grumbled, and set a plate down in front of him. "Just shut up and eat before you damage my reputation any further with Rylee."

They spent the next half hour eating and talking before Rylee finally excused herself and went into the bedroom.

"So," Noah began, "I guess I know why you've been so distracted for the past few weeks."

Nick sighed, and looked into familiar hazel eyes. "Yeah...she is." He didn't even bother to try and deny it.

"I take it you've been seeing her since we left Chicago."

Nick shook his head. "Actually, this is the first time we've been together since my birthday." At Noah's raised brow, he continued. "Our schedules were too tight for either of us to get away, but we've spent more than our fair share of time on the phone these past few weeks."

He grinned at Noah. "Our phone bill for this month is going to be a fucking fortune."

Noah chuckled and shook his head. "I guess I might as well get used to it, because I suspect it isn't going to get any better anytime soon."

"Listen, I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner that I was going to bring Rylee here. I took the Chicago job because I wanted to see her, but I hadn't planned to bring her back with me. It just happened."

"It's cool." Noah stared at him for a moment. "You really like her." It wasn't a question, and Nick didn't bother to respond. They both knew it was true. Noah started clearing away the dishes without commenting further.

Nick watched him for a moment. "Go ahead and say it."

Noah glanced over his shoulder. "Say what?" he asked.

"What a sap I am for getting so caught up in a woman." Nick smiled.

Noah turned and looked at him. "Nah" -- he shrugged -- "I can see why you want her. She's special."

Nick nodded. "Yeah, she's the one." He spoke quietly, seriously. "You know, I used to think that the whole 'love at first sight' thing was complete bullshit." Nick shook his head. "But since I've met Rylee, I see how it could happen. I get how the right person could make you feel things that you never believed you'd want, never imagined you'd need." He met Noah's gaze. "And, that person is Rylee."

They were both silent for a moment before they were interrupted by the sound of knocking at the front door. Nick opened the door and found his mother on the other side.

“Leslie told me you sold Pike today.” She leaned up and kissed him on the cheek as she walked in. “That’s a great sale. Pike was worth a lot of money.” She walked into the kitchen and kissed Noah as well before she had a seat at the counter.

“Hi, Mom. I’m fine. How are you?” Nick smiled and shook his head.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Nicky, honey. How are you?”

Nick walked over and wrapped his arms around her in a hug. “So, what brings you by -- other than to congratulate me on my big sale today?”

“Pour me a cup of coffee, Noah, sweetheart,” she spoke to Noah before turning to Nick.

“The weather is supposed to be really warm today, and I thought it would be nice to have a barbeque this --” She stopped speaking in mid-sentence, her attention focused behind Nick. His gaze followed hers to Rylee, who was standing in the bedroom doorway, watching them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rylee figured she’d given Nick and Noah enough time to talk, and decided to go and join them again. She opened the door and stopped in her tracks when she saw Nick with his arms around a blonde woman. Before she could decide if she should be upset or not, the woman turned around and looked at her, and Rylee saw those trademark hazel eyes that were so much like Nick’s and Noah’s.

“Well, I wanted to catch you before you made plans for the evening, but it seems I might be too late.” The woman spoke again, her eyes locked on Rylee.

Nick looked at her and smiled. He walked over to her, took her hand, and pulled her over to the woman.

"Mom, this is Rylee Putnam." Nick released her hand and looped his arm around her shoulder. "Rylee's visiting for the weekend."

Rylee shook her hand and smiled. "It's very nice to meet you, Mrs. Robin."

"Please, call me Caroline." She chuckled. "Mrs. Robin makes me feel old."

Rylee laughed. "I highly doubt anyone would ever mistake you for being old." It wasn't an exaggeration; Nick's mom didn't look much older than her.

"Thank you, Rylee." She beamed. "So, as I was saying, I thought it would be nice to have a barbeque tonight. Rylee, I hope you'll be able to talk these two into bringing you for dinner." She looked expectantly at Rylee.

"I'll do my best, Caroline," Rylee said. "And, thank you for the invitation."

"It's my pleasure. Well" -- she stood -- "I'm headed out now." She walked to the door and threw out a quick, "Dinner's at seven," before she was gone.

Rylee turned to Nick, who grinned down at her. "What?" she asked.

He kissed her. "Mom likes you."

"Oh, yeah? How do you know?"

"She told you to call her by her first name," he said. "She's never let our girlfriends do that."

She looked over at Noah, who nodded in agreement. "And, she invited you for dinner right after she'd just met you," he chimed in. "Another first."

"See, I told you." Nick kissed her again and whispered against her lips. "Trust me; everything's going to be fine."

Rylee smiled and tried to ignore the trepidation she felt. She just hoped Nick was right.

## Chapter Eleven

“What I want to know is, what in the hell does she see in you?” Nick glared at his cousin, Leslie’s husband. José just returned his glare with a grin, completely unfazed, while Noah laughed his ass off.

“I’ve been wondering the same thing since I met her,” Noah joined in. “But, she’s still beautiful and funny and smart, so we’ll forgive her lack of taste when it comes to men.”

“Oh, fuck both of you,” Nick said, fighting hard to hold back a smile. He saw his cousin walking toward him.

“Yo, Leslie! You’re just in time to rescue your husband from a serious beat down.”

“Hey, nobody gets to beat on my man, but me.” She wrapped her arm around José’s waist and kissed him on the cheek.

“Speaking of rescues” -- she looked back at Nick -- “you might want to rescue your girlfriend from Mom and Aunt Caroline.”

Nick groaned. “How bad is it?” He was almost afraid to hear the answer.

“Let’s just say that by this time tomorrow, the entire town will know that you’re dating a woman who’s almost as old as your mother.” She snickered.

“Don’t be a bitch, Leslie.” Nick scowled at her.

"It was just a joke, Nicky." She laughed. "Besides, I don't care how old Rylee is. I like her."

"That's good, because you'll be seeing a lot of her," he told the group before he walked off in search of Rylee.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick found Rylee being held hostage in his mother's living room by every female relative over the age of forty in his family.

"So dear," he heard his Aunt Sylvia ask, "how did you and Nicky meet?" The blush on Rylee's face told him he'd gotten there just in time.

"Okay, ladies," he interrupted the interrogation. "You've monopolized Rylee long enough. It's my turn to enjoy her company for a while." He reached for Rylee's hand and led her out of the house, amidst the objections of his family. Noah met them outside.

"You're my hero." She started laughing as soon as they were away from the house.

He gave her hand a reassuring squeeze as they walked through the crowded yard. "Don't let them scare you," he told her. "They're all harmless."

"Most of them, anyway," Noah murmured next to him. Nick glanced in the direction that Noah was looking and saw his ex, Ashley, glaring at him. He sighed. His mom just had to invite the entire town for dinner.

Leslie and José joined them, and they stood around and talked for a while until Nick's mother walked up.

"Rylee, do you mind if I speak to Nick for a moment? I promise not to keep him too long."

"Of course I don't mind." Rylee stepped back as Nick's mother linked her arm with his and steered him toward the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

"She's too old for you," Nick's mother said without preamble, as soon as they walked into the house.

"Mom, don't start, okay?" he warned as he struggled to keep the irritation out of his voice. "She's not that much older than me."

"Not that much?" Her face was filled with concern. "Nicky, honey, she's thirty-six years old -- fourteen years older than you. That's *a lot*."

"And Dad was *seventeen* years older than you when you got pregnant and married him at eighteen," Nick countered.

She sighed. "Yes, that's true. But -- fair or not -- this is different. Our society has always been more accepting of older men with younger women than the other way around."

His mother shook her head. "And, when you add in the whole race issue..." Her voice trailed off.

"Oh. So Rylee's not just the wrong age, she's the wrong color, too, right?" Nick glared at his mother. "Well, if it makes you feel any better, Mom, she's only half black. The other half is perfectly white."

"Don't you dare try to make me out to be the bad guy here, Nicholas Matthew Robin," his mother warned, her face turning red. "I'm not your enemy, and you know it. José isn't white, and I love him just like he was one of my own sons. Rylee could be green for all I care, and it still wouldn't make a difference to me."

She reached up and cupped his cheek. "But, I'm just one person. Unfortunately, there are too many people out there who don't see it the same way I do. I just don't want you to get hurt, honey. Couldn't you just find a young lady your own age to be with?"

"You mean someone like Ashley?" Nick snorted. "No, thanks."

"Ashley?" His mother frowned. "Honey, no, that's not what I meant --"

"I know what you meant," he interrupted angrily. "I don't want to be with Rylee because of what age she is or what race she is. I want to be with her because of *who* she is. It

doesn't matter to me that we come from different cultures and backgrounds. All I care about is Rylee, and how we feel about each other. And anybody who has a problem with that is just going to have to deal with it, because I'm not going to let other people's opinions about our relationship stop me from being with her."

They stood silently for a while, just looking at each other. "You really care about her, don't you?" his mother finally asked.

"Yeah, Mom...I do." His voice was firm, sure.

"God, you sound so much like your father did when we first met." Her eyes became watery. "I just wish he were still here. He'd be so proud of you."

"I think he'd like Rylee, too."

She started laughing. "Oh, I'm sure he would. He was a sucker for a beautiful woman."

"That's why he snatched you up." He winked at her, a huge grin on his face.

She gave him a playful swat across the ass. "Oh, I see you have a lot more of your dad in you than I thought." They both laughed for a moment before she hugged him.

"Just be careful, okay?" she whispered.

"I'll be fine, Mom," Nick told her.



## Chapter Twelve

"I heard she's almost forty years old."

"She's really pretty. She looks a lot younger."

"She's not all that. The only reason Nick's probably with her is because he thinks it makes him look like a stud to say he fucked an older woman."

Rylee stood in the evening shadows and listened to the three young women talk about her.

"Don't pay them any attention," Noah whispered in her ear, his hand resting on her shoulder. "They're jealous -- especially Ashley." He nodded to the pretty brunette. "She's Nick's ex."

"Ahh...I see. Well, I guess that explains the vicious comments, cutting looks, and overall shitty attitude I've been getting from her all evening."

"Yeah, Ashley's a real bitch. Nick was never serious about her, and he finally ended it a couple of years ago. But she just can't seem to get over it and move on." He chuckled softly. "I think of all the girls Nick ever dated, Mom hated Ashley the most."

"I can see why," Rylee muttered as she glanced at the group once more.

"Come on." He led her in the opposite direction. "Let me give you a tour of the place."

They walked toward the kennel and were greeted by excited barks when they entered the large building lined with cages filled with various breeds of dogs.

“So, how long have you and Nick been breeding and training dogs?” Rylee watched Noah walk through the room. He took a moment to pet each dog through the metal openings before he moved on to the next cage.

In spite of her efforts not to, Rylee couldn't help but admire Noah's muscled form as he bent down in front of one of the cages. It still amazed her how much he and Nick resembled each other, and she wondered if their similarities ended with their physical appearances.

He glanced over his shoulder at her and smiled. “Oh, man, we've been doing this for as long as I can remember. My parents started this business shortly after Nick was born. When Dad died a few years ago, and Mom retired, Nick and I just continued the business.”

Noah stood up and walked toward her, and she saw a moment of sadness flicker in his gaze. Then he smiled again, and the sadness vanished as quickly as it came.

“Luckily, Nick and I really enjoy what we do, and we work well together. Leslie and José work with us, too, so it's all good.”

As Noah talked, Rylee's gaze was focused on his lips. Full, firm, and sensuous, they reminded her so much of Nick's, and she suddenly wondered if they felt like Nick's as well.

It took her a moment to realize that Noah had stopped talking and stood looking at her with a knowing expression on his face.

Rylee felt her face heat, and she was sure that she'd turned about ten shades of red when she realized that he'd caught her staring at him.

She quickly looked away, turning her back to him, and focused on a beautiful Doberman in one of the cages that was whimpering at her for attention.

“It's cool, Rylee.” Noah spoke softly, his words destroying any hopes she'd had that he hadn't noticed her practically drooling over him. Rylee squeezed her eyes shut, far too embarrassed to turn around and face him.

“Nick and I know how much we look alike. Trust me” -- he chuckled -- “we’re used to being stared at by each other’s girlfriends.”

*Yeah, that was it. Wasn’t it?* Rylee desperately wanted to believe that was all it was, because the alternative was something that she just wasn’t prepared to deal with at the moment.

“There is one thing that I’m dying to know, Rylee.” She jumped at the sound of Noah’s voice directly behind her and spun around to face him. He stood so close to her, they practically touched.

“What?” Her voice was tissue-thin, barely strong enough to be considered a whisper as she stared back at him.

When Noah reached out toward her, she stood immobile, her emotions an unstable mixture of apprehension and anticipation as she waited for what would happen next. His fingers wrapped around a lock of her hair at the same time a huge grin spread across his face.

“I need to know the story behind this red hair.”

Rylee’s body relaxed, her heart started to beat, and she felt herself breathe again.

“Oh, that’s easy.” She returned his smile with one of her own. She was used to people asking her that question, knew how uncommon it was for someone who looked like her to naturally have hair that color. “My mother is Irish. I inherited my red hair from her. My name, too.”

“Oh, yeah?” Noah smiled. “So does that make you, Rylee Jr.?”

Rylee laughed. “Not quite. Riley was her maiden name. My father thought it would make a cool first name for me -- with a slight alteration of the spelling.”

“So, do you look more like your mom or your dad?” Noah continued to play with her hair.

"It depends on who you ask. Some folks say I'm a taller, darker version of my mother, and others say I look just like my father, except with red hair." She shrugged. "I like to think I'm a pretty good blend of them both."

"Oh, I'd say you're a hell of a lot better than just pretty good." Noah's fingers released the ends of her hair and slid deep into the thick, wavy tresses, to gently massage her scalp. The act was incredibly soothing and amazingly seductive at the same time.

"Did you know that Nick loves women with red hair?" he murmured softly, and his hazel eyes studied her intently. She shook her head mutely, far too mesmerized by the look in his eyes, the feel of his hands, and the sound of his voice to do anything more than just return his stare.

"It doesn't matter how many women are in the room, Nick will always focus on the redheads first." Rylee didn't know what to think, didn't know how to respond, and didn't bother to try. Instead, she just stood there, took it all in, and enjoyed it.

"Now, I see why he loves it so much." She struggled to keep her eyes open as Noah's fingers continued to knead her scalp. "Especially on you."

Rylee knew they were treading way too close to the out-of-bounds zone, could see them getting deeper and deeper into dangerous territory, and yet she couldn't seem to stop it.

Thankfully, Noah had enough sense to see where they were headed, and he put the brakes on before they went too far past the point of no return. He removed his fingers from her hair and dropped his hands to his sides before he walked past her to check on another dog.

As soon as Noah stopped touching her, whatever it was that had been blocking her ability to think clearly suddenly dissipated.

*What in the fuck are you doing?* Rylee's mind screamed, even as her body still craved his touch. She felt like some horny ass teenager who couldn't control her hormones. Rylee shook her head, convinced she had a serious problem. She'd finally managed to meet a

gorgeous, sexy, and attentive man, who'd given her more physical pleasure and emotional happiness in the past few weeks than men she'd known for years. Yet, that still wasn't enough to keep her from lusting after his brother.

"He really likes you a lot," Noah said, and Rylee flinched. His words served as a necessary reminder that he was supposed to be strictly off-limits. She heard him chuckle softly behind her.

"Look at how he's staring at you. I swear he gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, 'puppy love,'" Noah joked, and Rylee looked at him in confusion. He was focused entirely on the Doberman in the cage. Rylee finally understood that his earlier comment was about the dog, not Nick. But it still didn't lessen the guilt and embarrassment she felt at her behavior.

She turned around to look at the dog. He leaned his head against the cage and poked his nose through the metal grates, his eyes focused on her.

"What's his name?" She reached through one of the spaces to rub his head and scratch behind his ears.

"This is Zeus." Noah handed her a treat for the dog.

"Zeus, huh?" Rylee held out the treat to the dog, and he eagerly ate it from her hand. "I like that. It's strong and powerful, just like you are. Right, handsome?" Zeus barked as if he understood and agreed with her. She laughed and continued to rub and pet him while he licked her fingers and made soft whining noises in his throat.

"We probably should head back," Noah finally said.

Rylee looked at her watch and was surprised to see that they'd been away from the picnic for nearly an hour. "Wow, I didn't know we'd been gone so long."

"Time tends to fly when you're having fun with someone you really like." Rylee looked up sharply at Noah. His words were casual, but the look on his face was anything but. "It's been almost an hour, but to me, it feels like only minutes since we got here."

Rylee swallowed hard, and nodded. Despite the voice in her head that begged her not to, she said, "I feel the same way."

Neither of them attempted to move, neither tried to speak. They continued to stand there, surrounded by the random noises from the dogs and the distant sounds from the picnic, and let the unspoken words, and undeniable attraction, float in the space that separated them. The moment was broken when Zeus began to whine again.

"You can't get enough of the most beautiful woman here either, can you, Zeus?" Noah spoke softly to the dog, but his eyes remained locked on her.

She blushed and quickly squatted down by Zeus's cage. "I'll come and visit you again before I leave, handsome," she promised, and rubbed him once more before they left.

They walked silently down the road toward his mother's house. Nick met them once they reached the yard.

"Hey, angel." Nick put his arm around Rylee and pulled her close to him before he leaned down and kissed her on the neck. "I was just coming to look for you."

"I was showing Rylee around the place," Noah said.

"Cool. Did you meet all of the beasts?" He looked down at her.

"I sure did." She smiled back. "They're amazing...this entire place is amazing." She hugged him tightly. "Thank you for inviting me here," she whispered in his ear. "I'm glad I finally got a chance to see it. I'm very impressed."

Nick leaned down and gave her a long, lingering kiss that she felt all the way to her toes. As she lost herself in the sensations of his kiss, she remained acutely aware of Noah's presence in the background, watching them.

She opened her eyes and looked into Nick's smiling face. "You're very welcome," he said. "Hopefully, this is the first of many weekends you'll spend here." He nodded toward Noah with a smirk on his face. "That is, if my brother doesn't mind you hanging around all the time."

“It’s cool with me. But I think you should know that you’re not the only one around here who wants Rylee for yourself,” Noah warned.

Rylee’s heart fluttered wildly in her chest as she waited for Nick to respond.

“Oh, yeah?” Nick turned to face Noah. “Anybody I know?”

Noah nodded slowly, his face somber. “Zeus has a crush on her.” He sounded so serious that it took a moment for them to realize what he’d said. Finally, Nick’s head fell back, and he erupted with laughter.

“I knew Zeus was a smart dog. He’s definitely got damn fine taste in women.” Rylee’s laughter joined his. She glanced at Noah and saw that he was laughing as well, but his eyes remained serious.

“Come on, beautiful.” Nick kissed her on the tip of her nose. “Let’s go.”

“That sounds good to me.” She smiled at Nick, and then looked over at Noah again.

“Thanks, Noah,” she said softly.

Nick glanced briefly at Noah. “Later, bro.”

As she and Nick walked away, Rylee heard Noah softly mutter something. She wasn’t completely sure, but it sounded a lot like, *lucky bastard*.

## Chapter Thirteen

As soon as they got back to his house, Nick lifted Rylee and carried her into his bedroom. He tossed her onto the bed and came down on top of her. He'd wanted her all day. And now he couldn't wait, couldn't move fast enough to get her clothes off.

He kissed her. Their tongues slid and tangled together, and moans were pulled from both of them. Nick continued to work on Rylee's clothes as they kissed, and he finally managed to get her bra off. He leaned down to take a nipple into his mouth, and laved it with his tongue.

Rylee made little whimpering sounds, begging for more, her body undulating underneath him.

"Mine." He raised his head, held her gaze, and dared her to deny it.

"Yes...yours," she confirmed, and his lips captured hers again. The kiss went on and on, their tongues moving in time with the grinding of their bodies.

Once they were both naked, Rylee slid down his body until she reached his cock. Her mouth opened, and she swallowed his thick, hard length. The sensation had Nick crying out, pushing deep, and taking her mouth. She relaxed her throat and let him all the way in. Her



lips were wrapped tight around his cock, and she dragged them against his skin as he slid in and out of her mouth.

“Rylee...fuck...” Nick gazed down into Rylee’s eyes, watched as his cock disappeared into the warm, wet heat of her mouth over and over again.

He eased his cock out of Rylee’s mouth and pulled her up his body, so that she straddled his waist. “Ride me.” His voice was strained, filled with desperate need.

Rylee snatched a condom off the nightstand and covered Nick’s erection before she eased down onto his cock.

“That’s it, baby. Ride my cock.” He was thrusting deep, pushing up and into her heat, making Rylee’s whole body arch, her hips pushing down to take more of him inside her.

She was so hot, so wet, so tight, and Nick was struggling so hard to hold onto his orgasm, his fingertips were digging into her hips with the effort not to come.

“Kiss me.” Nodding, she bent forward, her lips meeting Nick’s with a moan. Nick’s tongue fucked her mouth, tasted her, his eyes burned for her. “Come for me, baby,” he whispered against her lips hoarsely. “Now.”

His words seemed to ignite her. Rylee screamed as her orgasm hit, and her pussy clamped down hard on his dick. Nick continued holding her, pushing deeply into her, pulling her quivering body against his chest and pressing kisses to her temple.

He started moving again, thrusting hard and fast into her heat. He was shaking hard, his fingers almost bruising her skin, pounding in and out of her, desperately seeking release.

“Goddamn, Rylee...baby. Oh!” A yell ripped from Nick’s throat as intense, white-hot pleasure shot down his spine and exploded from his cock.

He lay there, clutching Rylee to him. They were both panting hard, trying to catch their breath. Neither of them was able to find the strength to move, and they both pretended not to notice the figure that stood in the shadows and watched them from outside the bedroom door.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick heard the front door close and glanced at the clock. It was after three o'clock in the morning, and Noah was just returning home. Nick quietly climbed out of bed, trying not to disturb Rylee, and made his way into the living room.

Noah looked up when he walked into the room. "Hey," Nick spoke softly.

"What's up?" Noah kept moving around the room, avoiding eye contact. "I didn't mean to wake you up."

"It's cool. I wasn't asleep." He paused for a moment. "I was waiting for you to get home."

Noah swore softly, and a huge sigh escaped his lips. Finally, Noah looked at him. "Look, man. If this is about earlier, I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean to watch the two of you. It just sort of...happened."

They were both silent for a moment, before Nick spoke. "You want her, too, don't you?" It was more a statement than a question, but Noah answered anyway.

"Yeah, I do." He sighed again. "But probably not the way you think. What I want, I'd never ask from you. I know this is different. You...she's different." Noah picked up his keys and headed toward the door.

"Listen, I'm just going to crash at Mom's house for the rest of the night and give you and Rylee some time to be alone."

"You don't have to do that," Nick argued. "This is your house, too."

"Yeah, I do. Besides, if you saw me earlier, she probably did, too. I don't want her to think any worse of me than she already does."

"Rylee's not like that, Noah. She won't treat you differently, even if she does know that you were watching us earlier."

"I'll take your word for it. Listen, I'll talk to you later." Noah opened the door.

“Noah, wait,” Nick called out to him before he could leave. “You know I don’t have a problem with you being with Rylee.” He was as close to Noah as any two brothers could possibly be. They’d always shared everything with each other. Especially their women. Nick tried not to think about how much it excited him to know that Noah had watched him and Rylee, and he couldn’t help but imagine the three of them together. “It’s just that she doesn’t know that we’ve always shared women. I haven’t found the right time to talk to her about it yet.”

“Yeah, I can see why you might not be in a hurry to have that conversation with her,” Noah said quietly, turning to face Nick, his eyes serious. “Cause I gotta tell you, bro, Zeus isn’t the only one who wants her. And, if she were mine, I don’t know if I’d be able to share her.” Noah walked out the door and closed it quietly behind him.

## Chapter Fourteen

Rylee stood under the spray of the shower and let the warm water rain down on her. Her mind wandered back to the night before, and she groaned.

*How in the hell do you manage to get yourself into these situations?* She closed her eyes and ignored the voice in her head. But, no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't block it out completely. Just like her friend Drew predicted, she'd gone and fallen hard for Nick after only knowing him for a few weeks.

And, if that wasn't bad enough, she found herself wanting Noah in ways that she should never even consider thinking about with her boyfriend's brother.

She'd seen Noah the night before, could still feel his eyes burn along her skin as he watched Nick and her make love, and just the memory of it made her ache all over. Her mind had been consumed with visions of the three of them together since then.

She sighed, climbed out of the shower, and dried off. She was focusing so hard on how she was going to get herself out of her latest emotional disaster that she didn't hear Noah's voice getting closer to the door until it suddenly swung open.

They both stood there, staring at each other, and Rylee was pretty certain that the shocked expression on Noah's face mirrored her own. His mouth opened and closed several

times, but no words came out. His eyes slowly traveled down her body, and Rylee felt herself shiver under his gaze.

“She’s beautiful, isn’t she?” She had no idea how long they’d been standing there, looking at each other, before the sound of Nick’s voice behind Noah snapped them both out of their trance.

“God...I’m sorry, Rylee. I didn’t know you were in here,” Noah whispered hoarsely, still staring at her, drinking in every detail.

Nick walked farther into the bathroom until he stood behind Rylee, and his hands caressed her bare shoulders.

Rylee was completely speechless, her mind and body in turmoil, torn between what she knew was right, and what she so desperately wanted.

“Look at him, Rylee,” Nick whispered in her ear. “Look at how much he wants you.”

Rylee’s eyes trailed over Noah’s body, and she took note of his slightly flushed skin, the rapid rise and fall of his chest, his hands tightly clenched into fists at his sides, and the huge bulge pressing against the zipper of his pants.

When her gaze returned to his face, her breath caught in her throat. Noah looked at her with such intense passion, it made her whimper.

Nick’s hands slid over her shoulders to knead and massage her breasts. “You see it, don’t you, baby? You see how much you turn him on.” He ground his erection against her ass. “How much you turn us both on.”

Rylee’s eyes rolled shut, and her head fell back against Nick’s shoulder. One of his hands released the breast it was holding, moving down her stomach, between her legs, and into her slick folds.

“You’re so wet, baby,” Nick said, and she heard Noah groan. “You feel it too, don’t you?”

Rylee could only nod her head, too overwhelmed to respond.

"Do you know how gorgeous...how perfect you are?" He punctuated each word with a kiss to her neck.

"God, Rylee, you're everything we could ever want...ever need in a woman."

"It's true," Noah said. "You are so damn beautiful...so sexy. I want you so much, Rylee. I ache with it." The raw need she saw in his eyes, the slight tremor she heard in his voice, confirmed his words and ignited her own desires.

"Prove it, Noah," she said softly. "Show me how much."

Noah visibly shuddered at her words, and he reached for her. His hands wrapped in her hair, and his lips crashed down on hers. Their kiss was desperate and hungry. Their tongues tangled together, and Noah moaned into her mouth as he pressed against her until her body was sandwiched between him and Nick.

Their hands moved in unison over Rylee's body, leaving sparks of pleasure in their wake. She cried out when Noah gripped her ass and pulled her against his hard erection. His lips moved down her neck until he reached her breast, where he sucked the hardened nipple into his mouth.

"Oh, yes..." Rylee moaned. Her hands clung to Noah's broad shoulders, and she pushed her breast closer to his mouth as she silently begged for more.

Noah's lips suddenly released her nipple, and he dropped to his knees. He lifted one of her legs and placed it on his shoulder, and then he spread her slick folds apart and buried his face in her pussy. His tongue fucked in and out of her wet heat before his lips latched onto her clit and sucked the hard nub into his mouth.

"Oh, God...Noah..." Rylee's hands tangled in Noah's hair, her entire body shook, and it was only Nick's arm around her waist that kept her from collapsing to the floor.

"Easy, baby," Nick murmured soothingly. "Just let it go. Let Noah see how good you taste when you come."

Nick's words sent her flying right over the edge. She cried out, and her body convulsed as she came.

"Oh, yeah, baby. That's it." Nick's hands soothed over her body. "You're so fucking beautiful." Nick leaned down and kissed her, his arms still supporting her as she rode out her orgasm.

Their kiss had barely ended before Noah stood and kissed her deeply. She could taste herself inside the heat of his mouth.

"Want you." Noah licked and nibbled at her lips. "Wanna be inside you."

"Would you like that, baby?" Nick held her tightly from behind, his breath feathering across her skin. "Would you like for both of us to fuck you?"

"Oh, God...yes," she whispered breathlessly. "I...please..."

Nick picked her up and carried her to his room. Noah followed behind them. Nick laid her on the bed, then he and Noah made quick work of removing their clothes.

Rylee took a moment to admire their bodies, so similar, yet different. Though they were the same height, Noah's body was slightly leaner than Nick's more muscular frame. They both had the same sun-kissed skin, and a light dusting of blond hair covered their firm, rippled abdomens and trailed down to their pubes.

Her mouth watered at the sight of Noah's long, curved prick, its tip wet and leaking. Nick's thick cock was slightly shorter and pointed directly at her.

Rylee sat up and made her way over to where they stood at the edge of the bed. She wrapped a hand around each of their cocks and pumped their thick lengths through her fists. She leaned forward and sucked Noah's cock deep into her mouth. When she looked up, she saw them both staring down at her, their hazel eyes watching as Noah's cock slid in and out of her mouth.

Rylee switched to Nick, laving on his cock as she'd done with Noah, before she began alternating between the two of them, working their shafts hard until they were shaking, quivering, and clinging to their orgasms by sheer willpower.

The looks in their eyes -- so much want, need, and passion -- excited her, aroused her, and turned her on so much, she felt the liquid heat run down her inner thighs.

Rylee released their cocks and lay back on the bed. Nick climbed on the bed first; his body came down on top of her, his cock hot and hard between her legs. He kissed her, and it was wild, hard, and filled with desperation and desire.

When they broke apart, Nick rolled onto his back and pulled her on top of his body. Noah climbed on the bed behind them and placed kisses on the back of Rylee's neck, down her spine, and over the globes of her ass. He spread her cheeks apart, and his tongue licked down her crease, then delved inside the tight dusky rosette.

"Ahh...yes!" Rylee moaned, and her hips gyrated against Nick's hard shaft.

"Can't wait...need to feel you." Nick was panting, his hand blindly searching through the nightstand drawer, managing to locate a couple of condoms and lubricant.

He gave one condom to Rylee, and handed Noah the other condom and the tube of lubricant. Rylee sat up, opened the condom, and rolled it down Nick's shaft. She leaned over him again, her hair flowed around them. Her lips found his, and she kissed him slowly, deeply, completely. Their lips parted, and their heads rested together.

"Love your beautiful red hair." He played with several strands of her locks, his thumbs gently caressing along the sides of her face. "Love your soft honey skin." He leaned up and kissed her. "Love you," he whispered against her lips. His hazel-eyed gaze held hers, and Rylee could see the truth of his words in his eyes.

Tears stung her eyes, and she tried to swallow past the sudden lump in her throat. "Good" -- she gave him a watery smile -- "because I love you, too."



Nick groaned, his mouth locked on hers again, and he devoured her in a hungry, passion-filled kiss.

Rylee felt one of Noah's hands caress her back as he worked the cool, slicked fingers of his other hand inside her anus, past the tight ring of muscles, to penetrate her deep and prepare her for his cock.

"Noah! Oh...yes..." Rylee cried out at the feel of his fingers fucking in and out of her, shooting pleasure down her spine.

"That feel good, baby?" Noah leaned forward and kissed her on the neck.

"Yes...so good," she moaned, and her ass pushed back against his fingers.

"Are you ready for us, baby? You ready for us to fuck you good and hard?" Nick asked.

"Yes...now...please..." she begged, as need vibrated through her.

Noah slid his fingers from her ass, and Nick lifted her slightly; his thick cock pushed deep inside her pussy, and he groaned as he filled her. Rylee moaned with him, the sound low and shaky, full of need and heat.

Nick's hands cupped her ass and held her cheeks apart as Noah lined up his cock and slowly pressed into her hole until he was fully seated, and his hips were snug against her ass.

They held completely still as their breath came in shuddering pants.

Nick spoke first, his voice hoarse and full of need. "Gotta move now, baby. We need to feel you."

Rylee was so overwhelmed, she couldn't even think, much less speak. All she could do was nod, her eyes watching Nick's face, as they both began to move inside her.

They worked together like a well-tuned machine, alternating between deep thrusts and slow withdrawals, setting Rylee's body on fire and pushing her closer and closer to the edge.

The speed and intensity of their movements increased until they were pumping wildly in and out of her, the momentum of their thrusts slamming the bed against the wall. And Rylee just held on, taking everything in, everything they had to give.

"Oh, shit...can't hold it much longer...need to shoot." Noah was groaning loudly, shaking hard, his fingers gripping her hips tightly as he desperately tried to hold on.

"Uh-huh...yeah." Nick grunted. "Come with us, baby...wanna come together."

Rylee could feel Nick's muscles trembling, saw a dark flush rising along his skin. Pleasure shot through her like a rocket as she came. Nick and Noah were right there with her, the heat of their release flooding their condoms inside her.

Noah slid out of Rylee before he collapsed next to her and Nick. The sounds of their combined breathing echoed through the room.

They lay quietly together for a while before Rylee felt Noah ease from the bed. Her hand reached out, grabbed his, and encouraged him back into the bed.

"Stay," she whispered, "please."

Noah looked at her for a moment, his face filled with longing, and then he looked past her at Nick.

Nick nodded. "It's cool, bro," he said softly, and Noah climbed back into bed. Rylee quickly drifted off to sleep, her body wrapped within their twin embraces.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rylee could hear the low murmurs of Nick and Noah's conversation when she came out of the bedroom later that afternoon. She followed the sound of their voices into the living room.

They both looked up when she walked into the room, and Rylee got the impression from the looks on their faces that she'd been the topic of their discussion.

"Hey, babe." Nick smiled, and Rylee grabbed the hand that he held out to her as he pulled her into his lap.

"Did you sleep well?" Nick's breath teased her skin as he nuzzled along her jawline.

“Oh, yeah.” Rylee chuckled. “You two made sure of that.” Her laughter quickly turned into a soft moan when Nick’s lips found hers briefly before moving down her neck again.

She glanced at Noah over Nick’s head. He leaned against the kitchen counter watching them intently. Rylee could feel the heat in his eyes from across the room, and her body responded immediately to it.

“So, what were you two in here whispering about when I came in?” She watched them share a look before Nick turned to her.

“You.” Nick’s simple and honest response surprised Rylee. She hadn’t expected him to admit what she’d already suspected so easily.

“What about me?” Rylee looked between them, suddenly unsure where the conversation was heading.

Nick’s hand palmed her cheek, and he pulled her face toward his for a brief kiss. “We wanted to make sure that you were okay with what happened this morning.” Nick’s gaze moved past her, and Rylee glanced over her shoulder at Noah, who was now seated in a chair next to the couch.

“I love you, Rylee.” She turned around at the sound of Nick’s words, and her breath caught at the intensity in his eyes. “I’d never ask you to do anything that made you unhappy, and if you told me right now that you didn’t like what happened between the three of us earlier, I’d never ask you to do it again. But, I was hoping” -- Nick looked at Noah briefly before he focused on her again -- “we were hoping that it was as incredible for you as it had been for us, and that you’d want it to happen again as badly as we did.”

Rylee was speechless. Nick and Noah had no idea how much she wanted to be with both of them again. She woke this afternoon with thoughts of their threesome still fresh and vivid in her mind, with every kiss, every touch, every moan and groan of pleasure, permanently branded in her memory.

What Rylee had shared with these two men had been nothing short of spectacular. It was unlike anything she'd ever experienced, more than she'd ever imagined. And she wanted nothing more than to be with them like that as often as possible.

"What are you saying, Nick?" she finally whispered, too afraid to wish, to dream that he meant what she hoped he did.

"He's saying that he's in love with you, and I'm already halfway there." Noah had moved out of the chair and now kneeled next to her. "And I can't imagine anything better than to share the most incredible woman I've ever known with the best friend I've ever had."

"I...I don't know what to say." What they offered should have shocked her, how people would view a relationship like theirs should have bothered her. Instead, it just felt oh, so right. The idea of having two men to love, and who loved her in return, frightened and excited her at the same time.

"Say that you want to be with us as much as we both want to be with you." Rylee looked at Nick, and then Noah. Their expressions were mirror images of each other, filled with a mixture of love, lust, and longing. And all of it was aimed at her.

"Yes..." Nick engulfed her in an embrace, and his mouth closed on hers before she could say another word. He finally released her, and Rylee barely had a chance to come up for air before Noah pulled her against him and kissed her breathless once again.

Without another word, they all stood, and Rylee let them lead her back into the bedroom.

## Chapter Fifteen

“Are you ready to go, angel?” Rylee looked into Nick’s gorgeous face as he smiled down at her. She leaned up and took the kiss he offered her. Her gaze shifted to Noah, who was equally as handsome, and who wore a similar smile on his face. Nick was the more vocal of the two brothers, but Rylee knew that Noah’s feelings for her were no less intense.

She’d officially been seeing Nick and Noah for two months, and even though it was the middle of the week, they’d driven to Chicago to celebrate with her.

It was the first time that the three of them had gone out together, and the feeling was bittersweet for Rylee. She knew that she couldn’t hold and touch both of them in public like she wanted, and that bothered her.

And, as far as their family and friends knew, only Nick and she were dating. As much as they’d hated to do it, they had agreed not to tell anyone about their three-way relationship yet, knowing that some people might not be as understanding about it as they were.

So, instead of giving Noah a kiss like she wanted, and he deserved, Rylee settled for reaching out and taking his hand instead. Noah winked, his face full of understanding, and it just made her love him even more.

"Rylee, is that you?" She turned at the sound of the familiar voice and found herself looking into the face of an old acquaintance from her days with Ethan.

"Monica" -- Rylee offered her a stiff smile -- "how are you?" There was never any love lost between Rylee and the other woman, their tolerance for each other always superficial and disingenuous at best. Monica worked at the same law firm as Ethan, and she'd always been extremely up front about her interest in him and her desire to replace Rylee as the leading lady in his life.

Rylee laughed to herself. She and Ethan hadn't been together for almost four months, and Monica still hadn't managed to secure that spot yet.

"Apparently, not as well as you, it would seem." Monica's voice was as insincere as her smile, her eyes bouncing back and forth between the three of them. Nick and Noah excused themselves, and went to wait for her by the doors.

"So" -- Monica's eyes were glued on them as they walked away -- "are they both yours?"

*Yes.* Rylee wanted to shout it out. She wanted to walk over and lay her claim to both of them. She wanted to show the entire club just how much they meant to her, so that this bitch, Monica, and any other woman in the room would know to stay the hell away from them.

"I'm just with Nick," she responded instead, motioning in his direction, hating the lie, even as she said it. "And that's his brother, Noah."

Monica glanced in her direction. "I knew that Ethan had broken up with you, but I had no idea that you'd have to resort to searching playgrounds just to find a replacement." Her smile became a little more evil. "Although, I must say that they are definitely worth risking a little jail time for."

Monica's snide remark had Rylee ready to rip her head off, scratch her eyes out, and kick her fucking teeth in.

“You know, I figured you would be sick and tired of always waiting around for my leftovers, Monica.” Rylee gave the woman a disdainful smile. “Especially after the way you wasted two years waiting for Ethan and still came up empty-handed.”

Rylee saw the flush that spread across Monica’s cheeks as her face went tight with anger.

“Well, it’s not your boyfriend that I’m after, it’s his brother. And, since you seem to have more on your plate than you can handle anyway, I’m sure you won’t mind if I help myself to some of your dessert.”

“Whatever, bitch,” Rylee muttered. As Monica brushed past her, she barely refrained from grabbing the woman by her bleached blonde hair, throwing her to the floor, and stomping her into a puddle.

Rylee walked in the direction of the doors, and she could see Monica working hard to impress Noah with phony smiles, blatant looks, and none-too-subtle touches. And Rylee watched with no small amount of satisfaction as Noah politely, but firmly, rejected her.

As she approached the group, Noah and Nick’s focus shifted to her. The looks on their faces were filled with so much heat that Rylee knew without a doubt that she was the absolute focus of their attention.

Rylee glanced at Monica, and she could practically see the woman’s hatred pouring off of her. “Better luck next lifetime,” she murmured next to Monica’s ear before she slid an arm around Nick and Noah’s waists, and they walked her out of the club.

\* \* \* \* \*

“You’re up late, aren’t you?” Rylee jumped at the sound of Noah’s husky voice against her neck, his strong arms around her waist. She was so wrapped in her thoughts that she never heard him enter the kitchen where she stood making coffee.

“Hey.” She smiled up at him. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make so much noise and wake you up.”

Noah shrugged and leaned against the counter next to her. “You didn’t. I don’t sleep that well when you’re not there, anyway.” He reached out and stroked her cheek. “What’s wrong?”

Rylee was silent for a long moment before she finally responded. “I don’t like not being able to claim you, Noah. I don’t like having to pretend that you don’t mean anything to me. I’m not ashamed of our relationship, and I’m tired of denying that I love you as much as I love Nick.”

Noah nodded slowly. “So, you think that just because you can’t tell everyone about us that will change the way you feel about me, or how I feel about you?”

“No! It’s just...” She sighed heavily. “You don’t deserve to be ignored in this relationship, as if you’re invisible, or not important.”

“I’d like to consider myself as more of a silent partner,” Noah joked softly.

“You know what I mean, Noah.” Rylee knew she sounded frustrated.

Noah pulled her into his arms and stared down at her. “Listen to me, Rylee. I know you’re not happy about having to hide our relationship. I can’t say I’m too thrilled about it, either, and I wish it didn’t have to be this way. But, for now, it’s necessary. Besides, the only thing I deserve, the only thing I need, is you.”

“Me, too.” They turned around at the sound of Nick’s voice in the doorway. He moved in behind her, and Rylee found herself pressed between their bodies. She leaned her head against Nick’s shoulder and stared into Noah’s eyes.

“Not being able to say how we feel about each other in public doesn’t make our feelings any less real, or our commitment to you any less strong.” Nick’s voice was soft, his words comforting in her ear.



“Believe me, baby, if I thought it would make a difference, I would tell anyone who would listen about us.” Noah leaned his head against hers. “But I know how ignorant and judgmental some people can be, and I refuse to put you at risk of being hurt just because other people have a problem with how we choose to live our lives.”

“You’re right,” she said quietly. “I just don’t know how much longer I’m going to let other people’s issues dictate our lives and our ability to express our feelings for each other.”

## Chapter Sixteen

"Hello?" Nick smiled when Rylee's sleep-filled voice drifted through the phone, so soft and sexy.

"Good morning, angel. Did I wake you?"

"Mmm-hmm...was dreaming about you and Noah." Nick's cock perked up at her words. "God, Nick," Rylee moaned, "I want you both so much right now."

"Oh, yeah, baby. We want you too. It's been a long week. Miss you so much." Nick's cock was hard as steel, aching with need.

"Wish you were here with me right now," Rylee whispered. "I'd ride you, and then Noah, until none of us could walk."

He groaned. "Love how you look when you ride Noah, how you feel when you ride me. All tight and wet and hot. God, I'm so hard for you right now, baby." He was panting; his voice was low and rough as sandpaper. "So hard, it hurts."

Rylee made little whimpering sounds that made his cock jerk.

"I...God, baby. I need you right now," Nick whispered hoarsely.

"I know. I've been trying to figure out a way to leave earlier, but I'm the hotel manager. I have an obligation." Aggravation and need filled Rylee's voice.

"It's okay, babe." Nick tried to mask his own disappointment. He knew that having a long-distance relationship with Rylee would be challenging at times, but the longer they were together, the more he missed not being able to be with her, to hold and touch her, hell, to just be able to look at her for as long as he wanted, whenever he wanted.

"God, this distance shit sucks." Rylee suddenly became quiet, and Nick swore softly. He hadn't meant to speak out loud, but now that he'd said the words, he refused to take them back.

"I can't help where I live, or what I do for a living, Nick. And I can't just walk away from either one, no matter how much I'd like to at times." Nick could hear the hurt in Rylee's voice through the phone.

"I know, babe. And I'd never ask you to give up either one." No matter how much he so desperately wanted to at times. "It's just that I wish we weren't so far away from you."

"You were the one who told me that distance wouldn't be an issue." Nick grimaced at Rylee's reminder of his earlier words when they'd first met.

"And it still isn't an issue. I won't let it be an issue." His voice was adamant. "But I also won't deny that I'd give anything for all of us to be together on a more regular basis."

"Me, too." Rylee sounded as frustrated as he felt. "I...I just don't know what to do about it."

Nick didn't have any answers at the moment, either. But, he decided to drop the subject because he didn't want Rylee to be any more upset than she already sounded.

"Listen" -- he tried to keep his voice light -- "we'll talk about it more when we see each other later, okay?"

"Yeah." She sighed. "I can't get to Wisconsin fast enough."

"Are you sure you don't want Noah and me to visit you in Chicago instead? You've been working a lot of hours, angel. I know you have to be tired." Concern laced his words. "We can be there by the time you get off work this evening."

"No, I really want to come," she assured him. "Your place is so much more peaceful than here, and I always feel so relaxed when I'm there with you and Noah." She laughed softly. "Besides, your mother's already planned a dinner party for Noah's birthday, and I don't think she'd appreciate him not being there for it."

Shit. He'd forgotten all about that. Nick sighed. "Okay, angel. Go on and take care of your hotel, so you can come and take care of Noah and me later tonight."

"I can't wait to see both of you," she said.

"Yeah. Same here, babe."

"Give Noah a kiss for me."

"Give Noah..." The sound of laughter filled his ear. "Be careful, angel. Saying things like that will get you spanked."

"Ooh, you promise?" She sounded a little too excited at the idea.

"On second thought, scratch the spankings. You just might enjoy them too much."

"You just might be right." She laughed softly.

His voice turned serious. "I love you, angel."

"Love you, too, Nick. I'll see you tonight."

Nick hung up the phone, and the smile slowly slid off of his face. He sat there for several long moments, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't figure out a way for the three of them to be together permanently. One thing was for certain, in spite of how he tried to reassure Rylee otherwise, Nick knew that he couldn't take having her as a weekend lover for much longer.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thank God for weekends." Drew sighed and stretched a little. "Oh, my back is killing me."

“*Your* back?” Mya snorted. “Try carrying around another person for nine months. Then you’ll know what real back pain feels like.”

Rylee looked at Mya, her face flushed and glowing, her belly round and full, and she tried to ignore the twinge of envy that flared within her.

“Well, you look beautiful,” Rylee told her, and Mya beamed at her words.

“So, what are you doing for the weekend?” Rylee asked.

“Baby stuff, and more baby stuff. You know -- the usual.” Mya sounded exasperated, but the sparkle in her eyes told a different story.

“What about you? What are you doing this weekend?” Mya got a wicked gleam in her eyes. “Or, should I say, *who* are you doing?”

“Well, that’s a no-brainer,” Drew chimed in. “Damn, Rylee, your boy toy must really be something for you to voluntarily spend so much time in Wisconsin.” He shuddered. “Although I can’t imagine any dick being good enough to distract me so much that I wouldn’t notice the smell of cows all day.”

“Don’t call him that. And he breeds dogs, not cows.” Rylee scowled at him. “Smart-ass.”

“Dog shit...cow shit.” Drew’s nose wrinkled in distaste. “It stinks all the same.”

“Besides, they keep me so well occupied that I don’t have time to notice any smell.” Rylee realized her slip as soon as she’d finished speaking.

“*They*?” Mya’s eyebrows shot up.

“You’re doing both brothers, aren’t you?” Drew’s tone was accusing. “I can’t believe you, Rylee! What are you thinking?” he scolded her and shook his head. “Do you purposefully look for relationships that are going to cause you heartache?”

“Rylee, honey.” Mya’s voice was a little calmer, but no less disapproving. “Please tell me you’re not --”

“So what if I am!” Rylee snapped, suddenly feeling defensive and not appreciating it one bit. “You think that gives either of you the right to sit here and lecture me?”

She looked between her two friends. "I would think that of all people, you two would understand what it's like to be in a relationship that's outside of what most people consider traditional. And you have the nerve to try and judge me?"

"Rylee --" Drew started.

"No!" she cut him off angrily, "Nick and Noah are very special to me. I'm thirty-six years old, and these two incredible men make me feel things I've never felt in my life. Together, they make me happier than I've ever been before."

She looked at them, her eyes dead serious. "And I refuse to make excuses or feel bad for finally finding happiness."

Mya and Drew stared at her in shocked silence for several long moments.

"Oh. My. God...you're actually in love." Drew spoke first, his voice filled with astonishment and disbelief.

Mya nodded her head in agreement. "I never thought I'd see the day," she murmured.

"What are you two talking about?" Rylee said in irritation, feeling so done with the entire conversation. "Drew, you tell me all the time how I love men too easily."

"Not love, sweetie -- *in love*," Drew corrected her. "There's a world of difference between the two."

Rylee looked at Mya. "It's true," Mya agreed. "You can love anybody. But you're only in love with that person who owns your heart, your soul."

"Leave it to our Rylee to find 'Mr. Right' in not one, but two men -- and brothers at that." Drew laughed and kissed her on the cheek. "You can't do anything the easy way, can you, sweetie?"

"No, I think I've finally gotten it right for the first time," she told them. "One man owns my heart, and the other owns my soul."

## Chapter Seventeen

“So, do you like it?” Nick sat with Rylee on the couch in his mother’s living room and watched Noah hold up the leather jacket they’d bought him.

“Hell, yeah!” Noah grinned, and he stood up to try it on.

“Rylee picked it out for you,” Nick told him.

“Well, that explains it,” Noah joked, as he looked at Rylee and smiled. “I knew this was way too nice to be something that Nick picked out all by himself.”

*Fuck you*, Nick mouthed, and held up his middle finger. Everyone in the room laughed.

Noah walked over to Rylee and leaned down to kiss her on the cheek. “Thank you,” he said softly. “I love it.”

“You’re very welcome.” She smiled back.

When Noah stood and walked away, Nick saw his cousin, Leslie, frowning at him. Her narrowed gaze stared back at him knowingly, her mouth tight with disapproval, before she got up and walked out of the room.

Nick turned away and looked at Rylee. “You want anything else to eat or drink?” he asked.

"Nope. I'm stuffed." She patted her nonexistent stomach. "If I eat anything else, I think I just might explode." She leaned back on the couch and sighed. "I probably gained five pounds tonight alone."

Nick took a moment to admire her slender frame. "I don't think you have anything to worry about." He leaned close to her ear and whispered, "Besides, you're going to need the extra energy for the workout that Noah and I are going to give you later tonight."

He laughed at the blush that spread up her cheeks. He kissed her on the lips before he got up and headed toward the kitchen.

As Nick passed the bathroom, a hand reached out, pulled him inside, and the door closed behind him. He looked into Leslie's scowling face.

"What?" he demanded.

"You know what!" she hissed. "I can't believe you, Nick!"

"What the hell is your problem, Leslie?"

"Don't play dumb. Don't think for one moment that I don't know what's going on between you, Noah, and Rylee."

Nick stared at her, his face devoid of expression. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said flatly.

"Oh, really?" Leslie glared at him. "You're telling me that you and Noah aren't fucking Rylee?"

"I'm telling you that you need to mind your own goddamned business, Leslie." Nick spoke through clenched teeth.

"Oh, yeah? Well, you two need to grow up and stop fucking each other's women!" she shot back. "I thought Rylee was different. But I guess she's no better than any of those other sluts that you and Noah like to play around with."



“Who in the fuck are you to judge Noah or me?” Nick growled with anger, fighting hard to keep from yelling. “You don’t know shit about this situation.” He turned toward the door, and then stopped to look at her again.

“And don’t you ever try to disrespect Rylee like that again. She is *nothing* like those other women. They don’t even come close to being in the same league as her.”

“Fine,” Leslie snapped, but she reached out and grabbed his arm before he could walk out the door.

“Look, Nick. You’re right, okay? It’s not my business, and I’m sorry for the things I said about Rylee.” She sighed. “But you and Noah are my cousins, and I care about you. And if I figured it out, how long do you think it will be before Aunt Caroline figures it out as well, huh?” She stared at him. “What are you going to do then?”

Nick looked down at her. “I’m only going to say this once more; my relationship with Rylee is nobody’s fucking concern but ours.” His voice was cold and hard. “And if you value our relationship at all, you will back the fuck off.” Nick walked out the door and closed it behind him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rylee searched for Nick in the kitchen and found Noah instead. “Hey, you.” She smiled. “I thought Nick was in here. Have you seen him?”

“Hi, beautiful.” Noah turned around and looked at her. “Nah, I haven’t seen him. I guess you’re stuck with me instead.” He winked at her.

“Oh, I can think of worse punishments.” Rylee laughed softly, her gaze traveling up and down his body.

The look on Noah’s face went from laughter to lust in a matter of seconds. He walked to the kitchen doorway and peered down the hallway in both directions before he turned back to Rylee. He pulled her into his arms and slowly backed her against the sink.

"I can't wait to show you how much I liked my birthday present." Noah pressed against her as his hands slid down her back and cupped her ass. Rylee felt the growing bulge of his erection through his pants.

"And I can't wait for you to show your appreciation, either." She shuddered in anticipation as need and desire coursed through her.

"How about I give you a little sample right now?" Noah's head lowered, and he kissed her, his tongue sliding between her lips, those hazel eyes never leaving hers.

Rylee gave up trying to hold Noah's gaze, and she lost herself in the sensation of his kiss, the satisfaction of his touch.

Noah groaned and deepened the kiss, one hand slid into her hair, the other held her tightly by the hip.

They were so consumed by pleasure that they never heard the sharp intake of breath behind them until it was too late.

"What in the hell do you think you're doing?" Noah's mother yelled.

Rylee jumped at the sound of her voice, and she felt Noah tense. A soft curse left his lips before he turned to face his mother.

"I can't believe this," Caroline continued. She looked furious, her face deeply flushed. "How could you do this to your brother?"

"It's not what you think, Mom --" Noah started.

"And what exactly do I think, Noah?" she demanded, cutting him off in mid-sentence. "That you and your brother's girlfriend are sneaking around with each other behind his back? That you two were in here kissing while he's right in the other room?"

Movement in the doorway caught Rylee's attention, and she looked up to see Nick, his face filled with anger. Leslie and José were right behind him.

"And you!" Rylee's head snapped around to Caroline, who glared at her in disgust. "What kind of woman are you --"

"Mom, stop it!" Nick yelled and moved farther into the room to stand next to Rylee. His arm slid protectively around her shoulders, while Noah's arm rested around her waist.

"Nicky, honey." Caroline's voice softened as she looked at Nick. "You don't understand...you didn't see what they were doing in here."

"No, Mom, I *do* understand," Nick argued. "And I'm okay with it."

The room was completely silent as Caroline looked back and forth between the three of them. The expression on her face went from confusion, to shock, before it settled into a mask of pure hatred -- all of it aimed at Rylee.

"I knew from the moment I saw you that you'd be nothing but trouble. No self-respecting woman your age has a boyfriend practically young enough to be her son. And yet, despite all my reservations, and against my better judgment, I still welcomed you into my home these past few months. And this is how you show your gratitude."

"Aunt Caroline" -- Leslie tried to interject and placed a hand on her shoulder -- "please --"

"Don't!" Caroline snatched away from Leslie and closed in on the threesome, her eyes still focused on Rylee.

"It wasn't enough for you to have one of my sons; you just had to have both of them, didn't you? Well, you may have them fooled by your pretty face and your sweet smile, but I see right through your act. You're nothing but a fucking whore!" Caroline hissed. "Get out of my house! You are not welcome here anymore."

Rylee stared at Caroline in shock, too stunned to defend herself against the other woman's verbal attack.

"If Rylee's not welcome here, then I must not be either." Nick spoke quietly but firmly, and his response drew gasps from several people in the room, including Rylee.

"You can't mean that." Caroline stared at him. A look of disbelief shone plainly on her face.

"Yeah...I do."

"You would choose her over your own mother, your own family?"

"No. I would choose the woman I love, *and* the family I love," Nick corrected her. "I don't *want* to choose one over the other -- I shouldn't *have* to. But you're not leaving me any other options."

Rylee could hear the pain and anguish in Nick's voice. Her arm wrapped around his waist, and she held him tight against her as she fought back tears that threatened to fall.

"Okay, everybody," Leslie spoke up again. "Let's all just calm down before somebody says something they'll end up regretting later."

"And what about you?" Caroline ignored Leslie as she turned her attention to Noah. "Are you willing to walk away from your family because of this...woman?"

"It seems to me that my family wants to walk away from me," Noah said hoarsely, his voice filled with emotion.

"Whether you understand it or not, whether you agree with it or not, the fact remains that Rylee is the woman we want." Noah's hazel eyes stared down at Rylee. "The woman we love."

Noah turned back to his mother. "And that's not going to change just because you or anybody in this room has a problem with it."

He removed his arm from Rylee's waist, and reached for her hand, his fingers entwined with hers. Nick did the same with her other hand.

"So," Noah continued, "if it makes you feel better to have someone to blame for this, go right ahead. Blame me, blame Nick, blame anybody *but* Rylee. She's done *nothing* wrong, and she didn't deserve the treatment she received here tonight."

"If that's how you feel, fine." Caroline's voice broke, and she pointed toward the door. "Leave." Her eyes were filled with unshed tears, and her lips were pressed into a thin, hard line.

“No!” Leslie shook her head vigorously. “Please, don’t do this!”

With their hands still connected, Nick led the way out of the kitchen with Rylee and Noah close behind him.

“Nicky...” Tears flowed down Leslie’s face, and José wrapped his arms around her.

Nick stopped in front of Leslie and kissed her briefly on the forehead. “Don’t cry, Leslie. Everything will be fine.” He nodded at José. “I’ll talk to you later.” They continued to the door, and Caroline’s voice followed them out of the house.

“Mark my words; that woman is going to break both of your hearts.”

## Chapter Eighteen

As soon as they were away from the house, Nick released Rylee's hand.

"Noah, take Rylee back to the house. I'm gonna go check on the dogs."

Rylee looked at him. "We can go with you."

"Nah, that's okay." Nick shook his head, avoiding eye contact with her. "I'll catch up with you later."

"No," Rylee could see the hurt written all over his face, and she reached for him. "I want to stay with --"

"Just go!" Nick barked and walked off in the direction of the kennels.

"It's okay, Rylee," Noah put his arms around her. "He just needs some time alone. Come on" -- he led her toward their house -- "let's go home."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I don't know about you, but I could use a drink." Noah searched through the kitchen cabinet until he found a bottle of tequila and two shot glasses. He took two bottles of beer out of the fridge, opened them, and then carried everything over to where Rylee sat on the couch.

“Tequila and beer okay?” At Rylee’s nod, Noah poured the amber liquid into one glass and held it out to her. She lifted the glass to her lips and drained it down in a single gulp. Then she reached for a cold beer and took several long swallows before she sat the half-empty bottle on the table.

“Better?” Noah asked softly, reaching out and tucking a stray strand of hair behind her ear.

“Yes,” Rylee smiled at him. She held his hand and placed a kiss into the palm. “Thank you.” Her voice wavered slightly.

“Come here.” Noah sat his beer down next to hers on the table before reaching out and pulling her onto his lap. She went eagerly, wrapping her arms tightly around his neck.

“I’m so sorry,” Rylee said softly.

“For what?” She heard surprise in his voice.

“For ruining your birthday, for what happened tonight...for everything,” she sniffed.

“Hey,” Noah lifted her chin and kissed her. “You don’t have anything to be sorry for,” he whispered against her lips. “If anyone is sorry here, it’s me. I’m sorry for what you went through tonight, sorry for how my family treated you. And my birthday is perfect, because you’re here with me.”

Noah’s lips covered hers again; the kiss was hot and sweet. Rylee moaned into his mouth, and her body moved against him.

They pulled away from each other long enough to remove their clothes, and then Rylee straddled his waist; her hand reached between them to hold his erection steady before she pushed down, and his long shaft slowly eased inside her.

“Noah...” Rylee moaned as shudders raced through her. She spread her legs farther apart and pushed down harder to take him deep within her body.

“Baby, yeah...ride me.” Noah’s hands gripped her ass cheeks as he thrust in and out of her.

Rylee's hands gripped the back of the couch next to Noah's head, and she worked herself on his cock, like he'd told her. Her efforts drew groans and shudders from him, and she spiraled into complete ecstasy as her orgasm slammed through her.

"I love you," he groaned. His hazel eyes burned into her.

Rylee nodded. "I know." She kissed him. "I love you, too."

"Rylee..." Noah yelled, and Rylee felt him let go, felt his pleasure as it shot out of him and into her.

Noah held her tightly against his chest, and she listened to the sounds of their ragged breathing.

"I didn't use a condom," he whispered. "I'm sorry." Rylee was quiet for a moment.

"Do I need to be worried?" she asked softly.

"No." His response was immediate. "Nick and I get tested regularly. Nick had a test just before his birthday, and I had one right after I got home from that weekend."

He leaned back to look into her face. "I promise you that neither of us has been with another woman since we've been with you."

"Then, there's no reason to be sorry." She leaned in and took another kiss, and then sat back and looked at him. "My job requires that I have a physical every year. I got my results back a couple of weeks ago."

Noah smiled. "So, does this mean that we can skip the condoms from now on?"

"Well," Rylee said carefully, "there's always the issue of pregnancy."

The smile slid from Noah's face. "Oh...shit. Rylee...I..."

The horrified look on Noah's face hurt Rylee more than she cared to think about. She forced a laugh.

"Relax, Noah. You're not going to be a father just yet. I got it covered." She began to climb off his lap.



“Wait a minute.” Noah’s hands gripped her tightly by the waist. “You thought I was upset because I might have gotten you pregnant?”

Rylee didn’t immediately respond, and she stared at his chest to avoid eye contact. Noah’s hands cupped her face. He stared at her, his expression serious.

“Truthfully, I *was* upset -- but not for the reason you think. It’s not that I wouldn’t want to have a baby with *you*; I just didn’t think you’d ever want to have a baby with *me*.” He chuckled uncomfortably. “Nick, maybe...”

Rylee’s head snapped up at his words. “How could you ever think that?” she frowned; her fingers reached out and traced his face. “Don’t you know that I love you as much as I love Nick? The two of you are my world.”

“Oh.” Noah looked completely shocked by her words. Finally, he cleared his throat. “If I weren’t already so in love with you, I think I would have fallen right here and now.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Hey,” Nick looked up at the sound of Noah’s voice when he walked into the house.

“You okay?” Noah asked quietly from the couch in the dark living room.

“Yeah, I’m good.” He sat in a chair across from Noah. “Where’s Rylee?”

“She went to sleep in your room.”

“How’s she doing?”

“Better,” Noah told him. “She was pretty upset when we first got home, blamed herself for what happened.”

“It wasn’t her fault,” he denied hotly, as renewed fury flowed through him.

“I know...it was mine.” Noah sighed heavily and hung his head for a moment. Finally, he looked up and met Nick’s gaze.

“I’m sorry, man. I should never have kissed her in the house. I knew better, I just...” His voice trailed off.

Nick ran a hand through his hair. "Listen, this wasn't your fault, either. It was bound to come out eventually. Hell, Leslie already figured it out. It was only a matter of time before everybody else did, too. Not that it matters. I still love Rylee, and what they think won't change that."

"I love Rylee, too." Noah stared back at him, his voice low, sure. "And I won't let her go, either."

Nick met Noah's stare and nodded slowly. "Yeah, I know you do, and I know you won't."

They sat in silence before Noah spoke. "I've never seen Mom react like that before. I can't believe the things she said to Rylee...to us."

Nick heard the same hurt and anger in Noah's voice that he felt. His response was a grunt; the memories of the evening were still too new and painful for him to talk about it.

"You know she meant what she said about us not being welcome there anymore." Noah continued.

"Yeah, I do." His leveled gaze met Noah's. "And I don't care. I love Mom, but I love Rylee more. She's the best fucking thing that's ever happened to me, and I'm not giving her up for anybody, including Mom."

\* \* \* \* \*

Rylee awoke cocooned within the warmth of Nick's strong embrace. His fingers played with strands of her hair. She turned around so she could look into his face. "Are you okay?" she whispered.

"Yeah, I am." Nick closed his eyes and sighed. He finally opened them and looked at Rylee again. The muted light in the room couldn't hide the pain and regret she saw reflected in their depths.

"I'm sorry, angel." Nick spoke quietly. "Sorry for --"

“Shh” She interrupted, and placed a finger against his lips. “No more being sorry, no more being hurt tonight.”

Rylee replaced her finger with her mouth and kissed him. Her tongue caressed his lips before it delved deep inside. She poured all of the love she felt for him into the kiss, and she didn’t ease up until Nick began to moan.

“God, baby,” he breathed against her lips. “I want...”

“You got me,” Rylee assured him. “Anything you want. *Anything.*”

“I want forever.” His hazel eyes were dead serious, his voice sure.

Rylee smiled and blinked back tears that suddenly burned her eyes. “I guess that’s long enough.”

“Love you.” Nick kissed her again and eased her onto her back. His large body pressed her smaller one into the mattress.

Rylee automatically spread her legs and lifted her hips off the bed to grind against him. When Nick reached for a condom on the dresser, she stopped him.

“You don’t need those.” She pulled his hand away. “Not anymore.”

“Are you sure?” He questioned, his expression hopeful.

Rylee smiled. “I’m positive.” She leaned up and kissed him softly. “Besides, I want to love you tonight.”

His shudder was her answer, and Rylee slowly slid underneath him. Her lips kissed a path down his body as she went, until his thick erection was directly above her face. Her tongue licked up the veined shaft, and her lips wrapped around the crown as she sucked him into her mouth.

“Oh, fuck baby...yeah.” Nick leaned forward and grabbed the headboard, his moans echoing through the room, and his hips thrust back and forth as he pushed into Rylee’s mouth.

Rylee moaned around his length; her hands gripped his ass to pull him closer and encourage him to go deeper.

Nick roared her name when he came, and she could feel him jerk in her mouth as heat splashed against the back of her throat. Rylee continued to suck him through the spasms that wracked his body. When she released his semi-hard erection from her mouth, Nick rolled to the side and gathered her into his arms.

Rylee listened to the sounds of Nick's steady breaths, long after he'd fallen into a deep sleep. Her thoughts were filled with flashbacks as Mrs. Robin's words replayed over and over in her head and made her own rest impossible.

Each memory inflamed Rylee's anger even more. If Mrs. Robin wanted to hate her, that was fine. Rylee didn't give a shit about the other woman's opinions of her. But she needed her ass kicked for the way she'd treated her sons tonight.

Rylee looked down at Nick's sleeping form, his handsome face still marred by a slight frown that creased his forehead, and she knew just how deeply their mother's words had hurt him and Noah. It made her want to march back down to the woman's house and let her know exactly what she thought about a woman who would choose to alienate her children just because they weren't living a life that she thought they should lead.

Rylee thought back to all of the things she'd done in her life that she was certain her parents didn't agree with. Yet, in spite of that, she never doubted that no matter what happened, they always had and always would have her back.

That's why it was unfathomable to her how a woman with two wonderful, loving, and hardworking sons, who absolutely adored her, could willingly push them away simply because she had a problem with who they were fucking.

Rylee sighed and smoothed the hair away from Nick's forehead. No, his mother definitely wasn't a candidate for the Mother of the Year award. Rylee just hoped that the

woman hadn't let her own narrow-minded beliefs and petty biases cause irreparable damage to her relationship with Nick and Noah.

The hazy light from the morning sunrise had begun to filter into the room by the time sleep finally caught up with her. Rylee's last thoughts before she drifted into a restless slumber was that if Mrs. Robin was waiting for her to give up and walk away, she was going to be sorely disappointed, because Rylee wasn't going anywhere. And, no matter what it took, Rylee was determined to prove to Mrs. Robin that she was wrong about her and the love she had for her sons.

## Chapter Nineteen

As Nick's car rolled to a stop outside of Mya and Tom's lake house, Rylee could feel herself immediately relaxing. Her friends had purchased this piece of land in the private community of Lake Carroll a few years ago and built the house that was used as a weekend getaway. It was large enough to offer privacy, yet it still managed to remain cozy. And, it offered an amazing view of the lake.

It had become a tradition for Rylee and her friends to spend the Fourth of July here, and this year was no different. She loved coming to this place, spending time in the beauty and solitude of nature. Although she'd lived in large cities, Rylee was convinced that she was a country girl at heart.

"This is nice," Noah commented from the back seat.

Rylee unfastened her seatbelt and smiled at him over the seat. "Wait until you see the inside. It's beautiful, and the lake is pretty spectacular, too."

The front door of the house opened, and Rylee saw Mya and Tom walk out. She climbed out of the car and went to hug her friends.

"You're just in time. The food is hot, and the beer is cold," Tom gave her a quick peck on the cheek when she walked by as he headed to the car to help Nick and Noah with their bags.

"Come on," Mya pulled her by the hand toward the house. "Drew and Jacob are supposed to be watching the food, and if we wait too long, there won't be anything left to eat."

Rylee laughed and followed Mya through the house. "Am I sleeping in my usual room?" she asked as they walked onto the deck.

"Not this time," Mya smiled. "We figured you'd need the additional space this year, so Drew and Jacob agreed to switch rooms with you."

"There she is!" Rylee looked up to see Jacob walking toward her. "You finally made it. We were just about ready to send a search team out to look for you." He stopped long enough to give her a hug.

Rylee winced. "It's my fault. I ended up working later than I'd planned."

"You seem to be doing that even more than usual lately." The sound of Drew's voice had her searching the yard, finally finding him by the grill.

"Hey, no talking about work, remember?" Rylee kept her voice light as she ignored just how accurate Drew's comment was.

"You're right," Drew joined them at the table. "Besides, I'm just happy that you made it at all." He gave her shoulder a gentle squeeze. "I've missed you, kiddo. You work too hard, and I'm glad to see you taking some time to relax and enjoy yourself."

Rylee's attention was drawn to Nick and Noah, who walked onto the deck followed by Tom.

"I must admit that I have a lot more incentive to take time off for more pleasurable pursuits," she murmured.

Drew's gaze followed hers. "If that's what it takes to get you to take some time out for yourself, I'm all for it."

\* \* \* \* \*

Rylee sat with Mya on the deck, enjoying the warm July evening and watching the men on the boat as it slowly moved across the lake.

"So, I take it their mother wasn't too pleased to find out about the three of you."

Rylee snorted at Mya's comment. "That is definitely an understatement. If the woman thought she could have killed me at that moment, I'm positive she would have. I swear, you'd think I was the devil incarnate out to corrupt her precious little babies." She chuckled bitterly, lost for a brief moment in the memory. It took her a second to realize that Mya remained uncharacteristically quiet.

Rylee turned and studied her friend. The look on Mya's face made Rylee laugh again, and the sound was filled with hurt. "That's just great. You actually agree with her." She started to rise from her chair.

"Wait a minute, Rylee." Mya grabbed her arm and stopped her before she could leave. "I don't agree with her, and I certainly don't agree with what she said to any of you. But, I can see how she might feel that way."

Mya held up her hand to stop Rylee from speaking. "Just calm down and listen. When we found out about the three of you, we were shocked and concerned at first because we were worried about you, and didn't want you to get hurt again. But, ultimately, we accepted that you were an adult, it was your decision to make, and we were prepared to support you in whatever choice you made." Mya paused, and Rylee watched her absently rub her protruding belly.

"But, it's different for a mother, Rylee. It wouldn't matter if Nick and Noah were twenty-one or sixty-one with grandkids of their own. They're still going to be her babies.



And she's always going to think that there's no woman who is good enough for her sons -- especially not the same woman who wants both of them."

Rylee nodded slowly. Although she hated to admit it, Mya's words made perfect sense. "Mothers and their sons," she murmured softly.

"You got it." Mya chuckled. "And there isn't a damn thing we can do about it, but hope that one day we'll have sons of our own to torture and completely drive insane."

Rylee burst into laughter. "You are pure evil. I'm going to pray really hard that you have a girl."

They laughed quietly for a moment before Mya grew quiet. "Speaking of kids, do you think there will be any in your future?"

Mya's question caught Rylee off guard, and she couldn't think of any of her usual comments to blow off the subject.

"Yeah," she said softly, opting for the truth instead. "I'd love to have a child. I think about it a lot, actually."

"So, you're not worried that it would be hard for a child to understand having two fathers?"

Rylee shook her head. "Do you have any idea how many kids grow up every day without even one father around? I think that any child we have would be fortunate to have two of them." She looked toward the water. "Especially those two." She turned her attention to Mya again. "No, I'm not worried about that at all. I know Nick and Noah are going to be amazing fathers."

"So, what's stopping it from happening?"

Rylee sighed. "I'm not ready."

Mya laughed. "Uh, I hate to be the one to tell you this, but in spite of how young you look, your body is still getting older, and your window of opportunity is getting smaller by the day."

"It's not about being ready to have kids."

"Then what is it?" Rylee heard the confusion in Mya's voice.

"Would you believe me if I told you that I'm not where I want to be in my life?" She looked around the lake, the sounds and flashes of fireworks echoing in the night air.

"You know, I've spent most of my adult career working at the hotel, and I'm proud of my accomplishments. But, it just doesn't hold the same appeal for me anymore." She glanced at Mya. "Don't get me wrong, I love what I do for a living, but the environment is sucking me dry and stealing my youth."

Her eyes wandered back to the lake again. "All I know is that I have to make a change soon, otherwise neither of them will still be around for me to see the wonderful fathers I know they're going to be."

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick felt the bed move, and his eyes opened in time to see Noah leave the room and quietly close the door behind him. Nick glanced at Rylee and saw that she was still asleep. When Noah didn't come back after several minutes, Nick eased from the bed and pulled on a pair of jeans and shoes before he went looking for him.

He found Noah outside on the deck, leaning against the railing, seemingly lost in thought as he stared at the lake.

"You okay?" Nick watched Noah silently as he waited for him to respond. Finally, Noah sighed and turned around to face him.

"It's nice here." Noah spoke quietly. Nick just nodded, knowing that his brother had a lot more than just the scenery on his mind as he waited for him to continue.

"You know, I look around this place, I see Mya and Tom, even Drew and Jacob, and I can't help but think about Rylee. She deserves to be happy, just like her friends."

"Wait...what do you mean?" Nick frowned. "You don't think Rylee's happy?"

Noah shook his head. "That's not what I meant."

"Then what are you saying, Noah?"

"I'm saying that she deserves more. She deserves to have a family and a life like this."

Noah gestured around the lake, and sighed heavily before he spoke again.

"I'm saying that you should ask Rylee to marry you." Nick could only stare at Noah, feeling certain that he'd heard his brother incorrectly.

"If you don't, I will." Noah warned.

"Hold up." Nick walked over to where Noah stood. "Trust me; I have no problem with asking Rylee to marry me." He ran a hand through his hair. "Hell, I've wanted to ask her for a while, but I didn't want her to feel like I was rushing things." He met Noah's gaze. "And I didn't know how you'd feel about it if I did."

"How *I'd* feel?" Noah shook his head, and chuckled softly, the sound less than happy. "Part of me hates the idea of her marrying anybody other than me, including you." Noah was quiet for a while before he suddenly smiled, and the look was much more genuine.

"Luckily, that's a pretty small part. Mostly, I think I'd feel happy if the two people I care about most in the world were married." Noah looked at him with serious eyes. "I know how much you love Rylee, and she loves you."

Nick opened his mouth to tell Noah that Rylee felt the same way about him, but Noah held up a hand to stop him from speaking.

"And, I know that Rylee loves me, too. But she can't marry both of us. And I would never have known her if it weren't for you. So, yeah...I'm good if you two get married."

"Are you sure about this?" Nick watched Noah closely. He knew how deep his brother's feelings went for Rylee, and he was positive that Noah hadn't made that decision easily.

Noah held his gaze unwaveringly, his voice firm. "If it means keeping Rylee in our lives permanently, I'm willing to do damn near anything." Noah smiled, and his expression

became less intense. "And, hopefully, once you two are married, she'll want to have kids, which is good because you'll make a great father."

"No, *we'll* make great fathers." Nick corrected him. "Regardless of whether Rylee and I get married or not, we're all in this together." They stared silently at each other for a moment before Noah nodded slowly.

"There's one more thing," Nick said. "I think we need to seriously consider expanding the business. I know we've talked about it some in the past, but now that we're trying to make this official with Rylee, we're gonna need to come up with a way for all of us to live together." Nick paused, unsure of what Noah would think about what he was going to say next.

"It'd be a lot harder for her to move near us with her job, so we're probably going to need to look at available places closer to her."

Noah seemed to think about it for a moment before he said, "Yeah, I think that would work. Besides Wisconsin, we get more business from Illinois than any other state. We could move down there to run the new facility, and let Leslie and José handle the one in Wisconsin."

"As soon as we get back home, we need to start checking out properties." Nick could barely contain his excitement. "I feel like I've been waiting forever for the three of us to finally live as a family. And now that it's so close to being a reality, it can't happen fast enough."

## Chapter Twenty

*What did I ever see in him?* Rylee studied Ethan as he walked through the restaurant toward her table. She tried to remember what it was about him that had attracted her and made her stay with him for two whole years -- not to mention, consider him as marriage material.

At the moment, she couldn't think of a single thing about him that appealed to her. All she could see was a slightly better-than-average looking man on the wrong side of forty, hiding behind expensive clothes, a cocky attitude, and a flashy lifestyle in a pathetic attempt to hold onto his youth.

"Hello, gorgeous." Ethan leaned down and kissed her on the cheek, a huge grin on his face. "You look wonderful, as usual."

"Thank you," Rylee murmured and smiled slightly.

Ethan moved his chair so that it was close to hers before he sat down and took her hand in his.

"I have to tell you how surprised and absolutely thrilled I was when you called and asked me to have dinner with you." He smirked at her. "Especially after our last...encounter."

Rylee wanted to slap the look off his face as she eased her hand from his grip.

"Listen, Ethan. Let's just get something straight. This isn't a reconciliation dinner. I'm not trying to pick our relationship up where we left off."

The smile slid from Ethan's face. "Okay...since I was so obviously mistaken, why don't you tell me what this *is* about?"

Rylee took a deep breath. "Your law firm is handling the Weisman estate in Wisconsin."

Ethan frowned. "Yes, we are. What about it?"

"The estate includes an old ranch that's attached to a substantial piece of land," she continued.

Ethan nodded slowly. "Yes, it does. Shortly after Mrs. Weisman passed away a few weeks ago, we started receiving offers on that property, and we haven't even had it appraised to determine its full value."

"Yes, I know," Rylee told him. "I've already spoken to the Weisman family, and they directed me to their attorney. So...here I am."

Ethan's frown deepened. "I still don't get it. What does my firm's representation of this estate have to do with you?"

"Oh, come on, Ethan," Rylee said. "I thought it would be obvious to you by now." When he didn't respond, she sighed. "I want to buy the Weisman ranch, including the surrounding property, and I need your help to do it."

Ethan stared at her for a long moment, before his head fell back, and he roared with laughter. "You're kidding, right?"

"Do I sound like I'm kidding, Ethan?" Rylee tried to remain calm, in spite of her increased irritation.

"Why in the hell would you want that place?" He questioned in between laughter.

"I have my reasons," she said vaguely.

Ethan's laughter stopped abruptly, and he stared at her through narrowed eyes.

"This has to do with that punk kid, doesn't it?" His voice sounded hard. He didn't wait for her to respond before he continued.

"Monica told me that she saw the two of you together. You've got a hell of a lot of nerve, you know that? You dump me, and then when you need something, you turn around and ask me to help you. Why should I? Give me one good reason why I should make it easy for you to be with another man?"

Rylee was so angry, she could barely speak. She clenched her hands into fists under the table as she fought the urge to claw his eyes out. Ethan had cheated on her during their relationship more times than she cared to remember, and now the son of a bitch had the audacity to try and act like he was the one being victimized.

"I knew this would be a mistake." Rylee stood up from the table. As desperate as she was for his help, she knew she'd kill him if she had to sit there with him a moment longer and watch him play the jilted lover routine.

"I don't know why I ever thought I could come to you for help." She glared down at him. "Everything has always been about you -- what you want, what you need -- and to hell with anybody else." Rylee's voice raised, and she struggled to keep the tears at bay as several people in the restaurant looked in their direction.

*I will not cry in front of this bastard.* She clenched her teeth and took a deep breath before she spoke again.

"You and I both know that we weren't meant to be together, Ethan," she spoke quietly. "We were just using each other. You wanted an arm piece, and I wanted...to be wanted." She chuckled humorlessly, shaking her head. "But that's not enough for me, not anymore. I need to be *in love*, and I need to *be* loved. And we both know there was never any love between us." Rylee removed her jacket from the back of her chair and grabbed her purse off the table.

"So, if you're refusing to help me because you want to hurt me for ending our engagement, you're wasting your time. And if you think it will stop me, you're wrong. Regardless of whether you help me or not, I will find a way to get this property."

She walked away with her head held high, leaving a speechless Ethan still sitting at the table. Once outside, she hailed a cab. She'd just gotten in and was about to close the door when she heard her name.

"Rylee! Wait!" She saw Ethan running toward the cab.

"Fuck off, Ethan!" Rylee said angrily. "We don't have anything else to say to each other."

Ethan grabbed the door to stop her from closing it. "Just hear me out."

Rylee glared at him for a moment, before she sighed in irritation. She released the door and slid across the seat to make room for him. Ethan got into the cab and closed the door.

"Make it fast," she snapped as the cab pulled away from the curb. "We're only ten minutes from the hotel."

"You're really serious about this property, aren't you?" Ethan asked.

Rylee snorted and stared out the window. "Obviously I am, or I wouldn't be sitting here subjecting myself to your bullshit," she muttered.

Ethan chuckled briefly, and then he became quiet for a long moment. When he finally spoke, his voice was barely above a whisper. "What does it feel like?" he asked.

"What are you talking about, Ethan?" Rylee asked in annoyance.

"What does it feel like to be so in love with someone that you're willing to do *anything*, to risk *everything*, just to be with them?"

Rylee's head whipped around, expecting to see the patented smirk on Ethan's face, feeling certain that he was patronizing her and preparing to chew him a new asshole.

But her words died in her throat when she saw the look of genuine curiosity in his expression -- mixed with a little envy, and a lot of longing -- as he stared back at her.



"It feels...right," she finally responded. After a minute, Ethan gave her a brief nod.

"Well." He cleared his throat and glanced out of the cab window. "We're almost at the hotel. Let's talk about how we can get you that Weisman property."

By the time the cab pulled up in front of the hotel, they'd discussed Rylee's plans for the place and her offer.

"So, you're sure this is what you really want to do?" Ethan asked her again as they walked through the hotel lobby toward the elevators that led to her apartment.

"Yes, I'm positive," she confirmed with a smile.

"Okay, I'll contact the Weisman family tomorrow to discuss your offer. I'll call you afterward to let you know how it went."

They reached the elevators, and Rylee turned to him as she pressed the elevator button. "I think I owe you an apology, Ethan," she admitted. "I realize now that underneath that asshole persona there really is a decent human being."

"Shh!" Ethan said in mock horror and took an exaggerated look around the lobby. "Don't let anybody hear you say that. It'll ruin my reputation as a badass forever."

Rylee laughed. "Fine, but I do want to thank you for agreeing to help me."

"Don't thank me too soon," Ethan warned. "I still have to convince the Weismans to accept your offer. Although, I think they'll like your plans for the place a lot more than the idea of some big time developer coming in and destroying it to put up a bunch of pricey town homes."

"I'm not worried," Rylee assured him. "I may have questioned your ability to be a good fiancé and husband, but I've never doubted your skills as an attorney and negotiator."

Ethan's face suddenly became serious. "I might not be as good a negotiator as you think. I mean, I couldn't convince you to stay with me, could I?"

"Ethan..." Rylee was taken aback by the intense expression she saw on his face, and she didn't quite know how to respond.

"It's fine." He smiled suddenly, but Rylee noticed that his eyes remained sad.

"Thank you," she said softly.

Ethan's hand reached up, and he caressed her face. "I hope that son of a bitch knows just how lucky he is."

"I'm the one who's lucky." Rylee stepped away from his touch and into the waiting elevator. "Good night, Ethan. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Once the doors were closed, Rylee leaned against the elevator walls and tried to control the nervous excitement racing through her. Since the first moment she'd laid eyes on the ranch in Wisconsin, she knew immediately that she had to have it. It was the answer she'd been looking for, a way to continue the work she loved, and be closer to the two men she loved at the same time.

Rylee pictured the property and couldn't help but smile. Everything about it was perfect, from its size to its location. And, with the right amount of renovations, it was going to make a great bed-and-breakfast. And, more importantly, it was only thirty minutes away from Nick and Noah.

Rylee sighed. At least one of the toughest parts was over now that she'd managed to convince Ethan to help her. Now all she could do was hope that he was as good at his job as she believed he was.

That thought brought on another round of worries. Rylee knew that even if the Weismans agreed to sell the property to her, she'd still need more money to meet her own offer.

She thought about the part-time job she was going to start that week at a nightclub not far from the hotel. It was owned by an ex-boyfriend of hers, and he needed a manager to cover the weekends. Thankfully, their relationship had ended on good terms, and he still liked and trusted her enough to hire her for the job.

The pay was extremely generous, and Rylee knew that he was paying her more than he should for the job she'd be doing. But, as badly as she needed the extra cash at the moment, she wasn't about to complain about it.

The additional income she earned there would help supplement the line of credit she'd secured from her bank and the money from her own personal savings and investment accounts. It would give her more than enough money to cover her offer, and still be able to complete all of the renovations that she wanted to have done.

The elevator doors opened on her floor, and Rylee walked down the hall to her apartment. As she let herself inside and headed toward her bedroom, Rylee couldn't help but think that this was probably one of the last nights that she'd get a full night's rest for a while. But the lack of sleep would be well worth the sacrifice, if everything worked out in the end.

"*When* everything works out." She spoke out loud in the quiet room. It just had to. Rylee couldn't afford to believe otherwise. The alternative was more than she could bear to think about.

## Chapter Twenty-one

"Damn!" Noah walked into the house just as Nick swore and threw the cordless phone onto the couch.

"What's wrong?" he asked as he walked pass.

"Rylee." Noah paused halfway to his room and turned to look at Nick.

"Please don't tell me she's working," Nick heard the disappointment in Noah's voice. "Not this weekend."

Nick just nodded as he sighed and sat down heavily on the couch. He rested his head in his hands. It seemed that lately, Rylee spent less and less time with them.

He'd been living for this one weekend, had barely been able to focus on anything past that one moment when he would finally propose to Rylee. Nick thought back to the weeks he and Noah had spent shopping for just the right ring, one that would be worthy of her, the way they'd planned every detail of their weekend with her, and now it seemed that their efforts were in vain.

Noah blew out a frustrated breath. "God, it seems that lately Rylee's canceled more weekends than she's actually spent with us."

He met Noah's eyes. "We both know that Rylee is too good for us. I always knew that it was only a matter of time before she figured that out as well, before she woke up and realized that she could do so much better. And, I..." Nick paused and swallowed hard, feeling hesitant to put a voice to his real fears. "I just can't help but feel like that day has arrived, and she's finally gotten tired of being with us." Jesus, saying those words hurt more than he would have imagined.

They both got quiet for a moment, before Noah spoke. "I don't believe that, man. I can't..." Noah shook his head. "I just think that this whole distance thing is getting to all of us. It'd be so much easier if we didn't live so far away from her. Then, it wouldn't matter if she had to work, because we'd still be able to see her."

"That's why this weekend was so important." Nick ran his fingers through his hair. "But, now..."

"Well, I don't know about you, but I refuse to let it end here."

Nick looked at the determined expression on Noah's face. "Are you saying what I think you're saying?" he asked.

Noah nodded. "I think we need to take a trip to Chicago." He stood up and headed toward his bedroom. "I've waited too damn long for this weekend to let it go to hell just because Rylee has to work."

"Uh-huh." Nick was right behind him. "If we can't get our redhead to come to us, we'll just have to go to her."

\* \* \* \* \*

"What do you mean, Rylee's not working tonight?" Nick frowned at the receptionist. "That can't be right. Check it again. Are you sure?"

"Um...y-yes sir. I-I'm positive." The flustered young woman stuttered out. "I'm sorry, sir. Ms. Putnam isn't on the schedule for this weekend."

Nick turned and looked at Noah, who looked just as perplexed as he.

"Come on," Noah motioned toward the restaurant in the hotel. "Let's go and see if Drew's working tonight. Maybe she's with him."

They walked away from the front desk without a backward glance and headed straight to the restaurant. Once inside, they maneuvered their way through the crowded room until they reached the bar. Nick tapped Noah on the shoulder and nodded toward Drew, who was busy making drinks.

"Yo! Drew!" Nick yelled out and waved his hand in the air to catch Drew's attention. Drew looked up and smiled. He finished the drink he was making and then headed over to where they were standing at the end of the bar.

"Hey, what's up?" Drew reached out and shook each of their hands. Then, he looked around. "Where's Rylee?"

Nick and Noah glanced at each other. "We were hoping you could tell us," Noah spoke. "But I take it you haven't seen her?"

Drew's expression immediately became concerned. "No...not since earlier today. She told me she was spending the weekend in Wisconsin with you two."

"Yeah, well, she told us she had to work this weekend," Nick's voice was laced with worry. "We decided to surprise her and come here so we all could still be together this weekend, but we can't find her anywhere. She's not at work, she's not at home, and she's not answering her cell phone." Nick could feel his anxiety rising as he tried not to envision Rylee lying by the side of the road somewhere between Chicago and Wisconsin.

"I could check with Mya," Drew offered. "Maybe she knows where Rylee's at."

Nick glanced at his watch. It was already after ten o'clock at night. Mya was probably asleep already. He didn't want to disturb her unless it was absolutely necessary.

"Nah, it's okay," Nick turned to Noah. "Let's check her place again to see if she's back."

Nick could see a customer trying to get Drew's attention. "Listen, I gotta get back to work," Drew told them. "But I get off work at midnight. Let me know if you need for me to do anything, or if you hear from her."

Nick nodded as he and Noah headed out of the restaurant and back to the elevators that led to Rylee's apartment.

## Chapter Twenty-two

Rylee was so tired; it took all of her energy just to put one foot in front of the other without falling flat on her face.

“So, is this little job going to be enough to give you the extra money you need for the offer?”

She sighed and glanced at Ethan, regretting that she'd ever told him about her part-time job. He'd made a point to show up at the club on several weekends that she'd worked. He always claimed he had something to discuss with her about the deal for the property that was so important, he couldn't wait until normal business hours to talk to her about it.

Each time it turned out to be complete bullshit, and Rylee knew that he was only doing it so that he could spend time with her. Usually, she was able to get rid of him by the time the club closed. But tonight he'd gone a step further and insisted on walking her home. And Rylee was just too damned worn-out to even argue with him.

“It's fine.” Rylee's response was short and clipped. The lack of sleep had her feeling downright pissy, and she was barely able to refrain from biting Ethan's head off. Her body was running on fumes, and she felt like it was about to shut down on her at any second. All she could focus on was getting to her apartment and collapsing into bed for a few hours.



“Well, you don’t look fine. You look exhausted.” Ethan told her as they reached the hotel elevators.

“What I don’t get is why this guy isn’t helping you.” She could feel Ethan studying her closely as she pressed the elevator button. Finally, he said, “You’re doing all of this, and he doesn’t even know, does he?”

Rylee ignored his question. “Look, Ethan. Thanks for walking me back. I’ll talk to you later.”

Ethan reached for her hand and held on tightly. He moved closer to her until their bodies were practically touching. “You know, I would have given you the money if you’d asked me.”

“I don’t want your money, Ethan.” Rylee pulled her hand away. “I never did.” God, why couldn’t he just let it go?

“Yeah, I know.” His laugh was filled with resentment. “Just like you don’t want me, either. Right?”

“Don’t do this, Ethan. You’ve shown me a different side of you these past few weeks that I really like. Please don’t make me regret trusting in you again.”

“He doesn’t deserve you.” Before Rylee could respond, he leaned forward and kissed her. As she pushed against his hold on her, she was vaguely aware of the elevator door opening.

“What the fuck?!”

She snatched away from a startled Ethan and looked into Nick and Noah’s angry faces.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick and Noah had been upstairs for hours, practically out of their minds with worry as they tried to figure out where Rylee could be.

Finally, at nearly three o'clock in the morning, they'd gotten so frantic, they couldn't take it anymore, and they'd decided to go and drive the route Rylee would normally take to their house in order to look for her.

Nick couldn't believe his eyes when the elevator doors opened, and he saw Rylee standing there, dressed like she'd just come back from a date with that bastard, Ethan, who was kissing her like he couldn't wait to get her upstairs and into bed.

He didn't know what hurt more; knowing that Rylee lied to them so she could be with another man, watching that same man touch what he considered Noah's and his, or seeing the look of guilt on her face when she saw them.

Nick heard Ethan's shocked laughter. "Jesus, there's two of you? Well, I guess it would take two boys like you to be man enough to handle a woman like Rylee."

"Ethan, don't --" Rylee tried to intervene, but Noah's fist shot out before she could finish her sentence, hitting Ethan in the mouth, knocking him to the floor, and wiping the smirk off his face.

Nick ignored the shocked gasps and startled screams from the few onlookers in the mostly empty lobby as he wrapped his arms around Noah's midsection to hold him back when he lunged at the prone man.

"You got something else you wanna say, motherfucker?" Noah yelled, and struggled against Nick's hold on him. "I'm right here, and I'm more than happy to take you down again!"

"Noah, please!" Rylee begged. "Don't do this! It's not what you think." Nick watched Rylee help Ethan off the floor, and he felt a brief moment of satisfaction as he watched the blood flow from Ethan's busted nose and split lip.

Nick released Noah before he turned his attention to Rylee. His heart ached as he looked at the woman he loved so much.

“If it’s not what we think, then tell us what it is.” He spoke through clenched teeth. “Tell us you didn’t lie about having to work this weekend, so you could be with somebody else. Tell us you weren’t just standing here, kissing another man, and letting him touch you.” Nick’s voice cracked, and he fought to control the hurt and anger that threatened to overwhelm him. “Because that’s what we think, Rylee. So, go ahead. Tell us we’re wrong.”

He and Noah stood there waiting for Rylee to respond. And, with each second that passed, Nick died a little more inside. He secretly wished that she’d deny everything, tell them they’d imagined what they’d seen, and put them both out of their misery.

He could feel the box that contained her ring in his pocket, practically burning a hole through his thigh as he remembered why he and Noah had come here to begin with. He thought about everything they were willing to do, everything they were prepared to give up for this woman, and it made him want to cry.

“It wasn’t for the reasons you think,” Rylee finally said. “Please, Nick...Noah...” She looked between them. Nick could see the tears shimmering in her eyes, and he wanted so badly to pull her into his arms. But then he looked at Ethan’s bloody face, and he felt the rage return and his resolve harden.

“Please,” she begged. “Let’s go upstairs and talk. I’ll explain everything. Just...not here.”

Nick looked at the two security guards and the small crowd of people who stood along the perimeter and watched their little group. He knew that they’d already caused enough of a scene, and he didn’t want to embarrass Rylee any further in front of her staff. But he had no desire to talk to her at the moment, either.

As if he were reading Nick’s mind, Noah said, “Fuck this shit.” Nick saw him give Rylee a look filled with disappointment and disdain. “Come on, man. Let’s go.”

“Yeah, let’s get the fuck out of here.” Nick shot Rylee a withering glance of his own. “There’s nothing here for us any longer.”

## Chapter Twenty-three

*Rainy days and Mondays.* Rylee sat in a large overstuffed chair outside of her boss's office and stared out the window as the rain poured down outside.

The crappy weather was appropriate, really. It matched the crappy mood she was in, the crappy weekend she'd had, and the crappy direction her life had suddenly taken in just a matter of days.

After making sure that Ethan was okay and convincing him not to file assault charges against Noah with some none-too-subtle warnings that she'd tell how he'd provoked the entire incident with his comments, Rylee had spent the rest of her weekend trying to reach Nick and Noah.

She'd worked the speed dial on her phone nonstop, calling both of their cell numbers and their home number, leaving message after message, filling up the voicemails for all three phones before finally giving up and acknowledging that they didn't want to talk to her.

It hurt Rylee more than she would ever have imagined, knowing that they wouldn't speak to her, wouldn't give her a chance to explain. But, in spite of the hurt, she understood how they felt, knew how it must have looked to see her with Ethan of all people -- especially after his confrontation with Nick several months ago.

Looking back, Rylee knew that she had no one to blame but herself. She'd handled things completely wrong. If she'd only been honest and up front with them about the property and the job from the beginning, so much of the pain and anger she saw in their eyes could have been avoided. Instead, she'd lied and kept secrets, and destroyed any trust they probably had in her.

In so many ways, Rylee felt no better than their mother. She'd treated Nick and Noah like they were her children, instead of her men, lovers, and partners. They had a right to know what was going on, and deserved to have input on a decision that was going to affect all of them.

Now, Nick and Noah both probably hated her, and she waited to be reprimanded -- or worse -- by her boss for the little floor show she'd been a part of the previous Friday.

"Rylee, Mr. Spencer will see you now." Rylee was pulled from her musings by the voice of her boss's assistant, and she forced a smile, in spite of the trepidation that coursed through her.

"Thank, you, Elaine." She stood up and walked toward the closed door. She knocked briefly before she opened it and went inside.

Jeff Spencer had been the General Manager since Rylee first started working for the hotel ten years ago. He'd always treated her with fairness and respect. Rylee just hoped he'd be as kind today.

"Good morning, Rylee." Jeff was seated behind a huge mahogany desk, and he smiled warmly at her when she walked in.

"Good morning, Jeff." Rylee stood in front of his desk. "Before we start, I'd like to say something."

"Of course" -- he removed his glasses and sat back in his chair -- "go ahead."

Rylee took a deep breath before she rushed on. "I'm sure that you're already aware of the incident on Friday, and I wanted to apologize for my role in that situation. I can assure you that it was an isolated event, and I guarantee that it will not happen again."

Jeff was quiet for a moment. "Are you finished?" he finally asked calmly, and Rylee could see a slight smile on his face.

"Uh, yes, sir. I am." Her own voice was filled with uncertainty.

"Good." Jeff nodded. "And, you're right. I had been informed about the incident on Friday, and I accept your apology. I appreciate your honesty about what happened, and your willingness to take responsibility for your actions. However" -- he paused and put his glasses on again -- "that is not the reason that I wanted to see you this morning."

"It's not?" Rylee was suddenly overcome with a sense of dread.

"No" -- he smiled at her -- "it's not." He gestured toward the chair next to his desk. "Please, have a seat."

"If it's all the same to you, sir, I think I'll just stand." Rylee was practically holding her breath as she waited for him to speak.

Jeff looked at her for a moment, a ghost of a smile still on his face. "Very well," he finally said.

"I made a recommendation -- which was readily accepted -- that you be promoted to General Manager of the Western Region. As you know, that's one of our largest regions, and includes six states and more than fifty hotel chains."

"On second thought, I think I'll take that seat now." Rylee practically collapsed into the chair. She sat there with her mouth hanging open, staring at Jeff, but not actually seeing him. Her mind swirled as his words sank in.

"I-I-" Rylee stuttered. She was completely unable to form a coherent thought. General Manager. God, that was just so incredible, so unbelievable, so...far away.

"Aren't the Western Region headquarters located in Seattle?" Rylee asked.

“Yes, that is the one downside to this whole thing,” Jeff sighed. “Listen, Rylee. I know that Seattle is a long way from Chicago, but I think this is a great opportunity for you. I’ve known you since you started working for this hotel -- hell, I hired you.” They both chuckled.

“I’ve watched you grow from a hardworking employee to an even harder-working manager,” Jeff continued. “And -- Friday’s incident aside -- you’ve always led the staff of this hotel by your exemplary example. There’s no doubt in my mind that you have earned this promotion.” The smile Jeff gave her was filled with embarrassment. “It probably should have happened years ago. You were just doing such a great job here, and I was too selfish to let you go. But I know that you are more than ready to step into this position.”

Rylee still couldn’t believe it. This moment was the reason she’d worked so hard the last ten years. And now that it had finally arrived, she didn’t know if she was happy or sad.

Six months ago, she would have jumped at the opportunity. But that was before she met Nick and Noah, and she realized that all the professional success in the world didn’t make up for the lack of happiness in her personal life.

This accomplishment should have made her feel wonderful and excited. Instead, she felt hollow inside, because she didn’t have the two men she loved sharing it with her. In spite of what happened between them, she wasn’t ready to give up on them just yet.

“Thank you, Jeff. I really appreciate this opportunity. But...can I think about it?”

“Absolutely.” Jeff’s face was full of understanding. “I know this is a big decision that you can’t make easily.” Jeff chuckled and shook his head. “I remember making a similar decision when I came to Chicago fifteen years ago. I never regretted it, and I don’t think you will either.”

Regrets. That’s what Rylee was worried about. She knew she couldn’t commit to this position until she was certain that there was nothing left of her relationship with Nick and Noah.

"I have a small request." Rylee waited for Jeff to nod before she continued. "If it's okay with you, I'd like to take the rest of the day off to think about everything."

Jeff silently scrutinized her, his gaze seeming far too knowing. "You go right ahead, Rylee. Take the time you need, and I hope you find the answers you're seeking."

"I do, too, sir." Rylee shook Jeff's hand and left his office. She kept going until she was in her car and heading to Wisconsin.

\* \* \* \* \*

"They're not here." Rylee was just about to knock on Nick and Noah's door again, when the sound of their mother's voice behind her made her spin around.

"And even if they were here, they wouldn't want to see you."

"Really?" Rylee tilted her head and scrutinized the other woman. "Is that what they told you, or just what you want to believe?" Caroline had the decency to blush.

"It doesn't matter." Caroline lifted her chin and glared at Rylee. "It doesn't change anything. You still don't belong here."

"Whether I belong here or not isn't your decision to make -- it's theirs." She stalked toward Caroline, and she could feel all of the anger and hostility she felt toward the woman simmering just beneath the surface, threatening to explode at any second.

"You think just because you're their mother, it gives you license to run their lives? Well, I've got news for you, lady; in case you haven't noticed, your little boys aren't so little anymore. They're grown men, and they're perfectly capable of making decisions about their lives, and who they want in their lives."

Rylee stood in front of the other woman. "You want to stand here and pass judgment on me because you disagree with how I live my life? That's fine. If it makes you feel better to believe that I'm some old whore who corrupted your babies, you go right ahead."



She stepped into Caroline's personal space, their bodies mere inches apart. "Because quite frankly, your opinion doesn't mean shit to me -- and neither do you. What you think about me will never change what's in my heart. I'm going to love your sons whether you hate me or not; whether *they* hate me or not. And, there's not a damn thing you can do about it."

She walked past Caroline, toward her car. She opened her door, but Caroline's voice stopped her before she got inside.

"I believe you love them, Rylee," Caroline spoke softly. "But, I love them, too. In spite of what you think, I'm not trying to run their lives. I just want what's best for them." Caroline walked over and stood next to Rylee's car.

"They each deserve a woman of their own to love; someone to have a family with, to grow old with -- not someone who has already experienced all those things that they have yet to even discover. If you were a mother, I think you'd understand how I feel -- in fact, I think you'd agree with me."

Rylee got in her car and drove away without responding. A few miles from the house, she dialed her boss's number.

"Hi, Jeff. This is Rylee. I...I've decided to accept the position...I do have a request...I'd like to move immediately, if possible...yes...I'm sure...I can be ready by the end of the week... thank you, sir."

Rylee managed to disconnect the call before she released the tears she'd held since she'd left Nick and Noah's house.

## Chapter Twenty-four

Rylee sat in the food court of the airport, staring into a cup of coffee as she waited for her flight.

"You know you don't have to do this, right?" Drew asked. She looked across the table into his concerned face. Rylee glanced past Drew's head to the clock on the wall. She had twenty more minutes before her plane would begin boarding.

*Please, God, help me hold it together until then.* "Yeah" -- she forced a smile -- "I do. It's for the best."

Mya reached across the table to take her hand and squeezed it gently. "Honey, are you sure it's over between the three of you?" she asked.

Rylee just nodded, not trusting herself to speak at the moment.

"But how do you know for certain?" Mya insisted. "You said yourself that you never even saw them when you went to Wisconsin. Maybe you should wait until you talk to them before you do this."

"Mya's right," Drew added. "I'm sure they can wait a few more days in Seattle until you --"

“Just stop!” Rylee interrupted her friends as she desperately struggled to keep her composure. “A few more days won’t make any difference. They don’t” -- she took a shuddering breath -- “they don’t want me anymore.” Rylee internally cringed at the way her voice broke as she said those words. Her throat was so tight, she felt like she was going to choke.

Drew and Mya stared at her in silence, and Rylee blinked back tears as she looked away from the pity she saw in their eyes.

“Listen,” she finally said. “My flight’s going to board soon. Why don’t you two walk me to my gate?”

They walked through the airport in silence until they reached the security checkpoint, where Rylee turned to her friends. Drew stood looking at her with watery eyes, and Mya made no attempt to hide the tears that flowed freely down her face.

“I’ll call you as soon as I arrive.” Rylee hugged Mya, then Drew. “I love you both.” She turned away without waiting for their response and went through security. She walked toward her gate, never turning around to look at her friends again, hoping with everything in her that she could make it to the plane before she broke down and cried like a baby.

## Chapter Twenty-five

"Zeus, come!" Nick watched the Doberman race toward him, his smooth, black coat glimmered in the sunlight as his powerful body moved across the yard with incredible grace and speed.

Once Zeus reached Nick, he sat down in front of him. Nick waited for a few moments before he held out his hand and revealed the treat inside, which Zeus eagerly ate from his hand.

"Good dog!" Nick petted him as he finished his treat.

"You and Noah were always so great with the animals." Nick tensed at the sound of his mother's voice behind him. "Your father loved training dogs, but he never had the natural skills and abilities with them, like you boys."

Nick didn't bother to respond as he continued to pet Zeus.

"Zeus is an amazing animal. He could easily sell for --"

"Zeus is not for sale." Nick cut her off.

He heard his mother sigh. "Yes, I know. He was Rylee's favorite, wasn't he?"

Nick turned to his mother without answering her question. "What do you want, Mom?"

"I want you and Noah to be happy, but obviously, neither of you are."

"What are you talking about?"

"I...I think I made a mistake." She spoke quietly. Her eyes were sad as they stared back at him.

"I thought that once Rylee was out of your lives, you and Noah would move on and find some other women your own age to occupy yourselves with for a while, like you'd always done before you met her. But I underestimated just how deeply you two felt for her." Nick stared at his mother in silence and waited for her to continue.

"I did the same thing to Rylee that people did to your father when we first met. I refused to believe that a woman her age could possibly be interested in you and Noah for anything other than the obvious."

Nick saw her eyes well up with tears. "And, I did the same thing to you and Noah that people once did to me. I just couldn't accept that the two of you weren't kids anymore, but grown men, who were old enough to recognize true love when you found it -- even if it was with the same woman."

"What are you saying, Mom?" Nick's heart ached. He was torn between the anger he felt at his mother for the way she'd treated Rylee, Noah, and him; and the pain he felt as he looked into her eyes that were filled with so much sorrow.

"I'm saying I was wrong." She sniffed. "I was wrong about a lot of things." She took a deep, shuddering breath. "She came by to see you." She spoke so softly, Nick almost didn't hear her.

"Who came by?" Nick and his mother both looked up to see Noah in the doorway.

"Rylee...she came by to see you last month right after the breakup, and I sent her away." Her voice cracked. "I was wrong. I'm so sorry."

"You did what?"

"And you're just telling us now?"

"You had no right!"

Nick and Noah were talking at the same time, their angry words clashing. The anguished sound of their mother's sobs stopped them instantly, and they stared at her in shocked silence.

Nick didn't know what to say. He hadn't seen his mother cry like that since his father died.

"Mom, please...don't." Nick's words seemed to make her cry even harder, and he looked at Noah helplessly.

Noah walked up to her and wrapped his arms around her in comfort.

"I'm sorry that we yelled at you. But..." Noah sighed. "You really should have told us."

"You're right." She nodded, and her body trembled with emotion. "I thought I was helping, but I realize now that I only made things worse for everyone."

She reached up to stroke Noah's cheek. "I just wanted you to be happy. I won't pretend to understand it, but I can accept the fact that Rylee is the person that makes you happy." She turned to Nick and gave him a tremulous smile. "That makes you both happy."

\* \* \* \* \*

After they locked up Zeus and checked on the other dogs, Nick and Noah walked their mother home. They sat and talked with her for a while before they headed back to their own house.

Nick knew that it was still going to take some time before their relationship with their mother returned to normal. But it was a lot better than it had been in a long time.

When they got home, Nick looked at Noah. "Should we try and call her?"

Noah shook his head. "I think she changed her number. She hasn't answered her home phone in weeks."

“Yeah, she must have changed her cell phone number, too. The old one is disconnected.”

“I see I’m not the only one who’s been trying to reach her,” Noah commented.

“Yeah, well, as pissed off as I was about what happened, I still didn’t like how things ended between us.” Nick sat on the couch and put his head in his hands for a moment. Finally, he looked up at Noah.

“What if we got it wrong, man? What if it was no big deal, just like Rylee said? What if we were the ones who screwed everything up, and not the other way around? We never even heard her side of the story, never gave her a chance to explain herself. We just walked away.”

“You’re right.” Noah shook his head, his expression filled with self-disgust. “If she doesn’t hate us already, she probably should.”

“So,” Nick said quietly, “what do you want to do?”

Noah’s determined gaze locked with his, and he confirmed what Nick already knew. “I want to go and find our redhead.”

## Chapter Twenty-six

"I'm sorry, sir. Ms. Putnam no longer works here," the front desk clerk said.

"What?" Nick and Noah's shocked responses sounded at the same time. They stared at the man in disbelief.

"Since when?" Noah demanded.

"I'm sorry...I'm not at liberty to say," the clerk said apologetically.

"Does she still live here?" Nick pressed.

"Sir...I really can't discuss --"

"Yeah, yeah. I got it." Nick turned away from the clerk and looked at Noah in disbelief. He didn't know that to think, couldn't believe Rylee was actually gone, and couldn't imagine that they were never going to see her again. "What are we supposed to do now?"

Noah sighed in resignation. "The only thing we can do. We go home and figure out a way to find her."

As they left the hotel, they saw Rylee's two friends standing outside.

"Hey, Drew...Mya," Noah called out. The pair looked at them in surprise.

"What do you two want?" Drew's face became tight with anger.



"We were looking for Rylee," Nick told him. "The clerk told us she didn't work here anymore. Do you know where she went?"

"Don't you think you've hurt her enough already? Or are you trying to completely destroy her?"

"Fuck you!" Nick snarled at Drew and crowded into the smaller man's face. This entire situation had him quickly losing his battle to control the anger brewing within him. "You don't know dick about this situation!"

"I know enough!" Drew didn't back down. "I know you two assholes ripped her heart out and pissed on it!"

"Drew, don't --" Mya tried to pull Drew away, but he wouldn't budge.

"It wasn't enough for you to break her heart that night, was it?" Drew continued, and his face turned red with anger. "You had to humiliate and embarrass her in front of her peers, her staff -- people she had to work with every day, people who looked up to her!" Drew stepped closer to Nick; only inches separated them.

"And even after the way you treated her, she still drove all the way to Wisconsin -- prepared to beg, if necessary -- to ask you to forgive her for something that she didn't even do! And now, a month later, after all the damage is done, you decide to come looking for her? And you have the nerve to say 'fuck me?' No! Fuck *you* two selfish bastards!"

A car pulled up to the curb in front of them, and Tom and Jacob got out. They wore similar expressions of confusion and concern. Tom rushed over to Mya and wrapped his arms protectively around her.

"I don't know what the hell is going on here" -- he scowled at the group -- "but it's upsetting my wife, which means it's upsetting our baby. So everybody needs to calm the fuck down!"

Jacob put his arm around Drew, pulling him tightly against his chest. Drew continued to glare at Noah and Nick.

Noah placed a restraining hand on Nick's shoulder. "Look," Noah said, "we don't have a beef with you, and we're not trying to cause any problems. All we want to do is find Rylee."

"I know you all love her, and want to protect her." Nick spoke to the group, but his eyes were locked on Drew. "But, we love her, too. And, I swear to you, we're not going to hurt her again."

Nick's chest tightened, and he swallowed around the lump in his throat. He felt Noah squeeze his shoulder in support. "We know we fucked things up with Rylee. But we're trying to fix it. We need your help. Please."

Nick watched as Jacob whispered something in Drew's ear. Finally, Drew sighed and looked at Mya. He nodded his head slightly, and Mya turned to Noah and him.

"Rylee left," Mya told them. "She accepted a job in another city and moved away."

"What?!" Noah sounded incredulous. Nick felt like he'd been punched in the gut. He just stared at Mya.

"Where?" he managed to croak out.

"She asked us not to tell anyone where she went."

"But --" Noah started to protest, but Mya cut him off.

"Look, I believe you meant what you said today. But I promised Rylee that I wouldn't tell anyone where she went, and I won't break that promise -- not even for you."

"But," she added, "I will let her know that you're looking for her. It'll be her decision to contact you or not."

"Okay," Nick said finally. "That's fair enough. Thank you." He and Noah walked in the opposite direction of the group. Nick stopped suddenly and turned around. He looked at Mya and Drew.

"When you talk to Rylee, let her know that we've regretted that night since the moment it happened. Tell her that we never stopped trying to contact her, and we never

knew that she came to see us until today. Make sure...make sure she knows we never stopped loving her.”

Mya gave him a watery smile. “We’ll let her know,” she said softly. “And hopefully, you two will get a chance to tell her yourselves.”

Nick nodded once more, before he and Noah walked away. His heart was heavy, knowing there was nothing else they could do at the moment but go home, wait, and hope that it wasn’t too late to make things right between the three of them again.

## Chapter Twenty-seven

"Good morning, Ms. Putnam. You're just in time. You have a call holding on line three," Rylee's assistant told her as she walked in.

"Good morning, Joyce." She smiled. "Thanks. I'll grab the call in a moment." She went into her office and threw her purse and bag in the chair before she walked around her desk and picked up the phone.

"Rylee Putnam," she answered.

"Hey, boss lady." Rylee recognized Mya's voice and smiled.

"Hey, yourself, stranger!" She sat down in her chair. "How's my favorite mommy-to-be doing?"

"Oh, God." Rylee heard Drew's groan through the phone. "Please, don't ask, unless you want to be on the phone for the next two hours." Rylee burst out laughing.

"Hey, sweetie!" she spoke to Drew. "How are you?"

"I'm good, babe," Drew told her. "Are you doing okay?"

"Yeah...yeah, I'm good," Rylee lied.

"We miss you," Mya told her softly. "It's just not the same without you here."

"I miss you, too." Rylee suddenly felt like there was a ball stuck in her throat, and she fought the urge to cry.

*Stop being such a fucking baby, and suck it up.* "So," she said brightly, "what's up with the two of you?"

"You had some visitors yesterday." Rylee frowned at Mya's words.

"Visitors? I guess those bill collectors finally caught up with me, huh?" she joked. There was silence on the other end.

"It was Nick and Noah," Drew said. Rylee's heart pounded so hard in her chest, she could barely breathe, much less speak.

"Rylee." Drew called her name. "Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes..." Rylee's voice was a faint whisper. She swallowed and spoke again. "W-what did they want?"

"Well, you of course!" She heard Mya's familiar laughter through the phone. "They wanted to know where you were."

Rylee was filled with panic. "You didn't --"

"Relax, babe," Drew spoke up. "We didn't tell them where you were."

"What did they say?" Rylee was almost afraid to hear the answer.

"They said that they've been trying to contact you," Mya told her. "They also said that they didn't find out that you came to see them until yesterday."

*They never knew?* It really shouldn't have surprised her as much as it did. "I should have known." Rylee snorted. "Their mother hates me."

"Well, she may hate you, but they obviously love you very much," Drew commented.

"Did they say that?" Rylee sat there with her mouth open, torn between elation and disbelief.

"Yeah, they did." Drew sighed. "Look, Rylee, as angry as I was at those two assholes for how they treated you, I still believed them when they said they were sorry and that they still loved you."

"So...what are you going to do?" Mya asked.

*Scream...laugh...cry.* "I don't know." She closed her eyes, and leaned her head against the back of her chair. "Listen, I have to go," she told her friends. "I'll call you later tonight."

"Okay, babe," Drew said. The concern in his voice echoed through the phone. "Just promise us that you'll call if you need us before then."

Rylee smiled. "I promise, sweetie."

"We love you just like Nick and Noah do," Mya told her. "Well...maybe not *just* like they do. But...you know what I mean."

Rylee couldn't help but laugh. "I do know -- and I love you both, too. I'll talk to you soon."

She hung up the phone and sat at her desk for several minutes. Finally, she picked up the phone and dialed a familiar number.

"Hi...Ethan. It's me...Rylee. I was just wondering...is that Weisman property still available?"

## Chapter Twenty-eight

“Thanks, Mya.” Nick hung up the phone and rubbed his hand across his face. It had been almost two months since they’d learned from Rylee’s friends that she’d moved to another city. Her friends still hadn’t been able to convince her to contact them. And he still hadn’t been able to convince them to tell him where she was.

But he couldn’t be angry with them. Rylee’s friends were fiercely loyal to her, and it was obvious to Nick that they would do anything to protect her.

In the weeks after they’d learned Rylee had left, he and Noah had spoken to Mya and Drew several times by phone, and Nick had grown to really like and respect them even more than he had before.

There was one good thing that had come out of the situation. Although Rylee’s friends still wouldn’t tell him where she was, they’d been more than willing to tell him the real story behind what happened that night.

Nick could feel his throat tightening, and he had to swallow back his own emotions as he thought about Rylee trying to juggle two jobs, willingly sacrificing everything in her life just so that she could be a part of theirs.

And every time he remembered the way he and Noah had treated her that night, he felt physically sick. Nick knew they didn't deserve a woman like Rylee, but he refused to give her up. The thought of never being with her, never seeing her again, was more than he could bear.

He was still sitting there, lost in thought, when Leslie burst into the small office.

"Hey!" She was breathless, her face flushed with excitement. "There's a client outside who needs to see you. Right now."

Nick leaned back in his chair and blew out an impatient breath. "I can't deal with a client right now, Leslie. You go talk to them. Or, make José do it."

"No, it has to be *you*," Leslie persisted.

"What the fuck do you mean, it has to be me?" Irritation laced Nick's voice, and he frowned.

"The client specifically asked for either you or Noah," Leslie explained, seemingly unfazed by his attitude. "And, since Noah's not back from his delivery yet, that just leaves you."

"I really don't need this shit right now, Leslie." He glared at her, thoroughly annoyed with the entire conversation.

"Trust me on this, Nick. You'll want to talk to this client." Leslie smiled mischievously.

"Goddammit!" Nick practically shouted. He pushed away from the desk and stood up so fast, he almost knocked his chair over.

"This client had better be as important as you claim, or your ass is fired!" he threatened.

Nick walked to the office door and yanked it open. He hoped that he didn't look as pissed off as he felt. "Hi, I'm sorry to keep --" His words died in his throat at the sight of that familiar red hair. She turned around, and Nick found himself staring into amber eyes.

"*Rylee?!!*" He was just thankful that he was still gripping the door, because it was the only thing that was keeping him from falling to the floor at that moment.



Rylee nodded and smiled hesitantly. "Hi, Nick."

He was too busy staring at her to respond. Just the sight of her still managed to leave him speechless.

Nick saw her smile fade away, and a slight frown took its place. He realized that he still hadn't spoken. So many questions raced through his mind, he didn't know where to begin. He decided to start with the easy ones first.

"How are you?"

"Good."

"You look" -- *beautiful, amazing, perfect* -- "well."

"Thanks...so do you." *Yeah, right.* He looked like shit, and they both knew it.

"Where did you go?"

"Seattle."

Nick blinked. *Seattle? Damn.* "Wow...Seattle is..."

"Rainy? Green?" Rylee smiled, but it looked strained and never reached her eyes.

"I was thinking, *far away*," Nick clarified.

"Yes...it is."

"So...how long are you in town?"

"Indefinitely."

"Yeah?" Nick said carefully, ignoring the acceleration of his heart rate at her response.

"Where are you staying?"

"I...I was hoping I could talk a couple of friends into letting me stay with them." Rylee spoke hesitantly and stood there nervously wringing her hands, her teeth worrying her lower lip, while she stared at him with apprehension.

"I'm thinking they'd love to have you stay with them."

"I hope so."

"I know so."

Nick didn't know when they had started to move. One moment, there were several feet of space between them. The next, they stood directly in front of each other, their bodies so close, they were practically touching.

"Nick, can we talk --"

"Shh," he interrupted. "We can talk later. Right now, I just..."

Nick ached to touch her, and he gave into the temptation. He put both of his hands to the sides of her face and tilted her head toward him.

"God, I missed you," he whispered hoarsely. "I can't sleep, can't think. I can barely breathe without you."

Her amber eyes shined with unshed tears. "Me too...without you."

Nick's lips came down on hers. Rylee's lips parted, and she kissed him back eagerly, her mouth opening wide to welcome him inside.

His fingers threaded through her hair and cradled the back of her head. He tilted his head to the side, and his tongue delved deep into her mouth. God, he'd missed kissing her, missed feeling her mouth against his, and missed the slow, sexy way her tongue danced with his.

The sound of a throat clearing behind him interrupted the moment, and they were forced to end their kiss. Their lips separated slowly, unhurriedly, reluctantly.

Nick wrapped his arms tightly around Rylee, listening to her shaky breathing as she tried to calm herself. He watched the deep flush spread over her honey skin and felt the rapid beating of her heart that matched his own.

"What's up, Leslie?" His voice sounded like gravel. He didn't bother to turn around because he was busy focusing all of his attention on Rylee, scanning every single inch, memorizing every little detail. His hands kept trailing up and down the outside of her arms, refusing to break contact, needing reassurance that she was actually there.

“I’ll lock up here and check on the dogs, so you two can be alone.”

“Thanks. I owe you.”

“Does this mean I’m not going to be fired now?”

Nick ignored her sarcastic comment as he pulled Rylee out the door.

## Chapter Twenty-nine

Rylee didn't remember the short drive to Nick's house, couldn't recall getting out of the car and walking inside, wasn't sure how she managed to take off all of her clothes and climb into his bed.

The only thing she knew for certain was Nick; the feel of his hands on her body, touching, caressing, and pleasuring her. His tongue in her mouth, tasting, taking, possessing, and owning her.

"Need you," Nick groaned, his cock hard and hot against her skin. "It's been so long."

"Yes. Please, Nick. Yours...make me yours."

"You are mine." Nick's hands slid down to her legs, and spread them wide as his thick cock pressed against her slick opening. "You belong to me, to Noah."

Rylee nodded, her breath coming faster, her body aching for him.

"Don't let me go. Need you. Need you both so much."

"Mine," Nick growled next to her ear, the sound low and vibrating against her, his hazel-eyed gaze holding hers, silently demanding everything from her, even as he was pushing inside, staking a claim on her. Rylee didn't try to deny it, didn't try to run from it. She just gave up everything in her to him willingly, and freely.

“Love you, Nick,” she whispered.

“Uh-huh...love you, too.”

Nick’s hand reached between them and fondled her sensitive clit. “Come for me, baby. Show me how much you love me.”

“Nick...yes!” Rylee cried out as her orgasm raced through her, and her world went gray around the edges.

“Fuck...oh!” Nick shouted and slammed into her a few more times before he shot and filled her deep with his cum.

Nick slowly slid from her body, rolling onto his back and taking her with him, so she was lying on top of him with her head resting on his chest.

“I love you,” Rylee said quietly. “I want us to be a family.”

“We *are* a family, baby.” Nick held her tight against him. “We always have been. I don’t ever want you to doubt that -- no matter what anybody says, what anybody thinks. Noah and I, we just aren’t the same without you. We love you. We *need* you.” He kissed her hair, her temple, along her jawline. “Please...don’t ever leave us again.”

“Please tell me you won’t let me.” She buried her face against his neck, and he felt the wetness of her tears against his skin.

Nick lifted her face; the pads of his thumb gently wiped the tears away. “I promise.” His response was fast, sure. “We’ll never let you go again. We’ll never let anything -- or anyone -- come between us again.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“You finally made it back.” Nick met Noah at the door. He’d been anxiously waiting for Noah to come home so the real celebration could begin.

“What’s up,” Noah grunted out as he walked in, and all but slammed the door closed behind him.

Noah looked and sounded as irritated and pissed off as Nick knew he'd been for the past few months. He knew the feeling. He'd been the same way. Until today.

Nick smiled to himself as he watched Noah head toward his bedroom. He knew the surprise waiting for Noah in his bed would instantly make everything better.

He was almost to Noah's bedroom door when he heard, "What the...*Rylee*? Is that you?" He arrived in time to see Noah scoop Rylee's nude form out of the bed and into a tight embrace.

"God, baby...missed you so much...I'm so sorry...please stay...can't lose you again...love you so much..." Noah punctuated each plea and declaration with a kiss on her face and neck.

Rylee was clinging to Noah like a vine, responding to him with her own words of love, need, and devotion.

Noah laid Rylee on the bed. He came down on top of her, his mouth fused with hers, his body nestled between her long legs. His hips undulated, and his spine arched as he surged back and forth against her core.

Watching them together made Nick ache. In spite of having had Rylee twice already -- once in the bed, and again in the shower afterward -- he could still feel his body stir at the sight of them. Blood pooled between his legs, and his cock swelled until it was rock hard.

Noah climbed off the bed and began to undress. Nick could see his eyes still locked on Rylee the entire time; almost as if he were afraid she'd disappear if he looked away.

Noah climbed back onto the bed with Rylee. He lay on his side and pulled her close to him so that they were facing each other. Nick removed his clothes, grabbed the tube of lubricant from the nightstand, and joined them.

Nick lay behind Rylee, and trailed kisses along her shoulder and neck. He opened the lubricant and quickly prepared her and himself, and then he peered over her shoulder at

Noah. His expression said it all; there was no time for slow, or tender, or gentle. The need was too great, the passion was too strong, the desperation was too consuming.

Nick lifted Rylee's leg and held it open as Noah's cock thrust into her pussy in one long stroke that made Rylee gasp. She arched against Nick, her head fell back against his shoulder, and her nails dug into Noah's biceps.

He could see Noah struggle to hold still. His eyes were squeezed shut, and deep lines bracketed his mouth as he clenched his teeth together.

Rylee's hand reached behind her, and Nick felt her warm soft fingers close around his thick shaft and position it at the entrance of her anus.

"Make me feel it." She looked into his eyes. "I want to feel how much you both love me."

Nick groaned and pushed inside; past the puckered hole, past the tight ring of muscle, past the snug channel, going as deep as possible until he reached absolute bliss.

"Oh...goddamn..." Nick looked down at her, looked at the spot where all three of their bodies were joined together, and he shuddered as waves of intense emotions surged through him.

Rylee was flushed and wanting, her eyes gazing over her shoulder at him, letting him see all of the pleasure, the happiness, and the love there.

"You're so beautiful," he whispered in awe. The look on her face was enough to take his breath away, make him forget his own name.

Noah began to move inside her, and Nick soon joined in. They quickly found a rhythm of hard, fast thrusts and retractions in and out of her body.

"Oh, God, Noah...Nick...love you both so much," Rylee moaned and whimpered; her body shaking and shuddering between them.

They were covered in sweat when they came, one after the other, heat and need and passion filled the room.

Noah's hand threaded through Rylee's hair to cup the back of her neck and pull her to him for a kiss. Nick buried his face in her hair, his fingers twined with hers, holding tight.

She was there -- and she was theirs. Joy and happiness rushed through Nick, mixed with overwhelming love and desire.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nick awoke suddenly; his heart was pounding in his chest, convinced he'd only dreamed that Rylee was there with him. When he looked up and saw her quietly watching him, he felt his heart rate return to normal. The smile that began to spread across his face quickly faded when he noticed the worried expression that clouded her eyes.

"What's wrong, angel?" The bed shifted on the other side of Rylee, and Nick knew that Noah was awake.

"I have to tell you both something." Her whispered words sounded hesitant, and Nick suspected that he knew what she was going to say. He leaned over and kissed her before he spoke.

"We know about the ranch, angel. We know about your extra job, and why you'd been seeing Ethan." Rylee visibly tensed, and he knew that he was correct.

"Mya told you, didn't she?"

"Actually, it was Drew," Noah spoke quietly. "But don't be mad at him, baby. I'm glad he told us." Noah cupped Rylee's chin. "I just wish we'd heard it from you. I wish you'd come to us for help instead of trying to do everything all by yourself. Don't you know that we would do anything for you?"

"You're right." Rylee's voice was thick with tears. "I'm so sorry that I lied and didn't tell you what was going on."

Nick sat up on one elbow so that he could look into her face. "If anybody should be sorry, it's us. We should have trusted and believed in you enough to know that you'd never



intentionally hurt us like that.” He reached out and stroked her hair. “God, angel, you have no idea how many days I’ve wished that I could go back in time and change that one moment when we walked away from you.” Nick’s voice cracked with emotion. “Knowing that we were the cause of all the hurt, and pain, and anger that I saw in your eyes that night will haunt me until the end of time.” He pulled her against him, and felt Noah’s arms join his as they held her tightly between them.

“None of it matters anymore.” Noah kissed her. “All that matters is that you’re here with us again, where you belong.”

“I’ll be right back.” Nick eased from the bed and went to his room. He picked up the box that had been on his dresser for over three months before he returned to Noah’s room and sat on the bed.

He looked at Rylee, who stared back at him with wide eyes as he opened the box. Nick removed the solitaire ring from the box and picked up Rylee’s hand.

“This is why we came to see you that night,” he said softly as he slid the ring on her finger. “We were going to ask you to marry us. Well...” He chuckled nervously. “I was going to ask you to marry me.” His expression grew serious. “We wanted you to know how serious we were about you, and about making this relationship work.”

Nick brought their joined hands to his mouth and kissed the palm of her hand. “And if you want to marry me, too, I’m all for it. God knows that I want that more than anything.”

He glanced briefly at Noah. “But I also read about this place in Madison that does commitment ceremonies for people in relationships like ours. And I thought that we could do that, too. It’s not a legal thing like the marriage would be, but it would give all three of us a chance to exchange vows and make a commitment to each other.” Nick looked back and forth between Rylee and Noah. “So, what do you...”

“Yes,” Rylee said before he could finish his sentence. She leaned toward him, and he met her halfway as they kissed, slow and long. When she finally pulled back, Nick hugged

her closely against him. He looked at Noah over her shoulder, and he could see the love and gratitude in his brother's eyes.

*Thank you*, Noah mouthed the words. Nick nodded as a smile spread across his face.

Rylee let him go and turned to Noah, who pulled her into his arms and kissed her deep.

"Never letting you go again. You're ours," Noah whispered fiercely against her lips.

"Yours...both of you. Only yours."

Nick moved until he was pressed against her back. His hands moved gently over her body. "Every inch of you...ours."

"Yes. Made for you...for both of you." Rylee turned her head toward him, and Nick placed a kiss on her lips.

"So, how soon can we do the ceremonies?" Nick paused at Rylee's question. He looked at Noah, who looked equally surprised.

"Well, we can probably do the commitment ceremony in a few weeks. But are you sure you don't want to plan something bigger for the wedding?"

Rylee shook her head. "Only if that's what you both want. As far as I'm concerned, it can't happen soon enough. I've already wasted enough time being without the two of you. I'd prefer not to wait another minute."

"That's not a problem for us, angel." Nick grinned at her. "If it could happen today we'd do it." He kissed the tip of her nose. "We just figured that you'd want to have a big fancy wedding, like most women do."

Rylee laughed. "Well, I think it's safe to say that I'm not like most women."

"No, you're not." Noah pressed a kiss to her temple. "You're so much better."

They were each quiet for a minute before Nick reluctantly started to speak again. He looked at Rylee. "Before we do either ceremony, I think we need to figure out what to do about the whole distance thing."

His gaze shifted to Noah, who was nodding in agreement. "I know you just took a new job, and I'd never ask you to give that up..."

"Actually, that won't be a problem." Rylee interrupted quietly. "I quit my job."

Nick looked at Rylee in shock. He glanced at Noah, who had a similar expression on his face. "You quit? When?"

"I turned in my resignation a couple of weeks ago." Her eyes filled with tears that slowly ran down her face. "It was hard to be excited about my new life in Seattle when my entire world was still here in Wisconsin."

"God, baby..." Nick's hand slid through her hair until his fingers rested at the nape of her neck and urged her toward him until their heads rested together. He closed his eyes and took a moment to feel thankful that this incredible woman was back in his life. He opened them again and stared into her amber eyes. "I love you."

"Love you, too." Rylee smiled through her tears. She reached for Noah and pulled him close to her. "I just hope you two don't mind having a partner with no job for a while."

Nick shared a brief look with Noah before he looked at Rylee again. "I think we might have a solution for that."

Rylee frowned. "What kind of solution?"

Nick reached out and took her hand. "Do you feel like taking a ride? We want to show you something."

## Chapter Thirty

Rylee stood in the middle of the huge, empty room that was large enough to fit all of the rooms in Nick and Noah's house combined.

She walked over to the glass double doors that led to a private balcony and watched the crew below busily working to renovate the property.

"So..." She turned away from the window to look at Nick and Noah. Her heart raced at the sight of these two fine ass men who stared back at her like she was the sun to their sky, the moon to their stars, and the center of their universe. "This is yours?" Her expression was full of shock.

"No, this is *ours*," Noah corrected her.

"But...how did you know?" Rylee just couldn't believe that she was standing in the same place that she'd worked so hard to buy. When Ethan told her that the property had been sold, she'd been devastated. And to finally learn who'd actually bought it left her speechless.

"After Drew told us what you'd been trying to do, we went to visit Ethan at his law firm and made nice with him." Nick gave her a small smile. "It took a little work on our part,

but we finally convinced him to tell us which property you were trying to buy. It was still available, so we made the same offer that you did, and they took it.”

“But how did you get the money?”

Nick and Noah joined her at the window. “We’d been planning to open another training facility, so we had the money available.” Noah shrugged. “We just decided to use it for this, instead.”

“I don’t know what to say.” Rylee’s vision blurred as fresh tears filled her eyes. “You had no idea if we’d ever be together again, if you’d ever even see me again, and you still did this. I... I just can’t believe that you gave up so much, gave up your money, your plans...” Her words trailed off as her throat tightened well past the point of further speech.

Noah reached out and caressed her face. “We knew.” His voice was sure, firm. “And we would have gladly given up everything for the chance to live with you, go to bed with you, wake up to you, and make love to you every day.”

“You have no idea how much I want that, too.” She turned her face into Noah’s hand and nuzzled against his palm before she rested her head against his chest. She felt Nick move behind her, his arms going around her waist.

No one spoke, and in the quiet minutes that followed, Rylee soaked up all of the love, trust, and strength she felt within their embrace.

“So, what happens now?” Noah finally asked. “Do you have to go back to Seattle again?” Rylee could see the worry on his face; hear the concern in his voice.

“No” -- she smiled up at him -- “I’m here permanently.”

“Oh, thank God.” He held her just a little tighter. “I don’t think I could deal with you leaving us again -- even for a little while.”

“And now you don’t have to be worried about being unemployed.” By the sound of Nick’s voice against her ear, Rylee could tell he was smiling.

"No, I guess I don't." Rylee's attention was drawn to the balcony windows again. "When did you actually buy the place?"

"We got it about five weeks ago." Nick told her. Rylee realized that was around the time Ethan finally told her that the property was no longer available.

"It had been empty for a while, so we hired the workers to do basic renovations and repairs. Any other changes are completely up to you." Her mind was practically spinning with all of the changes she wanted to make.

"I know you're planning to turn the rest of the house into a bed-and-breakfast." Nick released her and walked in a circle around the large room. "But, what did you want to use this space for?"

"It's going to be the master suite." Rylee had decided that this section would be the master suite, once it was done, with a master bedroom in the middle, a smaller connecting bedroom on one side, and a large master bathroom with a shower and Jacuzzi built for three on the other. A kitchen and living room area would complete the space.

"Damn" -- he whistled softly -- "this is going to be a hell of a master suite."

"It needs to be." Rylee laughed. "It has to accommodate all three of us."

Noises from the workers below drew their attention. They opened the glass doors and walked onto the balcony. Nick and Noah stood on either side of Rylee, their arms around her waist and shoulders as they watched the workers.

"So, do you want to get some horses to go in the stables over there?" Noah pointed across the property to the empty structure.

"Actually, I was thinking it would make a great kennel and training facility."

"Yeah?" They looked at her in surprise, their expressions filled with happiness.

"Yeah." Her smile turned to laughter when she was engulfed in their twin embraces.

"God, I love you," Noah whispered.

"Me, too," Nick spoke softly. "So much."

"I know you do. I love you both, too."

They were quiet for a while, content to just watch the workers finish installing the display that would soon hold the name of the bed-and-breakfast.

"So, have you chosen a name yet?"

"Yeah, I did." Rylee glanced up at Nick. She'd thought a lot about the best name for the bed-and-breakfast since she'd decided she wanted to purchase the property. She'd chosen a name that reflected how she felt every time she came here, every time she was with these two men. "I'm going to call it *Sanctuary Bed & Breakfast*."

"I like that." Noah nodded approvingly. "We're so proud of you, baby." He leaned down and kissed her. When she opened her eyes, her breath caught at the amount of love she saw reflected in his gaze for her.

"Hell, yeah, we are!" Nick said. "Come here." He pulled her close, kissed her deep, and completely took her breath away before he released her.

A round of cheers and whistles could be heard from below. "I think we're causing a scene," Rylee blushed and hid her face against Nick's shoulder.

"Fuck 'em," he growled. "Let them look. I love you, and I don't care who knows it." He took her mouth in a heated kiss again.

"Come on," Noah told her when she came up for air. "Let's go home and celebrate."

Rylee led them out of the room, through the house, and past the knowing glances of the workers outside until they reached their car.

As they drove away from the ranch, Rylee couldn't help but think that it had been a long, hard few months. She was sure there would be many more like it.

But when she looked at the man sitting next to her, and the one sitting behind her, she knew that in the end, it was worth it.

They were worth it.

 THE END 



## **Kori Roberts**

Kori Roberts writes erotic tales of love, lust, and passion -- stories filled with strong, adventurous, and exciting characters who love hot, kinky, no-holds-barred sex.

Kori's novels reflect her belief that beauty comes in all forms, shapes, and sizes; love crosses all colors, races, and genders, and happiness can be found in the most obvious and the least expected places.

Whether you're seeking contemporary, fantasy, paranormal, or suspense novels with single partners, multiple partners, same-sex partners, or all of the above, you'll find what pleasures you within the pages of Kori's books.

Learn more about Kori by visiting her on the Web at [www.kori-roberts.com](http://www.kori-roberts.com).