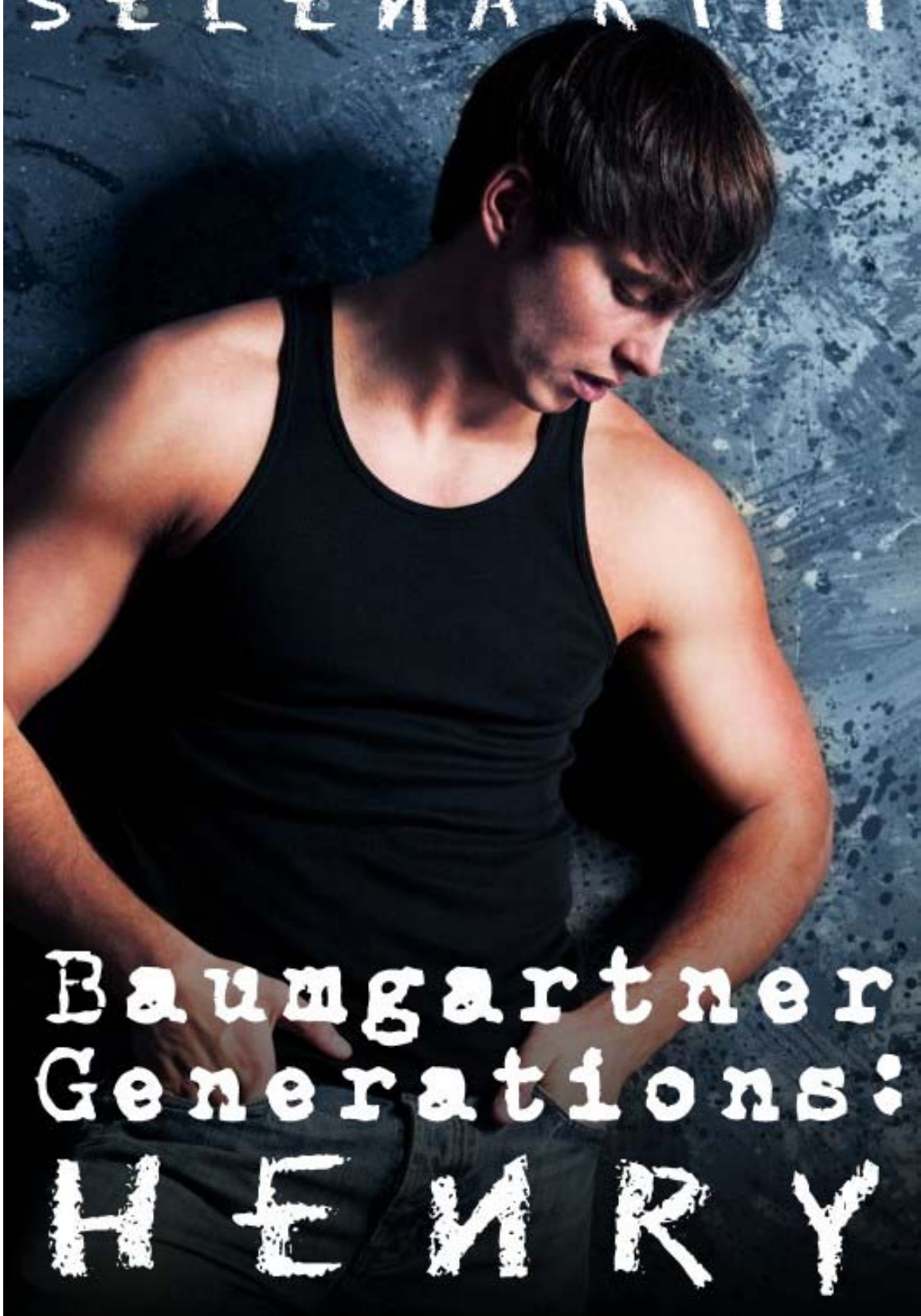


SELENA KITT



Baumgartner
Generations:
HENRY

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Baumgartner Generations: Henry

By Selena Kitt

Prologue

I don't know if I would go so far as to say that every man should at some point in his young life be under the tutelage of an older woman, but I do know that if I could go back in time, I wouldn't even consider changing what happened during my freshman year in college.

What did Mrs. Toni Franklin teach me that was so valuable? It wasn't what you might think—it wasn't the tips or tricks or techniques she taught me to use with a woman in bed, although I have to admit, those were undeniably helpful. It wasn't really the sex at all, to tell you the truth.

Toni was a goddess, and she knew it. She taught me to worship her the way all women should be worshipped—not from afar, put on a pedestal like some untouchable, but in the flesh, as the sleek, voluptuous creature of the earth she was.

Women are amazing, amorphous, changeably delightful creatures, and I know most men spend their whole lives trying to figure them out. Toni made me realize that most men too often hit the tree, but miss the target. The lovely mystery of woman was meant to be experienced and enjoyed, not measured and controlled.

Toni taught me that women are the weather.

If you want to know what the weather is like, open the window. Can you predict the weather? Sometimes you can feel a storm rolling in, or see a gorgeous blue sky and know rain isn't anywhere in the near future. But how much energy have we wasted trying to control or manipulate it, living in fear of storms? Men have created all sorts of instruments in an attempt to predict the path of the weather, and while we have

advanced to some degree, there are always rainbows that go missed, tsunamis that could never have been foreseen.

It is an impossible and futile task, when a man makes a woman a problem or puzzle to be solved. They are and always will be unpredictable. I'd rather spend my time basking in the sunshine and walking in the rain than fiddling with instruments and planning a siege against the next onslaught. If you're not living in the present, you're not living at all.

I was nineteen when I met Toni. I would never deny or discount how much I learned, the invaluable gifts she gave as my tutor—and not just in the lessons of love and women. Toni opened my life, unlocking parts of me I hid from everyone, even myself. And when she discovered my deepest secret, she still didn't falter.

Instead, she just taught me how to read.

Chapter One

Henry hated libraries. He couldn't think of a place he felt more uncomfortable than standing in the shadows of thousands of books. He was in the basement of the UGLi—the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library—and he couldn't have come up with a more apt name for the place than the one his fellow students had coined, the stacks looming, the florescent lights casting a dull, eerie glow.

"Four seventy-five." His whisper was barely an exhale but it felt loud in the silence as he ran his finger along the spines of books, their plastic covers crinkling. He repeated his excuse for checking this particular book out in his head. *It's for my nephew. He's in kindergarten.*

Of course, he didn't have a nephew. His older sister, as far as he knew, was far from hooked-up, let alone ready to get married and have a baby. But what were the odds he would run into anyone who knew his family here on campus? *It's for my little cousin.* He changed his head-story, just to be safe. *He's having trouble.*

Trouble. Yeah. He was in big trouble all right.

"Can I help you find something?"

Henry gave a strangled, smothered cry, taking a step back when a pretty redhead popped her head around the corner of the stacks.

"It's okay, I work here." The redhead stepped around to his side of the shelves, smiling, and he felt his heart pounding again, but for a different reason this time. "You sounded a little lost."

"I need a book."

Smooth, Henry.

He held out the paper scrap he'd copied the call number on to avoid any further talking and possible embarrassment.

She took it from him, studying it, and he studied her—gray skirt and black sweater, making her long red hair, straight and almost to the middle of her back, seem even more like fire, even in the dim light. She had to be a student, he thought, as she turned to the stacks, running her fingernail over spines the same way he had. She was young, about his age. He watched her fingers caressing the books, long and delicate compared to his big old paws, the nails neatly manicured.

"You're in the right place," she murmured, moving her finger up to the next shelf. "Would you get me that stool?"

He went to the end of the aisle where she pointed, dragging the rolling stool over toward her in response, not daring any more words. They'd just get him in trouble.

"Thanks." She gave him a grateful smile, stepping up onto the stool and reaching for the top shelf. Her legs were long, too, her skin pale and creamy. He realized, watching her stretch, one of her feet slipping loose of her heels, that she wasn't wearing any nylons. Seeing the intimate pink flesh of her instep as she went up onto her toes made his breath catch and he swallowed his immediate response, trying to look anywhere else.

She glanced down at him, still smiling. "Would you hold me?"

He gaped up at her, dumbfounded. Hold her? That wasn't exactly what he wanted to do to her—but hell, it was a start.

"Hold...you?" He faltered.

"I don't want to fall," she explained. "Just hold me. Here." She reached for his hand, guiding, placing his palm flat against the curve of her hip. He matched the gesture on her other side, squeezing gently, feeling her skirt shift over her skin underneath as she stretched up again. He steadied her, his eyes level with her back, her hair tickling his nose. Not that he was complaining.

"Ah, got it!" she announced, triumphant, turning around on the stool so quickly it startled him and he grabbed her waist, finding himself eye-level now with the tiny buds of her breasts in her black v-neck sweater. He realized, too late, that he should have offered to retrieve the book, but he was too distracted by his current view to lament his lack of chivalry too much. "Oh. Wow. This is the book you wanted?"

He flushed, glad for the dark shadows now, his story all ready in his head. "It's for my little cousin. He's having trouble in kindergarten."

He waited for the anticipated response. Hell, it might even earn him some points.

Oh how sweet you are to help him. You must like little kids.

The redhead was silent. She stepped off the stool, out of Henry's arms, and held the book out to him. Glancing down at the cover, his eyes widened, mouth dropping. If he'd been red before, he was positively purple now.

"That's—" He couldn't get the words out, staring at the picture of the completely nude, entwined couple on the front. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Kama Sutra*.

"That's not—"

"Not what?" She blinked at him, trying not to smile. "Not appropriate for kindergarteners?"

“No,” he croaked, desperate to correct the mistake. “That’s not the book I was looking for.”

“You sure?” She smirked. “It’s the number you wrote down.” She showed him the slip of paper, and sure enough, the Dewey decimal matched perfectly—375.4 W.

“But I looked it up on the computer!” He pointed desperately to the end of the aisle.

She hesitated, not sure she was ready to believe him.

“Come look!” He stalked down to the end of the stacks and around the corner. There was a row of computers near the elevators and he went straight to the one he’d used to look up the book. He turned to find her behind him, curious, and he pointed to the screen. No one had touched it since and it was still up there, plain as day. “See!”

She leaned in, glancing from the title to the slip of paper she held. “Well, I found your problem.” Sitting down at the computer, she began to type. Another title came up on the screen, the one Henry still had in his hand. He dropped it on a chair face down when he realized, glad it was out of sight. Not that he hadn’t appreciated the subject—or the picture on the front, for that matter. If he’d been alone, he probably would have flipped through it, just out of curiosity. But with the redhead there, it was all too embarrassing to be contemplated.

“The call number for the *Kama Sutra* book is 375.4 W.” She pointed to the scrap of paper. “That’s what you wrote down.” She hit the back button on the screen to the book Henry had originally looked up. “The call number for the book you wanted is 372.4 W. You transposed the five and the two.”

“Brilliant, Henry,” he muttered.

She used one of the stubby pencils to correct the number on the scrap of paper, trying to hide a smile. "Well, the good news is this book should be on the same shelf. And it's much more age-appropriate."

"Pretty diverse subject matter to be on the same damned shelf," he growled as he followed her. She had picked up the other book to re-shelve it.

"They're both guides," she explained, getting back up on the stool. Henry reached out to hold her hips again without thinking and she smiled a thanks down at him. "You know, those *Idiot Guides* and the books *For Dummies*, they're all shelved in the same place, by last name. Just so happens both are written by an author with a last name starting with W."

"Oh damn." Her shoulders slumped. "*Teaching Kids to Read for Dummies* isn't here."

"Is it checked out?"

"I don't think so." She slipped through his hands on the way down to the floor and the feel of her lithe little body gave him a jolt. "It would have said so on the computer. I bet someone's stolen it."

"That's pretty low, stealing from a library."

"Happens all the time. I can't wait until books go all-digital. No more stealing, no more late fees, no more re-shelving!" She regarded him, cocking her head to one side, and he didn't point out the obvious *no more librarians* conclusion implied in her train of thought. "Do you have an e-reader?"

"You mean, like one of those Kindle things?" He shook his head. "I've got a laptop, though."

"You can check it out digitally if you want." She sounded excited as he followed her down the row and back through the aisles of books. Pausing at the row of computers, she frowned. "But I don't know if it would work so well for your little cousin, reading it on the computer."

"Oh that's okay." He waved her concern away. "I'm just reading it so I can help him. The 'Dummy' in the title is me, not him." That he believed the statement to be more true than he wanted to admit, even to himself, was another point he wasn't going to bring up.

"That's so sweet." The look she gave him made him want to melt. *There* was the reaction he'd been expecting in the first place.

He hoped his blush appeared properly humble. "Thanks."

"Let's see if we have a digital copy." She sat back down in front of the terminal, typing away again, and this time Henry sat beside her. He was big for the little chairs, but she fit perfectly, crossing her slender, shapely legs and leaning toward the screen.

"So are you a librarian?" He didn't believe it for a minute.

"I'm just a student assistant," she explained, frowning as used the mouse to scroll down the screen. "I started working here last year and love it so much I changed my major to library science."

"So you're a sophomore?"

"Mmm-hmm."

At least she's not a senior, he told himself, not volunteering the fact that he was just a lowly freshman. She could probably tell anyway, the way he'd been stumbling around the stacks, looking lost. His roommate, Dean, said freshmen were like baby

pigs, he'd said, lost and rooting around looking for something to get into. Of course, Dean didn't really consider himself a freshman, even though he was. His parents were both alumni, his brother had graduated the year before, and his sister the year before that. He was like a celebrity on campus, a first string wide-receiver on the U of M football team.

"I'm sorry." She pointed to the screen. "It's not available as an ebook."

"Ah well." He shrugged. "We tried, right?"

Her eyes were a bright, shocking blue, and that, combined with the red hair and the smattering of freckles across her nose, and the way her lips pursed and her brow furrowed—he thought he'd never seen anything cuter in his life.

He'd seen lots of girls in his five weeks on campus since school started—blondes, brunettes and redheads alike. Dean had introduced him to most of them. Some of them had been real knock-outs, the sort you couldn't even approach without stammering and going cross-eyed, the kind you knew had to spend hours getting ready to go out every night.

But this girl...she was so naturally pretty it was hard to even wrap your head around it. She was the kind of girl that would grow old gracefully, who would spend her whole life looking beautiful not because she tried to be, just because that's who she was, at her very center. It radiated out of her like light and he gravitated to it like a moth, feeling like he was bumping his head against glass the whole time.

"How about this one?"

He just observed her as she spoke, trance-like. "Huh?"

“We’ve got *Phonics for Dummies*.” She tapped the screen with her fingernail.
“And most beginning reading problems usually stem from a phonics issue anyway.”

He stared at her, not really understanding a word she was saying, just sort of basking in her light. Now he didn’t feel like a moth—he felt more like a lizard on a rock, lazy and slow to respond, with no other thought in his head but his own basic need, which was growing more apparent by the moment.

“Um, okay,” he agreed. She could have said, “I think you should set your hair on fire and jump out the window,” and he probably would have agreed. Good thing they were in the basement.

“How exciting!” She stood, smoothing her skirt, and he remembered the texture of the material, wooly and soft, under his hands. He couldn’t have agreed more about the exciting part. “Let’s go upstairs. The ebook system is brand new, and this will be my first digital checkout!”

“So I can say I was your first?” Henry grinned as he followed her to the elevator.

“Dubious honor.” She pushed the button, giving him a sly, slanted look as she reached down to pick up the book he’d left in the chair. “But I suppose you can say you broke my digital-checkout cherry.”

He laughed. “Not quite as fun as the other one.”

“Print books, you mean?” She winked as the elevator doors closed behind them.

“Right.” He nodded. “That’s what I meant.”

Of course, now he was thinking things he shouldn’t and silently cursing the guy who got to hit that for the first time, if he was being totally honest. Which he wasn’t about to be, at least out loud, with the girl standing next to him.

“Have you ever read the *Kama Sutra*?” She leaned in close, as if there was someone else who could hear her, leafing through the book she’d picked up on their way into the elevator.

He eyed her, surprised, brain devoid of any snappy comeback. “No.”

“Look at that.” She paused at one of the pages. The book didn’t just have drawings of people, no—it was fully, pictorially illustrated. Christ. Henry swallowed, studying what was essentially porn open in the girl’s hands. “Do you think that’s even possible?”

“Ouch,” he agreed, noting the position, the guy standing, the woman’s legs bent at an awkward angle. How was he even holding her up?

“Oh, but this one’s nice,” she said, stopping on another page. The couple was kind of spooning.

“Nuh-nice.” Henry stammered.

“Sure you didn’t want to check this book out?” She winked and he noticed that even her eyelashes were red. *A natural redhead*. That meant that wherever else she had hair on her body, it was most likely red, too. She interrupted his straying thoughts. “No law saying you can’t. Thank god.”

“Yeah, censorship sucks,” he agreed, boldly reaching over and flipping a page. Then another. He could smell her, a light, clean scent, soap or shampoo maybe.

She stopped him, a small noise escaping her throat. “That one.”

The guy’s face was buried between the woman’s thighs, her legs up over his shoulders. You couldn’t really see anything, but you knew just what was going on.

“One of my all-time favorites.” Henry’s arm brushed hers as he reached out to turn the page again.

“Mine, too,” she breathed, making another noise at the position on the next page. “That’s a fun one. Ride ’em, cowgirl.”

“Is it just me or is it hot in here?” He shifted from foot to foot, peeking at the lights on the elevator. They were passing the ground floor now. Checkout was on the second floor.

“Got kind of intimate all of a sudden, didn’t it?” She was so close he could count her freckles. “Elevators do that to me anyway.” Her voice was low and sexy. The tone made his mouth water. He saw a smile playing around the corners of her mouth.

“Closed spaces.”

“You’re obviously not claustrophobic.”

First floor. Almost there.

She laughed as the elevator doors opened, stepping out and walking toward the checkout. Henry followed, giving up his student ID, which doubled as his library card, watching her as she typed and swiped and did whatever she needed to do.

There was another woman watching them—probably the real librarian he guessed, a pudgy woman with short black hair and thickly painted on red lipstick that was bleeding into the faint outline of her mustache. She was a far cry from his wet dream archetypal image of a librarian, but her demeanor was similar, the serious frown, the watchful eyes. She looked like she was about to say, “Shhh!” at any moment.

The flirty, suggestive girl from the elevator had disappeared—the redhead turned into all-business when the librarian was around.

“Okay, I think I did this right.” She handed back his card. “You’ll get an email with a link. Just click it and download the ebook file. It will expire in two weeks.”

“Two weeks?” Henry gulped. How in the hell was he going to learn to read in two weeks?

“You can check it out again, as long as it hasn’t been requested by someone else,” she explained. There was a line behind him now, and the red-lipstick librarian was watching them with raised eyebrows.

“Okay you’re all set...Henry,” the redhead said loudly, squinting at his card as she handed it back to him.

“Thanks.” He leaned forward onto the counter, his voice dropping to a whisper. “You know, they say you never forget your first.”

She smiled. “But you don’t even know my name.”

“I’m such a dog.” He pulled out his wallet so he could put his card back—just an excuse to talk to her longer. “With a long string of ebook checkout firsts all through the state...”

“Olivia.” She leaned forward to tell him, so close he felt her breath on his cheek. “Libby.”

He heard the girl behind him grumble loudly as he slipped his ID into his wallet.

“Maybe I’ll see you around, Libby.” Henry put his wallet into his back pocket, stepping away from the counter.

Libby winked. “I’ll be here.”

* * * *

The dragon-lady, a name passed on year after year to incoming freshman by her former students, was a formidable figure in front of the classroom. She towered over them, her heels clicking up and down the aisles, hips swaying. She reminded Henry of both a dragon and a cat at times. It was the way she moved, the way her eyes narrowed, and if she had a tail, it would swish constantly.

She was also drop-dead gorgeous. It wasn't just her curves—and the woman had those in spades, and in all the right places—she had a kind of cool beauty that made your breath catch in her presence. Unlike most women her age, she hadn't followed the trend and cut her hair short. Instead it hung long and free, so black it was almost blue under the fluorescents. She wore it up on occasion, or braided into a long, thick plait down her back, but mostly she didn't and it was a terrible distraction.

It was her eyes, though, that mostly got to Henry. They were dark eyes, framed by thick lashes, and they watched him. It seemed as if she watched him constantly. Whenever he looked up, her gaze was on him, as if she knew him, or knew something about him. It was unnerving. But it also intrigued him.

"Mr. Baumgartner." Professor Franklin sighed loudly as he fumbled with his microcassette recorder. He never took notes. Instead, he'd used his recorder all through high school and it was proving to be invaluable in college as well.

"Uh...yeah?" Henry glanced up, turning the cassette over and pushing the red button. Not that he wanted to record this exchange for posterity. For some reason, she liked to focus on him, single him out.

"Must you do that?" She had her paperback version of *The Great Gatsby* open, had been in the middle of reading them a passage, when his tape had run out.

“Do what?”

She pointed. “Use that...thing?”

“It’s...” *Necessary* was the word that came to mind. Instead he said, “Easier.”

“Easier than what? Taking notes?” She waved her hand around the room.

Everyone else had a notebook open.

“Yeah, for me.” He sounded more defensive than he wanted to. “It is.”

“Easy isn’t always best.” She considered his recorder, the tape turning again.

“Can I go on now?”

He felt his face burning. “Sure.”

She began to read again from the book, “He had intended, probably, to take what he could and go—but now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail. He knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he didn’t realize just how extraordinary a ‘nice’ girl could be. She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing. He felt married to her, that was all.”

She stopped, inspecting around the room. “Why do you think he felt that way?”

Henry blurted out, “She was his soulmate.”

“That’s very romantic, Henry.” It was the closest he’d ever seen her to smiling.

He shrugged. “Isn’t it a romance?”

“Gatsby?” She blinked at him. “Austen, maybe...that’s romance. *Pride and Prejudice*. *Sense and Sensibility*. Matches and marriages are made. Happy endings are implied. But Gatsby? Have you read to the end of the book?”

“Yeah.” Well, that was partially true. Thanks to audio books and his iPod, he’d managed.

She raised her eyebrows. "Then you know how it all ends?"

"Just because people die, doesn't mean it's not a romance," Henry said, defending his position. "I mean, they love each other, right? Just because Romeo and Juliet end up dead doesn't mean they didn't love each other."

Professor Franklin folded the book in front of her, keeping her place with her finger. "But Romeo and Juliet was a tragedy."

"Not in the beginning," Henry countered. "I mean, sometimes it works out, and sometimes it doesn't. But love is love. Isn't it?"

"Yes, that's true." She gave him a nod of acknowledgment, turning back to the book. Then she paused, focusing once again on him. "Henry, will you keep reading for me, please?"

It was the first time she'd called him by his first name. It was the first time he'd heard her call *any* student by their first name. But he couldn't read out loud. It was hard enough slogging through it by himself. One page could take him an hour.

Henry considered his predicament, trying to find a way out of it. "I've got a cold. My throat kind of hurts."

She didn't drop her gaze. "Just the next paragraph."

"Just one paragraph?" He picked up his book, glancing at the clock. It was almost time to go. Maybe he could stall... "What page are we on again?"

"Two-nineteen."

He started flipping through the pages, feeling his face begin to burn. This always happened, every time he got put on the spot. And if he had trouble with words to begin with, it was even worse under pressure. It became impossible to think, let alone read.

Henry found the page, glancing back up at her. "Two-nineteen?"

"Fourth paragraph," she indicated. "Go ahead."

He used his finger to count down the indents. *One, two, three, four...*

One word at a time, he told himself. But it was a futile reassurance. He was about to humiliate himself in front of the entire class.

"Wh—" Henry stopped. The words were literally swimming in front of his eyes. "What..."

"When," Professor Franklin prodded, her voice gentle. "The paragraph starts with *when*. Go on."

"When...they meet..."

"Met," she corrected. He felt her moving toward him, but didn't look up from page. He also felt thirty eyes turned in his direction.

"When they met...across..."

"Again." He glanced up at her this time, confused. She was standing right next to his desk.

"The word is *again*, not *across*."

He cleared his throat. "When they met again, two days after..."

"Later," she corrected. "Two days *later*."

"Hey, you know what, I have to..." Henry closed the book, starting to stand. "Go." He observed the time. Thank god. Saved by the bell. "I have hockey practice."

Professor Franklin glanced behind her at the clock. The class was already gathering books, packing backpacks, putting on jackets. "Don't forget to read through

the end of the book by next week!" she called over the rustling noise and conversation.

"I'm afraid it doesn't end all happily ever after."

Henry clicked *stop* on the tape recorder and shoved it into the front of his backpack, along with his paperback. He was getting up before he realized Professor Franklin was still standing next to his desk, watching him.

"Henry, may I speak to you, please?"

Henry again. Twice in the same day. Why had she singled him out? He followed her silently to her desk and stood there, waiting, as she began to pack her things as well. The class had dispersed by the time she pulled a blue essay book out of her bag. The sight of it made his stomach drop to his knees.

"You recognize this?" she inquired, putting it down on the desk.

He just nodded. She had given them a "pop quiz" last week, just a short essay about the symbolism in *Gatsby*. Freshmen professors had to send out five-week progress reports. It was a new thing this year, she'd explained, so she wanted something to base a grade on. He hadn't expected it and hadn't prepared for it.

"It's insightful." She tapped her long, red fingernail on the essay's front page. Then she opened it up and Henry saw the "F" circled in red marker inside the cover. He felt like throwing up. "But it's nearly impossible to read. Your spelling is atrocious. It's almost as if..."

"Spell check is my best friend." He gave her a sheepish smile, shrugging helplessly.

"No one should rely on spell check for the basics." She pressed her lips into a thin line. "I couldn't pass you based on this. I'm sorry."

"Can I...would you let me take it and re-do it?" This was something he'd gotten away with before. Maybe...

"I'm afraid not." She handed the paper across the desk to him. "Henry, I also wanted you to know...I had to send your progress report for this term to your coach."

He swallowed. "My coach?"

"You have a hockey scholarship, right?"

He nodded. *Not hockey.* Anything else, but he couldn't lose that.

"It's part of the new freshmen requirements." She sounded apologetic.

Henry steeled himself against her words. There was no way they'd bench him. He was leading the league in points. And even if his coach brought it up, he'd find a way to talk his way out of it. He always did. "Listen, I'm actually gonna be late for practice, if I don't go..."

"I just wanted you to know, before you saw your coach."

Henry turned and headed toward the door, escaping as quickly as he could.

* * * *

He couldn't stop thinking about the redhead.

He'd intended to brave the library again just to tell Libby that she'd done everything perfectly. The download worked and the ebook was readable right there on his laptop.

The only problem was the original print version of the book came with a CD that said all the phonics sounds for you, while the digital download didn't come with those particular bells and whistles. Unfortunately, in his case, the CD was a pretty necessary

thing, because trying to decipher all the pronunciation code was even more confusing than trying to figure out the words themselves.

Not that he was going to tell Libby that.

But then Dean insisted he pledge Alpha Pi Alpha with him and his mid-term progress report went out and he had to have “the phone call” with his parents and his coach threatened him with losing ice time if his grades didn’t come up—and he lost track of a week before he knew it. He’d told Dean about Libby, of course. He told Dean everything.

“The hot redhead in the library? You mean Olivia Stowe?” And of course Dean knew her. As big as the place was, it seemed like he knew everybody. “She was voted ‘the girl you’re most likely to jack-off to’ at Alpha Pi Alpha! There’s no way, freshman. She dated some senior guy for a while last year and then he graduated. She hasn’t dated anyone since.”

“We’ll see about that.” Henry shrugged, flipping through his history text, as if he were actually reading.

Dean snorted. “Is that a challenge, dude?”

“Maybe.” Henry grinned.

He’d never expected Dean to take him up on it. Or to win.

So when Dean invited him to the football game—wanted him to meet his date, maybe keep her company on the sidelines—Henry didn’t think twice.

He walked into his dorm room in a pretty good mood, on his way back from hockey practice, tired, but in a good way—at least he got to skate at practice—freshly showered, his face still red from the October wind and the long walk across campus,

ready to meet Dean's girl and head off to the game. He had to admit, he idolized Dean. But who didn't? And being his roommate gave him all sorts of advantages he didn't even know existed.

Now if he could just tell the dragon-lady to pass me in English, Henry lamented, opening his dorm room door, whistling some tune he'd heard piped into the locker room overhead just half an hour before, and finding Dean sitting on his bed with a girl in his lap.

This wasn't an unusual sight. He'd seen Dean with a lot of girls over the past five weeks, had even had to go next door to sleep in Bel's room one Saturday night because the black sock was tied around the door handle. It wasn't seeing him with a girl on his bed that was the problem.

The problem was—the girl was Libby. There was no mistaking her long red hair, that peaches and cream skin, the delicate, long-fingered hand that was playfully slapping Dean's roving hands away. Dean was with Libby.

Henry stood in the doorway, frozen, staring at the two of them with an expression he was sure gave his feelings away. He was too surprised not to reveal himself. He felt as if the entire foundation of the world he walked around on had just crumbled away in an instant and he was falling toward the fiery hell of its center.

"Dude!" Dean turned his head toward Henry, smiling, not getting up, not pushing Libby off. In fact, he pulled her in closer with one arm, wedging her more firmly in his lap, and she was struggling at his fierce attention. "Libs, you know Henry."

"Hi, Henry." That was all she said, but he thought he saw a moment of surprise cross her features.

“Hi.” He managed that much.

Dean frowned. “You okay? You don’t look so good.”

Was he really so obtuse? Or was he just playing head games?

Henry shut the door and tried not to stumble as he made his way over to his bed. He wanted to crawl under it. Or at the very least, throw himself down on it. Maybe punch the pillow. Or the wall. Until his hands bled. That would be good. Instead, he just sat facing the two of them, wondering just how much worse his life could really get.

“Yeah, well, coach gave me some bad news.” Henry tried not to look at Libby’s face. Anywhere but there. He didn’t want to see whatever feeling was in her eyes—especially if there was no emotion there at all. “He’s not playing me until my grades come up.”

“Fucker.” Dean rolled his eyes. Libby had managed to slide off his lap, but Dean still had his arm around her. Henry tried to ignore his friend’s hand, the one that wasn’t wrapped around Libby’s hip. That one was resting on her jean-clad thigh, massaging gently. That’s the hand he wanted to tear off. “Want me to have my dad call him?”

Henry actually considered it. Could he really do something, or have something done? Dean’s family carried a lot of clout at the university. His dad was on the Board of Regents. Maybe...

“Nah.” Henry stiffened, deciding that if Dean’s influence came with the kind of attitude he was now seeing in his roommate, he didn’t want to take anything from him. Henry kicked off his shoes and leaned back on his bed, hands behind his head, to stare up at the ceiling. “It’s just my English class. I’ll pull my grade up.”

“He’s got Franklin,” Dean explained to Libby.

“Ohhhh, not the dragon-lady.” The soft sound of her voice made Henry’s whole body respond. He’d been thinking about nothing but her since they’d met—her voice, her touch, her smile. Now to have her here in his dorm room, just a few feet away and untouchable, was the worst torture he could imagine. “I hear she eats freshman for breakfast.”

“I transferred out first week.” Dean snorted and shook his head. “See if you can get into Parker’s class with me. She’s a pushover. Total cake-walk.”

“Too late. Tried that.” Henry sighed. “They won’t let me transfer this late.”

“Franklin’s tough, but she’s fair,” Libby countered. “And you know what, we have a great tutoring program. You can sign up at the library.”

He didn’t turn toward her, but he mumbled a, “Maybe,” in her general direction.

“Well, dude, I’m sorry.” Dean stood, stretching, and headed to their bathroom. “It sucks you aren’t gonna get any ice time just because Franklin’s a bitch.”

“She’s a pain in my ass,” Henry muttered. Just thinking about his English teacher made him borderline homicidal.

Libby giggled and Henry rolled onto his side to gaze at her, realizing Dean had just left him and Libby alone, even if just for a moment. She was cross-legged on Dean’s bed, leaning her elbows on her knees and studying at him, her hair falling over her arms and thighs like a river of lava.

“So do you do tutoring?” Henry asked, hopeful. That would be a great excuse to see her, he thought, watching as she stood, wandering around the room.

“Professor Franklin runs the Literacy Tutor Foundation. I volunteered through them last year.” Libby was exploring the surface of Dean’s desk. “Oh my god, are these real?” She held up a pair of handcuffs.

“Ask Dean.” Henry snorted. “He’s got a whole story about a cop and a prostitute he could tell you.”

“Nice.” She rolled her eyes, dropping them on the desk as if they were on fire. “Anyway, yeah, I could tutor you. If you want.”

He considered her offer. He really, really considered it.

It wouldn’t be the first time he’d had a tutor. His particular handicap had forced him to become very resourceful over the years. He couldn’t count the number of tests he’d cheated on, the girls and friends who had written the essays and papers he’d turned in, and the tutors he had manipulated into doing most of his work. But for some reason, he didn’t want to lie to Libby.

Of course, he didn’t want her to know the truth, either. That would be awful.

“Nah, it’s okay. I’ll manage.” He always had. By high school, it was really athletics—hockey specifically—that had saved him. He’d found something he was incredibly good at, something that wasn’t just valuable to him, but something other people valued, too. His high school hockey coach had taken him under his wing, making exceptions for him and talking to all of his teachers. He went from skating by, barely passing, to getting A’s and playing great hockey. He’d even gotten a scholarship to U of M—something he was now in danger of losing.

“Well, the offer’s open.” Libby sat on the bed again as Dean came back into the room, still zipping up his jeans.

“I gotta get going,” Dean informed them, grabbing his jacket and regarding Henry. “You’ll keep Libby company during the game?”

Henry stood, walking toward the door and opening it. “Can I talk to you? In the hallway?”

Dean followed him.

Henry shut the door. His hands were shaking. “What the fuck is going on?”

“You mean Libby?” Dean took a step back when he saw Henry’s face. “Hey! Hey! It’s not serious or anything. I asked her if she wanted to go to the game and she said yes. I was as surprised as you! Besides, I thought it would give *you* time to get to know her, since *I*’ll be playing football the whole while.”

Henry frowned, hesitated. His hand was already clenched into a tight fist, cocked and ready to go. But part of him wanted to believe. Was Dean really just trying to help him? “It looked pretty serious to me.”

Dean grinned sheepishly. “Well, I wasn’t gonna turn the girl down. Would you?”

“So what is this now, a competition?”

“May the best man win?” Dean took another step back, holding up his hands and laughing. “Dude, I don’t wanna fight. We both got an equal shot. If she likes you, she’ll end up with you. If she likes me, well...” He shrugged, still smiling.

What else could he do? “Fine.”

“Still friends?”

Henry ignored Dean’s outstretched hand. How in the hell was he supposed to compete with Dean Mosher? The dorm room they lived in was named after his great-

great-something or other, for god's sake! The guy had everything and he walked around like he knew it.

“Hey, will you bring Libby back here after the game? I've got to head over to the frat house for some setup afterward. Next week's Greek Week, buddy!” Dean waggled his eyebrows, grinning with perfectly straight teeth, and Henry relented.

“Okay, but if the sock's on the door, you're sleeping on Bel's floor—and I saw him eating baked beans at lunch today.” Henry gave him the finger as Dean laughed and walked away.

Chapter Two

"I hate football." Libby was shivering, even in her oversized matching gold and blue scarf and knit hat and mittens, all with the U of M logo on them. She seemed so small sitting next to him.

"You're cold." Henry started taking off his jacket for her, but she stopped him, shaking her head and sliding her body closer, as close as she could, the armrest in the way.

"Just put your arm around me," she urged, teeth chattering. The wind was wicked and Henry happily did as she asked.

"Better?" He smiled when she tucked her head under his chin. He could feel her body already beginning to relax.

"Much." Her voice was muffled in his jacket. Down below, the band looked like little toy soldiers marching across the field. It was all a big show, the first game of the season.

"So if you hate football..." Henry's arm tightened around her as they both tried to make themselves as small as possible while a man and his son squeezed by. "Why did you come?"

Libby didn't say anything for a minute and he wondered if she was going to answer at all when she finally changed the subject and asked, "So, you play hockey?"

"Uh-huh." In his pocket, Henry's phone went off for the third time. He'd put it on vibrate, but it still startled them. He ignored it anyway.

She lifted her head and he liked how close she was, how her breath smelled like the cinnamon Trident gum she had been chewing on their walk to the stadium. "Think I could come watch a practice?"

"You like hockey?" She hated football and liked hockey. It had to be a sign.

"Oh I love hockey," she agreed, snuggling closer again. "I just wish I could afford season tickets."

"I get two free tickets for every home game." Henry offered, "You can have them if you want. Unless my parents are coming or something. Mostly they can't make the games. It's too far."

"I'd like that." He thought he heard a smile in her voice. The stadium was on its feet now, ready to welcome the home team, but they both stayed put. "So what's your major, Henry?"

He snorted. "Hockey."

"Are you good enough to play pro?"

"I don't know." He shrugged, trying to sound nonchalant. The dream of becoming a professional hockey player was so enormous for him, it was unspeakable. "Maybe." Now he was desperate to change the subject. "So you didn't always want to be a librarian?"

"No, I wanted to be an investigative journalist." Libby clapped her mittened hands as the team burst out onto the field, but Henry didn't take his arm from around her to do the same.

“What happened to that plan?” He was far more interested in their conversation than the upcoming game. Damn, there went his phone again. He jammed his hand into his pocket to silence the vibration.

She shrugged, leaning forward in her seat now to see, and he didn’t like it when she moved too far away. “Well, for one thing, newspapers are disappearing.”

“There’s always TV.”

She mock-shuddered. “I couldn’t do TV news.”

“Why not? You’re gorgeous. You’d make a great news anchor.” It was true. Of course, she could have made a great anything in that regard—model, actress, whatever. Although Henry thought it would be a waste of her real talents, he also believed someone should bask in her beauty. He selfishly thought it should be him.

“Well thanks for the compliment, but I get tongue tied.” Libby pulled out her cell phone and clicked the camera on, taking a picture of the field. “There, now we can show Dean proof we were here.”

“I bet you could overcome it,” Henry encouraged.

She made a goofy face at him, sticking out her tongue and crossing her eyes. It made him laugh. “You haven’t seen me. I freeze up. I stutter. It isn’t pretty.”

“Well, librarians are cool.” He thought whatever she did would be cool.

“So are hockey players.” She turned her attention fully to him, pressing close, her thigh brushing against his. He insanely wished, even though it was only forty-something degrees outside, that they were wearing shorts so he could feel her skin. His phone buzzed again and he swore, taking it out of his pocket.

“Who keeps calling you? Is it your girlfriend?”

"I don't have a girlfriend." Henry made sure to say that first. "It's my mother."

"Shouldn't you answer it?"

He clicked *silence all* with one hand and slipped it back into his jacket pocket.

"She just wants to yell at me about my grades."

"Oh, you have those kinds of parents too." She had a sad sort of knowing expression in her eyes.

"Actually no." Henry couldn't help being fair to his mom. She hardly ever yelled at him about anything, except maybe the time when he was seven and he'd taken his dad's spray paint from the garage so he could paint the entire lawn blue. He just wanted to play "shark," he'd told her—and it didn't look enough like an ocean. Mostly, she was kind and sympathetic and understanding. It drove him crazy. "She's just worried. She wants to help."

"Are you going to let her help?" Libby gave him a sly glance.

He shrugged. "She wants to get me a tutor."

"Hey, that was *my* suggestion."

"I know."

"So what do you have against tutors?" She nudged him in the ribs and he grunted. "Is it a pride thing?"

"I guess." He pretended to be interested in what was going on down on the field.

"Everybody needs help sometimes." Libby leaned in to say this, almost whispering. "It doesn't mean you're stupid or anything."

"Gee thanks." The wind had picked up and he hoped it explained away the redness in his cheeks.

"I'm freezing." She was shivering again and he pulled her closer, wishing the armrest between them would disappear. The band had started again, the fight song this time, and people were on their feet. At least it blocked the wind.

"Hey, do you think Dean would know if we went back to your room?"

Her words made him stiffen. In more ways than one.

"Probably not." He tried to sound casual. "He wanted me to take you back there afterwards anyway. He's got some frat stuff to do first."

Libby rolled her eyes. "Ugh. Alpha Pi Alpha?"

"That's the one."

She made a face. "The worst of them all."

"What's that supposed to mean?" He didn't mean to sound so defensive, but Dean had convinced him it was a great group of guys, that if he pledged, he would have friends for life. "Brothers," Dean said. That was what convinced Henry. He had an older sister, but he'd always wanted brothers.

"You're not pledging, are you?" Libby gave him a funny look, frowning.

He loved the way her brow crinkled. Those lines would probably develop into something permanent when she was older. She'd probably hate them and curse them and want to get Botox injections or something. And he thought, if he were lucky enough to still be alive and around when Libby hated those lines, he would love them just as much then as he did right now.

Henry deflected the question. "Why?"

"I did a story for *The Michigan Daily* about hazing last year," she told him. "They do some awful stuff to their pledges."

“Ah hah!” Henry exclaimed, still deflecting. “So you were a reporter!”

“*Were* is the optimum word there.” Libby stood and Henry lamented this, scanning her pretty, round face. She held a gold and blue mittened hand out to him and he couldn’t resist, would have said yes to anything she asked. “Come on, let’s go get warm.”

Libby kept close the whole walk back to the dorm, her arm linked through Henry’s—and he was pretty sure it wasn’t just because she was cold. Bel’s door was open as they went by and he waved from his bed, the TV loud. The game was on, and the cheers of the crowd sounded both on the television and far in the distance, an echo.

“This is better than shivering in the stands!” Libby pulled off her mittens, hat and scarf, shaking her hair out as she left her coat on his bed, already wandering around the room. He threw his coat next to hers, shoving them both over to sit cross-legged on the bed, watching her touch things, pick them up, put them down again.

She explored Henry’s desk this time, marveling at the volume of mini cassette tapes he had there. “Why so many?”

“I record all my lectures.” He grabbed his iPod out of habit, flipping through for something to listen to.

“Whatcha got?” Libby crawled onto the bed and he welcomed her warm weight as she settled herself beside him. “Anything good?”

Without a word, he reached over and opened his desk drawer, pulling out two pairs of headphones. He had a splitter that allowed them both to listen at the same time, and he handed her a pair. She slipped them on just as he hit *play*.

“*The Runaways*?” Libby listened, a smile curling the corners of her mouth.

He found it hard to not lean over and kiss her, both because she was so irresistible and because she'd instantly recognized the band. He held his breath as she situated herself with her head in his lap, her long legs stretched out, settling her yellow-and-blue stockinged feet halfway up his wall.

"Awesome," she murmured, her eyes tilting back to him, and he noticed they were a shade of blue so incredible he was sure the color couldn't have occurred anywhere in nature. "Spin me some tunes, Mr. DJ."

He did, and although he had his own set of headphones on, he wasn't sure he really heard any of the music he played for her. His senses were otherwise engaged, feeling the silky brush of her hair against his arm, her neck arched over the swell of his thigh, her pulse beating time at the hollow of her soft, pale throat.

He stared at her like a starving man in a prison cell watching a buffet parade by. The way her sweater pulled up when she stretched gave him an astonishing and intoxicating glimpse at the dip of her navel. To Henry, she smelled like rain and sweet corn and fields of poppies, like every good thing he could imagine, and he wanted to lose himself in the experience of her completely.

And that's just what happened. He forgot everything but Libby. They'd been listening to music and talking for hours when Dean showed up. Libby had her own iPod with her, and they went through each other's song lists, him poking fun of her Dave Matthews collection and Libby teasing him about owning anything by John Mayer. They'd been so engaged, Henry had almost forgotten he had a roommate.

"Did you see that touchdown?" Dean burst through the door, tossing his jacket at his desk chair. Libby was now sitting next to Henry on his bed, both of them wearing

headphones, and they viewed each other guiltily. Neither of them had thought to check the football scores.

"We creamed them! Twenty-eight to nine! Boo-yah!" Dean pumped his fist in the air. "I had four guys on me, and I'm running like this..." Dean squatted low and ran in place, head down. "And this jackhole comes around this side like he's superman or something, ready to tackle me." Dean weaved, first left, then right. "And I'm like, I don't think so!" Dean slammed an invisible football down onto the floor. "Touchdown!"

"Good game." Henry flipped through his iPod, hitting *play*.

Libby covered her mouth, stifling a giggle. The song was Carly Simon's "*You're So Vain*."

"You guys saw it, right?"

"Sure," Libby agreed, sliding her headphones down around her neck. "Great job."

"Thanks." Dean flopped down on his bed. Henry saw his eyes narrow when he realized how close the two of them were sitting on the bed. "So uh...you two look cozy."

"We've just been listening to music, waiting for you." Libby took her headphones off, handing them to Henry.

"Everything go okay at the frat?" Henry turned his iPod off, tossing it aside.

"All set." Dean's grin widened. "Pledge week is gonna be a blast."

"For everyone but the pledges," Libby muttered, picking invisible fuzz off her sweater.

"Well, I'm glad you like the roommate." Dean leaned back against the wall, real casual, but Henry heard the edge in his voice. "It's always good when everyone gets along."

“Speaking of roommates.” Libby swung her legs off the edge of the bed. “What do you guys say we double with mine? She’s really sweet, very pretty, and she just broke up with her boyfriend.”

“Uh-oh.” Dean rolled his eyes. “On the rebound?”

“I think she just needs to go out and have some fun, you know?”

“There’s a new horror flick playing at the Goodrich,” Henry offered. “*Let Me In*. A vampire movie. A real one.”

“As long as they don’t sparkle, I’m there,” Libby insisted, just when Henry thought his estimation of the girl couldn’t have improved.

“Cool! So what’s this girl’s name?” Dean asked. “My man Henry wants to know who he’s going out with, am I right?”

“Um...” Libby froze, her gaze shifting between the two of them. She felt as trapped as he did, Henry realized. What were they supposed to do now? Libby’s mouth turned down in resignation as she gave Dean what he wanted. “Elaine.”

“Oh that’s right.” Dean leaned forward, fingers tented between his knees. “You room with Elaine Litman, don’t you?” He looked at his roommate. “She’s hot, dude. Seriously. She’s got great—” He stopped when Libby gave him a sharp look. “A great personality,” he finished.

“Well, listen, it’s late...” Libby stood stiffly, reaching over Henry for her coat and he froze when the soft swell of her sweated breast brushed his arm.

“You’re not going?” Dean frowned, standing too.

“I’ve got to get up early tomorrow.” Libby smiled a thank-you when Henry handed over her mittens, scarf and hat. “Great game, Dean.”

“Thanks.” He reached for his coat. “I’ll just walk you back to your dorm.”

“No, that’s okay.” Libby pulled on her hat and mittens. “I have to stop by the library to pick up something anyway. I’ll take the bus. I’ll be fine.”

“When do you want to go to the movies?” Henry asked, still sitting on his bed, too aware of the cooling space next to him where her warm body had been. He figured he might as well take advantage of every chance he could get to see her, even if he was playing second fiddle to his roommate.

She visibly brightened, wrapping her scarf around her neck. “How about next Friday?”

“I’ll call you.” Dean opened the door for her and Henry couldn’t help smiling when Libby took the opportunity to pull her scarf up to cover her mouth when Dean leaned in to try and kiss her goodbye.

* * * *

“All my clothes?” Henry frowned over at Dean, who was already nearly stripped down to his skivvies.

There were maybe thirty of the pledges left now at the end of Greek Week. Those were the only ones who had managed to stick it out to the end, and while Henry was proud he was one of them, he also knew it was mostly because Dean was his roommate. He never would have made it through some of the stuff they’d been forced to do that week without him. He certainly would never have received an invitation otherwise.

“Trust me.”

How many times had Dean said that to him this week? But still, he went along. It was hard to say “no” to Dean Tosher, and not only was it difficult, but you got the feeling it just wasn’t a good idea.

Henry pulled his t-shirt off, shivering. The room was cold. Did they even have the heat on? The other guys were stripping too. They’d gotten used to taking orders this week, he supposed. They’d pretty much done everything that was asked of them, from the simplest things, like learning the history and traditions of the organization and then passing tests (oral exams, mostly, roused out of bed at two in the morning and answering questions while blindfolded and tied to chairs) to the campus-wide scavenger hunt, where they had to find everything from a fifth of Jack Daniels to used condoms.

It hadn’t been as bad as Henry thought it would be, actually, but that probably had something to do with being Dean’s roommate. He wasn’t one of the pledges who’d had to go to class wearing pink hair bows or diapers. The scariest thing he’d done all week, so far anyway, had been placing a mandatory hundred-dollar bet on an NFL game they had watched together as a group. Thankfully, he’d picked the right team and won. Dean hadn’t been so lucky.

“All right, brothers.” The door behind them opened and Henry slipped his boxers quickly off, wanting to be in compliance before the older members saw him.

The pledges all took an involuntarily step back when the door swung open, whether out of respect or fear, it was hard to tell. The older fraternity members were intimidating, but as far as Henry knew, even in spite of Libby’s warnings, no one had been hurt during Greek Week. They hadn’t even done any forced drinking games, which

Henry had fully expected—Dean said they weren't allowed to anymore. Henry had remembered Libby's article and wondered if there was a connection between the two.

"Let's go, gentlemen!" Marcus was the head of the fraternity and another football player—defensive tackle, built like the Titanic. Henry fell in line behind Dean as they all filed out of the room naked, following the enormous back and completely shaved head of their fearless leader. He had an earring in each ear, and Dean secretly called him "Mr. Clean."

The room they had been in was small, but this one was even smaller. There were two rows of chairs, facing one another, and a TV and a DVD player on a tall cart at the end. Behind each chair was one of their older soon-to-be fraternity brothers. Henry hesitated, seeing the setup over Dean's shoulder, but there really wasn't much of a choice as they were directed into the room.

Dean was pushed to the left and Henry to the right, so they ended up in chairs directly across from one another. The folding chairs were plastic, not metal, but they were still incredibly cold and Henry's balls felt like they were shriveled grapes. At least they were spaced far enough apart that he wasn't brushing up against the next to him.

"You've made it through Hell Week," Marcus announced.

"Almost," Henry heard the fraternity brother behind him murmur and then chuckle.

"After Hell Week, you all deserve a reward, don't you think?"

A murmur went up among the pledges in agreement. Henry glanced over at Dean, eyebrow raised. Were they kidding?

“The kind of brotherhood you are about to enter can’t be explained. It can only be experienced.” Marcus picked up the remote control and pointed it at the television. Henry watched it come to life, but there was no picture on it yet, just a blue screen. He couldn’t imagine what they were going to show them—some video about the history of the frat? Why in the hell did they have to be naked for that?

Marcus was still talking, but it wasn’t anything he hadn’t heard already this week. “You should always be able to trust your frat brother. You should be able to do anything for each other.”

“Or next to each other.” The guy behind him again. Henry felt a hand on his bare shoulder. What in the hell did they have planned? Henry’s sense of foreboding grew as the guy next to him passed him a bowl and whispered, “Take one.” They were full of condoms.

No fucking way, he thought, taking one anyway and passing on the message and the bowl to the pledge next to him. Dean had a condom in his hand and he was trying to suppress a smile, but the other guys looked just as scared as Henry felt. *Trust me.* That’s what Dean had said. But did Henry really trust his roommate? He’d been making a bee-line for the girl Henry liked, and had been close-mouthed all week about the fraternity rituals, although admittedly, Henry had gotten off pretty easy because of Dean. At least so far. Dean kept telling him he was a pledge, too—which was true. But he also obviously had inside information he wasn’t willing to share.

“You’re gonna want to buckle up for safety, boys.” Marcus turned on the DVD and Henry stared as two women appeared—two very naked, very sexy, very lesbian women. They were crawling all over each other, kissing and touching. The blonde

wasn't his type—too busty and fake for his tastes. But the redhead? Oh Jesus, she looked like Libby with all that hair! Her breasts were perfect, a pert handful of flesh, her nipples puffy and pink. And her pussy?

His dick was getting hard. Henry covered his crotch, condom still in hand, trying to keep his boy down, but the girl was so much like Libby, and when the blonde knelt between the redhead's legs, parting her pussy lips covered in curly red fuzz, the camera zooming in for a close-up, it was a lost cause. Even though he was sitting naked in the middle of a group of guys, his cock wouldn't obey his "down" command.

"We're all going to play a game."

Henry looked reluctantly away from the screen to see that most of his pledge brothers were having the same problem with their dicks. Dean wasn't even hiding his—and Henry was surprised to find his cock was rather small in stature, maybe six inches—but instead had his hand wrapped around it, stroking idly as he peered up at the screen where the women were rubbing their tits together now and moaning loudly.

Marcus picked up a black bag off the floor, taking out a bottle of KY gel. *No way*, Henry thought again. Was this going to be some sort of circle jerk? He could only hope—because he didn't have any sexual inclination toward guys, and there was no way he was going to consent to anything that involved one of his pledge brothers touching his cock. Or doing anything else to him, for that matter.

"Here we go." Marcus handed a bottle of KY to the first two pledges and they stared across the aisle at each other, eyes wide. He knew both of them, had hung out in Dean's room with Uri, a big, swarthy Russian guy with a thick accent, and Bel was the skinny geek from the dorm room right next door to them. In spite of the moaning and

soft cries of pleasure coming from the television, Henry had found that his cock had finally obeyed his “down” command. Everyone was too anxious to have a hard-on now. Well, almost everyone. Dean was still hard, cock firmly in hand.

“Fasten your seatbelts.” Marcus’s teeth flashed brightly white. “Buckle up, buttercups.” He reached back into the bag. Both guys sat frozen, a condom in one hand, KY in the other. Henry didn’t understand until Marcus pulled two more objects out of the bag. Flashlights? Huh? Were they going to have a masturbation contest in the dark?

“Just in case you thought this was gonna be easy.” Marcus took the end off of the flashlight, but where there should have been a light was...

“What the hell?” The guy on Henry’s right—he couldn’t remember his name. Peter or Phil or...?

“It’s a Fleshlight,” the guy on Henry’s left said. Henry knew his name—Cody. They’d been sitting next to each other during the game Henry and the rest of the pledges had been forced to bet on. Unfortunately Cody, like Dean, had chosen the other team.

“A what?” Henry whispered, thinking he’d mispronounced the word flashlight, but what Marcus was holding in his hand didn’t look like any flashlight he’d ever seen, and then one of the older frat brothers answered the question for all of them because he’d taken out the DVD of the two lesbian women and put in another, more informative one.

“Holy fuck.” That was Phil or Pete or...Pat. His name was Pat, Henry remembered as they all stared at the screen. There was a nearly-nude brunette up there, reclining, legs spread, and she holding the flashlight-looking thing in her hand.

With her other hand, she touched the pink flesh-like material, her fingers rubbing oil into the surface, and Henry finally understood, as the scene changed and the woman was on her knees in front of a very well-hung guy, licking his balls and sliding the flashlight—er, *Fleshlight*—down onto his cock.

“Ohhhhh,” the guy on-screen moaned. “It feels just like the real thing!”

Henry’s dick jumped to life again as he watched the guy decide to compare his new toy with the real thing, putting the brunette on the bed and the Fleshlight just above her pussy. Now it was like he had two cunts to fuck, one real, one synthetic. Henry stared, fascinated, watching the flesh part, wondering what it would feel like, as the brunette fingered first her own pussy and then the fake one.

A collective gasp went up when the guy stuck his cock into the brunette, beginning to fuck her. Then he switched, sliding his dick into the sex toy, fucking it just as hard. Back and forth it went. The whole room gave a sound of disappointment when Marcus turned off the DVD.

“Get the idea?”

They all got it. There were thirty-two cocks straight up and at-attention in the room. And those, Henry figured, were just the ones they could see. The older frat brothers, standing behind their chairs, were sure to be hard, too. He was just glad this wasn’t going to be some sort of homoerotic test. Not that there was anything wrong with being gay. He just wasn’t, that’s all.

“You two first.” Marcus gestured to the guys in chairs closest to the television. The DVD was being changed again, back to the lesbians. On the screen, the redhead was on the bed, her pussy spread for the blonde’s eager tongue. And Henry thought his

cock couldn't get any harder. Great. At this rate, he'd last about two seconds in that pussy-sleeve before it was all humiliatingly over. But according to the way this game worked, wouldn't that make him the winner?

Well, at least, he understood the condoms now.

The first pair up—so to speak, Henry thought, concealing a smile—was Uri the Russian and Bel. Henry watched his geeky dorm mate struggle to open the condom, tearing it with his teeth, using trembling hands in an attempt to roll it on. Uri was in Henry's row so it was harder to see him, but he looked down the line to find the Russian already had his condom in place, the KY open and dripping down onto his fat dick. He was more than ready to go.

"The first one to come wins," Marcus explained. "The brother behind you will be the one to make the call. The first guy to pull his cock out and show us the used condom wins that round."

"You'll be going head to head," Marcus went on. So to speak, Henry thought again, fighting the urge to snicker. He could hear guys whispering back and forth to each other, some of them laughing, nervous, anxious. Excited. "And once we've eliminated half of you in the first round, we'll line up for a second."

The group collectively murmured in protest. They were expected to go again, so soon after they'd climaxed once? Henry was beginning to understand how this "competition" was going to work.

"There are thirty-two of you." Marcus handed over one of the Fleshlights to Bel, the other to Uri. "After the first round, we'll have sixteen. Then eight. Then two."

“The winner will get that entire box of porn.” Marcus pointed to a cardboard box lined with DVD cases. There had to be hundreds of DVDs in it! “And a Fleshlight.”

The pledges actually cheered.

Then Marcus announced, “The second runner-up will get the other Fleshlight.”

Henry focused on Dean. He was grinning, the head of his cock practically purple as he squeezed it. No wonder he’d been stroking himself this whole time, Henry realized. They were going to go head-to-head, and Dean had a huge competitive streak.

“On your mark.” Marcus gestured to the first pair of guys. “Get set.” Oh, they were set all right. “Go!”

Henry had a feeling Bel was going to win this one. This first round would be easy. It was the second, third and—*gulp*—fourth rounds that were gonna be tough.

Uri groaned as he shoved the sex toy down on his cock. He acted with practiced ease, eyes half-closed, watching the women on the television screen. They were in a sixty-nine position now, the camera focused on the redhead’s lapping pink tongue, the blonde’s pussy juices smeared all over her cheeks. Henry hoped this DVD was still on when it got to be his turn. All he had to do was see the redhead once with his cock inside that thing and he’d come.

Hell, I might come before I even get into it, he thought, flushing.

“Oh fuck!” Bel cried out as he slid his condom-covered dick into the sleeve, his hand wrapped tight around the Fleshlight’s handle. “Oh my fucking god, it’s sooo *tight!*”

Across from him, Uri grunted and thrust, but it was already over for Bel. He pulled his lubed-up cock out, the condom end full of his cum, his face twisted in pleasure, legs splayed, his dick still pulsing with his orgasm.

Everyone whooped and crowed, and Uri let out a groan as he came, too, his thigh muscles straining with the effort. He had his condom off and tied and held up in a flash, but it was too late. Bel had already peeled his off.

“The winner!” The fraternity brother behind Bel slapped him on the shoulder.

“Gimme that thing!” The guy next to Bel already had his condom rolled on. Henry didn’t know that guy well at all—he was a scrawny-looking kid with frizzy red hair, his cock jutting up and to the left.

It was on to the next pair. They were going to have to do this how many times? Henry’s cock and balls were aching for release already, and next to him, Pat’s breath was coming fast as he jerked himself off, his eyes moving from the frat guys playing with the sex toy to the women licking each other on the screen.

May not even make it through the first round, Henry mused, and then Pat’s cock exploded. He wasn’t wearing his condom yet and cum spurted like a geyser over his pumping fist as he groaned softly and bucked up in his chair.

“Whoops!” The frat brother standing behind Pat’s chair laughed. “We’ve got a disqualification!”

“Sorry, dude, you’re out!” Marcus announced.

Henry gulped as Pat stood, grinning sheepishly, cum still dripping down his thigh as he wobbled toward the door, following Uri. Henry’s balls felt tight, no longer cold against the surface of the chair, but contracted and practically boiling. Still, he didn’t want to go off too soon. He really wanted to try that thing. The next pair was already at it, the redhead across the way pumping his freckled fist, his hand and the toy a blur, but

in Henry's row it was clearly already over from the sound of the moaning and groaning at the end of the line.

He'd only had the pleasure of experiencing the inside of a real pussy once, last summer. It was just a brief thing, but it had been beyond description. His hand, even a girl's mouth, was nothing in comparison. He was probably no more obsessed than any other guy out there, he supposed, but although he hadn't had the opportunity before or since, he couldn't get the memory out of his mind of the slick, velvet feel of her pussy wrapped around his cock no matter what he did.

Not that he tried very hard to forget. In fact, mostly he spent his time fantasizing, trying to remember the hot hug of her cunt, the sweet taste of her mouth and the feel of her breath against his face as she came, the grip of her thighs, the sway of her breasts.

Henry squeezed his aching cock, seeing pre-cum leaking from the tip, and took a long, deep, shuddering breath. *Hold on, Henry. Hold on.* He wanted to fuck a pussy again, even if it was a fake one. Maybe if I just close my eyes, he thought, block out one of my senses. He heard another cheer go up. Another round down. He heard the other pledges, some of them breathing hard, some of them chanting, "Go go go!" He could also hear the soft moans of the women in the porn movie. Just the sound of the two of them was maddening! And thinking about the redhead on the DVD made him think of Libby, and the thought of Libby was more than enough to push him to the edge.

He couldn't count how many times he'd jerked off the past two weeks thinking about her. Although that was probably a good thing. Maybe it would give him an advantage in tonight's competition! He'd always been surprisingly good at getting hard again soon after an orgasm.

Henry heard a huge groan from his row and knew another round was over. He opened his eyes and saw another pledge disqualifying himself, his cock twitching, his balls tight and red as tomatoes as he came all over his naked belly. Henry and Dean were second to last. Fuck, he was never going to make it. Henry closed his eyes again, trying to think of anything but pussy. Baseball averages. Crap, he didn't know any. States? He could name all fifty states in alphabetical order.

Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas... oh wait, Alaska came after Alabama. Was there anything before Alabama? His cock ached so bad it almost hurt. He didn't dare touch it. It throbbed against the chair, the tip hanging over the edge, literally dripping pre-cum onto the tile. Probably picked this room because it didn't have carpet, he realized. Just in case. To his right, someone else went off, someone not even holding the toy yet. They were popping like balloons too close to a light bulb now, excited into bursting, one after the other.

Alabama, Arkansas, Alaska... there was another "A" state. He was sure of it. He strangely had a fantastic memory. Only two chairs away now. He could actually hear the sound of it, the wet sucking noise it made when it went down on the guy's dick. Next in line beside him, last in line, was Cody. He panted, holding onto his cock for dear life. Henry clenched his ass muscles tight, daring a peep over to his right. Pat was gone, so he had a clear view of the guy who had the toy, the strained muscles in his forearm, a tribal tattoo flexing with his motion, as he manipulated the Fleshlight up and down on his dick. His hips began to thrust and Henry heard him whisper, "Ahhh that tight fucking hole!"

Oh no. Henry grabbed his cock, squeezing hard as the guy beside him grunted and thrust, his eyes rolling back as he came. Across from him, like a mirror image, another guy had a Fleshlight flying up and down his cock, riding it hard. He was close, but not close enough. *Alas...Alab...wha...* Henry couldn't think. He couldn't breathe. He wanted to come and come and come.

"Winner!"

The guy next to him held up his full condom triumphantly, turning to hand Henry the Fleshlight. "Careful, this thing is fucking lethal!"

Arizona! Ari-fucking-zona! That was it! Henry tore open his condom, rolling it down over the mushroom head of his dick, shivering at the sensation. Across from him, Dean was doing the same thing, sheathing his cock and positioning the toy just above it.

I can do this, Henry told himself, seeing the toy for the first time up close. Its resemblance to a real pussy was remarkable. It even had a tiny clit!

"On your mark..." Marcus was already starting them off and Henry was practically finished. He gazed over at Dean and saw that expression, that "I'm going to wipe the floor with you" look on his face. His roommate was ultra-competitive. Henry steeled himself, slowly rubbing the toy's slit back and forth over the head of his dick. Thank god for the condom or that alone would have done it. He didn't need any of the KY. The thing was plenty slick already.

"Get set..." The excitement in the room was palpable. Some of the guys who had gone once were clearly ready to go again. How long had it been? He'd lost track of time, of space, of anything. He was pure sensation, pure animal drive and instinct. If it had

been a real woman in front of him and not a sex toy, he would have grabbed her and fucked her senseless.

“Go!”

Henry gasped when he slid the sleeve down, his cock aiming like an arrow, burying itself deep. *Just like a pussy*—oh god, the memory, the sensation, it enveloped him completely.

Around him the voices started chanting. It had changed from “go go go!” to “come come come!” and he was seconds, milliseconds, from that point.

Libby, he thought, turning his head and seeing that the lesbians were still thankfully at it on the DVD, moaning and sucking at each other’s clits, but a man had joined them now, and he was fucking the redhead, giving it to her from behind so hard she cried out with every thrust.

Oh god, Libby. He wished it was her, her pussy, her little clit rubbing against his pubic bone, grinding into him—the sensation was just perfect if he closed his eyes. He was fucking her, letting her ride his cock, her hair falling around him like a fiery curtain, and he was going to come.

“Oh fuck! Fuck!” He heard Dean, the catch in his throat, and he knew the sound already, had heard it in the middle of the night, the shuttling of Dean’s hand up and down his shaft, trying to be quiet while he jerked off, but that catch in his breath meant he was close. Very close. He was going to come, too.

Henry groaned, closed his eyes and grabbed the toy in both hands, thrusting up and fucking Libby’s sweet little cunt. He was going to come up inside of her, fill her wet pussy with every bit of his cum, but it wasn’t his fantasy image of her breasts bouncing

or her sweet wet cunt that did it for him—it was her navel, the soft dip of her belly button, the memory of that swath of skin exposed when she stretched.

“Now!” Henry announced, slamming the toy down against his crotch, feeling the first blast of his cum filling the end of the condom in a hot, wet flood. The crowd howled in satisfaction, but across from him, Dean was groaning and thrusting, coming—damnit, he was coming, too! Henry hadn’t had nearly long enough with this toy, and now that he’d experienced it, he didn’t just want more of it, he wanted to own it.

Mine. It was a primal thought, and he did the opposite of what was instinctive. Instead of thrusting, thrusting, thrusting—emptying himself into the wet sleeve wrapped around his cock—he withdrew, still coming, his cock smacking wetly against the chair, the condom still filling with the aftermath of his orgasm. If he hadn’t done that, Dean would have won for sure.

He tossed the toy onto the chair beside him, grabbed the end of the condom, slipped a finger under an edge to break the suction, and pulled.

“Winner!” He heard it, they all did, two words spoken at the exact same time, the frat guy standing behind Dean and the guy behind Henry.

“We have a tie!” Marcus announced.

Henry panted, the world still swimming, his ears ringing as he tied the condom and tossed it into the garbage pail being passed to him. Then he reached over and handed the Fleshlight to Cody, who wasn’t even going to get a chance to use it in this round because the guy across from him had already disqualified himself. So many guys had gotten off without even getting a chance to try out the sex toy that there were only eight of them in the second round instead of sixteen.

Henry took a long swig from the water bottle offered to him by one of the older frat guys, feeling like Rocky between rounds. He got up as they rearranged the chairs down to eight—just four guys on each side. The rest of the pledges and frat guys surrounded them in a semi-circle, though they all left a clear view to the porn. Now the question was...could any of them get it up again?

Chapter Three

They say men hit their sexual peak at eighteen, Henry thought, watching his fellow pledges, seeing their dicks slowly getting hard again, while at the same time trying to seem as if he wasn't paying attention. *I hope I haven't hit mine yet.*

Someone had turned up the sound on the television and the two women were on their knees in front of the guy now, giving him a hell of a blowjob. The blonde's mouth was lipstick-red, but the redhead's was pink and open, soft and natural, her tongue licking at the cock on the screen like she was trying to catch all the drips on a melting ice cream cone.

Henry's dick began to jerk to life again, even without any aid. Condoms were passed out once more, and Marcus stood at the end of the shortened aisle of chairs holding a Fleshlight in each hand like a bizarre double-fisted Statue of Liberty. For a moment, Henry couldn't believe he was doing this. He had just masturbated naked in a room full of other guys—and was about to do it again.

But he wanted to win.

Maybe it was just the peer pressure. Or maybe it was Dean sitting across from him—again, directly across from him! He'd even seen his roommate move his chair so it would work out that way, like he *wanted* to be in direct competition. Well fine. If that's what he wanted, that's what he was going to get, Henry decided, wrapping his hand around the expanding length of his cock and squeezing.

He gazed up at the television screen for inspiration. Damn, but that redhead looked like Libby. He wondered briefly if Dean had planned this, even down to the porn

choice—but how much influence could he have? He was a pledge, too, after all. Had he known about this, though? Somehow Henry just had a feeling...

The first two guys were condomed up and ready to go, although he didn't know if they were going to last very long. Neither had gotten a chance to fuck the sex toy in the first round, because the guy they'd been paired up with had been disqualified. Marcus handed each of them a Fleshlight and they all watched, the eight in chairs and the crowd of guys surrounding them, as the two pledges poised their dicks right at the entrance of each toy.

Just like a pussy, Henry thought again. The feeling had been so real, so different from a hand or a mouth, it was staggering. It triggered something primal in his brain, something deep and uncontrollable, seeing something so realistic, watching a hard cock parting the flesh-like wetness, ready to enter. He knew it wasn't real, but oh, it looked and felt so real, he could almost believe it.

It seemed to provoke something primitive in all of them as Marcus counted down the beginning of the round with a "Mark, set, go!" and they were off. Not just the two holding the toy, but all the guys, even the ones standing out of this round. Many of them had their hands between their legs, pumping their cocks as they watched, and even the older frat guys were rubbing at their clothed crotches.

Henry had been right—the first two guys didn't take long at all. He couldn't see the guy in his own row very well, but he could hear the Fleshlight's natural suction and see it flying up and down his cock. The first guy across from him, though, an Asian guy with long dark hair that didn't quite cover the way he was biting his lip, his face twisted in pleasure as he rocked his hips up against the toy in his hands.

The chant was building again: “Come! Come! Come!” Both pledges did their best to comply, but it was the Asian kid who made it there first, his hips thrusting up so far into the air when he climaxed, his ass came right off the chair. The other guy, probably prompted by the sound of his fraternity brother’s orgasm, erupted immediately after him, but it was too late. Looking embarrassed but proud, the Asian guy stood and pulled off his condom and held it up, his cock still dripping cum down between his feet.

“Goddamn!” Marcus slapped the pledge on the back. “We’ve got our first round-two winner!”

Which meant Henry had two more of those to get through before it was his turn. His cock was so hard in his fist he felt like he could have mined diamonds with it. He knew his body well enough to know he could come twice pretty quickly. In fact, if he had enough stimulation, he could come just minutes after the first. He’d just done it early this morning, the light faint through the blinds, biting his lip to keep quiet and not wake Dean as he imagined coming first all over the soft, pale skin of Libby’s belly and then into her sweet, pouty mouth.

The problem for Henry wasn’t whether or not he could get hard and come twice so quickly. The problem was going to be holding back until he could get his hands on the Fleshlight again. He didn’t, however, know if he could do it a third time. And a fourth? Impossible.

Henry had already put his condom on, hoping the tight end near the base might help him hold back. The next two guys, he knew, would take longer, because they’d both gotten off in round one.

“On your mark...get set...go!”

Henry watched his dorm mate, Bel, slide the Fleshlight slowly down, letting it envelop his shaft. *Not gonna win that way*, he thought, but then it occurred to him that Bel was likely a virgin and had probably never been inside a woman before. No wonder he was savoring the sensation.

Bel had gone off like a rocket the first time, but he was clearly determined not to go so fast this round. He moved it slow and easy, eyes closed, taking it all the way up so the silicone pussy lips rubbed the head of his cock and then sliding it all the way back down again, grinding his hips, as if he could push in any deeper.

Across from him, the guy with the tribal tattoo on his forearm was pumping his fist, his breath coming hard and fast. *That's how I have to do it a second time, too*, Henry thought, watching the pistoning action out of the corner of his eye, too fascinated by Bel's restraint to stop watching him.

Bel's mouth was open, eyes closed, head back, his cock just gone, buried into the deep recesses of the simulated pussy shoved against his pelvis, hips rocking, and Henry tried to imagine how it must feel, all those lubricated ridges in there nuzzling the sensitive head of his dick.

I have to own that thing.

A low moan started in Bel's throat and, across from him, the tribal tattoo guy's muscles were tight, his eyes closed too, his body literally shaking with his impending orgasm. They were close. They were both close—one fucking himself like a rabbit, the other going at a turtle's pace—and yet they were going to arrive at the same destination any minute now.

“Come! Come! Come!”

They were coming, all around.

As the chant began, Henry heard a loud groan behind him as another pledge lost it, jerking his cock to a shuddering completion. Like firecrackers going off, it began to happen across from him, cum running in rivers down their thighs or splashed onto the backs of chairs. His cock throbbed. It ached. It begged to be touched.

“Oh! Oh!” It was Bel—what was he doing? He slid out of the chair to kneel on the floor, both hands on the Fleshlight as he shoved his hips up and forward, making low grunting sounds with every movement. The crowd roared their approval but Bel didn’t even hear them.

“Ahhhhhh!” Tattoo guy was close. Really close. This was a hell of a tight race. Henry would have laughed at his own pun if his cock hadn’t felt swollen to ten times its normal size between his legs. He didn’t dare touch it now.

“Fuck that little pussy,” Bel murmured, totally lost in whatever fantasy was playing in his head. It would have been funny if it wasn’t so strangely arousing. Here he was watching his dorm mate get himself off, his skinny arms straining with the effort, the white expanse of his belly practically concave, and Henry’s own cock was as hard as it had ever been. What was wrong with this picture?

“Oh god I’m gonna come inside that hot... ahhhh... fucking... ahhhh.... hole... ohhhhHHH!”

Bel’s gonna win, Henry realized, glancing over at the tattoo guy, his face red, his cock and balls, too, the wet suction sound of the toy loud and fast. *The turtle’s gonna win the race!*

“Fucking pussy!” Bel cried, arching his back and thrusting deep. “Oh that fucking tight cunt!” He growled like an animal, his whole body convulsing as he came, and Henry couldn’t help but wonder what girl he might be imagining, just whose pussy he was filling as he gritted his teeth and gave it everything he had.

More guys were going off around them, jerking their dicks fast and furious. Henry swallowed as, down his row, the tattoo guy finally got off, hips jerking, twisting the sex toy around on his dick again and again as he shot his load into it. *There’s something a real pussy can’t do*, Henry thought, as the tattooed guy twisted the toy right off to reveal his thick cock, the condom on it wet and filled with cum.

“Winner!” The frat brother behind Bel announced. Bel had finally given up the toy, reluctantly slipping it off the end of his cock and peeling down the condom. Bel threw himself happily back into his chair, still panting, the guys all cheering and pumping their fists—the ones not wrapped around their dicks anyway.

Well, actually, they were pumping those, too...

“Next pair up!” Marcus took the Fleshlights, stepping down the line.

Henry glanced next to him at the guy with the frizzy red hair, the one that made him think that if Carrot Top and Danny Bonaduce ever had a kid together, he would be it. Cody was across from him, sitting next to Dean. Henry avoided his roommate’s gaze, but he could see Dean had started already, fisting his cock and jerking it as he watched the next two pledges each take a Fleshlight and poise them above their condom-covered dicks.

By the time Marcus said, “Go!” Cody was already moaning, his eyes wide at first when he slipped into the wet recesses of the sex toy, and then closing in pure delight.

He hadn't had the chance to fuck it yet and Henry stared, fascinated, as Cody caught a quick rhythm, the low groan in his voice building to a growl. It was hardly fair, considering Carrot Top had come once already, but it was over almost before it began.

"Oh fuck! Oh my fucking god! That's too good!"

The whole room laughed and brayed in agreement as Cody grunted and thrust deep, shuddering as he came. The redheaded kid was jerking himself with the toy as fast as he could, but it was no use. Cody's condom was off already, his cock wilting as he was declared the winner.

But the redheaded kid wasn't giving up. He was inside the thing now, and he wanted to finish. Not that Henry could blame him.

"Come! Come! Come!" The chant started again and behind him, Henry heard another groan as someone else obeyed.

"Goddamn!" Carrot Top turned his head toward the television screen for incentive. The blonde was sitting on the guy's face, rubbing her pussy all over his tongue, while the redhead sat up on his dick, riding him. The camera moved in for a close-up on the blonde's shaved pussy and Henry couldn't help but make the comparison between toy and cunt. Pink and wet and open and waiting...

Fuck.

Henry had to turn his head when the camera moved in on the other girl, the redhead who resembled Libby. Her pussy was stretched with the guy's cock, her fingers down there rubbing her little clit, nipples hard, the skin around them puckered. He could barely stand to listen to her soft cries of pleasure over the roomful of whistles and shouts, guys urging Carrot Top on.

“Yeah!” Carrot Top stood, facing the television, blocking Henry’s view, and he was glad. He could barely catch his breath as it was, his own cock pulsing in time with his rapid heartbeat. “Take that, bitch! Take that up your hot little snatch!”

Henry gulped as everyone around him exploded in approval. This was getting really out of hand. *Henry, quit with the puns*, he told himself, closing his eyes and trying to breathe normally. It wasn’t easy.

“Last two!”

Henry barely heard him, but he took the Fleshlight, eyes still closed. He knew Dean was getting ready right across the aisle, but he didn’t focus there. He did it all by feel, sliding his fingers through the toy’s little slit, finding the hole. Oh, yes. Those wet open lips, that tight sleeve. That’s just where his cock wanted to go.

“Ready.” *Yeah. Fuck yeah.*

“Set.” *Right there. Oh that sweet pussy is mine. All mine.*

“Go!”

It was seconds, just seconds. Maybe thirty, even with the slight loss of sensation because of the condom. He pumped his fist fiercely, his cock swollen to bursting, and silently mouthed her name. And then he was coming, not inside of her, not on her, not with her, but for her, everything for her, his toes curling, pelvis thrust up like an offering.

“Winner!”

His ears were ringing too much for him to really hear, but he tied his condom up with shaking hands and tossed it into the trashcan making its way down the line. He didn’t see Dean glaring at him until they got up to rearrange the chairs again. He didn’t look happy. In fact, he seemed really pissed off.

But when Dean noticed Henry looking, he saluted. Henry shrugged back.

“Now it gets tough.” Marcus passed out more condoms.

Henry studied his poor, withered, wet cock. He couldn’t get the condom on now if he tried. Way too soft.

“But we have incentive for the four guys who’ve made it this far!” Marcus signaled toward the door and one of the frat brothers opened it and peeked out.

Henry’s jaw dropped when a woman, a real, live woman, walked into the room. She was dressed up like a goth girl, her hair streaked half black, half red, her lips and fingernails painted dark. She wore a black corset and fishnet stockings with garters that were mostly covered by patent leather boots that went far up on her thighs. But she wasn’t wearing a bra. Her breasts were big, heavy, the nipples fat and a dark, dark brown. And she wasn’t wearing panties either. Her pubic hair was shaved into a dark landing strip just above her bare mound.

She strutted past them, snapping her gum, and then turned and paced back toward the place where she’d come in, the door closed now. Back and forth, like a panther, and they were all struck silent by her presence. They had become predators and she the prey. Even Henry felt himself leaning forward, his pupils dilating in excitement. To hell with plastic pussy. This was the real thing!

Then she stopped in the middle of the row of chairs, turning toward Henry’s side. Her face was pretty, her eyes dark and round. She half-smiled at him as she bent forward, her breasts swaying, reaching behind and smacking her ass, first with one hand, then with the other. Henry heard the guys on the other side gasp.

Then she was turning again, the other way this time, and he saw her own handprints on the white globes of her behind as she bent, showing his row what she had just shown them. He gaped as she did it again, one hand, then the other, using them to spread her pussy and ass open for them to see.

“Holy fuck.” Cody gulped beside him. Henry was up against the Asian kid this time. Cody got Carrot Top again. “You have got to be kidding me.”

Henry couldn’t have agreed more. He’d been to strip clubs before. They’d gone during his senior year in high school, even though he’d had to procure fake I.D. for the venture. He’d been in the company of strippers. He knew how it worked, he knew all the rules. This woman...this girl...she wasn’t a stripper. Strippers didn’t...

“Want to touch it?” Her voice was low, husky, and it sent a shiver through him as she looked back over her shoulder at his row. “You can touch it if you want.”

She took a step toward them in those incredible fucking boots and Henry’s jaw dropped when she straddled his thigh, putting her arms around his neck and rubbing her pussy against his leg. Jesus, it was so *hot*—her cunt was on fire!

“You want to feel a real pussy?” she whispered, grabbing his hand and guiding it between her legs. “Touch it.”

Henry did as he was told, groaning as his fingers moved over her lips, parting them and finding wetness. He whimpered when she stood, swinging her leg over Cody’s and letting him feel. His eyes were glazed. Henry knew just how he felt. When she stepped over to the other side of the aisle, he noticed how the entire group watched her, how much they all wanted her.

She's a hen in a fox house, he thought as the Asian guy got his feel, grabbing her breast in his hand as well. *Why didn't I think of doing that?*

"Okay, boys, that's it." She turned to face the room. "No more touching. Got it?"

Like she could stop us? Henry felt that energy emanating from every guy in the room. It was crazy. Even guys who had come twice already were hard again. Henry was too, his cock responding without any thought at all. His body wanted what it wanted. And it wanted it *now*.

"No more touching during this round." Marcus took a step toward her, putting an arm around her waist. She smiled up at him, her eyes softening, and Henry understood. She was with Marcus. That much was clear. But Henry couldn't help thinking, *this* round? Did that mean they could touch her during the *next* one?

Oh please, God, let it be so.

He had to make it to the next round. He just had to.

"Val is going to give you all a little show for the next round."

An air mattress got pulled in from the hallway and put on the floor between the chairs. Henry watched, they all did, as Val unzipped her boots, taking her time, her legs finally revealed, the fishnets torn and held together in places by safety pins. Then she crawled onto the mattress, turning herself over and spreading her legs.

"Ready?" Marcus handed the Fleshlights to the first two pledges—Cody and Carrot Top. Thank god I don't have to go first, Henry thought, although his hand was already moving on his cock. It was getting harder by the minute as he watched Val's hands running over her body, cupping her breasts, tweaking her nipples.

"Set..."

Cody and Carrot Top were already hard enough to roll on their condoms. The porno was still running on the television—the scene had changed from the redhead and the blonde to something else—but no one was paying attention. It was amazing how focused an entire room full of men could be on one woman.

“Go!”

That was an understatement. The whole room was going. It was vibrating with excitement. The place had a thick smell now. It was the masculine smell of sweat and sex and cum. But there was a new scent in the mix, something more delicate, a uniquely feminine smell that made his nostrils flare and his heart pound.

Val moaned softly as she rubbed her nipples, her legs wide open. He could see her pussy, the lips totally shaved, the pink inside showing. Cody and Carrot Top were fucking themselves with the Fleshlights, and now Henry knew just what they were fantasizing about. She had every gaze in the room on her as she began to finger her pussy.

“That’s a girl.” Marcus smiled and Henry wondered at his generosity. If it had been his girl, he didn’t think he would have allowed such a thing.

“Ohhh, yes, that’s so good.” Val was like a cat purring as she parted her pussy for all of them to see, her fingers delving deeper. “I wish I had a nice, big cock inside of me.”

Her words made Henry’s balls ache and his mouth water. The girl wasn’t just flirting with danger, she was jumping on it. Okay, so her boyfriend was a giant, but he was only one guy. What if this whole room of men just decided to...pounce? Because he knew that’s what he wanted to do. And it had to be what every guy here wanted, too.

“Oh baby, right there,” she moaned, her fingers moving faster. “Fuck me good and hard!”

Cody was watching her through half-closed eyes, fist pumping. He was cupping his balls with his other hand, as if he could force his cum out by squeezing them. He had an even better view of Val's pussy than Henry did, and that's just where his gaze was focused. Not that the rest of them weren't all doing the same thing. Even the clothed guys had unzipped their pants and taken out their cocks. There wasn't a man there who wasn't out and stroking it, aside from Marcus, and Henry marveled at his self-control.

“That's it, just like that.” Val's breasts moved as she rocked on the mattress, fucking her own hand. “I want that big cock in my pussy. I want it in my mouth. I want it in my ass.”

Henry rubbed the head of his cock with his thumb, shivering at the sensation. There was something about her. Maybe it was just being in the midst of a group of hungry wolves, but he didn't just want this girl. He didn't just want to fuck her. He wanted to take her. Make her his. He wanted to *own* her. It scared and excited him at the same time.

“I love all those beautiful cocks.” She opened her eyes and studied him. Looked right *at* him, then at the cock in his hand. “Look how big and hard they are. Jerk yourself off, baby, yeah, just like that.” Her gaze shifted, moving all around the room. It was a huge circle jerk now, all of them stroking for her, wanting her.

“You wanna come for me?” Val lifted her fingers to her mouth, her soaking wet fingers, and Henry heard a guy behind him groan. “Where do you want to come? All

over my face?” She rubbed her juices there. “My tits?” She lifted them, squeezed, hard, let them fall. “My cunt?” And her fingers were back there, rubbing, spreading, showing them. “You want to come inside this hot little pussy?”

“Yeah!” Cody stood, moving toward her. Marcus took a step forward but Cody stopped, his attention focused on her as he fucked the Fleshlight. He was imagining it, Henry just knew it, seeing her spread open like that, he was fucking Val, shoving himself in as hard and as deep as he could. “Oh baby, I’m gonna come inside you!”

And then he did, his body arching, the toy slammed all the way down to his pubic bone. Val moaned, her eyes bright, watching him come. Not to be outdone, Carrot Top jumped up, too, growling as he looked down at her spread open pussy. She bit her lip, focusing on Carrot Top as Cody was declared the winner.

“That’s right,” she murmured, watching him fuck himself. “Slam my pussy. Do it hard. Come up inside me. Fill me!”

He groaned, thrusting, as Val pulled her legs back, showing him just where, and he came, too, shuddering and collapsing to his knees.

Henry was ready. He couldn’t believe it, but he was ready to come a third time. His balls were swollen as he tugged the condom on, taking the Fleshlight from Marcus and considering his opponent. It was the Asian kid this time, and it appeared that he was ready, too.

“Come on, boys,” Val murmured, turning onto her belly. Henry watched as she arched her back, reaching underneath to spread herself for them. “Stick it in and fuck me. I want all of you.”

Behind him, someone else let out a frustrated groan, but he was too focused on the task at hand. He had to get to the next round. Maybe they were allowed to touch her in the next round. Or maybe she was allowed to touch them. All he had to do was come. He just hoped he had some of the stuff left to deposit in the condom!

“Ooooo that’s a good boy.” Val watched the Asian kid as he stood over her, stroking fast. The Fleshlight was a blur on his cock. “Does it feel just like a real pussy?”

He grunted, giving a brief nod and going even faster.

“Think it feels as good as mine?” Val turned her face to Henry now, still fingering herself. He was sure it wasn’t quite as good, but it was good. Really fucking good. Did he want to crawl behind her, toss off the toy, and plunge into her cunt? Hell yes. But if he couldn’t do that, this was the next best thing. And it was sure as hell better than jerking off with his hand.

Henry knelt, frustrated that his body wouldn’t cooperate. He felt so close, so very close, and yet he couldn’t quite push himself over. He watched Val’s face, her eyes closing as she touched herself, her mouth open in a delightful “O.”

“I want you to come.” Henry leaned in to tell her, not touching, but close.

“For real?” Her eyes widened in surprise and felt his cock swelling just at the thought.

“Do it,” he said. “For real.”

He could tell she was getting off on this. She really liked it, being surrounded by all these guys watching her, all jerking off. He wanted to see her get off for real.

Val’s hips dropped and she began to touch herself. Henry couldn’t see—her pussy was at the wrong angle—but he didn’t care. It was her face he wanted to watch.

Her tongue moved out to lick her lower lip and her cheeks began to flush as she rubbed herself faster and faster. The motion increased, her body swaying, rocking.

“That’s it.” Henry twisted the toy around his cock, moaning. Fuck, that was incredible! Every ridge inside the sleeve massaged him as he turned it again, making him quiver. “Make yourself come. Do it for me.”

“Oh yes.” Her eyes were closed, mouth open, breath coming faster, faster. He’d never seen anything so beautiful. “Oh, it’s so close.”

Yes, it was. Henry’s balls drew up tight. So very close. Across from him, he heard the Asian kid groan. Fuck!

“I’m gonna commmmme!” Val moaned, her hips rocking, biting her lip, her brow crinkling. He could see the pleasure on her face, could read it clearly, more clearly than he’d ever read anything, including words. This was a language he understood completely.

“Me, too,” he whispered, never taking his gaze from her face as he came, the spasms rocking his body. When Val opened her eyes, they’d already declared Henry the winner and she was smiling at him.

“I give up.” The Asian guy pulled the toy and the condom off. He hadn’t made it to orgasm number three.

Then there were two.

Marcus had them move the mattress and put two chairs across from each other. The excitement in the room was palpable. This was the last round, and Henry knew he’d won at least one of the Fleshlights. He didn’t care about the porn collection. He

didn't really even care about the Fleshlight that much anymore. He just wanted to find out what this round might entail.

"This round is different." Marcus picked up the black bag and dropped both Fleshlights in. "Whoever gets hard first wins...and gets to fuck Val."

Henry stared at him, sure he'd misheard. Then he looked over at Cody, whose eyes were lit up like stars. Oh no. Cody had only come twice. Henry had just finished a third time. How in the hell was he going to manage?

The guys around them went crazy at the thought, shoving and nudging the two of them in their chairs, saying things like "Lucky bastard!" and "Save some for me!" but Henry wasn't paying attention to any of it really. There was no way. He would have to stand on his head to get his dick hard again.

And then Marcus surprised them. "Of course, you'll have help."

Val walked over, kneeling between the two chairs. Seeing her down there like that, her knees parted, her breasts shoved up by the corset, gave Henry some hope. His cock actually twitched. It didn't do much more, but at least it was something.

"No way," someone behind Henry murmured, but it was already happening. Val had Cody's cock in one hand and Henry's in the other. They were both soft. It wasn't going to be easy. Of course, she was surrounded by plenty of guys with hard cocks who hadn't come yet, who would be perfectly willing to take their places. That bolstered Henry.

"You like that?" Val's hand was like velvet as she squeezed him, rubbing her thumb expertly over the head of his cock, hitting all the sensitive spots. He let out a

whimper when she raked her fingernails lightly over his balls. Her other hand was busy in Cody's lap, doing the same thing to him.

"I know you want my pussy." She coaxed him, pulling on his cock like it was taffy, drawing him out. "I saw you looking at me."

She was talking to both of them, turning her head back and forth, trying to pay equal attention, but he could have sworn she was talking just to him.

"That fake pussy doesn't feel as good as mine, I bet." Val let go of them both, sliding her hands between her legs and getting her fingers wet. Then she rubbed her juices over their cocks. Henry noticed how it made the head of his dick glisten.

"I want your cock," she murmured, pulling, tugging. "I want it so bad. I have to feel you inside me." Oh holy hell. He was starting to really feel something. Just the pleading sound of her voice was getting him hard again. He glanced over at Cody, but he was still just as soft as when she started. Henry figured he was about halfway there.

The crowd of guys noticed. They started chanting. "Hen-ry! Hen-ry! Hen-ry!"

"That's it!" Val's hand squeezed him, stroked him. She was excited to see him respond, and that made him even more aroused. She was still working on Cody, too, but it just wasn't happening, and Henry made a mental note to thank his genes or God or something for his ability to get hard again so fast.

"I want to come all over your hard dick, baby," Val urged, her eyes bright, and Henry moaned, beginning to thrust up into her hand. The whole crowd cheered and Val smiled, turning away from Cody and focusing her attention all on Henry. He gaped when she took her gum out and stuck it deliberately under his chair before taking his cock into her mouth.

“Oh man. No fair!” Henry recognized Dean’s voice and glanced up, seeing his roommate standing in the circle, watching.

But he didn’t have much more time to think about anything. Val sucked him until he was completely hard again, and they didn’t even get the mattress down on the floor. Instead, she climbed up into his lap, her breasts in his face, her pussy rubbing against his dick. She was very wet. *She really came for me*, he realized, and the thought made him crazy with lust. The crowd closed in on them, whooping, hollering, practically slobbering, but he couldn’t concentrate on anything but the girl in his lap.

“You’ve got a gorgeous cock.” Val whispered this in his ear. “I want to come all over it.”

Henry couldn’t think of anything he wanted more. He leaned back, letting her lead. When she reached down to grab him, rolling yet another condom on, he took a deep breath, feeling her flesh give as she rubbed him up and down her slit. He’d won the sex toy, but he’d completely forgotten about everything but Val’s body, her eyes, the soft feel of her ass in his hands as he guided her down onto his cock.

And her pussy. Oh my god. There was nothing better. She rode him nice and slow at first and he could feel her breath, hear her soft moans and sighs. Then she really got into it, hips rolling, tongue slipping into his ear, teeth biting at his neck. He could barely hold onto her.

“Fuck me,” she insisted, climbing off his lap and turning around to bend over a chair. He was dazed, clearly too slow to respond, because hands moved him, nudged him out of his seat, and then he was standing behind her, thrusting deep into her cunt. “Oh yeah, baby, fuck me hard! Come on! Do it!”

He could barely breathe. She looked back at him, eyes half-closed, and he felt her hand between her legs, rubbing at her clit. Every time he thrust into her, his balls touched her there, a rhythmic sway. Henry observed his cock sliding into her, her hot pink center stretched open to take all of him, and was lost. He gripped her hips, thrusting deep, and heard her moan loudly.

“Make me come!” she begged, panting, fucking him back. Oh god, this was it. He was going to die. “Make me come, please, please, make me come!”

He couldn’t hold back, not for a second. He growled and thrust and came and felt her whole pussy clamping down on his cock like a vice. *Plastic pussies don’t do that*, he thought, grunting with pleasure as he emptied himself completely, sure that there wasn’t an ounce of fluid left in his body to give.

When it was over, when she turned and kissed him, long and soft and oh, so slow, that’s when he thought he would wake up. He would find himself sitting upright in his dorm room bed, sweaty and hot and hard as a rock from this crazy-ass dream and then go back to sleep only to wake and tell Dean all about it in the morning.

But he wasn’t asleep. And Dean was standing across from him, grinning with so many teeth he resembled a shark, and from the look on his roommate’s face, Henry just had a sudden, sinking feeling that maybe it would have been better if maybe he had been dreaming after all.

Chapter Four

The dragon-lady sat quietly sorting through papers on her desk, her door half-open. Henry hesitated in the hallway, heart beating too fast for him to knock yet. It had been racing since that afternoon, when she handed back his term paper with another big “F” marked in red on the last page and the words, *“Come to my office at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon.”*

What a letdown, after the weekend of partying at the fraternity, getting clapped on the back over and over, his new fraternity brothers grinning knowingly. It still made him blush to think about what had happened, but he was also rather proud of it in a sick sort of way—especially since Dean seemed so perturbed by Henry’s win. Or more to the point, Dean’s loss.

Henry might have thought it was all a dream, but he had a box full of porn shoved under his bed and a Fleshlight in his possession to prove it wasn’t. If he could have stopped time back then, he would have. Going back to class on Monday and facing the dragon-lady was the last thing he wanted to do.

She knows. He could see it on her face when she handed his paper back, the slight purse to her lips, the brief flash in her eyes. She was calling his bluff. He cursed himself for not finding someone he trusted, but he had been in a hurry, the paper due, and there was just no time.

“Henry Baumgartner.” Her voice made his stomach clench. “Come in, please.”

There was no more putting it off. He stepped into her office, shutting the door behind him and taking a seat when she asked him to. She still wasn’t really

acknowledging him; instead, she was writing with her red pen. The same red pen that had failed him. That anyone held so much power over him made him nauseous.

“I’d like to show you something.” Professor Franklin reached over and took a paper off a stack to her left. She put it on the desk in front of him, leaning back in her chair and crossing her legs. Her skirt was a soft, dark green, a respectable length, but her legs were very long. He felt like a mouse trapped between her paws.

“Go ahead,” she urged.

He picked the paper up, staring dumbly at it. It wasn’t that he couldn’t read at all. He could pick out words. He could read sentences if he focused, guessing or skipping over the words he couldn’t figure out, but it could literally take him an hour to read a full page. And when faced with paragraph after paragraph, especially in front of an audience, his brain completely froze. The words swam in front of him and he stared up at her, mute.

“What do you have to say for yourself?” Professor Franklin crossed her arms, the cream satin-like material of her blouse stretching over her breasts. No one liked her—but every guy had talked about fucking her. She was an older woman, probably his mother’s age, but with her long dark hair and tall, curvy figure, she was the stuff freshmen wet dreams were made of.

“Henry, do you know what that is?” She sat up, rolling her chair closer to the desk, looking at him quizzically.

He just shrugged, hands clammy, heart galloping. He wanted to bolt, but he knew it would only make things worse. Until he could figure out what she wanted from him, it was better to stay quiet.

“You know, I was going to keep this between us.” She tapped her fingernails on the desk’s surface. They were long and painted red. “But if this is how you’re going to act, I suppose I’ll be forced to get the dean of students involved.”

He looked back down at the paper in his hand. There was no title page and the words made no sense. Why was she showing him this? He felt slow, stupid, and he hated that feeling, because he wasn’t either of those things. He didn’t know what was wrong with him, why he couldn’t remember the same word from one sentence to the next, but he could remember every state in the union and recite them alphabetically. He could find them all on a map, by shape and location. But he couldn’t read their names.

“I don’t...” He cleared his throat, trying to buy himself some time.

“Okay, let’s do it this way.” She pressed her lips together into a thin line, folding her hands on the desk. “Read it.”

He glanced down again. His hands were trembling. His eyes scanned the page, left to right, but nothing made sense.

“Out loud,” she insisted.

He gaped up at her, his mouth dry, no words coming out, and finally he understood. This was his paper. Not *his* paper, but the paper he had purchased online and printed out and put his own name and cover page on. Of course, he hadn’t read it. He couldn’t.

“Oh my god.” Professor Franklin’s eyes widened. They were dark and round behind her reading glasses, and even rounder in her surprise and realization. She reached out to touch him, surprising them both, her hand soft, clutching his. “You really can’t...Henry, can you read?”

“Leave me alone!” He stood quickly, letting the paper fall, jerking himself away from her touch. He took off down the hall, ignoring her calling after him. He turned the corner and hit the door hard, opening it and gulping the cool autumn air into his overheated lungs.

He’d faced down teachers before. He’d lied, manipulated, apologized and weaseled his way out of a million punishments and reprimands. He was incredibly charming once he got his bearings. He had managed to convince everyone, including his parents, that he was just lazy and irresponsible sometimes. None of them had ever once guessed his secret.

So how does she know?

“Henry.”

He steeled himself, not turning to face her. Why had she followed him? Why wouldn’t she just call the dean of students, report him, have him removed from class? Or suspended. Even expelled. He felt like passing out just at the thought.

“Hey.” Her voice was soft, softer than he’d ever heard it. “Please.”

She touched his arm through his jacket and he glanced down at her. She’d taken time to put on a long, black wool coat. He tried to pull himself together. It was time to deny everything. He opened his mouth to do just that but even spoken words failed him when he caught sight of her face.

She was *crying*.

What the hell? Nothing could have surprised or disarmed him more.

“Henry, let me help you.” Tears streamed down her face. She cried openly, unashamed, squeezing his forearm, pleading with him. He was aghast. “Please. I can help.”

“I don’t need your help,” he sneered. “Or your pity.”

“Oh, no, Henry, you don’t understand—”

He turned and ran for the second time that day, determined to escape this time. He heard the click of her heels, her calls, but then they faded and he could only hear the sound of his own heart beating, the ragged pull of his breath as he ran, ran, ran, as far and as fast as he could.

* * * *

“Dude, you’re gonna get kicked out of school.” Dean sat on the bed across from him. Henry just pulled the covers over his head. It was four in the afternoon and he hadn’t gotten out of bed. He hadn’t done much all week except stay in bed. He’d managed to ignore the phone—and his roommate. He’d even skipped hockey practice. Twice. Coach was probably going to kick him off the team. But it didn’t matter. Ultimately, he was going to get kicked off anyway.

“You’re not sick.” Dean sighed. “What’s wrong? You can tell me.”

Normally, Henry would have spilled his guts. Dean had a way of making him confess things he wouldn’t tell anyone else. But he couldn’t tell him about this. Not this.

“Is it Libby?” Dean asked.

Henry perked up at the sound of her name. He’d considered calling her, taking her up on the tutoring offer. But she couldn’t help him. No one could help him. He felt broken. It was too late to fix him. “I talked to her. She still wants to go out tonight.”

“With *you*.” He couldn’t let Dean forget how he had usurped Libby’s attention. Was today Friday already? Had the whole week disappeared?

“Her roommate is hot,” Dean reminded him. “And she’s on the rebound. That’s practically a sure thing.”

“Is that all you ever think about?” Henry’s current concerns seemed huge and even the thought of Libby seemed far away in light of them.

“Come on, Henry.” Dean sounded pissed. He’d tried a few times this week to drag Henry out of bed, but they’d been half-hearted attempts. This time he sounded serious. And mad.

“No.” Henry rolled toward the wall.

“But we’re supposed to meet the girls in, like, an hour!”

Henry’s voice was muffled in his pillow. “You go.”

“Well I can’t exactly date both of them, can I?” Dean snapped.

“Take Bel.” He smiled at the thought. Bel could barely say his own name in front of a girl.

“Henry, don’t be a dick.”

He rolled back over, crossing his arms and glaring at his roommate. “What do you want from me?”

“I want you to take a shower.” Dean leaned over and thwapped him on the arm. Henry winced. “You stink.”

“You just want to get into Libby’s pants.”

Dean grinned. “Can you blame me?”

“Just leave me alone.” Henry rolled back toward the wall, sinking under the covers. He couldn’t. There was no way.

“Well, I guess I’ll have to call Libby and tell her you don’t want to go.” Dean had changed tactics. “Maybe I should tell her you’ve been in bed all week. Val must’ve really worn you out...”

Henry stiffened, turning back toward his roommate, a sinking feeling in his belly. “You’re not supposed to talk about that.”

“Right.” Dean shrugged, reaching into his pocket, pulling out his cell phone and flipping it open. He glanced up when Henry pushed by him. “Where are you going?”

“To take a shower.”

* * * *

“Now that was everything a vampire movie is supposed to be,” Libby crowed happily as they walked out of the theater. “Not even a hint of glitter.”

Henry stole a glance over at her, walking next to Dean. He’d resented the fact that she wasn’t sitting next to him during the scary parts. She’d practically climbed into Dean’s lap a few times.

Instead, he’d had Elaine screaming in his ear and hiding her face against his jacket. Okay, so she was nice enough, and definitely a hottie—Dean hadn’t lied about that—a pretty, petite blonde with an angelic face and big blue eyes. But she wasn’t Libby. And she kept proving that every time she opened her mouth.

Elaine fell into step next to Henry, taking his hand and swinging it. “Hey, now, no dissing *Twilight*.”

Of course she was a *Twilight* fan. He tried to be magnanimous. “Are you Team Edward or Team Jacob?”

Libby interrupted Elaine’s response, rolling her eyes and saying, “Real men don’t sparkle.”

“Wait. *Twilight*? Isn’t that the movie about the girl who can’t choose between necrophilia and bestiality?” Dean howled when Elaine punched him in the arm as he pushed the unlock button on his keys. Freshmen weren’t supposed to have cars on campus, but Dean had a black 2008 Mustang he parked at the frat house.

“Meanie.” Elaine stuck her tongue out at Dean as Henry ushered her into the backseat. It was close quarters and cramped back there. But it meant Libby was close, even in the passenger seat, and she half-turned so she could talk to them as Dean drove through campus back to the frat house. The whole way, Elaine’s hand kept finding its way into Henry’s lap, squeezing and petting his thigh. She’d been flirty all night and had made it pretty clear she liked him. By the time Dean parked, Elaine’s hand was practically in his crotch.

“Hey, come on in. I want to show you guys something.” Dean took Libby’s hand as they got out of the car, leading her toward the frat house.

“No,” Libby protested, looking for support from her roommate, but Elaine grabbed Henry’s hand, following. “Dean, I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Oh come on,” Dean said, literally pulling Libby up the stairs. “What do you have to be afraid of?”

“I think Elaine and I should go home.” Libby’s eyes flashed and she glared at Dean as he opened the door.

“But the night’s just starting,” Dean protested. “And I really want to show you guys something.”

“Come on, Libby,” Elaine said, nudging her friend into the doorway. “He wants to show us something!”

Libby relented as Elaine and Henry crowded in behind her.

The house was big enough to hold thirty-five fraternity members, and they didn’t have an empty room in the place. Dean kept trying to talk Henry into living in the frat house with him the following year, but Henry wasn’t even sure he was going to be in school next year at this rate.

There were rules about bringing girls in—but no one said anything to Dean as he led them down a hallway, past the laundry room and through the common area. There were two pool tables at one end and a huge wall-mounted television, but no one was in there tonight.

“Check it out.” Dean opened a set of double French doors and Elaine squealed.

“A hot tub!”

Henry had been on the frat house tour, but somehow had missed this room. “I didn’t know this was here.”

“They just built it over the summer.” Dean flipped a switch on the wall and the hot tub hummed to life, the bubbling water glowing, lit from underneath. “It’s not even officially open. They have to have it inspected or something.”

“So we can’t go in it?” Elaine pouted. “What a tease!”

“Oh hell.” Dean shrugged, then winked at her. “Want to do it anyway?”

“Elaine!” Libby protested as her friend shed her jacket and then her sweater. Henry gaped as she unzipped her jeans and wiggled them down her slim hips. She was in her underwear so fast—a very sweet, white bra and panties with pink polka dots—that no one had a chance to say a word before she was getting into the hot tub. Henry did have just a moment to wonder if she wore a matching set in anticipation of their date.

“Come on, Libby!” Elaine called, and Henry admired the way her panties hugged her behind, the water frothing around her thighs as she waded in.

“If you can’t beat ’em...” Dean stripped down to his boxers and followed Elaine into the hot tub.

Libby stood there, undecided, until Henry started peeling off his coat.

“Really?” She kept her voice low, and Dean and Elaine were splashing, laughing, and couldn’t hear them anyway over the noise of the water, he was sure.

“You only live once, right?” He took off his shirt and saw her blink at the sight of him without one. “What are you—chicken?”

She smiled at him. “Is that a challenge?”

His breath caught as she pulled her hoodie over her head. She was wearing a t-shirt underneath. He raised his eyebrows as she pulled her t-shirt off. Her bra was black, and he had a moment to lament the fact that the material wouldn’t be see-through in the water before he felt the first stirrings of arousal when she reached down to unsnap her jeans, wondering if her panties matched.

“Come on in!” Dean called and Henry saw him watching Libby undress. “Water’s great!”

“You coming?” Libby peeled her jeans off, leaving them in the pile of her clothes on the floor. Her panties were black, too, with lace trim and had a red bow in the front. He’d dreamed about seeing this much of her, the long limbs, the peaches and cream skin, and he was inflamed at the sight.

“Now who’s chicken?” She stuck out her tongue, turning and walking toward the water.

He’d never gotten out of his clothes so fast.

The water was warm, steam rising around them, and although Henry wanted to sit next to Libby, it was Elaine who reached a hand out to him, patting the surface of the water beside her, and he felt obliged to slide in next to her instead.

“This feels sooooo good.” Elaine rolled her neck from side to side and then dipped her head back, wetting her normally white-blond hair and making it the color of wet cornstalks. It also made her eyes seem even rounder and bluer.

“It gets better.” Dean reached back and flipped open one of the benches next to the hot tub, pulling out a brand new fifth of Jack Daniels. Henry wondered if it was the one they’d found for the fraternity’s scavenger hunt.

“Cheers, man.” Dean unscrewed the top and took a long swig, passing the bottle to Henry. He took a sip, the alcohol burning his throat, and handed it to Elaine, who was clamoring for it beside him.

“Oooo that’s strong!” she exclaimed, her eyes watering. She handed the bottle over to Libby, who passed it on to Dean without drinking.

Dean studied Libby for a moment and then asked, “Who wants to play a game?”

“What game?” Elaine inquired. Henry felt her hand on his thigh again, her fingernails tickling him.

Dean held the bottle up to the light, considering the amber-colored fluid. “How about Drink or Dare?”

“How do you play?” Henry asked. He was familiar with a few drinking games, but had never played that one.

“Just like Truth or Dare.” Dean took a long pull from the bottle. “But if you pick Truth, you drink twice. If you pick Dare, you only drink once.”

“I don’t know.” Libby was sitting in the corner of the tub, her arms crossed over her chest as if she was cold, although the water had to be eighty degrees.

“I’ll go first.” Dean ignored her. “Henry. Truth or Dare?”

“Truth.” Henry took the bottle, considering it. “Two?” Dean nodded and Henry took two sips, feeling the alcohol burn again as it went down. He nearly choked, though, when he heard Dean’s question.

“Who was the last girl you had sex with?”

“Oh come on.” Henry blinked, eyes watering.

Dean shrugged. “You want a dare instead?”

“Yeah.” Henry set the bottle aside.

“I dare you to kiss Elaine.”

Elaine’s eyes widened, but she turned her face eagerly up toward Henry in anticipation. *Okay, get it over with*, he told himself. *Don’t look at Libby. Don’t think about her. Better this than her hearing about that night with Val...*

Elaine moved into the circle of his arms, clearly expecting a real kiss and not just a peck on the cheek. Henry relented, holding her lean, wet body against his. She was so tiny, he felt like he could break her with one snap. When her lips met his, they parted instantly, her tongue seeking entry, and he tasted her, salty popcorn and M&M's, her breasts mashed against his chest, her leg rubbing between his under the water. She was sweet and light and delicious, and he couldn't help his response. He just wished she hadn't felt it against her thigh when she pressed against him, her tongue probing deeper.

"Okay," Henry breathed, breaking it off. Elaine smiled up at him, eyes half closed, and he knew then that Dean had been right. This girl wanted something—on the rebound, she probably wanted someone to make her feel whole and loveable and attractive again. He saw it in her eyes, felt it in the weight and press of her body against his. She wanted what she wanted and if Henry was willing to offer it, well, that was clearly okay with her.

"Okay," he said again, clearing his throat, turning back to the other two people in the room. Libby was quiet, watchful. Dean just grinned. Elaine's hand crept back up Henry's thigh under the water and he tried to ignore it, but she made that impossible when her hand moved under his boxers. Henry froze, glancing at her. She just gently squeezed and tugged at him. It wasn't an obvious motion, nothing that would draw attention, but it was clear and intentional. And it felt really fucking good.

"My turn?" A rhetorical question. He tried to keep his reaction to Elaine's softly stroking hand out of his voice. "Dean. Truth or Dare?"

“I got nothing to hide.” Dean shrugged, accepting the bottle and taking two sips.
“Truth.”

But that wasn't true. Henry found himself suddenly fuming. His roommate had dragged him out of bed and forced him into this situation. Henry was now dating a girl he didn't know, all the while watching the girl he already knew he liked paired up with his friend all night. And just two nights ago, Dean had brought some girl back to the dorm and had sex with her in their room. Henry had refused to leave, so Dean had told her, “Just ignore him,” and had fucked her anyway.

Henry leveled his gaze at his roommate. “When was the last time you had sex?” He crossed his arms, waiting smugly for the answer.

Dean's face spread into a slow smile as he held up his hand, wagging his fingers. “Just this morning.”

Henry rolled his eyes. “With a girl!”

“You didn't ask me that.” Dean winked, ignoring Henry's reddening face and turned toward Libby, handing her the bottle. “Libby. Truth or Dare?”

She hesitated. Finally, she opened the bottle, taking a drink, and said, gasping through the alcohol, “Dare.”

“Okay...” Dean looked around, speculative. His eyes settled on Elaine. “I dare you to kiss Elaine.”

Elaine laughed and Libby rolled her eyes, but the two girls acquiesced, moving toward each other, meeting in the middle of the hot tub. Henry's cock immediately missed the girl who had been paying attention to it, but he couldn't help how much it throbbed in anticipation of seeing the two girls together.

Libby frowned as her roommate wrapped her arms around her neck, glancing back at Dean. “Really?”

He didn’t answer her, just winked and tipped the bottle in her direction before taking a swig. Elaine giggled, leaning in and softly pressing her mouth to Libby’s. Henry watched the two of them together, standing in the middle of the tub, water swirling around their bare thighs. He noticed he could see the outline of Elaine’s nipples through her polka-dotted bra. His cock grew even harder when he saw a flash of pink tongues entwined.

Libby had entered into the whole situation stiffly, all business-like, but the longer the kiss went on, the softer she became, until she was practically melting against her roommate, making soft noises in her throat. Seeing her like that, her tiny nipples visibly hard under her bra, her hair wet and sticking to her shoulders, eyelids fluttering, made him want her more than he ever had.

“Hey,” Libby murmured, breaking the kiss when Elaine’s hand moved toward one of Libby’s little breasts. Elaine’s face was red, although it was hard to tell if that was from the hot tub, the alcohol or the kiss—or maybe a combination of all three. The girls went back to their original positions, both of them flushed.

“Is it hot in here?” Henry croaked. He was fully hard now and glad the water was opaque, whirling around them in heated waves, because goddamned if Elaine’s hand wasn’t back on his dick. He bit his lip, trying to keep from reacting, as she rubbed the head with her thumb.

“Elaine. Truth or Dare?” Libby took the bottle from Dean and handed it across the water to her roommate.

Elaine stuck her tongue out, drinking only once. “Dare.”

“I dare you...” Libby considered, a small smile playing on her lips. “I dare you to take off your bra.”

“Hey!” Elaine protested, her face reddening even more, but she stood, and again, Henry’s cock protested, but perked up as he watched her reaching back to do the clasps. Henry grabbed her hips when she stumbled on one of the steps, catching her before she fell.

“Thanks,” she breathed, turning back to him. She was practically in his lap now and her breath smelled like alcohol. “Will you help me?”

“Uh...” He considered her question, glancing at Libby, whose face was impassive, and then at Dean.

“What’s the matter, Henry? Don’t know how to undo a bra?” his roommate taunted.

Henry did it one-handed, undoing the two hook and eyes quickly. Elaine pulled the straps down, standing up and swinging her bra around her head before letting it go. Dean whooped appreciatively and Henry couldn’t help but stare at the soft swell of her breasts—she was much bustier than Libby—as she settled herself beside him, the nipples dark, dark pink and decidedly hard. They made his mouth water.

As if she could read his thoughts, Elaine turned her gaze toward him, and returned her hand to its previous employment. Henry shifted, giving her better access and she smiled, still pretending nothing was happening, nothing at all.

“Libby.” Elaine reached across with the bottle, handing it back to her roommate, and Henry had a feeling it was time for some payback. “Truth or Dare?”

“Truth.” Libby opened the bottle, grimacing as she took first one swig, then another. He should have been thinking of Libby, and in truth, he was. But Elaine’s hand was moving, tugging, twisting, and generally making it impossible to forget she was sitting next to him half-naked.

Then Elaine leaned forward, eyes bright. “When was the last time you masturbated, where were you, and what were you fantasizing about when you did it?”

Libby gaped at her. “Isn’t that, like, three questions?”

“Do you want a dare?” Dean countered.

Henry turned his head, back and forth between them, trying to decipher what was going on. It wasn’t easy to do with Elaine’s hand wrapped around his cock.

Libby crossed her arms and snapped, “Three days ago. In the shower. Brad Pitt.”

“Brad Pitt?” Henry snorted. “Really?” He couldn’t help it. Although the thought of Libby masturbating made his cock swell in Elaine’s greedy hand.

“Okay, no, not really.” She smiled in spite of herself. “But I’m not telling you who I was thinking about.”

Dean scanned her face, speculative. “She didn’t ask *who*, she asked *what*.”

“Fine, but it’s really boring.” Libby was blushing in spite of her protest. It just made Henry want her more. “I was just fantasizing about...sex in the shower.”

“What kind of sex?” Dean asked. “Oral sex? Intercourse? Inquiring minds want to know...”

Okay, it was true, Henry did want to know. But he didn’t want Dean to know.

“Isn’t it my turn?” Libby asked, handing Dean the bottle. “Dean. Truth or Dare?”

“Dare.” He took one swig, but it was a long one.

“Dare? Really?” Libby frowned, slowly examining the room. Finally, her gaze fell on her roommate. “I dare you...to kiss Elaine.”

Elaine was surprised out of her preoccupation between Henry’s thighs as Dean moved through the water with the speed of a viper, grabbing and tongue-kissing her. Henry heard Elaine protest before Dean’s mouth covered hers and Henry didn’t know if Libby saw it from where she was sitting, but Dean’s hand was squeezing Elaine’s bare breast, twisting her nipple.

“Hey,” Elaine protested, but Dean was back over on the other side of the tub in a flash. Elaine settled herself back next to Henry, still breathless, and he slipped a protective arm around her bare waist. She wedged herself closer still, and she rewarded him by reaching right back down to grab his cock, as if it was a steel bar and her hand a soft, velvet magnet.

“Libby.” Dean handed the bottle to her. “Truth or Dare?”

“Truth.” She started to take her two sips.

Dean cocked his head at her, eyes narrowing, and asked, “What were you fired from the paper for last year?”

Libby gasped, still on her last swig of alcohol, choking out, “I meant Dare!”

“Okay,” he agreed, leaning back. “I dare you to strip naked.”

“Come on,” Libby protested, eyes flashing.

Dean shrugged. “Okay, you can answer the Truth.”

Libby stood defiantly, reaching behind her back to unclasp her bra. Henry thought he saw her chin quiver. The alcohol was making his blood warm, the world hazy, but even drunk and incredibly horny, he knew this was getting out of hand.

“You don’t have to,” Henry said, but Libby waved him away, sliding her bra straps down and tossing it to the side of the tub. After that, he couldn’t speak or even think, and wouldn’t have protested again even if he could have. She was just too beautiful for him to comprehend, more beautiful than he’d imagined and yet just as he’d dreamed.

When she took her panties off, tossing those aside, too, he glimpsed a thrilling view of a triangle of naturally red pubic hair before she sat, sinking under the cover of the water, arms across her chest.

“Henry.” Libby handed him the bottle and her fingers brushed his. Maybe even intentionally, he thought, because they lingered there too long, as did her gaze on him. “Truth or Dare?”

“Truth.” He would have told her anything. Anything at all. He took two swigs of alcohol, his head swimming.

She smiled, and it was clearly just for him. “Blondes, brunettes, or redheads?”

“Redheads,” he assured her, and seeing the way her eyes brightened at his response made his cock harder than it had been all night.

“Hey!” Beside him, Elaine protested, punching him in the shoulder. She did that with the hand not busy under his boxers. It was more annoying than painful, and he turned his attention reluctantly back to the girl he was supposed to be out on a date with.

“Elaine.” He handed her the Jack Daniels. “Truth or Dare?”

“Truth.” She took two greedy pulls on the bottle, eyes bright.

He couldn’t think of anything, so he asked the first question that came to his mind when he thought of Elaine. “Team Edward or Team Jacob?”

She laughed. "Are you kidding me? Team Jacob, all the way." Turning, she handed the bottle over. "Dean. Truth or Dare?"

"Truth." He took two very long drinks. The bottle was now half-gone.

"Who was the last girl you had sex with?" Elaine asked and Henry felt her fingernails again, tickling his balls this time. He glanced over at Dean, realizing his roommate was caught. He was going to have to admit it, unless he switched to a Dare. Although Henry secretly hoped he wouldn't. Considering the direction the game had gone tonight, he didn't want to imagine what Elaine might dare him to do.

"Missy Kline," Dean confessed.

"Hey, she's in my psych class!" Elaine was getting very drunk, very fast, already starting to slur her words. "When?"

"You didn't ask me that." Dean's teeth flashed as he handed her back the bottle. "Elaine. Truth or Dare."

"Truth." She took two drinks, her eyes glazed.

Dean moved in for the kill. "Why did your boyfriend break up with you?"

"No," Libby protested, glaring at Dean.

"Dare." Elaine changed her mind, shaking her head. "I'll take a Dare."

"Okay...I dare you to..." Dean studied the room, first Libby, who continued to glare at him, then Henry and Elaine. Making up his mind, looking at his roommate as he said, "I dare you to give Henry a blowjob. While we all watch."

"Uh...no." Henry was already protesting, moving away from the girl beside him. "I don't think so."

“Oh come on, Henry.” Dean waggled his eyebrows. “You know you get off on being watched.”

“Hey...” Henry gave him a dirty look, but Elaine was moving toward him, her hand already up under his boxers. He gulped, meeting her bleary eyes. “You don’t have to.”

Elaine turned, sticking her tongue out at Dean. “I’m not doing this because you dared me to.”

And then she was on him, pushing Henry back so he was sitting on the edge of the tub and climbing into his lap, her hand still in his boxers.

“Elaine!”

Henry heard Libby protest and knew it was a bad idea, that he needed to stop this, right now. But Elaine was crawling all over him, and although she was tiny, it felt like the girl had a thousand hands. Once she had his boxers down and his cock in her mouth, it was all over. He hadn’t jerked off in...hell, he didn’t know how long. A week at least. And he was aching to come after all Elaine’s attention—that, coupled with their suggestive game of Truth or Dare and sitting in the hot tub with two naked girls, was his downfall.

He didn’t stand a chance.

“Wait!” That’s all he managed as Elaine stroked his shaft, her mouth and tongue like slick, hot silk up and down his cock. She sucked him fast and hard, her bare breasts rubbing up against him. He could feel her hard nipples brushing against his thighs as she worked his dick in and out of her hot little mouth. He glanced down at her wet,

blonde head, her big, blue eyes tilted up at him, and groaned. No way. He was going to come in her mouth. Just like that. He couldn't stop anything now.

"Oh fuck." He closed his eyes, grimacing, his balls drawn up tight, and when she cupped them, her fingernails lightly raking there as if she could coax his cum out with the motion, he gave her just what she was looking for.

Henry groaned, his hips bucking, spilling his cum into her greedy mouth. He knew there would be a lot and heard her gag but couldn't stop thrusting. Her mouth felt so fucking good! He grabbed her hair and she whimpered a protest as he shuddered and shoved himself in deeper, wanting more of her tongue, that sweet, lashing, pink tongue.

"Sorry," Henry gasped, the first bit of awareness coming back to him. He heard Dean swearing, saying something about the hot tub.

"Why didn't you swallow it?" Dean swore again and Henry lifted his head to see him standing behind Elaine. "They're supposed to test the water tomorrow!"

Henry half-sat up on his elbows, seeing his waning cock, trapped by the elastic edge of his boxers, and Elaine's wet face, covered and dripping with his cum.

"I couldn't swallow it all," Elaine panted, wiping her chin with the back of her hand. "It was too much!"

That's when Henry realized he couldn't see Libby. But he heard something behind him, a shuffling sound, and when he glanced back, he saw her almost fully dressed, pulling on her jacket.

"Hey." Henry sat fully now, shoving himself back into his boxers and standing. He glanced back once guiltily at Elaine, but he couldn't just let Libby go. "Wait. Libby, wait!"

She didn't look back as she opened the French doors and went through them. He swore, grabbing his clothes and going after her, not thinking twice, but stopping every few steps to pull something else on—jeans, shirt, shoes. He shoved his socks in his jacket pocket as he shrugged it on, hurrying out of the front door of the frat house.

She was already almost to the end of the block.

"Libby!" He called after her, breaking into a run. His phone rang in his jeans pocket and he swore again, pulling it out, sure it was Dean.

It was his mother. He shoved it back into his pocket, still running toward Libby, almost there now. She was walking fast, but she was only walking.

"Libby!" He grabbed her arm, whirling her around. "I'm sorry. Libby, I'm so sorry."

"Whatever." She waved him away, turning and starting to walk again.

"I'm drunk." Some excuse, he thought, glancing over at her. Her head was down, her wet hair stuck to her cheeks. "It was stupid. I didn't..."

"Henry." She stopped. "Just don't." She blinked at him, her mouth working, as if she was looking for something to say. "I should never have..." Her voice trailed off and her eyes looked wet in the moonlight. "Let's just forget tonight, okay?"

"But—" His phone rang again and he dug it out of his pocket and flipped it open. His mother again. Damn it.

"You should answer that." She turned and started walking again. "See you around, Henry."

He took a deep breath, turning from Libby as she walked away and answered his phone.

"Hello?"

“Henry!” His mother’s concerned voice came through the phone so loudly he held it away from his ear. “Are you okay?!”

He glanced back and saw Libby turn the corner. “I’m fine, Mom.”

“I’ve been trying to get a hold of you all week!”

“Sorry. I was...busy.” He started walking back toward the frat house, realizing for the first time how cold it was—and he was still damp.

“I got a call from your professor.”

Henry froze on the frat house steps, his breath gone. “You did?”

“You’re one lucky young man.”

“What?” The word barely made it out of his mouth.

“Not many students get to be personally tutored by their professors.” His mother sounded smug.

Henry sank to the steps, sitting. “What are you talking about?”

“Toni’s agreed to tutor you.” He could hear the satisfaction in her voice. She got that tone whenever she felt she’d solved a big problem.

“Toni...who in the hell is Toni?” He was drunk, but he had a feeling this conversation should still be making more sense than it was.

“You didn’t recognize her?”

He rubbed his eyes. “Recognize who?”

“Toni Franklin. Don’t you remember?” His mother laughed. “She and her husband have lived around the block for years. They used to come over and play cards.”

"No..." He frowned, blinking up at the stars. Toni Franklin? Why did the name sound so familiar?

"Well, you were pretty little..." His mother conceded. "Anyway, she thinks she can help you bring up your grade."

Then it dawned on him. Toni Franklin. The name stenciled on her office door—Antoinette Franklin. *Professor Franklin.*

Just what were the odds on that? Henry gulped. "What did she say?"

"Just that you were having trouble and she was willing to tutor you."

"Mom, I don't need a tutor." *I need a fairy fucking godmother.*

"Well you've got one, young man." He hated when she used that tone. It meant she'd solved it all and there was nothing more to be said about it. "I made an appointment for you with her tomorrow at two. You don't have a class then, do you?"

"No." He had hockey practice at noon, but all morning classes. What the hell was he going to do now? he wondered.

"You're supposed to meet in her office. Do you know where it is?"

"Yeah." The door opened behind him and he glanced up to see Elaine coming out. For a minute, he thought she might be crying. "Hey, listen, I've gotta go."

"Henry, you'd better show up." His mother warned. "I mean it."

"Yeah, yeah, okay, I will." He hung up on her, getting up as Elaine rushed down the stairs, headed the way Libby had gone. He called after her, but she ignored him, practically running down the block. Henry sat back down on the steps, his head in his hands.

There was only one thing he was sure of now.

Life couldn't get any more complicated than this.

But he was wrong.

Chapter Five

Henry knocked, barely getting out the words, “Professor Franklin?”

“Come in!”

It was like déjà-vu, a replay of the events of last week. He didn’t think he would ever be able to face her again, let alone be standing across from the woman actually asking for help.

“Hi Henry.” Professor Franklin stood, coming out from behind her desk to shut the door behind him, gesturing toward a seat. “Make yourself comfortable.”

Not likely, he thought, sitting stiffly in the chair. His hair was still wet from the showers—hockey practice had gone long, and although the coach had warned him he’d be off the team if it happened again, he’d managed to smooth over his absence the week before.

“I think we got off on the wrong foot.” Professor Franklin didn’t sit in the chair behind her desk this time. Instead she came to lean against it, half-standing, half-sitting on the surface, right next to him. “Can we start over again?”

“Sure.” Henry focused his attention out the window. It was cold and windy, dead leaves chasing each other out on the lawn. “I guess so.”

“I’d like to do an assessment with you.”

He frowned, glancing up at her. “You want me to take a test?”

“No, not a test,” she assured him, her eyes softening. She really was a very pretty woman, although Henry couldn’t remember, for the life of him, anything about her coming over to their house like his mother indicated she had. “It’s just an assessment. It will give us an idea where you are and what you need to work on.”

"I can't read." He'd never said those words out loud to anyone, ever, and he didn't even know how he'd managed to say them now. They made his breath turn shallow, his stomach flip. But there was something about the way she looked at him—understanding in her eyes, but strangely, no pity.

"That's the first step." Her smile made her eyes crinkle at the corners. "Admitting you have a problem."

He shook his head and gazed back out the window. "You can say that again."

"How did you make it this far, Henry?" She sounded both incredulous and sad.

"The truth?" He watched a black squirrel scurry across the quad and up the nearest maple.

"The truth," she insisted. "It's safe with me."

He met her eyes, leaning back in his chair. Why not spill it? What did he have to lose? "Sometimes I cheated. Sometimes I lied. Sometimes I paid people to write papers or essays for me. But mostly, I just played hockey."

"Hockey?"

He continued, "I went to a private school and they guaranteed me a varsity spot before I even tried out for the team. It was all about hockey. They even cut the budget for the football team my senior year so the hockey team could go to the International tournament. We were state champions three out of my four years. College and NHL scouts were around year long. They kept a count at the local Best Western. And I had my pick of colleges." He said it all matter-of-factly, without any hint of arrogance.

"Hence the scholarship."

“Yeah.” He shrugged, as if it meant nothing, but it meant everything to him. Everything.

Her lips were pressed together in a line, an expression Henry had come to recognize as annoyance or anger. “So your coach and your teachers had an arrangement?”

“Something like that.” He looked back out the window. The squirrel was down on the ground again, digging. “I never really asked. They just...passed me.”

“And your parents have no idea?”

He glanced up, panicked. “You can’t tell them.”

“I should.” She pulled herself up onto the desk fully and crossed her legs. She was wearing a skirt of course, a white one with brown spots, and Henry couldn’t help but admire her legs, even in his sudden state of panic. “I called your mother with every intention...”

“Please!” Henry reached out, grabbing her wrist, the touch startling them both. He took his hand away, trying to breathe. “You can’t. You just can’t.”

“My father was illiterate,” she explained, one of her feet swinging. She always wore heels and today was no exception—soft brown pumps—and one of them hung precariously from the end of her toes. “He spent his whole life unable to read. It’s no way to live.”

Henry stiffened. “Don’t feel sorry for me.” Now he understood how she had known, why her thoughts had immediately jumped to the conclusion she had when he sat there, frozen, staring dumbly at the paper she had given him, unable to read it out loud.

"I don't," she assured him. "My father was born in an era that didn't even have names for learning disabilities, let alone ways to test for them. You don't have that luxury."

"I...I guess not." He blinked at her, trying to remember a time, way back in elementary school, when he'd first started having trouble. He'd been so embarrassed by his affliction that he'd convinced his older sister to read to him from his school books over and over, thus memorizing the text, and when he was "tested," he passed with flying colors. That was just the beginning of his ruse.

"I'm angry that someone didn't notice before this." Her eyes narrowed at the thought. "That you were able to slip through the cracks simply because you were good at some stupid sport."

Henry narrowed his eyes right back at her. "Hockey means everything to me."

"Well, if you want to keep playing, and you want to stay in school, you're going to have to learn how to read," she said simply.

She had him there.

"I got a book," he admitted.

"What book?"

He flushed, remembering the snafu of checking it out, meeting Libby. "*Phonics for Dummies*."

The professor smiled. She had a dimple in one cheek when she did that he'd never noticed before. Maybe because, in class, he didn't really see her smile very much. "Decided to start at the beginning?"

"Where else are you supposed to start?" He shrugged helplessly.

“Here.” She leaned forward and he caught a whiff of her scent, something flowery, when she got near. “With me. Are you ready?”

“I guess.”

“No guessing.” She was the professor again, all-business. “You either want to work or you don’t. I’m more than willing to give up my time to help you learn, but you have to be committed. Can you commit?”

Henry watched the squirrel holding onto his found nut for dear life, peering from side to side, as if something could take it away at any moment. He knew exactly how the little guy felt. “I really don’t have much of a choice.”

“Of course you do,” she countered, still in business mode. “You always have a choice. My father had a choice. He died still not knowing how to read, but at any point in his life, he could have chosen differently.”

“It’s so hard...” Henry blinked, willing tears not to fall. Christ, he couldn’t believe he was letting himself get emotional about this in front of her. “You have no idea.”

“Yes, I do.” She leaned toward him again, her eyes on his, steady. “You walking in here today and telling me you can’t read may be hardest thing you ever have to do. But it was also the bravest thing I’ve ever seen.”

He couldn’t answer her and if he’d had a voice left at all, it would have disappeared completely anyway when she lifted her hand and ran it tentatively through his still-wet hair.

She laughed when she saw the bemused look on his face. “I’m sorry. You really don’t remember, do you?”

“Remember?”

“Well you were young...my ex and I used to come over and play cards with your parents...” Her voice trailed off, as if she was reminiscing, but Henry couldn’t recall a thing about it. “You were such a sweet little blonde boy. I wanted to steal you and take you home with me.”

He shrugged, offering her a lopsided smirk. “What happened, huh?”

“Well the little towhead disappeared, that’s for sure.” She laughed, a sound he wasn’t sure he’d ever heard, her hand still moving in his now-dark hair. “But I think you turned out all right.”

“Except for the whole reading thing,” he reminded her, frowning.

“We’ll work on that. Yes?” She stood, going back behind her desk to sit and pull out some papers.

“Yes,” he agreed. He still had a rock sitting in his stomach, but at least it didn’t feel quite so heavy now.

She was like a different person when she smiled. “Let’s get started.”

* * * *

“Come on!” Dean slammed his fist on the table beside him, jarring the cups and bottles of beer sitting on it. “That was the worst fucking pass I’ve ever seen!”

Henry sank back further into the low couch in the fraternity common room, grabbing his beer off the table just in case Dean decided to pound on it again.

“Dude, what the hell did you bet on the Lions for anyway?” Cody nudged Dean’s shoulder.

“Long shots pay off big.” Dean scowled. “Fucking pussy!” He yelled at the wide screen. “Can’t hold onto a goddamned football?”

"Butterfingers," Henry observed, hiding his smile against his beer bottle as he took a swig.

"Dick," Dean growled, glaring at him. He was practically foaming at the mouth.

"So Henry, guess who I saw in the kitchen?" Cody dropped his voice, leaning in to make himself heard over the music and the television.

"I have no idea." Henry tried not to snicker when the Lions fumbled yet another pass and Dean jumped out of his seat with a string of profanity, starting to pace in front of the couch like a caged lion.

"Val." Cody laughed when Henry nearly let his beer bottle slip from his hand.

"You're kidding me?" Henry hadn't seen her—hadn't ever expected to see her again—since that night. Although, he had to admit, he'd had a few Fleshlight sessions replaying the whole thing in his head. "Is Marcus here?"

Cody shrugged. "Didn't see him."

Henry still couldn't figure that whole thing out. If she was Marcus's girlfriend, as Dean claimed, then why in the hell had she volunteered to do what she did? Dean said she was just kinky like that, and it had actually all been her idea. He didn't know if he could believe it, though. Dean liked to tell tall tales, and it was often hard to know when he was telling the truth or pulling your leg. He still didn't know how they'd managed to get the girl out of there without it all degenerating into a gang rape, considering the energy in the room that night, but Marcus had ushered her out pretty quickly afterward.

Now she was here? How in the hell could she possibly walk back into the place, knowing that most of these guys had seen her in such a compromising position?

“Speak of the devil.” Cody gestured toward the door and Henry caught a glimpse of her out of the corner of his eye. It was her all right, no mistaking those big, darkly made-up eyes. She was wearing more clothes tonight, though—a short black and red checked leather skirt and a red sweater that all matched her red and black streaked hair.

“Hey boys.” The sound of her voice made Henry’s mouth go dry. It brought that whole night back into focus, which was both exciting and embarrassing at once.

“Hey, Val.” Cody tipped his bottle at her. “Want a beer?”

“No thanks.” She plopped down onto the couch next to Henry, sitting close enough that her thigh brushed his when she crossed her legs. “How you doing, Henry?”

“Fine.”

Dean swore again, stalking away from the television, and Henry glanced at the score. The Lions were down by twenty-one and it was only half-time.

“I need more alcohol,” Dean grumbled, walking by them.

Val crinkled her nose. She had a diamond stud in it. “What’s his problem?”

“I think he bet on the wrong team,” Cody piped up.

“I hate it when that happens.” Val’s reply was directed at Cody, but she didn’t stop focusing on Henry. He could feel her gaze on him.

“So where’s Marcus?” Henry took a swig of his beer, pretending to be interested in the half-time show. Cheerleaders—what was there not to like?

“He’s on a date.”

Henry startled, glancing over at her. “A...date?”

“Yeah.” Her smile was slow, her mouth curling at the corners, and he couldn’t help but remember how it felt when she kissed him. “We’re not exclusive. We have an arrangement.”

“Ah.” Henry looked back to the television.

“Besides, I’m tired of being a sports widow.” Val pouted, crossing her arms and pushing her not inconsiderable breasts up. He could remember every luscious inch of them. He tried to distract himself with the television, thinking about Libby. She wouldn’t call him back. He’d even tried going through Elaine, but she wouldn’t call him either.

“So what sport is he widowing you for?” Cody prodded Val.

She rolled her eyes. “Every sport.”

Val turned her attention toward Henry again, not letting up as she leaned in and whispered to him, her breath warm. “So how are you liking your prize?”

“Uh...” He shifted on the couch, feeling her breasts pressing against his arm, warm and soft and full.

“I liked watching you.” Her breath smelled like alcohol and cherries. He didn’t say anything, but her lips were so close they brushed his ear, making him shiver. “It turns me on, watching guys get off like that.”

He gulped down another long swig of beer, finishing off the bottle, not saying a word.

“And you were so incredible.” Her voice dropped into an even softer range, the words meant just for him. “I couldn’t believe how you just kept going. You got hard again so *fast*.”

Cody was watching them. Henry cleared his throat. “It’s a gift, I guess.”

“Want to do it again?” she murmured, her fingernails tickling the back of his neck.

He glanced from the television to Cody and then back again. It was hardly a question. Did he want to? Hell yes. But it was probably not the best idea in the world...

“What dorm are you in?” Her teeth grazed his earlobe. She had him so hard his cock felt like it was bent in half.

“Mosher-Jordan.”

“Nice.” Val raised her finely plucked eyebrows. “Private bathroom and just two freshmen to a room? What did you do to get that gig?”

He shrugged. “Won the lottery I guess.”

She stood, reaching out her hand. “Come on. I have a car.”

How was he going to tell her no? The short answer was—he wasn’t. Standing, he took her hand and ignored Cody’s dropped jaw. “Tell Dean I went to the dorm. Tell him not to hurry back.”

Cody tipped his beer. “Will do.”

Val drove a white Mazda stick-shift and Henry grabbed the dashboard as she zipped through campus.

Henry tried to start a conversation. “So...are you a sophomore?”

“We don’t have to make small talk.” Val smiled that Cheshire cat smile, her hand moving to the back of his neck again. Her nails scraping his skin made him instantly hard. Harder. If that was possible. “We’re going back to your room so we can fuck.”

Well. That cleared things up.

“I’m a junior.” Her hand moved back to the gearshift as she slowed for a light. “Pre-law. What else do you want to know?”

“Uhh...”

She was shifting again, turning corners faster than he could take a breath, teasing him, “I would think you already saw everything you needed to...”

“What’s your favorite movie?” He tried to change the subject, grabbing the dashboard with both hands as she pulled into the dorm parking lot, searching for a space.

“Lady and the Tramp.”

“The Disney one?” He gaped at her. “How come?”

“The spaghetti scene.” She pulled the car into a handicapped spot near the door, putting it in park. “I’m a hopeless romantic.”

“You are?” Henry moved to open his door as she got out of the car.

“Why?” She laughed, meeting him around the front of the Mazda, and they stood together under the light of a streetlamp. “Did you think girls couldn’t be romantic and still want to have sex?”

“No...I...” He noted her car. “You know, you could get a ticket if you park here.”

“I live dangerously.” She snaked one arm around his neck, her mouth close, but not quite kissing him. Her other hand reached between his legs, grabbing his crotch and making him jump. “Come on, big boy. I want to play with that toy of yours.” She squeezed him through his jeans, thick and throbbing. “And maybe we’ll get around to using your Fleshlight, too.”

They couldn’t get up to his dorm room fast enough.

“Can’t you just use any color sock?” Val laughed as he dug through his drawers, searching for a black one. “How about we just do this?” She peeled off her sweater,

revealing a black lacy bra underneath. He stopped digging through his drawers, watching as she unhooked it, letting her breasts free, and then opened the door to tie it onto the handle.

“Val!” he hissed, pulling her back into the room. “What if someone saw you?”

“I’m a bit of an exhibitionist.” She laughed, pressing him back against the door and locking it, her hands moving up under his shirt. “If you hadn’t noticed.”

Her mouth turned up to his and he kissed her, wanting to feel that again, her tongue, her lips, oh, her mouth was so *soft*. His hands found their way to her breasts, wanting to feel the weight of them, and she melted against him, moaning when he thumbed her hard, dark nipples.

“I think you have something for me.” Val dropped to her knees, unfastening his belt and unsnapping his jeans. There was no doubt about it, he was incredibly hard, and she tugged his pants and boxers down, letting his cock free. “Oh, now that’s nice...”

“Mmmm,” Henry agreed, closing his eyes as she stroked him in her hand first, and then took him into her mouth. Oh god, her mouth. Henry glanced down, seeing her eyes turned up, her tongue circling the head of his dick.

“I’m so wet.” She whispered the words against his shaft as she licked down toward his balls. Henry thought about the sweet clutch of her cunt, his cock jumping at the memory. It had all gone so fast that night. Now he wanted to really take his time and explore her.

But Val had other plans.

“Get on the bed.” She stood, tugging at his cock, drawing him further into the room. He stepped out of his boxers and jeans, toeing off his shoes, letting her lead him toward the bed by pulling on his dick. “Which one is yours?”

He pointed toward the one on the left with the Hudson Bay blanket as a bedspread. She pulled back the covers, pushing him down.

“Take off your shirt.”

He did as she asked, tossing it aside on the floor as she turned and backed up toward the bed.

“Do me?”

He unzipped her skirt, his hand moving over the soft, pale flesh of her bare back, dipping his fingers into the two dimples above her ass as she wiggled out of the skirt. Her panties were red and she wasn’t wearing any stockings. Instead of turning toward him, she bent over, giving him a nice, full view of her ass. He ran his hand over the edge of her panties, following the elastic down between her thighs with his finger.

“Where’s your new toy?” she murmured, protesting when he tried to pull her panties aside.

“Under the bed. In a box.”

She got down on her knees, finding the box and pulling it out. “Oooo a boy scout.” She held up a tube of KY gel. “Are you always so prepared?”

“I try.”

Val took the top off the Fleshlight, exploring the soft, flesh-like folds of the pussy inside with her fingers. “Wow, it looks so real.” He watched, breathless, as she brought

the synthetic pussy up close, studying it. Then she reached her tongue out to lick it, right on the little clit.

Henry groaned, his hand moving down to clutch the himself.

“You like that?” She flicked her tongue against the clit, then dipped down to press it into the hole. “Have you licked it? Tell me the truth.”

“I did,” he said, and then confessed, “I was thinking of you.”

Her eyes lit up. “Were you?” She opened the KY, squirting some onto her fingers and then rubbing it over the Fleshlight. Her fingers slipped inside and he saw her bite her lip as she felt around in there, all the soft raised edges and ridges that felt so damned good sliding down over his dick. She fingered the toy gently, letting him watch as she explored.

“I want to see.” She handed him the toy, gazing at his crotch. “Do it for me.”

Henry took it, slowly rubbing the head of his cock over the soft flesh, teasing. He loved the feel of the pussy lips parting for him, giving in.

“Ohhh,” Val breathed when he took it in both hands and slid it all the way down, burying himself inside. The sensation was heaven and Henry let out a long, shuddering breath. “Does it feel good?”

“Mmm,” he agreed, rocking his hips up.

“Do it,” she urged, standing next to the bed, admiring him. He could see the outline of her cunt, a wet spot on the crotch of her panties, and he felt his cock swell inside the toy at the sight of her. “Fuck that tight little pussy for me.”

He groaned, using both hands to start, making long, even strokes up and down. Val watched, her breath coming faster, her heavy breasts swaying as she reached

between her legs, rubbing herself through her panties. The times he had played with the toy by himself, he'd maybe had the stimulation of some porn or his own imagination, but not since that night at the frat house had he had such a sexy, live show. He was ready to explode. He closed his eyes, slowing, not wanting to come yet.

"What are you thinking about?" Val's voice was breathless as she knelt next to him on the bed, her hand inside her panties now, clearly rubbing. He wanted to see.

"Licking you." It wasn't *really* what he was thinking about—he'd been trying hard not to come, so he was holding back—but it was definitely what he wanted.

"Do you want to lick me while you do that?" She seemed to like the idea and before he knew it, she was straddling him, facing the wall, thighs spread, panties still on as she settled herself over his face. He had to hold the Fleshlight very still because just the smell of her pussy, that sweet, musky scent, made him want to come.

"You want it?" she teased, rubbing one finger up and down her slit through her panties. "You wanna lick that wet cunt?"

His cock jumped and he clenched his ass, watching as she pulled her panties aside, showing him. It was hard to believe he'd been inside of her, had fucked her, had watched and felt her come. It was like a dream. Had that really been him? Had it been real?

"There she is." Val nudged her clit with her fingernail, shivering. He could see how hard her nipples were, the skin around them puckered. "I bet she tastes better than your Fleshlight."

Henry was sure of it. He was actually salivating as she lowered her pussy to his eager mouth. He moaned almost as loudly as she did when he parted her lips with his

tongue, sucking at her clit, tasting her. He'd only ever done it once before, but he had imagined doing it a thousand, a million times, and his eagerness made up for any lack of skill.

"Oh!" Val's hands moved up to her breasts, cupping them, her hips beginning to rock. She was wet—she hadn't been kidding—very, very wet. Her juices coated his tongue, his chin, his cheeks, her hips rolling in circles. "That's good! Do that! Like that!"

He kept making the circles she seemed to like, around and around her clit. The taste of her was incredible, making his cock jerk and swell. He switched the Fleshlight to one hand, using the other to explore the soft folds of Val's pussy. She whimpered, bracing herself against the wall with one hand, the other still rubbing over her nipples, back and forth. When his fingers found their way inside of her, her eyelids fluttered closed, her hair falling down, framing her face.

"Don't stop," she whispered, her breath coming fast. Henry slowed the pussy fucking his cock. It was too much, feeling the smooth, wet walls of her pussy squeezing his fingers, the taste of her in his throat as he swallowed. If he let his mind go, if he for one moment imagined there was another girl riding him, he was going to explode. "Oh yes, yes, baby, make me come in your mouth!"

Oh. God.

She moaned, her thighs quivering, and he saw the muscles in her belly begin to contract. Then her pussy clamped down over his fingers, squeezing them with her orgasm, and Henry groaned, bucking his hips up into the sweet cunt wrapped around his dick, pumping fast and hard. He couldn't stop it, didn't want to anymore.

“Oh fuck!” Val shuddered, arching, spreading and splaying herself against him. He buried his face between her thighs, drowning himself in her juices, and he thrust himself deep into the pussy between his own legs, giving into his own climax. He watched her with glazed eyes as she climbed off, collapsing next to him on the bed.

He jumped when she grabbed the Fleshlight. “Easy!”

“Oh you were a bad, bad boy, weren’t you?” Val pulled on the toy, easing his cock out of the fleshy hole and watching Henry’s cum spill down.

“Sorry,” Henry apologized, but Val was already working on him, her hand wrapped around his shaft, the Fleshlight in the other.

“Mmmm!” She tipped the toy up and he groaned, watching her lap at the silicone flesh, catching the white gush of his cum with her tongue. “I want more of that.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” he agreed, watching her hand moving on his dick, her tongue still working its way into the toy, greedy for his cum. He thought he’d never seen anything so sexy in his life.

“Oh my god,” Val murmured happily. “You get so hard again so *fast!*”

“Your fault.”

“Amazing.” She was incredulous, watching his cock jerk back to life. “Hey, I have an idea.”

He watched, bemused, as she climbed off the bed, taking his Fleshlight and wedging it between the mattress and the boxspring, the pussy-end facing out. She rubbed her fingers over the opening again, gathering more of Henry’s cum, and then lifted them to her mouth, sucking greedily.

“Now we switch.” She pulled him down to kneel on the floor while she climbed back up on the bed, taking off her panties.

“What are you...?” He regarded her, half-smiling, as she stretched out, her legs dangling over on either side of him. She was something, stretched out like that. She had three star tattoos on her belly around her navel that he hadn’t seen that night—they’d been covered by the corset—and another one on her lower back, the proverbial tramp stamp. They were sexy as hell.

“Still hard?” she murmured, licking her fingers and circling her nipples with them. His eyes darkened as he watched her.

“Even harder,” he agreed, rubbing his thumb over the sensitive head of his cock. He’d only come once. He could definitely come again. And he wanted to be inside her when he did.

She cupped her breasts, one in each hand, her fingernails painted alternately black and red, her gaze on his face, gauging his reaction. She must have liked what she saw because she half-smiled, her fingernails tickling over her own ribcage, dipping into the softness of her belly, tracing circles around her navel. His breath quickened again as he watched her hands flutter down to that runway of dark pubic hair, leading the way to her pussy.

“Like what you see?”

“You’re beautiful.” He swallowed, her pussy opening for him under the soft press of her fingers. It was a gorgeous pink, the lips shaved smooth, still wet from his tongue.

“Want to see how I do it?” She visibly shivered when her finger began circling her clit. Her nipples hardened, too, the dark areolas shrinking as the skin around them began to pucker.

“That’s fucking hot.” His cock wept in his hand, nudging up against the Fleshlight stuck between the boxspring and mattress. He glanced down at it, his brain only registering one thing—*pussy*.

“Do it.” She saw him looking and smiled. “Fuck your toy.”

“But—”

“I want you to,” she breathed, rubbing herself faster. “Please.”

He wanted to fuck Val, but he relented as she touched herself in front of him, her breath coming faster. He hadn’t used the Fleshlight this way before, and he maneuvered his cock between the silicone lips, feeling the opening, that incredible fucking *give*, as he thrust his hips forward.

Val’s eyes lit up when he moaned softly. “Hold me,” she whispered, wiggling down, her pussy near the edge of his bed. “Grab my hips.”

His hands moved up over her breasts first, lost in the sensation, his cock pulsing inside the wet sleeve, Val’s pussy hot against his lower belly. She arched when he bent his head to take her nipple into his mouth, sucking, greedy, her hands moving through his dark hair.

“Is it tight?” she murmured, feeling his hips begin to rock. He groaned in agreement, his hands finally moving down to her hips, as if it was her pussy he was fucking instead of the silicone one shoved under his mattress. Still, it felt so good...

She watched his face, her fingernails grazing his belly, his chest. He hissed when she pinched his nipples. Her eyes lit up, and then she did it again, twisting, pulling at them.

“Oh fuck!” He thrust deep into the Fleshlight, the sensation spreading all the way down to his cock.

“Don’t come,” she urged, squirming in his hands, her pussy just wet heat against his belly. “I want you to fuck a real pussy.”

He groaned, sliding his cock slowly out of the Fleshlight. “We better do it then.”

“Got a condom?”

Henry reached over and opened his night table drawer—he and Dean had grabbed handfuls that night at the frat, stuffing them into their jean pockets. He climbed onto the bed, tearing it open with his teeth, but Val took it from him, pushing him back as she rolled it on, his dick jerking in anticipation.

He steadied her as she straddled his hips, rubbing the head of his cock up and down her slit.

“Ready for a real pussy?” She teased him, making circles against her entrance. He didn’t say anything. Instead he grabbed her hips, thrusting up, making her cry out in surprise as he buried himself into her wetness.

“Oh,” he breathed, eyes closing, his whole body sensation centered between his legs, spreading outward in waves. “Easy...”

“You can’t come again that fast,” she teased, rolling her hips.

“Don’t bet on it.” He groaned. “You feel so good.”

“So if I did this...” She began to rock back and forth. “You just might...”

“Fuck!” he moaned, grabbing her hips, trying to keep her still. She was so hot, so fucking hot inside, wet molten lava massaging his cock.

“How about this?” She squeezed her muscles and his eyes flew open in surprise.

“Val,” he warned, his breath coming faster, panting now.

“What?” she taunted, biting her lip, grinding her hips into his. “What are you gonna do?”

He let out a low growl, grabbing her ass and rolling her. She squealed and squirmed as he fucked her, long and deep and hard, his cock pinning her like a spread butterfly on the white sheet.

“Henry!” She hung onto him and pushed him away at the same time, her nails raking over his back, her teeth biting into the soft flesh of his shoulder. He barely noticed, only grunting and thrusting deeper, panting his lust into her ear. “Henry. Henry. Oh fuck, Henry, don’t...I can’t...breathe...oh...now...oh fuck make me come now!”

He felt her, again, oh yes, again, her pussy spasming, and it was more than enough to send him over the edge. His balls were drawn tight, his dick cocked, aimed and ready, and he exploded deep inside of her contracting cunt, a delicious, fiery milking, emptying himself of whatever fluid might be left in him.

“Oh.” Val breathed, blinking up at the ceiling as Henry threw himself next to her, still gasping for breath. “Wow.”

“Sorry,” he panted, eyes still closed. “You make me...crazy.”

“If that’s crazy...” She laughed. “I like crazy.”

He welcomed her as she snuggled up close, the impossibly soft flesh of her thigh sliding over his. “Are you sure Marcus is going to be okay with this?” It was too late to

ask, of course. But the thought of a six-foot-five, two-hundred and fifty pound defensive lineman coming after him was more than a little daunting.

Val snorted. "Marcus is too busy running his little business to care what I do."

"His business?"

She hesitated and then said, "He's a bookie. They run the whole thing out of the frat house."

Henry blinked. "Oh."

"It's no wonder he's always watching the games right?" She lifted her head, concern in her eyes. "You won't tell anyone, will you?"

He shrugged. "Who would I tell?"

They both heard the sound of a key in the lock. Val grabbed the Hudson Bay blanket, wrapping it around her, just as Dean shoved the door open.

"Hey!" Henry protested.

Dean blinked, taking in the scene, Val wrapped in a blanket, Henry completely nude, the Fleshlight still wedged into bed. Dean held up Val's bra. "The sock wasn't on the door."

Val rolled her eyes, standing and grabbing her clothes off the floor, the bra out of Dean's hand, brushing by him. She held the blanket closed around herself and headed toward the bathroom.

"Sorry, man," Dean apologized, glancing toward the closed bathroom door.

Henry pulled the sheet over himself as Dean flopped across from him on his own bed.

"Listen, can I ask you a favor?" Dean asked, lowering his voice.

“Sure.” Henry grabbed his boxers off the floor, pulling them on.

Val came out of the bathroom, shrugging on her jacket and finding her purse, her eyes meeting Henry's. “I'll see you later, okay?”

“Wait.” Henry took a few strides toward the door, grabbing her arm. He lowered his voice. “I'm sorry.”

“Forget it.” She rolled her eyes at Dean. “Talk to you later?”

“Absolutely.”

She opened the door, starting out, and then turned back to kiss him on the cheek. “Bye.”

Dean waited until Henry closed the door before asking, “Do you have any money I can borrow?”

Henry frowned, sitting down on his bed. “Not a lot...”

“Dude.” Dean sighed, elbows on knees, putting his head in his hands. “I'm in trouble.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“I just...” Dean looked up at him, eyes bleary. “Can I borrow three-hundred?”

“Three hundred?” Henry's jaw dropped. How was he going to explain that to his parents? “Can't you ask your dad?”

“No way.” His roommate threw himself back on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. “I'm tapped out.”

Dean always had cash—always. There seemed to be an endless supply attached to his debit card. Henry couldn't believe it. But he'd never seen his friend so desolate before.

"I have to go to the ATM," Henry said "Can it wait until tomorrow?"

"Yeah." Dean perked up, eyes bright. "Tomorrow? You promise?"

"Sure. What are friends for?" Henry slapped him on the shoulder as he got up.

"I'm gonna go take a shower."

Henry turned the water on, stripping off his boxers, and when he turned to gaze in the mirror, he saw the Hudson Bay blanket folded neatly and left on the sink, and a big heart drawn in lipstick on the mirror with a phone number written in the center. Val's number.

It's a bad idea, Henry, he warned himself, moving to smear the number, but in the end, he just couldn't do it.

Chapter Six

Thanks to an unseasonably warm week in December, the ice in the rink was far too slushy for Henry's liking, but he wouldn't have cared if he'd had to skate on water—under Professor Franklin's tutelage, he was now passing English, off academic probation, and most importantly, the coach had put him on the ice for an actual game!

He thought things couldn't get any better when he scored his first official college hockey goal—a gorgeous shot that slipped into the five-hole like it had been meant to be—until he saw Libby in the stands. He wouldn't have seen her if the camera hadn't panned in on her reaction to the goal and showed it on the screen high above—she was standing and actually dancing in the aisles, her red hair like a beacon the cameraman obviously couldn't resist.

Henry couldn't either.

He actually stumbled getting back onto the bench, taking the congratulations from his teammates with a distracted smile, scanning the rink for Libby, finally finding her, still standing in the aisle and waving. At him. He raised his hand, grinning like a fool. It was the first time he'd seen her since that night in the hot tub. He'd called her several times and she hadn't returned any of them. Had she been coming to games all along? He continued to give her the tickets he'd promised, slipping them under her dorm room door in an envelope, hoping to run into her in the hallway, but he never had.

He usually gave her both tickets, but today he'd given another one to Professor Franklin. His parents hadn't made it up for a game—he kept putting them off, embarrassed to tell them he'd been benched. But he'd given a ticket to her just that day

as they sat in the late afternoon sunshine, working on Henry's worst nemesis—phonemes.

He'd tried subtlety. "Do you like hockey?"

"Henry, you're distracting yourself."

He'd sighed. "I just wondered if you wanted to see me play. My parents can't make it."

"Funny, I was going to ask if you wanted to see a movie tonight." She had smiled when he blinked at her in surprise. They saw a lot of each other lately, but they'd never seen each other outside of a school-type setting. The idea intrigued him. "It's foreign. Subtitled. I thought it would be a good experience for you."

"Oh." Another learning experience. Go figure. "What time?"

"Show starts at nine."

"We can go after," he'd suggested slyly. "The game starts at five."

"It's a deal then." She'd agreed, putting a white sheet of paper in front of him with one word on it. "Now, what is that word?"

"Volcano."

"Look again." Toni—she'd insisted he start calling her Toni if they were going to work together four times a week—had put a clear blue-tinted sheet over the page. For some reason, the change in color helped him shift his focus.

"Tornado," he'd corrected himself, shaking his head. "Why do I do that? I'm so stupid."

"No you're not. You're just dyslexic."

"Which means stupid," he'd countered.

“Did you know Thomas Edison was dyslexic?” No, he hadn’t known. Every time he put himself down, she always managed to find a way to build him back up. “So was Albert Einstein.”

“Really? Mr. E Equals M.C. Squared?”

She’d laughed. “Your memory is amazing sometimes.”

“Yeah, and then I can’t tell the difference between a volcano and a tornado,” he’d grumbled.

“You know the difference,” she’d insisted. “You just have a hard time with the symbols that represent the things.”

He’d beamed at her. “Hey, maybe someday, some tutor will tell another guy like me, ‘You know Henry Baumgartner, the famous hockey player? He was dyslexic.’”

“Anything’s possible,” Toni had agreed, turning his focus back to the work at hand.

She was a slave driver sometimes, but she claimed he’d gone from a third-grade reading level to a sixth-grade one in just the short time they’d been working together. He’d even managed to write his own paper for her class, and she’d been willing to give him an oral exam separately from the rest, which he’d passed with a ninety-six percent. He understood theme and symbolism in *The Great Gatsby* perfectly well if he didn’t have to spell it.

Now Henry sat enjoying the fruits of his labor, his first goal of the year showing on the scoreboard above, the woman who was responsible for his progress sitting proudly in the stands, and now there was Libby, too, sharing the moment. He wished he could go talk to her, ask her why she hadn’t called. It was probably a roommate thing,

he'd long ago decided. Elaine wouldn't talk to him—was probably mad he'd gone after Libby. And Libby probably just felt a normal loyalty toward her roommate in the whole thing. It put him in an impossible position.

Libby's not here just to see you, he reminded himself, secretly hoping she was.

Her presence buoyed him so much he scored again on the very next shift, carrying the momentum of the goal he'd made just five minutes earlier. He felt the pass coming to him long before it was on his stick. He had sensed it coming moments before, when they were all tussling in front of their own net on the other end of the ice. He didn't know how he knew, couldn't explain the incredible body awareness he experienced on the ice, but he could anticipate, not only his own teammates' moves, but the opposing team's as well, with eerie accuracy.

That's how he knew to put a rush of speed on toward the net, sensing a defenseman in red moving in behind him but he would be unable to check or block Henry—he was too fast. There was a pass coming from the right, unseen but coming anyway, and he put his stick out for it, stopping the puck's trajectory without another thought and not even looking at the net before pulling back to take the shot.

The puck went in over the shoulder, the goalie twisting to get it, upended, staying there on his ass, winded and cursing himself for missing the shot, as Henry howled and pumped his fist in the air. The four of his teammates who were on the ice surrounded him, cheering and jostling and there was more of that again at shift change, guys slapping him on the back, the coach giving him an approving wink.

They won the game two to one, and both his team's goals belonged to him.

He was flying by the time they headed off the ice toward the showers, and then Libby was waiting for him. How she'd managed it, he didn't know, but she was standing outside the locker room, hugging herself against the cold and smiling. He wanted to put his arms around her to warm her up. Hell, he just wanted to put his arms around her.

"Hi Henry."

His teammates trudged by him, admiring the girl he stopped to talk to. "Hey."

Just be casual, he told himself, taking off his helmet and tucking it under his arm. His heart was thumping like a rabbit's.

"I just wanted to say great game." She had to crane her neck way up at him because his skates gave him several inches in height.

"Thanks." He couldn't help smiling, even though the expression felt too big and goofy on his face. "How've you been?"

"Oh, you know." She shrugged one shoulder. "Busy."

"Yeah, me too." They just stood there. Smiling. It was kind of awkward, but then again, it wasn't. Henry said the first thing he could think of. "How's the library?"

She laughed. "Still standing."

"Well that's always a plus." Henry couldn't keep his eyes off her and tried to make conversation so his staring wouldn't seem so obvious. "Seen any good vampire movies lately?"

"No, I haven't been out to a movie since..." It was the first time her gaze shifted away from his. "Well, I've been busy."

Impulsively, he took a chance. "Want to go?" When she didn't answer, he pushed ahead, ignoring the vibe she was putting off, hoping it was just nervousness. "To a movie?"

A movie. That reminded him that Toni was taking him to a movie after the game and he had to get into the shower. For some reason, the thought made him feel guilty, as if he was betraying someone. Going out with Toni, even just to some artsy education movie, excited him. He couldn't even say why, and wouldn't have admitted it out loud to anyone, especially Libby. But it was the truth.

"What's playing?" Libby asked.

He shrugged, his grin widening. "I don't have a clue."

"I don't know, Henry. I just don't think it's a good idea." Libby sighed when she saw him frown. "Maybe...maybe after we get back? I'm going home for break. My parents live in North Carolina."

"That's far." Henry was already ridiculously planning the road trip in his head.

"Anyway, I've gotta run." She reached out and touched his arm. He couldn't feel much through all the padding and she must have known it because she found his wrist, bare skin between his glove and his jersey, squeezing there. "I just wanted to tell you...great game."

He tried to think of something to make her stay, watching her retreating form, and called out, "So I'll see you January?"

"I'll be here." She waved back at him and then disappeared around the corner.

* * * *

The Michigan Theater was hardly crowded, even on a weekend. Art movies, especially foreign, were popular in a college town, but this was an old one. “An oldie but a goodie” as Toni had said. Henry had vaguely heard of it but had never seen it.

Toni picked their seats, somewhere in the middle, and there was only one other couple in the place besides them.

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to follow this,” Henry admitted in a low voice. The screen was black—no previews or pre-show garbage to clutter it up. It was eerily quiet.

“You’ll do fine. It has a real story.” She shrugged out of her coat and he admired the way her skirt rode up when she crossed her legs and turned toward him, revealing the tight hug of her brown suede boots around her slender calves. “It doesn’t jump around like a video game.”

“You’ve seen it?”

She laughed, a sound that was as familiar to Henry now as breathing. Although at one point, he never would have thought the dragon-lady was capable of laughing. “I think it was required viewing when I was in college.”

“So what did you think of the game?” He tried to sound casual, but he really wanted to hear her opinion. He’d asked her to come to the game for a reason. He’d wanted her to see, wanted her to understand how important it was to him.

“I was impressed.” Her face changed and he could see she really meant it. “I can see why you got a scholarship.”

He felt his chest swell with pride, but he didn’t say anything. Instead, he pretended to be watching the couple sitting near the front of the theater. The next words she spoke made him actually flush and he was glad the lights were dim.

“You’re quite an amazing young man.”

He didn’t have any idea what to say. For some reason, he didn’t want her to know how much it pleased him. “You sound like my mother.”

“Well, we can’t have that.” Toni chuckled. “So tell me something...” She sat back in the red plush seat and he noticed her skirt riding up higher. The woman almost always wore skirts and it just accentuated her most astounding features. It was maddening. Henry knew damned well he shouldn’t be looking, or even thinking about it. But he did. He was. “Who was the girl?”

The question got him to stop focusing on her knees. “What girl?”

She raised her eyebrows. “The pretty redhead who waved to you.”

“You saw that?” He flushed with the memory.

She glanced sideways at him. “The whole stadium saw that.”

“She’s just a friend,” he insisted, sounding more defensive than he wanted to.

She didn’t respond verbally but he saw that press of her lips and knew for some reason she wasn’t happy with his answer. It made no sense at all, but he felt guilty on two counts—as if he was somehow betraying Libby by being here, but back when he was with Libby, he’d felt as if he was betraying Toni. And he wasn’t actually involved with either woman! It made his head hurt.

“Toni...” he started. She turned to him, her dark eyes even darker in the dim light. He didn’t know what he wanted to say. Something to bridge the sudden gap between them. He finally said something he hoped would convey to her what it meant to him, everything she had done and continued to do. “Thanks for coming.”

“You’re welcome.” She touched his hand, briefly, as the lights began to go down. She leaned over, murmuring, “Are you ready for this?”

He shrugged, sinking down into his seat. “Ready as I’ll ever be.”

He was afraid it was all going to go too fast for him to keep up, but Toni was right—it had a linear storyline that didn’t jump all over the place. It started out with some girl wanting to rent the same apartment as some guy in Paris—but all of a sudden they were having sex in it. That, he figured, had to be the “tango” part of *The Last Tango in Paris*.

He’d seen Marlon Brando in *Streetcar Named Desire* in high school. This Marlon Brando was older, meatier. But the girl? He didn’t know who she was, but she reminded him a great deal of a young version of Toni—big dark eyes and long dark hair and legs that went on for-fucking-ever.

It was making him think things. Things he definitely shouldn’t be thinking. He watched Brando and the girl rolling around on the floor, feeling his cock starting to get hard. Although, he didn’t know if he was actually reacting to the movie or to the heat of Toni’s thigh against his in the dark.

Brando was mauling the girl on screen, pressing her into a wall in the empty apartment. The guy was old enough to be her father, for god’s sake, he thought. And that just made him consider Toni more, how she had been a neighbor all along, living right around the block, someone who had spent evenings hanging out playing cards with his parents. She was his mom’s age.

Henry gulped, watching the screen, trying to concentrate. There weren’t any words, just grunts and moans. Next to him, Toni uncrossed her legs, her thigh brushing

his jean-clad one. He could see her knees, exposed, the shape of her body in the seat, lean but curvy. Sexy.

Stop it, he told himself. It was seeing Libby, he reasoned, after the amazing game he'd played, that had him feeling so excited. He was just still flying high, and the presence of the woman beside him was nothing but a physical reminder.

Henry tore his eyes away from his professor's legs, back to the movie. Christ, they were going at it! The girl on screen moaned, arching, and he didn't need subtitles to figure out what was going on. It made him squirm in his seat, feeling Toni shift beside him.

When she leaned in to ask, "Does this make you uncomfortable?" he actually jumped.

He glanced at her, then back at the screen. "Sort of."

"Why?" She was close enough he could feel her breath against his cheek

"Because you're here," he admitted.

"Why does that make a difference?" Her words were soft, whispered, hot against his skin.

"I don't know." He wanted to say what he was really thinking, how much the girl on the screen reminded him of a younger version of her, but he didn't dare. He couldn't tell her the truth—that watching two people having sex on-screen made him think about her, imagining...well...

“I think you do,” she insisted and he stiffened when he felt her hand on his knee, squeezing gently. This wasn’t happening. That’s what he told himself, seeing the sex scene was over, but he still couldn’t breathe.

Instead of saying anything, he mirrored her, putting his own hand on her knee, squeezing. He felt her tense and glanced up to see her looking not at the screen, but at his hand on her leg.

“Henry.” Her voice was barely a whisper as she met his eyes in the darkness.

“Sorry,” he said. But his hand moved on its own, nudging her skirt up to mid-thigh.

“Don’t apologize.”

Her thigh was bare. He was touching skin and could feel the heat of her. Crazy. That was all that registered in his brain. This was crazy. Not happening. A dream.

But it wasn’t. Her skin was like silk. And the hand on his was massaging gently. “What are we doing?” he breathed.

He heard her swallow, saw her throat work when she did, before she whispered, “That’s a good question.”

“Toni...” He turned toward her, seeing her lick her lips, watching her mouth glistening in the light and shadow.

“You’re not paying attention to the movie,” she said, gazing up at the screen as if she was actually focused there.

She wasn’t wearing stockings. He couldn’t think about anything else. “What movie?”

"You should pay attention," she admonished him, but her hand was inching upward. It was nearing his crotch.

His gaze dipped down to the V of her button-down blouse. Her breasts had to be her second-best feature, full and round. She wore her clothes in the latest fashion, dark colored bras with light colored blouses, and it only accentuated them more. "I can't."

"What's distracting you?" She was trying to stay in teacher-mode, asking all the right questions. Part of his issue with reading was staying focused, not letting the outside world get in the way. But it wasn't the outside world that was the problem. And she damned well knew it, he was sure of that fact. He couldn't quite believe it, but he couldn't deny the hand nudging against the inseam of his jeans.

"*You're* distracting me." He whispered the words against the soft shell of her ear, feeling the tickle of her hair against his nose. "What would you say if I told you..."

His hand moved up on her thigh and he felt her clench, heard her gasp, but she half-turned toward him, shifting in her chair. "If you told me what...?"

"If I told you..." His lips moved against her cheek as he spoke.

"Henry..." Her voice turned to pleading.

"I just..." He closed his eyes, breathing in her scent. She was so close in the dark, he could feel her breath, coming too fast. "I can't stop thinking about it."

She turned her head toward him. "About what?"

"Kissing you." That wasn't all he was thinking about. Not by a long shot. But it was a start. He felt the corner of her mouth against his lips, could almost taste her.

"So do it," she breathed, turning and capturing his mouth with hers, the kiss hitting him with a force he hadn't known possible.

Touching his lips to hers was like completing a high voltage electrical current. His whole body came alive with energy. Toni made a small noise in her throat, maybe a protest, he wasn't sure, but then she slid a hand behind his neck, pulling him in closer, her mouth opening to take the eager probe of his tongue.

"Henry," she panted, breaking the kiss, but he couldn't stop himself. His hand was wedged up under her skirt, the heat radiating from between her thighs. He felt her giving in, her body slowly melting against his in the dark, and he kissed her again, not giving her the chance to say yes or no, not giving either of them a chance to think at all.

"Henry, wait. Stop." This time, when she broke off the kiss, panting almost as hard as he was, she pushed him gently away, pulling her skirt down to cover her legs. "Not here."

He groaned softly, seeing she meant business. She was straightening her clothes, smoothing out her skirt. He turned his face up toward the screen, sliding down in his seat and trying to ignore the aching throb of his cock.

"Toni," he whispered, nudging her with his knee.

"Shhh." Her hand pressed against his thigh, squeezing. "Watch the movie."

He tried. He really did. But she didn't move her hand away. Instead she began inching it slowly upward and he held his breath, his eyes half-closed and glazed over. He didn't know how long it took for her to reach his crotch. Half an hour? An hour? It was an agonizingly slow progression, but he didn't dare move. On the screen, Brando and the girl had found a myriad of ways to have sex, only making things worse off-screen. Henry was so turned on he thought he just might come in his pants when he felt her long, red fingernails graze over his erection through his jeans.

When he pressed his hips up toward her hand, he heard her swallow, her palm resting now against his zipper. Her face was turned toward the screen, as if the movie and whatever Brando was doing with a stick of butter was the most interesting thing she'd ever seen, but she was exploring the outline of his cock with her fingers in the dark. He wanted to touch her, too, but he didn't want to break the spell they were under, was too afraid she would stop, say no.

He let out a soft cry when she rubbed her thumb over the head of his dick through the denim. She shifted in her seat, crossing and uncrossing her legs, and he could hear her breath coming faster, almost as fast as his. He let his knees fall further open, feeling her thigh brush his. Her sweet, bare leg. He glanced down and saw that her skirt was up, far up over her knees, up the long, slim expanse of her thigh.

She was too sexy for words.

His eyes searched for her hemline, but it just kept going up and up, the folds of her skirt finally tucked into the V of her crotch. It was then that he realized where her other hand was. The thought of her touching herself, right there next to him in the dark, made his cock swell in response. He slowly covered her hand, the one cupping his erection, with his own. She whimpered when he did that and he saw her close her eyes as he rocked up against her, with her.

Then she searched for and found his zipper. She inched it down, not even unsnapping his jeans, just sliding her hand into the opening to feel him through his boxers. This is really happening, he realized, closing his eyes as her nails grazed his balls through his shorts before her fingers found his shaft, rubbing up and down.

"Toni..."

“Shhhh...” She teased him mercilessly and he stayed right there on the edge of exploding, and she still hadn’t even touched his bare flesh. He was pure sensation, letting her carry him away and then bring him back, stopping, starting, stopping again. She kept him panting and wanting more for what felt like hours.

Finally, on the screen, Brando was collapsing. The movie was ending and he had no idea what had happened. The credits were rolling, and Toni reluctantly removed her hand from his lap, pulling her skirt back down as the lights came up. Henry fumbled with his zipper, half-sitting, his cock like a steel bar stuck down his pants, making it difficult to move.

“So what did you think?”

Henry blinked at her as she shrugged on her coat. *Of what. The handjob tease? You masturbating?* She couldn’t possibly mean the movie. But she did.

“Could you follow it?”

“No.” He gulped, standing and pressed against her as they moved down the aisle, his voice hoarse, “But it wasn’t because of the subtitles.”

She didn’t speak as they walked out to her car. He wanted to say something, but he didn’t quite know how. He certainly wasn’t up to making small talk and clearly she wasn’t either. The ride back to his dorm was silent. She didn’t even turn on the radio.

When she pulled up in front of Mosher-Jordan hall, she put the car in park and turned to him in the darkness. “Henry, we shouldn’t do this.”

“I know.” Of course he knew. It was a million degrees of wrong and getting hotter by the second. There was no way they should have let anything happen in the first place, and going forward was impossible. Dangerous, even.

"I'm the adult here." She surveyed the front window where a group of guys walked by. "I... should know better."

Henry bristled. "I'm not a little kid."

"So I noticed." She turned to touch his cheek, rubbing her thumb against his jaw line.

"But I don't think..." Henry caught her hand in his, frowning. "I don't think I can pretend like nothing happened." He slid her hand down to his lap and her lower lip caught between her teeth

Then she let him press her palm against his aching crotch, and breathed, "I don't think I can either."

He leaned in and did what he wanted to, the very thing he knew he shouldn't, and kissed her. Toni let him—she let him touch her, slipping his hand under her coat, cupping her breast through her blouse, feeling the hardening press of her nipple through the fabric. She whimpered when he did that, trying to move in closer to him, although the gear shift was in the way.

"Oh, Toni," he groaned when her hand found him, rubbing him through the fabric of his jeans, hot, delicious friction. "I want you so bad."

"Wait," she gasped. "Wait."

He rested his head against her shoulder, breathing hard. "I know."

"Henry, you should go." Her voice sounded pained, but her hand didn't stop what it was doing between his legs.

"I know. I know," he agreed, squeezing her breast, so full and heavy in his hand, even through her bra.

"Please," she begged, starting to move away. He let her go, watching as she started straightening her clothing for the third time that night. "Before I...before we..."

Henry reached for the door handle, pulling on it. "Okay, I'm going."

"Goodnight," she said softly, but he didn't stop to say anything. He didn't say goodnight or see you Monday, which was when they had their next appointment in her office. If he'd stopped to say something, he would have just stayed. They would have gone somewhere, and things would have happened that neither of them could have lived with. She had begged him to go, and he'd done as she asked.

That's the thought he consoled himself with as he opened his dorm room door.

"Great game!" Dean greeted him with a high five from his bed, his laptop open in front of him.

"Thanks." Henry had almost forgotten about the game. He shed his coat and kicked off his shoes, flopping face down on his bed.

"So how was the movie?"

Henry raised his head. "Artsy." He'd told Dean he was going out to see the film—he just hadn't mentioned who with. "Hey, guess who I saw at the game?"

"Libby." Dean laughed at Henry's incredulous look. "It was televised, remember?"

"Did you know she was from North Carolina?" Henry asked. "She's going home for Christmas."

"I can't wait for break." Dean grimaced as his cell phone rang. He pulled it out of his jeans pocket. "Fuck."

"Who is it?"

“Study group.” Dean flipped open the phone. He didn’t even say hello. He just listened. Finally, he said, “I told you, after the break.”

Henry watched as his roommate got up and began pacing back and forth between the two twin beds. Dean had supposedly been meeting with a calculus “study group” twice a week, although Henry figured it had to be a cover for something. A new girlfriend maybe. He wasn’t sure.

“I know. I know!” Dean turned away from him, walking toward the window. “I said I would.”

Henry took the opportunity to slide the box out from under the bed. The Fleshlight was there, ready and waiting and always willing. His cock jumped at the sight of it. After tonight’s marathon tease, which he still couldn’t quite believe had been real, he was going to make good use of it. Dean was still talking in hushed tones by the window.

“I’m gonna take a shower.” Henry headed for the bathroom, but Dean didn’t even hear him. He was too involved on the phone.

Henry stood under the pounding hot needling spray, working his cock slowly into the silky, ribbed flesh of the silicone cunt in his hand, and tried to think of Libby. He always thought of Libby. He’d even stopped fantasizing about Val. They talked on the phone all the time and she was becoming too good of a friend for him to consider her that way anymore. Instead, it was Libby he always imagined in his mind’s eye at times like this. Thinking of anyone else felt wrong.

But tonight he didn’t. He couldn’t get Toni out of his mind. She had eclipsed everything else—he could still taste her on his lips, feel her long fingernails scratching against his cock, see the sweet bare silk of her thigh.

He wanted her. He'd never wanted anything or anyone more—even Libby, he realized guiltily. His brain wanted to debate, argue with him, back and forth, but his cock didn't lie. The more he thought of Toni, the harder he got. It was Toni he was fucking, the hot swell of her ass he was grabbing, her breasts he was pressing his face in between.

"Oh!" he cried, balancing the edge of the Fleshlight against the soap tray, leaning his hand on it to steady it. He imagined her there with him, bent over in the shower, her dark hair thick and wet and curling against her bare back. He saw her reaching behind, spreading herself for him, giving him her pussy, the red length of her nails digging into her own skin as he fucked her. He couldn't get the thought out of his head and had reached the point where he didn't even want to try.

He gave himself into it, thrusting deep, the ridged core of the silicone pussy urging him on, the memory of her flesh too compelling for him to stop. Henry let himself go, taking her in his mind, something he had refused to allow before, crossing a line he had drawn for himself even in fantasy, and at the final moment of his climax, he collapsed, still thrusting into Toni's hot flesh and helplessly calling out her name again and again.

Chapter Seven

"Henry, you're not concentrating."

"Yes I am," he lied. They were in her office, trying to work, but he was studying her skin, the pale expanse of it at her throat, where her pulse beat as fast as a bird's. She wasn't concentrating either.

She nudged him. "On the word."

"Oh." He glanced down at the page, scanning. He'd lost his place three times in the past three minutes, and he'd just lost it again.

"Henry," she whispered, nudging him once more. "Do we have to make this any harder than it already is?"

He ignored her unintended pun, but his cock didn't. Just sitting next to her, feeling the shift of her body, hearing the sound of her breath, made him want her. It was crazy. It was wrong. But he couldn't help it.

"This is where you were stuck." She put an index card over the page, covering the line above it, using her fingernail to point out the word. Just remembering the way she'd raked them over his crotch made him breathless.

"World," he said.

She tucked her hair behind her ear as she leaned toward the page. "Does that make sense in context?"

"No."

"Stand up."

Henry reluctantly got out of his chair. He had an erection that just wouldn't quit and he was putting it on her eye level. She was sure to see it. When he glanced down

at her, he was sure she had, indeed, seen. Her face was flushed, her gaze moving from his zipper over to the page.

“Okay, now look again,” she breathed, tapping the word with her fingernail. She often instructed him to do strange things like this—standing up, turning around. She said it was to jar his brain. It usually worked.

“Wuh...” It wasn’t happening. He couldn’t concentrate on anything but the hot bulge between his legs, and this vantage point only made it worse. Toni was wearing a button-down blouse and he could actually see the black lace edge of her bra from this angle.

“Okay, here.” Reaching behind her, she took down a white tray and a plastic container, putting them on the desk. She opened the container, spilling thousands of small, black grain-size particles into the sand-tray. “Write it out.”

He did as she asked, spelling the word in the black sand with his finger:

W-O-U-L-D

“Would.” He pronounced it correctly this time, effortless, as if he had always known it and hadn’t been stuck at all. It was like that a lot. Of course, he knew what the word meant, but as he said it, he heard the phonetic version and shifted from foot to foot.

God knows, I’ve got plenty of wood.

“Yes.” Toni was pleased and he loved pleasing her. There was something about it that made him want to wriggle around on the floor like a little puppy. “Go on.”

Henry sat, pondering the page, determined to concentrate. If his dick would just cooperate, everything would be fine...

“He would give them...huh...” Henry stopped, stuck again. He hated when his brain refused to work. His body insisted on doing what it wanted, out of his control. “I can’t do this today.”

“Yes you can.” She was admirably patient, shaking the sand tray gently free of the word *would*. “Try writing this one out.”

He did as she asked, but it meant nothing to him.

H-E-L-L

“Hole.” Now there was an image. If he could just get his mind off the subject...

“You’re guessing.” She sat back, crossing her legs, and it distracted him even further. “Stand up,” she commanded, and he did, seeing her gaze shift up from eye-level. He was still noticeably hard. “Write it in the air.”

His finger made the motions. *H-E-L-L*. She waited, expectant, but he had nothing.

“I think I’ve got too much blood being diverted from my brain,” he joked.

She stood, smiling. “Turn around.”

Henry gave her his back, sensing her behind him, the sway of her hips as she approached. He felt one of her hands resting on the side of his hip, her breath against the back of his neck. She might have devised this to help his word issue, but it wasn’t helping his other problem, not at all.

“Okay, let’s try this.” Her words were soft and he couldn’t help but believe that she was just as excited by their proximity as he was.

Using her fingernail, she traced the words in large letters across the hard planes of his back through his t-shirt. He shivered.

“Anything?” she murmured.

He made a noise, a denial, shaking his head. He got the message all right, but it traveled in the wrong direction, straight down to his cock. Nothing was making sense except sensation.

“You do it, then.” Toni turned around, putting her hands on the desk surface, slightly bent over, and he thought he would pass out at the sight of her like that. His head literally swam and his vision blurred. “Go ahead,” she urged, glancing back over her shoulder. “Do it.”

Do it.

He wanted to do it. He couldn’t even verbalize just how much he wanted it. Approaching her, he kept some distance, a foot maybe, between them, but her body radiated heat, the outline of her luscious perfection. He wanted to bend her over completely, shape himself around her, mold her into something he could put into his pocket and carry around with him everywhere.

Henry traced the word slowly between her shoulder blades, his breath not fast, but hard, as if breathing was a chore. *H-E-L-L*

“Hell.” He whispered the word as if in a trance, flattening his hand on her back, feeling her bra strap under his palm through the fabric.

“Yes.” She turned her face back to him, eyes bright, but she couldn’t move. He’d shifted his weight forward, his aching cock wedged between the crack of her ass through her skirt. They both felt it and Henry knew this was it. The tension that had been building since the first time he’d glanced behind him to see her walking up his row of desks—skirt hugging her swaying hips, heels clicking on the tile—was about to break.

“Oh hell...” she whispered the words, closing her eyes and shifting her weight too, so she was pressed fully back against him. It unbalanced them both and Henry’s arms went naturally around her, catching her around the waist. She put her arms over his, tilting her head back to search his face.

“Henry, if we do this...” Her eyelids fluttered closed. “I don’t know how we’ll ever live with it.”

“And if we don’t?” His voice was hoarse in her ear, his hands moving slowly up and down her sides. “Because I don’t know how I’m going to live with not doing this...” He grabbed the full, round globe of her ass in one hand. “And this...” She moaned when he cupped her breast roughly in his other. “And this...” The hand squeezing her ass moved around front, wedging between her legs, and she whimpered as he used that leverage to jam his cock with delicious precision again the crack of her behind.

“Oh no.” She arched and turned her face to his, eyes still closed, a denial. He felt it, too, but the urge to do what he was doing overpowered any sense of propriety that might have fleetingly crossed his mind. “Henry, I want you. Oh god help me, I do.”

He grunted as he lifted her by her crotch with one hand, taking all of her weight as she leaned back against him, her bare feet coming out of both of her heels as he kissed her, tongue probing. She snaked one arm back around his neck, pulling him in closer, squirming in his arms, her pussy hot even through her skirt.

Henry couldn’t hold her. He collapsed backward into the chair across from her desk, taking her with him, the jolt of her ass grinding against his crotch making him groan into her mouth as they kissed. She sucked eagerly at his tongue, turning in his

arms so they were belly to belly, and Henry was frustrated with the amount of clothing they were still wearing. He wanted to feel her skin against his.

Toni cried out as Henry grabbed hold of her ass, rocking up, seeking the heat between her legs. His cock was trapped in his jeans and he moaned as she wiggled in his lap, feeling desperate for her. He ran his hands up her back, pulling her blouse free of her skirt, her bare skin a silky heaven. He undid her bra as Toni broke their kiss, panting and arching.

“Suck them,” she urged, not even unbuttoning her blouse, just pulling it and her bra down so her heavy breasts spilled over the V. Henry didn’t have to be asked twice, pressing them together with both hands, his tongue lashing at her nipples. He’d expected them to be dark, but they were a delightfully light pink and pursed, her areolas huge but so light they were barely there. He sucked first on one, then the other, lost in her soft cries of pleasure.

“Oh god,” Henry groaned when Toni wiggled her hand between them, rubbing the thick length of his dick through his jeans. He didn’t think he’d ever been harder in his life. “Easy. Easy.”

Her eyes brightened as she slid out of his arms, kneeling between his jean-clad thighs. She was quite a sight, her soft gray and white plaid skirt pulled up to her waist, revealing black panties underneath, her blouse gaping, buttons either popped or undone, her breasts swaying heavily.

“Oh Henry.” She pressed her cheek against his zipper. He was throbbing. “You’re so hard.”

“You have no idea.” He reached out to touch her hair, just as silky and soft as he’d imagined, as she worked his pants open and started pulling them down. He lifted his hips to help, gasping when she pulled his boxers down too, his cock springing free and bouncing against her cheek.

“Ohhhhh,” she breathed, her eyes lighting up as she took him in her hand. “Oh my god, it’s gorgeous.”

Henry blushed—he actually blushed—although part of the heat filling his cheeks and chest was also a strange sort of pride. He was really going to like pleasing her, in every way, and she clearly liked his cock. Her tongue snuck out to lick the tip—it was already wet with precum but that didn’t deter her at all. In fact, the taste of it seemed to compel her, forcing her to take the length of him into the hot cavern of her mouth.

His eyes began to close in pleasure, but he kept them at least half-open, wanting to see her stroking and sucking him. He couldn’t help reaching down for her breast and she arched, giving the weight of it over to him. Her nipples were perfection and the one against his thumb was so hard he could flick it back and forth, making her suck him even deeper.

“Easy,” he begged, pleading, but she wasn’t having any of it. Her mouth was latched on him now, sucking hard, hand working up and down his length. At this rate, he was going to fill her mouth with his cum and there wouldn’t be a damned thing he could do about it. “Oh please. Toni, please!”

She made a low growl in her throat, her tongue liquid velvet, and there was no holding back anymore. Her greedy mouth enveloped him, her breasts heaving, her hand pumping so fast he could only see the red blur of her nails.

He grunted and thrust up, squeezing the heavy flesh of her breast, twisting her nipple. She moaned but didn't take her attention from between his legs, his balls drawing up even tighter as he felt the first hot spurt of his cum leaving his sac. Toni swallowed that blast, her throat working silently, her eyes never leaving his. Then she swallowed the next, and the next, letting it flood her mouth and bathing his cock in his own hot cum before downing it.

"Oh damn," he groaned, his hand moving in her hair, still panting. "I wanted—"

"You will," she assured him, moving to stand between his legs. She stepped toward the door, turning the lock, and then began to unbutton her blouse the rest of the way. It hadn't even occurred to him that anyone could walk in on them.

Henry watched as she stripped, blouse and bra on the floor, skirt unzipped and left there too. She was wearing only panties and Henry found himself staring at the apex of her thighs. Approaching him slowly, her hands moved over the soft flesh of her belly, a smooth, pale expanse of skin, her navel shockingly pierced. It was that detail that made Henry almost instantly hard again as she stood in front of him, toying with the edges of her panties.

"Take them off," he begged, pulling his shirt over his head and smiling at the light in her eyes when she saw him fully naked. "Let me see you."

Toni hooked her thumbs in her panties and pulled them down, revealing a triangle of dark hair between her legs. Henry gave a moan, leaning forward to grab her hips. She let him, her hand moving in his hair as he began to explore her slit with his fingers, parting her swollen lips. She was so wet!

“Ohhh!” Toni rolled her hips as he slid two fingers inside of her, his thumb riding against the hard edge of her clit. “Yes! Right there!”

“There?” he murmured, his cheek pressed against her belly, his lips even with the top edge of her pubic hair. She whimpered, her hand tightening into a fist as he fingered her slowly. Then he slipped his fingers out and sucked them. He had to taste her.

“Henry!” But it wasn’t really a protest as he shoved her back against the desk, lifting her onto it and kneeling between her legs to return the favor. He was already hard again, his cock aching, but he wanted to taste her, needed to feel her come in his mouth.

Toni leaned back on her elbows, spreading her legs for his eager, probing tongue. Her juices were thick and elastic. Henry swallowed the taste of her and went back in for more, parting her thick swollen pussy lips with his thumbs and fucking her with his tongue.

“Here,” she whispered, putting her bare feet up on his shoulders and flicking her clit with one long red nail. “Right here.”

She gave a soft cry when he worked his tongue slowly upwards, taking her juices with him and spreading them all over her clit, lashing back and forth. Her clit was a hard little ridge of flesh in his mouth, her thighs beginning to tremble as he licked her. He couldn’t help reaching down and grabbing onto his cock, stroking it slowly as he tasted the hot flood of her in his mouth. It was going to be so good to slide into her wetness, feel her from the inside out.

But not yet. Not yet. Her nails raked over his shoulders, trying to pull him in closer, deeper. He explored the soft, pink folds of her flesh with one finger, his tongue never leaving the spot where she'd directed him. When he slid first one finger inside, then another, her hips began to move, fucking him back with the motion.

Her eyes closed, head going back. Her belly was quivering, the navel ring there silver and glinting in the light from the window. Thankfully, the blinds were closed, or someone walking by on their way to class might get quite an eyeful of Henry and his professor having sex on her desk. The thought made his cock swell, even if it was horribly wrong.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!”

He swore he could feel each of the soft cries of her orgasm deep in his belly, at the base of his cock, as if her voice was calling to the cum left in his balls. She whimpered and rolled and writhed on the desk, her pussy spasming around his fingers as she came, her clit practically disappearing so he had to suck it between his lips to hang onto her climax.

When she stopped trembling, her knees now hooked over his shoulders, Henry took the time to really examine her pussy, the inner lips a hot, glistening pink, her juices thick and white, almost like a man's cum, slipping slowly down the crack of her ass. He wanted it. He wanted her.

“Come here,” she urged, still panting, holding her arms out to him, and he went, letting her pull him close, on top of her. She cradled his head against her breasts and he felt her chest rising and falling, her breathing still fast. When she slipped her hand

between them, searching for his cock, he shifted his hips and let her have it, surprising her with his hardness.

“Oh that’s good,” she murmured, beginning to stroke him against her hip. “You’re so hard again! I want you in me. Come on.”

He wasn’t about to argue, feeling the hot give of her flesh as she rubbed him up and down her slit. Henry propped himself above her, his feet still on the floor, her legs dangling, letting her guide and aim him. Toni moaned when he shoved his hips forward, not waiting anymore, pushing in deep.

“Feel how wet I am for you?” she murmured, her hands running up the muscles of his forearms, his biceps, his shoulders, exploring. “That’s how much I want you.”

There was no doubt. She was like butter, soft and open, and he began to fuck her, thankful that he’d come once already, because he wouldn’t have lasted two minutes otherwise.

“You feel too good.” He closed his eyes, his now cock poised at her entrance, her hands on him, moving over the hard planes of his chest.

“Fuck me,” she whispered, thumbing his nipples, making him squirm. “Come on, Henry. Give me that cock.”

His legs and calves were strong from years of playing hockey, and he had an incredible amount of leverage at this angle, allowing him to do exactly as she asked. He groaned and gave into her request, hips pumping, cock buried to the hilt. He wasn’t fucking her so much as rutting, sounding the depths of her cunt, and with every thrust, Toni’s bare heels dug into the tight, working muscles of his ass.

“Henry,” she whispered, wrapping herself around him, arms and legs now, her mouth right next to his ear. “Oh that’s good. You’re gonna make me come all over your cock.”

That drove him in deeper, if that was even possible, determined to feel her pussy around his cock as she climaxed. Toni whimpered and sucked at his shoulder, leaving dark purple marks there, her body tense, almost rigid, her softness turned to stone as she rode him to completion.

“Ohhhhh!” She muffled her orgasm against his shoulder, face buried, teeth sinking into his flesh. He would have marks and bruises there later, but he didn’t even notice as she began to come, her muscles taut, contracting, as if her whole body was reaching a delicious zenith, focused in her fiery, spasming cunt and spreading outward in ripples.

He couldn’t hold back another minute and he didn’t have time to ask her, hadn’t even thought once about protection, he’d wanted this so much. He groaned as he pulled himself out of her still-clenching cunt, his cum flooding the dark, curly mass of her pubic hair in white hot spurts. He stroked himself against the hot bud of her clit, feeling her quivering still, her breath hot in his ear as she moaned his name, begging him to come, come, come all over her.

“Oh, oh, oh,” Toni panted, her face hot against his chest, hanging onto him. “That was so good...and so, so bad.”

He tilted her face up, kissing her deeply. He didn’t want to think about it, any of it. He just wanted to be with her, experience every part of her, without any thought at all. And they managed to do just that, twice more, before Toni insisted she had an

appointment across campus—and even then, he sat her in her office chair and sucked on her clit until she came all over his tongue once more, just so he could keep the taste of her in his mouth on the long, cold walk back to his dorm.

* * * *

“Hey Val.” Henry flipped open his phone, crooking it as he shouldered his bag on the way out from practice. “Sup?”

“Can you come over?”

Henry walked, his feet crunching in the snow left on the sidewalk. “I’m at the rink. Where are you?”

She hesitated and then said, “At Marcus’s place.”

The frat house. He had pretty much stopped going over there as much as he could. There was stuff going on he didn’t like and he was regretting ever pledging in the first place. “I guess I can catch the bus. Is everything okay?”

“I just want to see you.”

Uh oh. He knew what that meant. Val had a tendency to want to drown her sorrows in sex. Not that he would have objected, at one time, but he’d turned her down again and again since that night in his room, only because it felt too complicated to say yes. “Did you have a fight?”

She sighed. “Something like that.”

“Need a big strong shoulder to cry on?” he offered.

“That’s what I was hoping for.”

As long as that was all she was hoping for, Henry thought. He decided it would be better to meet somewhere public and beg the question altogether. “You know what, I have to be at the library in an hour. Want to meet me there instead?”

“Sure,” she agreed, but didn’t sound happy about it.

“Basement of the UGLi,” he said, picking up his pace. It was a brisk walk, but a shorter one than the frat house. “I’ll be at the tables on the right, after you get off the elevator, okay?”

“Thanks, Henry.”

Val was already there when he showed up, sitting in the corner on one of the plastic chairs, her knees drawn up to her chin. There was no one else down there and they had some privacy. Which was a good thing—and a bad thing, he supposed. It was the same place he’d met Libby in the stacks, and whenever he came down here, he always hoped he might run into her.

Of course, planning to meet Toni here, now, after what had happened, was going to be different than it had been before. No one could tell, just by observing them, he told himself, but he wondered if that was true. They’d found every opportunity to see each other, even on days they weren’t supposed to meet. Toni’s office was safe enough, it seemed, if they could be quiet. They’d also found refuge in her car, parked under a broken streetlamp. They both knew their actions were like a ticking time bomb. But it just felt too good to stop.

“Hey.” Henry sat, dropping his backpack. Val scrutinized him. The fluorescents were out back here, and he hadn’t seen that she’d been crying. Her mascara ran down

her pale cheeks in black streaks. He noted she'd dyed her hair again too. It was black and blue streaks this time. Maybe it more fit her mood.

He sat beside her, held out his arms, and she was in them before he could even ask, "Aw damn. What happened?"

"I found this." Val dug into her pocket, producing a folded piece of notebook paper. Henry took it, still hugging her, and read it over her shoulder as she sobbed.

"Wait a minute." Henry got the gist—some girl had written Marcus a letter all about how she couldn't wait to see him again. There was a lot of stuff he skimmed over in the middle, but it was signed, "*I love you, xoxoxo Jen.*" "You guys have an arrangement remember?"

Val sniffed. "The arrangement doesn't involve *I love yous.*"

"Oh." Chicks. She was fine with sleeping with other guys, and even with Marcus sleeping with other girls, but three little words made her crazy? Of course, he tried to imagine how he might justify his relationship—if you could call it that—with Toni, to Libby, and couldn't come up with anything that might placate her.

"Do you know if he feels the same way?"

Val howled, burying her wet face in his neck. "He's never even told *me* 'I love you.'"

"Why in the hell do you stay with this guy?" Henry asked incredulously, shaking his head. "Val, you're better than this."

She sniffed. "This from the guy who was perfectly willing to fuck me in front of his sixty closest frat brothers?"

"I didn't know you then," Henry countered.

“What good does that do me?” She laughed at the irony in his statement. “You don’t even want me anymore now that you ‘know’ me.”

“I do want you.” Henry slapped her hip playfully, but still hard. She yelped. “As a friend.”

“Gee thanks.”

“Look, I may not be the guy for you...” Henry tilted her chin up so he could meet her raccoon-rimmed eyes. “But I personally think you could do a hell of a lot better than Marcus.”

Her lower lip trembled. “He’s such a dick.”

“You said it.” Henry looked pointedly into her eyes.

She pouted. “But I love him.”

“I’m sorry.” He pulled her head back down to his chest, feeling her relax.

“I am, too.”

Henry stroked her black and blue hair. It was incredibly soft. “Do you want me to beat him up for you?”

She laughed at the thought. Marcus was more than twice Henry’s size—and Henry was no lightweight.

He didn’t take offense to her mirth. “How about chocolate? Would that make things better?”

He felt her sniff against his shirt. She was probably leaving streaks of mascara there. “Chocolate always makes things better.”

“That’s it. It’s you and me, then. We’ve got a date with Baskin Robbins and some Rocky Road.” He kissed the top of her head. “Think brain freeze will make you come to your senses?”

“Something should.” Val wiggled in his lap quite intentionally and the soft squirming of her bottom was getting just the reaction she was looking for. “You’re helping.”

“I can’t help too much,” he warned her.

“She’s forgotten all about you, you know,” Val blurted. He’d confessed his feelings for Libby to her, and considering he was here to console her about her own love life, her comment was rather mean, but he forgave her.

“Maybe.” Henry shrugged. “But I haven’t forgotten about her.”

“Whoever you end up with is one lucky girl.” She went to kiss him and he turned his head so it landed squarely on the cheek.

“Henry.” The sound of his name, spoken sharply, made him stand almost immediately, nearly spilling Val out of his lap onto the floor. She caught herself, standing too, glancing up.

“Professor Franklin?” Val gazed first at her and then at Henry.

“She’s tutoring me,” Henry said quickly, adding, “In English.”

Val nodded and then moved in to kiss Henry’s cheek again. “Call me later?”

“Sure.” He wiped the lipstick from his face, ignoring the look Toni gave him, but feeling it anyway, in his gut. “I’m not kidding—Baskin Robbins. Tonight. They don’t close until nine.”

“Kerwins is better,” Val countered, heading toward the elevators. She waggled her fingers at Toni as she passed. “Bye!”

Toni waited for the elevator doors to close before she took a seat next to Henry. “So, who was that?”

“Val.” Why did he feel so damned guilty? “A friend.”

Toni opened her satchel without saying anything else about it, but it was there, the whole time. They’d decided to meet in the library for a reason—it wouldn’t afford them any opportunity to do anything *but* work. But now Henry couldn’t concentrate again, not because he was thinking about sex—although just the smell of Toni’s perfume got him hard now—but because he was worried about what Toni had seen.

“She’s really just a friend,” Henry blurted the fifth time he’d blanked on the same word. “I swear.”

Toni sat back, her arms folded across her breasts. “Well, it’s not like we’re dating or anything.”

He blinked at her. “I guess.”

“Okay, I admit it.” Her eyes softened, her hand squeezing his knee under the table. “I was jealous.”

He swallowed, meeting her dark eyes. “You don’t have anything to be jealous of. I don’t want her.”

Which was true. Of course, he didn’t mention Libby. He kept her like a secret.

“Do you want me?” Toni’s hand slid upward, cupping his crotch. He was half-hard, had been since Val was sitting in his lap, and with Toni next to him, his cock seemed to simply respond, Pavlovian, as if she were his bell.

“Always.” And that was true, too. Since they’d started, he could hardly think about anything else. Henry glanced around, seeing no one, and stole a quick kiss. She tasted good, her mouth warm and soft and opening under his, her hand massaging his cock from half-there to all-the-way-there in a matter of moments.

“We shouldn’t,” she murmured, looking over her shoulder, but her hand moved faster anyway, rubbing him under the table.

“I know.” Hadn’t they been saying that all along? But he couldn’t stop himself, and apparently neither could she.

“Come on,” she whispered, reaching for his hand. They left their stuff and he followed her down the back aisle, the one closest to the wall, deep into the stacks. It was quiet back there, the only sound the buzzing of the flickering fluorescents overhead as Toni pushed him against the shelf and sank to her knees.

“Are you sure?” he whispered, biting his lip as she unzipped him, yanking his jeans down and pulling his cock free of his boxers.

“It will help you concentrate...afterward.”

She had a point. Henry put a hand on her head, seeing her sly smile before she took his cock into her mouth—and then there was no more protest or even thought. Her mouth was practiced and sure, her tongue teasing the sensitive head before sucking him in deep. She went slow at first, her fingernails tickling his thighs, his balls, making his toes curl in his sneakers.

When he looked down, he saw her hand moving up under her skirt and the thought of her pussy, wet and getting wetter, made him crazy with lust. He had to have her. A blowjob in the library basement just wasn’t going to be good enough to tide him

over. He would have to spend all night in his dorm room without her warmth, the soft press of her body against his, until they met again in her office tomorrow, and he would spend that time remembering. He had been doing just that, every minute they were apart, since the afternoon in her office when they'd first given in.

"I want you," he breathed, grabbing her by the hair and slowly pulling her mouth off his cock with a soft, wet popping sound. It wasn't easy to break the suction. Her mouth was red, lips swollen, chest heaving. She wanted him too. "I want to fuck you."

She glanced first right, then left. They both listened and heard nothing but the hum of the lights and their own labored breathing, so Toni stood, putting her arms around Henry's neck and kissing him. Their tongues stabbed and probed, and he couldn't keep his hands off her, grabbing her breasts through her blouse, her nipples hard, reaching a hand between her legs to feel her heat.

"Gimme that cunt," he growled, turning her around and bending her nearly in half. She had to grab onto the edge of one of the shelves to keep from stumbling as he shoved the silky burgundy skirt she was wearing up over her hips, snatching down her panties. They were white, see-through, and the crotch was soaked. How long had she been imagining this? he wondered.

"Henry," she whimpered as he swabbed the whole length of her pussy with the head of his dick, tickling her clit before finding her hole, lining himself up and grabbing her hips. She whimpered when he entered her, his thumbs parting her behind, seeing her asshole winking at him, his cock sinking into her flesh. He couldn't get enough of this, couldn't ever get enough.

“Oh fuck,” he breathed as she reached a hand between her legs, her fingers brushing his swinging balls, her nails scratching gently along the length of his wet cock as he shoved into her. Then she was touching herself, rubbing her clit, getting herself off.

“Don’t stop,” she whispered, planting her feet wider, rocking her hips up and back. “Oh, please. Please.”

There wasn’t a chance in hell. Henry gripped her ass, shoving deep into her cunt, fucking her so hard they vibrated the shelves, and neither of them noticed or cared. Toni was close, he knew her sounds now, and Henry didn’t think he could wait another minute. His cock had a mind of its own, wanting nothing but to bury itself into her wet recesses and give her everything it could.

“Toni,” he warned, feeling her fingers slapping against her pussy, teasing herself, so close now but wanting to make it last. “I’m gonna come!”

There was nothing to do but hold on, feeling her shudder in response to his words, unable to keep her own imminent climax at bay. Toni reached out blindly with one hand, grasping books instead of the shelf, letting them fall to the floor before steadying herself, her breath coming in hot pants as she ground her hips back against him, the first wave of his orgasm hitting like a tsunami.

“Ohhhh!” He couldn’t help his sudden groan, but he stifled it the best he could, his belly contracting again and again, the sensation only heightened when he saw his cock pulsing, emptying itself into Toni’s fluttering cunt.

They found their way into each other’s arms, kissing, breathless, trying to quickly pull their clothes back on, as aware now that they were in a public place as they’d been

oblivious to it a moment before. Henry made sure the coast was clear before they snuck back down the aisle to the table where they'd left their things.

"Think we can get some work done now?" Toni teased.

"Maybe." Henry turned his attention to their lesson, his ears still ringing. Their little rendezvous in the stacks had gone unnoticed by anyone, he was sure of it, but his heart galloped in his chest when the elevator bell dinged and he saw the edge of a library book cart appear around the corner.

He didn't think Toni noticed him sneaking glances at Libby as she pushed the cart into the stacks for reshelving. And Libby, thankfully, didn't see them, at least not until she came back their way half an hour later, the cart empty, and by then both he and Toni had regained most of their composure and were deep into their lesson.

Libby saw him that time, though—he was sure of it. She half-lifted her hand in a wave and then seemed to change her mind when she saw the professor. Henry half-returned the gesture while Toni was digging in her satchel for her colored transparencies, but he didn't think Libby saw it.

Chapter Eight

"I suck." Henry slumped on his sister's bed, watching her gazing into her dresser mirror, twisting her long blonde hair up onto the top of her head. "I didn't get anyone anything."

"No one expects you to." Janie took out the bobby pin she'd been holding between her teeth and shoved it in her hair. "You're a poor college student."

"Yeah, but Mom put money in my account so I could buy everyone gifts."

Janie snorted. "Let me guess. It turned into beer money?"

"No, I loaned it to a friend," he admitted. He hadn't told anyone else how Dean was borrowing money, or why. He'd put it together, of course—Marcus was running the betting ring out of the frat, and Dean had a serious gambling problem. He was a bottomless pit, and the times Henry had said no, Dean had managed to make his life pretty miserable. Socially, it was easier to say yes. Of course, it was harder on the wallet.

"A girl?"

He shook his head. "My roommate, actually."

"What for, so he could spend it on beer?"

"Not exactly." It was a hell of a lot more than beer money, Henry thought.

"You shouldn't loan friends money." Janie turned from the mirror, frowning at him. "Seriously. It's not good."

Henry decided to change the subject. "Hey, Janie, do girls have a code?"

"A code?" She cocked her head, curious. "What do you mean?"

"You know." He flushed. "Like guys have the 'Bros Before Hoes' thing."

Janie laughed. "Well yeah. Except we aren't so adolescent about it."

If only Dean had respected the code in the first place, Henry thought, instead of making everything into a damned competition. "So let's say your roommate dated a guy once...would you consider him off-limits?"

"Yeah," Janie agreed. "Probably. I assume you're the guy in this scenario?"

Henry nodded miserably. "Is there any way to get a girl to break the code?"

"Sort of." Janie smiled, coming to sit on her bed next to him. "So who's this girl?"

"Her name's Libby." He wasn't ready to give up too much more.

"And you dated her roommate?"

"Once," he reiterated. "Just one time. Dean set me up." In more ways than one, he thought bitterly.

"Well, if I was Libby, and I liked you enough," Janie said, qualifying her statement. "I'd talk to my roommate and ask her if she minded. It was just one date, after all."

Henry considered this, musing out loud, "Maybe I should talk to Elaine..."

"That's the roommate?" Janie asked. "Was she into you?"

He remembered the way Elaine had kissed him, had snuck her hand under the water to stroke him, how she'd practically jumped at the chance to...

"You could say that."

Janie cocked her head at him again, frowning. "But you only went on one date."

"Yeah."

She made a face. "She couldn't have been *that* into you!"

"We got kind of drunk," he admitted sheepishly.

“Just because you had sex with her doesn’t mean anything. Necessarily.” Janie waved the idea away. “Did you have sex with her?”

“Hang on.” Henry dug his phone out of his pocket. He knew it was Toni—his ringtone for her was *Bolero*. “I gotta take this.”

“Is it Libby?” Janie tried to look over his shoulder, but he got up and headed toward the door.

“Hi,” he said, flipping open his phone and ignoring his sister making faces at him as he went down the hall to his room.

“I miss you.” Her voice was thick as honey.

“I know,” he admitted, closing his door. “I miss you, too.”

Here he was asking his sister advice about Libby, but it was Toni he was talking to. What was wrong with this picture? He’d fallen head first—or maybe leapt was more accurate—into this thing with Toni and it was like a snowball going downhill, just picking up speed as it rolled along.

“You know I’m right around the block,” she reminded him.

He hadn’t forgotten. She had an apartment on campus—one he’d been invited to twice now—but the house she’d lived in with her husband was just kitty-korner from his parents’ place. If he peered out his sister’s window, he could have seen her backyard, and maybe even the “For Sale” sign posted out front, from that angle. No one lived in the house at the moment—Toni’s soon-to-be ex had taken a job somewhere on the east coast—but she had mentioned she was going to get it into “for-sale” condition over break.

“It’s weird. You’re closer now than when we’re at school,” he said.

“Do you want to come over?”

He could almost see the smile playing on her lips. “Do you really have to ask?”

“How long?”

“Give me ten minutes.”

* * * *

No one asked him where he was going.

The walk around the block was short and Henry left footprints like breadcrumbs leading the way home. The snow they’d been predicting was just beginning to fall, a light dusting, making the neighborhood lawns sugary in the moonlight. The flakes were big and fat, though, and he caught one on his tongue like a little kid as he took Toni’s front steps two at a time to ring her bell.

He waited, glancing around at the other houses, wondering what her neighbors would say. It was dark, though, the streetlights on. No one around. Safe enough.

“Hey sexy.” She was ready for bed, standing there barefoot, her hair falling all around her shoulders. She was wearing a silk robe, a red and gold oriental print. “Cold out there?”

“Uh-huh,” he agreed, stepping in and out of the way so she could close the door behind him. “Warm in here, though.”

“Warmer now,” she agreed, turning and putting her arms around his neck, pressing him against the door, her mouth seeking his. He kissed her slowly, lost in the soft exploration of her tongue, her hands already unzipping his jacket, caressing the hard planes of his belly as she pushed up his shirt.

“What, no small talk?” Henry teased, sliding his hands down to cup her ass through the silky material. “Aren’t we going to make popcorn, watch a movie, talk about politics?”

“I’m voted for Obama,” Toni confessed, sliding her fingers through his belt loops and pulling his pelvis in toward hers. “Do you think I need a spanking?”

“You just might.” He smirked. “You’re probably right—the last time we watched a movie, horrible things happened with butter.”

“Oh, I don’t know if it was so terrible.” Toni led him into the living room by his belt loop and Henry’s cock immediately perked up at her words. He hadn’t caught much of *The Last Tango in Paris*, considering where Toni’s hand had been the whole time, but he definitely knew Brando had anally raped his little affair on the apartment floor using only butter as a lubricant—and Toni thought, what? That was okay? Was she into that? Now he was curious.

“You want something to drink?” Toni offered, picking up a remote and turning on an iPod unit with it. She had a fire lit in the gas fireplace and it was quite warm. “Coke? Wine?” She lifted her own glass from the fireplace mantel. “Beer?”

“I’m underage,” he snorted. Not that it had ever stopped him before.

“Don’t remind me.” She laughed.

“Nah, I’m good,” he assured her, flopping down onto the couch. It was white, just like the carpet, and he thought it was a good thing they never had kids. Or maybe they had nice things because there were never any kids around to ruin them. It was sparsely furnished, just the couch and a table with a lamp—no television. Must not have had room for this stuff in her apartment, he thought.

“Yes, you are,” she teased. “Very good.”

She was watching him with hungry eyes. He knew that expression. Sometimes it would come over her in the middle of a tutoring session. He would catch her gaze moving down to the crotch of his jeans, that soft, dreamy look on her face. And the minute his eyes met hers, they turned greedy.

“Come here.” He patted the couch beside him and she made her way over, slow, sexy, that smile curled at the corner of her mouth. As she walked, she undid her robe tie, letting the silky material fall open. She was wearing a white see-through teddy underneath and panties to match. He could see her nipples and the dark triangle of her pubic hair.

“Mmmm.” Henry’s hand moved down over the crotch of his jeans, adjusting. With his other, he reached for her, catching the elastic edge of her panties. “Gimme.”

“Greedy boy.” She gently shoved his hand away, but damn, she was so hard to resist, the way her hips moved like that. “Don’t touch.”

She used the remote to turn up the iPod and then tossed it next to him on the couch. It was some blues song, nothing he recognized, but it had a steady beat that her hips seemed to sway to all on their own.

“God,” he breathed as she gyrated slowly between his thighs, lifting her long dark hair and letting it fall, dropping her robe off one shoulder, then the next. “You’re beautiful.”

She turned her back on him, letting her robe drop to her waist, then bending over as she let it slip over her ass and to the floor. Her panties were completely see-through—he could see the dark patch of her pubic hair—and wet. Already so wet. She

slapped his hand away playfully again when he reached to touch her, so he decided to touch himself instead, unzipping his jeans and taking out his cock.

She gave him an appreciative look as he began to stroke it, but she clearly wasn't done with her show. Her hands moved up her belly to cup her breasts through the see-through material. They were heavy and full without a bra, her nipples poking out nicely, and she teased them with the tips of her fingers.

The music changed, this song slower, and she held her hand out to him. He stood, shuffling forward before realizing his pants were around his knees. He went to take them off, but she sank to the floor before he got the chance, working them down, along with his boxers. He gaped as she slithered back up him like a snake, her cheek brushing against his crotch, her breasts sliding over his belly, her tongue tracing over his collarbone and finally touching his as they kissed.

"Dance with me," she murmured, sliding her arms around his neck. Henry hadn't danced with a girl since prom, and although he'd probably had a hard-on at the time, it certainly hadn't been this exposed. Still, he put his hands at her waist, and discovered he didn't have to do much anyway. Toni was doing all the dancing, writhing in his arms as they continued to kiss.

"Off," she insisted, pushing his shirt up, and he pulled it over his head. Now he was completely naked. She had that greedy look again, her hands moving all over his skin—shoulders, arms, belly—and then reaching down to cup his balls and grab hold of his hard cock.

He moaned softly as she began to stroke it, nice and easy, in time to both the music and her hips. It was sexy as hell. When she sank slowly down onto the white

carpet to take him into her mouth, there was a moment his knees wanted to buckle, but he grabbed a handful of her hair instead, biting his lip and closing his eyes against complete collapse. She wasn't at it long, thank god, before she pulled him down to the rug, making him stretch out on his back before climbing on top of him.

His cock pointed straight up the ceiling and he had no idea what she was doing to it—although whatever it was, it felt fucking fantastic—because she had straddled his face, the see-through crotch of her panties poised directly over his mouth. He couldn't resist, but when he went to take them off, or even pull them aside, she protested.

"Can I at least lick you through them?" he begged, his hips rocking in time with the gentle pull of her mouth.

"Okay," she relented, her mouth full, and he pressed his tongue flat, working the crotch of her panties between her swollen lips, making the material even wetter with his saliva. She didn't let him do that long either, though, turning around and straddling his hips this time.

"Well now you've got to take them off," he teased as she ground her pelvis, his cock trapped between them. But she proved him wrong. The crotch of her panties slipped between her pussy lips and was growing ever wetter. She just positioned her swollen lips around his cock, undulating still, the sensitive head of his dick slipping again and again through that crevasse.

"Which do you like better?" she murmured. "My mouth or my pussy?"

He groaned, hands on her rolling hips. "How can I answer that?"

She reached between them to grasp his cock, leaning forward and pressing her mouth to his ear. "Have you ever been in a woman's ass?"

“No,” he confessed, gulping. But the idea of it was blackly exciting.

“Want me to get the butter?” She chuckled as his cock jerked in her hand in response. His dick was answering for him.

“You’ve done that before?” he asked, gazing up at her.

“Yes.” She sounded excited. “It takes a lot of trust, but if you do it right—it’s incredible.”

He kept seeing it in his head, the puckered wink of her asshole when he was fucking her from behind. She’d asked him to put a finger there once, and he had, and she’d really seemed to like it.

“Come on.” She led him upstairs, which was even more sparsely furnished than the downstairs. There was just a twin mattress on the floor with a sheet and covers, unmade, and a small night table in the bedroom she obviously slept in when she was here. The room was dark, the only light from the full moon shining through the window. There were no blinds. Those were gone, too.

“I want to give this to you,” Toni whispered as they rolled together on the mattress. “I want to be your first.”

He wasn’t about to refuse her.

She opened the little night table and pulled out a bottle of KY, joking, “I think it’s been in there since my honeymoon. Bill and I never used it.”

He didn’t like thinking about her husband. He didn’t like thinking about her with anyone else but him.

In the dark, she rubbed his cock down with KY, making him slick and even harder in her hand. Then she was on her knees, her bottom in the air, her panties finally gone.

His fingers probed—he couldn't help it—dipping into the hot flesh of her cunt, her juices copious. He wanted to plunge into her right then, feel the hot hug of her pussy, but the thought of her asshole was too intriguing to pass up. And she was giving it to him willingly. As a gift. It made him feel kind of proud.

“Put your finger there,” she urged, and he did as he was told, feeling the muscles tighten involuntarily around the tip of his finger. Would it do that around his cock, too? he wondered. He shivered.

“Fuck my ass with your finger.” Her words were whispered, a secret in the moonlight, and he began slowly moving in, up to his first knuckle, then his next, until his finger was all the way in. Then he began to pull it out. She moaned, rocking back, pressing it in again. She really seemed to like it.

“Now two,” she urged. “Use the KY.”

He found it on the mattress, squeezing some onto his fingers and rubbing them together. She gasped when he began to work the tips of two fingers into the tight clench of her ass. Toni took a deep breath and he felt her muscles relax, allowing his fingers to slip inside of her. His cock made an immediate association, throbbing in response.

“Yessss,” she moaned, rocking against his hand, taking his fingers all the way in, again and again. “That’s good. Oh god that’s good!”

He knelt up behind her, between her thighs, his fingers moving in deeper, at a different angle, making Toni buck. His cock, still slick with KY, was so hard he was leaking precum against her leg. He couldn't believe how much he wanted this now.

“Now your cock,” she insisted, slowing her motions, letting him withdraw his fingers. “Put it in...easy.”

Henry felt his way in the dark, moving his cock up and down her crack, finding the familiar give of her pussy without a problem and then moving further up, over the tight skin between, until he found the pucker of her ass. He felt her brace herself, her breathing ragged, and he used his thumb to press the head of his dick slowly against her.

“Ohhhhh!” she cried out as just the tip slipped past the tight ring of muscle. “God, you’re so fucking big!”

He flushed, his cock snugged nicely into her sphincter, holding her hips to steady them both. He waited, holding his breath.

“Okay,” she urged, starting to press back against him, pushing his cock deeper. “Okay, okay, yes. Do it.”

He groaned as he shifted his hips forward, feeling her flesh give. It was the most incredible thing he’d ever felt and he had to tighten every muscle in his body not to shoot his cum right then.

“Tight, huh?” Toni laughed and it made his eyes widen when she squeezed her muscles. “It can get even tighter.”

“It’s so hot,” he murmured, running both hands over her in the dark. He could see the white globes of her ass, lit up by the moonlight like rolling hills, and he was plunging into the valley between. Except it was more like a hot, humid cave. A very, very narrow one.

“Okay.” Toni wiggled her bottom into the saddle of his hips. He was all the way in her now, had plumbed her depths completely. Toni began, and his cock slicked slowly

back out of her, wet with KY, the head rubbing deliciously under that hot circle of muscle and then sliding back in. "Now you can fuck me."

He groaned, digging his fingers into her hips, giving himself some leverage. He wasn't going to last long. There was no way. But he was going to enjoy the hell out of it until it was over.

"Come on, Henry," she urged, and he felt her fingers against his balls, nudging them aside so she could play with her pussy. "Fuck my ass. Give me that hard cock."

His hips began to move on their own and Toni moved with him, her soft cries of pleasure going directly to his swollen cock. Her breath came faster, faster, her fingers rubbing, her asshole so tight she squeezed him with every pass like he was a toothpaste tube she was determined to get every last bit of stuff from.

And it was working, the muscles of her pussy beginning to contract with her orgasm.

"Fuck me hard!" she begged. "Oh I'm gonna come! I'm gonna—"

Henry shuddered as her ass contracted, too, milking his cock with every spasm. He grunted and spilled his cum into the hot clench of her asshole. Beneath him, Toni quivered, whimpering, and collapsed onto the mattress.

When Henry curled himself around her, still panting, she pulled the sheet up. They were both sweaty, their bodies slick.

"Thank you," he whispered, kissing her temple.

She chuckled. "You're welcome."

He didn't want her to misunderstand. "For that, but...for...everything."

She reached back and stroked his cheek. "You're welcome."

There wasn't anything else left to say. They slept as the snow fell outside and blanketed everything in white silence.

* * * *

"I just gotta make it to this weekend's game." Dean kept his voice low, reaching over and taking one of Henry's fries. "Then I can pay you back. With frickin' interest if you want."

"Come on, man." Henry snatched his fries off his tray before Dean could sneak another one. "You're into me for five hundred already. How much more do you want?"

"I just need another five to hold them off. In cash. Nothing I have is liquid. It's all been...committed elsewhere."

Henry sat back, chewing thoughtfully. He just didn't have it. His parents were already angry about his disappearing savings account and they'd told him they weren't putting any more money into it until he paid them back. He had no idea how he was going to do that—unless Dean managed to actually win big. So far, that hadn't happened.

"I don't have it." Henry gulped. "I'm sorry."

Dean closed his eyes, gritting his teeth. When he opened them, they burned into Henry's. "It's a sure thing. I'm telling you. I promise you will get your money back."

"How can you be so sure?"

Dean glanced around. They were alone at the table, but there were people all around them. He dropped his voice, leaning in. "Because we're going to lose the game."

"We?" Henry munched another fry.

"Shh!" Dean grimaced. "Saturday's game."

Henry contemplated it. Dean had a football game on Saturday—U of M against EMU. Then it dawned on him.

Henry's jaw dropped. "You're throwing the game against Eastern?"

"Shhh!" Dean nudged him with his knee under the table.

Henry immediately dropped his voice. "How?"

"You know my study group?" Dean's smile was small and tight, waiting for Henry to connect the dots. He'd supposedly been going to a calculus study group for a few weeks, but Henry knew it had to be a cover for something, because Dean didn't study. He'd said it was mostly guys from the fraternity, all football players...

All football players. Henry gaped at him.

"Eastern has had only had one winning season in twenty years. They've gone through eight coaches." Dean's grin widened. "Do you know how big this payoff is going to be?"

It wasn't impossible. Dean had a lot of influence—a *lot*. He could see him seducing players into jeopardizing the rest of their lives, their careers, for a big payoff.

"I just need five-hundred more," Dean insisted. "And I can hold the bastards off until after the game."

"And then you're done with gambling forever, right?" Henry asked sarcastically.

Dean held up two fingers and saluted. "Scout's honor."

"I'm tapped out." Henry shrugged helplessly. "I can't borrow any more from my parents."

"Then borrow it from your girlfriend."

“Who?” Henry blinked at him, sure he was making a crack about Libby, who still hadn’t called him, even though he’d called her and left a message twice since they’d gotten back. So much for getting together after break.

“Professor Franklin.” Dean’s words turned Henry’s blood to ice. He didn’t know, Henry thought, panicked. *He can’t know!* “I’m sure she’d be willing to help you out.”

Henry could barely speak the words. “What? I can’t do that.”

“Sure you can.” Dean leaned back in his chair, stretching, casual-seeming, but every move he made was calculated. “You know, I don’t think she’d be too happy if the university found out what she’s doing with you.”

“You mean...” Henry gulped. *How? How could he know?* “Tutoring me?”

“No.” Dean’s eyes flashed. “I mean fucking you.”

Henry stared. He couldn’t breathe. He didn’t know how Dean knew, but he did.

“Listen, it’s just five-hundred.” Dean’s voice turned friendly again—just a conversation between amigos. Never mind that Henry had that sick feeling in his gut like someone had just racked his nuts. “Just ask her. Okay?”

What else was he supposed to say? “I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thanks.” Dean leaned forward and clapped Henry on the shoulder. “Really, thanks.”

Henry stood, leaving the rest of his lunch. “I gotta go.”

* * * *

Toni’s apartment was small, but she said she liked it better than the big empty house she’d lived in with her ex, and he believed her.

“You’ll meet your soulmate some day,” she whispered to him in the dark. The bed was full and high—and it squeaked like they were squishing a thousand mice when they fucked. It made them both laugh so hard they often had to move to the floor to finish. “I promise, you will.”

Henry knew it had been a bad idea to tell her that Dean was asking him for money for gambling debts, and that he just might know what was going on between them—but he’d had a feeling this was coming anyway. Nothing could burn this hot, this fast, and last very long. Of course, he hadn’t told her about the game. That one was like an anvil on his chest, a paralyzing weight.

“What if I don’t want it to be over?” He spoke the words, but he didn’t know if he meant them. It had been wrong from the beginning, in all the right sorts of ways, and this felt the same. Wrong and right—a horribly apt paradox.

“It’s too dangerous, for both of us.” Toni’s cheek pressed against his back and she kissed his shoulder blade. “But I’m not abandoning you. We can still work together.”

“I don’t know.” Just being in her class for the rest of the year was going to be hard enough. He couldn’t imagine being in her office four days a week and not being... *with* her.

“Or...” She sighed. “I can give you a whole list of names. We have great tutors in the program.”

“I wish I could.” Henry turned, pulling her into his arms. “But I couldn’t be around you so much and not want you. I couldn’t resist.”

“I know.” She tucked her dark head under his chin. “It’s probably better this way.”

“I wish it wasn’t.” His voice cracked.

"Me, too." Her tears fell on his bare chest and they both pretended it wasn't happening, wasn't ending, at least for a while.

* * * *

"Henry?"

"Libby?" He recognized her voice immediately. It was the call he'd been waiting, hoping for, and now here it was, and he couldn't believe it. "How was your break?"

"Fine." But Libby's voice was wrong, somehow. Something was wrong. Not that everything wasn't already wrong in his life. Between his roommate problem and the ending of his affair with Toni, he'd reached the bottom of what could possibly go wrong. Or so he thought. "I really need to talk to you."

"Sure." He shrugged. "What's on your mind?"

"Not on the phone."

Had Dean called Libby and told her about Toni? he wondered. Is that what put such urgency into her voice? And still, his heart was pounding at the thought of getting to see her in person, no matter what the reason. He glanced at his watch. It was almost dinner time, but he didn't have anywhere to go.

"Want to meet somewhere?"

"How about The Red Hawk?" she suggested.

"Half an hour?"

"See you there." She hung up.

* * * *

The Red Hawk was pretty quiet for a Thursday night. They sat in one of the high-backed booths, Libby eating the Thai shrimp salad, and Henry was getting messy with the Red Hawk wings, extra spicy. They made his eyes water and his nose run.

"I bet it didn't snow down in North Carolina," Henry said, making conversation. They'd had a foot of snow over the break, just in time for Christmas.

"Henry, I need to talk to you about Dean."

He paused, a wing in his hands, then nodded. "Okay." At least now he knew the topic of conversation. Maybe she knew Dean was in trouble? Had he gone to her for money, too?

Just please don't let her know about Toni.

"But I have to tell you first why I was fired from the paper last year."

He waited, not understanding what in the world that could have to do with Dean, or anything having to do with Henry, but he was sure Libby would connect the dots.

"I told you I did a sort of exposé on fraternity hazing."

"Right." Henry remembered. "Forced drinking and all that."

She went on. "Well, the university did an investigation after the article went to print. They wanted to know my sources."

"Let me guess." Henry licked his fingers. "You wouldn't tell them."

"No, I wouldn't." She blinked at him, indignant. "The first amendment still applies, even at a college paper. We have the same constitutional rights as professional newspapers. This isn't high school."

"Then why did they fire you?"

Libby fiercely poked her salad with her fork. "The Board of Regents said that if I didn't leave the paper voluntarily, they were going to fire my advisor instead."

"Jesus." His jaw dropped.

She smiled sadly. "Nice, huh?"

"I'm sorry, Libby."

"I'm over it." She gestured his apology away, but it was clear to Henry that wasn't really true. "Anyway...one of my sources was Dean's brother, Chris."

Just when he thought his jaw couldn't drop any further. "You're kidding me."

"He was a senior member of the frat and he knew all the ins and outs." She stabbed at a shrimp.

"And he talked to you willingly?" Henry was doubtful. He hadn't met any of Dean's family, but he couldn't imagine them being much different from Dean. "He knew he was being interviewed?"

"He was..." Libby took a sip of her water. "I was dating him."

Henry sat back, stunned. And all this time, Dean had never said a word. Chris had graduated last year. So he was the senior guy she'd been dating, he realized.

"But Chris wasn't my source," she explained. Her salad had suddenly become her focus as if she could annihilate it with her gaze "He's just how I found out about the hazing."

She took a bite of shrimp, chewing slowly. Henry had lost interest in his wings. He just stared at her.

“The rumors were running rampant at the time—stories about tying pledges’ hands behind their backs and pushing them down the stairs, or leaving them all alone in one room with a kitten—and no one could come out until the kitten was dead.”

Henry choked on his Diet Coke. “Jesus!”

“For the record, I didn’t see anything like that.” She shrugged. “But there was forced drinking. They’d duct tape them to chairs and put funnels in their mouths. One kid nearly died from alcohol poisoning.”

“You saw this for yourself?” Henry had no real love for the frat he’d pledged anymore, but it was still hard to believe they’d done stuff like that to pledges. “Or someone told you?”

“I saw it,” she insisted, glancing up as the waitress went by, picking up Henry’s empty chili bowl.

“You’re a girl,” Henry observed. “How did you get in?”

She took another bite of her salad, chewing slowly. “Because there was also a lot of sex,” she said finally. “And they hired prostitutes.”

Henry stared, then he gaped. No way. It wasn’t possible. What was she telling him>

“You were a...?”

“No!” Her eyes widened but her face had turned almost as red as her hair. “But I did sign up with the escort service they were rumored to use. And I was there on the last night of Hell Week. That’s when they ‘reward’ the pledges for making it through.”

“They were rewarded with prostitutes?” He remembered his own ‘reward’ night well enough—although he clearly hadn’t had to go through what many of the previous year’s pledges did.

“You pledged.” Libby gazed coolly at him. “Didn’t you get laid out of the deal?”

He cleared his throat. “They did something different this year. Sort of.”

“Really?” Her red eyebrows arched. “What?”

“I’d rather not say,” he mumbled, taking a drink of his soda.

“I don’t blame you.”

He decided to change the subject, although now all he could think of was that night with Val. Had Libby done something like that? “So you didn’t...did you actually participate?”

“No,” Libby denied, but her face was turning even redder. “I mean, I danced and...stuff. But I didn’t sleep with anybody.”

“Chris must have known you weren’t a prostitute.”

“Chris wasn’t there that night. I made sure of that,” she said firmly. Her gaze dropped to the table. “But he found out anyway.”

“How?”

Libby closed her eyes and then lifted her gaze to him. She almost looked like she was going to cry. “Because they videotaped all of it.”

“Oh my god,” he whispered.

“Yeah.” She blinked, glancing toward the door where a couple was coming in to eat. Henry wanted to reach out and touch her, reassure her, but he didn’t know what to say. Then she turned her attention back to him. “Henry, I like you.”

The words made his pulse race.

“And I think you like me.”

If you only knew how much, he thought. He was still at a loss for words.

“And I’m sorry I...” She studied her hands. The fork was on the table now and they were clasped in front of her. “I know you thought I was ignoring you. But you don’t understand.”

When her gaze lifted to his again, her eyes were wet. “If that tape ever got out, and you and I were dating, do you know how long it would be before you’d ever play hockey again? You could easily lose your scholarship.”

He stared into her pretty face and things fell into place. It all made sense now. He’d made up all sorts of reasons and rationalizations in his head, but it didn’t have anything to do with Elaine. Libby had been protecting him. Who had the tape? he wondered. But in his gut, he knew.

“Dean found out I was still investigating Alpha Pi Alpha and he told me he’d release it if I got involved with you,” Libby went on, her words choked.

Henry frowned. “When did he say this?”

“Not long after...” Her eyes skipped away from his. “After that night in the hot tub.”

“Unreal.”

Libby’s lower lip trembled. “He said he’d mail it to the NCAA with an anonymous note. Henry, just one whiff of a player dating an alleged prostitute would put your scholarship in jeopardy. Even if I’d been vindicated—and who knows? I signed up as an

escort of my own volition, even if I was a reporter—you wouldn't have played hockey for a long time."

Her confession left him speechless. If his roommate had magically appeared in front of him, he would have killed him with his bare hands.

"What in the hell is wrong with him?" he croaked. "Why would he do that?"

"Your fraternity happens to have the largest betting ring on campus running through their house. That was going to be my follow-up story last year, before I got fired. Dean found out that I was still looking into it this year, even though I wasn't on the paper anymore, and he didn't want that to happen. He wanted something to hold over my head, so I wouldn't tell anyone."

"Because Dean's gambling." That much Henry knew. "He keeps borrowing money from me."

Libby made a face. "How much?"

"Five hundred." That didn't include the five-hundred Dean wanted him to borrow from Toni—that he'd been willing to blackmail his own roommate to get his hands on.

Libby sighed. "He's in for a lot more than that."

"He's sick." Henry felt helpless. What could they do? They had to do something. And he hadn't even told Libby about Dean's plans to throw the game!

"You have no idea." Libby looked down at her hands again. "Henry, Dean raped Elaine. That night in the hot tub, after I left...?" Her voice dipped low, became choked. "I never should have left..."

“Oh my god.” It took Henry a few seconds to make his frozen limbs move, but then he was over on her side of the booth, putting his arms around her. “I’m so sorry, Libby.”

“She told me last night.” Libby buried her face in Henry’s neck. “I tried to get her to report it, but she won’t.”

Henry’s jaw clenched. “I’m gonna kill him.”

“No,” she said vehemently, gripping his arm. “Don’t do it. He’s not worth it. I want you to stay away from him if you can. Ask housing if you can switch rooms. Just...don’t have anything more to do with him. That’s the best we can do.”

“But he’s going to throw the game,” Henry confessed. He’d been sitting with the knowledge, unsure what to do, who to tell, but it seemed natural to share it with her now. “This weekend against Eastern Michigan. He’s got it all set up. It’s as good as done.”

“Oh no!” Libby pulled back, staring at him, this new information making her eyes widen. “We can’t let that happen.”

Henry dug into his pocket, finding his ringing cell, and saw the number. Val. *Not now.* He let it go to message.

“Henry!” Libby grabbed his forearm. His phone made a sound, letting him know he had a message. “If he succeeds, it isn’t just his life he’s ruining. We’re talking about coaches and players and other people’s lives.”

“Yeah.” He was well aware of the consequences, but how could he tell someone when he didn’t have proof? And the backlash, if Dean found out he’d betrayed him...Henry didn’t want to think about it. “I know.”

His phone rang. Again. It was Val. Again. He flipped it open. "Hello?"

Val was talking so fast and so soft he could barely understand her. "Slow down," he urged. "Say it again."

"Your roommate is in big trouble," Val hissed. "Marcus isn't waiting for his money. They're coming for him tonight."

Henry sat up straight. "Tonight?"

Libby watched, eyes wide, as Val continued to whisper her warning.

"You need to get him out of there. Now."

He opened his mouth to reply, but she was already whispering, "I've got to go."

"Are you safe?" Henry asked.

Val hissed, "Bye," and hung up.

Henry flipped his phone closed, telling Libby, "The bookies are sending their henchmen after Dean. Tonight."

"Who was that?" she asked.

"Marcus's girlfriend."

"He's the ringleader," Libby exclaimed and he glanced at her. Just how much did she know? She was looking at him speculatively. "How do you know Val?"

He flushed. "It's a long story."

Libby let it go. "Where is Dean now?"

"Study group." Henry snorted. "That's what he calls it anyway. He'll be back at our room by... seven?"

Libby's eyes were bright with something. Fear? Excitement? "I think I have a plan."

Chapter Nine

"This will be perfect." Libby popped a mini-tape into Henry's recorder, snapping it closed and clicking *record*.

He stood at his desk, arms crossed. "I'm not letting you do this."

"Don't be a sexist pig." Libby stuck her tongue out, hitting rewind and then play. Their voices came out of the little machine, sounding tinny but clear enough.

"I should be the one," Henry insisted. "He already told me. It would be easy for me to get him to talk about it."

"We've been over this!" Libby rewound the tape to the beginning again, leaving the recorder on the bed. "If it's you on that tape, and the NCAA comes in to investigate, it could jeopardize your hockey scholarship."

"But—"

Libby hopped off the bed, shaking her finger at him. "Listen to me. I've already lost everything. I gave up my job at the paper. I have nothing left to lose." She stopped as she got close to him and saw the fierce expression on his face. "Well, almost nothing..."

"I'm not leaving you alone with him." Henry's jaw was working just thinking about it. This was insane. It was beyond insane. It was downright dangerous. "No way. Not after what happened to Elaine."

Libby glared at him. "You don't have any choice."

"I'll hide under the bed." He couldn't leave her alone in this room with Dean. He wouldn't.

She laughed. "You're crazy."

“It will work,” he insisted, going over and picking up the recorder. “And you don’t have to worry about working this. I’ll do it.”

“You’re awful big,” Libby said speculatively, but she actually seemed relieved at the thought of him being in the room. She dropped to her knees, lifting his Hudson Bay blanket. “Is there room under your bed?”

Henry flushed when she pulled a box out. “Hey, what’s this?” Before he had a chance to shove it back under, she’d flipped it open and her jaw dropped. “Well....that’s a lot of porn.” She winked at him. “And you said you’d never read the *Kama Sutra*?”

Henry sighed. “You know that long story I didn’t tell you earlier?”

Libby just studied him with raised eyebrows, so he took a deep breath and told her—about pledging at the fraternity, about the Fleshlight and Val.

“So that’s what they did this year,” Libby mused, taking the cap off the Fleshlight and staring at it. “They had a competition last year too...”

What sort of competition had they had last year—involving prostitutes? He wanted to ask, but he was almost afraid to.

“And you won?” Libby murmured, using her index finger to prod the Fleshlight, as if she could bring it to life. Seeing Val holding it had been hot, but seeing Libby with it just felt...weird.

“Do you like using it?” She was half-smiling, amused.

He shrugged. “What’s not to like?”

“And that girl who called you...” Libby put the cap back on the Fleshlight and dropped it into the box. “That was the girl?”

“We’re just friends.” He made sure to make that point.

“Friends huh?” Libby arched her eyebrow. “Friends with benefits?”

“No.” He watched her shut the box and shove it back under the bed. “She’s a sweet girl and all, but...”

“But...what?” Curious, she crawled up onto the bed to sit next to him and he remembered bringing her back here after the football game, months ago now, how they’d spent hours listening to music and talking. He’d never felt anything like it before, that feeling of being with her, just being. It was intoxicating. Addictive.

“But she’s not you,” he finished.

“Oh Henry.” Libby leaned her red head against his arm. “I wish I didn’t like you so damned much.”

His mouth felt dry. “Do you really?”

“What?” She lifted her head and gazed up at him.

“Do you really like me?”

Her eyes softened and she reached a hand out, linking her fingers with his. “Did you ever doubt it?”

He shrugged, swallowed, couldn’t speak. He’d thought nothing could be more important to him than doing what he loved, being on the ice—that pursuing that dream and whatever made it possible was all that would ever matter to him—but he was wrong.

This girl made everything else in his life seem small in comparison.

Libby knelt up on the bed beside him, taking his face in her soft little hands.

“Yes,” she said, leaning in to kiss his cheek. “Yes, Henry.” She kissed his other cheek,

her mouth impossibly soft. “Yes and yes and yes,” she whispered, the words muffled and lost in their kiss.

Henry felt it happening and knew it wasn’t the best timing in the world, but neither of them could stop it. It was as if their kiss had kindled something deeply buried in them that gave them both a heady fever.

Her mouth was soft, but demanding, asking more of him, and he gave it to her, pressing her back onto his bed. She welcomed him, her slender jean-clad thighs squeezing, arms wrapped around his neck.

Then she broke the kiss, struggling with her hoodie and he helped her, groaning when he saw her in just her bra and jeans, her red hair fanned out under her. Henry took his shirt off too, and her eyes brightened as she explored his skin with her long, delicate fingers, tracing the dark line of hair down from his navel to the button of his jeans.

She undid the button, then the zipper, tugging at his jeans, and Henry hopped off the bed, shoving them down his hips as he watched her do her own, wiggling out of them and tossing them with his on the floor. Now she was just wearing a white bra and panties and little pick socks.

“Come keep me warm.” She shivered, reaching her hand out for him, and he joined her on the bed again, the two of them kissing and rolling around, fumbling, moaning, exploring. He discovered she really liked her neck kissed and licked—she made soft kitten-like sounds when he did that, her hips bucking under his.

He tried to take his time, but he was so eager for her that her bra was undone and her panties gone before he could even savor the sight of her body with them on.

Her nipples were a pale, puffy pink, so very tiny under his tongue. Her breasts were little handfuls that practically melted into the flesh of her chest when she lay down, giving her a more boy-like appearance—yet everything about her was all-girl, from the beyond-soft silk of her skin to the tender cries of pleasure he extracted from her slender throat.

When his tonguing exploration reached the dip of her navel, his cock throbbed as if he'd found the promise land. Her belly was soft and pale and taut and he kissed his way down to the curly edge of her pubic hair. She whimpered in anticipation, her hand moving in his hair, waiting for him to part her red sea and drink her soothing waters. As soon as he tasted her, he was addicted, her clit a tiny, hidden treasure, the pink folds of her pussy a traceable map.

“Oh Henry...” She sighed as she came, so very pretty, her eyelids fluttering closed, her hips moving. He could fit her whole ass in the span of his hands and he did, lifting her to his mouth to drink her all up.

“Kiss me,” she begged him, sucking the taste of her own pussy off his tongue. He didn't think his cock could get any harder, but then she was tugging his boxers off and stroking it against the skin of her inner thigh as they kissed.

“Ohhh, I want you inside me so bad.” She opened her eyes, still breathing hard. “Do you have anything?”

He didn't want to leave her, but he managed to just sit up, letting her keep her delicious vice-grip on his cock, and lean over to open his night table drawer. He grabbed a huge handful of condoms from the pile, at least a dozen and threw them up into the air, letting them rain down like confetti.

“Atta boy!” Libby laughed, grabbing one and tearing it open with her teeth. The laughter stopped, though, when she rolled the condom over the swollen head of his cock with her thumbs and welcomed him back into her waiting arms.

Henry nudged against her as they continued to kiss and cuddle, his cock seeking entrance but not finding the right angle. Finally, Libby reached between them, sliding the head of his cock down through her swollen slit, positioning him, just right.

“There.” She whispered the words into his ear. “Now.”

He shifted his hips slowly forward, feeling her flesh give, but just a little. He pushed in deeper, her thighs silky and opening under his, feeling the snug hollow of her little hole opening too. Her pussy was wet from his tongue, wet from her orgasm, but she was still so tight! Thank god for condoms, he thought. At least it helped lessen the sensation—a little. She whimpered, her breath in his ear, when he was finally as deep as he could go.

“You okay?” he panted.

“Fuck yes,” she moaned, rolling her hips, moving his cock around deep in her cunt, making him groan and start alphabetizing states in his head. “Hey,” she said, kissing his jaw, his cheek, his chin. “Don’t stop now. Come on. Let’s go for a ride.”

“Let the motor calm down a bit,” he panted. “Otherwise we’re gonna overheat.”

Libby ran her fingernails lightly over his back, his shoulders, and they waited, breathing together, Henry’s face buried in the sweet-smelling mass of her hair, until he had some bit of control again.

“Now?” she whispered, her hips shifting, her pussy clenching. “Please?”

This girl was going to be the death of him, he decided, gritting his teeth and beginning to move. There was nothing soft and yet tight enough to describe the sensation of her flesh, the way she felt enveloping his cock. There was no silicone that could match it, and no other woman or girl he'd ever met, either. It was beyond pleasure, beyond good. It was perfection.

"Henry!" Libby moaned, and he felt her hand moving between them, touching her clit, working to get herself off. "Please! Oh god your cock feels so good!"

"Honey, I can't do this very long," he apologized, holding back, every muscle strained, as her pussy began to flutter and pulse. "Libby, baby, I can't—"

"Come!" she cried, her back arching, her long legs wrapped around his waist, driving his length deep into her waiting cunt. He couldn't have stopped then if he wanted to, the explosion through his body beyond fire—it was nuclear. He saw flashes of light behind his eyes, the red heat consuming him completely as he buried his face in Libby's hair and gave himself over to pure sensation.

"Oh my god," she whispered, kissing him over and over as they rolled on the bed, condoms sticking to them. "I've wanted that for so long."

"Me, too," he breathed as they finally slowed and Henry curled beside her, his cheek resting on her tiny breasts.

He didn't know where it came from, why he said it. Like the climactic explosion they'd shared, it just welled up in him and spilled over.

"Libby, I can't read."

And then it was all flooding in, a dam bursting.

He told her about tutoring. He told her about Toni. He talked and talked and Libby listened, silent. When he finally stopped, spent, he found himself filled with a cold fear. Would she pity him? Hate him? Walk out of his life forever this time? He cursed himself for ever opening his mouth when he lifted his head and looked at her closed eyes, tears slipping down into her temples.

"I'm sorry," he choked. "You must hate me."

"Henry, I don't hate you." She finally turned toward him, opening her wet eyes and cupping his face in her hands. "I uh—" She pursed her lips, blinking, holding back, and then kissed the tip of his nose. "I like you."

He smiled. "I like you, too."

"Uh-oh, we missed one." She reached over and peeled a condom off his hip, holding it up. Then she tore the wrapper off with her teeth. "Oops, it's open! Shouldn't let these go to waste."

"No," he agreed, finding himself back in her welcoming arms. "We definitely shouldn't."

His cock was already getting hard again.

* * * *

"Whoa. Hey. Libby?" Dean stopped in the doorway—even from under the bed, Henry heard the surprise in his voice and wondered if this was going to work at all. How was Libby going to explain how she'd gotten in?

"Hey Dean." Libby's voice was low, sexy. Henry bristled at the sound of his roommate's name in her mouth, said that way.

"Where's...Henry?" Dean took a few tentative steps into the room. Henry could see his shoes. He was clearly trying to put the pieces together.

"He left," Libby said.

Dean sounded incredulous. "He left you here?" Henry heard the door close.

"I told him I came here to see you," Libby told him. Henry really didn't like that sexy tone to her voice. It was downright seductive.

"Huh." Dean's tennis shoes crossed the floor between the beds and Henry shrank back without thinking. "How come?"

"Come over here." Libby was practically purring. Henry closed his eyes and reminded himself why she was doing this in the first place. "Closer."

"What is this?" Dean sounded cautious, bemused...but interested. Definitely interested.

"I wanted to ask you something," Libby murmured. Henry could barely hear her, but Dean obviously could. He was standing facing his own bed—the bed Libby was on.

Was she just going to come right out and ask him? Henry hit the *record* button on the little micro recorder.

"Whoa, hey!" Dean exclaimed and Henry saw him take a step back from his bed. "What—?"

Henry was dying to know what, too. He couldn't hear anything at all except his own breathing but he had a feeling he knew what was going on. Libby hadn't said anything about how she was going to get Dean to tell her what she needed to know, but now he had an idea. A very bad idea.

"Libby," Dean gasped. "Are you drunk?"

“So what if I am?” She actually slurred her words a little bit. TV news anchor? No—actress, Henry decided. Her talents were being wasted on paper, that much was clear.

He heard Dean groan. What the hell was going on out there? Henry set his jaw, watching the wheels turn on the cassette, willing himself not to move. It took all his effort.

“Oh, god...Libby...” Dean sighed and Libby made a sound, a very familiar sound, one Henry had heard not too long ago when they were in bed together. She was moaning.

Then he heard her say in a low, throaty voice, “Take off your pants. I want to find out if you’re as good as your big brother.”

“Ha.” Dean was smiling. Henry could actually hear his roommate grinning. “I love a competition.”

Of course he did. Libby knew damned well he did.

Henry saw Dean’s pants fall to the floor.

“Oh yeah, that’s good.” Dean’s shoes were still on the floor, but his feet weren’t in them anymore. “Come on, take your shirt off.”

No way. Henry closed his eyes. This wasn’t happening. She wouldn’t dare...

“Stay there.” Libby got off the bed, walking over to Dean’s dresser. Henry saw her cute pink stockinged feet. “Don’t move. You promise?”

“Sure, baby,” Dean agreed. Was he so arrogant? Did he really believe Libby had shunned Henry and chosen him instead—that she had come here just to fuck him, with

nothing else on her mind? But he seemed to have bought it, hook line and sinker. Dean fully expected he was going to get laid.

“Let’s play a game.” Libby’s voice was teasing.

“A blindfold! Kinky!” Dean chuckled. “But I want to see those gorgeous tits.”

Henry gritted his teeth. He heard a strange clinking and then a loud CLICK.

“What the—?”

Another loud CLICK.

Libby asked, “Are you ready to play?”

“Handcuffs? Naughty!” There was clear anticipation in Dean’s voice, but Henry understood now.

Libby moved to sit on the edge of Henry’s bed and although he couldn’t see her, he felt her energy somehow—she was saying, *This is for us, for you. I want you, not him*. He didn’t know how he could possibly interpret things that way, considering all she’d done was cross the span between the twin beds and take a seat, but he knew it was true.

“Hey.” Dean didn’t sound so happy now. “Where’d you go?”

Libby was sitting on the edge of the bed, clearly aware of Henry beneath her as she told Dean, “You’re not going anywhere.”

“I wasn’t planning on it.” He snorted. “Come over here.”

Libby’s next words created both silence and confusion for at least thirty seconds. “Marcus’s guys are on the way.”

There was real fear in Dean’s voice when he finally found it. “What are you talking about?”

"You wanted to know who my source was for the hazing article?" Libby was like a cat, playing with a bird or a mouse. "Marcus and I go way back. And he's not very happy with you, is he, *little* man?" She put a disdainful emphasis on the word *little*.

Dean was scared, but he was trying not to show it. "Quit fucking around. Give me the key."

"No." There was no teasing tone to her voice anymore. She practically spat the words out. "This is for Elaine."

"You fucking cunt!" Dean roared. "You know who my father is! You'll be fucking expelled!"

"Big threats from such a *tiny, little* man."

Ouch, Henry thought, finding himself oddly proud of the way she was standing up to him. He wished, more than anything, he could confront Dean directly and, well...kick his ass. That's what he wanted to do. But this, Libby toying with him, manipulating him, was almost as good. Almost.

"I still have that tape," Dean threatened. "I'll put it on fucking YouTube, I swear to god I will!"

"Do what you want." Libby sounded bored. "They may just kill you anyway."

"He's not really coming," Dean said softly, muttering. "I told him he'd get his money this weekend. You're just fucking with me." He almost sounded like he was trying to convince himself.

"Oh he's coming," she assured him. "Listen to this."

Henry clamped a hand over his mouth, stifling his own surprise. Now Henry knew why Libby had asked for his phone. It wasn't just so she could turn it on "silent" and keep it from giving away his position under the bed.

Val's voice came out of Henry's cell—of course, Dean was blindfolded and had no idea that it belonged to Henry. He just heard the desperate, pleading whisper of Val's voice saying, "Dean's in trouble. Marcus's boys are coming for him tonight!" before Libby turned it off again.

Once he'd heard it, Dean howled like he was in pain. "Let me go!"

"Are you kidding me?" She scoffed at the idea. "No way. You deserve it after what you did to Elaine."

"Fuck that." Dean swore, sounding desperate, but also somewhat calmer. "Libby, listen to me. I'm going to have their money this weekend. Call her back! Tell them to call the dogs off!"

"And Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny are your best friends too, right?" Libby actually laughed.

"Look in my backpack." Dean was gritting his teeth. "Front pocket." Libby moved from the bed, finding his backpack by the door.

"Right up front. See it?" Dean asked.

"What is this?" Libby padded back toward the bed, sitting on the edge of Henry's bed again. "Names?"

"The guys in my study group." Dean hesitated and Henry knew this was it. He was going to say it. He was actually going to tell her. "Notice they're all football players."

"So?"

Dean went on, spilling it, his voice actually gaining strength as he talked. "We're playing Eastern Michigan this weekend. EMU hasn't had a winning season since 1995. But not only are they going to beat the spread against U of M this weekend, they're going to win the whole damned thing."

Jesus Christ, he actually sounded proud! Henry realized. It made him nauseous.

Libby pressed him further, and Henry knew she wanted it to be as clear as possible on the tape. "What are you talking about?"

Dean hissed, "We're throwing the game! It's all fixed! And it cost me a lot of damned money, too."

Libby was quiet and then she said, "And you're betting on the winning team, of course."

"Hell yeah—all bets will be on Eastern!"

And there it was, all the proof they needed. Dean had admitted it to a witness and they had it on tape.

"Why would they?" Libby mused. "Why would these guys in your 'study group' jeopardize everything like this?"

"Because they're getting paid!" he exclaimed. And then he stopped, as if he'd just realized something. "You could get paid, too, Libby. I know your parents are frickin' dirt poor. Just think what you could do with ten thousand dollars!"

"Ten thousand?" Libby asked. "Is that what they're getting?"

"No." Dean paused. "Fifty thousand each."

"How much are you keeping?"

Another pause. "Half a million."

“Holy hell,” Libby whispered. “Where did all the money come from?”

“Literacy Tutor Foundation.” Dean laughed. “It’s my dad’s pet charity. I’ve been pimping for it since the beginning of the year.”

“Stealing from it, you mean,” she snapped.

“Whatever.” Dean shifted on the bed. Henry could hear the handcuffs moving on the post. “After Saturday, there’s going to be plenty to go around. Tell Marcus I’ll pay him double!”

Libby hesitated. “What if I just tell him you’re going to throw the game?”

“Marcus looks out for himself. He’s a second-stringer with a bad knee. He’s never going to play pro ball. He’d be lucky to get a tryout as a walk on!” Dean scoffed. “He’s not stupid. If he finds out, I’m sure he’ll just use it to his advantage, like I am.”

“Yeah, but there’s a difference,” she snarled. “You planned this whole thing!”

“So?” Dean’s voice had the same arrogant tone it always did, and Henry found it infuriating. His roommate was handcuffed to a bedpost, afraid half a dozen defensive linemen were on their way to beat him to a pulp, and somehow his worldview had yet to change. “Look, there’s nothing he or anyone can do about it now. It’s a done deal. We might as well all profit from it.”

Henry held his breath under the bed, watching the wheels of the tape turning, sealing Dean’s fate.

“Come on, Libby, let me go.” Dean wasn’t pleading anymore. Maybe the fear had receded some. Or maybe he really felt he was getting somewhere with his bribe. Who could turn down money, after all? “Ten thousand dollars. Think about it.”

“Twenty,” Libby said quietly.

Under the bed, Henry's eyes widened.

"Fine," Dean agreed. "Just let me go."

"Fifty," she countered.

Henry blinked. Was she serious? Was she really contemplating—?

Dean didn't answer for a minute, and then he said, "Okay, okay..."

"Quarter million." Libby's voice was flat, emotionless. Ruthless. She had him beat, and clearly Dean knew it.

After a brief, defeated silence, he said, "Okay. Whatever you want."

Henry watched as Libby stood, walking toward Dean's bed. She stood there for a while, long enough to make Henry squirm. He was sure Dean was, too.

"You didn't even acknowledge what you did to Elaine." Her voice was so low he almost couldn't hear her at all. "You don't even care."

"Oh come on!" Dean exclaimed, sounding really angry now, and even a little...self-righteous. "We both know she was drunk and she fucking wanted it. She was more than ready to top Henry off—why not me?"

Dean suddenly howled in pain.

Henry winced, his breath caught. What in the hell had she done to him?

"You couldn't pay me enough to let you go, you motherfucker," she growled and Dean screamed in pain again. "I hope they do kill you!"

Then Libby was bending low, peeking under the bed, urging Henry from underneath. He slid out as quietly as he could, taking the tape recorder with him. Dean was writhing in pain on the bed in his boxers, still blindfolded, hands over his head, the handcuffs looped between one of the wooden posts.

“Libby!” Dean yelled as she headed toward the door, gathering shoes and coats and pulling Henry in that direction too. “Don’t you leave me like this! Don’t you fucking dare!”

They closed and locked the door. It might afford Dean a little protection, if Marcus’s boys did show up—and at the very least, it would keep anyone from unhandcuffing him for a while, even if they did hear him yelling for help. Maybe even long enough for the cops to arrive.

It wasn’t until they were outside in the snow that Henry asked, “What did you do to him to make him scream like that?”

She shrugged, giving him a lopsided grin. “Apparently it’s true what they say about men’s testicles being sensitive.”

“Ouch.” He winced. He didn’t even want to think about it. He touched the tip of her nose, where a snowflake had landed and was melting. “Okay, Erin Brockovich, now what happens?”

“Now we take this information to the paper.” She took the tape recorder from his hand, tucking it into her jacket pocket and she showed him the notebook she’d taken from Dean’s backpack. It detailed not only the players involved, but beyond that there was a whole list of bets and an entire record of the ‘charitable donations’ people had made to the Literacy Tutoring Foundation that Dean had funneled elsewhere.

“The university paper?” Henry asked.

She set her mouth in a grim line. “No, the real one.”

Henry grabbed her hand as she turned to go, pulling her back into the circle of his arms and kissing her breathless.

When she broke the kiss, her eyelids fluttering open, snowflakes caught in her red lashes, she whispered, “I lied.”

“About what?” He couldn’t even imagine.

“I don’t like you.” She pressed her cheek to his chest, his heart thudding there under her listening ear, and he knew Toni had been right. He’d known all along who his soulmate was.

“Could have fooled me.” He kissed the top of her head.

“I don’t *like* you,” she repeated, her words muffled against his jacket, confessing, “I *love* you.”

He didn’t say anything—couldn’t speak—words had completely failed him. His whole life, they had failed him. They meant nothing, spoken or written. Like or love? It didn’t matter how they were spelled. It was the feeling behind them that mattered.

No words, he just held her, the world turning white around them.

Epilogue

Henry nuzzled Libby's neck, not paying attention at all to the news report everyone else was glued to on Bel's widescreen TV. It wasn't just big news on campus—it was big news everywhere.

"News out of Ann Arbor today—Dean Mosher, son of University of Michigan Board of Regents director Stephen Mosher, was arrested Friday on charges of racketeering, fraud and embezzlement..."

"Serves him right," Elaine said under her breath, but it was loud enough for Henry to hear her on the other side of Libby.

"Unreal." Bel sat at his desk, shaking his head in disbelief.

The newscaster, a pretty blonde in a navy suit, went on, "Mosher senior paid back the missing funds to the Literacy Tutor Foundation charity himself and has resigned from the LTF board."

"In other related news, reports of widespread gambling on-campus at the University of Michigan have focused on Fraternity Alpha Pi Alpha and members of the fraternity leadership are under investigation for racketeering."

Elaine hopped off the bed and went to the window, gazing out. "Snowing again."

"Cold, too," Bel chimed in. "Nearly froze my balls off walking back from the library."

Henry snorted. "What were you doing in the library?"

"Not making out with the redheaded librarian," Bel replied with a waggle of his eyebrows. "Unfortunately."

Henry put his arm protectively over Libby's shoulders. "She's not the librarian anymore."

On the TV, the news was switching segments, the anchors talking back and forth.

The blonde turned to talk to the sportscaster. "Even in all that snow, University of Michigan won Saturday's game against EMU, didn't they?"

"No surprise there, Heather." The sportscaster flashed a smile. His tie was awful. "They haven't had a winning season since ninety-five. But good news for Michigan fans, even though Dean Mosher was one of U of M's rising stars, the current word from the NCAA is that there is no investigation planned for the football program..."

Henry perked up at that news. The game had been won, so at least the guys who had been pressured or bribed by Dean to throw the game were off the hook.

"Hey, I gotta get to work." Libby leaned over and kissed Henry's cheek. "I left my shoes in your room."

"Got your magnifying glass and your reporter's hat, cubby?" Henry stood and held his hand out to help her up. The local paper that broke the story had given her a job, nothing major, just a copywriter position, but it was something—and today was her first day.

"You coming?" Libby called over her shoulder to Elaine.

"I'm gonna stay here a while." Elaine stood talking to Bel, waving her roommate out.

Henry slowed as he neared his dorm room door. It was ajar. His heart leapt in his chest as he glanced back at Libby. Dean? Dean's stuff had been boxed and moved out

already—he'd heard Dean's mom did it, but he hadn't seen her. He'd just come home to half the room empty. But Dean's family had connections. Had Dean sent someone after him? Or maybe Marcus's guys had gotten wind of who had turned them in?

He pushed Libby back into the hall, slowly opening the door to reveal a guy with a suitcase and a duffel bag standing there studying the room. Henry breathed a sigh of relief—he'd almost forgotten the call he'd received just that morning from the housing department.

"Hey, you must be my new roommate." Henry gave the kid his hand and the guy shook it. "I'm Henry Baumgartner."

"John Hill."

The guy seemed normal enough. Nerdy, maybe. But that was no crime.

"So do you, uh... play football?" Henry plopped down on his bed as Libby started putting on her tennis shoes.

"No." John lifted his suitcase onto the bed.

"Into gambling?" Henry inquired.

John gave him a funny look. "No."

"Got any buildings named after you?" Libby stood and held her own hand out. "I'm Olivia Stowe. Libby. I'm Henry's girlfriend."

"Nice to meet you." John smiled, pushing his glasses up on his nose.

Henry frowned. "Are you into redheads?"

John glanced between the two of them, bemused. "I don't have anything against them."

"I gotta go." Libby leaned over and gave Henry a kiss. He pulled her onto his lap and kissed her properly.

"Good luck," he whispered into her flushed ear. "Call me later."

"She's cute," John remarked as Libby closed the door behind her.

"Don't get any ideas." Henry's eyes narrowed as he watched his new roommate begin to unpack. Then he brightened. "As a matter of fact—here—if you ever get any ideas about my girlfriend and I'm not around..."

Henry reached under the bed.

ABOUT SELENA KITT



Like any feline, Selena Kitt loves the things that make her purr-and wants nothing more than to make others purr right along with her! Pleasure is her middle name, whether it's a short cat nap stretched out in the sun or a long kitty bath. She makes it a priority to explore all the delightful distractions she can find, and follow her vivid and often racy imagination wherever it wants to lead her.

Her writing embodies everything from the spicy to the scandalous, but watch out-this kitty also has sharp claws and her stories often include intriguing edges and twists that take readers to new, thought-provoking depths.

When she's not pawing away at her keyboard, Selena runs an innovative publishing company (www.excessica.com) and in her spare time, she worships her devoted husband, corrals four kids and a dozen chickens, all while growing an organic garden. She also loves bellydancing and photography.

Her book *EcoErotica*, was a 2009 Epic Award Finalist, her book *The Real Mother Goose*, was a 2010 Epic Award Finalist, her book *Heidi and the Kaiser* was a 2011 Epic Award Finalist as was her story, *Second Chance*. Her story, *Connections*, was one of the runners-up for the 2006 Rauxa Prize, given annually to an erotic short story of "exceptional literary quality," out of over 1,000 nominees, where awards are judged by a select jury and all entries are read "blind" (without author's name available.)

She can be reached on her website at www.selenakitt.com.

If you enjoyed BAUMGARTNER GENERATIONS: HENRY,
you might also enjoy:



BAUMGARTNER GENERATIONS: JANIE

By Selena Kitt

The Baumgartner series continues, this time exploring Janie's world as she moves to New York to try to make it as a writer, all the while serving as part-time lover in a polyamorous relationship with Veronica and TJ and full-time nanny to their daughter, Beth. Janie's life is already incredibly full when she—literally—runs into an agent one morning who sees great potential in her—and not just as a writer. As Janie's relationship with Josh blooms and her career takes off, Ronnie's happy surprise turns into a problem that even a vacation in a mountain cabin with the Baumgartners can't fix, throwing everyone's life off-kilter. Janie, especially, is spread thin, trying to please everyone while keeping Josh from finding out the true nature of her relationship with her benefactors. She knows she has to tell him eventually, but fear holds her back. Will she lose him? Will she be forced to make an impossible choice? Or will she, perhaps, find that the capacity for the human heart to love is, indeed, endless?

Warning: This title contains MFF threesome, lesbian, and hetero sex.

Excerpt From BAUMGARTNER GENERATIONS: JANIE

I woke up hung over and I had no idea where in the hell I was. My first clue was a pair of black panties I had wrapped around my wrist. I vaguely remembered having them stuffed into my mouth at one point, and then—had they been used to tie me to the bed post?

I rolled to my back from my belly with a groan. Oh my god, I was sore! My pussy was sore, my arms were sore, my thighs actually trembled when I tried to move...

What in the hell was I doing last night?

Then Catherine sighed and shifted in her sleep, pulling the covers up, and it all came back. Well, most of it anyway. I admired the smooth curve of her spine, her hair spilling over her shoulders like a river of fire, and felt faint. I didn't even want to think about what I'd done or said the night before. I had to get my stuff and get the hell out of there. TJ and Ronnie were going to be worried sick. They'd probably called a million times already. Where was my phone?

I found my panties and shoes on the floor and remembered my dress was in the living room. I slipped my panties on and carried my shoes, easing open the bedroom door as quietly as I could. Behind me, Catherine sighed and rolled again, but then she was quiet. The door clicked shut behind me and I crept down the hall, past half a dozen closed doors—*how many rooms do they have in this apartment?*—past the private penthouse elevator, looking for the living room.

The blinds were still open wide and I blinked at the brightness of the morning, my head throbbing. I'd obviously had way more to drink the night before than I'd realized.

Shading my eyes and groping my way around the couch, I returned to the scene of the crime, hunting around the coffee table and in front of the door wall for my things.

Problem was, they were nowhere to be found.

I stood there for a moment, lost in foggy thought, trying to recall. Had I gotten up in the middle of the night to get my clothes? I didn't think so, but I was pretty hung over. I couldn't be sure. Maybe—

"Are you looking for these?"

I probably would have screamed if my throat and mouth hadn't already been so filled with cotton.

"Who are you?" I squeaked, my arms snapping quickly closed to cover my breasts, my shoes still in hand, but I knew it was too late. And I knew, in an instant, who he was. Of course. It was Catherine's husband. If nothing else, I would have recognized him by the vanity wedding photo over the fireplace—the dark, curly hair and smiling eyes were a giveaway, although he was a few years older in person. And there he was, standing there looking scruffy and disheveled like he'd just woken up, too, wearing a navy colored robe belted at the waist and holding my clothes out in one hand like a waiter.

"I'm Josh." He took two steps forward, putting my folded dress and my purse on the coffee table and taking a step back to turn around. "Go ahead. I won't look."

"Thanks," I croaked. It was a little late for the whole not-looking thing, but I grabbed my dress and pulled it quickly over my head, wishing now that it was made of more material.

"I think you have some messages." He turned to say this over his shoulder, still keeping his eyes averted. "Your phone's been beeping."

I unzipped my purse and checked. Twelve messages—ten texts and two voice mails. Of course, the voice mails were Ronnie and TJ, respectively, the first asking where I was, the second asking if I was okay. The texts were all Lil. I flipped my phone closed—I'd read them later.

"Thanks," I said again, clearing my throat. "I'm dressed now. You can turn around."

He did, giving my outfit a once-over. "It looks much better on. So what's your name?"

I smoothed my hair. "I'm sorry. I'm Jane. Janie."

"Well, Jane-Janie... it's nice to meet you." He held out his hand. I took a few barefoot steps toward him to shake it. What else could I do?

Never mind that it happened to be the hand which had been buried up to the wrist in his wife's cunt the night before... Thinking about that made me want to pass out.

"It just Janie."

"Want some coffee, Just-Janie?" He nodded behind him toward the kitchen. So that's where he'd been when I thought I was sneaking by, I realized. "It's fresh."

I shook my head. "No, I should...I need to get home."

"I'll get you a car." He walked over to the wall, reaching for a button on the intercom.

"No!" I caught up with him just in time, covering his hand with mine. He looked at me in surprise, eyebrows raised. I moved my hand as if I'd been burned. "I mean...I can take the subway."

"In that?" He blinked at me. "I couldn't live myself knowing I let you out of here to ride the subway wearing that."

"I wore it last night," I protested.

Oh crap. I'd also worn a wrap I'd checked at the door and had forgotten to retrieve when Catherine and I left *1 Oak* in such a hurry the night before.

"Which is, I'm sure, one of the myriad of reasons Catherine decided to bring you home." He smiled as he began to unbelt his robe. I took a wary step back, my eyes widening, and he shook his head, shrugging the robe off his shoulders. He was wearing blue and gray striped pajama pants underneath. "Here. Put this on. Let's get you some coffee to help your head and I'll call you a car to take you home, okay?"

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