

A J A C O L E

PROFESSOR
STRAW

There's something *sexy* about being hot for teacher...

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Also by Aja Cole

Stay Connected!

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OceanofPDF.com

PROFESSOR SEXY

QUICK & HOT: HOCKEY ROMANCE

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AJA COLE

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Professor Sexy

Aja Cole

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*To all of my family and friends that have supported me every time I've said,
"I'm writing a book."*

I couldn't have done it without your love and constant encouragement.

*To everyone who reads my books and comes back for more...you fucking
rock.*

*To my author friends and the people who let me vent and freak out and
constantly inspire me to keep going...*

Thank you. I love you all.

And to my baby leapfrog, may you always know how much you are loved.

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THANK YOU!

I just wanted to say a quick thank you for giving my writing a chance, and I hope it gives you everything you're looking for!

I like my love scenes steamy and my sweet scenes sappy.

Now, please enjoy and I hope you love my characters as much as I do!

~ Aja Cole

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I drag my suitcase over the threshold of my apartment and heave a tired sigh, wiping my forehead with my shirt sleeve.

Four flights of stairs and no elevator. Moving day was a bitch, but it's better than being on the first floor and having bug issues. I've lived here for three years now, blissfully alone, and I love it.

But this is what happens when you go home and your mom re-packs your bag. I don't know what else she put in here, but it's way more than just my laundry.

I set it against the wall and head to my thermostat, turning the heat on. Usually, I'm all about saving energy, but I can't be bothered to layer up in sweats and a hoodie right now.

I just want to sleep.

I'm still feeling the remnants of the flu, and I couldn't sleep during any of the three-hour drive. I've missed my bed for two weeks, and I've got a lot of time to make up for.

After stripping and making myself at least brush my teeth and do a pared down version of my skincare, I make sure all the lights are off and my door's locked.

I melt into my sheets and curl up with my body pillow, letting loose a soul deep sigh at the familiarity. My room back home is the guest room now, so it's devoid of all of the comforts I have here.

It always amazes me at how much of a visitor I feel like in the home I grew up in. My dad said it's intentional because there's no way in hell that any of his kids are doing the *stay at home* thing.

Parents are stone-cold, I tell ya.

The minute my eyes start drifting closed and I feel like I'm floating in a warm cocoon of high thread count sheets and down feathers, it begins.

The group chat notifications that I forgot to mute.

Damn, damn, damn.

My phone is across the room on my desk, because I've been trying this semester to have a screen-free life when I'm ready to sleep. But the notifications keep going, and they won't stop unless those bitches shut up, or I silence them.

Sometimes I hate my friends.

Huffing, I sling back my comforter and stomp to my desk, snatching up the phone.

I know exactly what the hussies are talking about, and I don't even read through the messages before turning on my caps-lock and telling them exactly what I think about their midnight gushing sessions.

It doesn't phase them at all. The girls just send gifs and jokes about me only being so pissy because I haven't met the new guest teacher.

Bria: *You don't need sleep Neiko, you need to get your ass to class.*

Neiko: *I just got home assrats, I'll be in class tomorrow. Stop exaggerating about this teacher and go the fuck to bed. 😡😡*

Sammy: *I know what bed I want to be in.*

Leilani: *I'll meet you there, sis. If that man wanted me to join sister-wives, I'd say fuck yeah.*

There's no corralling them, and I swipe the notifications off and set the chat to mute, so I can finally get a good night's rest. Tumbling back into my bed, I cozy up and wait for sleep to take me.

We all have very different tastes in men, and I'm fairly certain that there's no way he can be as attractive as they're making him seem.

I swear if this teacher isn't a walking god, I'm getting rid of every single one of those talkative tramps.

I SLIDE into a seat next to Sammy, taking in her colorful attire today. A bunch of us athletic training students pretty much live in school apparel. We get so much of it that it's about half my wardrobe since I'm a senior now. Every year, we get a new heap of branded stuff, and we've affectionately deemed it *Nike Christmas*.

My chosen uniform today is blue and black Nike trainers, black leggings and a fitted blue running hoodie with our school logo on the breast.

Sammy, on the other hand, prefers a lot more flair.

Honestly, you'd think she was a fashion design major instead of training. Her polish is never chipped like mine, her hair is always sleek, and today's dress has a colorful pattern of delightful geometric shapes on it.

She has on immaculate white converse today instead of her usual heels. Must have to go up the million stairs today and meet with her advisor. There's only a handful of reasons she'd be caught dead in sneakers, and that's one of them.

"I'd ask if you're dressed like that for this teacher, but this is your every day." I open my laptop, logging into the campus wifi after being away.

"You're so skeptical; I can't wait to see your jaw drop." She taps her nails rhythmically on the desktop, brown eyes alight with amusement.

"Where is this lust-inducing Professor Saxton?" I roll my eyes, glancing at my watch. "He's late." This is one of our smaller classes, more about case studies and hands-on learning than a strict curriculum. There are only 12 of us, and we're all seniors and juniors.

"You mean Professor Sexy?" Bria throws in her two scents, turning around in her seat and moving her lollipop to the side of her mouth. Some people have all the luck. Bria's has a sweet tooth to rival an unchaperoned kid in a candy store as long as I've known her, but she *never* gets cavities. It's astounding.

"I am not calling him that."

"Yet." The door opens, and she whirls around so fast that she almost falls out of her chair. All I see is a ball cap and a dark hoodie for now, then he turns around and lifts himself onto the desk, swiping his hat off and ruffling a hand through his hair. He has a short hinged brace on his knee.

He skips his gaze over the room like he's making sure that everyone's here, and when my eyes meet his thickly lashed blue ones, my thoughts stutter to a hard stop.

Damn.

I guess my friends weren't exaggerating after all.

I BARELY KNOW what we talked about this class, but I'll be damned if I admit that to my friends.

"So, he's grade A right?" Leilani gives a dreamy sigh, sitting on the edge of my table. Class is over, but it's the last one of the day for most of us, so we're just hanging out for a bit before the next class needs the room.

"Not grade A enough to blow up my phone for days." I lie, zipping up my tote.

"I knew you needed your glasses for more than reading." Sammy scoffs, and I shrug, pretending like I didn't have visions of him trailing his fingers over my skin every time he picked up a marker. Or like I didn't imagine that whenever I met his eyes during class, I saw the same fire that was in my thoughts.

"Mhm." I grin, standing. Everyone's starting to clear out, and I avoid looking at the front where I know *Professor Sexy* is talking to Kaden and Darius. I walk with the girls toward the back exit. "Alright, I still feel a little off so I'm gonna go home. I'll see you guys later."

"Okay, feel better Ko." Bria sucks her lollipop that's still going strong, voice mellow. Not for the first time, I wonder if there's an *extra* ingredient to this particular candy.

"Hey, Neiko? Can you stay back for a second?" Deep and confident, his voice stops me. I turn slowly, ignoring the low murmurs of my friends.

"Sure." I force a cool tone, and make my way to the front of the room, watching him erase the board. He shed his sweatshirt, and the short sleeved shirt he's wearing lifts and moves with his movements. A muscle bunch here, a tease of tanned lower back skin there. By the time he turns around, I think I'm in heat.

He leans against the desk, crossing impressive arms, and it's a fight to drag my eyes to his face. *God*, his face is no better. Sharp bone structure,

well-shaped lips and a dimple that's visible even when he's not smiling. Slight dark stubble on his face and eyes that look more aquamarine up close, and I'm hoping that this is a speedy meeting.

"So, as I understand it, you've been out with the flu since I've been here?" His voice practically washes over me, and I don't understand it. It's just a voice. It shouldn't be so...sensual on its own.

"Yes, I just got back last night." I clear my throat, trying to stare at the middle of his forehead, so it *looks* like I'm looking at him.

"Okay, so it's been pretty relaxed here. You know I'm not a real professor, right? They've just been calling me that for shits and giggles." His mouth kicks up and I stare against my will.

"Oh?" Distracted. *Do better, Neiko.*

"You're not much of a hockey girl, are you?" His grin widens. Perfect teeth.

Wait, hockey?

"What about hockey?"

"I'm a hockey player. But your program director is a friend, and since I'm injured, I agreed to come in as a case and talk about my injury and everything that happened with that."

This is news to me. Maybe I should've paid more attention to the group chat, after all.

"That's pretty cool. I'm more of a football and basketball type of girl." I admit and look in his eyes this time.

It's a mistake because now I don't want to look away.

TYLER

I noticed her immediately.

Short, tousled hair with a little curl to it. Big brown eyes, plush lips and a smattering of subtle freckles on her light brown skin that I can see now that she's close.

It's not a massive class, so I noticed an extra person, but I also noticed her because the moment we locked eyes - I knew I wanted to feel her short strands slide through my fingers.

Neiko Brown.

A football and basketball girl, apparently.

I like that. It means she doesn't know much about me, and I get to talk to her without any preconceptions.

I was going stir-crazy not being able to play or do anything strenuous with my knee, so when my buddy jokingly mentioned that he was trying to find things for his class to do because they're so close to the end - I saw an opportunity to offer myself up for the cause.

And give *me* something to do before I started climbing the walls out of boredom.

It's tough not being out on the ice with my team, especially so early in the season, but at least it happened now and not during the playoffs. That would've hurt even more.

A damn MCL tear. Not a complete tear, thankfully.

I came to talk to Robbie's students and just see what they know and tell them my experience. I've let them work with me a bit on my physical therapy so they can see first hand the difference in mobility and strength.

It's been a week and a half with the class, and I've got about that much more time left before I'm cleared to get back to at least working with the team. It's been five weeks total since my injury. It'll be a little bit of time before I'm able to go full throttle, but it could've been worse.

If this is what I get for these last few weeks though, then you won't hear another complaint from me.

"Well, maybe you'll be a little more of a hockey girl by the time I leave."

She doesn't respond at first, and I tilt my head curiously because she's looking at me. I think.

"Neiko?" She blinks and shakes her head, looking chagrined.

"Sorry, you just, I'm sure people tell you all the time that you have captivating eyes."

"Well, they're behind a helmet most of the time." I smile, and that's when it dawns on me that she's just as interested as I am.

Damn, this woman might be trouble.

"I wanted to give you the opportunity to work with me like your classmates did while you were out, if you'd be interested in that. It's not a requirement if you're too busy."

Before I even finish the words, she's nodding her head. "Yes." She says. "I mean, no, I'm not too busy. Yes, I'd like to work with you deeper." She shakes her head, flustered as I hold back a bark of laughter. "I meant, I'd like to delve deeper into you know, your recovery."

My smile is full-blown now. "Understood."

I can tell she's embarrassed and she looks towards the door, meaning I can't stare at her cupid's bow anymore. "When do we start?"

"Let me check a few things, and I'll let you know by tonight. Is email okay?"

Please say you prefer texting or the phone.

I don't want to push any boundaries. Not without permission, that is.

"Just text me." Her smile is shy, and I cheer inside my head. She pulls out her phone, and I relay my number, feeling my phone vibrate in my pocket. "I'm still a little tired, so I will see you soon?"

"Hopefully." This time, I know my expression is a little less *safe*, but I watch her throat work on a swallow and have a feeling that maybe Miss Brown likes a little danger.

That's good because I'm a man that's all about the thrill. I chase it; I crave it, I search for it every time I step onto the rink and put my stick to the ice.

She backs away, turning to the door and I admire the way her leggings mold to her butt with each step. Enough bounce to let me know that she likes food and squats equally. Fuck, I'm getting hard just thinking about the things I'd do to her, how soft her skin probably is, how she'll shiver when I paint my hands over her body...

I'm still staring at the door after she's gone, and I shake myself out of my stupor, running my hand over my face.

I take out my phone and shoot off a message to Robbie.

Tyler: *Hypothetically, would it be against any rules to fraternize with one of your students?*

Robbie: *Oh fuck. Couldn't keep it in your pants for a few weeks??*

Tyler: *I said hypothetically.*

Robbie: *Usually you ask after doing, not before.*

Tyler: *Could you kindly answer my question, please? Time's ticking.*

Robbie: *Hypothetically, no. You're just a guest. No real power or superiority over them.*

Tyler: *Fuck yeah. Thanks, bro.*

Robbie: *Don't go fucking up any of my students in the head before they graduate. This is a good bunch.*

Robbie: *Who is it?*

Robbie: *Tyler*

Robbie: *Tyler!!*

I slide my phone into my pocket, whistling and turning out the lights as I leave.

Recovery isn't looking so bad after all.

I WRAP a towel around my waist and ruffle another through my hair, throwing it in the corner of the bathroom. I still have a bit of a limp, but it's getting better every day. I'm just grateful it wasn't a Grade 3 tear, that would've meant surgery and as long as six months of healing.

I'm not one for many rules, but when it comes to the health of my body as it relates to being able to get on the ice? Tell me whatever the fuck you want, as long as it means I get better, faster.

I've followed every doctor's order to the tee. I'm a model patient. But damn if I don't kind of wish I had longer for rehab, just to see what can happen with Neiko. So I'd have all the time in the world to explore her body, listen to my name on her lips.

I look down at the rising bulge in my towel wryly. "Down, boy."

It's probably a good time to let her know that we're on for tomorrow.

After I pull on boxers, I slide a compression sleeve over my knee. Technically, I don't still need it, but you won't catch me taking any chances. My priority is getting back on the ice and helping my team towards the Stanley Cup.

I lean back on my pillows and open my laptop, pulling up FaceTime. Let's see if we can catch Miss Brown off guard. I always hear it's presumptuous to video call someone out of the blue, but...it's me we're talking about.

The screen comes up when I press call, and I link my hands behind my head, watching myself smirk while I wait for her to answer. I can't help it; I want to see her reaction.

The screen expands when she answers, but all I see is black.

"Do you know how rude it is to FaceTime a stranger?" Her voice is clear, so she must be covering the camera.

"Am I stranger? I hadn't realized." I grin. "I told you I'd call."

"You said you'd let me know, and I distinctly remember telling you to text me." She corrects.

She's right, of course. But she won't hear it from me.

"Did I? Interesting. Are you covering your camera?"

"No."

Her matter of fact answer startles a laugh out of me since she obviously is.

"Is your camera broken?"

"No."

"Are you annoyed that I video called you?"

"Yes."

"Are you attracted to me?" I shoot quickly.

"Yes." She pauses, backpedaling. "Wait, no. I meant no." She huffs. "You did that on purpose."

"You fell for it way too easily." I wink since I know she can see me. I hear a sigh and the sound of movement and then she pops up on the screen, adorable round glasses perched on her nose. I can only see her from the neck up, so naturally, I'm curious.

"What are you wearing?" I blank my face, waiting for her reaction, and then watch her eyes narrow.

"If you're going to give me the same shit that I get from the guys I go to school with, we should drop this now."

"I was kidding," I say innocently. "Mostly."

"Why don't you put on clothes?" She sits back, and I see she's wearing a sweater that falls off her shoulders. She brings a cup to her lips.

"I'm wearing clothes. Boxers. Wanna see?" I raise an eyebrow. She makes a choking sound on her drink, and I feel bad for a second as she hacks, even though I'm laughing. "Maybe another time."

"You're a menace." She rasps, shaking her head. Her glasses fall down her nose, and she's just so damn cute. "When are we meeting?"

I pretend to think for a second, even though I already know.

"Tomorrow morning at 7? Training room?"

Her mouth twists to the side a little and her eyes squint slightly, a look I'm now going to call her thoughtful face whenever I see it.

"I can do that." She smothers a yawn with slim fingers. I know I should let her go because she's still getting back to complete health, even though I could tease her all night.

I think there'll be time for that later.

“Alright gorgeous, I’ll let you get to bed. I need you in good shape in the morning.”

“I’m in great shape.” She throws back with a sly smile, and before I can respond, she clicks off.

Damn.

I pull up messaging.

Tyler: *Trust me, I noticed.*

Neiko 🥰 : *Goodnight Professor Saxton.*

Tyler: *Don’t you mean Professor Sexy?*

For a few seconds, the typing bubble keeps coming up and disappearing. She’s surprised, but I’ve heard the other young women. I just ignored them...until I saw her.

Neiko 🙄 : *Nope. I never called you that.*

Tyler: *Sure. Go get some rest. Goodnight.*

The bubble appears and reappears again before it stops, and I close my laptop, sliding it onto the side table. There’ll be plenty of time for us to talk tomorrow when I’m letting her guide me through physical therapy.

I’ve got ulterior motives, but I do want to gauge her skill level and what she knows. It’ll be even hotter if she has the the brains to match everything else, and I really do want to be helpful in giving them hands-on experience with a professional athlete.

Flopping back on my pillows, I close my eyes and slip into inappropriate visions that involve a desk and a naughty student.

A man can dream...until it’s reality.

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I'm running late because I snoozed my alarm.

Do you know how long it's been since I've had to get up to be somewhere at 7 am? Perks of having the first pick of classes means that I avoided time slots before 10 am at the earliest, like the plague.

Nothing *needs* to be done before noon.

I glance at my dashboard as I pull up at the training facility.

7:38 AM. I hate being late, but it's just...wow, I don't know his first name.

The girls just called him Professor Sexy, and honestly...that's what I named him under in my phone.

He can never see that, though. I won't live it down. I practically *drooled* when he came up on my screen.

Arms folded behind his head, biceps visible, beautiful pecs, abs on full display...I could've licked my screen.

I'm no stranger to fit people. I'm around college athletes daily. A well-maintained body shouldn't phase me much. My ex is a quarterback, and he's religious about keeping in shape.

I've never wanted to strip for someone so badly. Even with my ex, who I thought I was pretty damn attracted to...it didn't feel like *this*. I didn't feel like I wanted to crawl out of my skin just looking at him. I didn't feel breathless every time I heard his voice.

I guess this is what *explosive* chemistry is. It's a little unsettling. Still, I'm going to try my best to ignore his flirting. I'm starting to get the feeling that it's a natural mode for him.

I walk into the training room and adjust the brim of my cap, looking around for the hockey player. I guess I should find out what his name is today.

If I can find him.

I can the area, turning in a slow circle.

No sign of him. I hope he didn't take my delay as an indication that I wasn't going to show. In hindsight, I probably should've texted him and told him I was on the way.

"Well good morning." He's right behind me, and I whip around, surprised. Lord, he has such a great voice. It's like warm and...smoky? I don't know if you can describe a sound that way, but that's the closest I think I'll get.

Makes me hot.

"Oh. Hi. Sorry I'm late." I tap my fingers on my thigh nervously. "I'm usually better about my time."

"It's alright. Though there might be some consequences." His eyes burn with innuendo, and my breath catches.

Immediately, images flash through my mind of possible *consequences*.

Me bent over the weight bench with him spanking me.

Me being punished with his cock down my throat.

Me being tied up and him teasing me relentlessly.

Have I done any of that kind of stuff before? No. But damn if all of Bria's talk hasn't apparently slipped into my brain.

My nipples are pressing against the thin fabric of my sports bra, and they're not small. I have the fortune to have thick, very prominent nipples when they're erect and when his eyes drop - I know he's noticed them.

I gnaw my lip, and he looks away, clearing his throat. I wonder if there's a similar reaction in his dark sweatpants. What a thought...me affecting him that way...

How am I going to make it through a therapy session like this??

"Come on; I want to gauge what you know, and then you can take me through some exercises." I follow him to the back of the training room, and he sits on one of the treatment tables. I pull up a rolling seat, putting myself into a more professional mindset.

He's hot, but he *is* still a recovering athlete. I don't want to look like I don't know what I'm doing, and I don't want to fuck up something and set back his rehab.

This is an excellent opportunity to put myself to the test.

“Alright, so I want to give you a chance to tell me the program and movements you’d recommend based on my injury, and then we can talk about why that’s not effective or why it is and give you a chance to see what you know.”

I like the matter of fact tone of his voice. Very confident. That’s hot too. He’s not a professor, but it feels very teacher-like right now.

“Sounds good.” I clasp my hands in my lap to keep from touching him.

“Tell me what you know about the MCL.”

I take a deep breath, pausing. “Okay, well the MCL is the Medial Collateral Ligament of the knee. It’s one of four stabilizing ligaments in the area, and it connects the femur and the tibia on the medial aspect of the knee. It basically helps prevent over-stretching or excessive movement with the inside of the knee.”

He whistles low, eyebrows raising a little and the side of his mouth kicking up. Him looking at me like he’s impressed sends a warm glow through my body.

“Very good, Miss Brown.”

“Thank you.” I murmur, holding back a proud grin.

“Alright, so how severe are MCL injuries?”

“There are three grades of injury. Grade I sprains are just over-stretching the ligament a bit, Grade II are larger tears, but the ligament is still attached, and Grade III tears are complete tears or ruptures, and most people need surgery. So I’m going to guess that you have a Grade II tear, maybe less than 80% tearing and no ACL injury.” I touch his brace lightly. “Are you wearing a brace by choice or is it still necessary?”

“Choice. Being cautious.” His pale blue gaze is piercing, like he’s trying to figure something out. “You know your stuff; your prognosis is spot on.”

“Oh good, all those nights of studying my ass off haven’t been for nothing.”

“Looks like your ass is still there to me.” The mischief is back in his eyes, and I glance sideways, trying to re-focus.

“Can I do an evaluation?”

Wordlessly, he unstraps the short brace and rolls up his pants leg to above his thigh. All tanned skin and muscle definition.

Drawing on what I’ve learned from training, I inspect his knee visually for any redness, swelling or tenderness. Then I palpate it, looking for those

same things. Because he's confirmed that there's only injury to the MCL, I focus on MCL specific stress tests.

I support the medial portion of the distal tibia with one hand, and I let my other hand grasp his knee along the lateral joint line. From there, I apply force and test his range of motion.

Then we change his extension, and I apply force from there. There's an end point to his range of motion, so that's how we know that the tear is healing well and it wasn't a full separation.

"You're in good shape." I murmur, "Still no pain right?" I feel around his knee gingerly again, just making sure the flexing hasn't caused any reaction.

"Yep. No pain." I glance up because his voice sounds strangled and he's grimacing.

"Are you sure? Be honest with me." I frown.

"You want me to be honest?"

"Duh?" I give him a once-over. He's pretty tense. Maybe he's not healing as well as he seems to be.

"Something's hurting, but it's not my injury." My eyes fly to his, and there's heat burning in those blue depths.

Oh.

I trail my fingers down his calf before I can stop myself, and take my hands away. Business first.

"Well, at least it's not your knee." I stand. "We should work through those exercises now. I think we should do the stationary bike for a little bit, some compression bands, and then some motion and strengthening exercises." I look to him for confirmation because he knows what he's been doing, and he nods approvingly.

Whoop!

"I think I'm in good hands." He swings his legs off the table and stands. His height puts me at his chest, and I can feel the heat emanating from his body because we're so close. I lift my chin, and he stares down at me, the small space between us feeling like it's not even there.

I feel hot. Flushed. I can feel my heart pounding.

He leans closer, and I almost stop breathing. His cheek brushes mine just barely as he speaks low near my ear.

"We better do something quickly, because if I stand this close to you any longer, you'll find yourself bent over this table."

Shiver.

I take a significant step back, only because there are other people around.

“Right. Bikes.” I hightail my way to that section and wait for him to join me, then we go through some physical therapy and *only* physical therapy.

I leave him to hamstring and quadricep stretches with the excuse that I’m going to the ladies room.

I round the corner and pull out my phone, starting a new text thread.

Neiko: *What’s the policy on...dating class guests?*

Lexie: *What do you mean?*

Lexie is one of the program directors, but she’s out on maternity leave right now, so I know she won’t know exactly who I’m talking about. That’s why I’m asking *her* instead of Robbie.

Neiko: *Say there’s a guest speaker, is it against any rules to see them outside of class?*

Lexie: *No, not if they’re not under any contract with the university. What happened to Vic?*

Neiko: *Dumped me. Long story. Will catch up soon. Thanks!*

Lexie: *Welcome. Deal xo*

Potentially hot sex, here I come.

I just have to figure out *how* to make it clear that I’m available. Honestly, I’m not the best flirt. I’ve only ever had sex when I was in a relationship, so this will be a first for the casual thing.

I don’t know what the rules are here, and I don’t want to ask the girls just yet because they would rib me forever and a day before they gave me any helpful advice.

Guess I’m going to have to figure out how to seduce him on my own.

I slide my phone back into the pocket of my leggings and go back to the mats, feeling a strange calm. Now that I know it’s not against any rules to take things further, I feel a lot more...free to have a little fun.

“I realized I don’t know your first name.” I start. He’s finished with the stretches, and that was the last thing we needed to do.

“Tyler.” He looks up from where he’s pulling his brace back on. He really is making sure nothing happens to it. “What do you have me saved as in your phone then?”

I pick up my bag and back away, letting a smile come to my face. “Professor Sexy.”

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It's the third day in a row that I've seen Neiko, and it's the most time I've ever spent with one woman.

It's new but I kind of like it. She's easy to be around, and I like seeing what things she reacts to most.

Nothing's happened between us. I don't want to overstep or do the same song and dance I do with other women.

I'm not an asshole, but I usually prefer women who know exactly what they want and don't need any courting beforehand.

It's been pretty easy to find those women, so I haven't had any issues.

But something's telling me that I need to let Neiko go at her own pace, so I'm heeding wherever that intuition is coming from. This isn't something I want to fuck up.

I'm watching team videos on my laptop, and she's leaning over a textbook in the armchair closest to the couch, legs tucked underneath her and a pen stuck behind her ear.

Her place is nice, nicer than I expected for a college student living alone. When I commented on it, she said that her grandparents are pretty well off and they told her to choose a safe place, and they'd pay for it. They didn't want to know the cost; they just wanted her to love the place she lived and gave her a blank check to pay in advance.

I get the feeling that she didn't exactly grow up struggling, but it's not from her seeming entitled. Just the way she carries herself sometimes, and even in the way she moves. It's very...elegant, is the only way I can describe it.

I obviously keep my eyes on her a lot. My phone pings and I pull it towards me, unlocking it.

I read the message and immediately frown.

“Shit.” I don’t mean to say it aloud, but it slips out.

“Everything okay?” She looks over from the pages she’s been diligently reading, hair falling over her brow. It’s longer than I initially thought, at least on the top. The glasses look so damn adorable on her, and they magnify her eyes.

“Date canceled on me.” I murmur, before regretting it, realizing how that sounds. “Not a romantic date or anything; a plus one for a wedding I’m going to this weekend.”

“Isn’t that a good thing? Now you get to flirt with the bridesmaids.” She says slyly, and I give her a dark look.

“That’s exactly what I’m trying to avoid.”

“Why?”

I grind my jaw, annoyed even at the memory. “I used to...date one of them, and every time I see her, she tries to rekindle things. I have zero desire to take that road again.”

“Date?” She says skeptically.

I pause, resigned to telling the truth. “It was a short fling.”

“Poor Tyler, women just can’t help wanting to come back for more.” She mocks, mirth twinkling in her eyes.

“You want a sample?” I study her, wondering what she’ll say.

To my surprise, she quietly puts her textbook down on the table and turns to me. “Maybe.”

Hot damn. Blood rushes to my dick immediately. This is the moment I’ve been waiting for.

I put my computer on the table, probably a little harder than I needed to, but fuck it.

“Come here.”

She moves her body across the couch, and I slide a hand around her nape, caressing lightly with my fingers. Her eyes are soft and curious, and I take off her glasses gently, as much as they fuel my fantasies.

She smells like butterscotch candy, and I can’t wait to see if she tastes just as sweet. I pull her closer to me, just barely touching my lips to hers and I feel her pulse speeding up.

“I’ve been thinking about this since I saw you.” I brush my lips against hers in a whisper, holding her in place when she makes a needy sound.

I lick playfully at her lip. “I’m hard as fuck right now, but when you want to stop, we stop. Yeah?” I pull back just enough to meet her eyes, so she knows I’m serious. I only want her to feel safe with me, because I know I might get a little intense later on.

She nods.

“I need a verbal, baby.”

“Yes.” She breathes. Before the word completely tips off her lips, I take her mouth with mine, breathing her in and fusing our lips together. Catching *me* off guard, she nips at my lips, testing, seeking. I growl and lay back, careful to keep my knee clear, but pulling her over my body.

I’m hard as rock now, and I run a hand down her back and over her ass, gripping it hard the way I’ve wanted to since she walked out of the classroom. Soft. Full. I squeeze a handful a little rougher than I intend, and she moans against my mouth.

Fuck yeah.

“You like it a little rough?” I bite the underside of her jaw, pressing an open-mouthed kiss there.

“Apparently.” She laughs huskily, and even that sound sends more arousal shooting through me.

“Hm.” I take the hand that’s at her nape and move it to her other cheek, digging both hands into the plump flesh as she drops her forehead against my shoulder.

“Why does that feel so good?”

I settle her more firmly against me, widening her thighs, so she’s cradling me in the space between her hips. Kneading her ass with my hands, I move her against me, the low gasps and moans she’s making in my ear spurring me on. She grinds against my body, all passion instead of finesse, and I seal my mouth to her neck, wanting to leave my mark on her pretty brown skin.

“I’m close.” She whispers, and I turn my head to capture her lips, licking my way into her mouth as she spears her fingers through my hair.

“Tell me what you need.” I pull away. She presses her forehead to mine, breath puffing softly on my lips.

“I don’t know, I think...more.” Her brown eyes are heavy-lidded, and I love the look of almost drugged pleasure on her face.

More. I can do more.

“You trust me?” I bite her bottom lip, pulling back gently.

“Yes.” She licks her tongue out, tangling it with mine, giving everything back.

“Good.” I dip my hands into the waistband of her red shorts, shoving them down and over her ass so I can feel her bare skin. Warming up her skin with my palms, I make sure my cock is notched against her.

Smack.

“Oh!” Neiko’s hands tighten in my hair, and she leans forward a little, teeth sinking into her bottom lip. I watch her for a heated second, and she moves lightly against my erection. “Harder.”

In my mind, I’m beating my chest like Tarzan. My girl likes a little edge, and I can’t wait to see just how much she can take.

I spank her harder, caressing her skin and soothing the hurt away before I do it again. And again. And again. Each time in between, molding her skin with my hands and rubbing her hot flesh. With each touch, she’s more frantic against me, and I roll my hips under her, swallowing her needy groans with my mouth.

She shudders, husky cries falling from her lips and I press kisses to her jaw, her lips, her neck. I run my hands tenderly over her ass, knowing there might be a little ache tomorrow. I bet she’s fucking dripping.

My dick is so hard that I’m light-headed. I think that’s a thing.

Neiko lays against my chest and I stroke my hands over her back and ass in long movements, feeling her press small kisses to the underside of my jaw.

“Good?” I ask.

“Mhm.” She murmurs. “Really good.”

“Good,” I say quietly. *This* is definitely not something I’ve done before. I don’t feel a need to go anywhere. It feels like could lay here with my dick throbbing forever if she wanted me to.

“I meant to offer to go with you as your plus one if you needed me too, but then I thought it might be odd.”

I don’t say anything at first. I roll her words around in my mind...and decide that it sounds like the perfect idea.

We’ll get to be away from campus, and I’ll have her all to myself for the long weekend. Three days to finally cement this thing between us.

Hopefully, three days that I'll get to fuck her in all the ways that have been running through my mind.

I want to see her ass laid out in front of me while I take her from behind. I want to look at her breasts above me as she bounces on my cock. I want to feel her body under my mouth while I lick her pussy until she's begging me to fuck her.

I want a lot. And this might be the perfect getaway for it. But she should know what she's getting into.

"My cock is aching right now, and if we go away for the weekend, the chances are high that I'm going to want everything with you." She drops her forehead against my chest with a short bark of laughter.

"Wow, you don't mince words."

"I want to make sure we're on the same page."

"I don't want to say anything for sure, but...if that was a sample, I think the full course is looking pretty damn appealing." She strokes a finger down my face, and I open my mouth, taking it between my lips and licking it playfully.

I'm counting down the seconds now, and she's definitely dessert.

I'm nervous about this weekend.

I'm not a virgin, but I might as well be when it comes to Tyler. We haven't talked about what he's interested in, but if a few nights ago is any indication, he's experienced in a few things that I am not.

Sex is sex, to me. I don't need a committed relationship, but it's just how it's happened up until now. I don't follow the three-month rule or arbitrary timelines, but I wait to have sex until I'm at least a little certain that he's not going to disappear the next morning. I like for there to be a bit of investment, even though anyone can change their minds at any point regardless if you've had sex or not.

But Tyler is an entirely different situation.

I haven't looked him up or gone searching for information because I want to enjoy this bubble. This blissful ignorance. By his behavior, it's not hard to conclude that he plays fast and loose in his personal life. He's too confident, too smooth, and very noticeably single.

And let's be real, with looks like his, he doesn't need to commit, and he probably doesn't want to.

So here I am, about to spend the weekend with him and I most certainly will come back afterward with even more explosive memories than what happened the other night.

Orgasming from a guy spanking me? Note that down in the *things that never happened before Tyler* category.

Before Vic broke up with me, we hadn't had sex for about two months. That means that I've now been sex-less for half a year. Not a super long

time, but considering that Vic and I had sex twice a day sometimes when things were really good...I've been hurting.

The breakup came out of the blue for me, and that was probably a little bit my fault. I just got engrossed in a lot of things other than my relationship, and Vic wanted attention that he didn't think I was giving him. It hurt when he ended things, and sometimes I still feel a pang thinking about him or waking up in my bed alone, but I don't like to dwell on the past.

He made the decision that he felt was best for him, and I accepted that. Even if I miss having someone hold me at night, or teasing him over always being cold. It's the little things that hurt the most that way.

My vibrator is not doing the trick, and the dildo I ordered pales in comparison to the real thing. There's just no amount of realistic qualities you can add to a plastic toy that'll replace a man for me...unless it's connected to a man and there's blood pumping through a throbbing erection.

Which brings us to my current dilemma.

I know my friends are into no strings attached and embracing their sexuality with whoever they fancy, but there's always been something *more* for me in sex. Something more for the guy too.

I've never wanted sex with someone so much that I didn't have feelings for, and who didn't have feelings for me.

I'm scared about what will happen *after* the sex, and if I'll be able to handle whatever does. I've never really worried about if I'm going to wake up and be kicked out or if the guy's going to ghost me after he gets what he wants. Before things happened with my exes, it was pretty clear that we were on the same page and sex would be a kind of official milestone in the budding relationship.

The only page that I'm certain Tyler and I are reading is the one that says "*Sex will be had, and it will be mind-blowing.*"

Maybe I'll just try to enjoy the weekend, whatever happens.

My phone pings and it's Tyler saying he's outside, asking if I need help bringing anything down. I have my dress for the wedding in a garment bag, and a small weekender tote with the rest of my things, so I tell him no.

Taking a deep breath, I make sure I have my charger and turn off all my lights.

It's now or never.

When I reach the bottom of the landing, I see Tyler leaning against a cherry red Range Rover. He pushes off of it and meets me, grabbing the weekender bag from my grip and placing it in his back seat after he opens my door for me. I pass him the garment bag as I get in and he stores that, then shuts my door and lopes around the front to slide into the driver side.

I buckle my seat belt and admire the tan and black leather interior.

“Hey.” He gives me a lopsided grin, and I can’t help but smile back. Hoping I’m not being presumptuous, I lean in and press a quick kiss to his mouth just because I want to. I felt almost *compelled* to.

“Hey,” I respond back, sitting back in my seat.

He regards me silently for a bit before he leans over and puts a firm hand on my chin, pulling me to him. The kiss is purposeful and confident. His tongue dips into my mouth, and I tangle it with mine, inhaling the peppermint I can taste on his lips.

It’s a better greeting than I could’ve imagined, and I’m dazed when he pulls back finally. Dazed and horny.

Really horny.

“I want you to greet me like that whenever we see each other, yeah?” He presses the push to start button, and changes gears, backing out of the parking space.

“I think I can do that,” I respond softly.

He glances at me and reaches for my left hand, pressing the back of it to his lips. “Hey, it’s going to be a fun weekend. You don’t have to worry about anything with me. I’ll take care of you.”

That’s what I’m worried about.

I NAPPED for a good hour and a half, and when I blink my eyes open, Tyler is tapping his fingers on the steering wheel and singing along softly to Jagged Edge’s Let’s Get Married remix.

“My mom played this song a lot when I was growing up.” I clear my throat because my voice comes out a little croaky after sleeping.

“It’s a classic. Were your parents together growing up?” He asks, switching lanes. I think there are about two or three more hours to go.

“They separated, and I lived with my dad for a few years.” I look out the window. “My mom developed a drinking problem after her best friend passed away, and my dad told her that he wasn’t going to watch her destroy herself.”

“Damn, so he left? That must’ve been hard for him to do. For both of them, and you.”

“My dad tried to get her help, but he couldn’t force her, and she refused to talk to a therapist. She said she was handling it. It took us leaving to snap her out of it, and even though my dad let her see me, they didn’t get back together immediately.”

He’s quiet for a few long moments, and when I look over, he has a pensive expression on his face. “Sorry, you were probably expecting something a little lighter.”

“Don’t apologize for being honest. I...” His hands clench on the wheel, and he moves his shoulders like he’s nervous. “I know what it’s like to cope in a bad way, that’s all.”

I don’t push him to explain, but I touch his arm lightly to let him know I’m here if he does want to share.

“I used to cut myself. From about 14 to 16. Maybe a little different from a grown woman dealing with her pain, but I understand that being inside your head can make you do all sorts of things you never thought you would. And it’s hard to ask for or accept help.”

“Why did you do it?”

“I felt out of control of my life. You know, I didn’t want to play hockey professionally at first? I wanted to write and play music, quit hockey, but my dad thought that was stupid and he made me keep playing. Obviously, I’m okay with that now. But then, I was just angry and it was the only thing I thought I had a choice in. Stupid, right?”

“I don’t think it’s stupid. If music was important to you and your dad made you stop it for something else, that’s hard. Just because it wasn’t someone dying or something super traumatic, doesn’t mean it should’ve meant any less to you.”

“I’ve never told anyone that.” He murmurs. “It always felt like other people had way more important reasons and mine was just...bratty.”

“Thank you for sharing with me.” I place a hand over his on the steering wheel briefly, and when I move it away, he flips his hand and links our fingers together.

“Thanks for listening.” His blue eyes meet mine, and I can’t pinpoint the look in his. It feels like there’s a tentative thread of connection now, and I don’t know how I feel about that. The remaining hours pass in what feels like no time at all, and soon, he’s giving his keys to the valet at the hotel.

The wedding this weekend is at a winery called Chateau Marmont.

Tyler grabs our bags and won’t let me help, so I give his name at the hotel desk to check-in.

“We don’t seem to have a note here. Would you like a room with double beds or is a king suite fine?” The receptionist asks after checking his identification against the reservation.

Tyler opens his mouth to answer, but closes it, looking to me instead.

I know what he’s asking, and I guess this is my time to decide. I know that if I decide I don’t want anything to happen, he’ll still respect that and it helps me make my decision.

“We’ll take the king suite, please. Thank you.” I hold his gaze steady as I say it, and I watch the heat rise in his. The same heat that I’m sure is reflected in mine.

Let the weekend begin.

Last night was...uneventful.

We were both a lot more exhausted than we realized, and after Neiko showered, she fell asleep on top of the covers without even putting pajamas on.

That was a sight to walk out to, but I was so tired that I didn't even get hard. That's how I knew that I was seconds away from passing out.

I pulled one of my t-shirts over her head and put her under the covers, then I slid on boxers and cuddled up behind her, knocking out almost immediately.

When I woke up this morning, the shower was already running, and I wished I'd had the chance to wake up and watch her a bit before she got up.

I've never done that with a woman before. But I want to with her.

I roll over and glance at my watch. We've got about two hours before the ceremony starts. I wonder what Neiko's wearing. Especially underneath.

The bathroom door opens and steam wafts out, with Neiko silhouetted in the doorway, a colorful shower cap on her head.

"Oh, I didn't think you'd be up." She looks embarrassed and snatches the shower cap off, tossing it on top of her things.

"You looked adorable." I swing my legs to the floor and stand, walking to where she's wrapped in a short towel with droplets of water clinging to her smooth skin. I wish I could lick every single one off of her, and from the way her chest has started to rise with her breathing, she knows it.

"Thank you." She licks her lips, and I follow her tongue's path with my own, relishing in the small sigh that escapes when she opens her mouth to me and lets me in. Sweet, so damn sweet. I move my mouth over her skin,

down her neck and over her slim shoulder, licking up the lingering water. “You need to get ready.” She gasps as I move my mouth down the slope of her breasts, nestling my face into her cleavage.

“I could die happy right here,” I whisper, and she giggles.

“Go get in the shower, *professor*.” She teases, moving away. “Wedding, dodging your bridesmaid, then the rest of the weekend...” She trails off, a playful smile gracing her lips. “Stuff.”

“Stuff?” I echo, catching the edge of her towel and pulling her back to me. “What kind of stuff?”

“Stuff.” She says firmly, dropping the towel. For a second, my eyes light up because I think I’m about to see her full body, but she’s already wearing her panties and bra underneath.

I still get hard as fuck though, because the bits of brown skin peeking through skin-colored lace is sexy as hell. She’s wearing a high-cut lace thong and a strapless bra that’s longer than a regular bra.

“What’s that bra called?”

She looks down at her chest. “A strapless bustier?”

“I like it. It frames your waist well, plus, cleavage.” I mumble. “Shit, woman. I could’ve used a warning.”

“Well, I’ll be wearing it all day today under my clothes so you can think about that, *while you get ready*. Now, go shower.” She slips on a robe, and I want to weep at her covering up such a sexy view.

But I know she’s right. I’m not going to be able to think about anything else all damn day.

“ZIP ME UP, PLEASE?”

I finish securing my belt and walk to where she’s turned around, back of the deep green dress gaping open. God, it’s like she’s been poured into, it drapes over her curves so well. I’ve been hard since I walked back out of that bathroom and it’s a testament to my self-control and respect for my friends that I don’t say fuck this wedding and keep her in this room indefinitely.

I find the zipper at the swell of her lower back and pull it up slowly, making sure I don’t catch any fabric or skin.

“What the hell is that scent you’re wearing?” I keep leaning closer and inhaling because it makes me want to go back for more. With her dress zipped fully, I indulge myself and nuzzle my face into her neck and around her ears, where it’s strongest. Peaches? Something sweet? Maybe honey? But something spicy too.

It’s like it never fucking ends.

“It’s a perfume oil I ordered from this indie company.” She laughs. “I’m guessing you like it?”

“Just start walking. I’ll stay like this all day. No one else will be able to get near you.” I’m only half-kidding. I know some of the other guys who’ll be at the wedding today and around this weekend.

They’ll take one look at Neiko, smell her delicious scent, and try to make their moves.

I usually keep my fights to the ice, but if I have to punch a fucker in the face this weekend for not heeding my warnings, I will.

Neiko is mine.

“Are you trying to keep me all to yourself?” She goes to move away, and I hook an arm around her waist, keeping her in place. I know she can feel how hard I am now, and I make it a point to press against her so there’s no ignoring it.

“If I see a man talking to you for too long, I’m going full cave-man. You’re sexy as fuck, it’s going to be open season and if anybody thinks they get to touch any of this…” I can’t help the growl in my voice; it’s pissing me off just thinking about the other guys. Because I *know* them.

And I know what I would do if it were me. I’d do my damndest to swoop in, and the thought of any of them taking her away from me sends panic shooting through my veins.

“You sound pretty possessive right now.” She turns in my arms, wrapping hers around my waist. Sparkling brown eyes peer up at me from under sooty lashes, and there’s a tantalizing glaze to her lips that makes me think of my favorite desserts. Neiko’s a full package, and I want to unwrap her so badly, it hurts.

“You’re mine this weekend, Neiko. That’s not up for discussion.” I grunt.

“Does that mean you’re mine this weekend too?”

“Baby, I couldn’t be more yours this weekend if you slapped a leash on me and made me crawl around behind you,” I say seriously, liking the

sound of her laughter.

“Alright cave-man, let’s get this show on the road and make your bridesmaid back off.” I move in for a kiss, but she turns her face away. “Uh nope, lip gloss. Later.”

I let her go and frown darkly, shrugging on my jacket and following her to the door after she grabs her clutch. Her ass came straight out of my dreams.

Goddamn lip gloss. What a cock-block.

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The wedding was beautiful, and since it was one of my teammates, there's a lot of good friends and people to celebrate with.

A few of the women I'm cool with have told me how much they approve of Neiko and she's delightful to talk to. I've warned off my guys about fucking with me when it comes to her, and they seem more amused than anything, even though they were disappointed.

I feel this odd sense of pride watching her mingle and laugh with some of the people I've gotten closest to.

She fits into my life. That's not something I've experienced or looked for before. Women have been temporary, for quick and mutual fun. I didn't introduce them to friends, even accidentally. I knew this weekend would be more intimate than I've ever been with someone, and it almost made me tell her that I didn't need a date after all.

When I video called her to tell her that she didn't need to worry about the weekend, she answered with such a bright smile that it hit me somewhere almost uncomfortable. Because she's genuine. She's not acting a certain way just because of who I am or operating with an ulterior motive.

She's just Neiko. And I want her to keep looking at me the way she does, like I can be more to someone than just a hit it and quit it.

So, here I am watching her dance with the flower girl, twirling her around the floor and laughing with her. Something is expanding in my chest that I'm not quite ready to identify.

"Tyler." A syrupy voice comes from behind me, accompanied by a hand sliding its way around my hip and I remove it firmly, stepping away.

“Brandi.”

“Oh, don’t be like that.” She pouts her lips, and once upon a time, I would’ve loved seeing that on her face. She’s a pretty girl, that’s why we got together in the first place, but it does nothing for me now. “I see you brought a date.”

“Yes,” I say tightly, looking over her head and searching for Neiko. She was on the dance floor, but I’m not sure where she disappeared to, and I wish I could send up an SOS flare.

“Well, that was silly.” She steps into my personal space *again* and puts a delicate hand on my chest, fluttering her lashes and leaning in conspiratorially. “You know that we’re going to end the night together anyway.”

“We haven’t ended a single night together since that weekend, and that’s not changing tonight.” I step back again, but she follows me, relentless. It’s like what I say goes in one ear and flees out of the other. Every damn time.

“The more you deny me, the more determined I am. This playing hard to get thing is going to make things so good when I’m back in your bed tonight.” I don’t know how she’s so confident about her assertion, but it freaks me out.

“I’m afraid that the spot in his bed is already taken, sweetheart, and three’s company.” Neiko comes up beside me, plucking Brandi’s hand off my chest firmly. “It’d be in your best interests to take your hands off my man.”

In my head, I’m popping champagne and jumping on the bed at Neiko’s words *and* at the realization that’s finally dawning on Brandi’s face. It’s about damn time! I haven’t said an encouraging word, admired, or done anything suggestive to egg her on at any point. Some guys are fuckers and lead people on when they claim not to want them, but that’s not me.

At the same time, even though I want her so much, hearing her claim me to someone else makes me feel a little odd. But I push the feeling away.

“I just...I thought he was just being difficult.” Brandi looks chagrined, and I’m trying to keep my mouth from dropping. Difficult for *two years*?? The mind is terrifying. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to overstep.” She nods at me and then moves away, sweeping her blonde hair over her shoulder and sidling up to one of the single rookies.

“I’ve been trying to shake her for two years, and you freed me in a matter of seconds?” I search her face, and she looks pretty smug and proud of herself.

“What can I say, I’ve got the magic.”

“You’ve got some kind of magic.” The voice belongs to Liv, my buddy Carter’s fiancée. She introduces herself to Neiko and gives her an appraising look. “I’ve been trying to convince Brandi to let it go for months now.”

“It’s because no one believes Saxton would settle into a relationship.” Carter comes up, slinging an arm around Liv’s shoulders.

“Is he your typical playboy athlete?” Neiko raises an eyebrow, and I give Carter a warning look.

“This one? The only thing I’ve seen him commit to in the time I’ve known him is winning.”

Goddamn it.

“Hm.” Neiko looks up at me, no expression on her face but curiosity, and I fidget.

“Well, I think that’s enough from you two for tonight. See you later.” I take Neiko’s hand and guide her through the double doors of the great room, heading outside. The back deck opens into a garden with fairy string lights hung up everywhere, and we walk for a while without talking.

Finally, she tugs me down to sit on a bench, stretching her shapely legs out in front of her and crossing her ankles.

“You seemed to want to get away from your friends before they said anything else.” She sizes me up, and I widen my legs and lean against my knees, linking my hands together.

“They know a certain side of me...and you know a certain side of me,” I admit, turning to her. She looks away and fingers a rose that’s on the trellis next to us.

“So you’re different with me, is that the line you’re trying to hook me with?” She fingers the soft petals. Startling her, I tug her over into my lap and she protests, holding up a deep red petal. “You messed up the flower.”

“I like you, Neiko.” I rest my chin on her shoulder. It’s a favorite place of mine lately. And she still smells damned enticing.

“Do you like me, or do you *like like* me.” Her voice is playful.

“I think I *like like* you.” I don’t know if she’s expecting that, and she quiets, settling herself more securely over my thighs. Turning, she drapes

her arms lightly around me.

“And how’s that going to work?”

“I don’t know yet, just...wanted you to know. I’m not playing any games here or...you’re not a Brandi to me.”

“Well, there’s no way in hell I’d chase you like Brandi did either.” She scoffs. “No matter how bomb the dick is.”

“It’s pretty bomb,” I smirk, pressing a kiss to the side of her mouth. Her hands stroke my back lightly, and I wrap my arms around her waist.

“Is it?” She murmurs, pressing in closer and turning her lips to mine fully. Hot, slow, deliberate. The kiss is a promise of things to come. “Show me, then.”

I still. “Are you sure?”

“Just know I’m grading you *Professor Sexy*, and I expect quality work.” Never have I wanted to laugh with a woman as much as I wanted to have her under me, over me, in front of me.

Standing as she yelps in surprise, I hold her tight in my arms and stride around the deck and down the short pathway that leads back inside. Making it to the elevators, she presses the button since my hands are a bit full, and grins happily up at me.

“Embracing the caveman, hm?”

“Just wait until I get you behind a closed door.” I rasp. “This ass is mine.”

There's anticipation running through my veins, and my skin feels hot all over. Tyler picking me up in his arms and seeming so impatient to have me alone is an aphrodisiac all in itself.

And his admission about liking me...unexpected, but it makes me feel so much better about all of this. I know that it doesn't guarantee anything, and who knows...it could just be words.

But it's more than we had before. I open the door with our key-card since his hands are currently full of me, and I drop my clutch on the table by the door before sliding down his body. Immediately, he presses me back against the door and falls to his knees, making my breath catch. He touches his forehead to my abdomen, shrugging out of his jacket and tossing it aside.

Pushing my dress up my hips, he palms my bare ass cheeks in his hands and presses his face to the lace covering my mound, prompting a moan to escape my lips. I can feel his breath on me, and his hands are roaming over my ass and fingering my pussy lips lightly over the fabric.

I stroke my hands through his hair as a shudder runs through me when he inhales deeply.

"Love the way you smell." He growls, gripping my ass the way I love.

"I might've swiped a little perfume oil on the lace, too," I whisper, the anticipation almost too much for me to handle. I do not doubt that Tyler's understanding of the female body is very comprehensive.

"No, this is all you, baby." He turns his head and presses a kiss to my thigh, nipping the skin with his teeth before he soothes the small pain with

his tongue.

Trailing his hands around to the front of my hips, he drags my thong down my legs, and I step out of it, still in my heels. I start to reach down and undo the straps, but he stays my hand.

“These stay on.” He looks up at me, blue eyes heavy-lidded and face taut with arousal. God, the look on his face is intoxicating. He’s so focused on *me*. So much need.

Running his fingers teasingly up the inside of my calves and thighs, he strokes one finger through my wetness, and I inhale softly. I want more, but I’m almost afraid to ask because I want to see what he does first. I’m lost in my wonder at what he’ll do next, how he’ll make me *feel* next.

Parting me with both of his thumbs, he makes me feel vulnerable because he just stares at me.

“What?” I breathe, pulling my bottom lip between my teeth nervously.

“Let me just look at you.” He rasps. He looks almost reverent, and it’s a new experience for me. Anything dealing with my vag that wasn’t penetration has always seemed like an after-thought. I feel like I’m the only one who knows it intimately because it’s on my body...but Tyler looks at me like...like he wants to be very, *very* intimately acquainted. “You’re beautiful.”

“Are you waxing poetic to my vagina right now?”

“Shhh, we’re having a moment.” There’s dark laughter in his voice, and the seriousness of it weakens my knees, so I press my hands against the door. I don’t know if I’m going to be upright much longer if he keeps this up, let alone when he gets down to business.

With one swipe of his tongue, he unravels me.

And with another, and another, he tears me apart completely. He wraps a tongue around my clit, suckling it and closing it in his lips, parting me further with a thick finger. He massages my entrance, pressing one finger inside, then two. Thrusting those fingers into me in an upward motion, he’s hitting all the right spots. That plus his constant pressure on my clit feels so damn good, and I’m clutching at his hair and trembling in my heels. Jerking a leg over his shoulder, he dives deep into my pussy, and I keel low in my throat, unable to stop myself. He’s practically holding me up against the door now, and my pussy is one mass of sensation, threading out to electrify the rest of my body and make me tingle all over.

I can't even form words anymore, all I can do is moan and make unintelligible sounds that I can't believe are coming from me. It's an out of body experience if I've ever had one because I can *feel* how much he's enjoying himself. Like he's whispering his enjoyment and speaking to my pussy without words. That makes all the difference, to know how much someone is relishing in giving you pleasure, and my body is dripping with its thanks.

He manages to press a third finger inside me, and it's that fullness coupled with his talented mouth that sends me tumbling over the edge. I wrap my leg tighter around him, and hold him to me, riding his face with my body. If anyone's outside the door, there's no way they can't hear my loud moans as he keeps up his motions, bringing me down from my climax. Pressing a soft kiss to the top of my mound as I sag lightly against the door, he then removes my shoes and tosses them aside.

When his hands go to his belt, I almost give in and collapse to the floor because of the shiver that hits me. My cunt spasms, as if I didn't just get off. I haven't seen his cock, but I've *felt* it, and I can't wait to lay eyes on him. He shoves his slacks down and magically produces a condom from I don't know where, ripping the package with his teeth and sheathing his cock with it. It's veiny and thick, and he looks like a warrior coming back to me, brandishing his *sword*.

I don't know if he picks me up first, or if I jump into his arms, but my head drops back against the door when he taps his cock-head against my clit a few times. Even through the condom, I can feel his warmth and I cream even more. With my legs locked around his waist and his hands full of my ass, he lowers me down onto his dick slowly, and I catch his gaze with eyes that I can barely keep open.

"That look on your face, I'm going to see it every time I close my eyes." His voice is throaty, and I pull his face to mine with my grip in his hair, opening my lips over his and kissing him sweetly. It's almost a thank you for already being one of the most amazing experiences I've had. He picks up what I'm putting down, dipping his tongue lightly into my mouth and canting his head to kiss me deeper.

While he busies himself with my lips, he lifts me off his cock and back down, pressing me back against the door for leverage. It feels so damn good every time he pushes the thick length inside me, and I break away from his lips because he's making me breathless.

“Pussy feels so good.” He traces my ear with his tongue, and I groan. It’s a hotspot for me, and he knows it. “Gripping my cock like it doesn’t want to let me go. Rippling around me. Wanna feel your cream all over me.” Dark and sensual, his voice is doing as much for me as his body is and I grip him tighter with my arms and legs, wanting it never to end. “That’s right baby, squeeze me tight.” He brings me down faster and pumps into me harder, and I just hold on for the ride, grinding down when I can and accepting his hot kisses.

“Fuck, I’m close. Come with me, Neiko.”

“Yes. *Please.*” I gasp, our movements uncontrolled and sloppy, but full of frenzy and need. It’s enough to drive us both wild, and I swear I can feel him coming even with the condom, and it sets me off too. He seals his lips against mine and swallows my yell, gentling his kiss as we both come down, and running his hands over every part of me he can reach.

He doesn’t say anything, but somehow, he has enough strength in his body to move us towards the bed. He falls back on it, and I make a little sound because everything’s a little tender.

“Sorry, baby.” He strokes a hand down my face and I turn into it, feeling very soft.

“It’s okay.” I lay on his chest, and he rubs a hand down my back soothingly. “I guess I should release you, huh?”

“Let me get rid of this condom, and I’ll give you all the cuddling you can handle. Then I’m going to fuck you again.” He slaps my ass lightly, rolling me over and pulling out to throw the protection away. He undresses me and gets rid of his shirt, cuddling up behind me. He pulls me back tight against him, cupping my pussy with his hand and leaving it there. It’s oddly comforting.

I don’t know how long we lay there, but I doze off with one of his hands covering my mound and another holding my breast possessively.

It’s the most cared for I’ve felt in awhile.

I feel really warm, and content.
Like I did before Vic stopped staying over.

I don't open my eyes yet, but I feel Tyler moving his hands over my legs and side and over my breasts. That's all he's doing, just... touching me leisurely. I peek one eye open, and it's to see him staring at his hands as they move over my body, and when he gets back up to my chest, he realizes I'm awake.

"Morning." His mouth kicks up, and he leans over for a kiss, but I turn my head away slightly.

"Morning breath," I speak through my closed fingers, and he pulls my hand away.

"Closed mouth, then. But I don't care." He presses a quick kiss to my lips.

"Why do you look so fascinated? I'm sure you've seen many female bodies." I roll to my front and rest my head on my arms, watching his face. He's got a bit of shadow where he needs to shave.

"It's the first time I've woken up with a woman."

"*Ever?* What do you do, disappear right after sex at night?" He looks chagrined, and I sit up, gathering the sheet over my breasts. "Wow, you're *that* type of playboy, huh?"

"It was just never like that with the women I was with; we had an understanding."

I press my lips together, lifting an eyebrow, and he sighs.

"Okay, Brandi was an outlier."

"Unhuh. How did you manage that being in relationships?"

He goes quiet, and I clutch the sheets around me even tighter.

“You haven’t...because you don’t *do* relationships.” I say slowly.

“I *didn’t* do relationships.” He emphasizes, and I slide away from the bed, trying not to jump to conclusions. But I do have questions. I wrap the sheet around me and tuck it under my arm, so I’m free to move around.

“Just so we’re clear, what did you mean last night about liking me? Was that just something you said to make me feel better about sleeping with you?”

“No.” He shoots up from the bed, standing. “Neiko, it wasn’t like that at all. I’m not going to lie and pretend I’ve wanted more with women over the years because I haven’t. Not really. But that doesn’t mean I was lying to you last night.” He comes closer, wrapping his arms around my waist and looking down at me. “I’m willing to try. I don’t have all the answers, but I figure taking a step is good for now right?”

I don’t know if I believe him. I *want* to believe him. But why is it any different with me? Why would a guy who’s never seriously dated all of a sudden want to change that? People have patterns, and they do things for a reason.

The words are coming out of his mouth, but I won’t know if they mean anything until I see more actions.

In any case, I don’t want to think about it anymore. So I go with distraction.

“We’ll worry about it later.” I slide both my hands into his boxers and grip his cock, loving his groan.

“I think we need to talk about it. I want you to know I’m serious.” It’s like he’s forcing the words out, and instead of heeding them, I drop to my knees and tug his boxers down.

“Oh, *hello.*” I kiss the tip of his cock, and he hisses. Licking my tongue around the head, I take him between my lips and taste the musky pre-cum and relish in the earthy smell of his skin.

“Neiko...” He starts, and I take him deeper into my mouth, gagging just a little when he reaches the back of my tongue. But I push through it and when he curses above me, I know it was a good move. “*Fuck.*”

I push him back until he’s sitting on the bed and crawl forward on my knees, claiming my position again and taking him in my hands. I sculpt every inch of his cock with my hands, thumbing the veins and enjoying the feel of him pulsing in my fingers.

“Don’t tease me, Neiko.”

“*Don’t tease me, Neiko,*” I repeat softly, looking up at him.

He grimaces, hands clenching on the bed. “You don’t appreciate how much control it’s taking not to fuck you on the floor right now.”

“Maybe I don’t care.” I tap his cock against my tongue playfully, and lick him like the tastiest lollipop around, covering every inch of him with my mouth. He’s so thick that he stretches my lips a little, but I love it.

“You’re asking for me to light that ass on fire again with all that lip.” I laugh at the disgruntled tone of his voice and take him in my mouth again, bobbing my head up and down in a rhythm I think he likes, because he’s starting to move his hips to meet my mouth. I suck him with the same attention that he paid to my clit, and he rubs my head gently. “Fuck, don’t stop, baby. I’m going to come.”

I’ve never swallowed before. Now seems like as good a time as ever, and I *want* to.

When the first spurts of cum hit my mouth, it’s a little bit of a weird feeling and I gag before reminding myself to swallow. Things go smoother as he finishes, and I pull back, cradling his still hard dick in my hands.

“First taste of sperm...not bad.” I muse. Giving me a look I can’t decipher, he cradles my face in his hands and kisses me, nipping my bottom lip as he pulls back.

“I’m the first guy you’ve ever swallowed?”

“New milestone I get to tick off, I guess.” He’s so close that when I talk, my lips brush his.

“That’s hot.” He kisses me again in small, short kisses, pulling me up from the floor. “Really hot.” He murmurs, pressing his face to my skin.

“I know you’re not ready to...do anything again.” I laugh because he’s started to tickle my sides and I try to roll away, but he’s not having any of that.

“I’m ready to do everything.” He snatches the remaining sheet away, and directs his attention to more...southern territory.

A girl could get used to this.

I CAN'T SAY that I've ever walked the grounds of a vineyard hand-in-hand with a hockey player, but there's a first time for everything.

"Favorite color?"

"I'm partial to grays."

"Fifty Shades of them?" He gives me a look, and I shake my head, grimacing.

"Christian had way too many issues."

"That's about as much as a reference as I can make, I didn't watch or read any of it. Girls uh..." He trails off. "This is such great scenery."

"Girls what?"

"Huh?" He glances at me from the corner of his eyes, shaking his head. "I don't even remember what I was going to say."

"Liar." I swat his arm lightly. "They wanted you to tie them up and everything else like him, didn't they?"

"I don't know what you're talking about." He hedges. "You know, we should go for a night-swim."

"Nope, not until you confirm that those girls didn't wake up some wannabe Christian Grey." I'm teasing him clearly, because no part of me that believes that the sexual confidence that he wears like a second skin is an act. I know there's more to experience with him in bed, and I can't wait to go down that road even more.

He stops, turning me to face him. "I think you just insulted me."

"Who, me?" I widen my eyes innocently. "Nope. So, night swim?"

He lowers his voice, sliding his hand around to my nape and stroking gently. There's something about the move that always makes me feel a little more...deferential to him.

"We'll go on a night swim, and then you can decide if I'm a *wannabe* or not." The heat in his eyes and voice is controlled, and I wonder if I've just opened a can of worms that I can't put back.

"YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME," I whisper angrily, unrolling a wad of toilet tissue.

My irregular period strikes again.

I have the arm implant for birth control, and it's made my periods pretty whacky. My doctor said things should stabilize soon since I've only been on it for four months now.

I didn't bring any pads or tampons with me, and I'm embarrassed that now I have to tell Tyler that our plans are over because cramps are definitely going to start with a vengeance soon.

Fucking shit dammit fucking hell.

Resigning myself to it, I open the bathroom door, and Tyler's waiting in shorts and a tee.

"What's that face about?" He asks, setting his phone on the bed.

"Uhm..." I hesitate. "My period started, and I'm not prepared for it. I'm sorry."

He doesn't say anything.

He stands and toes on his shoes, picking up his keys from the table, and I feel my stomach drop.

"Are you...you're leaving?"

That's it? Because I can't exactly have sex right now?

I feel myself tearing up, and I curse the goddamn extra hormones. But really, I know I'd probably feel this disappointment regardless, because I didn't expect this from him. Not after the time we've spent together, little as it may be.

He picks up his phone from his bed and finally looks at me, alarm covering his face.

"Oh shit, are you crying?" He tugs me to him, and I try to wipe the tears away, angry with myself.

"It's stupid. I knew what this was. I'll be fine. You can go." I try to pull away, and he takes my chin in his hands, making me look at him.

"Whoa, you cut that shit out right now. I was just thinking about where we passed a store so I could go pick up what you need, that's it."

I feel my bottom lip trembling, and I feel extremely foolish and dramatic now.

"We'll talk about the fact that you thought I'd do some foul shit like leave, when I get back." He frowns, wiping his thumbs under my eyes. "For now, give me a list of what you need, and I've got you, okay?"

I nod, mute because I'm still berating myself. Leaning my forehead against his chest as he wraps strong arms around me, I sign before letting him go and sending off a quick text to his phone of what to get.

When he gets back, he cuddles with me on the couch in front of the TV while we watch America's Next Top Model re-runs and eat way too many peanut butter cups.

Not once does he say anything about it being blowjob week or what he needs from me since I'm not into full-blown period sex. He just...is there.

And it makes me wonder how I'm going to cope when he's not.

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I'm pretty sure Neiko is avoiding me, and I don't like it. I thought we ended the weekend on a good note, and since I'm not going to her class anymore, I've been trying to set up time with her for the past week.

But she keeps being busy, and it's pissing me off a little bit. I don't think she believes me about wanting her. It feels like she took everything I said to her about my past with women, and is using it against me.

I don't chase women. I don't beg for their time, but dammit, I *really* want to see her. I want her to *want* to see me too.

I take the four flights up to her door and knock, waiting for her to open it. I didn't call her and let her know I was coming because I didn't want to give her the chance to tell me no.

If she is avoiding me, then I want to know. None of this *I'm busy* bullshit at every turn.

The door opens, and she looks put out that I'm standing on the other side of it. It does *wonders* for my ego.

"Ty, what are you doing here?" Her voice is resigned, but I like that she uses a nickname instead of *asshat*.

"I miss you. Can I come in?" She hesitates, and I think she's about to close the door in my face, but she steps back, closing the door behind me.

There are papers spread all over the table, and her laptop is out, along with a couple of books. She sits on the couch and she looks a little miserable.

Was it a bad idea for me to come over? I set the bag of chocolate pastries down on the table and move to sit next to her on the couch, but I

lean on my knees and keep my hands to myself. I don't think she wants to be touched by me right now and damned if I know what the hell I did.

"Did I do something?" I frown, glancing at her. I'm not used to this anxious feeling with a woman. There was only one person who gave me anxiety all the time...my mother.

I've avoided caring that much ever since. But Neiko is under my skin now, and it can't be helped. The only way to stop it is if I stop being with her, and I don't want that.

I feel like I'm an addict needing a fix. The craving to be near her, to touch her, to feel her...is stronger than anything I've ever felt before.

"No, I just, I have a lot going on right now. I'm applying for jobs; I have exams and I just...I don't have time to entertain you right now." The exasperation on her face and in her body language surprises me.

"I don't need you to *entertain* me." I clarify. "I just wanted to see you, even if it's just sitting around while you take care of what you need to. Is that such a bad thing?" I'm genuinely baffled. And a little annoyed that she thinks I want her to be some plaything for me.

I don't. Not at all.

"Look, this might be new to me, but it's a good new. You don't have to shut me out because you have this idea of what I want from you."

She's quiet for a bit, and I wonder what's going through her mind.

"I had this problem before too; it's not just you." She says softly, regret in her eyes. "That's part of why Vic broke up with me, because I shut him out when I got stressed."

"Well, Vic's stupid." I deadpan. She chews on her bottom lip, and her face is a little brighter and less stressed than it was when I first got here.

"He was right, though. I retreat to myself if I'm dealing with a lot. I don't let people support me."

I tug her closer, pressing a kiss to her forehead.

"Well, let me." I kiss the side of her face, her cheek, the corners of her mouth. Hell, I'm just happy she doesn't have that grimace on her face anymore.

"Okay." She whispers. "I'll try." Needing the feel of her soft lips beneath mine again, I capture her mouth and put all my pent-up need into the kiss. When she's breathing hard and my cock's straining against my jeans, I slide my hands under her shirt to cup the breasts that I know are bare.

But she pulls away, shaking her head.

“Not tonight, Ty. I’m not feeling up to it.”

I take a deep sigh and pull my hands away.

“Okay. No problem.” I’m horny, but I’m not going to be an asshole about it. Even if my balls are so blue that they’re probably purple.

“Look, you can leave if that’s all you want.” She starts to stand, and I throw up my hands, annoyed for a different reason.

“If you’re going not to believe what I say and create your own narrative, then what the hell am I even doing?” I stand too, propping my hands on my hips and pacing.

She narrows her eyes at me and I glare right back, feeling ridiculous, but slightly vindicated when she exhales loudly and rubs her hands over her eyes.

“I’m being a bitch; it’s been a rough week. I get snappy when I haven’t had much sleep.”

“Well then, come on.” I shrug off my jacket and strip off my shirt. “Let’s sleep. Whatever it takes for you to stop treating me like I’m the enemy.” I probably sound petulant, but I don’t know what else to do.

It’s never been hard for me, dammit.

When I’m standing before her in just my boxers and my watch, she shakes her head and comes closer, sliding her arms around my waist and hugging me.

“I’m a butt, I’m sorry.” She rests her chin on my chest, meeting my eyes. “I’ll make it up to you when I’m not so tired. You can even spank me if you want. I know you have a thing for my butt.”

“Like I have to have your permission. I owe you one anyway from last weekend.” I scoff, tugging on her ear lightly.

“Please don’t punish me, professor.” She grins, and I shift on my feet, because the words send lust through me.

“Alright, the last thing we’re going to do is sleep if you don’t cut it out,” I warn, scooping her up and making her shriek. She lays her head against my chest, and I turn off her lights as I pass the switches, then set her down in bed.

She ties a small scarf around her head then pounces on me, making me groan because I have to protect the family jewels with my hands.

“Careful, woman.”

“I’ll kiss it better in the morning.” She smacks a kiss on my lips and settles on top of me. I pull the covers over us, and our legs tangle together.

Her breathing evens out, and I lay there for awhile, listening to her and feeling her heartbeat against mine.

We haven’t talked about being exclusive or anything, haven’t *defined the relationship*. I know I’m not interested in seeing anyone else, and I know she’s not seeing anyone else either.

Yet somehow, it still makes me nervous to start the actual conversation.

I’m here, and I’m not going anywhere.

I just hope she finally starts to believe me, for both our sakes.

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O kay, now just spoon it into the casserole dish.” I finish cutting up cucumbers for the salad and then start chopping up the bacon.

The salad is my compromise for *him*. I would’ve been fine just eating my cheesy Ritz chicken casserole. But no, “*we need some green on that plate, you miscreant.*”

I eat green things. Occasionally. I’m a big fan of green beans, but I didn’t have any, and neither of us felt like running by the store.

Hell, the only reason I even have cucumbers is because I use them on my eyes when I’m in the bath sometimes.

Who knew they’d come in handy to eat?

“Give me a kiss.” Ty sets the large mixing bowl down that formerly held chicken, sour cream, chicken broth, and cream of chicken soup.

“Nope.” I toss bacon into the large salad bowl along with the cucumbers. “Spoon that cracker mixture on top and pop the dish in the oven. I already set the timer.”

I hear the oven open and close behind me, and I smirk because he *never* just accepts a no like that. It’s become a running thing for me to do, just because I like to give him a little bit of a hard time.

Ty reaches past me and takes the salad bowl, putting it in the fridge until the casserole is ready. I move to the sink to wash my knife and dry it with a dishtowel before I set it back in the drawer. I’m a wash as you use type of person because I hate having things piled up in my sink to deal with later.

I start to turn to grab the bowl that he used to mix the chicken together, but he traps me against the sink, holding my hands to the counter.

I grit my teeth so I don't moan. I love feeling him against my back this way. The other night, he pulled me over his lap and made good on his word to spank me. I knew I liked it already from that night on the couch, but it was different when he did it that time.

No matter how much I squirmed against his lap or begged him to touch me, he refused. He made me take back what I said about the Christian Grey thing, and then he proceeded to show me exactly why nothing's a game to him when it comes to the dominance he wears like a comfortable cloak.

I see it more with him lately. I think he's been softening his edges a little bit for my benefit. I made it clear to him that I want *alllll* the edge.

Let's just say; I won't be questioning him again anytime soon. Unless it's to goad him into *consequences*, that is. Being flippant is pretty fun.

"What'd you say to me?" He speaks low in my ear, and I cock my head automatically, loving the rush of his warm breath on my skin.

"Did I say something? Can't remember." I lie. His erection is against my back, and I tip my hips up a little, rising on my toes.

"I've never paddled a woman's ass before, but you might just be begging for it." He grinds his cock into me, and I whimper.

"Put your money where your mouth is, then." Before I finish speaking, he's sliding a hand down the front of my sweatpants and into my panties, cupping my pussy and stroking his middle finger along my slit. We both groan when he presses into me, and I widen my legs, dropping my head back against his chest.

Then the doorknob on my front door rattles and we both freeze.

No one else has a key to my place except...my family.

"Parents." I croak just in time, and Ty pulls his hand away, hightailing it to my room to hide his erection. He's not wearing anything but basketball shorts and *no underwear*. My front door opens, and my mom pokes her head in as I leave the kitchen and slide into the living room.

"Koko, come get this bag, it's slipping."

I grab the bag from my mom's hand before it falls, and she follows me, setting the bags on the bar counter.

"I didn't know you were coming up." We hug, and she gives me a small smile, pushing her thick brown curls away from her face. We have the same look, freckles and all. My hair is just cut short, permed and jet black. Same skin tone, same nose, same eyes.

“Well, I missed you and I know you’re busy. Wanted to bring you a few freezer dishes in case you were too tired to cook.”

“That’s sweet of you mama, thank you.” I start to take things out of the bags. She’s basically brought me enough food to last a month. She’s made burger patties, chicken calzones, french toast sticks, and meatballs. She’s also freezer sealed some brownies and chocolate chip cookies. “This is great. I really appreciate it.”

It took a few years for us to get close again after her problems with drinking. I didn’t trust that she was serious about being better, and I remember how much it hurt my dad.

But she’s been sober for almost ten years now, and she’s tried her hardest to be the mom we’ve needed her to be. I know a lot of people aren’t as lucky to get people back from their personal demons, so I’m grateful that we have a good relationship now.

“Are you cooking now? Mind if I stay a bit?”

“Uhm…” I glance towards the bedroom, but Tyler hasn’t come out yet. “So, I’m seeing someone. It’s new, but he’s here too. Just letting you know that it won’t just be the two of us.”

“I was kind of hoping you and Vic would get back together.” She frowns, disappointment on her unlined face.

“Well, you’ll have to shelve that because that ship has sunk to the bottom of the ocean. You’ll like Tyler. He’s a hockey player.”

“At the school? What year is he? I didn’t think any of those boys played hockey for more than fun.” She starts to put things in my freezer, and I pass the containers to her over the counter.

“He’s a professional hockey player, actually. He’s a defenseman for the Knights.”

At that, her eyebrows fly up to her hairline.

“I wish you’d date a nice engineering major or something.” She sighs.

“What would we have in common?” I laugh. “I promise he’s been good to me. I want you to give him a chance, okay? Don’t compare him to Vic.” I warn.

“Have you googled him?” She lowers her voice, and I roll my eyes.

“No.”

“Why not? Ignorance is not bliss, sweetheart.”

“I know, Mama. But he’s told me what I think I need to know, and we’re just taking it from there. Promise you’ll be nice?”

“I’m always nice, Koko.” She eyes me with a soft look in her eye. “If he treats you well, then I want to know him. Go tell him to stop hiding.” After rounding the counter-top and pressing a kiss to her cheek, I go to grab Tyler.

He looks up from where he’s sitting on my bed, a nervous look on his face. “Is it your dad?”

“Why do you look scared shitless?”

He rubs a hand over the back of his neck. “What if your parents don’t like me? What if they think I’m a player like you do?”

“First, it’s only my mom. Second, I don’t think you’re a player.”

He gives me a skeptical look, and I shrug sheepishly. “Okay, I don’t as much as I did before? Come on, my mom wants to meet you, and I think you’ll be fine.” I pull him up from the bed, tugging him towards the door. “What happened to all that bravado?”

“Hush up, minx.” He mumbles, but I feel him squeeze my hand the moment my mom comes into view. I survey him from the corner of my eye, genuinely surprised. He really is worried that she won’t like him. It’s a bit endearing.

I also realized that even though he told me he genuinely likes me that weekend...I never said it back. We haven’t talked about what this is or put a label on things. Maybe talking about it after my mom leaves will give him a little more peace of mind.

“Mom, this is Tyler. Tyler, this is my mama, Nanette.”

“You can call me Nan.” She smiles at him warmly, and mentally sigh in relief. “I’m going to grab me a glass of wine before the food gets ready, and you can tell me all about hockey.”

“I’ll get it for you,” Tyler says, pulling the bottle out that I’d put in the freezer earlier. Pulling down two glasses, he pours my mom and I some and passes them to us.

Then we all sit around the table, and I listen to him tell my mom all about how he got started playing hockey and what it means to him now. I mostly listen and let the two of them chat, offering answers here and there.

Ty goes to the kitchen to take the dish out of the oven, and my mom leans closer to me. “Okay, I like him. And he’s super darned cute. I guess he can stay.” She winks, and I smile.

Hopefully, he wants to.

But when my mom leaves, Bria calls me crying because she found out the guy she's dating came onto Sammy when she walked away, and she's pissed that her dating luck is so bad. All the girls are already with her, and I don't want to be a lousy friend.

I kiss Tyler goodbye and grab my keys to head to Bria's, and just resolve that we'll talk about things soon. I want him to know that I believe him, and I genuinely want him too.

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What does the parasympathetic nervous system do during exercise?" I read off the flashcard. Neiko is sitting on the floor, leaning her head against the inside of my leg while I run my hand through her hair gently.

It's been a familiar position these past few days. I've been coming over and helping Neiko study after my practices. It's a good way for me to help her and still get to spend time with her. It also helps her not to be so stressed out, apparently.

"It turns off and the heart rate increases."

"What's a satellite cell?"

"It's a muscle stem cell that's important to muscle hypertrophy."

"Give me a characteristic of neuromuscular junctions." I stroke the shell of her ear.

"One to one transmission of action potentials."

"What happens when you stimulate a gamma motor neuron?"

"Increase in sensitivity of the muscle spindle." She fires back. That's the end of this set of cards, and I set them on the table, moving my hands to her shoulders.

"Good job, baby. You only missed three."

"Thank you." She sighs, relaxing into my hands. "I really appreciate you helping."

"I enjoy it. And I think it's hot that you know so much. And I'm learning a few things too. It's nice."

"Did you imagine this is how you'd be spending your nights sometimes?"

“Not at all. But I’m learning to like a lot of things with you that I never imagined.” I lean down and tug her head back a little, kissing her lips.

There’s a knock on the door, and we pull apart.

“I’m not expecting anyone.” She rises from the floor gracefully, and I watch the sway of her hips as she walks away. Everything about her is attractive to me. “Who is it?” She asks, and they respond, but I can’t make out what they say.

When I don’t hear her say anything else or hear the door open, I look behind me, and she’s standing with her hand on the knob.

“Neiko?”

She turns to face me, gnawing on her bottom lip. There’s hesitation all in her body language, and I sit up. “What is it?”

“It’s my ex-boyfriend. I’ll see what he wants and get rid of him, okay?” Her eyes are a little wide, and she looks uncertain, nervous.

“I’ll be here. No worries.” The words leave my mouth, but my chest feels tight as I turn around and flip on the TV, turning to ESPN and watching the highlights.

I hear the door open and close, and I flinch a little.

My eyes are on the screen, but my mind is on all the possibilities of what’s happening right now and what she’s going to say when she comes back inside.

I still don’t know how she feels, not really. I mean, not in words. It *seems* like she’s as interested as I am, and she told me that her mom liked me a lot...but I don’t know. Usually, I avoid labels and defining shit. But with her, I just want to know that she’s in this the same way I am. I’ve just been a little bitch about bringing it up because I don’t know what she’s going to say.

I know all too well that someone can seem entirely in the moment with you, and still not want anything serious.

Because that’s me.

And I know that people can promise things and still not follow through. I’ve tried hard not to be that person because I know what how that disappointment feels.

But I know that the breakup wasn’t her decision, and she feels like it was her fault because she stopped giving him the time that he wanted from her.

I'm jealous that he's out there with her right now, and I'm nervous that if he's come back to tell her that he made a mistake...that she'll pick him over me. I don't like this feeling at all, feeling like I'm about to lose something.

I must've fallen asleep, and I rub a hand over my face when Neiko wakes me gently.

"Hey." Her voice is quiet, and it immediately puts me on edge.

"What time is it?" I sit up straight, blinking away sleep.

"Later than I expected. Things took a little longer than I thought they would." She lowers her gaze, taking a deep breath, and my heart drops to my feet. I know what that hesitation means.

I know what's coming.

"I'm glad you woke me. I wanted to talk to you about something, but I wasn't sure when to bring it up."

"Oh okay, well...you first, then."

"I think we should end things here. We had a good time together, but maybe it's just not realistic for me to think I can jump into something serious."

I expect her to nod her head and agree with me, to tell me that it was what she was coming back to say too. But *I* said it first, I got the upper hand this time.

No surprises, and no fucking disappointment because I care too damned much.

But she doesn't do any of that.

She moves away from the couch and crosses her arms, her face completely shut down.

"Well, I guess it's best for you to leave if you feel that way."

And when those words tip off of her lips, I know that I've made a huge fucking mistake, and I can't take it back now.

She won't believe whatever comes out of my mouth, and I wouldn't blame her one bit. The worst part is knowing immediately that I assumed the wrong thing, but not being able to do anything about it. Not being able to drop to my knees and beg her to forget I said anything. Beg her to forget that I'm a selfish asshole who was only thinking about his own insecurities.

So, I grab my things, and I leave. Before the door shuts completely, I hear a sob, and it rips me into fucking pieces.

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It's hard trying not to be a sad sack when you want to cry all the time because you're bewildered that the metaphorical rug was pulled out from under you.

That's how I feel, at least.

I didn't see Tyler ending things *at all*. It's been two weeks since I've seen him last, and I still haven't told my friends that anything happened.

Hell, I doubt they'd believe me even if I did. It wasn't precisely in-character for me. And I shouldn't be feeling this damn much.

I don't think I felt so forlorn when Vic ended things, and we were together for two and a half years.

Tyler Saxton just got under my skin in a way that I never expected and didn't see coming.

When Vic showed up at my door, I didn't feel nearly as excited as I thought I would. He was right to break up with me, and I accepted that I hadn't been a very good girlfriend. But I didn't try to change his mind or beg him to give me another chance.

I think part of me was a little relieved, even though I missed the little things that you get used to in a relationship.

Vic told me that he felt like enough time had passed for us to give things another shot. He asked me just to hear him out, so I did.

When he finished laying out his thoughts, he told me not to give him an answer yet, but to think about it and let him know at the end of the week.

He didn't try to kiss me or overwhelm me with his knowledge of what makes me soften towards him. He was very respectful and not pushy, and I appreciated that he didn't try to force an answer out of me immediately.

Vic was never an asshole, so I wasn't surprised. He's pretty sweet. And attractive. And smart. And I love how passionate he is about playing football, because I love football too.

But I just didn't feel the pull for him the same way I felt with Ty. I told him I appreciated him coming by and I'd let him know in a few days what I thought.

Then I was going to tell Tyler everything, and how I felt about him, and see what he thought. So when he said he wanted to talk about something first, I thought that maybe he was going to beat me to it.

Maybe he was going to make things official. Which hey, I know that it sounds a little childish, but I think it's important not to assume things.

And clearly, I was right.

Even after Tyler left and I was sobbing into a chocolate sundae, I still didn't feel like calling Vic back and accepting giving things another try.

I didn't want to hold onto that relationship just because he was offering me commitment and Tyler wasn't.

Because part of me still wants that damn hockey player, even if he's decided that he's finished with me.

I stop pretending I'm listening to whatever Dr.Lane is saying about epidemiology, and slide my laptop into my bag, leaving the room quietly.

I just need to find my keys, and then I can go home and wallow with some more Days of Our Lives before I have to be normal and report to the training room.

I finally find my key ring in the bottom of my bag, and I'm trying to yank them out, but I think they're stuck on something.

"Neiko." The low, velvet-lined voice is immediately recognizable, and I drop my keys back in my bag, jerking my head up to find alluring blue eyes.

It's a stab right to the heart. I don't know why it hurts so badly, maybe because I thought there was potential so I'm mourning that too.

"Meeting Rob?" I reference his friend that's my regular teacher.

"I was hoping to catch you." He pins me with his unrelenting stare, and I want to look away as much as I don't.

Pathetic.

"For?"

"To talk, to apologize."

“Okay. You have. I’m going to go now.” I clutch my bag tighter against my shoulder and start to move around me

“Please. I promise I won’t take up a lot of your time.” There’s a quiet earnestness in his voice that chips away at my defenses, and I give a jerky nod, taking zero pleasure in his low exhale of relief.

We walk until we’re in a secluded area near the school’s water fountain, and we sit on a low bench. I make sure to keep a little distance between us.

“How’s your knee?” I ask politely.

“Great. Better than everyone expected. I’m doing more runs with the team, and I should be able to start again next week. I guess my caution paid off.”

“That’s good,” I say primly, avoiding looking at him. I don’t want to be reminded how sexy he is.

There’s silence for long moments, and then he starts to speak.

“You were something more to me from the first moment we met. I know that sounds like the most cliché shit imaginable, but it’s true. Something I never told you is that I had problems with my mom, too. Except she was just good at saying one thing and then doing someone entirely different. I can’t count how many times she promised me she’d be there or would do something, and then I was just disappointed because I kept believing her. So in a way, me avoiding having anything real, anything where promises would be made - was my way of trying to run from that constant disappointment that I felt growing up.” I can hear him swallow, and my lower lip trembles because I know exactly what he means.

I went through the same things when my mom was drinking. She’d forget to do things, or she’d say she would and then she was nowhere to be found. That was part of what made my dad leave with my little sister and me because he said he didn’t want us only to remember being let down by her.

“I told you about my mom; I would’ve understood where you were coming from.” I stare hard at the spidery cracks in the gray concrete.

“I’m not exactly the best at sharing everything that’s in my head, and I didn’t think about how much it still affected me.”

“So what’s changed now?”

“Someone might’ve told me to pull my head out of my ass because he was sick of seeing one of his favorite athletic trainers seem so down.”

“I didn’t know Rob knew about us.” I look at him in surprise.

“He didn’t, not really. I’d asked him if I’d be breaking any rules by seeing you initially, but I didn’t tell him who you were. I guess he put two and two together.”

“I asked one of the directors if I’d get into any trouble by seeing you too,” I confess. “I guess we were on the same page about that, at least.”

“I was the biggest idiot imaginable. I was scared that you were going to tell me you wanted to be with Vic, and I wanted you so damn much that I thought I’d hurt you before you could hurt me.”

“You’re a doofus.” I grind my teeth, annoyed. “Vic wanted to get back with me, yeah, but I was coming to tell you that I wanted to be with *you*.”

“I knew that the moment I saw your face and you told me I could leave. I knew I fucked up. I *know* I fucked up, and I know you don’t owe me anything, but...I want to be with you, Neiko. I’ll do whatever you want, however you want. I just want another chance to show you that this isn’t some fling to me.”

“And what happens if you want to run scared again?” I ask seriously. “I’m not perfect at all, but I think we at least need to both commit to trying to be open with each other and talking about stuff when it comes up. Not making assumptions and acting only on those.”

“I can’t say you’re not going to want to knock me upside the head sometimes when I’m being thick, but I promise I’ll give it my best. 250%. Exactly what I give in every game, I’ll give to you, if you let me.” I give him a once-over, gauging his sincerity.

And he seems pretty sincere.

When it comes down to it, I haven’t stopped thinking of him for a single day since I last saw him. Yeah, he did something stupid, but I think we both have things to work on.

Mainly just communicating with each other and being transparent.

“Okay.” I trail my eyes over his scruffy cheeks, and reach out a hand to touch him. “You need a shave.”

“I know.” He presses my hand to his face with his own. “So, we’re in this? You’re officially my woman.”

“And I guess that makes you my man, too.”

“Damned straight.” He murmurs and kisses me slow and deep. It’s a make up for lost time type of kiss, and heat only grows under my skin as it goes on. “Thank you for giving me another chance.”

“Thank you for not giving up for good. Because I definitely wouldn’t have chased you.” I lean my head on his shoulder, and we sit there, watching the water spout up from the fountain.

“Make-up sex?” He suggests, and I nod my head gratefully, springing up from the bench.

“First one to my apartment wins.” I start to race towards the parking lot, but he stops me with a gentle grip.

“I think it’s time for you to see my place.”

“Oh snap, this *is* serious.” I laugh, even though I feel a little relief. I know that he doesn’t have women over, and it warms me to know that he’s really taking different steps here.

“I’m all in, baby, and don’t you forget it.”

EPILOGUE

NEIKO

I'm deliriously happy, and I want to shout it from the rooftops.

I graduated college but stayed on to work with the football team as an athletic trainer. I did that for a year, and then an intern position opened up with the Knights. Ty's coach practically begged me to apply for it.

I'd gotten to know him and some of the other players pretty well by then, and I agreed, even though I figured more qualified people would apply too.

To my surprise, and no one else's apparently, I got it. Coach said he thought that I had a really good head on my shoulders, and I interacted with the team well.

He also assured me that even if something happened between Ty and me, my job would be completely separate and he'd only base things on my merit.

I appreciated that because I was most hesitant about mixing our lives that way. But honestly? It's been fucking amazing. I'm learning from some talented trainers, and there are rumblings that they're going to ask me to stay on in a permanent position.

Honestly, nothing would make me happier. It turns out; hockey is amazing. I love watching them on the ice, the fast pace of the game, and the edge of aggressiveness is hot too.

Especially when it's my man out there kicking ass and taking names. It's been a little over two years since we met.

Definitely the longest time he's been with one woman, but you wouldn't know it by the way he acts. He's a natural-born boyfriend; I like to tell him.

Speaking of being born, my 24th birthday is tomorrow, and I think I'm doing pretty damn well when it comes to where I was hoping to be.

I've got a cool job, an amazing man, and my family is thankfully alive and well. My friends are doing well too and that damned group chat is still as lively as ever since everyone is spread out now.

I met Ty's dad last month when he came into town. He lives in Alaska and spends a lot of his time on the boat that he bought. My dad and Ty spend a lot of time together, I mean, I think he might like him more than *me*.

I unlock the door to our apartment and take off my sneakers by the door, dropping my bag to the floor. Ty hates when I do that, but I'll grab it later. Or he'll swat my ass a few times for it, whichever comes first.

Spanking is a regular part of our fun now, and I can't believe I only started it when I met him. I almost crave the feeling of his hand on my ass now, it's a little twisted but also, amazing.

What was really fun, was when we role played student and teacher and he introduced me to the fiery sweetness of a paddle with heart-shaped cutouts. It was the best kind of burn, even if my butt was sore for a few days.

Desire is growing in my body because of the memory, I pad into the bedroom, peering around the corner to see if he's in the room. He's sitting on the bed, unlacing his sneakers, and he glances up with a warm smile when he hears me.

"Hey, baby girl." He notices my empty hands and gives me a look, to which I smile innocently at. "You dropped your bag at the door again, didn't you."

I put a knee on the bed on one side of him, then the other, hooking my arms around his neck and settling my butt to his thighs.

"Whoops. I'll grab it later."

"Mhm." He drops a kiss on my shoulder. "How was dinner with your sister?"

"Good, she sends her greetings, and wants to know if you'll do that mud race with her and a few other people."

"Oh yeah, that'll be fun. You gonna do it with us?"

"Do I *look* like I want to crawl through the mud for obstacle courses?" I grimace, shaking my head. "Count me out. I'll cheer from the finish line or something." I pull back and take in his features. I swear he gets more

attractive to me every day. He's gotten rid of his facial hair and is more clean shaven all the time. It's just as hot as the short beard, if not hotter.

He's got this sexy dimple right below his mouth that makes me want to just dip my tongue into it whenever I see it.

"I'm horny." He speaks against my neck, and those two words send a jolt to my clit.

His dick. I want it.

"How do you want me?" I stroke my hands through his hair, raking my nails lightly over his scalp.

Instead of answering, he shifts back a little and moves me off the bed so that I'm standing. Then he turns me around, and I'm facing the large standing mirror that's usually inside of our closet.

Oh fuck me, I can't believe this didn't cross my mind before.

He starts tugging my jeans down my hips, and I kick them away when they reach my feet. Next is my tee, then my bra and my bikini panties. He gets rid of his clothes, and I watch him behind me giving long strokes to his heavy cock while he sits on the beg. Thick legs wide, and I can see the veins in his forearm that I think are so fucking sexy too. The sight of him is so erotic, and I sink my teeth into my bottom lip, breathing shallower.

"1-10?" He asks.

"Mmm, 5," I admit, and he gets a devious smile on his face. It's his way of asking how ready I am. Ten is *dripping wet, shove your cock in my right now, no delays.*

"Can't have that." Husky and sensual, that voice of his. I can hear it in my dreams, and it's the most comforting sound to me.

He tugs me by my hips until the back of my legs hit the end of the bed, and he's framing me with his powerful thighs. Starting with his hands on my shoulders, he caresses down my arms and over my hips, up my sides so he can trace tantalizing circles on the sides of my breasts that make me shudder, then back down my abdomen and pauses with his hands over my sex.

It's a little surreal watching his every move, and seeing the arousal on his face that matches mine. It's like our own personal porno, in real time.

He thrums my clit with his thumb, and I blow out a soft breath, watching and feeling the sensitive nub throb and grow harder under his attention. With his other hand, he swipes two fingers over my slit, testing until I part for him and he sinks into my hot pussy.

“I love how big your clit is, fucking sexy.” He kisses my back and goes lower to the swell above my ass, pressing a kiss there too. While his hands continue to wreak havoc all over my sex, he bites and licks at my ass cheeks, nuzzling his face in them. I’d be amused if I wasn’t so damned heated from his touch.

He does this to me, to my body, with a single look sometimes. It’s insane. Ty sends fire streaking through my veins and pure need rising in my soul with every brush of his attention on me.

“Thank you.” My eyes flutter shut because the thrust of his fingers is stealing my sanity. I shift on my feet, getting restless, but I let him run the show in here, and he runs it so well.

“You need more from me?” He sinks his teeth into my ass, and I moan, pressing back against his mouth.

“Yes, please.”

Switching our positions quicker than I can follow, he yanks me so that I’m teetering on the edge of the bed and puts his massive shoulders under my thighs. At the first suckle of his mouth on my wet folds, I whimper, watching my toes curl in the mirror. Seeing his dark head between my thighs, the muscles in his muscular back, seeing this powerful man knelt on his knees to worship *me* with his mouth...I almost shatter into a million brilliant pieces.

He licks and kisses and breathes life into me with his mouth, even as he steals my breath, and I sink my fingers into his hair, clutching him to me. I’m growing wetter by the second, and I can’t take it anymore.

“10, baby, 10.” I moan. He shares the taste of my juices with me with a delicious, passion- fueled kiss and reverses us again. He positions the tip of his cock at my pussy, and I sink onto him, filled inch by inch by his thickness and unable to stop my faint gasps as he stuffs me full of his length. The contrast in our skin tones is erotic too, and I watch the deep pink flesh of my cunt part around him, sucking him in.

I see myself through his eyes, this way. I look...passionate. And alive. And sexual...majestic. And he looks the same, my powerful, sexy man holding me in his arms and having my back in more ways than one.

He moves my foot up to to the bed, and I bend my knee, the angle allowing me to see everything as he brings me down on his erection and I writhe against him with every movement.

Sparks. Heat. Light. I'm one aching mass of lust, of love, of pure, unadulterated need and desire.

Only he can satisfy me this way. When watching us gets to be too much, I turn my face to his and take his lips in a needy kiss, our tongues dueling with each other as our fucking speeds up. Guttural sounds, low moans, and the slaps of skin on skin fill the room. He fills his hands with my breasts, pinching and pulling at my nipples as he growls against my skin, whispering heated words in my ear and questions that I can't even string words together to answer.

"Look at how fucking hot we are together, how sexy you are to me. Do you like seeing me fill you up? You like watching this beautiful pussy of yours take me so easily, suck me in and not let me go?"

Fucking yes to all of the above.

I tremble in his arms and fist the covers with my hands, eyes almost rolling back in my head as my orgasm rushes over me. Seconds later, I feel his cock thicken, and he fills me up with his come, sending small aftershocks through me. I watch him in the mirror, eyes heavy-lidded and feeling completely content, my hand stroking whatever part of him that I can reach while his do the same.

No matter who he used to be, there's zero doubt in my mind that this man is mine.

And I'm his.

"So, I have an early birthday gift for you." Ty rolls over and reaches into the nightstand drawer, pulling out a box. We've just been lying here and talking about our days before we drift off to sleep.

It looks suspiciously like a ring box, and my chest gets tight. When he looks back at my face, he smoothes the worried lines from my forehead and laughs.

"I'm not proposing marriage baby girl, don't worry."

"Oh, thank god. I would've hated to have said no, but I would've." I rest my head back on my pillow, facing him on my side.

"I know you want to wait a few years to get married, so I won't ask you yet because I'm not fucking with a long engagement." He starts. He flips

open the box, and it's a really stunning and sparkling band that looks like flower vines, then there's a rose in the middle with a single diamond.

It's perfect and simple, and I love it.

"This is a promise ring. It's my promise to you that when you're ready, I'll replace it with a wedding band. It's my promise to you that I'm in this for good, and you're the only woman I want. Since you won't let me give you my last name yet," He takes my right hand and slides it onto my ring finger. "We'll let this hold my place. Okay?"

I nod rapidly, straddling him and covering his face with kisses.

"I love you I love you I love you," I whisper between them, feeling his body shake under me as he laughs and envelops me in a tight bear hug.

"I love you too, baby. Always."

The End

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



In addition to the people in her life that indulge her crazy - Aja Cole loves men that smell phenomenal, food that tastes amazing, and something that college makes it hard to do called sleep.

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