

SOME SECRETS ARE BETTER REVEALED AT SEA...

# Sailor's Delight



CJ HANDLEY

A SECOND HONEYMOON NOVEL

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By CJ Handley

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# Chapter 1

Jenn loved surprises almost as much as she hated waiting for things. That made her presence here on the cruise equally wonderful and loathsome. She hadn't been planning on a cruise until the very last minute — surprise! Yet here she was, doing her least favorite thing in the world: waiting.

She adjusted the name tag secured by magnets to the delicate silk of her designer blouse. They'd tried to set her up with a pin name tag. A *pin*? Really? There was absolutely no way she was going to push a *pin* through this blouse, or any of the clothes she'd brought to wear on this cruise. She'd kindly, but firmly insisted on an alternative, and one of the crew members had finally found her a magnetic one. She'd expressed deep gratitude to the man, who'd grinned and given her the thumbs up, but whom she'd sworn she'd heard whisper, "Bitch," as he walked away.

Her gut had twisted in equal parts anger and shame. She didn't make a big deal out of nothing. As a matter of survival, she didn't sweat the small stuff. But if he'd known how much this blouse had cost, he might have understood her hesitation in putting holes where there weren't any.

She adjusted the blouse and admired the way it both fit and made her feel. It was a baby blue, deep plunge, sleeveless v-neck peplum blouse, and it fit her like a glove. She smiled at the mental image of herself in the mirror before she'd left the room: her breasts, her hair, and her makeup had all looked amazing. The chest was generous enough to fit the girls, and it created a slimming false waist just under her rib cage, while the flaring fabric at the bottom of the blouse draped out away from the belly where she carried the weight that her sexist doctor insisted she needed to lose, but that had kept her from neither the cycling nor the normally *very* active sex life she so enjoyed, as he so frequently and obviously implied it would. She clearly needed a new doctor.

She filed that decision away for later contemplation and action. She was here on this cruise for one reason, and one reason only: to end the dry

spell that she'd been in for the last several months, with no outside distractions. She adjusted the skirt that was lip-biting-nervous-smile too-short and went back to waiting. Waiting and watching.

She always found people-watching on a cruise ship a fascinating exercise. The procession of the extremes of society never failed to amuse.

She sat on the ostentatious leather sofa of the cruise ship's meager library, an unopened book on the arm next to her, legs crossed and one foot bouncing as she watched out the glass windows and doors. One hand cupped her cheek, the other idly stroking the freshly-shaven skin of her thigh. Was there anything as satisfying as newly-shaved legs? She was almost tempted to go straight back to the room, take off each and every piece of expensive clothing she was wearing and jump naked between the freshly-laundered sheets. The combination of two of her favorite things was almost enough to pull her away from her waiting. Almost.

She dropped the idle hand to her lap. No more distractions. The parade of bodies was beginning.

The evening meal was one of her favorite parts of any cruise. One got to see so many different kinds of people. She loved telling herself stories about those who paraded past the windows of the library.

They must have come from nearly all walks of life. Obviously, being a public cruise, the likelihood of there being any members of the ultra-rich were nearly zero. If you had money— real money— you certainly wouldn't be sharing your cruise with others. That didn't mean that there weren't those on board who were above PRETENDING that they were the ultra rich. These were the ones with the elegant, full-length gowns and actual tuxedos, taking the "formal" in formal evening wear *very* seriously. One such couple glided past the window, the woman's hair crusted with glittering costume jewelry (again, anyone wearing anything real that looked like that wouldn't be on a public cruise) sparkling at her crown, her throat, both wrists, and her fingers. Jenn glanced at the woman's name-tag. "Caroline" clearly paid no attention to the "put it all on, take one off" rule when it came to accessories. "Stephen" was hardly any better. The gold watch chain, the tails, the white bow tie reminded Jenn either of a penguin or the Titanic, she couldn't decide which. Maybe Stephen worked at a

hedge fund, but not a very good one. Or maybe he was a lawyer of some kind. Maybe Caroline was a doctor. Or a director of a nonprofit. They had enough money to think it made them different, but not enough to actually be any different from most of the other people on board.

Jenn smiled at “Chloe” and “Desire,” the couple walking past in complementing bohemian-inspired sundress and paisley print button up shirt with suspenders, both of them sporting very chic wide-brimmed hats. They both smiled back.

The group of college-aged young men that walked past needed no back-story and were too many to read name tags. Their elevator eyes (the kind that traveled a woman’s body up and down) and their exchanged comments, then their return to staring and smiling at her were more than enough to tell her everything vital about the group. She uncrossed and crossed with the other leg, taking a moment to stretch the leg out, letting the boys get a good look at a piece of what none of them had any chance at scoring.

Their wide eyes, cupped hands hiding smiles, agitated hops, and muffled shouts of appreciation from behind the glass were exactly the reactions she was looking for. She blinked slowly, smiled ever so slightly, and gently but firmly shook her head.

Laughing silently to herself as the group bounced away, the laugh died in her throat when “Casey” walked into the library. The tightness of the long-sleeve button up white shirt across his shoulders and around his biceps told her a few things. Casey spent far too much time at the gym (obviously skipping leg day,) and he either didn’t know enough to size a shirt that fit properly, or he mistakenly thought the poor fit accentuated his physique. The muscles were apparent, but so was his inability to even move normally. She’d had enough first-time experiences in corporate settings with men like this to be wary as he entered. Men like this respected her position in the boardroom far more than they respected her position on the couch.

His slow walk, eyes carefully averted and aloof from Jenn’s outstretched leg and cleavage made her doubt her snap judgment only for a moment. Watching him closely, Jenn sat back, turning her full attention on

Casey. She didn't have to wait long for the facade to fall. His eyes swept blindly over the titles on the bookshelves, never once lingering on anything in particular. When he turned away, it was to turn the long way— Jenn's way— to stare back out at the hallway outside the library. As his head turned, Jenn watched his eyes slide up and down her body, and a smile play at his lips. When he finished "checking the hallway," he turned again, his eyes staring fixedly at Jenn's chest, then glancing up and startling slightly when he made eye contact with her.

Casey smiled and laughed cockily. He put his hands up and turned from the bookshelf, adjusting the rolled sleeves that strained at his forearms and shook down the silver chain bracelet, then tucked in his shirt, leaving his hands on his waist. "All right, you caught me." Jenn didn't smile. She was still waiting. With just a bit more concern, now.

"Jenn, huh? With two n's?" Casey smiled, his white bleached teeth gleaming, and his perfectly coiffed hair catching the glint of the room's strategic dramatic spotlighting overhead lights, casting a halo around his head.

"Mm-hmm," Jenn said, her RBF firmly affixed. She had far too much experience with men like Casey. Even the slightest encouraging act he would receive as a glowing signal for more predatory engagement and unwanted pursuit.

"I'm Casey." He held out his tanned hand, an easy smile on his slightly parted lips.

She pointed at the name tag on his shirt pocket.

"I know."

He laughed, like she had made a joke. "Right."

He sat down at the other end of the couch, spreading his legs as wide as the crotch of his pants would allow him to, and turned himself to face Jenn, one hand mirroring her posture of the arm on the couch cupping her face.

"So, are you waiting to go to dinner, too?"

What an asinine question. Her every urge was to say so. But again, wisdom and caution won out; men like Casey typically didn't handle



rejection or even critique very well.

“Mm-hmm,” she repeated.

Casey mock groaned. “Oh, come on. Don’t be like that.”

“Like what?” she asked coolly.

He groaned again. “Like that! All stiff and aloof. I’m just trying to make polite conversation.”

Jenn clenched her jaw.

“Uh-oh.” Casey laughed again, that false, patronizing laugh so unique to men who chose to act like him. “What’d I say?”

Jenn nearly audibly let out a sigh of relief when the door of the library swung open again and another man walked in. As the newcomer made a beeline to the bookshelf, Jenn could hear him mutter, “All right, let’s see what we have here.”

Casey’s eyes followed the man, sizing him up and taking him in just as Jenn was doing. Well, maybe not *just* as Jenn was doing.

“Trey’s” suit was nice— no fancy tux like Stephen, but it fit him well, unlike Casey. His touchable, wavy hair looked clean and well-taken care of, and brushed the tops of his shoulders as he ran his hand back through it, whispering, “Okay...”

Jenn glanced at Casey, who looked away from Trey, his lips pursed, staring with a look of annoyance at the door as he waited for the stranger to leave.

Jenn turned back to Trey. He had squatted down, perusing the titles closer to the floor, still muttering. Jenn found herself turning her head, admiring the way his pants now hugged his rear. She smiled.

“Really?” Casey was looking at her. Jenn glanced at him, shrugged, then raised her eyebrows and smiled, returning her gaze to Trey’s bottom near the floor.

“Bruh, for real? Just pick one!”

Trey turned, smiled with only one side of his mouth, and apologized. “Shoot, I was talking to myself, wasn’t I? I’m sorry; I do that sometimes.”

Casey looked away, fuming. Trey made eye contact with Jenn and winked slightly. Jenn’s stomach erupted in butterflies.

“Aha!” Trey selected a book from the shelf and stood up, pushing up off his knees and groaning loudly as he did so. “Boy, I am not getting any younger!” He adjusted his glasses as he read the back of the book under his breath.

Jenn watched his lips move underneath the closely-trimmed mustache and beard that he sported. They were full lips, if a bit chapped. Her eyes traveled down across his broad shoulders, his thick chest and belly bulge appreciatively. Trey pushed one side of the jacket he wore aside, resting a hand on his hip as he read. Jenn’s smile grew wider, and her foot began bouncing again. She wasn’t waiting anymore.

“Are you serious?” Jenn heard Casey whisper as he adjusted on the couch.

“Hey, have you read this?” Trey held the book up, turning the cover of a steamy romance novel Jenn had read several months ago out for Casey to read.

“Hell naw, bruh. Just decide already.”

Trey turned the book around again, studying all its surfaces as if undecided. “A friend recommended it recently.”

“I’m sure it’s fine. You should take it and head in.” Casey’s voice was impatient.

Trey turned to look out at the hallway. Folks were still milling about, waiting for the doors of the ballroom to open. “Naw, they’re still waiting to go in. We got time.”

With that, he walked to the couch, still examining the book cover, and wiggled his way down onto the cushion between Jenn and Casey, muttering, “Just gonna slide right in here.”

Casey leaped up as if he'd been stung by a bee. "Bruh, what the actual hell?!"

Trey looked up, the book held open and his mouth agape. "I'm sorry, was this seat taken?"

Casey turned to gesture to the empty seats and couches placed about the room. "There are a ton of empty seats, man!"

Trey nodded and pointed into the hallway. "No, I know. You were just both already sitting here, I figured it must have the best view to see when the doors open."

Casey pointed around the room. "It's a glass wall! They all have good views!"

Jenn could see that Casey was only escalating. She decided the situation needed to be brought to a swift end. She linked one arm with Trey's and rested the other hand on his leg.

"Oh!" Trey made a quiet exclamation and looked down at the hand on his leg in exaggerated surprise, then looked back at Casey, grinning sheepishly.

Casey glanced back and forth between them, his face an open mask of disgust, and huffed. "Whatever. Y'all deserve each other."

Jenn wagged her fingers at his back as he left the room, glad to be rid of him. Casey had turned out to be exactly as she'd imagined him to be.

"Do you have enough room?" Trey asked, glancing down and making as if to scoot over slightly to give Jenn some space on the couch. She pulled his arm to keep him from moving further away.

"I'm fine."

Trey smiled warmly. "All right, well this is cozy!" Then he turned back to his book. Crossing one knee across the other, he opened it to the back cover. "So this is supposed to be pretty good, huh?"

"I loved it."

“Really? Huh. Well, what the heck.” Trey flipped to the first page, glanced outside at the growing crowd, and began to read.

“Thanks for stepping in, but you took your sweet time.”

“Hmm?” Trey looked up.

Jenn nodded out the glass doors, where Casey could still be seen, walking around the hallway angrily, flexing occasionally in obvious agitation.

“Oh, I didn’t want to step in the middle of anything where I wasn’t needed, is all.”

Jenn chuckled. “I was afraid you hadn’t seen me at all!”

Trey’s eyes returned to his book, but they twinkled in suppressed mirth. “Oh, I don’t think so. I clocked you the moment I stepped off the elevator.”

Jenn blushed in pleasure. She still had it. Approaching forty, and she could still turn all the right heads.

“I think the doors are open.” She pointed at the movement of the crowd outside the doors.

“Hmm?” Trey had already returned to his book. “Oh!”

He stood up and slipped the book into the waist pocket of his jacket, then held out his hand. “Shall we?”

Jenn smiled, slipping her hand into his. “Absolutely.” Trey helped her to stand, and his eyes went wide in open-mouthed amazement.

“Jenn, you are absolutely stunning.”

Grinning now, she turned a full circle for him. “You like it?”

Trey nodded. “Very much!”

“If you like these, you should see what I’m wearing underneath!” With that, Jenn turned and walked for the door, smiling to herself as she left Trey blinking his eyes rapidly and grinning, as well.

“Well, okay!” she heard him mutter.

Trey pulled out her chair for her and pushed it in when she sat down. “Well, what are the chances that I’d be assigned to the same table as three of the most outstanding folks on the ship?” Trey looked across at the bohemian couple Jenn had noticed earlier and smiled. “Trey. He/him. Pleasure to meet you.”

The couple seemed instantly and measurably more at ease, then smiled. Chloe smiled then held out her hand. “Chloe: she/her.”

Trey smiled and shook Chloe’s hand. “Chloe.”

Desire stood and reached across to shake Trey’s hand enthusiastically. “Desire: they/them.”

Trey returned Desire’s smile. “Pleasure to meet you both.”

Jenn reached across. “Jenn: she/her.”

Staring at Chloe, Jenn said, “Chloe, you actually look really familiar. Have we met?”

Chloe laughed uncomfortably. “Do I?”

Desire laughed, as well. “Believe it or not, she honestly gets that ALL the time.”

Desire pointed between Jenn and Trey. “How long have you two been together?”

Jenn turned to look at Trey, who looked at her expectantly, clearly waiting to follow her lead. “Believe it or not, he actually just rescued me from some lunkhead named Casey.”

Trey laughed. “Or, looked at differently, she just saved me from the embarrassment of being beaten to a bloody pulp by said lunkhead.”

Desire and Chloe exchanged a look, then both smiled again.

“Where are you both from?” Chloe asked.

“Actually,” Jenn spoke up, just as Trey opened his mouth to speak. “I have sort of an odd request to make.”

The other three diners at the table went quiet, waiting for her to finish.

Jenn laughed. “I don’t know about you, but I did not come on this cruise to talk or think about life outside of it. Is that weird?”

Desire and Chloe looked at each other and smiled nervously, but Desire turned quickly back. “Sure. I get it.”

Trey just looked at Jenn, a smile on his lips.

“Are you alright with that?” Jenn asked him.

“Sure. Live purely in the moment. I like it. Yeah, I’m good with that.”

Jenn sighed. “Thank you all so much. I just want to be able to focus on nothing but the next seven days!”

“I’ll drink to that!” Chloe raised her glass of water.

“Oh, no,” Jenn said. “This is an adults-only cruise! Unless any of you choose not to drink—“ she paused to check. Chloe, Desire, and Trey each shook their heads. “—we’re not toasting with anything but alcohol!” She flagged down a passing server to request a bottle.

When their glasses were filled, Jenn smiled pleasantly at Chloe. “You were saying?”

Chloe raised her glass, her eyes dancing between her partner and her new friends. “To the next seven days of bliss!”

The other three raised their glasses. As Chloe and Desire grinned into each others’ faces and exchanged a quick kiss, Jenn turned to look at Trey.

“To bliss,” she echoed.

“To the coming absolute bliss,” Trey said, staring into her eyes.

As they drank, Jenn knew bliss wouldn't be the only thing coming. She'd make absolutely certain of it.

The meal passed quickly. Chloe and Desire were a couple up for a challenge, and they leaned into Jenn's request to stay grounded in the moment. Their excited conversation covered everything from which onboard shows they were looking forward to, to which outings and activities they'd signed up for. When the last dessert had been finished and the table was cleared, Chloe and Desire stood up.

"We're going to head up to the deck," Chloe said. She turned to smile at Desire. "This is my first time at sea; I don't want to miss the sunset." She looked at both Trey and Jenn. "Would you like to come?"

Jenn, a little tipsy, heard the potential for the pun and smiled. She very much would like to come, but not on the deck. Not tonight, anyway.

"No, thank you." She turned to look at Trey. "What about you, Trey?"

Trey smiled at Chloe and Desire. "Your first sunset at sea? That's something you'll never forget, and one of the most romantic things in existence. You don't want a third wheel like me crowding and making things awkward for you. You go right ahead. I'm gonna keep an eye on Ms. Jenn, I think."

Jenn waved him off playfully, but she winked at Chloe and Desire when Trey turned back to them.

The couple smiled in unspoken understanding of Jenn's intent and bid the other two good night, walking hand in hand out of the ballroom.

Jenn leaned over onto the table, cupping her chin in one hand, the other crossed under her breasts. She was keenly aware of the effect that the position had on the girls. She was planning on it.

Trey looked into her eyes and smiled warmly. "Now, what am I going to do with you?"

She giggled. "How am I going to do you?" she mimicked back.

He laughed. “Now I know you’re drunk. Let’s get you to your room.”

Jenn groaned. “Don’t be like that.”

Trey stood and offered her his hand, which she took gladly, enjoying the warmth of his palm against her fingertips.

“It’s a week-long cruise. I promise I’m not going anywhere.” Trey smiled as he gently folded her arm under his and led her toward the elevators. He nodded at the buttons. “Which deck did you end up on?”

Jenn couldn’t take her eyes away from Trey’s. She’d never met another man who consistently met her eyes as he did, especially given what she was wearing. “You have really beautiful eyes,” she said suddenly.

He smiled. “Thanks. I’ve always thought they were some of my more impressive features.” He laughed, then repeated, “Which deck?”

“Hmm?” She turned her attention to the rows of buttons waiting to be lit by purpose, driving those riding the elevator on to bigger and better things. “Twelve,” she said slowly, thinking.

Trey smiled. “Same as me. That will certainly make things more convenient.” He tapped the corresponding button.

“What things, exactly, Trey? Tell me exactly what sorts of things would you like to conveniently do with me?” Jenn turned, rotating her arm in his so that she could clasp him with both arms around his slightly soft middle (she adored that about him), pressing her body up against his so that he could feel every curve of hers.

Still staring saint-like into her eyes, Trey smiled tenderly. He placed his hands carefully on her back, approximately where her bra strap would be, if she were wearing one. His big hands gently cupped the soft flesh there as he bent to whisper softly in her ear, “All the things.” Jenn shivered deliciously.

The elevator door dinged open, and Trey gently maneuvered her around so that she was facing out. Taking her left hand in his, he placed his right hand on the curve of her waist beneath the baby blue peplum blouse.



She dropped her hand to cover his and squeezed with the left as he led—practically danced—her out of the elevator.

“What room number?” he asked quietly when they reached the branch in the hallway.

“Twelve three fifty-nine.” She pointed with her head, pressing his hand harder to her waist and trying to slide it lower, onto her hip. He stubbornly stayed exactly where he was.

“Very convenient,” he said. “I’m literally a door down and across the hall.”

“Very convenient,” she echoed, taking in his scent. Tobacco scent, not actual tobacco, with what may have been some sort of bay rum mixture? She breathed deeply. He smelled so good.

“Twelve three-sixty,” he said quietly.

For the first time that evening, she watched his eyes leave her face and wander over her body. She pretended he was looking for more than just her keycard. She shivered slightly again, goose pimples covering her skin.

“Are you cold?” he asked, concern in his voice.

“Not at all,” Jenn said, pushing back into him. He was so delightfully soft. Muscles were one thing to look at, but another to actually experience. The thought of pushing up against someone big and knotted like Casey made Jenn slightly nauseous at the moment. Give her a man with a little bit of padding on him any day. Give her a man like Trey...

“Where are you hiding your keycard?” There was a laugh in his voice. She looked up into his gently smiling eyes. Without hesitation, she slowly and deliberately reached one hand into the plunge of her blouse and unstuck the keycard from where friction had adhered it to the skin of her breast, never leaving Trey’s eyes.

He laughed, accepting the card from her two fingers. “Clever girl.”

He slid the keycard in the lock, pushing the door open. He let his hand slide from her waist and gently nudged her in with his other hand.

She turned to look at him, crossing her arms beneath her breasts and put a pitiful pout on in one last attempt to entice him in. “Are you really going to make me sleep in here all on my own?”

He looked into her eyes, and he smiled adoringly. “Tonight, I am. Phone?” He held out his hand.

She located her phone where she’d left it on the countertop and handed it to him, puzzled.

He held it up to her face to unlock it, then stared silently at it for a few moments, tapping quickly. He handed it back. “All right, I’ve gone ahead and set up the messaging on the cruise app and added myself to your circle. Let me know when you wake up in the morning, and we’ll pick things up from there.” He gently kissed her forehead, and backed out the door, one hand on the handle. “Can you get yourself ready for bed, or do you need help?”

Seeing one last opportunity and taking it, Jenn backed up to the bed and let herself fall onto it. She held up one leg off the floor, high heel outstretched and creating just enough space to afford him a decent peek up her skirt. “I definitely need help.”

Trey laughed. “You’re incorrigible. Good night, Jenn.”

Jenn raced to strip off her top, truly desperate now. By the time she’d gotten it over her head and tossed in the direction of the entrance, it bounced harmlessly off the back of the door, dropping to the floor in a shimmery pile as it clicked shut.

She fell back, sighing in frustration. She stared up at the ceiling, one fist pressed to her forehead, the other hand slowly tracing light lines across her bare abdomen. For just a moment, she smiled, biting her lip and closing her eyes as she ran the hand upward toward her breasts, imagining that they were Trey’s fingers. After a moment she gave up. Her fingers were too cold, and nowhere near large enough. The thought of his big hands gave her one last pleasurable shiver that she smiled away before kicking off her heels, standing up to unzip and drop the now-regrettably-too-long skirt to the floor, leaving her standing in only the thong panties she wore underneath. Clicking off the light, she pulled back the covers and slid into the bed.

The moment her legs hit the sheets, she was glad for Trey's help in making the decisions that had led to this point in her evening. It really was for the best. With as much as she'd drunk at dinner, she probably wouldn't have been able to remember and feel everything she wanted to in taking Trey into her bed. Better leave that for another night. Tomorrow night, however, she wouldn't have been able to truly appreciate THIS. She joyfully slid her legs back and forth beneath the sheets, her smooth skin gliding easily, the fabric caressing her skin everywhere, all at once. It wasn't sex, but it would do. It would do very nicely for tonight. As Trey said: it was a boat. He wasn't going anywhere.

## Chapter 2

Jenn awoke the following morning remembering why she didn't often drink these days. She remembered back to her twenties in college when she could stay out drinking and dancing until 2:00AM, then crank out a 7:00AM final with minimal difficulty.

The pain in her head and the taste in her mouth left her wishing she'd exercised a bit more restraint the previous evening.

She rolled over and stretched, letting the sheets be pulled down to her waist as she pushed to sit up. The headache flared, causing her to groan and gingerly lie back down. Eyes closed, she fumbled on the shelf above her head for her phone. When she found it, she tapped the screen, causing it to blare into life, searing her eyeballs and her brain with this week's background. She swore, squeezing her eyes closed and dropping the phone on her face, causing her to swear again.

As she held her now throbbing cheekbone, she held the background in mind. A seascape with palm trees and her bare, pale legs extended from the bottom of the frame. A memento from her last seaside vacation, it was simply a placeholder until she took a worthy replacement this week.

Squinting mightily, Jenn raised the phone and tapped the screen again. Swiping quickly, she lowered the brightness as low as it would go. Opening the cruise line app, she checked for missed messages from Trey. Her face fell when there were none. She vaguely remembered that he'd said to send him a message when she woke up. Checking the time, she giggled. Ten thirty. It had been a *long* time since she'd slept in like that. She took another moment, lying back on the sheets in the dark and lying spread-eagle, taking up as much space on the empty bed as she could. She smiled, reveling in the fact that, if she had wanted to, she could just as easily go back to sleep.

But that would leave Trey waiting and alone. It was a big ship, but a small world. Chances are, there were other women on this ship who liked to move as fast as she did, and she found herself jealous at even the thought of

any one of them getting to occupy his time, rather than her. She'd made him wait long enough.

*I'm up.*

She sent the message and threw her legs out of bed, now simply choosing to ignore the splitting headache in her forehead. Standing up, she pushed the thong panties down over her thighs and stepped out of them, leaving them on the floor where they fell. Let it be a tantalizing visual reminder, the next time Trey came to the room.

Smiling despite the headache, she turned on the smaller mirror lamp in the bathroom, not ready for the full overhead light. By its light, she stepped back out into the entrance of her room and examined her reflection in the full-length mirror.

Feet together and placing her hands on her hips, she took herself in as a stranger might.

She was tall, not as tall as Trey, but tall enough for a woman at 5'8". She had small feet for her size, giving her figure what she thought was a classic hourglass taper. Her legs began thin at the ankle, then flared steadily outward to her bottom, which she could only describe as ample. She turned to get a glimpse of her cheeks in the mirror, causing the flesh of her bum to jiggle and shake with the movement. She instinctively winced slightly, then pursed her lips in a determined little smile. *More to love*, she repeated to herself.

From there, her attention turned to her belly, which bulged more and had a distinct sag that hadn't been there 15 years ago. She ran her hands over the skin, feeling the marks and imperfections there, the layer of adipose tissue beneath the skin. Adipose. She liked the word, because it didn't have the social connotations of fat, and normalized the fact that it was just an expected body part. She pushed gently on the softness of the belly, staring down at what she could see of it between her breasts. She caressed it gently as she mentally practiced her affirmation, intentionally and deliberately, *I love my body. I've done and experienced so many amazing things in this body, and it's never failed me.*

Next, her hands ran up to her breasts, cupping one enormous feature in each hand. She'd recently been toying with the idea of having them reduced, but that was only because they were difficult to exercise with, and there was no denying the ache in her lower back that only sometimes went away temporarily when she leaned over to lay her chest on a countertop or supported their weight on the shelf in the shower at home.

It was purely a functional decision she was considering. Aesthetically, she genuinely loved her breasts. She loved how they swung when she shook them, and loved how they looked in clothes like the ones she'd brought on the cruise, though it made finding those clothes immensely more difficult.

She turned, looking at herself briefly from each side, holding her breasts, then smiled at her reflection, nodding in quick and forced approval. She jumped in the shower and washed quickly. She debated for a moment over shaving again, feeling the very slight, almost imperceptible stubble of the hair, then went ahead and did it when she remembered that there was nothing more pressing than her desire to see Trey again to make her rush.

Finished, she stepped out and back into the room, picking up her phone to check for a reply from Trey.

*Glad to hear it. I'll bring coffee. What would you like for brunch?*

She smiled and texted him back.

*A muffin and some bacon, if you can get them.*

She waited for his reply. A thumbs up appeared. She waited while he continued typing.

*Meet you on the observation deck at the front of the ship.  
See you soon.*

Grinning, Jenn tossed her phone onto the bed, then allowed the towel to drop to the floor. She turned to the closet, a smile on her face. *Now, what to wear?*

When Jenn summited the staircase to the observation deck at the front of the ship, she had to shoot a hand up to keep the wide-brimmed straw sun hat on her head from flying off. Catching sight of Trey, she waved coyly with her other hand, smiling with satisfaction in her appearance.

She'd decided on the short-sleeve lavender button-up romper with a belted waist. The tight, short pant legs on the romper, paired with the tall Espadrilles wedges she wore, accentuated both the length and the thickness of her long white legs. The material of the romper had a delightful stretch to it, meaning that it could hug tightly to her backside while still allowing her to bend and move naturally. She'd been wonderfully pleased with that fact as she'd turned her head to look at herself from the back as she'd prepared to leave the room moments ago. She looked absolutely fantastic from behind.

The top three buttons of the romper she'd left open, a daring feat: when she'd moved quickly in the mirror, she'd caught glimpses of the particularly soft skin of her underboob. She didn't hate it.

Now, walking toward Trey, the breeze carrying the elegant dangling earrings on her ears fully lateral, she only momentarily regretted that her pixie cut couldn't adequately blow in this picture-perfect approach. She allowed herself the calculated risk of an extra energetic sway to her walk, well aware of everything the action put in motion.

She was fully gratified and relieved, behind her large, mirrored sunglasses, in the drop of Trey's jaw, the clear worship in his eyes, and the slight push against the fabric of his pants below his pockets. The last she only saw because she was looking particularly close and specifically for it. It was exactly what she'd hoped for.

"Good morning," she said cheerily.

"Wow!" Trey grinned and, for the second time since the library, allowed his eyes to roam appreciatively all the way from her face, to her toes, and back to her face, skipping nothing in between.

Fully satisfied and fairly glowing, Jenn turned a short circle, posing and allowing him to take her in from all angles. His smile and the look in

his eyes were as good as alcohol this morning. He wanted her. That much was obvious.

“Good morning,” Jenn repeated, her back slightly to him, and allowing herself to turn her chin into her shoulder, looking back at him.

“Yes, it is!” he said, though it was quiet enough that she wasn’t sure whether it was intended for her or not.

He hurried to pull another deck lounge to the small table he’d set up with her breakfast. A paper coffee cup, two creamers, and a sugar packet, her favorite way to take her coffee. She looked at him appreciatively.

Alongside the coffee on the tray were a pair of plates heaped with a variety of foods from the buffet.

“I thought you might be a bit more hungry than just a muffin and some bacon slices. Eat what you want, and I’ll have the rest.”

Jenn looked at him in horror. “Stop it; you didn’t wait for me to eat, did you?”

He shrugged. “I wasn’t that hungry.”

She sat on the lounge, crossing her feet at the ankles and resting her head against the back so that her hat couldn’t fly off.

“How long have you been up? Be honest?” She pulled a small bunch of grapes from one of the plates and put one of them in her mouth. She sighed appreciatively. She *was* more hungry than a muffin and a few pieces of bacon. She gazed at Trey in adoration. He smiled.

“Not *that* long.”



## Chapter 3

In truth, Trey had popped awake just before 5:00, pretty similar to his normal wake up time. He'd briefly checked his phone for the time then rolled over and attempted to go back to sleep, but in the end, his circadian rhythm won out. He pushed himself out of bed, drew on some shorts, a T-shirt, socks and some worn cross trainers, and let himself out into the hallway, holding his wallet with his key card in his mouth while he drew his hair into a tight bun on the back of his head, securing it with the elastic he always wore around his wrist for this purpose.

Walking down the nearly empty halls, the few people he passed were mostly staff members already bustling throughout the ship, quietly keeping everything running smoothly while the passengers slept on, blissfully unaware of the effort needed to support the decadent and indulgent activities they enjoyed.

Trey made a point of making eye contact with each and every one who would on his way to the exercise room, nodding and smiling warmly. They deserved to know their labor was seen and appreciated. Many simply wouldn't meet his eyes, choosing to feign invisibility rather than risk the ire of a potentially upset guest.

When he reached the exercise room, Trey quickly ran through his normal routine of 45 minutes on a worn-out old rowing machine that wheezed with every stroke. He finished quickly and made his way back to his room, two doors down and across the hall from Jenn's. He thought briefly about knocking on the door and checking on her but ultimately decided that rest was the best thing for her after seeing how she was last night.

He showered and dressed, then headed up to the observation deck to take in the sunrise.

As an early morning person, Trey had seen his share of sunrises. But as an early morning person, only infrequently did he ever share that sunrise with another person. But he had a good feeling about this week. Who

knew? Maybe before the week was through, he could share a sunrise with Jenn.

He glanced around the observation deck, suddenly curious. There weren't many people there right now. How many people were around at 5:30? He turned and leaned against the rail, scanning the walls of the ship, looking for cameras. Who would be watching this part of the ship at 5:30AM? The answer was, too many. He spied one camera high on a wall, another couple on a light pole in the center of the deck. Far too many eyes for what he had planned. His plans required a semi-public space, room enough to work, while also enough seclusion and privacy that the likelihood of interruptions wasn't very high. There could be no witnesses.

He mentally crossed the observation deck off his list. The cruise was young. He had nearly a full week to solidify his plans. He could afford to take his time.

He spent the rest of the hours waiting for Jenn to message him wandering the ship, looking for a spot that met his requirements.

It took him a few hours of fast walking (he didn't mind the extra cardio) to decide that none of the truly public, open access areas of the ship would do. They were simply too exposed, too open, too easy.

That was all right. He hadn't booked this trip with the assumption that carrying out his intention would be simple. He'd planned on it requiring a little leg work and research. He'd already put in months of research and careful watching. What were a few extra hours broken up by nothing but uninterrupted time with Jenn? It was all he'd been thinking about for months.

After a quick trip back to his room, he caught the steward for their bank of cabins in the process of restocking a supply closet with linens and towels. The man smiled eagerly. "Mr. Trey," the man greeted him.

"Hey, good morning, Ricardo," Trey returned his eager grin. "How go things this morning?"

"Very good, very good," the Filipino's head bobbed. "And how you sleep?"

“Like a rock,” Trey replied.

Ricardo’s smile wavered for a moment, uncertain. “Is good, yes?”

Trey nodded enthusiastically. “Very,” he confirmed. “Thank you.”

“Oh, wonderful, wonderful.” Ricardo’s grin returned. “Can I get you anything, Mr. Trey? You need something?”

“I think I’m good, Ricardo, thanks.”

Ricardo gave him a thumbs up. “Okay, Mr. Trey. Let me know you need anything.”

Trey returned the sign. “You bet.”

Trey put his hand on the door, but then stopped, his keycard in his hand.

“Everything okay? Your keycard not working?” Ricardo’s face was the picture of concern.

“No, I’m sure it’s fine.” Trey turned to Ricardo, an idea forming in his mind. “Are you married, Ricardo?”

The man blinked in surprise. “Yes, why?” He laughed uncomfortably.

Trey smiled. This could be the solution to his problem. He pointed across the hall with his thumb. “You know the lady in 12359?”

Ricardo glanced at the door and nodded. “Ms. Jenn? Yes. What about her?”

Trey smiled. “We’re actually married.”

Ricardo looked doubtfully between the two rooms, pointing out the distance between them. “Two rooms?” he asked.

Trey shrugged, smiling. “It’s a long story. I won’t bore you with the details. Anyway, I’ve been working on this surprise for her for months now, and I just need somewhere to... pull it off.”

Ricardo's eyes narrowed slightly. Trey could see he was losing him.

"How long you been married?"

Trey exhaled. "Fifteen years, if you can believe it. This is actually our anniversary trip."

Ricardo's face, try as he might, couldn't hide his suspicion. "Separate rooms?" he asked again.

Trey pushed harder. "Look, I've been planning this for months, but I just don't have a place where I can carry it out."

Ricardo once more pointed at the rooms. "Rooms not okay?"

"They're great, just... not enough space for what I have in mind," Trey said.

"What you have in mind?" Ricardo's voice was terse, quick. Trey could see he was pushing too hard.

"What I have planned is... fairly private. I just want to be able to do something for her that she's had coming for a long time. It's something she's really wanted."

Ricardo went back to putting away linens. "Rooms are good, Mr. Trey."

Trey sighed. He'd clearly lost him. He tried a different tactic.

"How long have you been married, Ricardo?"

"Eight years," Ricardo said proudly, still tidying.

"Any kids?"

Ricardo nodded. "Our son, Nathaniel."

"How old is he?"

"Two," Ricardo said.

"Two?" Trey laughed. "Oh, man. I remember when our son was two. What a little terror he was!"

Ricardo smiled, but didn't say anything.

Trey played his last card. "Ricardo, if you help me, I'll give you a thousand dollars."

Ricardo looked up, his mouth hanging open.

Trey nodded. "If you help me find a secluded place, no cameras, no people around, a big open space where Ms. Jenn and I can be alone, I'll pay you a thousand dollars. Think of what your family could do with a thousand dollars."

Ricardo stared at him, his eyes narrowed again. "What you have planned, Mr. Trey?"

Trey shook his head. "I can't tell you that, Ricardo. It's private. You'll just have to trust me. I promise you, no one will be hurt."

Ricardo was shaking his head. "No. I don't know you. This is not normal thing. Leave, please." He waved Trey off.

Trey panicked. "Look Ricardo, I'm sorry. I know it sounds strange. I'm just trying to do something nice for my wife, okay? You have to promise me that you won't say anything to her, please? Not even that I told you we're married. Has she told you her rule?"

Ricardo nodded gently. "No talking about her life outside cruise."

Trey nodded solemnly. "Right. Promise me you won't say anything to her?"

Ricardo made a face. He looked between Jenn's door and Trey's face, obviously undecided.

Finally, he threw up his hands and stepped out of the supply closet, pulling it closed behind him. "I don't want in the middle of this. You keep me out." Grumbling in a language Trey didn't recognize, Ricardo walked away, pushing the cart full of textiles and glancing angrily back every so often.

Trey sighed. That had not gone well.

His phone buzzed in his pocket.

He pulled it out and checked the message from Jenn:

*I'm up.*

Trey glanced across the hall in panic. Shit. How long had she been up? Had she heard him and Ricardo?

Cursing his stupidity, he made his way upward toward the buffet, his stomach twisting in knots.

“You promise?” Jenn pressed.

“Yeah, it’s fine. Honest, I don’t mind.” Trey smiled warmly. “You’re worth the wait.”

“Aww!” Jenn simpered. “You’re so schmaltzy.”

Trey laughed, a full-bellied, genuine, booming sound. Jenn smiled.

“That... is very true.”

Jenn turned her attention to the two plates of food, picking up a fork in eager anticipation. She pushed through to the bottom of the plate with the hot items and gasped. “Are those hash browns? Oh, god bless you, Trey.”

Trey smiled as he watched her dig in. She pretended to ignore him, but really he was the focus of every cell in her body. Especially after her good night’s sleep, her long, luxurious shower, and the two-days-in-a-row of freshly shaved legs, she was positively brimming with pent up sexual appetite. It had been *way* too long since her last session between the sheets with a partner other than her vibrator, and she found herself growing extremely impatient.

If Trey had been willing, Jenn was pretty sure she would have taken him right then and there. Well, probably not. But the idea certainly made her smile.

“What’s so funny?” Trey asked.

Jenn, her mouth full, only smiled and shook her head.

“Fine. Keep your secrets.” He paused.

Jenn smiled and chuckled lightly to show she understood the reference. Trey smiled.

“All right, so if we can’t talk about life off the boat...” Trey paused, clearly thinking. “What would you like to do today?”

*Honestly? Just you.* Jenn swallowed both the mouthful of fried potato and her gut response. She sat back, looking up into the bright blue sky, and took a deep breath, closing her eyes. She sat for a moment, feeling the warm late spring sun soak into her outstretched legs, her arms, and her upturned face. When she opened them, Trey was sitting quietly, a half smile on his lips, simply watching her.

Jenn became suddenly self-conscious. “What?”

Trey smiled and looked down, rubbing his palms together. “Nothing.”

“No, really! Come on, what are you looking at? Do I have food on my face? A pimple?” Jenn ran her fingers over her face.

“There’s nothing. I’m just—,” Trey broke off, staring at the ground again. “Just you. I’m just watching you. I’ve always liked watching you.”

Jenn blinked. “Always?”

Trey fumbled, pointing with his finger. “Yeah, you know, always since yesterday. You know; it feels like forever.”

Jenn narrowed her eyes and smiled. “Okay, weirdo.” She took another bite of hash brown and bacon, holding up her hand to talk around the food. “What do *you* want to do today?”

Trey blew a loud raspberry, leaning back on his lounge and turning to look around them. He held out his arms as if to take in the whole ship. “Well, I believe it’s a sea day, so the entirety of the *Duchess of the Waves* is our oyster.” He smiled. “We can go anywhere and do anything you want, as long as it’s on this ship.”

“Really?” Jenn asked, smiling into the plate of food. “Anything I want?”

“I mean, anything within reason. I’m pretty sure we’re in international waters at this point, so felonies are definitely out...” He grinned at her, that smile she’d fallen so heavily for. “But other than that, I’m down for whatever.”

“In that case...” Jenn stood up, gripping Trey’s hand. “There’s something I’ve been wanting to try with you.”

“I’m flying, Jack!” Jenn stood with both pumps perched precariously atop the second rail from the bottom of the guardrail at the forward most point they could access on the boat, both arms outstretched, one hand clasping her hat, the other fully like a wing.

Trey pressed against her back, supporting her weight with one arm wrapped just below her belly, the other pressing tenderly against her lower ribs, high on her waist. His face pressed into her neck, and she smiled, closing her eyes as he placed a tender kiss there, sliding his lips along her neck both before and after the kiss. She shuddered involuntarily.

“Now who’s the schmaltzy one?” he whispered.

She didn’t answer, only dropped her free hand to his flexed forearm and gave a gentle squeeze.

She wasn’t sure whether it was the wind or something else that squeezed a tear from the corner of her eye.

“Well, I’m glad you got that out of your system,” Trey said as they walked, arm in arm, across the observation deck, Jenn still needing to hold onto her hat with one hand.

Looking down at their shadows, she smiled. They cut quite a pair, at least in silhouette.

“You’ve been waiting to do that from the moment we boarded, haven’t you?”



“God, yes!” Jenn groaned. “I can’t believe they still don’t charge for that. Can you imagine? Oh, they could make a killing!”

Trey’s beard shifted. She could tell he was fighting the urge to smile. “At least for another couple years, until all the Gen Xers and Millennials who were traumatized in their teens and preteens by that movie are too old to safely get up on the bars. Then they’ll have to make wheelchair ramps.” He mock-gasped, whipping his head to look at her. “Or a chair lift!”

She whacked his forearm affectionately. “Keep it up. I dare you.”

He only smiled in response.

A warmth began to spread in her belly that she hadn’t felt in months. *God, it’s been forever since I’ve felt this light.* She stole a glance at Trey. He was staring out across the ocean. The smile on her face wavered. What was he thinking about? *I remember this feeling,* she thought pensively.

## Chapter 4

The day had passed quickly and enjoyably. They'd passed the day exactly as one should on a cruise: they ate when they were hungry, drank when they were thirsty, and dozed side by side in the warm sun.

They had turned the loungers so that they were side by side but facing each other. Trey glanced at Jenn, her head turned slightly to the side and face mostly covered by her hat. He smiled tenderly. She needed this. The last several months, he knew she'd been working herself to death on a merger at work. He also knew that she had a strict policy of not taking work home with her, which she observed religiously. Unfortunately, during times like this, that meant that she mostly never went home, or even up for air. Or rather, she did, but it was only a pitstop, long enough for her to change the tires, refuel, and get back out onto the track. She had good reason to be exhausted.

His phone buzzed.

Trey flipped the phone over.

*Any progress?* the message read.

Trey typed his response:

*Not yet. Still haven't nailed down anywhere with enough space and privacy to make it work.*

*Shall we just forget it?*

*No, just give me more time. I have one lead, but it's tentative.*

Jenn stirred, breaking Trey from his conversation.

"Good morning, Sleeping Beauty."

"How long was I out?" Jenn pushed herself further upright on the lounge.

Trey rushed to finish a followup message:

*I'll keep you posted.*

He dropped the phone casually to his chest. "Not too long. Maybe half an hour?"

Jenn turned her face to his, letting her head fall back on the lounge contentedly. "Mmm. I don't know why I'm so tired."

Trey laughed. "You wanna talk about it?"

Jenn held her hand up, cutting him off. "Nope. Rule number one."

Trey opened and closed his mouth, uncertain whether he should say anything more.

"But—."

"Trey, I did not fly to the coast, board a ship filled with horny, waiting-to-be-drunk adults, and cross an entire ocean only to talk about stuff at home."

She lifted her head and sought out his hand. He squeezed her fingers reassuringly. "I came out here to eat, sleep...", she looked around coyly. "And fuck," she whispered.

Trey smiled, but it was tinged, internally at least, with a little bit of sadness. How was he supposed to argue with that? And yet...

"So far, I've done just enough of the first, far too much of the second, and absolutely none of the third." She lowered her sunglasses and peered over the top at him. "A problem I aim to rectify as soon as possible."

"Jenn, I..."

She looked at him, worry beginning to temper the smile on her face.

He chickened out. "I'm just really glad you're here."

"Aww. You're so sweet." She leaned forward and puckered her lips. Trey mirrored her, moving forward so that their lips touched. Trey went to move away, but Jenn's hand snatched out, pulling the back of his head

toward her. Her lips spread, allowing her tongue to stroke his lips, begging entrance. Despite himself, Trey leaned forward, his own hand seeking a place on her ribcage.

Jenn pulled back slightly, taking a look around them. They'd chosen a place on the rear deck of the ship this afternoon, and it had begun to empty as people went inside to prepare for their various dinner plans. They nearly had the entire deck to themselves.

Jenn smiled mischievously, then moved Trey's hand up from her rib cage to her breast. Biting her lip suggestively, she slowly guided Trey's hand inside the open top of her romper. Trey shivered, then glanced around the deck guiltily as his pants got unbelievably tight around his groin.

"Jenn!"

"Just humor me. I've wanted you all day long. I saw you when I walked on deck this morning..." Jenn glanced at the growing bulge in Trey's lap. "And I see you now." She leaned forward until her lips nearly touched Trey's, then spoke in a seductive whisper, "I know you want me. There's nothing keeping us from going back to my room and making love until we both drop out of exhaustion. What do you say?"

Trey could feel Jenn's heart hammering in her chest in his hand, beneath her breast.

"Please, just don't make me wait any longer," Jenn groaned breathlessly.

Trey's determination crumbled, and he found himself wanting to give in, wanting to forgo the plan, call off the whole thing, and just give Jenn what she wanted tonight.

Without fully realizing it, Trey found himself nodding in agreement.

It was all the encouragement Jenn needed. She leaped up from the lounge, catching her sandals through the straps at the heels on two fingers, and seized Trey's hand with her other hand.

Trey couldn't help but let himself be swept up in her fervor, pushing himself to his feet and following after her as she ran barefoot along the deck, sandals and breasts bouncing as she went.

When they reached the elevator bank, Jenn tapped the button, her grip on Trey's hand tightening in proportion to her rising impatience. When one of them dinged, the arrow above it lighting up, Jenn began to rush forward toward the opening doors, but stopped when a group of three sunbathers moved toward it. Trey heard her swear under breath, then say, too loud, "No problem, we'll get the next one."

"Are you sure? There's plenty of room!" one of the young women called out helpfully.

"We'll get the next one, thanks!"

The girls stared out of the closing doors, and Trey shrugged, smiling awkwardly. Their giggles were cut off by the closing doors.

As soon as they heard the lift begin moving, Jenn began her feverish tapping of the call button, muttering repeatedly to herself, "Come on, come on."

"Hey, what's your rush?" Trey tried to laugh, but it turned into a yell as Jenn yanked him toward the ding of the next arriving elevator. The doors opened, and Jenn surged forward then nearly tripped over herself as a small group filed off.

Trey tried to smile, knowing the disembarking passengers were receiving no such niceties from Jenn. When the last person had left the car, Jenn darted in, yanking Trey in with her, then turned and rushed to push the "12" button, then the door close button as if her life depended on it.

"Can you hold the elevator?" a voice called from out of sight in the hallway.

"Oh, shoot, I don't know how to do that! Plus, I had a lot to eat today; it might not hold us all, sorry!" Jenn lied as the doors closed.

The moment they sealed, Jenn turned to Trey, pushed him up against the back wall, and pulled his face down to hers.

Her tongue searched for his with an intensity that threatened to take Trey's breath away. He found his body responding nearly of its own volition. He did want her, maybe even as much as she wanted him. His hands sought out the smoothness of her neck, then slid slowly to her chest, pushing tentatively beneath the fabric of her romper to caress her lightly, tracing her collarbones their full length out to the softness of her shoulders.

Jenn shivered beneath his fingertips, pulling away from his lips momentarily to gasp, catch her breath, and begin to untuck his white linen shirt from his pants, fumbling with the buttons. Trey kissed the top of her head, exhaling loudly between kisses.

All too soon, the elevator dinged. They scrambled apart, straightening shirts and hair, but the hallway was empty.

"Come on," Jenn gasped, pulling Trey out of the lift. They only got as far as the junction of the hallway before Jenn turned around, pulling Trey's arms around her back and leaping to wrap her legs around his waist, burying her face in the crook of his neck.

Trey responded in kind, squeezing her ass and pulling her tighter against his waist, feeling the curving softness of her chest push against his own, her heart throbbing behind it as they stumbled down the hallway.

Trey could barely focus as he lurched down the hall, Jenn beginning to unbutton his shirt and kissing his chest as it became exposed.

He stumbled against a door, and Jenn reached for her key, this time tucked in the tiny pocket on the back of the romper. She flicked the card in the reader, only to have the device give a short buzz and flash a tiny red light.

"Ugh! Come on." Jenn tried again, still clasping Trey tightly with her legs as he kissed her neck, sliding toward her chest.

The lock gave another buzz and flash of error, just as the door opened.

Trey surged upright and heard Jenn gasp as her feet unlatched and she dropped unsteadily to the floor.

Together, they exchanged surprised looks with the young man holding the door in uncomfortable shock.

“I think you have the wrong room,” he mumbled, looking at the floor.

Trey glanced across the hall. His room, 12360. The number on the open door: 12361. He’d miscounted.

“I am so sorry—,” Trey began.

“Have a good night!” Jenn called out, already pulling Trey next door. She slid the card through the lock, pushed open the door, pulled Trey inside behind her, and had it closed before Trey ever even heard the one next door click.

Jenn locked and latched the door, then flipped on the lights. Her breathing was ragged as she turned to face Trey.

She didn't say anything, and neither did he. For a moment, they simply looked at each other, multiple top buttons undone, chests heaving, both their faces and chests flushed.

They came together in a rush, both sets of hands feeling their way to each other’s chests. More buttons were undone, exposing more flushed skin. Jenn shrugged as Trey undid the belt and pushed the sleeves of her romper down off her shoulders, getting temporarily caught on her elbows.

She left the last buttons of Trey’s shirt still buttoned, lowering her forearms so that the romper slid down to her waist, her heavy breasts splashing back into place as they were freed. Before she could pull her wrists out of the sleeves, Trey seized a handful of the material at the small of her back, pinning her hands to her hips.

“This okay?” he whispered, the corners of his mouth turning up the hairs of his mustache as he smiled.

“Yeah,” the word was a light breathy exhale as she stared up at him, begging him to go on.

Jenn's breathing both deepened and quickened as Trey lowered into a squat, putting his face level with her heaving chest.

He paused, his face inches away from the soft white skin of her breasts, just staring. She could feel his warm breath move the tiny blonde hairs on her chest, and she shivered, breathing and smiling in delight and anticipation.

Still holding her hands pinned with her romper, with his free hand, Trey traced the outline of one large breast, starting almost at her throat, following the swell atop her sternum, then lightly tracing the seam where it rested against her ribs, and finally continuing on up and into her armpit.

Under the light, feathery soft touch of his fingertip, Jenn's nipples grew hard and erect, like two tiny beige thimbles.

After tracing a similar brushing track on the other side of her chest, Trey stood, their bodies forced close together due to his hand still clenched on Jenn's romper. Gently, tenderly, he cupped her massive left breast (the slightly larger of the two) in his large hand. It completely filled his palm. She thrilled at the warmth of his hands. Such warm hands!

Trey moaned softly, almost to himself.

"I love your folds," he whispered. His hand slid from her breast to the crease where it met her armpit. She squirmed slightly; she had always had ticklish armpits. She smiled at him as their eyes met.

"I'm ticklish," she whispered.

"I know," he whispered back. She could feel the heat from his chest, thought she could hear the pounding of his heart. Or was that hers?

His hand moved slower, gentler, but with persistence until it cupped the flesh where her breast and armpit met.

"I love this fold." His hand slid downward and onto her back, tracing the soft ridges on either side of her spine.

"These," he continued.



His hand dropped lower still, until it was filled with one of the love handles at her waist. “This fold.”

As his hand caressed lightly toward her stomach, she fidgeted slightly, and he held her gaze, tightening his hold on the romper. His hand cupped the bulge where her belly began to pooch out from her thigh. She blinked and swallowed, but Trey’s gaze never faltered as he worshiped her. When she stilled beneath his touch, he whispered, “This one.” She blinked again, and this time it forced a tear out.

Without a word, Trey pulled her close, her chest pressing to his, the open shirt hanging on only by the last few buttons. He slowly let go of the romper and brought that arm up into her armpit, pulling her tighter into him. The other hand stayed firmly fixed on the bulge of Jenn’s belly, the belly she fought so hard to love some days.

Jenn wrapped her released arms around Trey’s neck, both of them adjusting so that they could steadily enjoy the embrace. *How did he know?* How did he know that today was a difficult day, a day when she felt less than beautiful in this skin she had to live in?

The hand still cupped around her belly pivoted, adjusting to the new angle of their bodies, but remaining solidly shielding around her.

Jenn sniffed, using her hands to wipe cold tears from her eyes.

“You okay?” His check in was faint, as if he were afraid he was interrupting.

She laughed, wiped the last of her tears, pulled away his long hair, and took another long sniff, this one at the nape of his neck. *God, he smelled good.* It wasn’t even shampoo or body wash. Here, it was just a slight mix of sweat and the natural oils of his skin and hair. It was positively intoxicating.

She let go of his neck and pushed him back to arm’s length. His one hand dropped to the small of her naked back. The other never budged from her stomach.

“Less talking, less crying, more loving,” she whispered with a tight smile. “I think I like where you were going with this.”

Trey smiled, and tenderly planted a light kiss on her eager lips.

“Like I was saying,” Trey began again. “I love this one...” The hand on her belly gave one last squeeze, then slowly migrated to her rear.

Jenn watched as Trey’s eyes lit up and he pretended to be surprised when his hand plunged into the romper and didn’t encounter any panties.

“Oh!” He exclaimed quietly, almost a squeak.

“Oh, as if you didn’t know,” she said mock-accusingly.

Trey scoffed. “Of course I knew! You don’t get as fine an outline of an ass as that by rocking panties!”

With that, his hand forced quickly the rest of the way inside the romper to cup one of her cheeks, right down where it formed a seam with her thigh. He hefted it in his hand a few times, the motion reverberating throughout her entire body.

“Oh, my God,” she groaned, sagging her head against his chest. “It is so big!”

“It is so big!” Trey echoed excitedly. “And I love it so very much!” he hissed.

He planted a quick kiss on the top of her head.

She looked up at him, her smile expectant. “Anything else?” she asked teasingly.

“Oh, yeah!” he whispered enthusiastically.

In a rush, both his hands swept the crumpled romper to her knees, from which it fell quietly to the floor.

Now completely naked, Jenn shivered slightly, whether from cold or anticipation, she couldn’t tell. Her stomach was in a tight knot. *Good God, it has been so long!* Long enough that it almost felt like a first time.

Jenn leaned into that feeling, leaning into the thrill of anticipation, excitement, and just a little bit of nervousness. She briefly remembered her actual first time, and almost laughed out loud.

The warm clasping of Trey's hand over her vulva, thumb and pinky fingers tracing the seams where her sex met her thighs, brought Jenn back to the moment. This magical, exquisite moment.

"I definitely love this one," Trey said, then gently laid her down on the edge of the bed, her knees several inches from the edge. Without a word, Trey took a moment to tie his hair back from his face, then pressed his lips to hers, using them to pull at her lower lip, then brought them together, parting them slightly to allow his tongue to dance across hers.

They kissed for several seconds more, the hand Trey wasn't supporting himself with dancing lightly across her naked body, fingertips grazing everywhere, pinching a nipple here, massaging a thigh there.

Jenn felt hot, flushed, and eager all over. Her fingers fumbled blindly at his shirt until she managed to undo the final two buttons, then spread the halves apart, pushing it down over his shoulders. He let up only for a moment to take it all the way off, but that moment felt like a lifetime to Jenn. She pulled him back to her hungrily, forcing her tongue into his mouth.

When her hands began fumbling with his belt, his free hand stopped her, holding her wrists together.

Both of them breathing heavily, Trey breathed, "I have a better idea."

With that, he pushed up on top of her, both arms supporting himself as he lowered his face enough to kiss her delicately on the lips.

She knew where this was headed. She closed her eyes and smiled. She was looking forward to this.

He kissed her cheek, her jaw, then slowly kissed his way down her body until he had dropped off the edge of the bed, and his head was over her belly button. He paused. When she looked down, curious as to why he'd

stopped, she realized he was asking for permission, removing his glasses and allowing his eyes to bore up into hers. She smiled and closed her eyes again, turning up toward the ceiling. She nodded, mentally preparing herself.

With that nod, that affirmation of consent, he took her.

Jenn gasped as his tongue began working inside her, prodding, caressing, tickling.

Trey was perfect, years of practice coming to a beautiful head. He used her body itself as feedback. He responded to every arch of her back, every hitch in her breathing, each quiet moan, knowing just when to let up, when to go harder, and when to switch it up.

The buildup was steady, the pressure sharp and intense. After three months, Jenn was in no mood to draw things out. As she drew closer to that precipice, she gasped, her breath catching as she approached.

When she climaxed, she stopped breathing altogether, pushing him out and away so that she could draw her legs together. Again, he needed no instruction. Throwing himself on the bed next to her, Trey slipped a single finger between her legs and gently continued to stroke the nub at the apex of her vulva. Wave after wave of shivers and intense pleasure washed over her, finally releasing her breath with a gasp and buckling her knees.

When the waves subsided, she put a hand on his hand and held it still. Knowing she was done, he let the hand cup her, gently taking the mound of her pussy inside his large, warm palm and laid his head on her chest. She held him there, watching his head rise and fall with each of her breaths.

He turned to look up at her with his incorrigible, winning grin. "Round two?" he suggested quietly.

Jenn shook her head, still breathing hard. "Your turn. Get a condom." She pointed to her suitcase in the closet. "Top front pocket."

Trey pushed off the bed, replaced his glasses, and leaned down to kiss her forehead. He walked toward the closet, and Jenn scooted herself up

further onto the bed.

When he bent to pick up his shirt, she didn't think anything of it. But when he slipped his arms into it, then turned to face her and backed to the door, Jenn scrunched her face in confusion.

“What are you doing?”

“It's a long cruise. Gotta leave you wanting more, otherwise you'll get tired of me.” He smiled, pulling the door handle.

Jenn laughed in confusion. He had to be joking. “Are you serious? Get back here!”

He undid the latch and pulled the door handle, releasing the dead bolt, and opened the door.

Jenn scrambled, pulling the comforter up to cover her. “What the hell?” she whispered. “Where are you going?”

“Come over when you're dressed, and we'll go grab some dinner!”

“Trey!”

“You're beautiful!”

As the door clicked shut, Jenn continued to stare at it in equal parts confusion, disappointment, and annoyance.

“What the hell?” she breathed.

## Chapter 5

Trey heard the door click closed and swallowed hard. He looked around the hallway. It was empty except for Ricardo, busily doing some sort of housekeeping a few doors down. When he saw Trey leave 12359, a funny look came over his face. His mouth fell open, and his brows furrowed slightly. If Trey didn't know better, he would have bet it was disbelief stamped on Ricardo's features.

Suddenly incredibly aware of his erection, Trey stuck his hands in his pockets and backed toward his cabin door, grinning awkwardly.

Fortunately for him, once Ricardo had recognized who and from where he was entering the hall, he'd staunchly turned his back on and pretended adamantly not to notice Trey. In his current state, that suited Trey just fine.

Without a word, Trey fed his card into the reader on his door and scrambled to get it open as quickly as possible.

Finally on the other side of the door, he closed it with a long shaking exhale, leaning his head back against the cold metal. He groaned as he took off his glasses, rubbing his eyes and the bridge of his nose with thumb and forefinger. He'd made a mistake.

At Jenn's mention of a condom, he'd panicked. If he'd been thinking at all, he just would have gone along with it. What would it have hurt to just have sex with a condom, even if the condom was unnecessary? Absolutely nothing, that's what.

If he had any sense at all, he'd go right back over there right now and finish making love to her. Operation be damned, he should just go finish making love to the woman who was obviously happy to have him.

He groaned again, running his hand backward through his hair in exasperation. His guilt had gotten the better of him. It always did. He hated feeling like he was keeping secrets. Surprises were one thing. Secrets were

another, entirely. Surprises were secrets with expiration dates. Secrets were just lies of omission gone rancid.

Surprises... Trey reached out and slid the closet door to one side, exposing the small valuables safe secured to the shelf inside. Punching in the four digit code he'd chosen (Jenn's birthday), he pulled back the door at the audible click of the locks disengaging.

Taking a deep breath, he reached inside and removed a black velvet bag. Undoing the closure at the top, he reached in with two fingers and delicately brought out the object inside.

It had cost him just over \$1,000, which he thought was a fair price. He'd felt satisfied with his purchase.

Now, looking down at the piece of skillfully crafted metal in his hand, he wasn't sure even its effects would be enough to fix the damage he'd just caused. He'd really stepped in it with this one.

The rapid, hard knock on the door confirmed his worst fears.

"Just a sec!" he called, racing to get the object back in the bag and returned to the safe.

The safe beeped loudly when he locked it again. He grimaced. *What are the chances that Jenn didn't hear that on the other side of the door?*

He turned and pulled the door open, putting what he thought was an easy smile on his face.

Jenn entered without a word, still buttoning her romper. When she looked pointedly at the safe in the closet, Trey fought to keep the worry from his face.

"What was that?" Jenn asked quietly, when she'd finished with her buttons. Trey couldn't help but notice that she'd done up all but the last two this time, instead of three.

"Not a fan? I thought it might be fun to leave with a little anticipation." Trey tried to smooth over the blunder, but even he knew the

excuse was a few bricks short of a full load in covering the rupture he'd just caused in their relationship.

Jenn stared, then began what Trey referred to as her "attack" pacing. She always paced like this when she had more pent up frustration in her head than she could get out in a single moment.

Throughout the merger, she'd spent hours like this on the phone in her office. Nearly every time he'd found reasons to go by her office during those three months, this was her state. It did not bode well for the looming conversation.

"Anticipation?"

Uh-oh. She was using her "Chief Operations Officer" voice, and not the "we just exceeded our fiscal goals, bonuses are coming" one, either. More like the "we just came up \$10,000 short in our Petty Cash funds, firings are coming" one. He'd observed her use both over the years. This was unmistakably the latter.

"No, anticipation is the promise of good things yet to come. This felt more like the breach of a contract already in action." To her credit, Trey watched Jenn stop pacing, put her hand on her chest, and take a number of deep, steadying breaths with her eyes closed. *She's so sexy when she's regulating.*

Her eyes snapped open, and he instantly regretted the smile that had come to his lips.

"I'm trying really hard to understand why you would do what you just did," she continued. She was still using her COO voice, but he knew far better than to say so at the moment. "Please, help me understand."

She turned to look at him, and he could almost see the executive shield slip away fractionally. "Did I say something? Do something?" She was searching his face now, and his stomach clenched in regret. She was really having a hard time with his leaving. "Is anything wrong?"

She opened her mouth to speak again, but clearly decided against it, choosing instead to sit and give him space. She'd come a long way since



he'd first seen her in action. The Jenn of yesteryear would have come into the room verbally swinging, and wouldn't have stopped until there was a literal or metaphorical knockout, whichever happened first.

"I—," he started and stopped, not sure what he was even about to say. She stared at him, biting her lip and visibly putting in so much effort to simply listening. She'd clenched her hands into fists, nails into her palms, the skin of her hands turned white with pressure.

"It's just—,"

Her mouth fell open slightly, as if she could force the words out of his mouth by opening her own.

Trey reached for her hands. She needed to feel that nothing was wrong. He took her hands, cold, bloodless, and pitted from where her nails had pressed into the palms. He brushed the backs with his thumbs.

"I'm fine. We're fine."

Jenn relaxed visibly, but only marginally. She could sense that there was still a "but" coming. Her fingers tightened around his.

"It's just been a really long time, and I want the first time to be really special."

Jenn stared at him. "Trey, we are on a ship in the middle of the ocean, on our way to Mexico, with no responsibilities and no work to do for the first time in God knows how long. It doesn't get much more exceptional than this, dude. Not at our stage of life."

He smiled and chuckled slightly. She always did have an ear for understatement.

He took a deep breath. There wouldn't be a better time than this to share the news with her.

"I...", He blew the breath out, giving her hands a gentle squeeze to steady them from shaking.

"Trey, you're scaring me," Jenn said.

“I got a vasectomy!”

It wasn't quite a shout, but it definitely wasn't the cool, collected revelation that he'd hoped for. He watched Jenn's eyes blink, then widen as she registered what he'd said.

“Oh!” she whispered. “Okay—,” Jenn was nodding, relief rearranging the features on her face. Then her eyebrows furrowed again. “Hang on, so you decided to have this done right before your best chance to have uninterrupted, noisy, uninhibited sex?” She laughed. “Weird timing.”

“No, I had it done back in, like January. Right after the New Year.”

Jenn's face went cloudy again. Trey reeled her hands back in, afraid that she'd go dark.

“Oh. Clear back in January?”

Trey nodded.

“Then I don't get it. Was there a complication or something?” She glanced down at his pants, where his erection had been painfully obvious just a short time ago. “There's obviously nothing wrong with your boners.”

Trey laughed.

“No, I'm serious, what is it then? What's wrong?”

Trey studied her face.

“Are you mad?”

It was Jenn's turn to laugh. “Am I mad? I mean, I feel more than a little stupid, maybe.” She locked eyes with him again. “But, you're okay? Everything went okay? Nothing, like broken or horribly scarred or anything?”

Trey shook his head slightly, the corners of his mouth lifting again.

“Then I seriously don't get it!” Jenn pulled her hands from Trey's and pushed him playfully. “Why are we not still across the hall, balls deep and screaming each other's names?”

Trey rubbed his chest where she'd shoved him, pretending it had hurt. "I panicked! When you started talking about condoms, all I could think about was, 'I don't have to wear a condom anymore, but she doesn't know that. I don't want to wear a condom, but I have to wear a condom, cause I haven't told her yet, and...'"

"Trey! Enough about the condom! Quit being so awkward." Jenn reached up, gripped his ears, and pulled his face down to her. She kissed him hard on the lips, the sort of kiss that makes it clear the conversation is over.

When she finally let him go, Trey stood back up, looking into her eyes. "So you're not mad?"

Jenn's eyes glinted mischievously. "I'm a woman who only got to finish once when she'd fully intended to finish a minimum of three times with a partner for the first time in months. I'm the very definition of sexually frustrated at the moment." She smiled. "But I've made it this long. I suppose I can view what we just did as a fantastic appetizer. But not tonight. I don't think I could handle that much up and down in a single evening." She pointed a finger up at his face mock threateningly. "But tomorrow night, you're all mine, until I say we're done. Agreed?"

Trey grinned. "Sounds fantastic."

Jenn dropped her hands from his shoulders, running them down his chest and belly, then down to his crotch. She gave his now-flaccid cock a gentle squeeze. When it swelled responsively, she shook her head in mock disbelief. Trey shivered. Jenn turned and looked up over her shoulder at him, maintaining firm eye contact with him while she rubbed her rear against the tightening front of his pants; Trey groaned.

"Now who's cruel?" he asked.

"Tough break, kid," Jenn said, unsympathetic. "Let's get out of here. I'm starving."

## Chapter 6

Trey wasn't feeling up to a formal dinner that night. Neither was Jenn, for that matter. She was more relieved than anything when he requested that they simply visit one of the other restaurants for a relatively early dinner on the ship, instead.

Drinks in hand, they found a quiet table in a dim corner of the artisan burger shop at Jenn's request. Just because they weren't making love again tonight didn't mean that she couldn't drive Trey wild beneath the table. Now that she was no longer spread naked on the bed of her cabin, building anticipation seemed more than fair again.

"Do you want my mushrooms?" Jenn asked Trey when they were situated.

Trey blinked. "You ordered a mushroom burger."

"I know. I love the taste of the sauce, but the mushrooms themselves are nasty. Don't judge me. Want 'em?"

"Sure." Trey smiled, but did not judge. At least not out loud.

Jenn rewarded him with a gentle squeeze of his thigh.

He pulled out his phone, checking the time. "Well, since we're not —," he glanced at Jenn, who raised an eyebrow and suppressed a smile. "What would you like to do tonight?"

Jenn reached for one of his hands, intertwining their fingers and laying it down on the table in front of them. Trey turned to face her, his face lighting up in a happy grin, letting his phone drop onto the table.

"They're holding a pool party tonight. I think we should go."

"Sounds good," Trey murmured, propping his face up on his hand as he simply stared at her.

After another quiet few seconds, neither of them saying anything, the worker at the counter called their number.

“I got it.” Extracting his hand from Jenn’s, he left his phone on the table and headed for the counter.

As he navigated his way through the close tables and chairs of the small shop, the screen of his phone lit up, automatically drawing Jenn’s eye.

For all of her directness, Jenn was not a prying person. She didn’t make a habit of reading other people’s messages, even when the opportunity presented itself. But when she saw that it was a message from within the cruise line’s messaging app, her interest was roused. The screen went dark.

She hadn’t messaged Trey. So, who did? Glancing up at the counter and Trey’s back, waiting in line to grab their food, Jenn tapped the screen to wake it up.

*“You’ve had all day; any idea where we can meet up?”*

Jenn’s eyes went dry, and her breathing became shallow. Who else did Trey know on the ship, and why would they be meeting up?

Trey was accepting the tray from the worker. Jenn glanced down as the phone went dark again. Trey once more wove his way back to the table through the throngs of loudly conversing and eating adults.

Jenn glanced around at the seated patrons with new interest. Was this mystery person in the room right now?

Jenn took a deep breath. No reason to catastrophize and jump all the way to the worst conclusion. There could be a perfectly reasonable explanation for the message.

“Thanks.” She worked hard to put a believable smile on her face as she accepted the shallow wooden platter holding her overpriced burger and passable battered fries.

“You need ketchup or anything?” Trey asked.

“Nope. I’m good.”

Trey blinked, and his smile faded for a moment. “You sure?”

Jenn nodded, and tried another easy smile. “Yeah.” She gestured to the romper, free of spills and stains. “Ketchup and I have a fraught relationship.”

Seemingly satisfied with her answer, Trey sat down, sliding his own wooden platter into position.

Jenn didn’t say anything as she opened the burger and scraped the mushrooms from the top of her patty onto Trey’s platter.

“Thank you!”

“Mm-hmm.”

She vented her frustrations on the burger and the fries kept her mouth from filling with angry words. Instead, she used the time to think.

At last, taking a sip of the soda that for some reason tasted altogether too sweet, Jenn spoke.

“Mm— I didn’t tell you: I swear I saw someone from my work pass by just a minute ago, while you were getting the food.”

“Really?” Trey’s eyebrows were raised as he stared out toward the hallway outside the shop, as if expecting the fictitious person to walk by a second time.

“Right? What are the chances?” Jenn shook her head in mock disbelief, staring casually into her burger as she strained her jaw in preparation for another bite.

After several chews, she spoke around the mouthful, covering her mouth with her napkin. “Have you seen anyone you know yet?”

She was looking at her fries, but all of her attention was on the figure of Trey in her periphery, waiting breathlessly for his response.

“Mmm,” he intoned noncommittally, looking around the restaurant half-expectantly. “I don’t think so. Not yet anyway.”

Jenn’s stomach turned, and her appetite disappeared. She took one last half swallow of soda to clear her mouth, then pushed away her platter.

“I’m full.”

She saw Trey glance at her leftovers. “You sure? You hardly touched your fries. How was your burger?”

“Fine.” The moment it was out of her mouth, she knew she’d been too brusque.

Trey turned to look at her. Her cover was blown.

“What’s wrong?” Trey asked quietly.

She went impassive, willing herself not to blow up.

“While you were gone, someone messaged you. They wanted to know where you wanted to meet up.”

“Oh!” Trey buried his face in his burger, taking a large bite. He chewed slowly, grunting quietly in appreciation and nodding slightly. When he swallowed, he pointed at his food. “That’s a good burger.”

He pointed at his phone. “Probably some guy from this morning, another early bird. He wanted to get drinks this evening.”

“Really?” Jenn plastered an expression of mock disgust to her face in an attempt to conceal her doubt. “He sounded super needy.”

“Did he?” Trey picked up the phone, his eyes scanning the message. Jenn watched him closely. “Wow. You’re right. He sounds *super* needy.”

“You gonna meet up for drinks?”

“Probably not,” Trey said. “I think I have other plans.” He winked, then went for another bite of his burger.

Jenn decided, then and there, that regardless of whomever was on the other end of that clinging text, Trey was going to be very, *very* busy this

evening.

Trey knocked quietly on Jenn's cabin door. When she pulled the door open, he couldn't help the smile that grew across his face, nor his eyes from taking her all in.

Her makeup was done for the evening, smoky cat eyes and a bright pink lipstick giving her an alluring appearance. She was wearing a long, black, only slightly translucent coverup reminiscent of an old Hollywood evening gown.

"Wow. What a look!" He hesitated. "Are you sure we're only going to a pool party?"

"I'm sure," Jenn purred. "You haven't seen half of it, yet."

"Well, I look forward to the big reveal!" Trey offered her his arm. "I feel a tad underdressed!"

Jenn pulled her door closed as she accepted his arm. "It's only a pool party."

"Yeah, well—," Trey gestured to all of her appreciatively.

"Shall we?" Jenn glided through the hall, the train of the coverup billowing out behind her.

"Oh, that's just not fair," Trey gasped.

Jenn smirked. "Don't be jealous. You could wear one, too, I suppose."

"Yeah, but I wouldn't fill it like you do," Trey whistled.

"It's cute that you don't think so."

Trey looked up, smiling at the quip. He chuckled at the good-natured ribbing. "O-okay," he said. "Message received." He smacked his belly lightly. He was rewarded with Jenn's quiet laugh.

"Let's do this," he said, smiling.



They heard the pool party long before they reached it. The bump of bass and the metallic ring of steel drum pans echoed slightly throughout the atrium as they exited the elevator.

As they headed for the sliding doors that led to the pool deck, the sounds of the crowd and partygoers alternately muffled and echoed as the doors opened and shut as passengers passed through them.

Trey gave Jenn's hand a gentle squeeze. "I'm incredibly lucky to be going to this with you."

Jenn gave him an affectionate smirk. "I know."

She let go of Trey's arm and walked through the doors alone with a walk that would have been the envy of European models.

Trey took only a moment to enjoy watching her walk before he remembered that every moment she was out there unaccompanied was a moment another man (or woman, for that matter,) might make a pass at her. The idea made him incredibly jealous. He ran to catch up with her.

The darkness of the night sky formed an inky black backdrop to the lights, fog machines, and lasers of the DJ's table and stage. The multicolored lights waved and swept over the crowd, casting a thousand shadows that danced and lifted themselves, adding to the already-bustling scene of the deck party.

Jenn had passed through the crowd like a queen, looking neither to her left nor right. She made straight for the only empty loungers still available at the back of several cramped rows, much of the rest of the pool deck cleared to create a dance floor where those more uninhibited cruisers swayed, danced, or simply drank.

Trey couldn't help but admire and observe the stir that Jenn created as she passed. Women looked on in approval and appreciative smiles. Men looked at her in begrudging interest, as if resentful that someone so clothed could hold so much of their attention.

Why she ever chose him was beyond him, at that moment. He looked at this creature, this seductive angel wrapped in gossamer, and he

knew he was punching above his weight — which, looking down at his stomach— was considerable these days.

Jenn turned to find him and beckoned him over. He hadn't realized how far behind he'd fallen. When her gaze found him, he smiled and jogged forward, unbuttoning his shirt as he did so. By the time he reached her, he'd removed his shirt, and gently tossed it in a ball onto the lounge next to her.

"We doing this?" he asked, pointing toward the pool.

Jenn nodded, undoing one of the ties that held her coverup closed. "Go ahead; I'll be in in a minute."

Trey nodded and turned toward the pool. He apologized and excused his way into it, finding a place to stand near the center. He turned to check on Jenn.

Standing in the pool, Trey's eyes grew as wide as his smile. He watched, transfixed, as Jenn gently let the coverup fall from a fingertip, stretching luxuriously and looking pointedly in his direction as she reached toward the sky. The micro bikini straps connecting the miniscule bottom piece to the even smaller top pieces strained as her arms lifted over her head.

Trey heard a laugh and watched Jenn's head whip toward the source. Trey glanced to look. A group of college-aged dudes sat at the far end of the pool, legs in the water, staring and leering openly at the many women across the deck in varying states of undress. A few of them made half attempts at hiding the phones that snapped pictures wildly.

Trey turned back to look at Jenn, whose arms had lowered and was now glancing nervously between her body and the group, scanning the rest of the crowd for faces looking at her as she bent to reach for a towel, her hands starting to fold across her body as she tried to hide.

Trey leaped into action, spraying a young woman a few feet away with saltwater.

"Hey, watch it, dadbod!" she protested.

“I’m so sorry,” Trey apologized quickly. “Jenn!” He called her name urgently. Jenn looked up. She had sat down on the edge of the lounge, fumbling with the gossamer gown.

Trey smiled, beckoning to her eagerly, his grin genuine, warm, and encouraging. He saw a slight shake of her head. He panicked. “Oh, come on! You look amazing!” he called. She hesitated, then tentatively stood and walked toward him in the pool.

“White whale alert!”

“Thar she blows!”

The calls had come from the group of collegiate lurkers.

There was no way he was going to allow someone as amazing as Jenn be cowed and humiliated by a bunch of men who were probably still obsessed with “body count.” Without hesitation, Trey began dancing to the loud reggae music now emanating from the ship’s speakers.

“White whale walking!” he called out, simultaneously turning toward and catching the attention of the group of young men at the pool edge. Picking out one in the center, where he judged the calls had come from, he pointed at the young man, proceeding to dance provocatively, gyrating his hips and swinging his belly around as he advanced on the crowd. They had all gone still, eyes wide.

“Come here, cutie!” Trey called, moving faster toward the group. There were a few laughs around the pool as more passengers began taking notice and stared at the unfolding scene.

Trey kissed noisily. “Come on, big man: white whale’s hungry. Come dance with me.”

The young men at the periphery of the group had already stood up and climbed out of the water, laughing uncomfortably and retreating a few feet from the pool as Trey advanced. The ones at the center, the loudest and most brazen of the bunch, tried to look on in disinterest and disdain.

“Yo, back up, bruh,” one of the young men said forcefully.

“Aww, don’t be like that,” Trey teased playfully. “Come play with Trey-man.”

When Trey was within arm’s reach of what he’d dubbed as the ringleader, the young man shoved hard against Trey’s chest.

“Bruh, get outta my face!”

Trey put his hand to his chest where he’d been shoved, smiling creepily. “Trey likes it rough. Do it again.”

When he surged forward, sending a wave of water surging up and over the young men’s laps, the last of them scrambled to their feet and retreated from the water’s edge.

“Dude, you nasty!” The mingled cries from the young men overlapped as they slunk away, accompanied by cheers and the sound of applause. Dozens of onlooking passengers, most of them women, cheered the upset in the pool, whistling for Trey and booing the group of men who fled, flashing middle fingers and grumbling as they went.

Trey bowed briefly, smiling, then dropped low into the water and slowly hopped back to his spot. Jenn was waiting for him. When he sat down beside her, she scooted closer, pressing her thigh and side tight against his.

Placing her mouth close enough to his ear that he had to resist the urge to pull away at the tickle, she whispered, “Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” he said, laughing quietly. He returned several of the smiles and nods he received from women around the pool deck.

“How did you know that would work?” Jenn asked, scooping water from the pool and wetting her shoulders. Trey watched the water bead up at first and run off, then gradually spread and run in rivulets down her chest, leaving the skin shiny and smooth, dimly reflecting the lights of the dance. He felt a rush of blood to his extremity, pushing briefly against the flimsy fabric of his swim trunks.

“They were macho guys. There’s nothing macho guys hate more than being treated the same way they treat women.”

“Hmm.” Jenn hummed softly. It was almost a low loan. Trey felt another rush of blood, and his heart started to beat when he realized she was playing with him. She knew exactly what she was doing.

Her mouth was back at his ear, and this time her whisper was a seductive breath. “Well, thank you. How *ever* will I repay you?”

Beneath the water, her hand brushed down the top of his trunks, following the outline of his growing cock, even as it shifted with another large rush of circulation. Not here! Not now! There were far too many people: too many witnesses! He laughed nervously and placed his hand on top of hers, guiding it away from his shorts, down his leg to his knee.

She looked at him playfully, narrowing her eyes in challenge.

“Gonna play hard to get? Challenge... accepted.”

With that, Jenn kissed him lightly on the cheek, then proceeded to throw her legs over the top of his and scoot up onto his lap. Hooking her arms around his neck, she said, loudly enough for those around them to hear, “What would I have done without you?” She pulled him into a tight hug.

The soft swell of her next-to-bare breasts pushing against his chest was simply too much. In a series of pumping throbs, his cock expanded like an inflating balloon, trapped between both their legs. Trey heard Jenn chuckle quietly.

“There he is,” she whispered quietly enough for only Trey to hear.

There were several claps, laughs, and whistles as persistent onlookers, maybe still watching out of interest from Trey’s display earlier, shouted approval and encouragement. Emboldened, Jenn pulled back slightly, looking around and even smiling back at some of the cheerleaders.

Trey panicked. He couldn’t do what needed to be done here. There was no way that this was happening here, now.

Jenn, encouraged by the positive support of the crowd, spun around on Trey’s lap and laid back against his chest, letting her head rest against his shoulder. She peered up at him, smiling.

Looking down at her, Trey's eyes were drawn past her smile to her breasts, just above the waterline, where he could see the outlines of her nipples straining hard against the tiny strips of fabric that covered them. His penis strained uncomfortably against the seam of his swim trunks.

Feeling the pressure against her bare cheeks, Jenn bit her lower lip mischievously. Her right hand disappeared below the water line. Trey rediscovered it when he felt eager fingers pushing across his thigh toward his cock. Behind his glasses, Trey's eyes widened.

"Jenn— "

"Just go with it," Jenn whispered. Her fingers clenched around his cock. She unclenched and slid her hand slowly up and down the length of his shaft, still inside his suit.

Despite his best efforts, Trey's breath caught in his throat and every muscle in his body tensed. A quiet moan sounded deep in his throat.

Jenn grinned, laying her head back on his shoulder and arching her back, thrusting her breasts out of the water and into the air in front of them. There were a few more cheers and whistles.

"Jenn, stop."

"Why would I stop? They are all loving this!" Jenn was reacting to the cheers of the crowd now. A young woman's voice yelled, "Get it, girl!" Jenn began thrusting back and forth on Trey's lap, sliding her cheeks across his swim trunks. More cheers.

Jenn let out a whoop of her own.

"Jenn, please stop. This isn't you." It was all Trey could do to get the words out. Jenn's persistent thrusting had shifted his now-fully-erect penis until it was in line with her crack. She hummed again.

"Slide forward and lean back."

"What? Why?"

Jenn smiled and slid her hand up toward Trey's belly, forcing her fingertips under the lip of his trunks. "Cause I wanna ride your cock."

“No!”

Trey recoiled, hunching over instinctively. Jenn was forced off his lap, barely having time to protest before her head was submerged underwater. She came up sputtering, wiping water and makeup from her eyes.

Trey rushed to help her up. “Shit. I’m sorry, Jenn. Let me—,” There were some laughs and squeals of second-hand embarrassment as cruisers all around the pool deck either looked away or stared harder.

Jenn pulled her arm away, glaring at Trey. She didn’t say anything, just wiped water from her face and flung it from her hands as she waded toward the opposite side of the pool.

“That’s cold, man.”

“Honey, he don’t deserve you!” Jenn turned to look at the woman who had shouted, a thin, tight, quick, angry smile flickering over her face.

Trey stood up to follow her but dropped back in the water when he realized just how far his cock pushed out the front of his trunks. Outside of the water, there was no hiding the strength of his erection. The few who had seen made catcalls and shouts. One woman a few feet away pushed a pair of sunglasses up onto her head, staring fixedly at the water where Trey’s tented trunks rippled and waved underneath its surface.

“Damn, don’t pay her no mind, baby! If it were me, even if you dumped me in the water, I’d be all over that stick. Give me that Vitamin D!” She clucked her tongue in approval.

Trey did his best to ignore her, watching Jenn and waiting for his erection to ease.

Jenn, having reached the far side of the pool and heard the woman’s comment, turned and flipped her off, saying, “Go right ahead and try, ‘baby.’ Maybe you’ll have better luck than I did.”

As Jenn reached down to adjust the narrow strip of fabric that covered the small patch between her legs, the woman said, none too quietly, “Fuck you, fat bitch.”

Trey winced as he saw Jenn visibly flinch. “Not cool,” he said to the woman. His erection now rapidly decreasing, he stood and followed after Jenn.

She had lifted herself out of the pool, crossing her arms uncomfortably across herself and returned to her lounge chair. She clasped a towel to herself, picked up the delicate fabric of the coverup, and without a backward glance, headed for the entrance into the atrium of the ship.

The DJ running the music spoke up over the speakers. “Hey, let’s all remember that we’re here to have some fun! Leave all that drama on land, people! Out here, we only do one thing: party!!” He launched into a new song, an electronic dance tune with heavy beats that soon had the crowd all bobbing and whooping in time. Trey pulled himself out of the pool, scooped up his shirt, towel, and sandals, and ran to follow after Jenn.

As he did, the brazen woman from before called out, “Hey, I’m in cabin 756, if she doesn’t put out! You’re welcome anytime!”

He ignored her. Right now, Jenn was his only concern.

Trey had every reason to be concerned. Jenn was furious. She clasped the towel around her breasts with one hand, mashing the elevator call button with the other.

“Jenn! Wait, please.”

She took an angry breath, glaring at the couple standing waiting for the elevator, as well.

“No, no, keep staring. In another minute, I’ll give you a private show.”

The couple glanced at each other and walked to another set of elevator doors to wait for a different car.

The elevator doors dinged then opened, and Jenn stomped in, punched her deck button, then repeatedly tapped the door close button.



Trey's arm kept the doors from closing entirely, then he slipped in quickly as they reopened.

Jenn set her face in a freezing stare and faced the bank of buttons.

"Jenn, I'm so sorry. I— "

"Do you think any of that was easy?"

"What?"

"Do you think running around with my tits hanging out and my bits on display for everyone to see is just my natural state? Do you think that comes easily?"

"I just— we couldn't very well just fuck in the pool, Jenn. I mean, did you really want all those people watching?"

Jenn stared. Sucked her lips in as she jack-hammered the 12th deck button. Lord don't let her explode on this beautiful man.

"Besides, in the pool? That's... wrong on a number of levels."

Never mind, Lord.

Jenn whirled on him as the elevator began to move. She dropped the towel to the floor.

"My apologies, Mr. Morality. Does the idea of having your privates exposed for everyone so inclined to look at make you uncomfortable?" She flipped aside the two nipple covers, fully exposing her breasts, then used two fingers to dislodge the flap that covered her vulva and the narrow, delicately trimmed trail of hair extending up from them.

Trey stared, and Jenn shouted, "What about mine?"

She couldn't care less about the bulge in his shorts that grew in response to her display.

"Nope. Just yours." Jenn replaced the cover at her crotch and only just managed to get the nipple covers back in place before the doors

opened. A white-haired couple stared in, the man's eyes hungrily taking in Jenn's near nudity.

Jenn bent to pick up the towel, giving the couple a full show of her backside. She heard the woman gasp and make angry muttering noises. When she stood and turned around, she made fixed eye contact with the woman as she wrapped the towel around her body.

"Believe me, he's seen way more than that, and you probably chose the wrong cruise if that offends you."

The woman sniffed in disapproval as Jenn left the elevator. The couple turned to Trey, whose hands tried and failed to hide his erection.

Behind her, Jenn heard Trey try to offer some explanation as she swept down the hallway, leaving him behind.

He caught up to her just as she reached her cabin door. She opened her bag, pulling out her keycard.

"Jenn, I— "

She cut him off.

"I put everything out there for you, Trey. Literally." She didn't look at him as she swiped the card. He didn't interrupt. "Not only did you turn me down—," She whirled on him. "You rejected me!" "Not only that, but you made me into a laughingstock, while you came out of it smelling like a rose, a paragon of virtue to stand firm and unaffected by the drunken advances of the cruise fat lady!" She pushed the door open and stepped inside. "Say hello to 756 for me, or whoever the hell else it is you're meeting up with tonight." She slammed the door behind her, then leaned against the door, fighting the tears that built up in her eyes.

The humiliation, embarrassment, and anger poured out of her as she slid slowly to the floor, cradling her head on her arms and knees as she cried.

## Chapter 7

For the third time the next morning, Trey knocked on Jenn's door with no response. He checked his phone again. Still no response to either of his messages. Jenn was ghosting him. *On a ship? Was that even possible on a ship?* He'd heard of ghost ships, but this was ridiculous!

Trey turned away from the silence of the cabin door. Ricardo! When he saw Trey turn and begin walking toward him, the man yanked the supply closet door closed and scrambled backward, pulling the cart he held between them like a shield.

"Ricardo, I just have a question. Have you seen Ms. Jenn this morning at all?"

Ricardo waved his hands as if shooing away a bothersome stray animal. "No. Can't help. Very busy, Mr. Trey."

Trey slowed to a stop as Ricardo wheeled around a corner and out of sight. He pulled out his phone and stared at the empty messaging screen helplessly. *Where could she be?*

Last night literally could not have gone worse. Trey thought they'd been on sure footing after their afternoon delight. Apparently, he'd been wrong. He had absolutely no idea why Jenn had decided that she needed to have him right away, and in the pool, of all places. Like a couple of horny teenagers. She'd mentioned his clumsily-covered-up text. Was that it?

It seemed silly to say that she'd been upset. A little like saying a volcano is hot. Sure, it's a true statement, but a massive exercise in understatement.

Just then, the chime of the loudspeaker system sounded.

"Good morning cruisers, this is your captain speaking. We have docked successfully, and we're just waiting on the last finishing touches to get the ship all secure before we open up the gangway. If you have any last-minute signups or alterations to your shore excursions, there are attendants

waiting at the Shore Excursion counter in the atrium to assist you. Otherwise, please enjoy your day in Cozumel.”

That was it: shore excursions. If Jenn was truly as mad at him as he thought, he bet dimes to dozens that she would be changing her shore excursion to one that *he* wasn't on.

Trey wove his way along with the other passengers heading down toward the gangway on the lower levels. The lines for the elevators were longer than a ladies' bathroom at a Taylor Swift concert.

Trey headed for the atrium balcony. Staring down, the wide open, glass-encased chamber echoed loudly with the voices of excited passengers and a single lonely guitar player whose attempts at an Eagles song were largely ignored and overshadowed.

Trey peered down into the sea of brightly colored sundresses, woven-grass hats, and obnoxious Hawaiian print shirts. *How the hell was he supposed to see a single specific woman in all of— There she is!*

“Jenn!”

She didn't look up.

Trey cupped his hands around his mouth and leaned as far as he dared over the balcony railing. “Jenn!” he shouted again. He thought she might have turned her head slightly, but she never looked up.

He turned and ran for the stairs, taking them two at a time right up until he stumbled, and his foot slipped down a step.

He went down hard, falling backward onto the stairs as his ankle crumpled beneath him.

“Damnit!” he hissed as a few other passengers rushed toward him, offering concerned gasps, words of consolation, and a few helpful hands up.

Trey tried to smile through the pain in his ankle as he waved them away graciously. “I'm fine. It's fine,” he said, continuing to limp his way downstairs.

Slowly, painfully, he hobbled down the rest of the remaining flights of stairs to the floor of the atrium.

*Damn, damn, double damn!* There was no sign of Jenn. Trey tried to stand on tiptoe to see above the crowd and winced. His injured ankle was not going to support him, and he couldn't balance well enough on one ankle to see much. He made his way to the Shore Excursions counter.

"Excuse me," he said loudly, over the top of the attendant helping a couple in particularly bad matching Hawaiian print sun dress and shirt combo. The woman glanced at him, annoyed.

"Sir, if you're wanting to book an excursion, we'll be happy to serve you at your turn." The attendant smiled thinly and pointed to the end of the long line.

"No, sorry, I just wanted to ask about a woman who was just here."

The woman's face went tight and decidedly cold. "I'm sorry, sir, we can't give out information about other passengers."

"No, I— she's my wife."

The woman looked at him, suspicion coming so thick from her eyes he could have spread it on toast.

"What room are you in, Sir?"

"No, that— we're staying in different rooms."

The woman paused, her face now starkly devoid of expression. Trey wondered briefly if she thought she was actually hiding any of the obviously negative thoughts she was having about him.

"I'm sorry, sir. I can't give out the information of other passengers. It's for everyone's safety, sir."

Trey sighed. There would obviously be no help coming from this direction. He glanced at the couple at the counter. The man's whole face wore a furrow that traveled uninterrupted from his forehead to his chin, and the woman's disgusted sneer had Trey gritting his teeth.

“Creep,” he heard her say.

It was all Trey could do to walk away from the desk without saying anything. The last thing he needed was to draw more attention to himself.

His mind raced. He couldn't call her, couldn't message her. He glanced down at his ankle. Couldn't follow her.

“Are you all right, sir?” The cruise employee gently touched Trey's shoulder, pulling him out of his stupor.

“What?” Trey glanced down at his ankle again. “Yeah, I'm fine,” he lied, hopping as he fought to keep his balance without stepping on the offending ankle.

“Do you need to see the ship's doctor, sir?”

“No, I'm fine.”

Trey looked up, an idea flickering in his brain.

“Is there a pair of binoculars I could borrow?”

A few minutes later, holding the expensive pair of binoculars he hadn't intended on buying, but been given no other option, Trey stood watch on the top deck as close to shore as he could get, his eyes fixed on the gangway doors where the waiting crowds would appear from the cruise ship.

His best chance at knowing where Jenn went would be if he could spot her from the ship, using the binoculars, and track what excursion group she hooked up with. Maybe then he could follow after.

He winced again as he set his foot down even slightly. *Or not.*

The doors opened. He leaned out over the railing to get a view of the faces coming out of the gangway. He just needed to spot her as she came out.

The faces came and went, throngs of passengers holding bags, wearing sunglasses and wide, brimmed hats.

He turned his attention toward picking out the pale-yellow blouse and mermaid style white skirt Jenn had been wearing. Picking out her face with the sunglasses and hats felt like a losing task.

The passengers flowed outward, flitting in groups of twos, threes, and more, only a few single figures entirely on their own. It was only the loneliest or the surliest of persons who didn't have a friend by day three of the cruise. Trey tried not to think about what the quietness of the deck said about him right now.

*There!*

He squinted, trying to tell if it was truly Jenn who'd exited the ship or just a lookalike. It was only dumb luck that made the woman lift her head, studying the sky overhead and gripping the hat that threatened to blow away.

The pixie cut gave her away. It was Jenn. Trey felt his anxiety lessen just slightly. At least he could breathe again. Now he just needed to see where she went.

He watched Jenn file with the rest of the crowd into the long building at the end of the dock and disappear inside. He raised the binoculars to his eyes and watched the other end almost without blinking. If she emerged from there without him seeing her, chances were good that he'd never find her again.

His eyes burned from blinking too little in the stiff sea breeze that whipped up the side of the cruise ship into his face. He risked a long series of blinks to cope with the sting.

He inhaled sharply when Jenn emerged from the building. She was talking to someone: a tall man in a loose black tank top that emphasized his huge arms and shoulders.

"Shit!" Trey lowered the optics, his mouth and eyes spread wide. "Are you kidding me?" Raising the binoculars again, he swept them over the shore until he found them again. Sure enough, he spotted Jenn, walking side by side with that idiot from the library. *What was his name? Casey?*

This wasn't happening.

Jenn adjusted the hat on her head. The strong breeze rushing in from the sea threatened at every opportunity to take it right off her head, and she couldn't be more bothered by it.

Everything bothered her this morning. When the stewards had smiled too cheerily as she waited for the chance to disembark and go ashore, it had irked her. When the breeze had first seized her hat as she'd left the ship, nearly succeeding in stealing it from her, she'd been annoyed. When she'd been filing through the building claiming to be selling discount alcohol, cigarettes, tees, and tchotchkes, she'd resented those holding up the line from moving.

That's why it surprised her when she wasn't absolutely irate that Casey from the library appeared at her side, offered her an elbow and a bottle of water, and said, "Hey, I wanted to apologize."

Wary, but not nearly as annoyed as she thought she'd be, she accepted the water bottle but left the elbow pointedly alone. "Oh, yeah? What for?"

Casey smiled and adjusted the strap of the bag he wore across his chest. "I wasn't exactly at my finest in the library a few days ago."

Jenn didn't smile, careful to give no premature indication of an acceptance. "I haven't heard an apology yet."

"I—," Casey broke off, filing through the gate with the others, falling into line behind Jenn as they went through, emerging into the already-too-warm-for-total-comfort light of the May day. "I was rude, inconsiderate of your time and space, and it wasn't fair of me to just push myself on you like that. You clearly weren't looking for a come-on, and I came on, anyway. I'm sorry."

Jenn blinked. That was a far more self-aware apology than she'd expected. *Had she been wrong about Casey?*



“Where’s your friend?” Casey asked, obviously looking around for Trey.

“We’re taking some space today,” Jenn said briefly.

Casey grimaced loudly, hissing. “Ouch. Your call or his?”

“I’d really rather not talk about it.” Jenn kept her voice cool.

Casey lifted his hands in apology. “Sorry. Not my place: my bad.” He walked beside her quietly for a moment, then added, “You having a solo day, or would you be down for some company?”

Jenn glanced at Casey out of the corner of her eye. *How old is he?* She guessed he was probably close to ten years her junior. She’d be absolutely stunned if he was over 30. And yet, here he was, picking up on her for the second time in three days, in a crowded ship of singles and pairs ready to mingle, obviously interested. Jenn couldn’t help but be cautiously flattered.

“That depends. What are you hoping to get out of this, Mr. Casey?”

Casey shrugged those big shoulders, the huge muscles connecting his neck to his shoulders—were those called trapezoids? —already glistening with shimmery sweat under the Mexican sun. “Honestly? Good and good-looking company?”

“Nothing more than that, huh?” Jenn hummed doubtfully.

“Doesn’t need to be,” Casey shrugged again. “I mean, I wouldn’t hate it if it were more, but I’m not gonna push it to be, either.” He paused. “It can be whatever you want it to be.”

Casey, surprising her again with his self-awareness and respect. Unexpected, to say the least. She nodded toward the plaza, where several groups were beginning to form and gather around cruise and tour group employees holding printed signs for various destinations.

“You doing an excursion?”

“Not if you aren’t,” Casey replied.

“Look, kid.” Jenn turned to face the younger man. “Yes, I’m calling you kid. I still own CDs that are older than you.”

Casey’s nostrils flared, but he didn’t say anything. So, Jenn continued.

“I don’t need any company. I don’t know if you’re one of those guys who thinks a woman *needs* a man to take care of her and protect her. I don’t. So, please, if you’re hanging out for that, just do me a favor: don’t.”

Casey had flinched and folded his arms at one point. Jenn waited for him to blow up, to begin berating her or attacking back.

“If we don’t hurry, I think we’re going to miss our rides.” He nodded toward the first of the tour groups that had begun taking off, headed for the parking lot. “Last chance.”

“Screw it,” Jenn muttered under her breath. Out loud, she said, “One more for the taco tours!” She headed for the sepia, reddish-brown skinned man holding up the sign denoting “Taco Tours.”

She turned to look back at Casey. “I’m about to stuff my face with tacos. What are you doing?”

Casey smiled mischievously, one eyebrow lifting above the sunglasses. “I’m all about stuffing my face with taco.”

Despite herself, Jenn found her cheeks growing warm and her eyes dropping to the ground.

Casey didn’t say anything else, simply followed after her, holding up a single finger to the guide to indicate his intention. The man nodded in acknowledgment.

*Whew!* The morning was certainly beginning to warm up! Jenn started to wonder if perhaps not discouraging Casey from accompanying her was going to turn out to be a mistake.

The e-bike tour, culminating in an authentic, Mexican spread of tacos and other foods, was just what Jenn wanted.

For the last time, Jenn caught her floppy hat as it tried to sail away with the warm coastal breeze. She crushed the offending accessory into the bottom of the bike's basket, even going so far as to adjust the complimentary bottle of water so that it rested on top.

Jenn pretended not to notice Casey's side eye as she hiked up the mermaid skirt high around her thighs, nearly to her hips. She hadn't planned on cycling when she'd gotten dressed this morning. But the last-minute cancellation and switch required adaptability. Many of the other outings had already filled.

She strapped the helmet provided to them and cinched it tight, smiling as she pushed off to follow the guide.

The first thing she did was switch off the electric pedal-assist motor on her bicycle. Under the rising eye of the Yucatán sun, it didn't take long at all for Jenn to begin to sweat heavily from the effort of pedaling.

The exertion felt good. Jenn had always preferred riding a bicycle for her cardio over running, or worse, a treadmill. An actual bicycle, outside, exposed to the actual elements and giving her something more to look at than the same four walls, gym bros, or even just the slowly transitioning scenery of running. With a bicycle, one could actually see something, cover some distance in a short amount of time.

Several minutes later, she was grateful that she didn't have long hair; several of the other women on the tour who'd forgotten hair ties were battling the breeze and their own speed, unable to look very far in either direction, else their hair was blown straight into their mouths, noses, and eyes.

Jenn couldn't help but smile as she pedaled harder, shooting out away from the group to catch up to their guide, a few yards ahead. Her thighs burned, and the sweat dripped down her neck and armpits. She felt electrically, deliciously alive.

Casey sped up to match her, riding quietly and nearly effortlessly at her side.

“You know, these work better if you turn them on,” Casey said, taking in her sweat-matted hair, glistening arms, and heavy breathing.

“Depends on what you want out of it,” Jenn puffed.

“If you wanted to swim, you picked the wrong outing.” Casey’s half smile told Jenn that he found himself funny, even if she didn’t.

“Oh, a funny guy!” Jenn said between breaths. The guide was leading them up a slight hill. Jenn heaved the bike side to side, standing up to give added strength to her downstrokes. They crested the hill and began coasting down the other side. Jenn took the opportunity to study the town around them.

The road was divided in two by a wide, tree-filled median. The trunks of the sprawling, brightly leaved trees were all painted a bright white. *Bugs? Aesthetics?* Jenn had seen the practice before but wasn’t certain of the actual purpose.

The parked cars on one side and the median on the other created a narrow roadway, forcing traffic to move at a smooth, comfortable (for a bike, anyway) clip.

They rode past numerous open-air bars and restaurants, catering to the throngs of cruisers from the nearby docks. The varying sounds of mariachi, pop, country, and slow, mournful Mexican ballads alternately swelled and faded as she coasted past.

Ahead of them, their guide, who’d introduced himself as Benjamin, was pulling up onto a sidewalk, coasting to a stop.

“You’re in pretty good shape!” Casey called out from immediately behind her as they followed Benjamin onto the sidewalk.

Jenn paused, waiting for a qualifier of some kind. “What? No ‘but’ coming?”

“No, the butt’s coming nicely,” Casey said.

Jenn turned to look at him blankly.

He tried to grin, but it faded when she didn't laugh or smile. She didn't even blink.

"No?" he asked with that obnoxiously cute half smile.

"Nope," she said loudly, unclipping her helmet and hanging it from the handlebars.

The first stop was a historic Catholic Church. It was everything Jenn thought it would be: a crème-stuccoed building with arched stained glass windows, a beautiful mosaic tile floor, and a score of uncomfortable looking pews facing the cavernous rotunda at the front of the sanctuary.

Jenn hung back as Benjamin led the group up one of the side aisles of the church, whispering quietly as the other members filed past Jenn.

Standing with her hands on the back most pew, Jenn heard one young woman whisper, "Ew. Why so sweaty?"

Jenn glanced at her. Barely out of high school, by the look of her. Jenn chose to ignore the comment. Adolescence was a ruthless time for those who deviated from social norms and expectations outside the expected. The young woman's crop top, high-waisted, booty-clinging shorts declared her solidly within social bounds.

Jenn took a look down at herself. Her low-cut yellow blouse was drenched with sweat, which also beaded up on her shoulders and ran down her neck into the shirt.

"For the record, I don't think you look too bad," Casey murmured, an arm's length away from her, leaning down on the pew with both hands.

Jenn's sigh through her nose was forced and quick. She spun to face Casey.

"Enough, boy. You can't hang out with me if you're going to be constantly hitting on me and trying to get in my pants."

The half-smile was back. "You're not wearing any pants."

"I'm not wearing any panties, either." Jenn watched Casey's eyes widen and wander down over her generous hips and thighs. She saw his

board shorts wiggle of their own accord. “Easy, tiger. All that means is that they’re not going to be dropping anytime soon, got it?”

A slight hiss pulled both of their attention. A black-robed clergyman stood staring at them, mouth agape. “This is a house of God!” he whispered in a thick Mexican accent, horrified.

Jenn frowned. “Sorry, Padre.” She retreated toward the entrance, making a cross on herself as she backed out of the entryway. She had no idea if that was what was actually done in a Catholic church. She’d seen people do it on shows and movies often enough. *Couldn’t hurt, right?*

Jenn found her bike and reached into the basket for the water bottle. She clapped her floppy hat, a bit the worse the wear for its trip in the basket, back onto her head, then uncapped the water bottle.

As she took a long dip from the thin, crinkly plastic vessel, she watched Casey emerge from the chapel. She took an inhale through her nose as he stepped through the door frame. *Damn, he’s tall!* He nearly had to duck to avoid hitting the top of the threshold.

Jenn had to check herself when her eyes automatically dropped back to his board shorts that she’d seen move earlier. Was it her imagination that she saw some independent swinging behind the fabric low on his thigh? *Sweet Christmas!* She glanced away, forcing herself to think of something — anything — else. Young monster cock was not what she wanted to think about right now.

She did, anyway. The memory of what it felt like to wrap her fingers around a flaccid, limp penis and feel it respond to her attention by standing to its own attention filled her with an ache that nearly made her groan aloud. Trey. It made her think of Trey. They’d been so close! Why hadn’t he just—

“You’re really...” Casey interrupted her simultaneously horny and angry thoughts. He paused, his stalled observation hanging in the air between them.

Jenn swallowed. “Hot?” She fanned herself to drive her point home.

“Well, yeah...” *Enough with the sexy half-smile!* Casey looked her up and down again to make his double meaning clear.

“But I was gonna say, ‘interesting.’”

Jenn paused, the water bottle halfway to her lips. *Interesting? The hell does that mean?*

“Oh, yeah?” she asked, taking another long pull of the bottle and nearly emptying it. “How’s that?”

Casey wordlessly handed her his own water bottle. Jenn accepted it without acknowledgment, making it clear that this unrequested favor was not significant enough to warrant any reciprocation. She dropped both bottles back into her basket.

“You don’t seem to care what anyone thinks about you, you put yourself out there for the world to look at, but not touch, yet, when that monk—,”

“Priest,” she corrected without thinking.

Casey shook his head and smiled. “—Priest shushed you, you retreated quicker than a cat on a hot tin roof!”

Jenn squinted behind her shades. A southern boy, huh? She wouldn’t have guessed that.

“The church and I have what you might refer to as a fraught relationship.”

“Yeah?” Casey waited.

Looking up at the front of the building before them, Jenn took a long breath and let it out slowly. When she turned away, it was with a whole lot of intention. “Casey, if this is going to last at all longer than it already has, there are two rules I’m going to need you to abide by and respect.”

Jenn unclipped the helmet, switching it with her sun hat. “First, I don’t talk about life off of the cruise. I’m here to forget about life for a while, not to hash and rehash old memories, mmkay?” She buckled the

strap, careful not to pinch her neck in the device. “The second: nothing takes away from my bliss.”

“Got it.” Jenn noted with equal parts annoyance and eagerness that Casey was putting on his own helmet. “So, how thick are you and that guy from the library?”

Jenn squeezed the handlebars at Trey’s name. “You know, Casey, you’re really bad at this.”

Casey turned his bike to follow her as she stepped through the frame and started pedaling. “I just want to know whether I have a chance, is all!”

“You don’t have a chance, Casey. I feel like I’ve been pretty clear about that from the beginning.”

“None at all?”

“Absolutely none.”

“Why is that, exactly? Do you have history or something?”

Jenn turned to check the traffic and started pedaling circles around the block, waiting for Benjamin and the rest of the group to finish up inside the church and continue on.

“I’m done, Casey!” she called behind her, hearing his bicycle bell sound in her wake. “Company is all I’m interested in!”

To Jenn’s surprise, when they finally reached the next destination, Casey was still behind her and chose to walk quietly beside her across the sprawling plaza before the government buildings. And the next, the next, and the next. At every stop Casey was there, never saying a word more about life outside the cruise, Trey, or his chances with her. He simply pointed out photo opportunities, pushed new flavors of ice cream, offered to hold her shoes while she waded into the ocean.

When Benjamin signaled the last and final stop of the tour, Jenn invited Casey to sit beside her at the table as they sampled a variety of tacos.



Jenn closed her eyes as she took a bite of the taco in her hand. The meat was spiced to perfection, the flavor savory and deep in a way that made her jaw tingle as she bit down. A bit of the sauce dripped from her lip, tangy, spicy, and just enough hint of lime. She didn't care. *Why couldn't food in the US taste like this?* A quiet moan escaped her throat.

A quiet snigger reminded her she wasn't alone.

"You doin' okay over there?"

"Shut up, Casey." She spoke the words before she realized it. She glanced at him to check his reaction. She relaxed when it became apparent that he wasn't offended in the slightest. He was watching her, a few crumbs all that were left of his last serving.

"Have you tried the carne asada? This stuff is to die for!" Without thinking, Jenn turned and held out the taco.

"Just to be clear, you're asking me to taste your taco?"

"Ugh, enough! Men." Jenn dropped the unfinished taco on her plate, then stood and walked to her bicycle.

"Señora?" Benjamin called out. "Leaving already?"

"Yes, thank you for the tour, Benjamin. Everything was wonderful." Jenn pulled a twenty out of her skirt pocket. "For you."

The young man smiled. "Gracias, Señora."

Jenn pulled the note back temporarily as she had a sudden thought. "It's Señorita, Benjamin." She winked.

Benjamin grinned. "Of course, señorita. Lo siento."

"Never miss an opportunity to make a woman feel young and beautiful without being creepy, and you'll always find yourself with plenty of these," she said quietly, buckling her helmet with her free hand.

"Si. Gracias, señorita." Benjamin reached out to take the bill tentatively. Jenn released it.

“Hang on, I’ll come with you!” Casey called out, pushing his chair in.

“Good luck,” Jenn said, switching on the power to her electric motor. She raced away, pedaling hard and zipping through the streets toward the ship and the docks.

## Chapter 8

Trey had never given up his watch. His stomach growled as he swept over the end of the dock with the binoculars again. *Where had she gone? And with Casey?!*

He squeezed the body of the optics, a long, heavy breath whistling out through his nose. He couldn't believe she'd done that. Left him on board without so much as a word, and gone to spend the day doing God knew what, God knew where with *Casey, of all people!*

There! His eyes narrowed as he spotted Jenn's yellow blouse— now soaked in perspiration. *Good God!*

Trey followed her progress with the binoculars until she was within a hundred yards of the gangway, then dropped the optics on their leash around his neck and began alternately hopping and limping toward the hatch that would take him to the elevators.

He tapped the button then stood muttering, "Come on, come on," under his breath until the doors dinged and opened.

Trey skip-limped as quickly as he could down the hall toward his room. When he reached the door, he slid the keycard and slipped inside, closing it quickly behind him and tossing the binoculars onto the bed.

He stood there, his eye pressed to the peephole and fought to get his breathing under control as he waited for Jenn to appear.

He checked his watch. Minutes passed by, and Jenn still hadn't appeared. He was on the verge of giving up and trying to text her again when he heard voices in the hall. He stiffened.

It was Jenn. She said something out of sight and walked to her room. Trey took his eye away from the hole in the door and took a breath. Here went nothing.

He pulled the door open.

“Jenn?”

She paused in her doorway, her hand on the handle.

“Were you waiting for me?”

Trey hesitated, but only for a moment.

“Maybe,” he said with a quick smile. It faded as he saw it wasn’t returned.

“Did you need something?” Jenn’s voice was flat, carefully devoid of all emotion.

“I just wanted to see how your excursion went.” Trey left all judgment and attack out of his voice. It wouldn’t make him any headway right now.

“It was fine.” Jenn glanced at him, then turned to look longer when she saw the bandage around his foot. “What happened to you? Where did you go?”

Trey forced a laugh. “Nowhere. I never made it off the ship.” He tried to adjust his pant leg to cover the bandage unsuccessfully. “Did you do what we were planning on?”

Jenn scoffed. “The couples massage and retreat at the spa? No, I didn’t do that by myself.”

Trey couldn’t keep the skin around his eyes from tightening in suspicion. That wasn’t completely a “no.” One could argue that Jenn could have been telling the truth, even if she’d taken Casey with her in Trey’s stead.

“So, you didn’t go to the spa, then?”

Jenn looked down at herself. Trey’s eyes followed, taking in for the first time the mud- and dust-spattered sandals and hem of her skirt.

“No, Trey, I didn’t go to the spa.” Jenn’s hand went back to the door handle. “Was there something else? I’d really like to shower and get cleaned up.”

“You want any company in there?” Trey asked with a laugh.

“They’re a little small. I don’t think that’d work out very well.”

Trey took a tentative step forward. “I don’t know, we could probably squeeze in and figure things out, if you wanted.”

Jenn stared at him. Trey couldn’t quite decide what expression he could see behind her eyes.

“If it’s all the same to you, I think I’ll shower alone.”

Trey hesitated. She was still very much upset with him.

“I—Okay. Uh, do you want to connect up afterward? What are you feeling for dinner and the evening?”

He heard Jenn take in a deep breath, then watched as she looked up and down the hall.

“Shall we go ahead and have this conversation in my room?”

Trey’s heart sank. This was not how he saw the trip progressing at this point. He nodded quietly.

Jenn stepped inside and held the door for him to enter behind her. He limped inside, trying and failing to hide the depth of his injury.

“What exactly happened there?” Jenn asked quietly as she closed the cabin door.

Trey sat on the bed, wincing as he accidentally tried to support some of his weight with his injured foot. He smiled through gritted teeth. “Just tripped on some stairs.”

“Sorry; it looks like it hurts.”

Trey shrugged. “It’s not great, I’m not gonna lie.”

Without a word, Jenn lifted her shirt up over her head, leaving her solely in her bra and skirt.

Trey swallowed.

“Was there something you wanted to say?” Jenn asked, turning her attention to her sandals.

“Yeah. I—erm...” Trey tried and failed to take his eyes away from Jenn’s cleavage as she bent down to unlatch her footwear. *Mother of pearl, she was beautiful!*

He coughed, finally succeeding in jarring his own thoughts enough to look away. “I’m sorry about last night.”

“Oh?” Jenn asked, stepping out of the sandals and tossing them into the bathroom. “What for, exactly?” She began to unzip the skirt, making clear her intent to continue undressing. Trey turned to face the sliding door at the back of her room leading to the private balcony.

“You were obviously upset last night, after you—,” he glanced at Jenn, who had paused when he’d said, “you.”

“—When I...” His voice trailed off. He didn’t know where he was going from this side of things. He turned back to face her.

“You don’t know what you’re apologizing for, do you?” Jenn asked, her hands paused inside the waistband of her skirt.

Trey hesitated. This was clearly a trap, but he saw no way out of it. A false apology or an apology for the wrong thing would be worse than honesty.

He shook his head. “I really don’t, no. I kept us from fucking like wannabe porn stars in the public pool of a cruise ship.” His voice rose, and he could feel his face heat up. “I honestly don’t see that as something requiring an apology.”

Jenn’s arms were crossed across the top of her chest now. It wasn’t the seductive, teasing crossing from the first night of the cruise. This crossing was all defiance and opposition. Jenn’s expression had gone from careful lack of expression to the steely gaze and clenched jaw of challenge.

“It’s called *foreplay*, Trey! I was doing my damndest to rev things up between us!” She shifted, pulling the skirt up a little higher as it sagged,

undone, around her hips. “God knows *someone* has to take that on; all *you* ’ve done is put the brakes on everything since the very first night.”

She’d paused. He knew this tactic: she was pausing to give him a chance to attempt to defend himself before further eviscerating him. A little more rope with which to hang himself. A tactic right out of the corporate handbook.

He saw all the warning signs, and still he took the bait, anyway.

“You were going to, and I quote, ‘ride my cock!’” He used air quotes to emphasize the line. He knew she hated that.

“I was talking dirty, Trey! People do it! I believe most men actually get quite the turn on from hearing the woman grinding their privates talk about wanting more.” She huffed, sneering. “Not you, apparently.”

“No? How about Casey? Casey into the whole dirty talking girl thing?” The words left Trey’s mouth before he could stop himself. The cold shiver of regret wiggled its way up his spine.

Jenn blinked and her mouth opened in what Trey could only interpret as disbelief. “Casey? I’m sorry, did you follow me or something?”

Trey shifted uncomfortably side to side on the bed. He hated fighting. “I... when you didn’t answer your door—,” he jerked his chin to point at it. “Or answer my texts, I went looking for you.”

“Okay, and what? Followed me all the way to my excursion?” Jenn glanced at Trey’s foot. “How did you really hurt your ankle?”

He winced from the accusation and the amount of hurt in her voice. “I really did fall down some stairs.”

Jenn didn’t miss a beat. “Then how did you see me with Casey? We didn’t even meet up until the far end of the dock!”

“Whoa, hold on, ‘met up?’ Did you plan to meet him?”

“I’m not dignifying that with an answer.” Jenn turned to face the door and pulled it open, standing behind it. “Will you please go? I’d like to shower.”

Trey took an angry, shuddering breath in and stood up off the bed. He walked out on both feet, his pride hiding the pain from walking on the hurt ankle. The door clicked shut behind him.

“I don’t get it. We were going to spend the entire day together. Couples’ massages, a private seaside cabana, the works! It was supposed to be this incredibly romantic occasion, but instead...” Trey took a breath and a swallow of the whiskey in his glass. “She spent the entire day riding a fucking bicycle all over Mexico with that macho-prick, Casey!” He snorted derisively into the glass, glaring when it turned up empty.

Across from him, Chloe and Desire glanced at each other uncomfortably. Trey saw the look and glanced around the banquet hall, reminded of his surroundings.

“So, what are you thinking?” Chloe asked quietly. “Do we call everything off?”

Trey’s head shot up. “What? Are you kidding? No, absolutely not.” He drove the point of his finger into the tabletop to emphasize his point. “This is happening. Now, more than ever.”

Desire took a deep breath. Trey saw Chloe squeeze her elbow and shake her head minutely.

“What?” he asked shortly.

Desire took Chloe’s hand reassuringly. “If this is still going to happen, you have a lot of work to do. Because from where I stand, right now, not only is this not likely to happen, but if it keeps going this way, it’s impossible. You’ll never get her there right now. It doesn’t sound like she’d go anywhere with you, at this point.”

“Desire!” Chloe whispered harshly.

“What? He’s got to hear it.” Desire looked back to Trey. “Speaking of, have you found anywhere that something like what we’re planning is even possible, yet?”

Trey shook his head, spinning the tumbler between his fingers. He clenched his jaw.



Desire scoffed lightly. “So, is this basically going to be a monumental waste of time?”

“Stop it!” Chloe said. “We've still got time. He can make it work.” She turned to look at Trey, her eyes wide. “Right?”

Trey stood up. “I’m working on it. If you’ll excuse me, it seems I’ve got my work cut out for me.”

## Chapter 9

Jenn finished toweling off her hair and sat down on the bed. She sat for a moment in the silence of the cabin, looking around her. The cabin felt decidedly empty. Empty closet, empty bathroom, empty bed. The sheets were made immaculately, evidence of the enthusiastic housekeeping efforts of Ricardo.

Jenn picked up the small towel animal, an adorable little elephant, and chuckled. Ricardo was incorrigible. She set the animal undisturbed on the small nightstand at the side of the bed. It seemed a shame to ruin something so cute for no reason.

Jenn flipped back onto the bed, the comforter slightly scratchy against her bare skin. She stared up at the low ceiling of the cabin, fuming.

*This is not how this trip was supposed to go. I've orgasmed exactly once on this trip, two days in!*

Jenn huffed angrily. If no one else was going to help her, she'd take matters into her own hands.

She leaped off the bed and threw open the closet door, fumbling for the second small suitcase she'd packed specially for this trip.

Heaving the luggage onto the bed, she yanked the zippers open, throwing back the lid.

Her eyes scanned past all the lace, spandex, latex, and even just a bit of leather in resentment.

*No need for you, sexy outfits!*

She pushed beneath the pile of fabric sex appeal to the bottom of the case. Her hand brushed past a variety of glass, metal, and smooth velvety silicone surfaces, searching for her favorite.

Jenn couldn't help but smile when she found it. It felt a little like running into an old friend at the coffee shop. If, that is, that friend took you into the bathroom and proceeded to give you the best thirty minute, truly

no-strings-attached orgasm of your day, then went back out front with you to enjoy your iced coffee without a single word of protest, cajoling, or pressure.

*No pressure is EXACTLY what I need.*

Looking around, Jenn tried to decide where she wanted to spend the next thirty minutes. The bed? She fiddled with the pillows for a moment. The chair? She examined the rigid, understuffed armchair only for a moment before shaking her head.

The light from the setting sun pulled her attention to the sliding glass door and the balcony.

*Absolutely beautiful.*

Jenn smiled.

*When in Rome...*

Jenn slid the glass door open and poked her head out, listening for voices.

*Any nosy neighbors out and about?*

She didn't hear anything. She took a tentative step out onto the balcony. The vigorous sea breeze swept over and around her, caressing every inch. She shivered as her nipples stiffened. Jenn tiptoed to the partition that divided her section of the balcony from the neighbor on the left and tried to press her eye to the small crack between the partition and the bulkhead. She couldn't see anything.

*Good for me.*

Jenn crept to the other end of the balcony and attempted to crane her head out and around the barrier on that side. It didn't take much to do so. She looked around the barrier easily, giving her a clear view of her neighbor's empty veranda.

*Not so good.*

Jenn stood at the rail for a moment, reveling in the thrill that came with being naked outdoors where you shouldn't necessarily be, the wind licking spots that rarely felt the open air.

The sun was nearly touching the visually endless ocean as the port receded into the horizon behind them. The sky around the sun blazed in oranges and pinks that Jenn had rarely seen anywhere else. She sighed.

*If only I wasn't alone to appreciate this.*

She straightened, tapping the rail.

*And that's quite enough of that!*

Having decided, Jenn worked quickly, pulling the armchair from inside the door out onto the balcony and close to the rail. At the last minute, she grabbed the towel where she'd thrown it on the floor. It wouldn't hurt to have some cover if she needed it.

Jenn situated herself comfortably in the chair, her feet propped up on one of the rails. Taking a slow breath in, she closed her eyes, letting her head fall back onto the back of the armchair.

In her fingers, the vibrator buzzed to life. She smiled.

*That's more like it.*

For the next several minutes, Jenn enjoyed thinking about nothing but what was between her legs. She kept the vibrator busy and on the move, brushing lightly over the entire area. There were quick darts in and out, moments of frustrating building and testing patience as she held it still, coaxing the O from where it slept behind her belly button.

As the minutes passed, Jenn's eager parted lips drew tight and started to turn down. The vibrations of the toy in her hands had started to feel less titillating and more taunting. Finally, after several more minutes of adjusting, varying the speed and intensity of the vibe, and a full five minutes solely of trying and failing to reach her g-spot, Jenn gave up.

Avoiding the urge to simply throw the vibrator into the ocean, she drew the chair back into the cabin and closed the door. She stood for a

moment, staring at the sunset that was now nearly gone below the horizon, her hands on her hips, breathing heavily.

She'd never been good at pushing down her emotions in favor of sex. If she was upset, it was goodbye orgasms, hello sexual frustration.

*Damn you, Trey.*

*Damn you, Trey.*

Trey was backing slowly away from Jenn's door for the third time in thirty minutes. The first time, he'd thought he had a good idea of what to say to Jenn to smooth things over. He'd been about to knock when he'd heard the telltale buzz of a vibe. That time, there'd been a jolt of envy. Not because she was using the vibrator (he was a huge proponent of tools for fun and variety in the bedroom), but because he wasn't involved at all. It was unabashed self pity that sent Trey away from the door that time.

The second time, with the buzz still coming faintly from behind the door, it was resentment. *I'm mad, too! You don't see me just sitting there rubbing one out to deal with it!*

The third time, when the buzzing from the toy behind the door was louder than ever, he realized he may be in more trouble than he realized before. He'd observed Jenn long enough to know there was only one reason why she'd still be going at such a high intensity after so long: she hadn't climaxed yet.

*Damn it.*

That meant that she was too distracted to climax. That meant she was more upset with him than he'd realized.

*Damn you, Trey.*

He quietly opened and closed his cabin door behind him. He leaned back against it, sighing. His eyes went to the safe in the small closet. He half considered throwing caution to the winds, opening the safe, and using the metal object behind it in a wild attempt to bring it all to an end. But he knew better; doing things that way would be messy. Better to exercise a bit

of patience and finesse to the situation, so that he could be assured of getting Jenn to cooperate in getting her where he needed her when he needed her there, in order to carry out the plan.

*Besides, I still have to figure out where to do it.* The only way this would work was with enough privacy and undisturbed time to do it right. Chloe and Desire were here to help make that a reality, but still, a location was critical.

*One problem at a time.* If Jenn wasn't speaking to him, it wouldn't matter how carefully he planned everything else. That was his most important job, at the moment. He shook his head, regretting the pair of drinks he'd had at the bar. If he'd known how much trouble he was in before that, he never would have considered drinking.

*God, I'm an idiot.* He needed to talk to someone, but that someone definitely couldn't be Jenn right now. Not if things were going the way he thought they probably were behind that closed door. *Then who?* The only other people he even knew on the boat were Desire and Chloe, and to be honest, he didn't even think Desire particularly liked him very much. Chloe, on the other hand, Chloe was easy to talk to. She had been right from the start, when he'd initially approached her with his plan for Jenn.

Trey pulled out his phone, opened up the messaging app, and clicked Chloe's number.

*Any way you can meet now?*

He waited for a few moments, counting his breaths in the near pitch dark of his cabin. His phone buzzed.

*Sure. I'll meet you on the bar lounge deck.*

Trey sniffed, placed his phone back in his pocket, ran a hand through his hair, and opened the door to the hall.

Jenn opened the door, only to shut it quickly again when she heard Trey's handle across the hall click. She waited, hating herself for her knee-jerk reaction to hide from him. Why couldn't she just face him? Why was

her instinct to hide like a middle schooler? She waited for him to knock on her door, kicking herself and scrambling for what she would say when he did.

The knock never came. She frowned slightly, wondering what could be taking him so long to make the trip, and quietly leaned her head forward to take advantage of the peephole. Trey was nowhere in sight.

Confused, Jenn opened the door quietly and turned to look down the hall just in time to see Trey turn the corner toward the elevator bank.

A cold jolt hit the bottom of Jenn's belly. Was Trey headed to meet whomever had been on the other end of the text from yesterday? In the entire time she'd known him, Trey had never struck her as the type of man to want to meet up with a man he'd just met at the gym for drinks. She jogged quickly down the hall, her low-heeled sandals making the movement more challenging than it should have been.

Ricardo and another staff member stepped out of one of the service hallways, and Jenn darted past them, whispering quickly, "Hi Ricardo. Bye Ricardo!" Ricardo only lifted a hand in half hearted greeting, a puzzled look on his face.

Jenn rounded the corner just as she saw Trey's back enter an elevator in the reflection off the mirrored walls. She entered the waiting area and pushed the call button, her eye fixed on the deck indicator over the elevator Trey had used. She waited for it to pause, then darted into her own elevator, pushing the button for Deck 8.

She had no idea whether there had been anyone else in the elevator, or whether Trey had in fact gotten off on Deck 8. When she stepped off, she poked her head around the corner warily, uncertain whether Trey would be there or not. Her caution paid off: she spotted his shirt through the glass doors of the 21 and up club at the end of the hallway. She slunk away from the elevators, aware of what she probably looked like to anyone watching, but not particularly caring.

Trey passed through the club and exited the club onto the patio deck at the rear of the ship. Jenn entered the club and sought out a spot at the bar

near a column, where she could peer out to the deck, but not be completely exposed, should Trey turn around.

“What can I get you?”

Jenn was about to order something cheap and nonalcoholic to settle in to wait, when she saw Trey sit down at a table across from none other than the bohemian princess, the young woman from dinner. *What was her name? Chloe?!*

“Son of a bitch,” Jenn whispered breathlessly.

“We get that a lot, actually,” the bartender said humorously.

“Shut up,” Jenn snapped. She was in no mood for games or jokes right now.

The bartender walked away, too professional to snap back or mutter within earshot. Jenn ignored him, staring out the window at Trey, who was talking rapidly with his hands, while Chloe listened with what Jenn could only describe as simpering sympathy. Her whole demeanor conveyed empathy and understanding. Her beautifully sculpted and furrowed brows, her flawless yet sympathetically-creased forehead, her full and pouty lips puckered beautifully in sympathy for whatever Trey was saying.

Jenn hated to realize it, but this attractive young woman was perfect. Jenn found her own gaze being pulled to the curve of her lips, the softness of her ribs, the way her dress clung to her in all the right places. She recalled Chloe’s giggles at dinner, her calm confidence and quiet gentleness, and understood what Trey saw in her.

Which only served to make Jenn all the more angry with him. *How dare he show interest in someone so attractive!*

The thought didn’t make any sense, and she knew that on some level, but it didn’t mean it didn’t feel right. When Chloe reached across the table and quietly took Trey’s hand, then proceeded to say something obviously heartfelt to him, Jenn felt a flutter in her own stomach that quickly turned to rage.



Grateful that she hadn't yet begun drinking and therefore retained all her faculties, Jenn made the decision to leave. She wouldn't confront Trey here, in public, and embarrass them both more than they already had up to this point. She couldn't take any more public scrutiny.

She rushed out of the club and back to the elevators, fuming all the way up to Deck 12 and her corridor.

Ricardo, ever diligent, was just finishing up with something in an adjacent cabin and floated out into the hallway, his courteous grin fixed on his face.

"Ms. Jenn!" he called quietly. His grin faltered slightly when he saw her face. "Everything okay?"

Jenn stopped beside him, her hands instinctively going to her hips. "I'm going to need something from you, Ricardo."

Ricardo blanched visibly, but his smile didn't dim this time. "What you need, Ms. Jenn?"

Jenn nodded toward Trey's door. "I'm going to need you to let me into room 12360."

Ricardo's eyes went wide.

Trey's walk back to his room was a lighter one than the walk to the bar to meet up with Chloe. Chloe really was a great listener, and she'd offered him some great support without Desire there to hold her back from it. She'd helped him rekindle his zeal for reaching out to them in the first place.

It was all about Jenn. Jenn was the reason they were here. Jenn was... standing at the foot of Trey's bed, an expression of murder on her face.

Trey let the cabin door swing closed behind him, his mouth hanging open.

"How did you..." he began.

“Oh, no!” Jenn cut him off. “I’ll be going first, and I’m not here to swap excuses, so you’ll just be listening.”

Trey couldn’t resist the swallow that made his Adam’s apple bob. His mouth was suddenly very dry. His eyes were suddenly drawn to the open safe in the closet, and he couldn’t stop the groan that escaped his throat.

Jenn held up the black velvet bag, the heavy metal contents inside swinging lazily from the drawstrings.

“Yeah. I know about this.” She dropped the bag at his feet, and Trey flinched.

“I know all about your little meet-ups with Chloe, too!” There was heat behind Jenn’s words.

Trey’s eyes went wide.

Jenn paused briefly, as if she expected him to jump in with an explanation. Trey was still too shocked to utter a word.

“Does Desire know?” Jenn’s voice was a dangerous whisper.

Trey could only manage to form the words, “About what?”

Jenn gave him a clear look of disgust.

“I was really hoping for some honesty. I…” she stopped, shaking her head. “I don’t know what I was thinking. This was a terrible idea, and I don’t know why I let myself get carried away so thoroughly. Honestly, I did not see this coming.” Jenn’s voice wavered, and she put her hands on her hips, one hand going up to stifle the sob that tried to strangle her.

Trey was dumbfounded. This was definitely not part of the plan. His mind was scrambling, still trying to somehow salvage the reason for the trip, while watching it fall apart like wet crepe paper before his eyes.

When she realized that Trey wasn’t going to say anything, Jenn seemed to flip a switch internally. Her expression went cool and impassive, and her tone went flat and robotic.

“I asked Ricardo if they have any empty cabins. He’s looking into it for me. In the meantime, I’d appreciate it if you kept your distance for the remainder of the cruise.”

She paused, and her half-closed eyes lingered on Trey, as if daring him to speak. Trey couldn’t make his mouth work. The link between his brain and his mouth felt severed, like a broken telephone line flailing in the emotional hurricane he was now stuck in.

Jenn’s mouth twisted in a facsimile of a smile, and she scoffed, shaking her head. She pushed past Trey, bending unbelievably so as not to touch him as she did. When she reached the door, she stopped, her hand on the handle.

Trey saw her head dip, following the slump in her shoulders, and his heart twisted uncomfortably.

“You know, I really saw this whole week going very differently,” she whispered without looking back.

Trey’s heart imploded.

Jenn pushed down the handle and slipped out of the room, letting the door close loudly behind her.

Trey stood dumbfounded, his brain disbelieving the messages his eyes, ears, and heart were sending it.

## Chapter 10

Jenn sat in her room and ugly-cried for roughly thirty minutes before she decided she was over that. She was on a cruise ship, dammit. There were no responsibilities, no DUI, absolutely nothing to keep her from getting all-out, sloppy, fall-down drunk. In a moment of preventive clarity, being in no mood for company, she thought to wear her frumpiest, most dowdy and uninteresting outfit. She just didn't know what that was, given her expectations at the time of packing.

Looking over the collection of lace, silk, cotton, and spandex her closet had to offer, she briefly considered wearing the complementary bathrobe included in her room, then decided against it. There would probably be some sort of policy in place to deal with clearly-crying, robe-wearing, sorrow-drowning women in the cruise line handbook. She had no desire to be placed on some "watch" or something.

In the end, she went with the tasteful yet covering flared jacket. Barely any skin showing, a concession to her better sense in the event there was a chilly evening, it met her parameters for now. Not the intended purpose of the piece, but a use, nonetheless. She buttoned the jacket, pushed the hair of her pixie forward into as boyish a look as she could, and went straight to the door.

Aware now of Trey's penchant for watching through the peephole for her (which felt a little creepy to her, in this frame of mind), Jenn opted to take the long way to the elevators, the route that wouldn't take her past Trey's door.

*Don't give him the satisfaction.*

Jenn punched the down button on the elevator, then stepped aboard when the carriage opened. She stared for several moments at the bank of buttons, no destination in mind, except for two details: alcohol and wherever Trey was not, nor likely to be. She briefly wished, not for the first time, that there was a women-only bar of some sort on the ship.

“Which floor are you staying on?”

Jenn blinked. She hadn’t even registered that there had been anyone else on the elevator. The woman’s slow, too-loud inquiry was a clear indicator that she thought Jenn was already inebriated.

*Not yet, I’m not.*

“Do you know any good bars on board?” she asked by way of reply, enunciating clearly to show her sobriety.

“Oh!” The woman was clearly taken aback. “I thought you were— That is…” the woman trailed off, not willing to finish the sentence with what she obviously thought.

Jenn simply waited, her eyes still fixed on the bank of deck buttons.

“I like the Cabana Lounge, down on Deck 8. It’s a lot smaller, better lit, and quieter than most of the others I’ve seen. They typically have a wonderful piano player who—”

“Thanks,” Jenn said, pushing the button and hoping to cut off any more helpful chatter that she wasn’t really in the mood for.

“I—” The woman broke off, clearly offended, but trying not to appear so. “You’re welcome.”

When the elevator dinged on 8, Jenn stepped out.

“I hope you have a better evening, miss!” the woman called out to her.

“You, too,” Jenn muttered.

The Cabana Lounge was everything the woman had promised. Tastefully lit, a cozy environment meant to resemble a 1920’s jazz club with lots of wood, a surprisingly-convincing electric wooden fireplace, and an abundance of red velvet.

The entire lounge was oriented around an enormous ebony grand piano. The lid on the instrument was up, sending the tinkling, melancholy melody wafting around the lounge. Jenn recognized the tune the pianist was

playing, though she couldn't name it. The pianist played it excellently. She looked, but the lid prevented her from seeing who sat at the keys. Elevator lady had been right: this was exactly what she was looking for.

Jenn easily found a small table for two (there were no singles, she noted with disappointment) at the room's edge and sat down. Within moments, a sharply dressed waitress in a waistcoat and bowtie appeared to take her drink order.

"Whiskey. Neat."

If the waitress was surprised, she didn't show it.

"Will anyone else be joining you tonight?" she asked courteously.

"God, I hope not."

The woman chuckled, the veneer slipping as she whispered, "I get it." Louder, she said, "I'll go get that whiskey."

"You just charge it to the room, right?"

"That's right," the waitress said.

"Great! Keep 'em coming," Jenn grumbled.

The waitress laughed, winking and pointing a finger at Jenn conspiratorially. "You got it."

Jenn sat back, took in a long, deep breath, and closed her eyes. When she'd let it all out, she opened her eyes just as the pianist completed their number to light applause around the bar.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me."

Behind the keys, eyes twinkling, Casey murmured into the microphone adjusted to sit just outside of his lips.

"Thank you. You're all very kind. This next number I hadn't planned on doing tonight, but I think I'm going to throw it in for a very special lady who just walked in."

The opening, soulful chords to John Legend's "All of me" began echoing from the open grand, and a few women around the lounge cheered and whooped.

"Fuck me." If it hadn't been for the fact that the waitress had appeared at her elbow with her drink at that very moment, Jenn would have stood up and left. As it was, the woman grossly misinterpreted her meaning.

"I know, right? He's new to the crew on this voyage. Honestly, he kind of seems like the total package. Everyone who's worked with him the last few nights had nothing but good things to say." She slid the whiskey carefully across the table to Jenn. She winked again. "Based on the fact that I think he's talking about you, you just might get that wish." With that, she turned and walked away, playfully saluting Casey with her wooden tray, who smiled into the microphone as he crooned.

"What's going on in that beautiful mind?"

Casey's eyes looked away from the waitress and locked with Jenn's. He proceeded to hold her gaze all the way to the pre-chorus, at which point Jenn had to look away, her face and her belly both growing warm despite her wishes. She tipped the whiskey into her mouth, and it didn't take long for the entire contents to disappear.

The burn in her literal stomach distracted somewhat from the warmth in her belly. She looked up for the waitress and, when they made eye contact, held up the empty glass meaningfully. The waitress widened her eyes with a smile, glanced meaningfully at Casey, and nodded in acknowledgment. Jenn blushed deeper and avoided looking anywhere in Casey's direction for the rest of the song.

Jenn continued to sit and drink, although her pace slowed considerably after the first, all the way through the rest of Casey's set. When the last sullen notes of his final number died away, he stood, straightened the waistcoat that emphasized both the size of his arms and the trim condition of his waistline, and bowed gracefully, flashing the practiced grin of an entertainer.

He walked to the bar, said a few words to the bartender and the waitress, who glanced in Jenn's direction multiple times while grinning,

then turned and walked casually to Jenn's table. He stopped a respectful distance away, then asked, "Are you open to any company this evening?"

Jenn openly stared at him, her mind spinning with all the reasons not to say yes, and all the many reasons to say no. However, in the end, and against her better judgment, what she managed to get out was a noncommittal and articulate, "Eh."

Casey laughed and maintained his distance. He placed his hands behind his back and bent slightly at the waist. Then, in a whisper intended only for her, Casey said, "I'm afraid I'm going to insist that you ask for it."

A familiar flutter tickled Jenn's already warm belly, and a tingle ran up her spine. This was dangerous water. The hurt argued angrily that this was just sharing a table, and certainly nothing more damning than what Trey had done. *And that's probably just the tip of the iceberg*, the voice argued.

Jenn blinked when she realized that Casey was still bent, still smiling, still waiting for her to "ask for it."

"Will you sit with me?" she heard herself say.

Casey's smile widened. "I'd love to," he said.

They sat for a moment in silence, measuring for each other up, waiting for the other to speak first.

Eventually, Jenn caved. "Look, just so you know, this is as far as this whole thing goes. I'm tired, I've had a really shitty day, and I'd really like to just get drunk and go back to my room alone."

Casey studied her for a minute longer before he spoke.

"I'm truly sorry. That sucks." He went quiet again. "Your guy friend?"

Jenn stared into the bottom of her tumbler and nodded, her throat constricting.

Casey put one hand on top of her wrist. The warmth in the gesture surprised her.



“I’m sorry.”

Jenn looked at his hands, for the first time noticing what long, strong fingers he had. A weightlifter’s hands: strong. A pianist’s hands: nimble and delicate. She couldn’t help the constriction of her pelvic muscles as she imagined what that combination could be capable of.

She shifted, placing the tumbler down with a solid clink. “Ugh! All right, condition number one, boy-o, is that you get it through your head that you are NOT coming back to my room with me, nor will I be going back to yours!” She gestured to all of him. “This whole sympathetic, artistic, hot giant thing you’ve got going? I’m not boarding that train, mmkay?”

Casey smiled and patted her hand in a grandmotherly way. “Don’t worry. I wouldn’t come back to your room even if you asked me to.”

Jenn blinked and ducked her chin as if he’d struck her. “All right, well you don’t have to be a dick about it.”

He chuckled. “All I mean is that...” He studied her again. “That’s not what I’m interested in.”

Jenn’s brows furrowed. “Oh? And what is it that you’re really interested in, Mr. Casey Pianopants? Because for someone who’s not interested, you and I keep finding ourselves in each other’s company an awful lot for a big boat full of people.

Casey laughed out loud now, “Hey, you literally walked into my bar. I had nothing to do with that.”

Jenn looked at him, studying his face for any hint of what was going on behind his eyes. “True.”

Casey went quiet again, and they took another moment of mutual examination.

It was Casey who broke the silence this time.

“Will you do something with me tomorrow?”

Jenn held up her finger, and the waitress came eagerly over, her eyes flitting between the pair at the table.

“Water?” Jenn said simply.

The waitress nodded, then walked away, her high ponytail bouncing busily.

“Terribly vague, Casey. What exactly are you asking me to do with you tomorrow? I never sign a contract without reading the fine print.”

“Fair enough.” It was Casey’s turn to shift. “There’s a waterfall. It’s kind of a ‘locals-only’ kind of thing, but I’d like to show it to you, if you’d like.”

Jenn frowned slightly. “You want me to just go off into the jungle with you, alone?”

Casey backpedaled. “No, it’s not anything like that. Heck, bring your friend, if you want. What was his name, again?”

Jenn’s jaw clenched. “Trey?”

Casey nodded. “Sure! Bring Trey along. It’ll be a blast.”

Jenn inhaled deeply. “No, I don’t think so.”

“Oh, come on! It’ll be a blast! Just bring him along with you.”

Jenn’s voice was hard. “I really don’t feel like being around Trey right now, Casey. If at all possible, I’d actually like to avoid him at all costs.”

Casey’s eyes went wide. “Really?”

Jenn nodded, swallowing thickly.

“Oh...” Casey stared down at the tabletop and proceeded to chew his lip nervously, as if deep in thought. Finally, after the waitress had dropped off and Jenn had finished the water in her glass, Casey started, glancing at the waitress as she walked away.

“What if April came with us?”

Jenn started. “April? Who the hell is April?”

Casey pointed with his thumb toward the departing waitress. “April. What if she came with us? Would you come see the waterfall then?”

Jenn’s mouth was an open “O” of surprise.

“What’s up with you and this waterfall?”

Casey faltered, clearly flustered. “I don’t know. It’s just supposed to be world-class, really beautiful. I’ve just always thought things like that were more enjoyable with someone to share it with.”

Jenn nodded in absent agreement. She nodded toward April, now behind the bar. “What about April? Believe me, she’s interested.”

Casey was already shaking his head. “I have a policy: never date coworkers.”

“I thought this wasn’t a date.”

“It wouldn’t be with you,” Casey countered. “With her, it would be. Alone, I mean. If she’s the third wheel...” Casey gave a thumbs up. “No mixed signals there.”

Jenn stared again, trying to figure out this enormous, beautiful, talented puzzle of a man.

“All right. If April comes, I’ll go with you to see this waterfall.”

Casey tapped his hands on the tabletop, his grin infectious. “Fantastic. I’ll meet you at the gangway, or the plank, or whatever you call the place where you get off the boat.”

“Sounds good.”

Casey patted the table once more, grinning, then stood up and walked to the bar, disappearing through a staff door leading further into the ship.

Jenn stared after him, still mildly turned on yet more than anything confused about just what Casey’s intentions toward her might be.

## Chapter 11

Trey barely slept that night. At multiple points, he considered barging across the hall and pounding on the door until Jenn let him in. But he knew she'd hate that. He'd hate that. And so, minute by minute, he waited.

He didn't realize he'd fallen asleep until he woke up to the sound of a knock on his cabin door. He scrambled out sleep, the illumination of the numbers on the alarm clock the only light in the room. He searched for the door blindly, finally finding the handle and pulling it open. He blinked in the sudden glare of the light from the hallway.

Ricardo stood there, his face conveying his obvious displeasure at having to initiate this interaction with Trey.

"Mr. Trey, I was told to give you this. From Miss Jenn." He handed Trey an envelope without another word, then walked rapidly away.

Trey held the envelope in one hand, blinking groggily down at it. He stepped back into the room and closed the door. *What is this about?*

He clicked on the cabin light and sat down on the bunk. His eyes sought out the alarm clock more intentionally now, and he froze. *Is that really the time? Shit!* He'd slept far longer than he'd ever intended to. The ship had likely already docked, and Jenn debarked. He was facing another full day of this excruciating waiting and ruminating.

He looked back down at the envelope and his brow furrowed. It wasn't Jenn's handwriting on the front. Trey slid his finger beneath the flap and tore through the adhesive.

As he scanned the contents, his eyes went wide, his face went white, and his breathing came in quickening spurts through his nose.

Trey darted to the safe and fumbled with the buttons, punching in the code he'd set upon getting settled. The lock clicked, he yanked the door open, and snatched out the black velvet bag, dumping its contents into the hand still holding the letter and envelope.

It was a bracelet, a 1920's art deco piece, Trey had learned through his lazy attempt at research. The many sections featured intricate gold inlay designs accenting the gaudy rhinestone set into the center of each piece. At its middle, one large section featured a low pyramid shape, each of the four faces adorned with four different gems, each a different color.

The vintage feel of it, the fact that you could easily envision a 1920s flapper flailing it about on her wrist as she danced the Charleston, were the reasons he'd bought it for Jenn. She had an appreciation for all things vintage, but nurtured a special love for the fashions of the '20's, '30's, and '40's. It didn't matter if it were flapper gowns or post-war pencil skirts, she adored them all.

Trey's gaze flitted back and forth between the letter and the bracelet, disbelief in his wide, frantic eyes.

*How is this happening? WHY is this happening?* He drew the bracelet up to his eyes, looking for something, anything he'd missed that would make it worth the demand on the letter in his other hand. *Something that would make it worth Jenn.*

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Jenn was not enjoying herself. She regretted wholeheartedly her decision to accompany Casey and his work friend April on their exotic foray into the uncharted jungles of Mexico in pursuit of the rumor of a waterfall that was supposedly "breathtaking."

The mud of the jungle trail stole the ballet flat (the closest thing to what she'd consider a sensible shoe she'd brought) from her foot yet again. So far, there was no waterfall, and she still had her breath, but her shoes might end up being another thing, altogether.

"Hey, not to be a stick in the mud—," She nearly fell flat on her face, tripping over an actual stick in the mud. "—But are we close to this waterfall? I wasn't really prepared for this much of a slog through the trees and everything." She took a moment to look backward through the trees to the jungle floor on the valley below. She could see the village they'd hopped the taxi to, and far beyond that, glimmering at the edge of the horizon, what she assumed was the ocean.

“We’re almost there,” Casey called back from where he led their little expedition, the sweat soaking the neck of his yellow tank top in a perfect “v” around his neck in back. He reached up to grab a tree limb and used it to pull himself up a particularly steep and rocky portion of the trail. Jenn found herself mesmerized by the shiny ripple on his forearm made by his tendons and ligaments.

She shook her head, staring at her shoes, taking a deep breath in through her mouth and letting it out. *I gotta get fucking laid. Damn you, Trey!*

Thinking about Trey forced her to glance back at the ocean. She knew she couldn’t, but she imagined that she could see the ship, where Trey was doing god-knows-what with god-knows-who. She viciously kicked some stubborn mud from her flat.

“Almost there. Right. This better be worth it,” she muttered.

She’d intended the words to be just for herself, but, to her surprise, April turned around and grinned like a Cheshire Cat. “Oh, it will be, I guarantee!” She winked at Jenn in a way that left Jenn slightly confused and, truth be told, a little creeped out.

*The hell does that mean?*

Jenn stopped walking, her shoes squelching in the mud. “Hey, I think we should head back.” She looked down at her mud-spattered shorts and the sheer white button-up top, under which you could clearly see her bikini top. “I’m not really dressed for...” she gestured to the forest generally. “...Whatever this is.”

She saw April give Casey a stricken look, and that was it. She had no idea what was passing between those two, but the alarm bells were full-on ringing now. She turned and started back the way they’d come, making her slippery way down the trail.

“Wait! Jenn, don’t go. I just realized I left something in the taxi! You two go on ahead!” With that, April crashed through the brush to Jenn’s left, leaped back onto the trail, and disappeared at top speed through the trees down the mountain.

Jenn stared after her in stunned silence. Finally, after several moments of jungle silence, she turned to look at Casey, who had come back down the trail and was now standing within arm's reach of Jenn, watching where April had disappeared.

"What... the hell... was that?" she asked.

"She isn't especially subtle, April," Casey offered quietly. "She thinks we're on a date."

Jenn snorted. "Why would she think that? She was literally here with us up until the moment she ran away screaming like a lunatic."

"Probably because I told her this was a date."

Jenn whirled on Casey. "Excuse me?"

Casey didn't move, his expression impassive behind his sunglasses. "You weren't going to come with me, otherwise. So, I told her you were nervous about coming on a date with me, assured her that I had nothing but noble intentions toward you, and paid her for her time in coming far enough with us that I could get you alone."

A chill ran up Jenn's spine, and a cold bead of sweat dropped from her back into the hem of her shorts. She backed away from Casey, her hands outstretched and a single warning finger held up between them. "You son of a bitch. You stay away from me!" Her eyes darted between Casey and the trail she was frantically trying to retreat down.

"Relax. It's not like that. That's not what I'm after." Casey took a step toward her, putting a hand out to steady her.

"Really? A guy who went to great lengths to get a girl alone doesn't want the one thing that all guys want?" Jenn huffed. "That'd be a first."

"I'm not—," Casey stopped, as if stunned. "I'm a good guy."

Jenn couldn't help it. She knew that, under the circumstances, it was probably the worst thing she could have done, but she laughed.

"Casey!" She spread her arms wide to take in the world immediately around them. "You lured a woman to a remote location under false

pretenses by manipulating another woman into helping you do so.” She couldn’t help the anger that crept into her voice now. “You’re not a good guy!” She turned and cupped her hands around her mouth, shouting in the direction that April had disappeared. “HELP!!”

Casey leaped forward, seizing Jenn around the middle and clamping a hand over her mouth. She fought, kicking with her flats and throwing elbows into as many soft spots on Casey’s body as she could reach.

Casey grunted and tense beneath her blows but didn’t release her. He dropped the hand around her mouth, scrambling to trap both her flailing arms, but leaving her mouth free.

“April, help!” she shouted again, taking advantage of her release.

“Shut up!” Casey finally succeeded, using both arms, in securing her hands at her sides, but as he was trying to pin them both with a single arm, he slipped, sending them both tumbling into the mud and rolling and sliding down several feet of the muddy trail.

They came to a rest at the base of a tree, Casey more or less pinning Jenn to the ground with nothing but his sheer bulk.

“Look, I don’t want to hurt you! I don’t want anything from you; it’s Trey who has what I want. I only need you to get what I want, okay? All you need to do is wait until Trey comes running to your rescue. He’s probably on his way now!” Casey was breathing hard, but Jenn couldn’t tell whether it was from exertion, frustration, or the fact that his crotch was pressed against her thighs and had a full handful of her left boob. Whatever his intentions, it was difficult to deny the growing firmness in his pants against her thigh.

Jenn’s survival instinct kicked in hard, and she went completely still and quiet beneath him. She’d fought against him, lost, and was now completely at his mercy. It was time to focus on simply staying alive.

“Casey, please. Let me go. I won’t tell anyone what happened, I won’t say anything.”



To his credit, which gave Jenn just a glimmer of hope to counter the fear that now flooded her system, Casey adjusted so that it was his chest and arms, not his pelvis and his rapidly swelling cock that held Jenn pinned against the ground. Jenn felt him swallow and take a deep breath. “Look, I wasn’t lying: I don’t want to hurt you. I don’t want to—,” he adjusted again, pushing his crotch even further from her. “I’m not gonna....” He trailed off.

Jenn lay perfectly still beneath him, waiting to see what he would do. Whatever her turbulent relationship with God, she was praying now. She wasn’t sure who to, and she didn’t know what words she was supposed to be saying, but she prayed like she’d never prayed before.

Casey pushed himself up to stand, leaning over to place his hands on his knees and turning to hide the erection that threatened to completely tent his gym shorts. Jenn, for all the precariousness of her situation, couldn’t help but notice, once more, that his cock was massive beneath the shimmery material of his shorts. The thought of it this time, however, didn’t run a shiver of want through her. It put a chill in her gut that refused to go away. His recent protests and current disposition notwithstanding, Jenn knew she wasn’t out of the woods yet. She decided her best chance was leaning into the better nature he so desperately claimed was there, beneath the surface.

“So, what IS it you want from Trey?” She asked quietly, trying to divert the attention away from what had just passed between them.

Casey wouldn’t look her in the eye, which she saw as a good sign. As an experienced businesswoman, she knew when her opponent didn’t have the heart to close the deal and how to work with that. She stayed on the ground, making herself present comfortably. So far, he’d only gotten physical and come after her when she’d struggled to get away and get help. Maybe if she projected an image of calm and complacency, he would match it. She pulled her knees up, looped her wrists loosely around them, and leaned her head back against the tree she’d fallen into, wincing internally as her bruised ribs stretched.

Casey dropped to a crouch, still fighting (and failing) to hide his erection. From there, he at least tried to hide its girth down the inside of his leg.

“It’s... a bracelet.”

Jenn blinked. “That thing?”

Casey met her eyes.

“You know about it?”

Jenn nodded, her brow furrowed. “Yeah, I found it in his room. How do YOU know about it?”

Casey shifted on the balls of his feet, and Jenn saw him try to covertly adjust his penis with a hand as it shrunk. *It’s working: if he’s not aroused, I’m good. Keep him talking.*

Casey laughed humorlessly. “It’s a long story.”

Jenn glanced around the forest meaningfully. “I’m not going anywhere; are you?”

Casey laughed again, uncomfortably this time. “No, I guess not.”

He slowly stood, and Jenn was hyper aware of the fact that he watched his shorts to see if his erection had deflated enough to allow him to move normally. Lucky for him, it had. Instead of sticking out like the center pole of a circus tent, it swung more like an elephant’s trunk, no longer erect, but also not even close to completely flaccid. Jenn’s eyes widened again, and she looked down. *Lord, let this man keep his cock to himself!*

“It’s kind of a family thing. My great-great uncle made it back in the 60’s. He was a jeweler and silversmith in Georgia. The bracelet was a commissioned piece. It’s more or less just sentimental.”

Jenn raised an eyebrow. “You kidnapped a woman and are holding her ransom for sentimental reasons? I call bullshit.”

Casey made one final adjustment of his shorts and found a seat on the ground not far from Jenn. Close enough that he could reach out and stop her if she tried to flee, she assumed.

“Don’t forget: I’ve seen it. It was cute, but not the most expensive piece I’ve ever seen. Common gemstones, decorative gold inlay... pretty,

but not worth a fortune.”

Casey squirmed. He was clearly holding back. Jenn could smell it.

“Look, I have a right to know what my life is being traded for.”

“I’m not trading your life,” Casey grumbled.

“Is that what you told Trey?”

Casey wouldn’t meet her eyes again.

“That’s what I thought,” she said. Thinking back to her confrontation with Trey, she sighed. “I have bad news for you.”

Casey looked up, his expression alarmed.

“I seriously doubt that Trey is going to come after me, let alone trade his whore’s bauble for me.”

Casey raised an eyebrow. “What are you talking about? He’s super into you.”

Jenn shook her head. “Nope. I thought so, too. But turns out, he’s been seeing another woman on board this entire time.” She had a sudden realization. “Maybe even before the cruise.” She swore, punching the mud. “I’m pretty sure he bought the bracelet for her.” She laughed without any trace of humor. “In fact, he probably thinks you did him a favor. After what happened last night, I kind of doubt he’s even coming after me.”

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“I’m going after her!”

Trey flitted around the cabin like an injured hummingbird, opening drawers and closing closet doors as if he expected something useful to have materialized since the last time he’d looked.

Chloe and Desire sat on the edge of the bed, trying and failing to keep out of the way in the tiny interior cabin.

“Trey, you can’t go after her alone: look at you! You basically have to hop on that ankle.” Chloe’s voice was gentle, pleading.

“What she means to say,” Desire spoke up, glancing at their partner. “Is that this is way more than we signed up for, you’re in no shape to be pursuing a kidnapper, and it’s time to involve the authorities.”

Chloe glanced at Desire. “That’s not what I said, and please don’t put words in my mouth. You know I don’t like it when you do that.”

Desire sighed sharply. “I’m sorry. I’m just not comfortable with this. I was on board with the original plan. This is something else entirely.” They pointed toward the hull of the ship and what lay beyond it. “That’s Mexico out there. You fuck up out there, it’s not exactly a slap on the wrist you’re in for. They don’t mess around.”

“And this is based on what?” Chloe asked, turning to face her partner. “*Narcos*?”

Desire blushed slightly but continued. “All right, but you know that was based on a true story, right?”

“It wasn’t even based in Mexico! And not every person living south of the United States is in a cartel. You know who you sound like, right?” Chloe glared at Desire, then turned her attention back to Trey.

“That’s not what I was saying,” Desire countered, clearly hurt. “It’s just... not what we agreed to. At all.”

It was Trey’s turn to interrupt. “I know it isn’t, and I’m not asking you to help. But I’m doing this, one way or another. I won’t risk anything happening to Jenn.”

Chloe was nodding. “Of course. And honestly, it’s not that big a deal; whoever it is, they were pretty clear: hand over the bracelet and Jenn goes free.” She gestured at the black velvet bag on the vanity outside the bathroom. “It wasn’t even a huge part of the plan. Just turn it over, get Jenn back, and we’ll take things from there. I still think we can make this work.”

Trey smiled halfheartedly. “Right now, I just need to focus on Jenn.”

Both of the other occupants in the cabin nodded their silent agreement.

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“So, what happens next?” Jenn asked dejectedly. “We keep pushing on through this sludge until we get to this waterfall I kept hearing so much about?”

Casey chuckled. “No. There’s no way Trey would ever find us there. It’s a legend among the crew because there’s inevitably passengers who try to get there who end up missing the departure. Every damn time.” He laughed again. “No, I just said that so April would come with us.”

“Yeah, she seems nice. I’m gonna kill her,” Jenn said flatly.

Casey laughed out loud, an altogether not unpleasant sound. “Her heart’s in the right place, but you’re right: she isn’t very bright.” Casey managed to stand upright, this time without his third leg making anything but a subtle appearance behind his shorts. “We should head for the meeting spot.”

“Which is?” Jenn accepted his offered hand to help her up.

“An abandoned sugar processing plant.”

“Of course it is.” Jenn grimaced. “God! How do you guys find places like this?”

Casey had the decency to look offended. “‘You guys?’ It’s not like there’s a social club.” He frowned. “And I told you, I’m actually a really good guy!”

Jenn couldn’t help it again. She snorted. “Whatever helps you sleep at night, I guess.”

“I am! And it was actually really hard, by the way. It’s not like you can just google ‘abandoned buildings.’”

“But I’ll bet you tried!” Jenn laughed.

“Maybe.” Casey grinned slightly.

They slid and walked down the trail for some way in silence.

“So, I don’t get it: if you knew Trey had the bracelet, why didn’t you just offer to buy it from him?” Jenn was still confused about a great many things that were happening.

“Well, I didn’t know his name, or anything. All I knew was that he bought it and had told the shop owner that he was going to give it to a special lady friend of his on their upcoming cruise. Apparently, the shop owner was curious about cruising, because he remembered asking about which cruise line and the port of departure and a whole bunch of other stuff I didn’t care about.”

“So, you just hired yourself out on a cruise on the off-chance that you might run into the guy who intended to give your great-great-uncle’s artisanal bracelet to his girlfriend? And your plan was to kidnap the girlfriend and ransom the bracelet from him? Did I leave anything out?”

Behind her, Casey didn’t reply.

“How did you know it was me?”

“What?”

Jenn’s foot slipped, and she reached out to catch herself on a branch at the same time a strong pair of hands caught her beneath the armpits.

“Thanks,” she said, shrugging out of his grip and resuming her controlled fall down the mountainside. “You approached me in the library before Trey and I ever met up. What made you believe I was the girlfriend?”

There was silence behind her. Jenn turned to look, wondering if Casey had stopped for some reason.

“I didn’t.” It was almost a whisper.

Jenn hesitated. *Ah. This complicates things.*

“So, you...” Jenn hesitated, still unsure whether she should pull at this particular thread.

“Thought you were hot?” Casey offered.

“Mmhmm,” Jenn hummed.

“Maybe,” Casey admitted. “I mean, you ate with that blouse and skirt.”

“That *was* a good outfit,” Jenn agreed. She filed this information away for use with all the rest. “Okay, but you still haven’t answered my question. Why not offer to just buy the bracelet from him? Do you know how much it cost?”

There was an uncomfortable hum from behind her. She turned to look at him, but Casey staunchly avoided her gaze this time, staring down at his shoes.

“You don’t have it, do you?”

Casey squirmed.

“How much did it cost?”

Casey shrank into himself and muttered, “A thousand.”

Jenn stared at him. “A thousand dollars? I’m being kidnapped and ransomed for no more than a thousand dollars?” She slapped his chest. He drew back even further. “Do you know how embarrassing that is? How am I ever going to show my face at the office again when word gets out that I was ransomed for the price of an executive team lunch?! Christ, Casey!”

Jenn pulled her phone from her pocket. “What’s your handle? Tell you what: I’ll pay you double that, right now, and we’ll just completely forget this embarrassing thing ever even happened, all right?”

Casey grabbed her phone, holding it up and out of her reach. “No. It’s not about the money. Not exactly.”

“Then what the hell is it about, Casey? Because right now, it looks like I’m caught in the middle of some family history drama with a shot-nosed kid who can’t afford a pair of collector’s kicks and a two-timing asshole who couldn’t be bothered to buy a quality piece of jewelry! Stop me when I get to the part I get wrong!”

Casey remained silent, the phone still held just out of reach.

“Fine. Then give me the phone, and I’ll text the money and an explanation to Trey.” Jenn held out her hand expectantly. “With any luck, we can all be back on the ship by departure and drunk by sundown with this whole stupid thing behind us.” She waved her fingers in request for the phone.

Casey hesitated for a moment, then lowered the phone slightly. “Do you think he’ll agree to it?”

Jenn snatched the phone from his hand. “He will if he knows what’s fucking good for him.”

She unlocked the phone, then immediately groaned. “Son of a bitch!” she yelled, fighting the urge to throw the phone into the jungle. She took several deep breaths through her nose. “No service. You?”

Casey looked down at his own phone, which he’d produced from his chest bag. “None.”

“Shit. So, what you’re saying is that we have no choice but to see this half-baked, ridiculous thing through to its epically awful conclusion?”

“It really is looking that way,” Casey said with a grimace. “I—I’m really sorry about this. My whole family has just been looking for that bracelet now for three generations, and I kind of... lost my mind for a bit when I found it, lost it, and couldn’t just buy it back.”

“So your mind went immediately to kidnapping?!” Jenn sat down in the mud on a particularly steep section, choosing the predictable mud soak over the unanticipated fall. “You’re STILL not the good guy here, you know that, right?”

She turned to stare at Casey. His lips were pursed, and his sunglasses pointed at the ground. She had a momentary lapse in her anger. He really did present like a kid who had just gotten a thorough tongue-lashing and was now sitting in his shame.

“Okay, don’t.”



He looked up, surprised. “What?”

“Don’t do that.”

“Don’t do what?”

Jenn pointed at him, up and down. “That. The whole ashamed kid thing. It’s not working for you. How old are you, again?”

“Twenty-five.”

“Fuck me.” Jenn paused in her chaotic descent. “I’m gonna give you some advice, Casey. You make mistakes; you own them. You don’t bemoan them you don’t make people pity you. You take accountability, you learn what went wrong, and then you don’t make the same mistake again.”

Casey nodded. “Makes sense.”

“Of course it makes sense. You think I got to be a woman with an executive suite in her company’s main office by saying things that don’t make sense?” She laughed, the first true laugh that day. It felt good. “You know what doesn’t make sense? Kidnapping a woman over a family heirloom! *That* doesn’t make sense!” She whacked Casey on the arm, playful this time. “Now get me off this damn mountain, Casey.”

## Chapter 12

Trey pushed between the overbearing vendors in the alleyway. It was already 2:30 in the afternoon. If he was going to reach Jenn in time to still make the boat's departure time, he had to hurry. He limped past the entrance to the marina, where there was a large driveway filled with waiting taxicabs, hoping to pick up an American for premium fare.

Trey raised his hand, and one of the vehicles lurched forward, barely missing the curb as it swerved to meet him.

He opened the door and let himself in, carefully situating his ankle below the cracked leather seat of the cab.

"Hola, senor! Where you want to go? I get you there muy rapido!" The woman in the driver's seat put an arm over the top of the seat, smiling eagerly at him.

Trey held out his phone, with the address for the location typed in. "I need to get to this place as quickly as possible."

The driver whistled low between her teeth. "You sure, hombre? That's a rough part of town."

Trey sighed. *Of course it is.* "Unfortunately, yes. And I'm pretty pressed for time. Any chance you could step on it?" He held up a \$5 bill for her to take.

The driver grinned. "Si, amigo! Muy rapido!" She took the bill and popped her blinker, then surged out into traffic as soon as there was an opening. Trey snatched at the handle above the door. "Shit!" he whispered. Maybe he should have offered another \$5 for getting him there in one piece!

When the cab stopped outside the empty warehouse 35 minutes later, a wave of relief surged over Trey's body, and he slowly unclenched his ass, which had been tightly clenched since the car had first taken off. The driver must have been enrolled in an advanced satellite Formula 1 racing course; not only had she gotten him there 5 minutes faster than his

GPS thought possible, she'd also never once so much as scraped a curb or another vehicle in the traffic.

"Are there ever any cabs out here?" he asked breathlessly, undoing his seatbelt.

The cabbie shook her head, her curly black hair bouncing. "Never, senor. You want me to wait?"

Trey pursed his lips. "How much is that going to cost me?"

The cabbie shrugged. "Depends."

Trey narrowed his eyes, then smiled and reached into his wallet. "How long will this buy me?" He slid a \$100 over the top of the seat.

"Amigo, I'd blow you for \$100. I'll wait as long as you want."

Trey blinked in surprise, shoving his wallet back into his pants pocket. "Uh... rain check?" He opened the car door and stood up unsteadily on his one good ankle. He reached back onto the seat and picked up the black velvet bag, hefting it in his hand.

*If I'd known that it would have led to all this...*

Trey blew a noisy raspberry through his lips and limped toward the warehouse entrance.

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Jenn stood up from where she'd sat on the warehouse floor when she heard the car door shut. *Trey! It has to be.*

Casey stood up as well, but Jenn waved him back into the shadows. "Let me handle this, okay? The last thing we need is for things to turn ugly here. I just want to get back to the ship, back to my vacation, and move past this whole damn thing."

Casey nodded in understanding, stepping back and pressing up against the wall.

The hinges of the big metal door screeched open, and Trey blocked out the light from outside, blinking in the sudden darkness of the warehouse interior. Jenn blew out a soft sigh of relief. As furious as she still was at him, it was good to see him. He at least had the decency to look supremely worried, if his face and anxious shoulders were anything to go by.

“Trey, I’m here!” she called out, realizing he probably couldn’t see her.

“Jenn?” No denying it, his voice was thick with worry. “Where are you? Are you alright?”

She nodded, then called out, “I’m fine. Everything’s fine; it was all just a misunderstanding!”

Trey took another couple of steps inside, allowing the door to close behind him, then stopped as his eyes adjusted to the dark.

“Jenn!” he called out as soon as he could make her out. His eyes widened as he took her in, head to toe, her backside, feet, and calves covered in mud. “Are you hurt?”

Jenn held her hands out, nodding. “I’m fine.” She hesitated. “I wasn’t sure you’d come, honestly.”

Trey’s mouth fell open. “Are you kidding? Of course I came! Why wouldn’t I come for you?”

Jenn twisted a little inside as she thought, *Chloe, that’s why*. “We can talk about that later. Did you bring the bracelet?”

Trey frowned, his brows furrowing as he looked around. “How do you— Who did this?”

Jenn heard a scrape behind her as Casey shrank further back into the shadows, perhaps seeing the anger in Trey’s eyes. *Wise choice*.

“That’s not important right now.” She held out her hand for the bag. “Hand me the bracelet.”

Trey stared at her, his frown deepening. “What’s going on?”

Jenn sighed again, this time deeply and audibly. “Believe me, it’s more complicated than it needed to be, and could have been solved with nothing more than an email and a payment request.”

Trey’s face puckered in confusion to the side. “What?”

“Just trust me. Give me the bracelet.” Jenn held out her hand and beckoned sharply with her fingers, impatience gnawing at her insides.

Trey stared at her for another moment or two, then took several limping steps forward and placed the velvet bag in her upturned palm.

Jenn nodded, then turned and walked back toward the shadows and Casey.

“All right, here’s the bracelet. We fucking good after this?”

Casey stood there, the bag balanced on one hand, staring at it dumbly. He glanced up at Jenn's face. “Are you serious? You’re just going to give it to me?”

Jenn nodded. “Yep. And I don’t want to see any more of you after this, got it?”

Casey resumed staring at the bracelet, his face inscrutable. Finally, he spoke. “This went a lot different than I thought it was going to.”

Jenn laughed. “Aren’t we all glad? If it had gone the way you thought it was going to, someone would have ended up behind bars.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?!”

Jenn turned at the sound of Trey’s angry voice. He’d walked up behind her without either of them noticing. He stepped awkwardly around Jenn and swung on Casey, muttering, “Motherfucker!”

“Trey, stop!” Jenn called out.

Casey caught Trey’s wild swing in the ribs. He grunted in pain, but scrambled back, to his credit.

Trey wound up again, his eyes fixed, blazing, on Casey’s face.

Jenn screamed, as loud as she could, as if in pain.

The moment both men's eyes turned on her, concern and surprise written on both of their faces, Jenn ripped her shirt upwards and freed her breasts from her bikini top. Both Trey and Casey's eyes went wide, and Jenn achieved her desired effect; they both stopped moving, staring at her breasts as she wagged them slightly from side to side. She'd learned a long time ago that there were few things as mesmerizing to a heterosexual man as a pair of tits in motion.

"Stop, both of you! Trey, this was all a misunderstanding and admittedly bad judgment on Casey's part, it's true, but I'm fine, nothing happened, no one's been hurt, just a little bit unnerved. Let's all just stop while we're ahead, okay?" She gave her tits an extra pleading little shake. She couldn't help feeling more than a little gratified and boosted when both men whispered, "Fuck!" to themselves.

"Now, I'm going to put these away..." She cupped her breasts, squeezing them in her hands, and was rewarded by a quiet moan from Trey, and an undeniable burst of motion from the front of Casey's shorts. "...And we're going to talk these things out like adults!"

As Jenn lowered her shirt and fought with her bikini top, struggling to get her boobs back into it, she made fixed eye contact with Trey, who blinked, let his eyes wander back up to her face, and adjusted the front of his pants. "Jesus, Jenn," he whispered, his eyes glancing at Casey in what Jenn thought might be jealousy. A small pinprick of warmth ignited behind her navel.

"Let's just chock it up to inexperience and desperation, and laugh about it later, okay? For now, let's just get back to the ship before we miss the departure." Finally back in her top, she alternated her gaze between the two men in front of her. "Agreed?"

Casey just nodded, both hands holding the black velvet bag in front of his crotch. Jenn raised both an eyebrow and the corner of her mouth and enjoyed the squirming dance as Casey shifted from foot to foot, trying and failing to hide his new erection.

*Now who's in control?* Jenn smiled. She wished, not for the first time, that the board room were as easy to control as a man aroused.

She spoke to Casey. "What was your plan to get out of here? A car? A moped? A bicycle?"

Casey stuttered, still clearly distracted by the memory of Jenn's breasts in his mind's eye. "I... I wasn't gonna go back to the ship. I was just gonna hitchhike back to the border."

Jenn stared at him. "Unbelievable. You're lucky your plan went to shit, you know that?"

Casey grinned sheepishly. "Probably."

"I don't want to see any more of you once we reach the ship," Jenn repeated quietly. Casey nodded.

"I have a cab waiting," Trey offered quietly.

Jenn turned to look at him. Trey was staring, arms crossed, fixedly at the door of the warehouse.

*He's angry with me. Are you serious?*

"You have no right to be upset with me right now. We'll talk about this later, but where is this cab?"

Trey pointed with his chin out the door he'd come in. "She should be waiting somewhere close outside."

"Great! Let's go. I want to get out of these clothes."

She heard both men give a sharp intake of breath and tried to hide the smile that dominated her face and her insides.

Trey led the way, limping quietly in the lead. Jenn followed, and Casey quietly brought up the rear.

Trey held the door open for Jenn, but she noticed that he released it before Casey had finished walking through it. She couldn't fault his anger. Casey *had* essentially kidnapped her, albeit peacefully.

Trey opened the back door of the cab for Jenn. She brushed as much of the mostly dried mud from her pants and legs as she could, then slid across the seat to make room for him. As he climbed in beside her and closed the door, Casey surprised her by sliding in and closing the door on the other side, his long leg pressing up against hers.

“Are you serious?” Trey said loudly, disbelieving.

“What?” Casey asked as the cab leaped forward.

“Where to?” the cabbie asked, her eyes darting around her as she quickly navigated away from the warehouse.

Trey turned and stared out his window, shaking his head. “Back to the ship.”

“You got it!” Jenn heard the engine putter faster as the woman pushed the accelerator.

“You couldn’t have ridden up front?” Jenn asked, a smile in her voice.

“I– I didn’t think passengers were allowed up front,” Casey said, his face going red.

Trey sighed, but didn’t say anything, staring out the window.

Jenn couldn’t help but smile as she turned to face out the windshield. They rode in silence for several moments, the only sound the rise and fall of the engine as the cabbie wove in and out of the streets on her way to the harbor.

The first hard right turn she made, all three passengers in the back seat lurched to the left, and Jenn had no choice but to throw her hands out to support herself. The only available space were the thighs of the men on either side of her. Trey’s thigh flinched beneath her hand, but he reached his right hand out to support her. Her left hand, in the meantime, landed squarely atop not Casey’s leg, but his half-stiff cock. He tried to shift away, offering quiet apologies, but there was nowhere for him to go. Jenn’s eyes went wide at the feel of him, even briefly, and she swallowed and blinked,



fighting a smile. She lifted her hand, but held it out over his leg, rubbing the tips of her fingers together absently.

Jenn turned to look at Trey. "I want this."

Trey turned to look at her, his eyebrows knitting slightly in confusion. He glanced at her hand, hovering over Casey's leg, and his mouth opened slightly. Jenn watched his face tighten and wrinkle and could see his mind at work. Finally, he whispered, quiet enough that only she could hear.

"Do you actually want it, or is it just to get back at me?"

Jenn stared at him, her own mind now at work. She couldn't deny that she was still angry with Trey. Nothing had changed there. But the attraction to Casey predated that by several days. The initial attraction in the library, which she'd tamped down at the time in favor of Trey, had only built in the following days with the chance meetings she'd spent with Casey.

"This is something I actually want."

Jenn saw Trey swallow slightly, then slowly nod. "Okay." He didn't say anything else, simply turned and looked out the window.

Jenn looked at him appraisingly. "You sure?"

Trey nodded. "If it's something you want, I say go for it."

Jenn gave his leg a squeeze in thanks, then turned her attention to Casey.

"Hey," she said, setting her hand intentionally back atop his leg, the shaft of his cock pressing into her palm. Her own heartbeat quickened as she felt the blood surge into the flesh beneath her hand with each one of Casey's rapid heartbeats. "You remember how I said I didn't want to see any more of you once we reached the ship?"

Casey nodded, and a swallow made his Adam's apple bounce like a bobber on a fishing line.

Jenn stretched up to whisper into his ear, “Well, we haven’t reached the ship yet, and there are some parts of you I’ve been dying to see more of.” She pressed down with her palm, squeezing his cock between it and his leg.

Casey groaned. Jenn smiled. She was going to enjoy this.

## Chapter 13

Jenn was never good at waiting. Indecisiveness wasn't rewarded in the business world. She knew what she wanted, she'd made the decision, so now she simply went for it.

Jenn slid the bottom of Casey's shirt up high enough to expose the little bump where his hip connected to his midsection. Jenn didn't know what it was called, nor did she care. She brushed her fingertips down across the smooth, tan skin. Casey's abs flinched, and he breathed out shakily. Jenn saw him glance over at Trey, his mouth wordlessly opening and closing.

"Don't worry about it. He's fine." Jenn pushed the tips of her fingers down below the waistband of Casey's shorts, and he tensed visibly, his legs attempting to straighten reflexively, pushing his head up into the ceiling of the cab. Jenn stopped her advance for a moment. She looked up into Casey's face. "Should I stop?" she whispered.

With one more wide-eyed glance at Trey, Casey shook his head, reaching up with his opposite hand to grab the handle above the window. His other hand grabbed onto his knee, knuckles white. He straightened as much as he could, his posture clearly inviting Jenn to continue her advance into his pants. She accepted the invitation, slowly inching her fingers down, past his hip, across the hair on his thigh, until she found what she was looking for.

Jenn couldn't help but gasp when her hand closed gently around him. The sheer girth of him was unbelievable. Her fingers only barely touched when she tried to circle entirely around him. She slid her closed hand up and down a few times, the skin of his shaft pulling up and down with each stroke. Casey groaned.

Jenn glanced up and made eye contact with the cabbie in the rearview mirror. The woman's eyes were smiling. "Amiga, you sassy! You have what you need?"

Jenn blushed, and she asked, "I'm sorry?"

The cabbie glanced meaningfully between Trey and Casey, then she reached over and popped the glove compartment. Jenn could see a folded wad of condoms. "You have what you need? I like to take care of my customers!"

Jenn smiled, taken aback but emboldened by the woman's unblinking support.

"I'll let you know."

Jenn released her grip on Casey and trailed her fingernails down his shaft, across his balls. He wheezed, a taut exhale. She looked up into his face and smiled, then cradled his sack in her hand and rolled down the top of his shorts with her wrist. She rotated her thumb beneath his length, flicking it free of the fabric. It sprang stiffly into the air, pointing straight at the ceiling.

"Oh, my god!" Jenn heard Casey whisper. He moved the hand on his knee up to join the other on the handle over the window, scanning uneasily outside the vehicle.

Jenn's hungry eyes watched as Casey's monstrous dick bobbed and swayed with every heartbeat, leaped with every involuntary contraction of his pelvic muscles.

"Oh, my god, indeed," Jenn whispered as she allowed her fingers and palm to slide loosely up and down his cock several times, getting to know him. Casey groaned, and her smile widened. She gave him another several tugs, enjoying how responsive he was beneath her hand. Jenn glanced at Trey and saw that he was watching from the corner of his eye. She turned to look at him, and his eyes flicked to meet hers.

Maintaining eye contact with Trey and managing to maintain a steady pumping motion with the hand still encircling Casey, Jenn slowly slid her other hand from Trey's thigh up to his belly. She gave him a gentle squeeze, then dropped her hand into his waistline. Trey closed his eyes as she gripped him lightly.

An erect penis now held in either hand, lightly stroking each warm appendage, Jenn couldn't help but giggle. This was literally the stuff of

dreams.

The driver glanced in the mirror, then turned to glance behind her and laughed.

“Dios mío! Two at once?”

Casey, who must have been unaware of what was happening with Jenn’s other hand, glanced over and whispered, “Jesus Christ!” Jenn closed her eyes, grinning like a fool and biting her lip, the warmth filling her hands also fanning the flame in her belly.

Trey shifted slightly, undoing the button and zipper of his pants and slipping them down to his thighs. Casey, without looking in Trey’s direction, followed suit, pulling the waist of his gym shorts down to his knees.

Jenn continued to stroke with both hands, reveling in the muted groans and grunts of the men beside her. Boardroom be damned: *this* was power. Slowing down led directly to heaving breaths, pleading for more. Speeding up created breathless silence, punctuated by gasps.

Jenn released both men for a moment. She sought out each of their opposite hands and brought them to her, Casey’s to her breast, Trey’s to her waist, then returned her hands to the pink, shiny cocks on either side of her.

“Figure it out,” she grunted.

Both men did.

As Casey’s fingers began hungrily undoing buttons, Trey smoothly untied the tie of her shorts and slipped a hand down the front of them.

It was Jenn’s turn to gasp when Trey’s finger found her pussy and easily slipped in and out, the inner lips of her labia slick. He wet his finger with her, then withdrew it to slide upward to the little bud at the top of her vulva.

When Trey began making small circles with the tip of his middle finger, his thumb pressed against her belly and other fingers gently applying

pressure on either side of her lips, Jenn allowed herself to groan aloud, swiveling her pelvis to add to the motion Trey was supplying.

“Ay!” Their cab driver laughed, adjusting on the seat. “If you don’t mind, I tune you out; you make it hard to drive!” She clicked on the radio, pushed a few buttons, and some slow, heavy Spanish rap began playing through the car’s speakers.

Casey’s fingers had managed to undo all of the buttons on Jenn’s shirt, and he pulled it down off her shoulders. Jenn paused with each hand long enough to slip both arms from the sleeves.

Casey paused, uncertain whether he should continue.

“Don’t stop there,” Jenn encouraged him with a brief smile.

He needed no further invitation. His hand went to the back of her neck, where one tie of the bikini rested, and undid the knot, then slid down her back to the other, untying it, too.

In a flash of green fabric, Jenn was sitting in nothing but her mud-spattered shorts, her heavy breasts hanging down her chest, a man’s hand down her pants, another cupping one breast, a throbbing cock in each hand. Jenn leaned her head back, eyes closed.

As she hoped, both men took it as the invitation she intended it as. Trey leaned in, his mouth going to her chest above her breasts, planting light, teasing kisses along her clavicle. She shivered.

Casey leaned down and put his mouth lightly against hers, a tentative kiss that Jenn pushed up into, drawing him in further with her eagerness. She let her tongue run over his upper lip, and he pushed back greedily, inviting more of her. She accepted, sliding her tongue fully into his mouth. His own tongue stroked hers, his lips circling around her tongue. He stroked her tongue, bobbing his head forward and back so that her tongue plunged in and out of his mouth. She pulled back, looking back down at what was happening near the seat.

In both her hands, the men’s cocks were growing steadily warmer and harder. Trey’s, as long as her hand, was straight and circumcised; the

mushroom tip was shiny and taut with the strength of his want.

Casey's, impossibly, continued to grow. There was now a slight gap between Jenn's fingers when she tried to encircle him. She looked down at him for the first time, really watching his cock as she worked it. He was uncircumcised, his foreskin retracting back a bit further from his tip each time she stroked toward his belly.

Unable to resist the urge any longer, Jenn slid her bottom toward Trey, throwing one leg up and over his, then leaned over toward Casey and slowly pressed her lips to the peeking tip of his dick.

Casey stopped breathing altogether. He slid down in his seat, his knees crushing against the back of the driver's seat in front of him. His hips thrust upward, as if begging Jenn to take more of him. One of his hands sought the back of her neck, not pushing or pulling, simply touching gingerly. The other reached around to her front, cradled a breast, and gently rolled one of her nipples between his fingers.

Jenn filled her mouth with Casey. She took him in until she could fit no more, then intentionally pushed down a little more, gagging slightly as the tip of him pushed against the back of her throat. She pulled back from him, one hand holding the shaft straight, the other pumping just ahead of her lips, rotating back and forth along his shaft down to the base, pushing back the close-trimmed hair that grew there.

While Jenn sucked on Casey, Trey continued to pay close attention to her lower half. Her positioning on Casey forced her to adjust on Trey, turning entirely over so that her right knee rested on the floor of the cab, and the left was thrown across Trey's lap. He continued to rub and caress her, his free hand running over her bare ass, her thighs, her stomach, while the other continued its quick little circles at the apex of her pussy.

Casey's hand on her breast let Jenn know first when he was getting close. His breathing became quick and ragged, and the hand on her breast squeezed tighter and tighter until she had to use one hand to guide him gently off of it, his hand instead reaching down her back to rest at the top of her ass.

When she could feel in the tension of his belly and cock that he was getting close to releasing, Jenn removed her mouth, using her hand, instead, to guide Casey to completion. The young man shivered, groaning loudly and grunting as the hot, sticky cum spurted from the tip of his penis, splashing onto his shaft, balls, and the seat of the cab.

Casey groaned, but Jenn kept milking him, coaxing every last spurt and tremor out of him until he gave one last shiver and finally brought one hand on top of hers, halting her movement.

Behind her, Trey kept fingering her. Jenn smiled, lowering back deeper onto her knees and arching her back to make herself more accessible. She laid her head on Casey's lap, eyes looking up into his, and holding the slick, sticky tip of his cock in her mouth while she was fingerfucked.

Casey joined in with caressing, exploring hands, gently stroking and kneading every part of her he could reach. His hands were at her breasts, her belly, her sides, her ass, her back. Everywhere his light fingers touched, goose bumps appeared on her skin as she sighed repeatedly, Trey's hands guiding her closer and closer to climax.

"Hey," the driver called back to them. "You better finish. We're close."

Jenn turned to plead with Trey with her eyes, letting Casey's deflating member drop out of her mouth. "So am I," she mewed.

Casey, looking ahead out the windshield, spoke up. "I don't think you're gonna make it. I can see the gates." He was already pulling up his shorts. He glanced down, unsure what to do about the semen that was everywhere until the driver passed back a package of wet wipes she'd produced from the glove compartment.

Jenn pushed up onto Casey's knees with her hands, turning to look for herself. Sure enough, she could see the gates several blocks ahead.

"Shit," she groaned. She gently pushed Trey's hand away, her lips pouting, and began to pull her shorts up, from where they'd fallen around one ankle.



Trey, too, worked to cover himself, getting his shorts back into place as Jenn retook her seat, shorts in place and retying the bikini top around her middle.

They all sat back in their seats, all of them breathing heavily through their noses.

The cab driver laughed. “You all sound like sex!”

The three adults in the back seat glanced at one other and laughed, as well. They looked like sex, too. Flushed faces, disheveled clothing, sweaty skin.

“Don’t worry about the seat. I wipe it down when you leave,” their driver called back. She laughed again. “You’re lucky my man takes care of me. I’m gonna need him bad tonight. He loves it when I work the cruisers.”

It was Jenn’s turn to laugh. “Well, in hope he gives you a good ride; you’ve certainly been more than accommodating this afternoon.”

The cabbie smiled and waved off the compliment. “Ah, I’ve worked the cruisers a lot. I seen some crazy shit, I tell you that!”

“I’m sure you have!” Jenn gave both men’s legs a gentle squeeze.

## Chapter 14

Trey closed his cabin door and leaned back against it in the dark. This afternoon hadn't been in the plan. Not by a long shot. He'd never have anticipated sharing a cab handjob session with Casey. That wasn't anything he'd seen coming when he and Casey had first crossed paths back in the library that first day.

*But all's well that ends well.* He rubbed his leg where Jenn had rubbed it. There'd been a lot of promise in that squeeze. Things were looking better than they had for days. He opened his phone and pulled up the cruise line app, clicking on the text group with Chloe and Desire.

*We're back. Long story short, Jenn's fine, we're back on.*

He waited a minute after hitting send, hoping they would see it and respond quickly. His hope was rewarded.

*OMG, What a relief! Glad you're both okay, would love to hear the story later. Do we have a location?*

Trey sighed, grinding his teeth. He had one last Hail Mary to try to make this work. He opened the door and stepped out into the hall.

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Jenn wasn't expecting the knock on her door that woke her from her nap. She pushed herself up off the bed, where she'd been lying down since they'd boarded again.

She peered out the peephole. Trey, wearing a black tuxedo with a white bow tie, hair slicked back pristinely, every hair in place, was standing a half step back from her door, a gentle half smile on his lips.

*What is he doing here? Maybe the handjob and squeeze were a little much?* Jenn acknowledged that, for all her grinding on his hand and moaning in the cab, she was still upset with Trey. She looked out again. *God, he looks good in that tux.* Jenn sighed and opened the door.

"Yes?" she asked, trying to exercise patience and kindness.

Trey folded both his hands in front of him. “Jenn, I’d like to talk to you; I have something to say, and something to ask.”

She folded her arms across her chest. “Okay,” she said stiffly.

Trey blinked, then looked up and down the hallway. A few passengers walked by and stepped in and out of cabins down the way. “Do you want to do this inside or outside?”

“Here’s fine.”

Trey blinked again but nodded his understanding. “Okay.” He took a deep breath. “I acknowledge that it looks like there’s been something going on with me and Chloe. I don’t know exactly how you know, or what exactly you’ve seen or heard, but I’d like to offer a complete explanation that I think will help clear everything up and help make things right between us.”

Jenn waited for him to continue. When he didn’t, she shrugged in confusion. “Isn’t there more?”

Trey smiled apologetically. “Yes. Just not here. Will you get dressed?” He gestured down at himself. “This is the recommended dress code, if you’re willing.”

Jenn scowled, but it was her thinking scowl.

Trey held both hands out in front of him. “I know things have been tense between us recently. I’d like to make up for all of it, if you’ll let me. I’m asking, if you think I’ve earned any of your trust, for you to trust me.”

Having said his piece, Trey dropped his hands and stood with them clasped lightly behind his back, ready to wait as long as Jenn needed.

Jenn looked at him, taking in every line of his face, every carefully combed hair on his head, each precisely trimmed hair in his beard. She did trust this man. Implicitly. She nodded. “I’ll get dressed. How long do I have?”

Trey fought to tamp down his smile. “As long as you need.”

Jenn laughed. “If I’m going to outdo you, I’m going to need at least forty-five minutes.”

Trey let the smile have his face. “You’re worth the wait.”

Jenn smiled. “Are you waiting in your room, or mine?” She stepped aside, extending the invitation to come in.

Trey breathed out heavily. He shook his head slowly. “I would love nothing more than to watch you getting ready. But I think, if this is going to happen the way I want it to, I better wait in mine.” The disappointment in his voice was palpable. “Text me when you’re ready.”

“Kay,” Jenn closed the door. “See you in a bit, then.”

“See you in a bit,” Trey said, grinning.

As soon as the door closed, Trey stepped back across the hall and opened his phone.

*Roughly 45 minutes. Be ready!*

He beeped himself into his room, turned on a single lamp, and sat down in the chair in front of the vanity, preparing to wait for the longest 45 minutes of his life.

He wasn’t wrong. When his phone finally vibrated with a message, his knee was bouncing, he’d already paced up and down the room for fifteen of the forty-five minutes, and he was beginning to feel slightly sick with all the anxious waiting.

*Ready.*

He liked Jenn’s message, then switched threads and typed his own message:

*She’s ready. Get everything ready; we’ll be down as soon as possible.*

Trey opened the door and stepped across the hall. His breath caught in his throat.

Jenn stood, clad in a shimmery red silk evening gown, a simple yet elegant halter top that plunged deeply at her bust and went backless far down her body. She turned to give him a full view. The back plunged past where the small of her back tucked inward, to the point where her body began to push outward again and became her ass. She raised her arms, which were clad in white satin gloves to her elbows, up to her head, allowing Trey to see everything he wished to know about her outfit and what lay beneath it.

Her makeup was done up for the evening, simple yet elegant, her eyes smoky and dark. A tasteful diamond choker adorned her throat and set off the earrings that sparkled behind the feather wisps of her pixie that sat in front of her ears.

“Wow.” It was more an exhale than a fully formed word. Trey had to remind himself to close his mouth. “You look... Amazing.”

Jenn smiled, holding out her hand. “Lead on, good sir. I’m intrigued to hear this explanation you’ve promised me.”

“It would be my absolute pleasure.” Trey bowed, then delicately took Jenn’s hand, leading her carefully down the hallway toward the elevators, never once breaking character, their hands held out high before them. Couples and individual passengers who passed them on their way couldn’t help but smile as they did. Trey smiled to himself. He was already enjoying this thoroughly, and the absolute best was yet to come.

He pushed the button for Deck 7.

Jenn frowned. “What’s on Deck 7?” Her eyes scanned the deck guide to the left of the elevator doors.

“A private venue,” Trey offered, his eyes on the indicators above the door. His armpits had suddenly begun to sweat.

“Really? I didn’t even know there was such a thing!” Jenn said, glancing at him. “This evening just got a little more interesting.”

*I really hope so.* Trey smiled. He reminded himself of the hours and hours he’d spent planning this, weighing it out, discussing options with

Chloe and Desire. It was a good plan. He took a deep breath in when the elevator dinged and gestured to allow Jenn to step off first.

They were in a tasteful yet small hallway, dark except for several wall sconces with electric candoliers.

“Oh! This is different,” Jenn observed, looking up and down the hallway. “Which way?” Trey indicated with his thumb to the left. He allowed Jenn to walk ahead of him, taking the moment to enjoy watching the way her body moved beneath the silk as she walked. The motion of her ass, the taut shape of her calves as they alternately pushed back the material of her dress, the curves in her back as her arms swung gently side to side.

*She’s beautiful.*

“Are you going to come, or are you just going to stare at my ass?” Jenn asked from down the hallway.

*What I’d really love is to come while staring at your ass.*

“Yeah, coming!” He jogged to catch up with her, then turned and pointed down a short hallway to the “Moonlight Lounge,” according to the placard on the door.

“Moonlight Lounge, huh?” Jenn whispered. “I like the sound of that.”

Trey smiled, opened the door, and ushered her into the room, closing the door securely behind him. As promised, there was a key that allowed him to lock it.

Jenn turned at the click.

“What’s—,” she turned to look into the quiet, empty room. “What’s going on? Where is everyone?”

“I thought I’d offer you a little something more with my explanation,” Trey said quietly. He nodded further into the room, where two shapes had left the relative shadows of one of the private dinner booths.

“Who...?” Jenn whispered, then stopped when Chloe and Desire stepped into the light from the chandelier hanging over the center of the

floor. Both of them were dressed similarly to Jenn and Trey, Chloe wearing a dark dress with swirling paisley patterns embroidered into the skirt, and Desire wearing a sharp tailored black tuxedo with black bow tie and black dress shirt.

“You’re fucking with me.” Jenn turned to look at Trey. “Okay, you promised me an explanation. Start talking.”

Trey smiled in what he hoped was a comforting manner. “I thought I’d let her do the explaining, instead.” He nodded at Chloe.

“Oh, interesting choice,” Jenn said. She turned, hands on her hips, and said, “You have thirty seconds, Chloe.”

Chloe smiled at Jenn. “Actually, would it help if you referred to me as *soulsurfer06*?”

Jen frowned for just a moment, then her mouth dropped open, and her eyebrows flew upward. “What?” Her hands went up to her mouth in disbelief, remembering at the very last moment not to touch them to her lips and cheeks. She pressed them together in front of her face. “No... That’s why you looked so familiar!” She turned to look at Trey. “How...”

Trey grinned. “You matched. Months ago, before you got so busy with the merger.” He nodded at Chloe, who was also smiling. Desire was also smiling. It seemed no one could help it. “When you didn’t respond on the website, Chloe found me and reached out on social media.”

“I just couldn’t let you disappear into the depths of the internet,” Chloe said, holding out her hand to Jenn.

Jenn hesitated. She looked at Trey, and there were tears in her eyes. “It was all for me? The sneaking around? The text messages, the meetups with Chloe in the bar, it was all so Chloe and I could be together?”

Trey nodded, his grin infectious. “I’m so sorry. When you confronted me about Chloe, I panicked. I didn’t know how to keep the surprise and explain at the same time, so I... choked. I’m truly sorry about that. You must have thought the absolute worst of me.”

Jenn nodded quickly. “I did.” She stepped over to Trey and took his face in her gloved hands, placing a gentle kiss on his lips. Trey’s body tingled, and he wasn’t sure if it was more from relief of the surprise being sprung or from the kiss itself. Either way, he enjoyed it.

“*I’m* sorry!” Jenn whispered, cradling his forehead to hers. “I... with the merger, and everything after...” She suddenly looked up, her mouth aghast. “Oh, my god, everything with Casey!”

Trey laughed quietly. “So there may have been just a bit of revenge fucking involved there?”

Jenn looked at the ground, embarrassed. “Maybe just a little bit. God! What you must think of me!”

Trey tilted her head up with a finger. “I think the world of you, Jenn. You work harder than any person I’ve ever met. You’ve accomplished more this year than I could ever accomplish in a lifetime.”

Jenn sputtered, removing her glove so she could wipe away the tear that pushed out from her eye. “You’re making me cry.” She sniffed. “And breaking my cruise rule.”

Trey leaned into her, wrapped a hand around the small of her back, put his mouth right next to her ear, and whispered, “Fuck your cruise rule.”

He gently turned Jenn around to face Chloe, who stood waiting for her, hands kneading each other in midair.

“Ten months ago, you matched with a woman who wanted to meet you and help you explore this side of yourself. This woman. We’ve travelled across an ocean specifically so that this night could happen. Don’t let it go to waste with misplaced guilt.” Trey put one hand gently on her lower back and pushed her forward.

Chloe reached out, and Jenn took her hand. Trey noticed a shiver that traveled up Jenn’s spine, and he let his hand slide down to pat her ass affectionately.

Trey turned to look at Desire. “Wanna get a drink?”



Desire nodded.

“No!”

Trey turned to look at Jenn, surprised. “No?”

“Will you stay?” Jenn turned to look at Chloe, suddenly bashful. “Is that okay?”

Chloe nodded, smiling. She turned to look at Desire, who gave a thumbs up and unbuttoned their jacket, then walked to the dinner booth they’d come from and sat down.

“Are you sure?” Trey asked, glancing at first Jenn, then Chloe. “You want me to just... watch?”

Chloe smiled. “Is that gonna be a problem?”

“Hell, no!” Trey said quickly. “I just want to make sure that’s really what you want, and you’re not just doing it out of guilt or shame or something.”

Jenn shook her head. “I want you here. I *need* you here.”

Trey smiled in reassurance and brushed his thumb over Jenn’s cheek. “Then here’s where I’ll be.”

He turned and walked to join Desire at their booth and slid in at the opposite side of the single long bench that curved around the large table. He found a comfortable position, and then he stopped moving, and simply watched.

## Chapter 15

Jenn turned her face from the shadowy booth where Trey had disappeared and smiled at Chloe. “Sorry. I just... he puts me at ease.”

“I understand completely. There’s no reason to apologize.” Chloe was all warmth and smiles.

Jenn blew out a breath, fanning at her face in an attempt to dry her makeup. “So... how does this go?”

Chloe laughed, and it was a beautiful sound, as if it came from her very toes. “How do these things ever go? Shall we just start with a dance?” She gestured around them at the empty dance floor.

“Might as well,” Jenn said, smiling. She reached out with both hands. It took them both a few moments, as two femme-presenting parties, to decide whose hands would do what, but they eventually figured it out, Chloe taking a man’s position to lead Jenn around the dance floor. Chloe held Jenn close, close enough that their bodies could do much of the communicating about where they were headed next. After several seconds of waltzing around the floor in silence, the small, thin sound of a waltz playing over cell phone speakers reached them from the dinner booth. They both turned to smile at the dark corner.

“What would we do without our partners?” Chloe asked quietly.

“I honestly have no idea,” Jenn whispered back.

Chloe turned to face her and gently leaned her face in, not quite going all the way in to kiss her. Jenn hesitated only a moment, then leaned in as well, her lips sliding softly against Chloe’s. It started out as a very light, curious kiss, both of them testing the openness and willingness of the other. After another moment or two, they stopped turning on the floor, and Chloe dropped both hands to Jenn’s waist.

Jenn wrapped her hands slowly around Chloe’s shoulders, leaning deeper into the kiss. They separated briefly, and Chloe opened her eyes to smile at Jenn. “Is this okay?”

Jenn didn't answer. Instead, she pulled Chloe back into her, kissing her heavier, harder.

Chloe's body responded in kind, her hands sliding gently and caressingly up the bare skin of Jenn's back with just her fingernails, causing Jenn to shiver and pull away slightly.

Jenn smiled, her lips nearly touching Chloe's. "I'm ticklish," she whispered.

"Good to know," Chloe whispered back, pressing her hands into the flesh at Jenn's sides and pulling her more tightly to her.

They resumed their kissing, exploring more of the other's tongue and mouth with each passing moment. Finally, Chloe pulled away, dropping her face to kiss the skin of Jenn's throat beneath her ear. Jenn closed her eyes and let out a heavy breath, arching her neck to expose more of it for Chloe to explore. Chloe followed her unspoken cue, leaving a trail of light, feathery kisses down her throat and onto her shoulder. Chloe brought a hand up from beneath Jenn's arm and lightly brushed the shoulder where she'd just kissed it.

Jenn shivered. Her shoulders had always been something of a hot button for her. She had no idea how Chloe knew that.

"How did you know?" she whispered breathily as Chloe continued to stroke both shoulders now, gentle fingers brushing lightly over the smooth, creamy skin.

"You have a very observant lover," Chloe whispered, and glanced over at the corner.

Jenn followed her look, searching through the darkness for Trey.

"I do," she whispered back, then turned to press her mouth against Chloe's ear, nibbling gently at her ear lobe, one hand running up into Chloe's hair, to grip the back of her head.

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Trey watched in equal parts fascination and arousal as the two women grew increasingly agitated and passionate on the dance floor. He'd seen Jenn in a lot of situations over their years together. But this one? This one was new.

He watched in breathless silence as Chloe reached up and unlatched the halter of Jenn's dress with one hand. When she lowered the front, allowing Jenn's breasts to spill out into the light from the chandelier, he had to stifle the groan that coincided with the growing tightness in his pants: tonight wasn't about him. He was an observer only; there by invitation only. His role was silence.

He watched Chloe fill one of her hands with one of Jenn's large breasts and lightly heft it, as if enjoying its weight. She said something, and Jenn laughed. Trey couldn't help the smile that lit up his face. He loved to see her this way: carefree, relaxed, happy. Chloe traced a finger around the outline of one breast, and Trey caught himself mirroring the action in space, unable to keep from imagining himself in Chloe's position, enjoying Jenn to the absolute fullest.

"You're doing really well," Desire commented from across the table.

Trey glanced over, surprised and a little embarrassed to have Desire's attention on him. "What?"

"I said, you're doing really well. My first time, I was a mess."

"Do you..." Trey hesitated, unsure whether what he was about to say would be offensive or not. "Do you do this a lot?"

Desire smiled and nodded. "She's got a big heart, my girl. She was raised in a super conservative family. *Super* conservative family. Her coming out was... It wasn't great." They turned to look back at the couple on the dance floor. "She spent a lot of years in therapy, and now, she reaches out to women who are just figuring out they're bi, to help them make sense of it and make their first time..." They trailed off.

"Amazing?" Trey nodded, gesturing wordlessly at the two women, now gasping together beneath the chandelier.

“Exactly.” The pride in Desire’s voice was obvious.

Trey nodded. “I get that. Where would we be without the women we love?”

Desire chuckled. “I’d drink to that.”

The two of them lapsed into silence again, attention drawn to what was happening on the floor.

Jenn pushed her dress down over her hips, falling slowly past her thighs and gradually down to the floor. There had been no lines beneath her dress; she wore no panties. She stood, wearing only her jewelry, a single glove, and her heels.

Across from him, Desire whistled low. “She’s a beautiful woman, Trey. You’re fortunate.”

“She is, at that,” he whispered, taking all of her in with his eyes as Chloe caressed her gently. Jenn stood, inexplicably holding her breasts between her curled arms, despite the fact that they’d been out for quite some time. She glanced at the table, said something. Chloe turned Jenn’s head back to face her with a finger, said something equally quiet in response, and reached behind her to undo the zipper at her own neck.

Chloe turned so that Jenn could finish drawing down the zipper. When the back was loose, Chloe pushed out of the long, sheer sleeves, taking her arms out of the dress and pushing it down around her waist. She wore a black lace bra that, as her dress fell the rest of the way to the floor, matched her panties. Without a moment’s hesitation, Chloe reached up and undid the clasp at the front of the bra, shrugging it off and dropping it on the floor.

Her breasts were full, not quite as large as Jenn’s, but they hung quite well together, Trey thought. He startled at the rustle across the table and glanced at Desire, suddenly nervous.

“Relax,” Desire smiled. “If she didn’t want you here, she’d have said something.”

Trey turned his full attention, and that of his rapidly-filling cock, back to the dance floor.

Both women had stepped out of the puddles of their dresses, and now clung to each other, their mouths firmly connected. Trey watched the light play across their naked bodies, shadows created wherever their hands pressed into each other, their quiet moans and gasps flitting across the silence of the lounge to reach him. He adjusted on the bench, trying and failing to create more room in his pants.

At the squeak of his pants on the leather seat, Chloe and Jenn's kiss broke off, and their faces turned toward him.

*Damn it!*

He debated whether to call out an apology when Chloe whispered something to Jenn, who turned to face her, smiling, then nodded, and they both began walking toward the table.

It was like something straight out of his dreams. Chloe led Jenn by the hand, the two of them gliding across the floor in their high heels, setting off a cascade of wiggles and bounces across both their bodies that sent Trey's stomach into his mouth, breathless worship on his lips.

Desire whispered the only word that seemed to capture both their thoughts. "Damn!"

Both women walking toward the table smiled, the expressions only enhancing their already superb and varied physical features.

"We decided we don't want spectators tonight," Chloe said quietly.

Disappointment sent his stomach dropping back into his belly, but Trey smiled outwardly and made to stand. "Sounds good," he lied, trying to make it sound sincere.

Jenn put a hand on his chest, keeping him from standing, then tugged off her one remaining glove. "We only want participants."

It took a moment for Trey to process what she'd said. When he did, his eyes flew wide. "Oh, sweet Jesus."

“Not quite,” Chloe said, holding her hand out for Trey to take. She glanced at Desire. “Give us a few minutes, then join us?”

Desire smiled, then reached up and untied their bow tie. “You got it.”

Chloe had Trey stay sitting, then guided Jenn to the table. She patted the surface in front of Trey. “Up you get.”

Jenn sat on the table, bracing slightly at its cool surface against her bare buttocks.

Chloe turned her so that she was facing Trey, then she placed one leg on either side of Trey’s head, Jenn’s heels resting on the back of the bench behind him.

Trey couldn’t help but glance down at Jenn’s pussy, then up at her, naked, nervous, and leaning back on her hands.

Chloe patted Trey’s leg. “Your dinner, Sir.”

Trey smiled and undid the knot of his bow tie. “I don’t think I’m quite dressed for dinner.”

“Just don’t let it cool,” Chloe said quietly.

“No, ma’am,” Trey whispered. He undid his top button, then leaned forward and slowly buried his face between Jenn’s thighs.

Jenn leaned back, letting her face point up to the ceiling, and moaned deep in her chest as Trey’s tongue went to work.

After hearing her ditch her heels, Trey looked up to see that Chloe had climbed up on the table, one leg on either side of Jenn. She squatted down atop Jenn then dropped to her knees, hovering above Jenn’s abdomen. If he looked up, Trey was staring right at her ass, which he still wasn’t sure how he felt about, so he closed his eyes, focusing on what he was doing with his mouth.

“Stay with me, Jenn,” he heard Chloe say. “We’re not done with you yet.” He heard Jenn giggle and opened his eyes to peek at what was happening ahead of him.

Jenn was laying back, dropping all the way down to the table. Trey heard her give a sharp inhaling hiss as her back connected with it. As soon as she was flat, Chloe dropped to all fours, leaning down to kiss Jenn again. This meant that her ass was spread directly in line with Trey's vision, barely a foot above him. He reached a hand up to touch her before pulling back, feeling suddenly very hesitant about the arrangement.

A strong hand closed around his wrist and drew his hand back up to rest lightly on Chloe's ass. Trey turned, lifting his face from Jenn, to lock eyes with Desire, whose shirt and jacket were undone, displaying a tattooed, muscular chest and abs with just the hint of breasts disappearing beneath their shirt.

"If you're going to do something, do it right," they said, taking Trey's hand and tracing it down the curve of Chloe's soft, round buttock.

Despite himself, the front of Trey's pants bulged with a fresh surge of want. He blew out through his mouth, and he noticed Jenn wiggle her pelvis in response.

"I'm— this isn't really about me," he whispered.

"And it isn't," Desire replied. "But you've been invited in. That means you get to have wants, too." Saying so, Desire leaned in and kissed Chloe's hip, directly on the bulge above where her hip met her back. Chloe broke off from her kissing Jenn to look back at the two of them, and she smiled, then shook her ass seductively.

Looking up at Jenn and Chloe, Trey glanced down to make eye contact with Jenn. She pressed her thighs together and reached down with one hand to grip the back of Trey's head, tangling her fingers in his hair.

"Don't stop," she pleaded.

Trey said nothing, simply going back to work with his mouth.

After that, he limited himself to only the occasional glance upward to distract him from his all-consuming task of consuming Jenn. Every occasional glance was memorable.



The first time, Chloe and Jenn were still making out passionately, both of their hands grasping nipples, bellies, and backs, whatever they could reach, while Desire knelt on one knee to the side of Chloe, one hand on their partner's lower back, the other making small circles around her clit, their tongue rimming Chloe's asshole.

The next, Chloe had rotated her position and was kneeling over Jenn's face, thrusting lightly as she kissed Desire, who cradled one of Jenn's large tits in their hand.

All the while, Trey gave his all to focusing on Jenn beneath his tongue, not easy, given the noises that were coming above him, the sights that met his eyes any time he dared to look up, and the increasing aching discomfort that was his entire groin area from a raging hard, ignored erection. The fact that leaking precum had wet through the front of his underwear only added to the discomfort, creating stickiness, wet, and additional friction.

Despite all that, Trey knew Jenn well enough to know that she was getting close. He could feel the tension in her thighs, hear the hitches in her breath as she focused on the rising pressure that could potentially build into an orgasm. Trey recommitted, ignoring the fatigue in his tongue, a completely new sensation that was not altogether pleasant.

One of Jenn's hands reached out, after having been so busy elsewhere for what felt like so long and latched onto the back of Trey's head as Jenn gasped. Both her legs, up and down their length, tensed and flexed as Jenn gasped several more times in rapid succession. Trey kept licking.

When Jenn moaned loudly, Trey kept licking. When her thighs, legs, and belly started spasming, Trey kept licking. Only when the spasms had subsided, her breath had deepened, and the hand on the back of his head moved to push him away gently, did Trey stop licking.

There was whispering ahead of him, and Trey sat up, wiping his moustache and beard with his hand.

"How was that?" he heard Chloe ask from where she now lay on the table beside Jenn, head propped up on one hand, while Desire absently

drew circles around and slipped a single fingertip in and out between Chloe's wet vulva.

Jenn had to take several deep, shuddering breaths before she answered, one arm thrown over her eyes, a smile on her face. She lifted the arm to peek down at Trey, who winked at her.

"Good," she managed, before chuckling breathlessly. "Fun. Holy shit!" She swallowed, still breathing heavily. "It was so much! Just... so much going on! Ah!" She laughed again, retreating visually once more into her elbow.

Desire, standing bare-chested on the floor beside Chloe, nuzzled into their partner's neck, and Chloe moaned and sighed, smiling.

Trey wrapped his hands lightly around Jenn's ass on the table in front of him and planted several soft kisses on the insides of her thighs. She glanced out from under her elbow, a crooked smile on her face.

"What do you want?" Chloe asked quietly. "Again? Enough? To watch?" Desire wrapped their arm around Chloe's belly at the last suggestion, and Chloe planted a light kiss on their cheek.

"Mmm!" Jenn sighed. "That's a decision I hate making!"

Chloe laughed. "I get it. Take your time." She closed her eyes and leaned into the quiet kisses that Desire had been trailing down the length of her body, starting from her neck. They'd reached the back of her knees at this point.

Trey noticed all of this while his eyes never left Jenn. He sat there, his erection physically painful at this point, but silent. Tonight was about Jenn.

Finally, Jenn sat up, propping herself up on her elbows again. She dropped her ankles from the back of the bench onto Trey's back, pulling him down into her. He let her, laying his head on the lowest part of her belly, the thin line of hair disappearing into her pussy tickling his cheek. Jenn tousled his hair slowly, and he closed his eyes, kissing her thigh once

more and unable to keep from imagining himself taking her in a thousand different ways, a thousand different positions.

“Are you busy tomorrow?” he heard Jenn ask, a smile in her voice.

Trey heard a kiss break off, then Chloe said, “We can be *very* busy tomorrow.”

“It’s a date,” Jenn said. She relaxed her legs, and Trey pulled back just in time to see Jenn reach out, pull Chloe to her, and plant another deep, hungry kiss on her mouth.

The bulge in Trey’s pants gave one last little heave and gave up, easing his discomfort slightly.

Trey pulled the door to the Moonlight Lounge closed, the latch locking behind them with an audible click, silencing the groans and noises coming from Desire and Chloe, back at it on the dinner booth table.

Jenn didn’t say anything as she adjusted her dress and gave her gloves one more tug, stopping in front of the elevator doors.

Trey pushed the call button and watched Jenn out of the corner of his eye, waiting for her to speak first.

They waited in silence for a few moments, then Jenn said quietly, “Well, *that* was unexpected!”

Trey smiled as the elevator dinged. “So, you were definitely surprised... what did you think?”

Jenn entered the elevator and stared absently at the doors as they closed, one gloved hand brushing lightly at her lips. Finally, she said, “do I taste like that?”

Trey laughed. “Like what? I, uh... didn’t taste Chloe.”

Jenn’s eyes narrowed as she thought. “Slightly like tomatoes?” She asked, an awkward smile on her lips now.

Trey laughed. “Yes. I’ve always thought you tasted a bit like tomatoes.”

“Huh. Good thing you like tomatoes,” Jenn said seriously.

“And you?” Trey asked. “Do you like tomatoes?”

Jenn paused again as the elevators stopped and several passengers got on. “You know, tomatoes are growing on me. I think I could learn to really like tomatoes.”

Trey smiled as the other passengers all stared up at the deck indicator light, completely unaware of what was being discussed behind them.

“You seemed to really enjoy your tomatoes,” Jenn said with a smile, leaning into the game they found themselves playing.

“Oh, I always enjoy your tomatoes,” Trey said, taking the game a step further. One man glanced back at them quizzically.

“Yeah, the tomatoes I had were pretty good, too,” Jenn said seriously. “But, you know, I really felt like there was something missing that would have rounded out the flavor a little bit.”

“Oh?” Trey pressed, genuinely unsure where this was headed. “What’s that?”

“Some meat.”

Trey sucked both lips to keep from smiling too large and giving away the game. “Oh, yeah?” he asked.

“Yeah! I really enjoyed the tomatoes, but I just kept finding myself wanting some meat to round the whole thing out. Some ground beef.”

Trey had to look at the floor.

“Or some rump roast,” Jenn continued.

Trey had to plug his nose and cover his mouth to keep from laughing.

“God, I would have killed for some sausage!” With that, Jenn reached out with her gloved hand and clasped Trey’s penis through his

pants. Trey snorted. Several passengers turned to look back at them now, some smiling slightly, others frowning.

“Well, then, next time, let’s get you some sausage with your tomatoes,” Trey said.

Jenn stared up at the deck indicator, her face miraculously deadpan. “Oh, hell no. I need some sausage tonight. Right now, in fact.” She reached out and pressed the button for Deck 12. There were a few chuckles as passengers in the know realized there were no restaurants on Deck 12.

When the elevator dinged on their floor, Jenn pulled Trey by the hand out the doors offering a polite but firm, “Excuse me.”

As the elevator doors began to close behind them, Jenn turned to the crowd inside and put her hand on Trey’s crotch. “It’s dick. Sausage is code for dick!”

Several passengers whooped and cheered, one woman said, “Oh, for God’s sake,” and several men cleared their throats noisily.

Trey grabbed Jenn by the waist, crushed her to him, and kissed her on the mouth. She wrapped her arms around him, kissing him back.

Trey pulled back, looking into Jenn’s face. “Are you sure you want sausage tonight?”

Jenn stared up into his eyes, her pupils unusually wide. “Trey, I’m done talking in code. I’ve wanted your dick since we set foot on this boat. It’s literally the reason I came.” She released her grip on his neck, then turned and began dragging him by the hand down the hall. “It’s high time I got what I came for!”

## Chapter 16

Jenn slid her keycard across the reader and pushed her cabin door open. She stepped across the threshold and beckoned Trey inside. “I’m so done waiting! Get in here.”

Trey laughed and slid past her into the dark hallway.

The door closed, plunging them into darkness.

“Where’s the light in here?” Trey asked, and Jenn could hear his hands running over the nearest wall, searching for the switch.

Jenn pulled the gloves from her hands, not caring that the fingers turned inside out, knowing she’d pay for it later. She didn’t care. She scrambled for the zipper and undid it, slipping the dress from her chest and shimmying it down over her hips. She heard Trey chuckle in the dark.

“What are you doing? Where’s the light?”

She kicked the heels off her feet, sending them flying through the dark to thud against the back wall.

“Jenn?” There was concern in Trey’s voice. “What was that? Are you okay?”

Jenn found him in the dark, let her hands run up across his back, over his shoulders, and slowly pushed her fingers under the lapel of his jacket, bringing it down off his shoulder.

“Oh!” Trey gave one of his pleasantly surprised little exclamations that Jenn loved so much and drew his arms out of the tuxedo jacket. Jenn threw it toward the door in the dark, so that neither of them would trip on it later. When Trey started to turn around, Jenn stopped him, pushing him gently against the wall.

“No,” she said gently but firmly. “Tonight, you do exactly as I say. Yes?”

“Yes,” Trey whispered. She felt his breath quicken in the rise and fall of his shoulders.

*Good.*

Jenn reached out and felt for the bowtie he’d replaced before leaving the Moonlight Lounge and slowly pulled it loose, then went immediately to undoing the buttons of his shirt, one after the other. She slid her fingers just far enough down the front of his pants that she could reach the hem of the shirt and pulled it up, untucking it. Trey stopped breathing while her hands were below his waistline.

She slid her hands down his arms, feeling her way in the dark, and undid the cufflinks there, then repeated the same thing on the other side. When she peeled the shirt back off his shoulders, it simply fell away, allowing her to kick it to join the jacket in the corner somewhere near the door.

Once more, her hands descended into his pants, this time to untuck the white undershirt tucked into his underwear. When Jenn let her fingers run through the curly, trimmed hairs between Trey’s legs on her way to free the shirt, Trey let out a quiet, wordless exhalation, pure want made breath. She smiled in the dark, her nipples growing hard at the sound.

She pulled the tee up and over his head, then threw it, too, in the direction of the door.

“Turn around,” she whispered.

Trey complied quickly, backing slowly away from her in the dark so as not to step on her feet, she assumed. She pushed him back against the wall, then slid her one hand on his chest slowly downward, trailing over his belly, across his thigh. She crouched in the dark, close enough that she could feel hairs on her head catching on his pants. She turned her head slightly, allowing it to brush where she now estimated his cock to be, letting him know where she was in the dark. Trey grunted from deep in his chest, his growing desire evident.

Jenn slid her hand all the way to his foot, where she untied his shoe, which was removed then tossed, along with the sock. She slid her hand

upward, along the inside of his leg, and crossed over, gently running her fingertips across his balls in his pants, then down the other side, where she deftly removed the other shoe and sock.

Only his pants and underwear remained.

Jenn didn't say anything, simply placed her hands on the bony crests of Trey's waist beneath his flesh and turned him again in the dark. She guided his bare arms up, so that his hands pressed against the wall, then pulled him back far enough by his waist that his arms were fully extended, palms flat against the wall.

Still behind him, Jenn placed her hands flat against his belly, gently caressing the soft skin and light covering of hair there, then lowered her hands painfully slowly down to his pants, where she slowly and deliberately undid each button, clasp, and zipper. When they were loose, she let them fall, pushing them down past his ass in the back. He stepped out of them and kicked them toward the door, eagerness making his movements jerky and fast.

Finally, Jenn brought her hands slowly around the back, letting her fingernails drag lightly over the skin above his boxers. She hooked her thumbs beneath the hem and drew them down, cupping his cheeks with her hands in the process. The back pulled down, but the front got hung up, as she knew it would. The back of the boxers hooked beneath his bum; she danced her fingers across his flesh to address the hang up.

The strength of Trey's erection held the boxers straight out and tight against his hips. Jenn allowed herself the teasing luxury of circling her fingers around Trey still inside his boxers. She let her hand drift, not rubbing, simply tracing its outline beneath the fabric. Trey groaned audibly.

"Oh, please!" he whispered.

"Shhh!" Jenn hushed. "I didn't say you could speak."

Trey didn't say anything more, but beneath her hands, she could feel him trembling with anticipation. She placed both hands on his bare belly then slowly ran them both down, beneath the boxers, until she cupped his base in both hands. She slid them both slowly and lightly up his shaft,



freeing him from the boxers. She let him go, guiding the boxers down over his hips and onto the floor. Trey didn't move, obediently waiting for whatever came next.

With Trey now completely naked, Jenn wrapped her arms around him and pressed herself, cheek to calf, against him in the dark, letting him feel her and feeling him in turn. The warmth of his back pressed against her chest, pushing her tits apart. She wiggled slightly to adjust them to a more comfortable position, then stilled. His perpetually cold ass cheeks pressed against the warm skin of her belly and thighs, and she smiled at the chance to warm him. Their thighs and legs pressed together, warm and already slightly damp with sweat in the dark. She held him, his hands still on the wall, her cheek pressed to his shoulder, and let their breathing synchronize and deepen. She could feel his heartbeat faintly against her chest, hammering behind his ribs.

She held him that way for another several seconds, long enough that she could feel some of the tension leave his body, simply enjoying the closeness and intimacy that they'd been missing for the last several months.

After several more seconds, when he audibly relaxed with a long, steady sigh, Jenn made her move.

She let go of him and darted in front of him, ducking beneath his arm in the dark, and squatted before him, ass resting on her heels, her back against the wall. She ran a hand up the inside of his leg and found him in the dark, still warm, still full, but not quite hard.

*We can change that*, she thought.

She opened her mouth and slid as much of his bouncy length into her mouth as would fit, pushing toward him until she felt the warm tip touch the back of her throat. She gagged slightly despite her best efforts, and she heard Trey gasp sharply as her throat muscles constricted around his cock.

She slid backward across his shaft, nothing but her lips touching the sensitive skin of his shaft, the mushroom head, the tip of his penis.

She started moving her head slowly back and forth, sliding up and down the length of him, which continued to grow as he responded to her attention, the warmth and wetness of her mouth.

She continued until she felt Trey start making small thrusting movements of his own back and forth, his own reactive attempts to drive more, faster, deeper. She pulled back off of him with a slurp, then stood up between his arms and wrapped her own arms around his chest, pressing her breasts to him and searching for his lips in the dark. He bent to kiss her, his mouth hungry and warm.

To her surprise, his hands stayed obediently on the wall in front of him, waiting for her instruction to do otherwise. It was time to reward his patience.

Jenn pulled back from him and took one of his hands from the wall in the dark. She said nothing, simply led him through the dark toward the only source of light in the room: the faint moonlight that came in through the sliding glass door to the balcony.

She undid the latch and slid it slowly open, the sea breeze whistling across the opening at first, then helping push the door the rest of the way open.

Jenn led Trey onto the balcony, which was dark, as were the adjoining ones. It must have been early enough in the evening that most cruisers were at dinner or other pursuits, leaving them with the glorious illusion of being completely alone, the ocean stretching away in front of them endlessly, the moon casting dancing ripples of light across its surface.

Jenn shivered against the cool breeze. She dropped Trey's hand, went to the rail, and bent down, resting her hands and forehead on the rail second from the top. She turned to look back at Trey, smiling though he couldn't see it, and wiggled her ass at him.

"Come fuck me," she whispered.

Trey needed no second invitation. He closed the distance between them, slid one gentle hand between her legs to feel for her opening, and used the other to direct himself in. There was a bit of resistance at first, but

he slid a fingertip inside her to wet it, then used her own wet to ease his entry. He slid the rest of the way inside her without difficulty, causing them both to gasp together.

Both his hands went to her ass, pressing the skin, gripping the bones at her hips as he thrust slowly, steadily, and deeply into her. She felt him bump against the end of her and winced slightly.

“Am I hurting you?” he asked quietly.

“No. Keep going,” she whispered back.

He obeyed, his thrusts even, consistent, and controlled. She knew it felt good for him: she could hear it in the low hum in his chest. She knew he was enjoying the sensation of simply being inside her, sliding through her, becoming part of her. She gave it to him readily, eagerly, even. She sighed, her breath coming out in staggered puffs with each thrust of his hips.

She knew, at this pace, he could last for hours, if needed. It felt good but wasn't enough to take him to and over the edge of orgasm. She gave him another several minutes of breaths, of steady pushes and the rhythmic sound of clapping thighs on cheeks, before she stood, forcing him out of her.

Again, she didn't say anything, simply led him inside and to the bed. She knew he could wait for hours, but she couldn't. Jenn left Trey at the door and felt her way to the bed, where she flicked on a single bedside lamp.

She pointed to the bed. “Lie down.”

Trey did so without question, trusting her completely.

Jenn walked to her closet and lifted the lid to her second small piece of luggage, fingers searching through its contents. She deftly picked out several objects, creating a small stack against her naked belly. When she had what she wanted, she returned to the bed, depositing her collection.

Trey chuckled and started to speak, but Jenn interrupted him with a finger to his lips. She bent to kiss him, straddling him in the dim light. She

brought his hands up to her breasts, letting him cup her. His fingers squeezed, eager yet gentle. She knew he loved her breasts. He always had. He moaned, and she felt his cock swing up and tap her lightly on the ass with a fresh surge of hot desire. She smiled.

“I brought what you like,” she said quietly.

“I have what I like right here,” he said, still fondling her breasts.

“I brought the *other* things you like, too,” she said, looking at him meaningfully.

A smile lifted the corner of his mouth beneath his beard. “Oh?”

Jenn nodded, then she went to work.

She pushed a few drops from the tube of lube onto the short glass piece, the three sequential, growing beads gleaming in the light from the lamp. She used a finger to coat it, then glanced at Trey, smiling. “Spread ‘em.”

Trey pulled both knees up on either side of Jenn, still straddling him. She reached behind her and guided the beads into position.

“Ready?” she whispered.

Trey nodded, and Jenn slowly pushed the anal plug into position. Trey gasped, and the plug shot forward, out of her fingers as his pelvic muscles caught it and pulled it deeper inside him.

Trey hummed, and she could feel him flexing and tensing his muscles, getting comfortable with the object inside him.

Jenn turned her attention to her own plug, quickly repeating and getting it inserted into herself. She inhaled, the feeling of fullness that came with using the plug washing over her.

Next, she picked up the two tiny bullet vibrators and handed one to Trey. “Your weapon, sir.”

He took it, pushed the button to activate it with a quiet buzz, then surprised her by pushing the tip not against his own plug, but hers, sending

a rippling wave of pleasure up her very center. She gasped.

“Not fair!” she moaned.

“From what I understand, all's fair in love,” Trey said, the tacky smile on his face letting Jenn know that he knew how bad the line was.

“Yeah?” Jenn returned the favor, activating her vibe and pressing it to the small circle of glass between Trey’s cheeks. He grunted, closing his eyes.

They both sat still for a time, enjoying the sensation of stimulating the plug vibrating deep inside the other, both simultaneously giving and receiving.

Jenn wasn’t sure exactly how long it had been, maybe a few minutes, when she reached behind her with the other hand for the lube.

“Help me with this,” she said, refusing to release the vibrator pressed against Trey.

He used his other hand to undo the cap as she held it, equally dedicated to the toy against Jenn.

Jenn squeezed a short supply of the viscous liquid onto the top of the tube, then used an adept finger to scrape it off. She popped the top closed and dropped it, then reached behind her and slowly coated Trey’s penis with the stuff. She slowly lifted her pelvis, careful to let Trey follow her movements with his hand, and lowered herself down onto him, both of them groaning as she did so.

The sensation, having both holes filled and stretched, was so difficult to describe. The fullness and the warmth never ceased to amaze her. As she began to bounce, she pushed Trey’s hand away, letting her own come away from his ass, as well.

“Trade ya,” she whispered. Trey complied, holding his own vibe, while Jenn transferred hers to her front, centering the point of the bullet above her clit.

“Oh, my god,” Trey whispered into the room to no one in particular.

Jenn bounced on him, taking all control as she fucked him.

“Come for me,” she whispered.

“Yes, ma’am,” Trey whispered back, his breathing unsteady.

Jenn could feel his cock pulsing inside her as he kegeled. She gave a few of her own gentle squeezes, which sent Trey into a fit of wild chuckles as he repeatedly whispered, “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

Jenn felt the familiar building pressure behind her belly button as she thrust, and she tried to pay more attention to her own body, confident that Trey’s was well on its way. She raced to join him.

When they came, it was together, Trey’s ankles lifting almost even with Jenn’s head as he climaxed, moaning loudly as he did so. Jenn gasped loudly, her breath surging in and out as her own orgasm rippled through her body, leaving her skin tingly, her mouth dry, and her clit painfully sensitive.

She thought briefly about chasing after a second but decided not to when she looked down at Trey’s face.

His eyes were wide, adoring, his mouth slack with awe. Jenn sat forward, sliding off of his penis. As it slid out of her, Trey groaned one last time as his warmth and wet dripped out of her onto his belly.

Jenn laid down on top of Trey, her head dropping against his chest. He adjusted to get his still-mostly-erect penis out of the way, then wrapped both arms and legs around her and turned off his own vibrator.

They lay together in the sudden quiet, simply holding each other as they recovered their breath. When they both were finally able to breathe calmly and deeply once more, Jenn raised her head and whispered, “You know, you’ll never hear me say this again, but that was almost worth the wait!”

Trey laughed and pulled her lips to his.

## Chapter 17

The remaining days of the cruise passed in a blur, composed entirely of lovemaking in one of their two cabins, quick trips to meet up with Chloe and Desire in their large cabin, and frequent trips to the cafeteria to refuel.

It was at the end of one of these, both Trey and Jenn enjoying a heaping cone of the soft serve ice cream— Trey strawberry, Jenn chocolate—that they encountered Casey.

He drew up short when he saw them, his eyes wide, the tray of food in his hands largely forgotten. Trey reached out to hold up the side as it started to tip over.

“Easy there, sailor,” he said quietly.

“Uh... hey...,” Casey said quietly, his eyes fixed on Jenn. It was obvious to anyone who cared to notice the flicker of fabric between his legs what he was remembering. Jenn ignored it.

“Sit with us?” she asked, instead, turning and walking to an empty table with four chairs in a far corner without waiting for an answer.

Casey glanced at Trey, who smiled disarmingly and gestured for him to follow.

When they were all situated, Casey sat, wide-eyed and openmouthed, as Jenn voraciously licked the dripping sides of her ice cream. When she caught his eye, she glanced at the cone, then shook her head quickly. “Don’t worry,” she pointed at the cone. “This isn’t symbolic. It’s just really good ice cream.” She took another lick.

“Kay,” Casey said weakly. His eyes turned downward, staring down at his tray as he concentrated on adjusting everything on it to keep his mind otherwise engaged.

“I wanted to ask, since we never really got a chance to talk after... you know,” Jenn said, taking a long, definitely suggestive lick of her ice cream cone. “Everything... What’s so special about that bracelet?”

Casey took a deep shuddering breath. “My uncle—,”

Jenn interrupted him. “Yeah, we know about that. You told us already.” She glanced at Trey. “Me, at least. But nobody goes to the lengths that you did over nothing more than sentiment and a couple of rock-shop gemstones.” Jenn caught a drip with her finger and sucked it off loudly. Casey stared. Trey laughed and shook his head.

Casey hemmed and hawed for a moment, right up until Jenn said, “Look, I don’t like to throw around the ‘B’ word, but I’m not above blackmail right now, all right? You can either tell us, or we’ll go ahead and report what you did. I don’t think I’m asking for a lot here, do you?” She glanced at Trey, who shook his head with mock seriousness.

“God! Okay, fine.” Casey glanced around the cafeteria, then slowly reached into his pocket and pulled out a wadded napkin.

Jenn frowned. “Is that from the banquet hall? Weird klepto fetish.”

Casey pushed back the folds of the napkin, revealing a yellowish stone, no larger than the tip of Jenn’s pinky.

“Is that...” Jenn’s eyes widened. “A diamond?”

Casey nodded. “It was in the bracelet.”

Trey scowled and spoke around the last bite of his ice cream cone. “No, it wasn’t. I looked over every inch of that bracelet, and there was no diamond. Not like that!”

Casey shook his head. “No. I mean it was *in* the bracelet! Literally inside!”

Both Jenn and Trey stared at him.

Casey rewrapped the diamond, slipping it back in his pocket. “Look, my great-great-uncle was approached by a guy, some actor-turned-jewel-thief named Jack Murphy, to hide the diamond. He said he’d stolen it, it was hot, he felt like he was gonna get caught, and he wanted it hidden.” Casey picked up his fork but didn’t even glance at his platter. “He did get caught, and he served time, but he never went back for the bracelet. My uncle held



onto it. He was scared that Murphy would come after him if he sold it, so he just hung onto it until he died.”

“But why didn’t your family hang onto it, then?” Jenn whispered, leaning across the table, her eyes wide with interest.

“Because my uncle never told anybody about it. Not a word about it to anyone. When he died, the family sold off everything in his shop that they didn’t have any feelings about. Nobody knew anything about the bracelet, so it just got sold.”

“So, how did you come by the information?” Trey asked, equally intrigued.

“Years after his death, somebody was reading his journal, doing some work on family history or genealogy or something, and he talked about it there, along with a sketch of the bracelet.”

Trey and Jenn looked at one another. “So, your family has just spent the last sixty years looking for this bracelet?” Jenn asked quietly.

Trey nodded. “Sort of. A lot of them tried really hard to track it down at first, but nobody knew anything about it at that point. Over time, it mostly just became one of those family stories you know, ‘Oh, if only Uncle Herbie hadn’t lost the Eagle diamond, things would be so different!’” Casey laughed. “Most people moved on, got their own jobs, did their own thing. I—” He lowered his eyes, and his shoulders slumped. “I haven’t really had anything going for me up to this point.”

Jenn and Trey looked at each other.

“That’s... really something,” Jenn said quietly.

“So, are you gonna keep it?” Trey asked.

“Probably? I mean, I’ll try and sell it, probably. I’ve been wanting to try and start a business. I thought this might help.”

Jenn sat back and slurped a wide swath up the side of her neglected ice cream cone. “I think you deserve it. Maybe I’m crazy, but I still think

that somewhere, under all those muscles and bad decisions, you still have the capacity to be a decent dude.”

Casey looked up, suddenly bashful. “Thanks,” he smiled.

“Don’t mention it,” Jenn said, and offered Trey a lick of her cone. “Help me finish this?” she asked.

Trey made an unreasonable amount of eye-contact with Jenn as he lowered his mouth to her cone and began to slurp loudly.

Jenn yanked it back. “Oh, good lord, stop that! Can’t anything ever just be what it is with you guys? Why does anything that goes into my mouth have to be sexual?” She stood to leave and looked down at Casey. “I mean it: use that to do something good. You don’t owe anyone else a damn thing from it. You did all the work; you should get all the reward.”

“Thanks,” he repeated.

Trey stood to leave, as well, putting a hand on Jenn’s ass. She hip-bumped him as she started walking. “See you around, Casey!”

When they were a few tables away, Trey said, “It’s pretty big of you to just forgive what he did. I can’t imagine how scared you must have been.”

Jenn shrugged. “Eh. Honestly, I was never really that scared. I was mad! At you, though.”

Trey scoffed. “Really? You were literally kidnapped, and you were still mad at me for something you only thought I did?”

“Yes!” Jenn responded quickly, smiling into her strawberry soft serve. “I had no idea you were planning...” She glanced at Trey, who raised his eyebrows and glanced at her, as well, waiting for what she would say. “What you were.” Jenn’s eyebrows knit together. “Hey, by the way, how on earth did you arrange the entire Moonlight Lounge to ourselves for our little ‘party?’”

Trey shrugged. “I paid off Ricardo.”

Jenn choked on a mouthful of ice cream. “You did?”

“Yeah.” Trey’s eyes were thoughtful now.

“For how much?”

He glanced at her again.

“How much, Trey?”

“Ten thousand dollars?”

Jenn stopped short, staring sightlessly down the hall.

“What?” Trey asked, turning to look at her. “You just closed the biggest merger of your career! Your bonus will be unreal!”

Jenn turned around and began walking back into the cafeteria.

“Where are you going?” Trey asked, his arms wide.

“To negotiate my half of that diamond,” Jenn called behind her.

Trey ran to catch up to her and caught her by the elbow, turning her around. “No, remember? You think he’s a nice kid who deserves the chance to make something of his life.”

“Yeah...” Jenn allowed herself to be redirected. “You really think I’m worth ten thousand dollars?”

Trey grinned. “And a fortune more, besides.” He steered Jenn toward the elevators to below decks, where they still had a few things left to pack before the ship docked and it was time for debarkation. “C’mon,” he said. “I don’t know about you, but I’ve still got some stuff scattered across the cabin that I need to gather up.”

They walked to the elevator and rode it to their deck.

Stepping out of the elevator, Jenn glanced at her phone, checking the time. “You know what I just remembered?”

“What?” Trey nodded to another couple walking the other direction.

“That incredible red sky last night at sunset.”

Trey nodded, humming his agreement. “Oh, yeah. That was pretty epic.”

“But you know what that means,” Jenn said, sliding her keycard across the reader one last time.

“Uh... no?” Trey frowned.

Jenn grabbed his wrist and pulled him into the cabin. “Red sky at night, sailor’s delight!”