The Pryce Family Book 4

The Billionaire's Forgotten Fiancée

New York Times and USA Today Bestselling Author

nadialee
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The last thing wedding photographer Ginger Maxwell wants to do is face her high school sweetheart, who shattered her world when he disappeared after proposing. But when his powerful family wants her to bring him home or suffer utter financial ruin, she has no choice.

Amnesia left billionaire adventurer Shane Pryce with no memory of the golden beauty who claims to be his fiancée, but her gentle soul pulls at his heart. Together they create new memories to replace the ones that drove him away… but will those be enough when Shane finally remembers everything?

**Note:** This edition of *The Billionaire’s Forgotten Fiancée* is for sale on iBooks only. If you downloaded this book elsewhere, it is an illegal and/or illegitimate copy. Thank you.
The Pryce Family Series (Billionaires in Love Spin-Off) Reading Order

Book 1: *The Billionaire’s Counterfeit Girlfriend* (Mark Pryce’s Story)
Book 2: *The Billionaire’s Inconvenient Obsession* (Iain Pryce’s Story)
Book 3: *The Billionaire’s Secret Wife* (Vanessa Pryce’s Story)
Book 4: *The Billionaire’s Forgotten Fiancée* (Shane Pryce’s Story)
Book 5: *The Billionaire’s Forbidden Desire* (Dane Pryce’s Story - coming summer 2015)

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Billionaires in Love Series Reading Order

Book 1: *Vengeful in Love*
Book 2: *Reunited in Love*
Book 3: *Redemption in Love*
Book 3.5: *Sweet in Love*
Book 4: *Forever in Love*
Book 5: *Merry in Love*

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The Billionaire’s Forgotten Fiancée

The Pryce Family Book 4

Nadia Lee
To my awesome fans, without whom this book would never have been written.
Chapter One

“I’m really sorry.”

“Yeah, me too.” Ginger Maxwell’s hand tightened around her phone as another of her clients canceled. They were going to lose their thirty percent deposit, but unless she could book replacements, she was screwed. It was the fifteenth—or was it sixteenth?—cancellation in the last few days, and that left her calendar blank for months.

Sighing heavily, she sat on her living room couch and buried her face in her hands. Think, think, think. Should she run some kind of promotion or sale? The deposits gave her a little leeway. Some couples might be looking for a last-minute wedding photographer. Anything to fill up her schedule.

The doorbell rang and she thought, Finally, my pizza. She pulled the door open and shoved a limp twenty-dollar bill out with one hand, her eyes and mind on the food. Just as she realized that there was no cardboard box, a cool voice said, “I don’t need your money.”

She looked up into the face of Dane Pryce, older brother of her former fiancé Shane. Her brain sputtered for a moment. Was this some kind of nightmare? Finally she managed to say, “What are you doing here? How do you even know my address?” She’d moved a month ago.

“It’s not like you’re in witness protection.” Annoyance put an edge to his tone. “If you hadn’t refused to talk to my assistant, I wouldn’t have had to come.”

She crossed her arms. “We have nothing to say to each other.” Shane’s parents had never cared much for her. His siblings had been nice enough, but ever since his sister had seen Ginger on a date with another man and called her names, she didn’t think the rest of Shane’s family had much in the way of warm and fuzzy feelings left for her.

Dane’s eyes grew hard. “Trust me. You’re the last person I want to hang out with.” He stepped around her and walked inside. Dressed in a ridiculously
overpriced suit, he looked completely out of place in her modest one bedroom apartment.

Notes and memory cards were scattered everywhere on her dining table, and her laptop whirred, processing images. She cringed at the three old pizza boxes under the coffee table and shirts and shorts tossed carelessly over the back of her couch. She really should keep her place cleaner…except she hated cleaning.

“Pack your things and grab your passport,” Dane said, his gaze sweeping over the mess that was her apartment. “There’s a car coming in two hours.”

“For what?”

“For you to go to Thailand. There’s a jet waiting. Once you land, a driver will take you to our family vacation home.”

Her jaw dropped at his high-handedness. “I can’t just fly off to Thailand!”

“Of course you can. I’ll arrange for pizza to be delivered.” Dane gave her a frosty smile. “And you’ll be paid quite well for your time.”

She narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms. “Is somebody getting married in Thailand?”

He ignored her hostility. People were right. Ice water flowed in his veins. “I don’t particularly want you there, but Shane’s doctor recommended we send somebody. The requirement was that it be someone he’d had a positive relationship with for a long time.”

_Doctor_? She’d told herself she no longer cared about Shane. He’d betrayed her, treating her like he didn’t even know her when she’d gone to him. But her heart stuttered anyway, panic flooding through her body. “Is he all right?”

“He had a head injury. I sent some men, but he doesn’t want to come home, and none of us are in a position to drop everything and go. That leaves you.”

“I have a job,” she said, although that wasn’t technically true. Every one of the clients she’d booked for the next six months had cancelled…

“Is that a fact?”

She scowled as a thought crossed her mind. “Did you get my clients to cancel?” When he merely looked at her, outrage closed around her neck. “How dare you!”

“You’ll make more money from this than those wedding jobs. People have said a lot of things about me, but stingy isn’t one of them.”

_Just asshole and bastard._

A corner of Dane’s mouth lifted. “And proud of it.”

She glared at him. “I can just wait you out. I have the money and resources.”

“And I have more of both. You aren’t going to win this one.”

As infuriating as that was, he was right. She wouldn’t win this one at all. “It’s hot and muggy in Thailand,” he said. “Pack accordingly.”
The camera shutter clicked as he took another shot of the name on a heavy ivory card in front of him. The late afternoon light was hitting it just right, and the paper took on a warm undertone.

Shane Lawrence Arthur Pryce.

His full name supposedly, although he didn’t remember. He snapped some more photos. Somebody—he couldn’t recall who—had told him pictures didn’t lie. They captured everything, and if he sifted through them later, he might see something about Shane Lawrence Arthur Pryce, something that might trigger his memory.

Had his parents considered the initials, or had they simply not cared?

His stomach twisted at the thought of his parents, and Shane grimaced. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t recall a thing about them. But his gut always had the same reaction. Maybe they’d been abusive. Had they beaten him? Were they high-functioning alcoholics or cocaine snorters?

Just because his family was rich didn’t mean they were nice or well-adjusted members of society. He glared at the men standing around the huge living room in the beach house in Thailand. They’d claimed Dane had sent them to take Shane home. They didn’t say it outright, but they’d hinted that Dane was worried. Yeah, right.

On Shane’s phone were several contact groups. One of them was labeled Assholes, and Dane was the only one in it.

The men wouldn’t go back without Shane, so he’d started to ignore them. Dane would give up soon enough. Or not. Shane frowned. Did assholes call it quits that easily?

A car rumbled outside, and Shane felt his eyebrows pull together. Who now?

The engine stopped. Doors slammed, and voices came, words indistinguishable from the house. A man’s voice and a woman’s.

Was it his mother?

Shane’s jaw muscles tightened automatically. Dane—apparently his brother—had threatened to sic her on him if he didn’t come home. Damn it. Shane turned his attention back to the camera he’d been holding in his hands and snapped a few more shots of the card. If he kept taking photos, she might let him be. He didn’t want to go back with his mother either. He didn’t want to go with anybody.

The door opened from behind him. He pretended not to hear it, clicking even faster. There was a massive memory on his camera, and the RAW files were uploaded to some online storage site automatically. Of course he had no idea
what his login ID was supposed to be, but he felt no need to find out.

He heard the housekeeper Peeraya welcome the guest. “Sawadee-ka,” she said, her voice lilting, and he knew that the greeting had been delivered with a slight bow while her hands were held together in a prayer-like pose. That, he knew. “Let me take your bags, madam.”

Shane heard a woman’s footsteps come through the foyer, even as his stomach clenched harder.

“She?” came a soft voice.

He finally swiveled around. It wasn’t his mom, rather the blonde who’d barged into his hotel suite in Johannesburg. She was as gorgeous as he remembered, if a bit thinner. That bothered him, although he wasn’t sure why. The white t-shirt on her hung somewhat loosely, and her cropped denim shorts revealed slim legs. She’d probably been on a diet. All the women around him seemed to be on one, trying to shed every ounce of fat from their bodies. This one seemed to have been successful. He ought to congratulate her.

Her leanness accentuated delicately shaped facial bones. The sky-blue eyes that had looked at him with fury were guarded now, her full, rosy mouth set in an uncertain line. It was as though she was approaching a rabid dog. And he hated her for it. She was the one who’d brought out his temper in South Africa. No need for her to act like she was the victim.

“Ginger, right?” he said, keeping his voice light and mocking.

“Yes.”

Her voice washed over him like a silken dream from long ago, allusive and achingly sweet. He didn’t know why she had this effect on him. Ever since he’d lost his memory, he’d relied on his gut feelings, and right now, they were urging him to simultaneously wrap her in his arms and throttle her. Damn contradictions. She’d had the same effect on him in Johannesburg, which had been why he’d kicked her out of the suite. She’d told him they’d been engaged, but he wouldn’t have committed to a woman who gave him that nasty feeling, would he? Women fell to their knees at the sight of him, ready to do anything he wanted. Why wouldn’t he have chosen one of them?

*Nothing clears the head like sex.*

He blinked. Who’d said that? He couldn’t place the voice, but he’d heard it often enough. “Why are you here?”

“Dane sent me.”

That explained why Dane had the Asshole group all to himself. “You can’t stay.”

“Apparently, I can.”

He got up and deliberately moved closer to her, invading her space. She
smelled like orchids and butter cream. He inhaled sharply, his body tightening. He wanted her with an intensity that stole his breath.

If she didn’t want to go, why not keep her and fuck her? See if she was the one who could help him shake off the sense of wrongness every time he’d tried to sleep with somebody in the past year.

He studied her mouth, the way her lower lip was slightly fuller than the upper one, and how rosy and delicious they both looked. They’d be sweet under his own lips…or wrapped around his cock. He didn’t even know if she was any good, given how angelic she looked, but he wanted something so dirty and hot it could incinerate all the annoying things on his mind.

“I don’t let women who aren’t warming my bed stay here.”

She gave him a slight smile. “If you want me gone, find me some comparable lodging. Any five-star hotel will do. If not, I’m staying here and I’m definitely not sharing your bed.”

He snorted. She talked big now, but she’d change her tune soon enough when she realized he was serious. Either way, he was going to have her in his bed that night.

He dialed the travel concierge on his speed dial. Unlike most travel agents who only booked hotels and flights, the one his family used arranged for everything related to family travel.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Pryce. How may I help you?” came a professional voice.

“Need a room at a top hotel near our family vacation home in Thailand immediately.”

“Certainly.” A few moments later, the woman said, “I’m afraid there aren’t any.”

There aren’t any? “I thought May wasn’t the high season.”

“It’s not, but none of the acceptable hotels are showing any availability. The earliest is three weeks from now.”

“But that’s June!”

“That’s correct.”

His hand clenched around the phone. Suddenly all of the resorts and hotels were fully booked from May until June? He didn’t think so. What the hell was Dane playing at? “Did Dane tell you to do this?” he asked point-blank.

“No, sir. I haven’t heard from Mr. Dane Pryce since—”

“Forget it,” Shane managed to maintain a civil tone. That jerk-off had probably reserved every vacant room in the area.

When he hung up, Ginger quirked an eyebrow. “Well?”

“Everything’s booked.”
She didn’t seem surprised. “Well, guess that’s it.”
“There’s a reason why Dane’s an asshole.”
“Oh, there’s more than just one. And don’t forget to add ‘bastard’ to the list.”
She punctuated that statement with a smile. It was so unexpected and sweet it hit him like a punch to the gut.
Before he could recover, she went upstairs, her hips sashaying. He ran his hand over his mouth. It didn’t matter.
He’d have her anyway.

* * *

Ginger went upstairs to the bedrooms. Peeraya had put her bags in the guest suite across from the master bedroom suite, which she assumed Shane was using.
If the housekeeper was surprised at Ginger’s request to be in a separate room, she didn’t show it. But then Shane’s family wasn’t known for normal interactions. Ginger had often wondered why his parents kept the property on the beach anyway since the family rarely vacationed together anymore. And she knew for a fact that Shane’s parents had remodeled the master bedroom suite so it now had two connecting bedrooms.
The guest suite was smaller, with a queen-size bed, but decorated with a feminine touch in pink and pale gold. Shane’s sister Vanessa used the suite whenever she was in the area. The vintage four-poster bed was done in wrought iron, and a pale lace canopy hung over the frame. Ginger ran her hands along the pink sheets, enjoying the cool silk.
She perched on the edge of the mattress. Her heart had slowed now that she was away from Shane, and she felt like she could breathe normally again. She couldn’t believe how he could affect her like this even after everything that had happened between them the previous year. When he’d looked at her mouth with that scorching intensity, all the wicked things they used to do had flashed through her mind, and she’d wanted to pull him down for a kiss as her panties grew moist.
But she knew better than to give in to temptation. The Shane she used to know was gone. This new Shane was different…harder and more cynical. Besides, she still had no idea why he’d fled. Everyone around them said he’d “left”, but that wasn’t the right word.
When she’d come home after an out-of-town photo shoot, he’d been gone. Just…gone. No note, nothing. The walk-in closet they shared looked like it had been ransacked; piles of clothes were on the floor, and some of the dresses and
jackets were hanging lopsided. His dressers had been in the same condition, and the bathroom had been missing all of Shane’s things.

She’d been so worried and concerned. But no matter how many emails and texts she’d sent, he never responded. She’d called him numerous times, but they’d all gone to his voicemail. Eventually she’d needed to talk to him, and it was his older brother Mark who’d told her Shane was in South Africa taking nature photos.

“Is he in a jungle or something?” she’d asked.

“What do you mean?”

“He isn’t responding to my emails or texts.”

“Huh.” Mark shifted his weight. “Well. I don’t know. I heard from him not too long ago.” He cleared his throat. “It sounded like he’s a little busy. I’m sure he’ll call you soon.”

Sure. If Mark had believed that, he wouldn’t have looked at her with such discomfort. She didn’t think he knew exactly what was going on with Shane, but he knew something was up. And the worst part of it was she couldn’t just wait until Shane worked out whatever problem he’d had.

When she’d flown to Johannesburg to see him, she’d found him with another woman. A tall, gorgeous blonde who looked like she should be on the cover of a fashion magazine. Ginger had been paralyzed, feeling by comparison like a drab mouse in her comfortable travel t-shirt and Capri pants. She’d been so stunned she hadn’t even been able to tell him the reason why she’d traveled all that distance to track him down, even as he pushed her out of the suite.

It had taken her over a month to bring herself back home, and more months before she’d started to feel normal again. She wasn’t going to let Shane shake her now. All she had to do was drag him home. The time for reconciliations was long past. She was never going to leave herself vulnerable again.
Chapter Two

One ring. Two. Three…
Shane muttered, pacing, as Dane didn’t answer. Finally there was a click.
“Dane Pryce. Leave a message.”
With an effort, Shane unclenched his jaw. “It’s not going to work the way you want. I’m not coming home like some damned puppy just because you snap your fingers.” He hung up and threw the phone on the couch.
Damn Dane and his interference.
Shane didn’t necessarily want to regain his memory as soon as possible. Sure, it was inconvenient when he couldn’t recollect something that people seemed to think he should. But that was a poor reason to rush back to a home he didn’t remember when something was telling him he didn’t want to go “home” and surround himself with his family. After having dealt with Dane for a while, he was beginning to think his subconscious was pretty smart.
He tossed himself on the couch and stared at the skylight in the vaulted ceiling. Fat clouds tinged with the palest gray glided like a group of blimps. One thing was clear. Despite his initial assumptions, he had to admit Ginger was his real fiancée after all.
When he’d left the hospital, he’d researched his family. Google had been incredibly helpful, giving him lots of interesting information about his parents and siblings. His father was a womanizer who slept with any female who was young and pretty. His mother bore all of it with a polite smile. That had made Shane shake his head. Nobody would’ve blamed her if she’d brained her husband.
Then there were his brothers. They all dated models, heiresses and actresses. Gorgeous, leggy women only, please. His sister dated…no one, apparently—probably living like a nun—and worked way too much while drinking copious amounts of alcohol if her career trajectory was to be believed. The Internet didn’t have much about Shane himself, though, maybe because he was the
boring and sedate one, without any titillating gossip. The most significant
mention of him was the fact that he was engaged to the high school sweetheart
he’d been dating since his sophomore year.

Given the kind of pricey private schools his family had attended, he’d
assumed his fiancée would be a wealthy heiress or something, not a woman like
Ginger who obviously didn’t come from money. As a matter of fact, he was
certain her family couldn’t have afforded to send her to the high school he’d
gone to.

*Women will always want you for your money. Enough money can make up
for any flaw you have.*

He didn’t remember who’d told him that, but he knew it was true. At the
hospital in South Africa, he had his own private room with two dedicated nurses
and a doctor who’d come by frequently to check up on his condition. After a day
or so of being confined, he’d gotten restless and taken a walk through the
hospital. Other patients were in shared rooms with only thin, gauzy curtains
around their beds for privacy. Harried nurses took care of them, and doctors
rarely spent more than a few moments with each patient before moving on.

What was the difference between him and them, except for the size of their
bank accounts?

Not even his looks mattered. He knew he was young and attractive.
Apparently he’d been blessed with the famous Pryce profile—a classic, clean
line that made all the men in his family ridiculously handsome. But it was the
money that really made the difference. People wouldn’t have scurried to please
him otherwise.

And women were no different.

So when Ginger had shown up, claiming to be his fiancée, he hadn’t believed
her. He’d assumed she was some sort of con artist, trying to take advantage of
his memory loss. She’d tried to tell him things that she said were important, but
he hadn’t had the patience to listen to a line of bullshit.

Of course, he would have acted differently if he’d known she was his real
fiancée.

Peeraya brought in more Thai orchids, and he waved at her.
“*Sawadee-ka,*” she said, bowing. She didn’t put her hands together since she
had two huge bouquets.

“Peeraya, have you prepped dinner already?”
“Not yet. You want for anything particular?” she asked.
“Phad kra praow seafood,” he said, as it popped into his head.
“It very spicy.”
“So?” Did he like spicy food? He shrugged. “I don’t care.”
“You want mild?”
He shook his head. “Just make it like you normally would.”
Peeraya nodded slowly. “All right, sir.”

* * *

The phad kra praow was disastrous. Not because there was anything wrong with the ingredients. The seafood was fresh, and everything, even the calamari, had the most perfect texture.

The problem was the chopped chili peppers. Peeraya had used both red and green. The red variety was already painful enough, but when he’d accidently bitten into a green one, thinking it was a piece of green bean, it felt like the back of his throat would explode.

Since Ginger was on the other side of the table, he surreptitiously spat out the chili pepper and drank some of the cold tamarind tea. The sweet and tangy brew helped, but it wasn’t enough.

Ginger on the other hand seemed to enjoy the dish just fine. She even ate one of the green peppers with her rice without any problem.

He tapped the rim of his glass. Why had he specifically requested this mouth-incinerating abomination? Was it because he somehow knew she’d like it?

“Peeraya, you’re amazing,” Ginger said. “I’ll never be able to eat Thai food in L.A. again. You’ve ruined me.”
The housekeeper blushed. “Thank you, madam.”
Ginger grinned before turning back to her food.
There was an open pleasure in the way she ate—her flushed cheeks, the soft curve of her mouth and sparkles in her eyes. She also liked the tamarind tea, and it was obvious she was a deeply sensual woman.

What was she like in bed? No matter how he raked his memory, he couldn’t recall. Was she fiery and a little bit naughty, or was she on the sweet and demure side to match her golden “all American sweetheart” looks?

It would be mind-blowingly good no matter how she was. He was certain of it, or his body wouldn’t be craving her like this. He wouldn’t be having this tight longing in his gut, and his cock wouldn’t be hardening at the way she licked the glistening sauce from her lips.

After eating about a quarter of the food, he put his fork down. He wasn’t going to be able to finish it, so he was going to watch her instead for the rest of the dinner while thinking of a way to get her into bed. She was using a guest suite for now, but it was probably because she was peeved at the way he’d
treated her in Johannesburg. He’d apologize, then they could have makeup sex. To show her how sorry he was, he’d lick and suck and taste her until she came against his mouth. Then he’d make her orgasm until she couldn’t remember why she’d thought it was a good idea to stay in the guest suite in the first place.

* * *

Ginger swallowed the last bite of her food. Shane had that hooded look on his face, which she knew meant he was having dirty thoughts.

It used to make her hot and whisper naughty things in his ear as she got more and more turned on. But now she was too guarded to be that open with him. Dane had been very specific about what he wanted—bring Shane home and she was done. And she wanted exactly that, nothing else. Being around Shane any more than she had to was foolish. She wasn’t a naïve girl in love anymore.

Nor did she believe love could be enough. There were things other than a lack of love that could destroy relationships. Because if love could cure everything, the two of them wouldn’t be here right now and she wouldn’t have lost so much.

She got up. “I’m going for a walk.”

“I’ll go with you,” he said.

“Alone.”

“It’s late. I wouldn’t feel comfortable you out there by yourself.”

She snorted. “This place is pretty heavily guarded. There aren’t any unsavory characters lurking around in the dark.” The property no longer had armed guards after the military coup, but it still had guards who looked like they ate nails for breakfast. It was fenced off as well, and she doubted anybody wanted to come in badly enough to tunnel through. Small waterproof lanterns strung on palm trees along the beach provided some light, so people didn’t stumble around in the dark.

Shane ignored her and followed her out. They didn’t link their hands like they used to—she decided to carry her shoes instead, hooking the straps in her crooked fingers—but his presence was impossible to ignore as he walked next to her. He was so big and warm, like a furnace. The briny breeze did very little to cool her heated skin.

“It’s nice to be out here without the MIB,” he said, his voice light.

“What?”

“The men in black. You noticed those stiff fellows standing around, didn’t you?”

She nodded. She’d assumed they were his bodyguards or something.
“Dane sent them to make sure I don’t run off. Apparently it took him a while to find me.” He chuckled. “Why bother, huh? The family seems to have done fine without me for the last year.”

“I’m sure your mother misses you.” Nobody could dispute Ceinlys was a maternal woman. That had surprised Ginger. She’d assumed somebody as worldly and status-conscious would have other interests that could keep her occupied.

He said nothing.

“How much do you remember, really?” Ginger asked.

“Before the accident? Not much.”

“Don’t you want to go see your family then? Find out who you are?”

He was quiet for so long she thought he might not respond. Then he said, “Everyone gets a gut feeling sometimes. The one I have now says I don’t want to go back.”

She frowned. He had his issues with his parents, but he was close to some of his siblings. And what about her? Hadn’t she meant something to him?

Her feet dug into the cool, soft sand. She looked out over the water, virtually black all the way to the barely perceivable horizon, and the waves came in a languid succession. She moved closer until one came in and covered her toes with its foamy edge.

Suddenly the sky opened and water began pouring down. She blinked as she was instantly drenched. Shane remained next to her, making no move to run back to the house.

Bittersweet memories danced through her mind—how the two of them used to stand in the torrential rains of Thailand. So very different from the occasional Los Angeles rain—the fierce intensity of it and the hot moist air that dissipated as the sea breeze pushed it away. It was cleansing, an absolution for the soul as they stood together.

She looked at Shane. His hair stuck to his skull, and his profile blurred from the needle-sharp rain. He looked back at her, and she couldn’t help but think that he must remember a lot more than he thought. And that his instincts were probably intact. It was in the way he’d been taking photos earlier when she arrived, how comfortable he’d looked with his camera, the way he’d held it.

Then what had been his true feelings for her all along? What had changed his reaction to her so much?
Chapter Three

Did she have any idea how much he wanted to pull her into his arms right now and claim those vulnerable lips?

Ginger didn’t seem aware, but the rain had turned her shirt transparent. Her bra must’ve been one of those flimsy ones because Shane could see the pink areolas clearly. Her nipples grew pointed and sharp, and his mouth watered. He wanted to pull them in and suckle them until she cried out and clung to him.

Shane took a step closer. When she didn’t move except to blink away the rain drops clinging to her thick eyelashes, he pulled her into his arms and kissed her.

His senses clarified, colors and texture and scent intensifying. In the center of all this was her—the ever beautiful Ginger.

She gave a small gasp. The soft sound went straight to his groin, and he seized the moment to deepen the kiss. He didn’t want her thinking about how he’d wronged her in South Africa or any other bullshit like that. He hadn’t remembered—he had a doctor’s note—and that deserved a “get out of jail free” card.

He pushed his tongue into her mouth again, cupping her sweet ass in his palm. Damn she tasted like fire and honey, and he was rock hard against her. Her body pliable, she pulled him closer, then sucked his tongue like she had his cock in her mouth.

His skin tightened, stretched thinly over a hot need that was growing bigger and bigger. There was such a rightness in having her in his arms, his senses sang.

She adjusted herself until she could rub her hot core against his aching cock. He groaned deep in his throat. He wanted her so bad right now. If it hadn’t been for the rain, he might have taken her on the beach.

Ginger was absolutely shameless and gloriously sensual. He must’ve been absolutely mad to have left her in the first place to go to Johannesburg. If he’d been in his right state of mind, he would’ve spent all his life with his cock buried deep inside her tight pussy or enthusiastic mouth. And he would’ve eaten her, so
he could taste her sweet orgasm on his tongue.

He ran his tongue and lips along her jaw line as he flicked the tip of her breast with his thumb. She moaned and rocked faster against him.

He pulled her nipple into his mouth, shirt and all. She cried out, her back arching. He cursed inwardly at the damned shorts in his way. She should never, ever wear them again so he could touch her whenever, wherever he wanted.

“Shane…I—”

She was about to say something he didn’t want to hear. Tensing, he put two fingers into her mouth and sucked hard on her nipple until his cheeks hollowed. With a groan, she licked his fingers and dug her hand into his hair, keeping him at her breast.

He moved her over and braced her against a palm tree. Using one hand, he managed to unbutton her shorts and slip the fingers under her panties.

The fabric was cool from the rain, but the folds between her legs were scorching hot and dripping. She moaned against his fingers, the sound and vibration so sexy he felt like he could come at any moment just from that.

He pulled out his fingers from her mouth and pushed away her shirt and bra. Her breasts popped free, both of her nipples pointed. But the one he’d loved before was rosier and plumper. “You have no idea how beautiful you are right now,” he murmured against it.

She shivered. “Shane…”

“You’re going to come for me.” He wrapped his mouth over the other one, trapping it between his tongue and the roof of his mouth, as he ran his fingers along her slick sex and thumbed her swollen clit.

Ginger panted, her breaths choppy and sexy. Her muscles tensed, and he sensed she was getting close. He looked at her face as he continued to torment her nipple with his tongue and teeth. He wanted to know what she was like when she came—the flush of her cheeks and chest and the sound she made.

He plunged two fingers into her tight channel. She didn’t passively wait for him to finger-fuck her. Rather she moved with him, showing him how she liked it.

Shane approved. He liked her bold sexuality.

“Yes, yes, yes…” she panted with every thrust.

He let her nipple go. “Come for me, Ginger. Now.”

A wave of strong shudders went through her. Her inner muscles spasmed around his fingers, milking them as an orgasm crashed into her. A high-pitched cry tore from her as her eyes squeezed shut and her body twisted and arched closer to him.

He clenched his teeth as he savored her climax. He was so, so damn close.
He wanted her so bad it was a physical pain.

He tore at his shorts, unable to wait. Then she put a hand over his. “Do you have a condom?” she asked.

“What?” he said dumbly.

“A condom. I’m not on the pill.”

He cursed under his breath, and they stood in a sort of unmoving tableau for several moments.

“It would’ve been a mistake for us to go any further anyway,” she said, her voice subdued.

“Why?” he asked, suddenly furious. She could feel how hard he was. This was being pretty fucking selfish. “Didn’t you like it? I think everyone around here heard you scream.”

She flushed, but didn’t look away. “The kiss was a mistake,” she said. “Us having sex is a mistake.”

“What?” he said, then产业园。She could feel how hard he was. This was being pretty fucking selfish. “Didn’t you like it? I think everyone around here heard you scream.”

She flushed, but didn’t look away. “The kiss was a mistake,” she said. “Us having sex is a mistake.”

Why deny ourselves? It’s going to be amazing when we’re both naked, skin-to-skin, and I have my dick buried inside you. I felt how wet you were for me.” He raised his hand. “You’re still slick.”

“I have to protect myself, okay?” she said, her tight fists shaking by her sides. “And not just physically. For you it might be just fun and games, but it’s not for me. You broke my heart once, Shane. I won’t let you do that to me again.”

* * *

Ginger fled, holding her clothes to herself, before Shane could say anything. If she’d lingered, she might have given into the need pulsating from his hot body.

The rain still beat down hard, but she welcomed the cool water sluicing the evidence of her ocean-side tryst away. Her fingers were trembling as she slowed down and adjusted herself near the house. She didn’t want to give Peeraya—or the MIB, as Shane had called them—anything to talk about.

He was right about how good they were together. No matter how many years they’d dated, the chemistry between them hadn’t cooled—sex was always fantastic. She could always let go and express her sexuality with ease because Shane had embraced it. And apparently he still did, even though he didn’t have his memories.

But that wasn’t the problem.

Keeping her head down, she rushed up the stairs and slipped into the bathroom in her suite. She brushed her teeth with extra toothpaste. Afterward she jumped into the shower to erase the rest of Shane’s mark on her.
Even as she washed away the slick wetness between her legs, she throbbed deep inside. Yes, having him inside would’ve been amazing. She’d felt how thick and hard he was earlier. He was so big he stretched her almost to her limit, but she loved the total invasion, of having that aching emptiness inside her filled by him.

*Forget about that.* Thinking about it wasn’t helping the situation. She couldn’t accomplish what she’d come here to do if she kept fantasizing about Shane.

Besides, she should think about protecting herself. She hadn’t been exaggerating. If he broke her heart again, she would never be able to pick up the pieces.
The next morning Shane was up extra early, not having been able to sleep the night before. His fist was a poor substitute for Ginger, and knowing that she was only a few yards away had only added to his frustration.

Peeraya greeted him and offered him coffee. He nodded his thanks—she made some of the best brews he’d ever had—before his mind returned to the problem at hand.

Ginger had acted like the situation in South Africa had done something irrevocable to her. He could see how a person would be devastated at being treated that way by their fiancé. But it seemed out of character for her to claim that it had broken her heart so badly that she couldn’t even have sex with him. He’d seen how she’d challenged him to find her a room if he wanted her gone. Besides, they were engaged, for god’s sake!

By the time he was almost finished with his omelet and croissants, Ginger had made her way to the dining room. She was barefoot in an ocean blue sundress that reached right above her knees. Despite some makeup, there were dark circles under her eyes. Why was she making both of them suffer, when she could’ve ended it by giving in? He didn’t get that at all.

“Sawadee-ka,” Peeraya said to Ginger and poured her some coffee. Ginger murmured her thanks and sat on the edge of a seat across from him. Her knuckles were white as she brought the coffee cup to her lips.

“Relax. I don’t pounce until I’ve had at least two coffees,” Shane said dryly.

She choked and sputtered. He went over and patted her between the shoulder blades. She pulled back. “You could’ve said that before I had a mouthful of coffee.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” he said, smiling.

Suddenly she laughed. “Yeah, you’re right.” The tension was gone from her shoulders and neck.

He tilted his head. “Where’s the ring?”
“What ring?”
“The engagement ring. I’m sure I gave you one.” He doubted he’d proposed without one, given how much money he had. It had to have been something memorable.
The tension came back. “I gave it back to you.”
“You did? When?”
“I left it at your penthouse after I got back from Johannesburg.”
“What the hell? You unilaterally ended our engagement?”
She nodded like it was the most obvious thing to do in the world, but her throat worked as she swallowed.
“You can’t do that,” he said.
“Uh, I think I can. And any woman would, if she’d gone through what I went through,” she said, lifting her chin.
“Are you lumping yourself in with all the other women out there?”
A slight smile curved her lips, but it wasn’t friendly. “Nice try. But you aren’t going to put me on the defensive.”
“I’m not putting you on anything. Just pointing out that it’s unfair to hold something I did after I lost my memory against me.”
She shook her head. “There’s more to it.”
“Did we fight a lot? Is that why I left?”
“No.” She tucked a wayward tendril behind her ear. The solitaire diamond on the lobe sparkled. “We rarely fought. As a matter of fact, we got along very well.”
He slowly made his way back around the table, thinking, women. “Then what’s the problem?”
“Do you have any idea what it did to me when you left the way you did? I thought the place had gotten robbed or something. There was stuff strewn everywhere.”
He cringed. “Maybe I’m messy.” He always had people picking up after him, and maybe Ginger was a neat freak.
“No. It was beyond messy. You were in a hurry to go. I had no idea why…and I still don’t know.” She took a sip of water. “And when you ignored my emails, texts and calls, I thought maybe something had happened to you…except your family was so blasé I figured that couldn’t be right. Then I learned your brother Mark knew where you were. You were in touch with him…but not me. Not your fiancée. And then there’s the hotel.” She dragged in a shuddering breath. “Do you know what it was like to see you with that woman?”
He scowled. The coffee suddenly turned bitter in his mouth. “I didn’t know I was engaged. But don’t worry, I didn’t sleep with her.”
“Am I supposed to believe that?” Ginger said, arching an eyebrow. “She was gorgeous. Probably a model.”

“An aspiring model, and yes, damn it, you should believe me when I tell you I didn’t sleep with her.” He scowled at her. “I just couldn’t, okay? It felt wrong to do anything sexual with her.” He set the coffee cup down with a loud clink. “Trust me, there have been plenty of offers. And I’m not going to lie: the women who threw themselves at me were very good-looking, objectively speaking. But, well…they just didn’t do anything for me.”

Ginger watched him with unfathomable eyes. They seemed so deep, deeper than the ocean. He didn’t think he could ever figure out what was in her heart. And he had a feeling that she didn’t believe him.

“Just because somebody isn’t ugly doesn’t mean I want to have sex with them. Those women didn’t make me want to grab them and kiss them senseless, or throw them up against the closest available wall and push their dresses up.”

A delicate flush darkened her cheeks, and her mouth parted.

“It’s you, only you. And I didn’t realize it until yesterday, but somehow you’ve left such a mark on me that I’m unable to want anybody but you.”

“Stop,” she said, her voice hoarse.

“Don’t you want the truth? Don’t you want to know what I’m thinking, what I’m feeling?” Frustration tightened his chest. “You keep telling me I made mistakes and that I hurt you because I didn’t remember. So I’m telling you what I can. I may never regain my memory. It’s been a while, and you’d think if I was going to make a full recovery, I’d’ve done so by now.” He leaned closer until he could smell her—orchids and butter cream. And in an instant his fury turned darkly possessive. “I’m not going to accept that our engagement is off. End of discussion.”

* * *

End of discussion. Easy for him to say after telling her all that.

Strangely enough, Ginger believed what he’d said about not sleeping with the women who’d thrown themselves at him. When they’d been together, he’d never, ever looked at other women. She’d had her doubts about their relationship from time to time, especially in the beginning. They were too different—he stunningly gorgeous and wealthy and powerful, while she just pretty with an average family background, the kind you would find anywhere in America. He also hadn’t had much family love—his parents had been too busy with their lives and affairs to care. With her, it had been the opposite. Her family might not have been materially wealthy, but they were rich in love. Her mom often worried
Ginger was dating somebody so different, but Shane had been sweet to her in public and passionate in private. And despite his father’s and brother Mark’s reputation as womanizers, Shane had been utterly faithful.

But that wasn’t enough anymore. If he hadn’t left the States the way he had, she might have been able to pick up where they’d left off. She could even pretend like she hadn’t lost something precious in Amsterdam. But Shane couldn’t live in Thailand and other vacation spots forever, and neither could she. And the second he went home, the best doctors in the world would be working on him. It was only a matter of time before he got his memory back. Then whatever that had made him leave in the first place would start to fester. If he left her again, she simply wouldn’t be able to deal with it.

How could she risk that?

Shane tilted his chin. She was about to tell him to forget it when her phone rang. The ringtone from the Brady Bunch made her smile. It was her half-brother, Trevor. “Excuse me,” she said and walked away from the table. “Hi, Trevor.”

“What’s this I’m hearing? You’re in Thailand? At the Pryce vacation home?”

Her jaw dropped. “How did you know?”

“I have my contacts.”

She shook her head and started up to her room, not wanting everyone to overhear their conversation. Trevor and his contacts. She could swear he worked for the CIA, even though he wouldn’t admit to anything.

“What are you doing there? I thought you were through with that bastard.”

She winced. Trevor had always been overprotective. She supposed that was par for the course since he was five years older. But he’d gone a bit too far. Recently he’d refused to refer to Shane by name, instead preferring “that bastard.” Apparently that was the least Shane deserved for breaking her heart.

“I’m here on a job.” She closed the suite door behind her and sat on the edge of her bed.

“Job? Who’s getting married?”

“Dane is paying me more than four times my fee to get Shane to come home.”

“Why doesn’t he send his own family?” Then Trevor snorted. “Oh never mind. Who’s gonna want to go home to a school of barracudas?”

“Jeez, Trev—”

“Wait. Do barracudas even have schools?”

“They aren’t that bad.”

“Are you kidding? I’m insulting the barracudas. His family’s a bunch of fuck-ups, especially his parents. I’ve run some checks—”
“Have you been spying on them?”
“Don’t ask me things I can’t answer.”
“Look, I know you mean well, but you need to stay out of this, okay? Shane’s my ex, and I’ll handle him.”
“I wouldn’t be so hostile if he treated you right. He’s never appreciated how special you are.” The edge in Trevor’s voice hardened. “He’s lucky I was in Russia and couldn’t track him down after what he did to you. I knew it was bad when Debbie had to fly to Amsterdam to join you for retail therapy.”
Ginger took a deep breath. Trevor didn’t know exactly what had happened. Her best friend Debbie Chang had told everyone she was meeting Ginger for some frivolous shopping, and apparently Trevor hadn’t bothered to check the story. “It was a while ago, and I’ve gotten over it. Otherwise I wouldn’t be here.”
“So it’s just a job, right? Just money? You aren’t doing anything else with him?”
Her mind flashed back to the storm. How Shane had kissed her and suckled her and given her the best orgasm of the past year. “Nope.”
“You’re lying. You hesitated.”
“Am not!”
“What about Robert’s feelings?”
Oh my god. “How do you know about him?” Robert was the man she’d dated after returning to the States to forget Shane.
“I checked up on him, too.”
“Okay, you need to stop. You’re being creepy.”
“I’m not stalking the man. Just making sure he didn’t have any criminal convictions or anything.”
She rolled her eyes. Was that supposed to make it better? “What was that? The connection here is spotty. I think I’m losing—” She hung up.
It was annoying how well Trevor knew her. He seemed to have some kind of innate lie detector when it came to his little sister.
She lay on the bed, then chuckled humorlessly at how Trevor hadn’t realized that she and Robert had broken up a few weeks ago. He was super sweet, and she liked him a lot, but ultimately, they weren’t right for each other. No, she wasn’t right for him. He needed a woman who wasn’t using him to forget her ex.
A few moments later, her phone rang again, this time a sexy Beyoncé remix. She smiled.
“Debbie! What a surprise,” Ginger said.
“Trevor just texted me. I don’t even know how he has my new number, but whatever.” Debbie spoke like she was firing words from a machine gun. It felt jarring to people who’d heard her speak Chinese, which came out with a lyrical
sweetness. “Is it true you’re in Thailand with Shane?”
   “We’re not here by ourselves.”
   “Domestic help doesn’t count,” Debbie said. “They look the other way.”
   “Peeraya isn’t like that.” Except she was.
   “Have you forgotten what he did to you? That bastard tossed you out when you were pregnant with his child!”
   “He didn’t know. I never told him.”
   “Stop saying that to make him look less guilty. You always do, you know.”
   “Debbie, I’m serious.”
   “And is it true that Dane’s involved in you going to Thailand? That rat bastard?”
   “Yes, but he’s paying me. And you’re right—he’s a rat bastard.”
   “Don’t let them intimidate you. There are things more important than money.”
   “Is that what you told your father when he gave you a brand new Mercedes coup on your sixteenth birthday?” Debbie’s father was one of the wealthiest land developers in Shanghai. His family had migrated to the U.S., but he still spent a lot of time in China overseeing his real estate empire. He was currently training his only daughter to take over the company when he retired.
   “No. But I was shallow and stupid back then. I saw what you went through. No amount of money is worth the headache and drama. There isn’t enough to make up for what Shane did to you.” Debbie’s voice was low but tight with intensity. “Just let me know if you need anything, okay? Don’t stay there because jackass Dane bullied you.”
   “What are friends for?”

* * *

Sitting in the living room, Shane scrolled down his contacts on the phone. Although Dane had sent Ginger, Shane didn’t think he was the man to call. Vanessa…probably not. He had a feeling that would be unwise. Then who?

Dane’s spies watched him. They were casual about it, but he knew they were reporting his every move. Shane sneered at them, then got up and went to the bedroom. They had the decency not to invade his privacy there.

He lay on his belly and thumbed through faster. Surely he had somebody he could ask for help.

Then it hit him. Ginger had said things that implied that he and Mark were tight. Maybe he was the one to ask for a favor.
He dialed and waited. On the third ring came a deep voice. “Shane?”
“Hi.” Shane cleared his throat.
“How are you? We’ve been worried about you.”
Shane rolled to his back and stared at the pale ceiling. It was strange to hear a brother he didn’t remember talking about being concerned for his welfare.
“Well. I’m fine.”
“Good. Man, you missed so much since you left. I got engaged, and so did Iain. And Vanessa finally got married, and she’s pregnant.” Mark chuckled.
“Always so impatient.”
“What?”
“Vanessa. She was the last one of us to get engaged.”
“I see.” Shane cleared his throat. “Well…congratulations to everyone.”
“Thanks! Are you coming home any time soon? We all miss you, and I’d love to have you at my wedding.”
“I…can’t say yet. When is it?”
“August. Just like Hilary wanted. She’ll love to meet you too.”
No matter how closely he listened, he couldn’t detect anything except genuine warmth and happiness from Mark. And the thing was, Shane’s gut wasn’t twisting like it had when he’d thought of his parents. Maybe Mark was a good one.
“So tell me how you’ve been. What are you up to?” Mark asked.
“Oh, this and that.” Shane spoke a bit about his travels, omitting the part about his memory loss. It didn’t seem like an item he should share over the phone. “Anyway, I’m calling because I need a favor.”
“Anything,” Mark said without hesitation.
“Ginger left her engagement ring at my penthouse. Can you have it shipped?”
“Okay. Where in your penthouse?”
“Ah…I don’t exactly know.”
“All right. I’ll find it. Where are you now?”
“At the family vacation home in Thailand.”
“How soon do you need it?”
“ASAP.”
“I can have it overnighted to you, no problem. But…why do you want it so urgently? I thought you and Ginger were through.”
Shane scowled. How did Mark know about that? “It was a misunderstanding. On her part.”
“Hmm. Okay.” There was an undertone of skepticism.
“What?”
“Nothing. I just guess this means you’re coming home soon to see her.”
“You didn’t know?”
“Know what?”
“She’s here. Dane sent her to be with me.”
Mark made a choking sound. “Dane? Are you sure?”
“That’s what she told me.”
“Ah, jeez.”
“What?”
“Nothing. I’ll have it overnighted to you. Just… Never mind.”
Shane frowned. Why was Mark reacting like that? “Is there something you want to tell me?”
“No. It’s nothing.”
Except Mark’s tone said it was anything but that.
Chapter Five

Hilary winced as Vanessa banged on the door to Dane’s penthouse. She’d texted Vanessa’s husband Justin for reinforcements, but his jet had just hit LAX. Normally she would have had complete trust in Vanessa’s ability to handle anything, but this was Dane. He never pulled any punches, and she didn’t want a bloodbath while Vanessa was pregnant.

“Dane, I know you’re in there!” Vanessa bellowed.

Hilary stared at her future sister-in-law in awe. Who knew a woman that small could be so loud?

The door finally opened. “As a lawyer, you’re aware of the laws regarding public disturbances?” Dane said. He was in nothing but a towel, which was currently wrapped around his hips. Hilary resisted the urge to squirm and looked at a spot behind him.

“Honey, who’s that?” came a woman’s voice from somewhere in the penthouse.

“Honey?” Vanessa said, blinking.

Dane shrugged. “She doesn’t know my name.” He turned to the living room, where a big-breasted blonde with puffy lips and a flushed face had appeared. She was wearing what could barely be considered a dress and had her head tilted to one side as she put an earring in.

“Hi! Are these the ones for that foursome you were talking about?”

Hilary and Vanessa exchanged a glance. Foursome?

“They’re really nice,” the blonde continued, “…although that one’s sort of fat.”

Hilary felt her jaw drop all the way to her chest. Would it be rude to punch her future brother-in-law’s bedmate?

Vanessa didn’t hesitate. “Don’t be disgusting. And get out, you skank. This is family business. For your information, her breasts are real, unlike your cheap plastic tits.”
The blonde pouted. “You can just say no if you don’t want to share.”
“Time to go,” Dane said. “I have guests.”
“Call me, honey!”

The woman slipped away, and Vanessa marched inside Dane’s place. Hilary followed her in and almost jumped when Dane slammed the door shut.
“What’s the problem?” he asked.
“What isn’t the problem? Is it true you sent Ginger to Thailand to be with Shane?” Vanessa said.
“Yes. How did you find out?”
“He called Mark.” Vanessa paced. “She’s dating somebody else.”
“After they broke up. She doesn’t have to live like a nun just because you’re stuck in the dark ages.”
“Don’t make this about me.”
“But it is about you, isn’t it? Your feelings. What do you want to do? Burn her?”
“For once, just shut up, Dane. Did Shane ask you to send her?”
He snorted. “No. He was furious according to my men.”
“See! That’s exactly what I mean.”
“Stop being hysterical. This isn’t like you, even if you are pregnant.”
Hilary winced. Wrong thing to say.
“My pregnancy has nothing to do with this! Shane doesn’t deserve to have you mess with his life,” Vanessa said, gesturing wildly with her hands. “Don’t you think he had a good reason to break it off with her?”
“I think he doesn’t have even one good reason.”
Vanessa brought her arms under control and crossed them, tapping her foot.
“Right. Because you’re the love expert.”
“He doesn’t remember her.”
“What?”
“He has amnesia. He doesn’t remember anything. Not you, not me. And not Ginger.”
Hilary put a hand over her mouth. Vanessa collapsed onto a couch behind her.
“When is he coming home?” Hilary asked Dane.
“Whenever he’s ready.”
“Is she there to bring him back?” Vanessa asked.
“That and to ensure he doesn’t suffer further emotional damage. The doctor was very specific about him being around someone he likes and trusts.”
“So you sent her? I could’ve gone,” Vanessa said.
Dane cocked an eyebrow. “In your condition? You think Barron’s going to
let you fly all the way out there with his great-great-nephew in your belly?”

“Somebody else then. Family!”

“The doctor was specific. Ginger’s the one he had a good relationship with the longest. Mark would also probably work, but he can’t go out there to babysit Shane.” Dane glanced toward Hilary “Busy getting married, don’t you know.”

“Did you send a specialist or someone along with her?” Vanessa said.

“No, and I don’t plan to. We can arrange for all that when he comes home. The doctor who saw him said he was physically fine. He thinks that a memory loss this long may be psychological.”

“He doesn’t want to remember?” Vanessa looked incredulous, but Hilary could sort of understand. If Shane had had a childhood like Mark’s, he might never want to remember. Although their mother had mellowed a bit after her decision to divorce, that was a recent change, something that happened after Shane had left the States.

“You shouldn’t be surprised,” Dane said. “Out of all of us, he was the one with the artistic temperament. I always thought it odd that he never tried to run away. But this… Well, it’s beyond what I expected.”

“It’s not something to admire!” Vanessa shouted again.

Dane gave her a flat look. “I wasn’t. And stop shouting. For your information, I have no intention of letting him and Ginger stay together once they’re back. She’s just a means to an end, got it?”

Hilary shivered at the iciness in his eyes. She’d always known he could be blunt and cold, but using Shane’s ex like that seemed beyond low.

“Now if you ladies don’t mind, can you all get out so I can get ready for my evening?”

“Are you going out to continue with that woman?” Vanessa asked, wrinkling her nose.

“There are plenty of women in my phone. Now out. And Hilary, don’t let my sister do anything you wouldn’t do.” He pushed both women out and shut the door behind them. The lock engaged with a metallic click.

“Can you believe his gall?” Vanessa said, staring at Hilary.

“I think he cares about Shane.” Which was somewhat unexpected given the way he generally was.

“That’s like saying sharks are caring. No. Ugh. I have to do something,” Vanessa said as they stepped into the elevator.

“Like what?”

“Bring him home. I don’t think his problem is psychological, and even if it is, dealing with Dane would make anyone want to run the other way, not come home for medical treatment.”
“Do they not get along?”
Vanessa snorted. “Who gets along with Dane?” Her mouth firmed. “If Dane gave a damn, he wouldn’t have sent Ginger, no matter what.”
“I thought she and Shane were together since high school.”
“Yes, but she did something to make him break it off. And she’s dating somebody else! I saw it with my own eyes.” Vanessa huffed. “For her to go to Shane just because Dane asked her… It’s pretty messed up. She doesn’t even like Dane, and if she is really through with Shane like she said she was, she would’ve said no just to spite him. I feel like…” She swallowed. “I feel like she’s trying to weigh her options to figure out which is more lucrative. Shane or that guy she’s dating. And of course Shane’s going to come out ahead.”
Hilary cleared her throat. “Would that be so terrible? Maybe she’s realized that Shane’s the one she really wants after all.”
Vanessa looked at her. “Do you know what he fears the most?”
Hilary shook her head.
“Becoming like our parents. He’s nothing like Salazar, but Ginger… There’s no guarantee she’s not going to be like Mom, is there?” Vanessa’s throat worked, and she wiped away sudden tears impatiently, smudging her eyeliner. “We try so hard to block it all out, but we aren’t blind to their flaws and mistakes. I just… I just can’t let Ginger hurt Shane.”
Chapter Six

Ginger hid from Shane for the rest of the day and the next morning. She didn’t know how to deal with him. No, that wasn’t quite right. If all it had been was Shane wanting to sleep with her, or to go back to the way things were, she could have handled it. But she couldn’t control her reaction to him.

Logic didn’t work. Reminding herself of the pain of loss didn’t work. Her stupid, unteachable heart wanted Shane. It didn’t understand why she didn’t want to accept his proposal and pretend the past twelve months had never happened.

Don’t try to believe that you’re going to find another man who can somehow make you forget Shane forever. Didn’t work with Robert. Won’t work with anyone else.

She pushed the thought aside. She didn’t want to brood about Shane. She wanted to take photos.

The late afternoon sun was still bright and hot, the air too humid for anything but a simple sundress. Her huge white beach hat provided some cover as she walked along the beach and snapped pictures.

The camera never lied. It captured all the shadows and colors perfectly. When she looked at them later, they’d show her all the things her mind had forgotten or missed. Like that little lizard on a black rock she’d almost overlooked. The palm overhead gave it some relief from the direct sunlight. Its dark green and brown tail was long and straight, tapering to a sharp point. The way its head was up made it look alert, but its eyes were lazy slits.

Something splashed not too far from her, and she turned around and saw a man and Lou the elephant. His mahout yelled something when Lou splashed him with sea water again.

Lou had been found on the beach years ago. When none of the families who owned properties along the private strip could find where he’d come from, they decided to adopt him and hired a mahout to care for him.
“Hello, Klahan,” she called out, walking toward them.

“Good afternoon, madam,” he said, dragging out dam in that lilting way of his. His grin was extra bright against his darkly tanned skin. “I heard from Peeraya that you were back.”

“Yeah.” She smiled without elaborating. “He’s so big.”

“He’s a big boy,” the mahout agreed.

Lou looked at her with sparkling black eyes. The hair all over his body was a few inches long and stood up like wires. She patted him. “Do you remember me?”

He patted her back with his trunk. When it brushed by her side, she giggled.

“That tickles, Lou.”

“He’s trying to see if you’re hiding food,” Klahan said.

“Sorry boy, I don’t have anything,” she said, rubbing Lou’s trunk.

“Here.” Klahan reached into a sack slung across his shoulder and brought out a bag of chopped rose apples.

She flushed. “You don’t have to.”

He made a sort of offering gesture. “It’s all right. I was going to feed him later.”

“Well…okay. Thanks.” She took the plastic bag from him. Lou tracked her movements with anticipation shining in his eyes.

She pulled out each chunk and gave it to him. Lou scooped the fruit into his pale pink mouth with ease. She smiled at the way the moist tip of his trunk tickled her palm. He was absolutely one of the most adorable animals ever.

When she was all out of treats, he nudged her with his forehead. “Hey, no more, buddy,” she said, showing him the plastic bag.

The trunk snaked into the bag and nosed around for a moment. Then Lou lumbered over to the water. Klahan yelled something in Thai. Before she realized what was happening, Lou was splashing her with water and sand.

She spun around quickly, her back to the elephant to keep her camera dry. Klahan scolded Lou harshly, then turned to Ginger. “Are you all right, madam?”

“I’m fine,” she said. “Don’t be too hard on him.”

“He wants to play, but he’s too big now. He can’t do what he did before,” Klahan said, slapping the elephant’s side. “I’m trying to teach him, but he doesn’t want to listen.”

“He was just being playful after getting fed. I wasn’t hurt or anything,” she reassured the mahout.

“Maybe he’s still hungry,” came Shane’s voice from behind her.

She turned to look at him. A day’s growth of beard covered his square jaw. His thin white shirt was unbuttoned all the way to mid-stomach, revealing lean,
tight abs. He’d rolled up his blue summer trousers, and he was mouth-wateringly spectacular, standing there with bare feet. “How long have you been there?”

“Long enough.” He handed her a bunch of the small Thai bananas, each one yielding no more than two or three bites. “Want to keep feeding him? I’ll hold your camera.”

** **

Shane waited, wondering what Ginger would say. She’d been avoiding him, and he was getting tired of it. So when he’d spotted her with Lou, he’d come out, carrying bananas for the elephant.

“Thanks,” she said finally, giving him a small smile. She reached for the fruit while handing him her precious equipment. Her movements were slightly over-precise, betraying an inner tension.

He brushed his skin over hers—on purpose—and watched the pulse in her neck leap. Satisfaction mingled with mild exasperation. Why was she putting them through this bullshit? If they’d never slept together before—if they’d been complete strangers, he would understand how she wouldn’t want to get intimate so fast. Women were peculiar about stuff like that. But Ginger had no excuse.

She cleared her throat and turned to Lou, feeding him again. Did she know she had the gentlest smile when she played with the animal? She looked like an angel. And she’d been quite patient and forgiving with Lou when he splashed her. Not all women would’ve been so understanding.

Would she want to have children? Shane hadn’t given it much thought, but he suddenly realized that he wanted them with Ginger. A girl just like her and a boy just like him. Or maybe a mixture of the two of them. He didn’t care. He bet Ginger would make a great mother.

Apparently getting tired of moving his trunk, Lou just opened his mouth wide so Ginger could deposit bananas directly inside. She laughed and mock-scolded him for being lazy. Her eyes shone with delight, and pleasure flushed her cheeks.

And just like that a giant tsunami of emotions slammed into Shane. His heart expanded. Just looking at her was enough to share in her joy and pleasure. Was this a new feeling or had he felt it before? This was more than just him wanting to bury himself inside her. It was a sensation of pure possessiveness and protectiveness. Even though he didn’t remember her, she was important to him. He knew it.

He raised the camera and hit the button. The camera made clicking sounds as it took in the moment. He wanted to capture this moment forever and savor it
until he died.

When she ran out of bananas, Klahan signaled for Lou to bow in thanks, and they walked away together. They grew smaller and smaller with each step, then Lou started running. Klahan yelled something and ran after him, but the elephant was faster.

Ginger turned to Shane. “My camera, please.”

The sea breeze tossed her hair, and he reached over and tucked it behind her ears. “Give me a minute. I’m not going to run off with it.”

She gave him a look that said she wasn’t sure what to do or say next.

_If I remember everything and revert to the man I used to be, will she be more at ease around me?_ “How did we meet?” he asked.

She raised her eyebrows. “What?”

“The first time we met. You know, don’t you?”

“Well, of course I know. We met in high school. Our freshman year. Biology class.”

“What were we like?” It seemed so strange to think that at some point in his life he’d been a kid. His memory didn’t extend that far. The only thing he remembered was being a fully-grown adult.

“You were popular. Most of your friends from junior high school were in our class, and even back then you were good-looking. So there were always lots of girls around. But you never seemed to notice.”

When she didn’t continue, he said, “You?”

“Me?” She laughed softly, the sound tremulous. “I was a nobody. The school was private, exclusive and expensive. I was able to go because my parents taught there. My dad was a math teacher, and my mom was a Latin teacher. And I was good enough—academically speaking, that is—to get in.”

“And there were always lots of boys around,” he said. She must’ve been gorgeous, a classic golden beauty.

“It wasn’t like that. Some of the kids didn’t care much for me. I was, you know, ‘weird’, and I didn’t have the kind of moneyed background that everyone else had. There weren’t that many social activities I could join.”

“What kind of things did we do?”

She closed her eyes briefly. “Oh...sailing. Polo lessons. Trips to exclusive resorts and stuff. You were always invited, and you often went.” She tilted her head. “Don’t you remember anything? Not even a little bit?”

Letting out a frustrated breath, he raked his hair. “No. Nothing. I—”

Suddenly a vision came to him. _He was in a classroom. Taking some notes. Subject...Well, it wasn’t important. The notes were just blurred anyway._

_Ginger was sitting next to him in the class. Her clothes were inexpensive but_
nice enough. She looked so young, the lines of her face softer and even more delicate than now. She had a camera on her desk. Shane sneered at it. The dork and her camera. How stupid.

Shane blinked at the unkind thought, the crude superiority behind it. Had he been such a shallow little shit?

Before he could process it further, the rest of it came in a quick wave.

“What do you think you’re doing, dorkface?” he said to Ginger, expecting her to ignore him again. She always ignored him like she was some kind of royal princess. Whatever. Everyone knew she didn’t belong there. The only reason why she was there was because of her parents. Couldn’t tell a jib from a mainsail or a Maserati from a Ferrari. She’d probably never even had decent liquor before.

She gave him a look. “What do you think? I’m studying.”

He scowled. He hated the way she talked back to him. She was supposed to just…be there. Silently. “Like what? How to be a dorkface?”

She wrinkled her nose and turned back to her notes. “Not worth my time.”

That dismissal, delivered with a careless shrug, punched him in the gut. His heart rate spiked, blood rushing through him with a furious roar. Snotty bitch. Nobody dismissed him like that. Nobody!

“For god’s sake. Shane, can’t you have Al take care of that? I have other obligations,” came his father’s annoyed voice. “Or if you must, ask your mother.” Then he added under his breath, “She’s the one who wanted all these children, not me.”

Shane wasn’t sure if his father meant for him to hear the last comment. He never gave a shit about anything or anybody. It was obvious he hated every minute he had to waste on Shane.

He lunged to his feet and slammed his fists against her desk so hard it rattled. The camera shook, then toppled over the edge, smashing against the hard floor. The outer casing cracked. Ginger cried out and picked it up, but it was too late. Something inside rattled as she turned it in her hands.

“What do you think you’re doing?” she yelled. “What’s wrong with you?”

“Nobody ignores me. I’m not some accident nobody wants!”

“I never said you were. For god’s sake!” Tears trickled down her cheeks, and she wiped them away. “You’re such a jerk, you know that? You think you’re something special because you have money, but you’re an asshat. You wouldn’t like yourself if you could just see what you’re like.”

“Handsome and rich and got everything in the world?”

She shoved her camera into her backpack and looped the straps around her shoulders, her motions jerky. She hadn’t even zipped her bag right, and some stuff fell out. Before he could tell her, she spun on her heel and left.
He clenched his jaw. Maybe he shouldn’t have reacted so violently and damaged her camera. But whatever. She was the one who’d said he wasn’t “worth it.”

Glancing down at the papers she’d dropped, he realized they were pictures. Jeez. Who the hell printed photos anymore?

He reached down and picked up the pictures on the floor. As he was about to dump them into the trashcan, he blinked, stopping. He pulled them closer, studying his face.

His eyes were bright in the photo, but not with smug satisfaction. They were full of anger and derision. His lips were twisted into an ugly, cynical line. Maybe it was because he was having a crappy day when she’d taken the picture. Then he realized that wasn’t the case. The picture had been taken when he’d been hanging out with his friends after school.

His insides going cold, he flipped to the next one. It was the same. He wasn’t even close to “handsome, rich and got everything in the world.” He looked like an angry, pissed off brat with an attitude problem…just like his oldest brother Dane always said.

And he hated it. He hated that he was exactly as Dane had described. Entitled. Foolish. Not worth the hassle. His gut twisted, and he curled his nose as bile rose up his throat.

“Shane?”

He blinked. Ginger was looking up at him, a frown creasing her forehead.

“Are you all right?”

“Yeah.” He shook his head. “Hey…you remember the camera I broke?”

“What camera?”

“You know, the one in high school.”

She inhaled sharply. “You remember?”

“Did I replace it?” He wrapped his hand around her upper arm, suddenly needing the touch. Say yes.

“Yeah. The next day. Actually you bought me one that was a lot better than the one I had.” A wistful smile ghosted over her lips. “It was…unexpected.”

“Why? Was I that bad?”

She laughed softly. “It’s not that. I was pretty abrupt with you when the camera fell on the floor. I mean you nudged it over when you hit my desk, but I shouldn’t have put it so close to the edge either.”

He didn’t know how she could laugh about that when he felt like a total dickhead for what he’d done. What kind of an idiot had he been? “Did I apologize?”

“When you gave me the new camera, yeah. You were sort of stiff.” She
peered up at him. “So. Your turn. How much do you remember?”

He shrugged, rolling on the balls of his feet. “Just…that. Nothing much.”

“I see. Well, still, it’s good that you remember a little bit. Even if it’s unpleasant, your past has made you who you are today.” She put a hand on his arm. “Don’t be so hard on yourself. The camera was old anyway. It was about time I got a new one.”

He didn’t think so. There hadn’t been any reason for her to buy another. It did something funny to his insides to hear her say things to make him feel better when he didn’t deserve it. And what kind of insensitive clod was he that he hadn’t noticed her sweetness…hadn’t even tried? When he’d seen her at the hotel, he’d thought she was a damn fine woman. He thought she’d look great naked in his bed.

How shallow he’d been.

As he gazed into her eyes, he saw her beauty wasn’t just on the surface. She glowed from within her soul.

And he wanted to hold onto her, be surrounded by her light. He cupped her cheeks. The contact seemed to warm even the coldest corner of his heart.

“Ginger…”

Her eyes drifted shut, the long, dark eyelashes resting on her cheeks like butterflies. He kissed her. She tasted as sweet as the ripest strawberries of the season. He deepened the kiss, flickering his tongue against hers in a sensual invitation to pleasure each other.

She moaned softly, her body relaxing like heated wax. She pressed into him, and he let her in. Her hands tunneled into his wind-mussed hair and tightened around his scalp.

Desire surged fast, his cock going rigid. The previous encounter had left him sexually frustrated, and kissing her like this under the sun only intensified his need for her.

He pulled her closer until she could feel his cock against her. “You have no idea how beautiful you are, how much I want you.”

Rose colored her cheeks, and she looked away.

“Don’t. You’re perfect. I wish I could show you what I see when I look at you.”

“There’s the camera,” she rasped.

“I can’t capture it.”

“Sure you can.” She licked the column of his throat. “You’re one of the best photographers I know.”

He dropped to his knees and buried his face in her navel, his mouth against her hot skin. “It can never properly record the way you radiate with light. Or
your gentle soul.” And how much he wanted to possess and protect her. He groaned. “You have no idea what you do to me.”

“Neither do you,” she said shakily. “I know we shouldn’t, but I can’t think straight whenever you’re around.”

“Don’t pull back.” He tightened his arms around her legs. “If you want me to grovel for the shitty things I said to you in South Africa, I will. If you want me to promise to call you every day, I’ll do that too.”

“Oh, Shane.” She fell to her knees and looked into his eyes. “I don’t want you to do any of that. The situation’s just—we’re just—too complicated.”

“Why? We’re engaged. We’re sexually compatible—I don’t have to have sex with you to know that, since I can’t imagine us staying together that long if we weren’t—and we obviously care for each other. You can’t even say that money’s the problem in our relationship because I have more than plenty. What more does a relationship need?” he said.

There it was—those hints of uncertainty and apprehension crossing her face as fast as lightning before a storm. He wanted to erase them. And he knew the best way to do that.

He took her mouth, this time with an almost brutal intensity. He wanted her to forget everything and just enjoy herself and know that he’d take care of her. He used his teeth and tongue, nibbling and licking her closed lips and coaxing them for an entrance. His hands roamed over her back and sweetly curved ass and squeezed. She moaned, softening her mouth. He took advantage of the lapse and thrust his tongue inside.

Her fingers dug into his shoulders as he assaulted her mouth. She kissed him back hotly. She didn’t use just her tongue or lips or teeth. She used her entire body, pressing against him and rocking, her throat vibrating as she moaned her budding pleasure.

He slipped a hand between their torsos and weighed her plump breast. She had the most gorgeous breasts he’d ever seen—round, soft and incredibly responsive. She trembled as he massaged her breast and played with the nipple, pinching and pulling it. The sundress she wore was thin, but he didn’t want even that between them.

Before he could move, she pushed the skinny straps down. His cock twitched at the sight of her naked chest, fully revealed to him. During the storm he hadn’t been able to see her very well, not with the darkness and pelting rain. God, she was absolutely beautiful.

And she was his.

He pressed his head in her cleavage and inhaled. She smelled amazing, all orchids and butter cream. She cupped a breast in an offering. He smiled, but
didn’t take the nipple into his mouth. He wanted something else instead.

He ran his callused hands over her breasts. She shivered, her white teeth sinking into her rosy lip. “Lie on your back, Ginger.”

She obeyed instantly. The bodice was bunched around her waist; the sand under her hot from the sun, but she didn’t complain. Instead she stared up at him with anticipation in her dark eyes.

He kissed along her torso. Her stomach jittered as his five o’clock shadow scraped the delicate white skin. He was certain she hadn’t put any sun block on her belly, and he didn’t want her to burn. He’d linger later—in the comfort of his bedroom.

Getting rid of her panties and pushing her skirt aside, he reached down and ran his forefinger along her folds. They were slick, and in the daylight he could see them glisten with her juices. She put a hand over his wrist. “Shane—”

“Shh…” He blew over her clit and smiled when she bucked against him. His cock was so damn hard he felt like he could use it to crack coconuts, but right now what he wanted was her against his mouth.

He traced each juicy lip, lapping her up. Groaning, she arched her back. She was dripping with need, and he sucked her clit, devoured her, making sure he got every drop of her sweetness.

Her cries pierced the air. “Please…please…”

She was so damn close. He thrust two fingers inside her as he increased the suction over her clit.

“Oh god, yes…” she panted. He plunged his digits in and out of her almost violently, sensing she wanted something fast and furious. It didn’t take much time. She writhed one last time and screamed out her orgasm.

Unable to wait any longer, he stripped. His shirt and shorts and underwear landed somewhere on the beach. He didn’t give a damn where.

Ginger grasped his dick. She could barely wrap her hand around the shaft. Mouth dry, he watched her as she gave him a cocky grin and licked the precum beading at the head.

Hot damn. He closed his eyes. Her tongue felt incredible. She was a fucking goddess as she swirled her tongue over his cockhead as though it were a lollipop and pulled him into her mouth, her cheeks hollowing.

His heart accelerated like he was sprinting. She looked so gorgeous on her knees with her lips around his cock. He dug a hand into her hair—her hat was long gone. His pelvis moved on its own volition, fucking her mouth. He could barely think, just feel as a massive wave of searing pleasure gathered itself, ready to barrel into him.

“Touch yourself. Fondle your tits,” he grated. “Come again as you suck me
off.”

Ginger did exactly as she was told, her hands moving over her gorgeous breasts before one of them disappeared into the dark V between her thighs. Her breathing grew rougher, and he knew she was still primed for another peak.

Holding back while he was deep in her mouth was damn difficult, but it was worth it. His cock muffled her second scream of pleasure, and that hot little vibration was enough to push him over the edge.

He pulled out at the last minute and spurted onto her as an orgasm crashed through him. The white seed hit her chest, and the sight of her being marked as his consumed him, filling him with a monstrous satisfaction. She might not be wearing his ring, but she was his. Nobody better come sniffing around her unless they wanted their nose broken.

His legs felt like overcooked pasta, and he dropped to his knees.

She looked at him, her lips curved in bemusement. “Well. Now I gotta wash up.”

“There’s the ocean,” he said lazily, then kissed her deeply. She tasted like her and him. This is how it should be.

Reluctantly, he used his shirt to wipe her down, then pulled the dress back into place and smoothed the skirt. When she raised an eyebrow, he said, “Sunburn.”

“Oh.” She flushed. “I didn’t even think about that.”

“Probably just stunned with post-sex euphoria. It’ll wear off in a few hours.”

Laughing, she punched him lightly on the arm. “Where did my hat go?”

“Forget it. I’ll buy you a new one.”

As they walked back to the house, Shane felt like everything was right with the world for the first time since he’d lost his memory.
Chapter Seven

Ginger sighed softly as warm water and suds sluiced down her body, remembering how Shane had come on her. Like he was staking his claim.

And the crazy thing was, she’d really liked it. Even though she knew better than to give in to their attraction when they still had so many unresolved issues.

She couldn’t believe she’d succumbed so quickly, but not even a phalanx of elephants would’ve been able to drag her from him. The two of them had always had sizzling chemistry.

He was going to regain his memory soon enough. She could sense it.

And then what are you going to do?

She was convinced the reason he’d left had something to do with her, even though she had no idea what that might be. Not knowing made it so much worse because she couldn’t do anything to fix it.

Hopefully, he’d choose to talk to her instead of disappearing again. She didn’t know if she’d be able to handle being deserted by him a second time.

When she went downstairs, there were boxes stacked everywhere. She blinked at the sight. “What’s going on?” she asked.

“Packing,” he said. “Don’t worry, I’m not going to ask you to help me carry them. Peeraya’s going to ship the rest.”

“All this is yours?”

“Yup. Stuff I bought while traveling.” He handed the housekeeper a sheet of paper. “Just follow these instructions. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome, sir,” she said, then nodded at Ginger. “Hello, madam.”

Ginger smiled at her, then turned to Shane. “Where are you going?”

“Home,” he said.

“This is pretty sudden.”

“Not really. It’s how I’ve been traveling around.” He cupped her face. “I’ve been living someone else’s life for the past year. You were right. My past makes me what I am, and it’s about time I reclaim it.”
“You’re going to see specialists.”
“Maybe. I might just remember more when we’re home and surrounded by familiar things and people.”
“You might not like everything you remember,” she said.
“Like what?”
She pulled her lips in. She didn’t want to talk about whatever it was that had made him go to South Africa. “Your parents? You didn’t always get along with them, especially your father.”
“I had a feeling,” he said with a shrug.
“What kind of feeling?”
“Gut. Every time I think about my parents—especially my father—I get a cross between heartburn and a nasty ulcer.”
“They aren’t that bad.”
“You’re a terrible liar.”
She gave him a rueful smile. “No matter what, they’re still your parents.”

* * *

“Is that your dad?”
Shane turned his head to look. A man who bore an obvious resemblance to Shane, only older, stepped out of his car. What the hell was he doing here again?
As if he’d noticed the stares, he turned. A brief frown crossed his handsome features, then they smoothed into an affable mask. “What are you boys doing out here? It’s a school day, isn’t it?”
“What are you doing here?” Shane demanded.
“Just checking up on your progress at school.”
Shane looked at his friends. “We’re, like, fifteen minutes away from campus.”
“True enough. I finished talking with your teachers and thought I’d stop somewhere”—he gestured at a small eatery on the opposite side of the road—“and grab a bite.”
Fucking liar. He could never make any time to see Shane, but he’d come all the way out here to check up on his progress? Like that made any sense.
Bitterness churned in his gut. Shane already knew where he ranked in his father’s priorities—a couple of places below a decent shoeshine.
Salazar was actually interested in a pretty brunette who lived in the neighborhood. The really shitty thing about it was that the woman was married. The marriage wasn’t on the rocks or anything, from the rumors Shane had heard. She just had an uninspiring husband. But Salazar Pryce didn’t let that kind of
detail stand in the way of getting what he wanted.

Shane would have bet his yearly allowance that the woman was waiting for his father in the stupid little café across the road. They’d pretend to have coffee or some bullshit like that…and then they’d go to a hotel.

Suddenly angry, he took a step toward his father. “I don’t care who you fuck, but at least consider the location and the audience,” he hissed. “You don’t care who the pussy’s attached to so long as they spread their legs for you.”

Salazar’s expression didn’t change, but it became tight. “Such language. Is this what my money’s paying for?”

“You chose the school, not me.”

Salazar leaned closer until the tip of his nose almost touched Shane’s. “You think girls give a shit about you?” He smiled nastily. “They want you because you’re my son. Because I give you money. You’re nothing without me. Might want to remember that the next time you’re lucky enough to get laid.”

Shane clenched his shaking hands into fists. How dare he…!

Salazar stepped back, the affable smile once again smooth and relaxed.

“Man, I’d better get going. I’m starving.”

That bastard. That total bastard.

Shane blinked away the memory. It had appeared so suddenly, playing in his head like a mini-film. It probably wasn’t something he’d just imagined. It was too vivid and too messed up for that.

“I’ll go ahead and pack too,” Ginger was saying, and he forced a smile.

“Take your time. Ask for help if you need anything.”

“Okay.” She nodded and went upstairs.

Once she was gone from view, he shoved a hand into his hair and dropped onto a couch. When he’d decided to go home, it had seemed like the most logical thing to do. Ginger was obviously worried about the reason—reasons?—he’d left, and he wanted to prove to her it was nothing. And to do that he had to remember.

But the two memories that had come back to him had been ugly. His father was a nasty piece of work, and he… He himself wasn’t that much better.

He dragged in a shuddering breath. He’d dated other women after kicking Ginger out in Johannesburg. He hadn’t been able to sleep with them or anything—there was a wrongness that made him unable to do anything—but shouldn’t he have remembered something about the fact that he was engaged? Shouldn’t he have realized he was doing the same shit his father did when he’d wined and dined those women?

His gaze swiveled to the stairs. Had he ever cheated on Ginger? Had he ever hurt her, made her cry or suffer?
Maybe there was more to Ginger’s reluctance than just the way he’d disappeared. That might be why she kept telling him they couldn’t go back to what they used to be until he remembered everything.

He pressed his fists against his knees. He wouldn’t let her go. She was his. He’d fight for her with everything he had, and by any means, fair or foul.
A black SUV took them to the private jet that had brought Ginger to Thailand. She raised her eyebrows; she’d assumed Dane had called it back. Had he been that confident she could bring Shane home?

They boarded quietly. The inside of the jet was luxurious with creamy beige leather on the seats and gleaming faux-marble and wood finishes on the fixtures. A pretty cabin attendant smiled and greeted them.

As she sat next to him, waiting for the jet to take off, Ginger wasn’t sure what was going on with his mood. He’d seemed upbeat and happy until he’d started packing. Now he was brooding.

He’d deny it of course. Shane was very, very good at denying how he really felt because that was how he coped with his dysfunctional family. Some of his siblings were nice, like Mark and Vanessa, but some of them like Dane and Iain were nasty and cold, respectively. Then there were his father and mother, who had to have married specifically to make each other as miserable as possible. They rarely seemed to care how their behavior affected their family. Ginger sometimes felt like she couldn’t even breathe around them, and she’d only spent a few holidays with the whole family. She still couldn’t understand how Shane had lived most of his life with them.

“You’re frowning,” Shane said.
“I’m thinking.”
“What are you plotting?”
A smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. “Just...” If she’d told him everything about her thoughts he might just decide to stay at the beach house forever. “I just don’t like takeoffs.” Which was true, just not the thing that was bugging her the most.
“How come?”
“I heard that the chances of crashing are greatest during takeoff and landing.”
He chuckled softly. “Is that true or some kind of urban legend?”
“Probably true,” she said primly.
He reached over and linked their fingers together. “Better?”
She turned toward him, her eyes wide. The gesture was unexpectedly sweet, like he used to make when they’d been together. The engine roared as the plane picked up speed. Her fingers tightened, and he leaned close and covered her mouth with his.
The contact sent a shockwave through her system. It was like being pulled into a maelstrom of irresistible heat and delicious sensation. Need pulsed through her, her heart pounding. And underneath the sexual want was a sense of completion—she was with the man who was created just for her. And she clung to that feeling, trying to forget everything else that had been bugging her.
She clutched the back of his neck and pulled him closer. He kissed her hard and deep like they hadn’t just pleasured each other only hours before. He thrust with his tongue, and she pulled it in, sucking it and loving his aggression. The spot on her chest where he’d spurted tingled, and she clenched her thighs, the emptiness between them aching.
The PA system pinged, and the pleasant voice of the cabin attendant announced that the jet had reached cruising altitude.
Ginger blinked and drew back to her seat, her sensitive mouth parted and swollen. Her cheeks felt like they were on fire. Shane pulled his lips in like he wanted to savor a final taste.
Her gaze slid to the stateroom in the back. The Pryce family jet had a king-size bed and a shower in there.
Her phone buzzed. She looked down, her face still hot. “Jeez. I forgot to turn it off.”
“Who cares? It’s a perk of flying private. You can do whatever you want,” Shane said.
She glanced at him sharply. That was something he’d used to say. Quickly she forced a smile. “Yeah, you’re right.” There was a text waiting for her from a number she didn’t recognize. It read:
A deposit has been made to your account. Mr. Dane Pryce asked me to tell you that you’ve done well.
It must be from his assistant. There was also an email from her bank, informing her of the incoming money. She raised her eyebrows. It was far too much, even if he was paying for almost five times the money she would’ve normally made for half the year. She quickly wrote: It’s too much.
A moment later, another reply came. Consider it a bonus. Mr. Pryce is pleased with your progress.
She pressed her lips together. Just like Dane to reduce everything to money,
like it was the only motivation.

Her coming out here had probably made him believe she was in it for financial gain. And she couldn’t lie that finances were a part of the equation since he’d threatened to ruin her freelance career if she didn’t cooperate. But she also had a line she wouldn’t cross, no matter what anybody promised.

“What’s wrong? You look like you just saw a leech,” Shane said.

She laughed at the description. “You know, I think I just did.” She put the phone back in her purse, then pushed all thoughts of Dane aside. There was no reason why she should let him put her in a crabby mood.

None.

* * *

Shane hadn’t expected anybody to come to the airport—he hadn’t told anyone he was coming home. His plan was to have a car pick them up and go to his place. His family’s concierge service had set up a romantic dinner for two on the balcony, and toward the end of their dinner he’d give Ginger the ring back. He’d considered giving it to her in Thailand as soon as it’d arrived, but it seemed better to do it properly and romantically, just the way all women dreamed of. The concierge had promised it’d be perfect, and Ginger might be even overcome with joy and cry.

Heh, he thought with a small grin. She didn’t have to cry. Just being happy would be good enough. He didn’t remember how he’d proposed, but hopefully the second time would be just as memorable as the first.

But the moment he stepped off the plane, a horde of extremely well-dressed people mobbed him. The women among them were expensively perfumed as well. He stared at the madhouse, wondering what the hell was going on.

“Shane, Shane!” the oldest person from the group hugged him. Her scent was familiar although he couldn’t quite place it. Despite her age, she was beautiful, her skin flawless, her bones delicate and elegantly formed. A black Chanel dress on her made her look like she was attending a funeral, but she wore a big smile on her face. “It’s so good to have you back home.”

“Yeah, man.” A tall dark man slapped his shoulder. The man next to him nodded. They bore a very strong resemblance to each other, and a somewhat weaker one to him, possessing the classic features that Shane saw every time he looked in the mirror.

Iain and Mark. Dane was probably lurking in the background, thinking of something obnoxious to say. A woman with bright red hair hugged him from behind. “I knew you’d be back,” she said against his back, her voice muffled. “I
just knew you wouldn’t stay away forever.” She sniffled.

“Don’t mind her. She’s pretty emotional right now,” Mark said.

“Transitioning from first to second trimester.”

“Don’t you dare try to reduce me to hormones,” Vanessa said, wiping away tears.

“Yeah, listen to her, Mark.” Another redhead, this one natural, put a hand on Mark’s forearm. A huge diamond ring winked from her finger. She was curvy and dressed to show off her figure. A confident woman. Shane liked that. “I’m Hilary Rosenberg.”

“Soon to be my missus,” Mark said.

“I’m Jane, Iain’s fiancée.” A pretty brunette next to Iain extended a hand. It had several cuts and burns, as did the forearm behind it. “So nice to meet you, Shane. I’ve heard so much about you.”

Shane shook hands with her. She was warm and gentle, and Iain stood close, like a dragon guarding its pile of gold. She didn’t wear her ring on her finger. Instead it dangled from a platinum chain around her neck. “What do you do?” he asked.

“Personal chef,” she said. “Just getting started.”

“But very successful. She’s a genius in the kitchen,” Iain said. Her cheeks glowed rosily in response.

“So. Where’s the man who got you in that condition?” Shane asked Vanessa. She wasn’t showing yet, but he trusted Mark was right about her hormones.

“Justin’s on his way here. Work, as usual. He’s going to meet us at the restaurant.”

Shane blinked. “What restaurant?”

“Mine,” Mark said. “Éternité. It’s my latest, although it’s no longer all that new. You missed the grand opening.”

“He dedicated it to Hilary,” Vanessa said with a soft sigh. “Is that just romantic or what?”

“Am I even dressed right?” Shane asked. Unlike his family he was in a white short-sleeve button-down shirt and old, comfy khakis, and Ginger was in a sundress.

“The clothes don’t matter. You’re family.” She looped her arm around Shane’s. “Come on. Let’s go.”

He looked around, wondering where Ginger was. Finally he spotted her at the edge of the crowd. Nobody from his family tried to welcome her back, and she stood with her face politely blank. Annoyance scraped his nerve endings. Something told him she’d been snubbed before—probably by his family. They had no right to treat her like this. She was his fiancée.
“Excuse me,” he said, unhooking his arm from Vanessa’s. If his sister needed to lean on somebody to walk, she had plenty of people to choose from. Shane went to Ginger and put a hand on her shoulder. “Hey, apparently we’re invited to a family dinner.”

“Looks like it,” she agreed, her voice not revealing anything. She didn’t seem displeased, but that didn’t mean she was thrilled either, especially given how standoffish his family was being. “I should probably get a cab and go to my place.”

“Don’t. Come with me. We’re going to Éternité.” He linked his hand with hers. “If the food sucks, I’ll buy you dinner elsewhere. Anything you want.” She shook her head. “It’s not going to suck. It’s one of the best restaurants in the country.”

“Have you been there before?”

“No, but it has a great reputation.”

He scowled. Mark should’ve invited her to the opening even if Shane hadn’t been in the country. Ginger was practically family. He forced himself to smile, while making a mental note to talk to his brother later. “Let’s go then. It’ll be even more delicious since it’s free.”

Her mouth curved into a reluctant grin. “All right. I’ll go.”
Chapter Nine

Iain and Jane had brought a large Mercedes, and they drove Shane and Ginger. Shane shook his head at the atrocious traffic. “Are we going to make it to the restaurant before it closes?”

“They’ll wait for Mark. He’s the boss,” Iain said. He glanced at Shane in the rearview mirror. “So. I heard from Vanessa you don’t remember much.”

“Yeah. Some kind of head injury. But things are starting to come back.”

“That’s good.”

“So where’s Dad? Too busy to join us?”

Jane cleared her throat, and Iain said, “He’s probably not coming. Things are sort of awkward between him and Ceinlys. You heard about the divorce, right?”

“I remember some gossip rags mentioning it. So it’s true?”

“Oh yeah. She got one of the best lawyers in the state. She might even get something out of it, too.” When Shane frowned, Iain added, “Don’t you remember the prenup—the reason why she stayed with Dad for so long? She gets nothing if they divorce.”

“What if he divorces her?”

“Doesn’t matter. Still nothing for Mom.”

Shane recalled the nasty flashback. Why hadn’t Salazar divorced Ceinlys?

“Then there’s the whole thing with Vanessa.”

“What about her?” Shane asked. “Is she divorcing somebody too?”

Jane choked, and Iain laughed dryly. “No, she just got married. But…” He glanced briefly at Ginger.

“You can say it,” Shane spat. Why the hell was Iain acting like Ginger didn’t belong there? They’d been together longer than Iain and Jane. Shane was sure of it.

Iain sighed. “All right. It turned out she’s not Dad’s child.”

Ginger put a hand over her mouth. Shane squeezed the other one. “What the hell?” he said. “When did he find out?”
“He’s always known.”

“Why didn’t he say something?” Salazar had always made it clear to Shane he didn’t want more kids after Mark.

“You know dad. He said it didn’t matter if there was ‘an extra mouth’ to feed.”

Shane shook his head. What a dickhead thing to say, yet not that surprising given that it was his dad. “Did Vanessa know all along too?”

“No. She found out while she was pregnant. Talk about a nasty shock.”

Shane cursed.

“But she’s still our sister.”

Jane who’d been quiet all along turned around to face Shane. “It’ll mean a lot to her if you acted like nothing’s changed.”

“Of course,” Shane said. Vanessa had cried like he was everything in the world to her. He wasn’t going to look at her funny because she was a half-sister. She was lucky her dad wasn’t some screw-up like Salazar…then again, maybe he was. “So who’s her real dad?”

Iain grimaced. “Just some guy Mom had an affair with. He’s dead though, and Justin—Vanessa’s husband—isn’t too enthusiastic about getting close to her half-sister.”

“Why not?”

“Money. Justin has enough to fund a medium-sized war, and he’s a little leery of relatives no one knew existed popping up, especially when the relative says she needs financial help.”

Made sense. Shane would’ve felt the same way if Ginger suddenly acquired a lot of long-lost cousins with money trouble. A lot of people’s attitudes changed when they learned you had money. He’d experienced that himself after the accident, and it’d left a bad taste in his mouth.

“Okay, finally. Here we are,” Iain said.

Crisply dressed valets came over to open doors for everyone. One of them handed a ticket to Iain before taking the car away with an alacrity that felt foreign to Shane. Nobody moved that fast in the countries he’d been staying in.

Shane looked at the two-story building in front of him. The exterior was smooth white marble, with tinted, roving floodlights that produced swirls of color. The effect reminded him of weddings and, oddly, an aurora he’d seen on a BBC documentary a few months back. Swoopy letters spelled Éternité.

He took Ginger’s hand. “Nice.”

“French meets Japanese…or something like that,” Iain said as they walked inside. “I’m a food pleb.”

Jane poked him with her elbow. “Didn’t you claim you were a discerning
food critic when you were praising my braised lamb with mint sauce?"

“That was different. I know lamb. I doubt André is serving lamb in there.”

“You never know. It might be the seasonal special.” She turned to Shane and Ginger. “André started that recently to experiment and serve stuff that’s not on the regular menu. It’s been really popular so far.”

A maître d’in a tux greeted them. “Your table’s ready.” He gestured, and a slim blonde in a black and white dress came out. The smile she directed at Iain and Jane was warm, but the one at Shane was inviting.

He merely put an arm around Ginger’s shoulders.

“This way, please,” the blonde said smoothly, leading them through the hall in the back.

The place was packed with people dressed like they were in competition for the “world’s most fashionable” title. Some of them had tried so hard, they ended up in the weirdest stuff Shane had ever seen…but it was probably considered avant-garde or some crap like that.

They climbed the stairs to the upper level. At the end of the hall was a spacious private room decorated with European and Asian antiques. “Nice,” Shane said, looking around. “Very chic.”

“Thanks,” Mark said, coming in with Hilary. Vanessa arrived with Ceinlys—they’d shared Ceinlys’s car—and everyone settled down at the round table. A few minutes later a tall man in a dark suit came in, his movements purposeful and dynamic. The first thing he did was to go to Vanessa and kiss her on the mouth. “How have you been?”

“Good,” she said with a smile as he took a seat next to her. “Shane, my husband Justin. You remember him?”

Shane shook his head. “Sorry. It seems unfair that you guys all know everything about me, but I don’t know anything about you.”

“That’s not true,” Hilary said, opening the wine menu. “I know nothing about you.”

“Me either,” Jane said.

“Is Dane coming?” Mark asked.

“I invited him,” Ceinlys said.

There were various winces and scowls around the table.

“He’s family too,” Ceinlys said.

“Yeah, familia non grata.”

Ceinlys gasped. “Vanessa!”

Justin squeezed her shoulder, but Vanessa crossed her arms. “I told you I wasn’t happy with him.”

“He brought Shane home,” Ceinlys said.
“Ginger brought me home,” Shane corrected.
Vanessa looked at a spot between him and Ginger. “See?”
“Why don’t we order?” Mark said loudly.
Hilary pushed a basket of bread toward Vanessa. “Try the rolls. They’re really buttery. Just the way you like them.”
Vanessa didn’t move, and Justin plucked one and put it on her plate. Tension radiated from Ginger, and Shane glared at his family. What the hell was wrong with them?
“Can we play a game?” he said. “Anybody who says anything mean has to go downstairs and sing ‘Oppa Gangnam Style’ and do that weird horsey dance in front of the diners. I’m sure it’ll make a great Facebook post, complete with video.”
“Shane!” Ceinlys exclaimed.
He raised a hand. “I’m not finished, Mom.” He turned to everyone else. “I didn’t come home to be bombarded with tension the minute I meet and have a meal with my family for the first time in a year.”
Ceinlys, Iain and Mark looked at Vanessa. Jane and Hilary suddenly developed a fascination with the silverware.
Finally, Vanessa sighed. “Sorry, Shane. I’m just so worried for you.” She stole a quick glance at Ginger, then looked at him again. “I’ll try to be gracious.”
Shane pretended like he was considering it, then turned to Justin. “Think she can pull it off?”
“Oh, yes,” Justin answered with mock gravity. “I wouldn’t have married her otherwise.”
Their waiter came in to explain the seasonal specials. Shane took the opportunity to lean over to Ginger. “You all right?” he asked in a low voice.
“Fine. Thanks.” She gave him a small smile. “That was very…commanding of you.”
“You liked that? I can be commanding in other places too.” His gaze dropped to her lips.
She flushed. “Behave. We’re with your family.”
“So?” He grinned, then straightened. “I’ll have the seasonal special,” he told the waiter. He had no idea what it was, but it didn’t matter. It was going to be great.

* * *

The dinner went well from then on. The food at Éternité was to die for. Shane could see why it was such a success. Mark was a freaking genius, although he
was sure tons of work had gone into creating a restaurant of this caliber.

He stared at the empty dessert platter. Red and purple berry sauces streaked
the pristine white china. “Mom, would you disown me if I licked my plate?”
“I very well might,” Ceinlys said, arching an eyebrow. “I taught you better.”
“Gotta tell you, I’m tempted.” He licked his lips. “So tempted.”
“I’d give you mine,” Vanessa said, her tone serious. “But I’m eating for two
now.” She patted her belly.

Justin pushed his dessert her way. Iain made a whip-cracking noise; Vanessa
threw her napkin at him, then yelped when he snapped it out of the air and threw
it back at her. The table dissolved into general mirth—although no more napkins
were launched.

Shane relaxed against the back of his chair. This wasn’t as terrible as he’d
thought it might be. Was it because his dad was missing? Or was it something
else? His mother was different from what he’d expected. He’d thought she’d be
demanding and stiff. Instead, she seemed warm and genuinely happy.

Maybe he’d been wrong to judge his family without giving them a chance.

His phone vibrated. He picked it up and saw the name Dane flash on the
screen. What the… He’d left a message days ago, and he was getting a call back
now? “Excuse me,” he said, then got up and went to the hall. “Took you long
enough.”

“Unlike you, I actually have responsibilities,” came a cold voice. “Now that
you’re home, I can cross ‘babysitting Shane’ off my list.”

Shane’s shoulders tightened. “Don’t strain anything with all this brotherly
love.”

“Love has nothing to do with it. We’ve all been suffering at home over
family dramas. It’s only right that you share in the pain.”

“Asshole.”

“Very original. Now if you’re done with the juvenile insults, I was calling to
make sure you’re where you should be, and not lost somewhere in L.A.”

“I’m fine. I’m at Éternité right now.”

“Good. I can’t be there, so I’m sending you a Macallan Sixty Year Old in
Lalique. I hope you haven’t lost your palate along with your memory.”

“I’m fine, and the memory’s starting to come back.” Not that he needed it to
know that Dane was a dickhead. “Ginger’s been helping.”

“Tell her she can go now. My assistant’s going to set you up with Dr.
Marsh.”

“Ginger’s not going anywhere. She’s my fiancée.”

“Ex-fiancée.”

“It was a misunderstanding. We’ve reconciled.” Giving her the ring again
would be a perfect finale to the process.
   “Really. Because she wasn’t there to work out a misunderstanding or reconcile. She’s already dating somebody else.”
   Sudden jealousy exploded in Shane’s chest, stealing his breath. Clenching his hand around the phone, he managed, “You’re lying.”
   “Why would I lie about something like that?”
   “For shits and giggles? To revel in someone else’s torment? To meet your daily quota of unpleasantness?”
   “Fine. Ask Vanessa. She saw Ginger out for a stroll with her new boyfriend.”
   Vanessa had seen Ginger with another man? Shane concentrated on breathing slowly as a vein throbbed at his temples. He undid another button on his shirt. Suddenly it was hot in the restaurant.
   “But who cares?” Dane was saying. “If you want to take her back, you take her back. None of my business.”
   “If she was dating somebody else, why did she agree to come out to be with me?” Shane ground out between his teeth.
   “Money. Didn’t she tell you?” Dane named a sum that made even Shane’s mouth drop. “Very few women would say no that.”
   Shane ran a thumb roughly across his eyebrow. Of course. Fucking money. Lots of it.
   Dane was still talking, but all Shane could hear was a bunch of gibberish. He hung up in the middle of it and pressed his fists against the wall, desperate to punch something.
   The idea of Ginger dating somebody else felt like a spike through his heart. The ache in his chest intensified, and he rubbed the spot with the heel of his palm. Why hadn’t she said something? Was money such an overriding motivator for her?
   He dug his hands into his hair. Damn it. He should’ve never answered Dane’s call. Then he wouldn’t have known. He could’ve been happy.
   Happiness built on a lie of omission.
   Another set of images flashed through his mind. His mother in a gorgeous dress… Her hand on another man’s shoulder. She looked up, her mouth curved in a seductive smile. The man responded in kind. She was stunning. What man would say no?
   His father watched. His eyes held black rage and pain, but he watched, then pulled another woman into his arms and kissed her like he didn’t give a damn who saw.
   His mother saw. Her face twisted. Bleak bitterness filled her eyes. But after she blinked a few times, it was gone. She was again the ever-perfect, ever-
beautiful Ceinlys Pryce. She whispered something into the man’s ear. The man put an arm around her waist and pulled her away…

Shane’s gut twisted so hard he almost gasped. Anger and jealousy surged inside him, a powerful and ugly tsunami of bile that threatened to drown him. He couldn’t breathe, couldn’t think. The walls seemed to close around him.

He had to get out of there before he got sick.

His legs carried him away from Ginger…outside, to where the city lights obscured the stars. He looked up at the hazy night sky and focused. There was a sweet sanctuary where nobody could bother him. He knew it. He could sense it. It was just at the edge of his memory, teasing and tormenting him.

But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t remember how to reach it.
Chapter Ten

“Where’s Shane?” Ceinlys asked.
Ginger shook her head. “He had a call and went out to take it,” she said.
“What could take so long though?”
“Let me check.” Iain left.
After the door closed behind him, Vanessa said, “So Ginger, what are your plans? You’re still with the guy I saw, right?”
“No. We broke up.”
Vanessa opened her mouth a couple of times, then closed it. Justin said, “I’m sorry to hear that.”
“I’m not. Dating Robert was a mistake. I realize that now.”
“Before or after Dane contacted you about going to Thailand?” Vanessa asked, apparently having recovered.
Ginger forced a smile. If Vanessa kept treating her like a hostile witness, she wouldn’t be responsible for her actions. “I don’t exactly recall, counselor. Dane had been trying to get in touch with me for a while before he finally succeeded, and I wasn’t keeping track.”
Vanessa rested her jaw in her palm. “I can’t decide what to think of you anymore.”
“What do you mean?”
“You guys were so in love. You were sane and normal, and I was convinced Shane was the perfect guy. Like Dane, Iain and Mark were just practice.”
“Geez, thanks, Vanessa,” Mark said dryly. “You wanna do the ‘Gangnam Style’ song and dance?”
She waved him away. “The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but—”
Mark snorted. “Lawyers.”
“Whatever. If it wasn’t for Hilary, you’d still have the romantic attention span of a teenager.”
Ceinlys sipped her wine and said nothing. Ginger blinked. That was so…
odd. The Ceinlys she used to know would’ve given Vanessa a tongue lashing in that horribly stiff upper class diction for disssing her precious sons.

Vanessa turned back to Ginger. “It just feels like…” She frowned. “I just don’t want to see him hurt. Out of all of us, he’s the most sensitive one.”

“I know, Vanessa. I’ve been with him since high school.” And they’d shared so much, most of it stuff that not even their families were aware of. “I don’t want to hurt him either.”

Iain reappeared. “Uh… Shane doesn’t seem to be around.”

“Where could he have gone?” Ceinlys said, pulling out her phone.

“I got it.” Mark already had his ringing. He waited a few beats and said, “He’s not answering.”

“Did he get lost or something?”

Their waiter came in, carrying a gorgeous liquor case with care. “The Macallan Sixty Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whiskey in Lalique for Mr. Shane Pryce, compliments of Mr. Dane Pryce,” he announced.

Mark raised an eyebrow. “Dane is here?”

“I don’t believe so, sir. This came via special courier.”

“Where could Shane have gone then?” Ceinlys mused out loud.

“Maybe he’s in the bathroom or something. Let’s wait a bit.” Mark signaled the waiter, gave some low instructions, and more drinks were served.

Half an hour later, it was obvious Shane wasn’t coming back. Their waiter whispered something to Mark, who winced. “You sure you looked everywhere?”

“Positive,” the waiter replied, his voice low.

Ginger forced her rubbery cheeks to move so she could fake a smile as everyone’s eyes zeroed in on her. They weren’t blatant, but pity and discomfite showed in the way they frowned and quickly averted their gazes.

“We can give you a ride,” Justin volunteered at the same time Iain said, “We’ll give you a ride home.”

“Just tell us where you live, and whoever’s closest can drop you off,” Hilary added.

“Thank you. But I can call a cab. It’s no big deal.” Ginger picked up her wine and took a long, deep swallow. The pricey alcohol did very little to blunt her humiliation. If only she could wave a wand and make herself disappear!

Thankfully the dinner ended soon after, and she climbed into a taxi before anybody could stop her.

“Go. Please,” Ginger said to the driver. She could hear Vanessa calling to her in the background, asking her to wait.

He started to pull away. “Where to?”

She hesitated, then gave him directions to Debbie’s condo. She didn’t want
to be alone right now.

* * *

Shane ended up wandering into a hotel several blocks away from Éternité. He got himself a suite and a bottle of good scotch.

The amber liquor soothed his raw throat. Closing his eyes, he leaned his head against the back of the armchair. It was too bad he didn’t have a really good vice to fall back on when he felt like shit. Even without his memory, he was certain he would’ve indulged out of habit, just like the way he’d known exactly what do with his cameras.

He wished he could tell Dane he was a lying sack of shit, but Vanessa… No, she wouldn’t have lied. She was in the Family group, and there hadn’t been any notes about her being a bitch. Furthermore, she seemed like a very straight-from-the-hip type of woman who wouldn’t feel the need to lie. If she didn’t like someone, she’d just say so.

Pour the scotch into a glass. Drink. Pour another. Drink…

Shane scowled. It was stupidly inefficient.

He took the bottle directly to his lips. Maybe he shouldn’t hold Ginger dating some other guy against her. She’d thought she wasn’t engaged anymore. He’d dated too, and he refused to be a hypocrite…even if he wanted to be when it came to this particular point.

But hadn’t she had a chance to tell him about the other man? She shouldn’t have done what she did with Shane if she was seeing somebody.

Maybe she couldn’t resist you. You were just too good compared to her current boyfriend.

Shane pressed the heel of his palm against his eyebrow. Wishful thinking.

His parents didn’t sleep around because other people were better in bed. They did it because it was who they were. He took a big swallow of the scotch. Wasn’t there a saying about men marrying their mother?

He lay down on the bed with the bottle. Thinking… He shook his head. Who the hell had decided thinking was a good thing? He didn’t want to think. He just wanted to sleep. And go back to the moment in the hospital when he’d just woken up, this time without his ID. And be a John Doe nobody could find.

* * *

“You don’t have to look so glum,” Shane said.

“The word you’re looking for is grim,” Dane said, nursing his scotch.
“Aren’t you going to congratulate me?”
“For what reason?”
Shane shook his head. “Didn’t you hear me? Ginger and I got engaged.”
“That warrants my deepest and sincerest condolences.”
“You know what? You’re just an asshole. I’m actually going to make a contact group called Asshole and put you in there. Only you.” Shane pulled out his phone and carried out his threat. His brother deserved it.
A faint smile flitted over Dane’s cool face. “You think it’s going to be different?”
He didn’t have to clarify. “Hell yeah. What Ginger and I have is nothing like mom and dad’s relationship.”
“They weren’t always like this. At one point, they were in love.”
Shane wrinkled his nose. His brother was awfully talkative that evening. Must be the liquor. “What do you know about love that doesn’t involve scotch?”
“More than you, little pup. They were in love…or very good at faking it. It’s too bad they stopped making the effort around the time you were born.” Dane’s eyebrows pinched briefly. “You could’ve had a better toddlerhood, if nothing else.”
Shane laughed, uncomfortable with the conversation. It was too deep and emotional for his brother. “Jeez, man. How much have you drunk?”
“I’m perfectly fine. This is only my fourth for the evening.” Dane downed it in one violent motion. “Just don’t expect what you have with Ginger to be like this forever. If you promise me you can do that, I’ll congratulate you.”
Something buzzing and vibrating woke him up. Shane shook his head, scrunching his eyes. What the hell was that? It was barely—he glanced at the clock by the bed. Three thirty-six?
The noise and movement stopped, then continued again. He then saw his phone screen light up on the bedside table. He didn’t recognize the number, but then he didn’t recognize any phone number these days. He picked it up. Must be pretty important to be calling at this hour.
“Yeah?” he rasped.
“You scumbag, bottom-feeding asshole!” a woman screeched.
He jerked the phone away from his ear. Then he brought it back and said, “Wrong number. Not your cheating boyfriend.”
Just as he was about to hang up, he heard, “Shane Lawrence Arthur Pryce, don’t even think about it!”
Okay. So maybe she had the right number. “Who are you?”
“Debbie Chang. Ginger’s BFF. The one who cares about and protects her from jerks like you.”
The name didn’t ring a bell. She probably wasn’t even that close to Ginger. He couldn’t imagine somebody as sweet as Ginger being friends with this harpy. “Why are you calling?”

“Do you have any idea what you’ve done to Ginger? You threw her to the piranhas and disappeared!”

“Piranhas? You mean my family?”

“Oh my god, are you saying you didn’t know what you did? Ginger took a taxi to my place because she had no ride, nothing! And while you were gone, your family, especially your sister, insulted Ginger. And you can’t fool me. I don’t even believe you forgot everything. It’s too convenient, and it’s not like you suffered, not the way she did.”

“What are you talking about?” Shane asked.

Suddenly Debbie paused in the middle of her tirade. “Never mind. Anyway I’m not like her, so I don’t buy it. If you’re going to keep pulling disappearing acts on her, get the hell out of her life, okay? She can’t move on if you keep messing with her.”

“She’s already moved on. Isn’t she dating somebody?”

Debbie snorted. “Wow, fast gossip. Is that what Ginger told you?” She didn’t wait for Shane’s response. “She broke up with him a few weeks ago. I told her it was a mistake because Robert’s a good guy, unlike some people I could name. He could make her happy if she’d just give him the chance.”

Shane rubbed his face, trying to process what she was saying. Ginger wasn’t seeing anybody? Dane had given him outdated news. “Where’s Ginger? Is she still at your place?”

“Why the hell do you care?”

“I need to talk to her.”

“You know what? I don’t think she should talk to you.”

Shane bit back a series of frustrated expletives. “I need to talk to her. It’s important, okay? I was led to believe she’s been dating somebody else while with me.”

The line went so quiet he thought Debbie had hung up on him. Then she sighed softly. “Fine. You better fix it or I’m going to kick your ass.”

“Deal. Now talk.”

“She went home, but she’s not going to be there much longer. She’s going to hit the road first thing tomorrow morning.”

“To where?”

“To the people she always goes to when she needs some TLC: her parents.”
Chapter Eleven

Ginger pulled into a small farm off a two-lane road about three hours north of Los Angeles. As she made the turn, her headlights swept over a sign that read “Happy Bastard Farm.”

The place had been in her mother’s family since the Second World War. Ginger’s great-grandfather, upon coming back from that war, had said he was a happy bastard to make it home alive because America was the sweetest place in the world, and he’d changed the farm’s name to reflect his sentiment. Nobody had dared change it since, not even her staid parents.

It was barely dawn. The original plan had been to start in the morning, but after leaving Debbie, she hadn’t been able to wait. With nothing to distract her, all she could think about was how Shane had abandoned her again.

At least the drive had been somewhat distracting. She’d listened to several episodes of the Freakonomics podcast, including some older ones she’d already heard. The host always had interesting questions and hypotheses to examine. And the show challenged her to pay attention and re-examine the world with data rather than assumptions. So she applied that to her current situation.

Assumption one: Shane still cared.
Data said: No. If he did, he wouldn’t have disappeared.

Assumption two: She sort of fit in with his family now.
Data said: No. If she did, Vanessa wouldn’t have said the things she’d said.

Assumption three: She was strong and resilient enough to move on.
Data said: Questionable. If she were, no amount of money from Dane would’ve made her go to Shane in the first place.

No matter what the financial considerations were, she shouldn’t have gone. She realized that now. Seeing Shane was like picking at a scab. If she’d just let it be, the wound would heal, and—eventually—the scar would fade. Why couldn’t she just remember that? Why did she harbor a pointless hope that maybe things would be different between them if she’d just give it another shot?
Ginger turned off the ignition in front of a modest three-story house. Her mom Zoe had inherited the property some years ago, and her parents had decided to retire there so they’d still be close enough that she could visit whenever she needed. Like now.

She frowned when she noticed a shiny Acura coupe. It wasn’t the kind of vehicle her parents would drive. They preferred something unassuming and practical. You couldn’t get too frivolous on a couple of teachers’ pensions.

Somebody knocked on her window. “Hey, sis.”

She got out and faced her half-brother. Trevor was in shorts and a pair of Nikes. Beads of sweat trickled down his unshaven face and heavily muscled torso. The skin on one shoulder was puckered from an old gunshot wound, a visual reminder that his job was dangerous even though her family did their best to pretend it wasn’t. “Isn’t it a little early for a morning run?”

“Nah. The best time of the day.” He grinned, his green eyes warm. “I’d give you a hug, but…”

She smiled. “Definitely not, you sweaty pig.”

“When did you come back?”

“To— No, yesterday.”

“Kinda unusual for you to take time off to visit the parents. Isn’t it busy season for bridezillas?”

She snorted. “I’m entitled to some family time.” Ginger popped her trunk and heaved out the lightest of the suitcases that were in it.

“Damn,” he said. “Didn’t anybody teach you how to pack?”

“I’m not a ‘one backpack’ kind of woman.”

“Yeah, but three bags?”

She shrugged. Normally she would’ve just brought an overnight, but most of her stuff was already in suitcases.

“How long are you going to stay?” he asked.

“Maybe a few days?”

Trevor shook his head, muttering under his breath. As he bent to pull the other two bags out of the trunk, the waistband of his workout shorts slipped lower, revealing dark bruises and fresh scar tissue. “Oh my gosh, what happened to you?” Ginger asked. When he hesitated, she said, “Is it classified?”

He smiled. “Nope. Got whacked in the butt by a door.”

“What kind of door leaves marks like that?”

“Now, that’s classified.” He winked, then carried her bags to the house.

Him and his clandestine work. Shaking her head, she followed him into the house.

The tightness in her neck and shoulders eased as they went inside and were
surrounded by comforting familiarity. All the lovingly framed family photos, the soup stock that had been simmering overnight, and the faint scent of yeast and flour and sugar from the baking her mom must’ve done the day before—it was a feeling of warmth and acceptance. Ginger ran her hand along the old quilt draped over the back of her parents’ well-worn couch. The squares were contributions from the family, each of them with a little story. The pink piece was from Ginger’s old onesie, and the red one with numeral twenty-three used to be Trevor’s old tee—he had wanted to grow up and be just like Michael Jordan until he realized he wasn’t any good at basketball. Then there was a piece from her grandmother—a gorgeous white lace that she’d created herself—and so much more.

Ginger looked around. This was the kind of home she’d always wanted for herself. And she’d thought she’d have it with Shane…except reality had shown her she’d been deluding herself.

“I’m gonna dump your stuff in the small guest room and shower. I took the big one…didn’t know you were going to show up with so much stuff,” Trevor said.

“That’s fine.” The smaller room had a better view. “How long are you going to be here?”

“Dunno. It’s sort of an unexpected leave.”

“Guess you aren’t going to tell me.”

“Sorry. Classified.” He flicked the tip of her nose and carried her bags upstairs.

Her parents would be up soon. She sat down on the sofa and arranged the quilt over herself. She should wait until they were downstairs and say hi before going to sleep.

She leaned back, sinking deeper into the comfortable couch. It was okay if she didn’t have a warm, welcoming home like this yet in the city because she could always just come here. She still had her family. Was there really a need for anything more?
Chapter Twelve

Shane downed two more ibuprofen pills as he drove his Aston Martin. Well, it wasn’t technically his car. He’d borrowed it from Mark because he couldn’t remember where the hell his place was, or where he’d left his car keys.

He scowled as a hammer pounded his head again. He really shouldn’t have had all that scotch and gone to sleep without drinking at least a couple glasses of water. Then he wouldn’t have wasted all morning trying to figure out where Ginger’s parents lived or how to get a set of wheels so he could drive up there. Or feel this awful. It was already almost three, but he still felt like crap.

Happy Bastard Farm.

He blinked at the sign. Was this even the right location? The sign seemed so inappropriate for a place owned by two retired high school teachers. He’d expected something more...mainstream and respectable with none of the words that would’ve gotten him in trouble back then. But Mark had been very sure when he’d given directions. And he was not an asshole like Dane.

Shane parked his car at the end of the driveway and got out. The air smelled of wet, fertilized soil and manure—probably the cows he’d seen on the way here. He stared up at the house.

Three stories. Sprawling. Sort of old-looking with the exterior that could use a new paint job. Maybe he was at the right place. He didn’t think retired teachers had a lot of money to throw at renovations.

A small blue sedan that looked to be about five years old or so plus a flashier car were parked outside. A separate set of tire tracks showed another vehicle had been here, something bigger and more powerful than the two in front of him. Probably a tractor.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

Shane looked up. A man in his thirties who was built like a semi stared down at him from the roof. Sweat and grime stained his dingy old t-shirt.

“Stay right there.” He disappeared from view.
Who could that be? According to his quick research, Ginger had a half-brother. But he didn’t live on their parents’ farm.

Soon, the man came around the corner. His eyebrows were low over deep-set eyes, which were currently shooting death-rays in Shane’s direction. He pumped his fists as he walked, each stride big and purposeful, his jaw muscles bunched.

Shane braced himself for a fight, changing his stance to block whatever the other man would throw. Damn, what wouldn’t I give for some of Iain’s MMA training?

Wait, what? Shane blinked as a thread unknotted in his mind.

The other guy stopped less than an inch from Shane’s face. “You got some fucking nerve coming here.” Dark veins stood out on his forehead and neck. “If we were anywhere else, I’d break every bone in your body.”

Too close to focus on, Shane looked right through him. “I’m not here to see you.”

“Oh, that’s fucking rich. Guess you’re here to harass Ginger, then? Cuz you know she’s not gonna do what I’m gonna do to you.” He put a finger into Shane’s chest. “Stay the fuck away from her. Users like you make me sick. You don’t even deserve to breathe the same air she does.”

“Where’s Ginger?” Shane asked calmly.

“You’re going to have to beat it out of me.”

“Good god, Trevor. Your mother and I taught you better than this.”

Shane stepped back to take a look at an older man coming up behind Trevor’s huge frame. He was shorter than Trevor, maybe five ten or so, and had kind eyes that reminded Shane of Ginger. So… This must be Fraser Maxwell the retired math teacher and Ginger’s father.

“Dad, this man’s the enemy,” Trevor said.

“Nonsense. Shane’s always welcome here. He’s your sister’s fiancé.”

“Not anymore!”

“That’s not true,” Shane said, then addressed Fraser. “Sir, I’m here for Ginger.”

“She’s not here right now. Went to the store with Zoe,” Fraser said. “Why don’t you come help me while you wait?”

Shane looked at Fraser and Trevor’s outfits—simple t-shirts, faded jeans and work boots—and his own—an expensive pale blue dress shirt, sharply creased dark slacks and leather Italian loafers. He shrugged. “Okay.”

A corner of Fraser’s mouth turned up. “Come on, cupcake. We got a lot of work to do.”

***
Ginger stared as her mom dumped two sacks of potatoes into their cart. “Does he really eat this much?” she asked.

“Mmm-hmm.”

“Doesn’t he eat while he’s on a mission or whatever?”

“I don’t know,” Zoe said. “But I feel like it’s my duty to make sure he gets enough, you know? He always tells me the food is terrible.”

Ginger snorted. “He should learn to cook then.”

“I’d rather not have our farm burn down.”

They laughed together. It was so good to be at her parents’ place, applying herself to simple activities that didn’t twist her insides or make her do crazy stupid things.

Ginger looped her arm through her mom’s and said, “It’s so good to be home.”

“You should visit more often. Make the time even if your job keeps you busy.”

“Technically I’m the boss, so I can give myself some time off,” Ginger said.

“Good. You deserve it. Nobody can work all the time. When do you need to go back?”

“Not for a while. I’ve cleared my calendar for the next few weeks.”

Zoe patted her hand. “Excellent. Although I feel sorry for all the couples. You do take the most romantic pictures.”

Ginger smiled. There was something really ironic about her being a wedding photographer with a reputation for capturing romance and hope when she couldn’t even get her own fiancé to stick around. Maybe she should consider the idea that the relationship might have run its course even if she didn’t want to admit it. The sex was still hot, but there was more to a relationship than sex.

Her phone buzzed with a new text. It was from Trevor. The enemy’s here.

She frowned. What enemy?

Shane. Don’t worry. Gonna break his legs before you come back.

She gasped.

Zoe tilted her head. “What’s wrong?”

“It’s Trevor being Trevor.” Don’t you dare! she texted.

“Oh dear. Should we go home now?” Zoe said. “I have everything we need for the week.”

“Yes.” Ginger shoved her phone into her purse. “Let’s get back before Trevor does something.”

* * *
Shane gritted his teeth at the way his muscles were protesting. He exercised regularly, but hoisting barbells and dumbbells in an air-conditioned gym was nothing like farm work. He could see Trevor smirking, and Shane buckled down to push harder. He’d rather smear cow shit all over his face than to admit he couldn’t do the work.

There was no way Trevor was related to Ginger by blood. He was a complete jackass, and proud of the fact that he was a complete jackass. Guess every family had an asshole. The only saving grace was that he wasn’t juvenile on top of that, refraining from tripping Shane when it was obvious he wanted to.

Or maybe it was Fraser’s presence that was stopping him. The man didn’t miss much. Shane bet he’d controlled his classes with the same kind of mastery.

“There they are,” Fraser said, looking at a Honda coming their way.

“I’ll go give them a hand bringing the groceries in,” Trevor said. “You can help Dad put away the rest of this stuff.”

Damn it. Shane wanted to see Ginger immediately, but there was no way for him to do that without appearing to be a shirker.

Fraser shook his head as Trevor jogged off. “He just wants to see what they brought home for dinner.”

“I guess.” Shane probably hadn’t gotten along with Trevor before.

“Ginger told me you’re suffering from amnesia. That you still don’t remember everything, and that was the reason why there’ve been some problems with your relationship with my daughter.”

“That’s right.”

“She also told me you don’t want anyone to know about it.”

“It’s not something I’m interested in advertising.” When Fraser waited, Shane added, “I’m sure you’re aware of my background. Some people would try to take advantage.”

“I understand, but there’s nothing wrong with relying on your family and loved ones.”

Shane squinted at him. “Was I ever in your class?”

“Yes. Trigonometry.”

“Then you must’ve seen how it was between me and my family even back then.”

Fraser pursed his lips, then sighed. “But they’re still your family. If you can’t rely on them…” He put his hands on his lower back. “I think I’m going to go in now. This stuff”—he gestured at the pile of hay—“can wait until tomorrow. Zoe made some of her amazing lemonade before leaving. Come, join me.”
Chapter Thirteen

The dinner wasn’t as bad as Shane had feared. Zoe’s cooking was homey and quite good, and the farm workout had given him quite an appetite. Apparently Trevor felt the same because he kept quiet, too busy shoveling meat and potatoes into his mouth…although he still glared at Shane from time to time.

Zoe was an older image of Ginger, silver threading her golden hair. She gazed at her husband with deep love as he spoke about how the vegetables were doing. Shane’s heart felt funny as he watched them and Ginger, who was doing her best to pretend he wasn’t there.

“Wine, Shane?” Zoe asked, ever the gracious hostess.

*Don’t want a repeat of last night.* “No, thank you.”

“I’ll have some,” Trevor said.

Ginger had seated herself as far from Shane as possible. He couldn’t decide if it was her decision or Trevor’s maneuvering. She was a bit pale, the dark circles under her eyes more pronounced. Must be tired from the trip and the drama from the night before. She didn’t look at Shane or speak to him. But at least she finished everything on her plate, Shane noted with approval. She needed to gain back the weight she’d lost.

Fraser and Zoe asked about Shane’s travels, ignoring Trevor and Ginger’s behavior. Zoe sighed. “I always wanted to visit Johannesburg. Maybe one day.”

“You can go any time. Right now if you want. Say the word and I’ll have it arranged,” Shane said.

Zoe laughed. “I wish I could take you up on the offer, but there’s a lot to do here with the farm. Thank you, Shane. You’re such a sweet boy.” She put a hand over his. “Always were.”

Trevor snorted, and Ginger glared at him. “You should eat more slowly, so you can avoid making ugly noises at the dinner table,” she said.

“Ginger,” Fraser said.

“It’s true.” Ginger looked down at her apple pie. She’d eaten only half of it.
“May I be excused? I’m tired. I think I’ll go to bed early.”
Zoe glanced at Fraser, then nodded. Ginger stood up with her plate and left.
“Same here if you don’t mind,” Shane said. “The flight from Thailand was long and exhausting.”
“Yeah, me too,” Trevor said.
Zoe shook her head. “You didn’t have a long flight from Thailand too, did you? You said you were in Mexico.”
Trevor made a face. “I can still be tired.”
“Just finish your pie before you go,” Zoe said.
The muscles bunched in his jaw, and Shane gave Zoe a grateful glance. Then he took off after Ginger.

***

Ginger slipped out through the backdoor. The final dying sunshine colored the farm a deep orange.
Soon she heard another person follow her. She didn’t have to turn around to know it was Shane. Nobody else would’ve made her skin prickle with awareness. “What are you doing here?”
He stood next to her. His gaze settled over her like silk. “I wanted to apologize.”
She kept her eyes on the horizon. “Don’t.”
“Why not? It was wrong of me to leave last night.”
“Don’t worry about it.”
“How can you say that?”
“Because.” She looked up at him. Exhaustion had deepened the lines bracketing his mouth. “I’d rather you be honest. Don’t stay if you want to be somewhere else.”
“Ginger…”
“You used to tell me about how you thought your parents should divorce because they didn’t belong together. You were convinced your mother stayed with your father for the money, and your father stayed because he wanted to be able to have affairs without giving his mistresses any false hope about becoming his missus. Well, I don’t want that.”
She looked away. Brave words, but she’d be lying if she told herself she wanted him to go. Why was she even with somebody who hurt her the way Shane did?
Because when things are good, they’re really, really good. And she wanted to make things work between them so badly. She wanted what her own parents
had, with him.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Shane reached out and held her hand. She didn’t pull away. Tingling warmth spread from his skin to hers. *I must be a glutton for punishment*, she thought.

“I got a call from Dane,” he said. “He told me you were dating somebody else.”

She glared at him and tried to yank her hand away, but he held on. “You couldn’t ask me?”

“In front of my family? Not without making a scene, and I didn’t want to do that. Especially with Vanessa acting so hostile.”

“She saw me with Robert. That’s why she was like that at the dinner. I never got a chance to tell her we broke up.”

“I know that now. But at the time I was just…furious with you. And myself.” He raked his hair. “Even when Dane told me you were with another man, I wanted you. I wanted to fuck you until you forgot him…until I could take you away and make you mine.” His jaw clenched. “I never wanted to be like my dad, who doesn’t care about anything except screwing the women he wants. Even if they’re married. So I couldn’t…” He let out a rough breath. “I just had to get away…and I messed up.”

“Shane…” She squeezed his hand, her heart aching for him. “You are nothing like your dad. I would’ve never stayed with you for so long if you were.”

His laugh was hollow, self-deprecating. “Debbie was really pissed off.”

Ginger’s eyes widened. “What did she do?”

“Called me some names. Threatened a few things. I don’t really remember, because I was, uh, a little hung over.”

“Jeez. I told her not to do stuff like that.”

He shrugged. “She’s your best friend. You really should expect more from the people around you. Speaking of which…” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a ring box. “I had Mark mail your original engagement ring to me in Thailand. I was going to give it to you there, but then I thought I should make the second proposal at least as memorable as the first, even if I couldn’t remember exactly how it had gone before. I was going to do it last night, but everything got derailed when my family decided to drag us out to dinner. But I can’t wait any more,” he said, going down on one knee. “I’ve screwed up everything since the first time I saw you after the accident. But I want you to give me another chance.”

His words rushed out in a torrent, and Ginger felt her heart soften. He got wordy and spoke fast whenever he felt nervous, which was rare. His mouth set in
a firm line and his gaze unblinking, he was doing a good job of looking cool, but there were taut lines around his eyes as he waited.

Her heart pounded unsteadily. A part of her wanted to run. A big part. If things went bad again, she wasn’t sure she could ever deal with it. But another part of her urged her to say yes. Most people never got a second chance. She should seize this one and make it count.

“Will you take my ring?” he asked.

With a slow smile, she extended her left hand. “Put it on me.”

He pulled out the ring and pushed it onto her ring finger. She knelt down opposite him and he rested his forehead on hers. “You’re mine.”

“Right back at you.” She tilted her mouth up for a kiss.

His lips were so soft, so gentle. His tongue darted out, licking and taunting her with teasing strokes. He tasted like Shane and happiness and apple pie, and her heart sang—he’s mine. Her core went liquid, and she tilted her head for some deeper contact, thrusting her tongue boldly into his mouth.

With a low groan, he pulled her closer, his powerful hands on her hips, fitting her body against his until she could feel his erection pressing against her belly. She rocked slowly as she put her hands behind his neck. He felt like everything she’d dreamed of, every fantasy she’d ever had about her fut—.

“What the fuck?”

Ginger jerked back at Trevor’s outraged voice. Her cheeks heated. “What are you doing here?”

“I finished my pie!” His gaze swung to Shane. “Dude, what the fuck? This is our parents’ house!”

“Calm down,” Shane said.

“Would you be calm if it was your sister?”

Ginger pinched the skin on her forehead. Now thanks to Trevor’s yelling, probably everyone within a mile radius knew what she and Shane had been doing.

“Yeah,” Shane said at the same time Ginger stood up, tugged on Trevor’s arm and said, “Come with me. Now!”

“I’m not finished with—”

“Yes, you are. And if you don’t come with me right now I’m not going to talk to you for the next half a decade.” She turned to Shane. “You stay here.”

Shane had started to get up, but stopped with one knee still on the ground. “Yes, ma’am.”

She dragged Trevor away to the barn. Cows stared at them, then flicked their tails and turned away. “Even the cows have better sense,” she muttered, then rounded on her brother once they were in the barn. “What’s wrong with you?
Why are you so nasty to Shane?”

“Because he hurt you. You think I don’t know what’s going on?”

“That’s exactly what I think, unless you’ve been stalking and spying on me.”

“I don’t have to do either of those things to know what he’s doing. I’ve seen guys like that. He takes women for granted, uses them…and he sweet talks them or seduces them to get out of anything. You’re making a huge mistake if you take him back.”

“Jeez, what’s up with you? He’s not like that.”

Trevor stared up at the loft and she actually heard his teeth grinding. “I’m starting to think you’re the one with amnesia.” He stuck out a meaty hand and started using his fingers to tick off points. “He dated you, strung you along for over ten years, then finally proposed when it looked like you might ditch him, and then refused to set a date for your wedding!”

Her jaw dropped. “Are you crazy? That’s totally not how it went. We dated in high school and he followed me to college despite his parents’ opposition. His mother was absolutely livid that he chose to go to Berkeley rather than some Ivy League school. She threatened to cut off his allowance, then when that didn’t work, tried to get him to choose Stanford if he wanted to be close to me. But he insisted on Berkeley because he didn’t even want to be that far apart. You know this.

“And there was no ‘stringing along.’ I stayed with him because I wanted to, not because he tricked me. I’m not that stupid, Trevor. And just because we got engaged didn’t mean we had to set a date immediately just to please you, okay? We wanted to take our time looking at venues and their availability and go from there.”

Trevor made a frustrated sound deep in his throat. “Ever heard the saying that you only need to look at a man’s father to know how the son’s going to treat a woman? He’s emulating Salazar. Everyone knows what a womanizer that old geezer is, and I’m sure he’s thrilled to be getting divorced now so he can pursue his hobby without worrying about a wife or children.”

“Shane’s nothing like Salazar!” Ginger clenched her hands, barely restraining herself from punching Trevor. She’d never felt such a violent urge before, but her brother was infuriating. “You’ve never even met his father, or seen how Shane strives to be better than him. While we were dating, he never even looked at other women, even when they were virtually naked and throwing themselves at him. He always made me feel like I was the center of his universe. The only thing that changed all that was whatever it was that made him go to South Africa. And I still don’t know what that is because he can’t remember. And that makes me feel just…awful, like there’s a bomb in my life. I can hear it
ticking, but can’t do anything about it.”

Trevor paled, flinching.

“You don’t know what that did to me,” she said. “You don’t know what it’s like to lose someone you love like that because you’ve never loved anybody the way I love Shane. He gave me my engagement ring—again—and I know he loves me. So I’m going to grab this chance and make sure we can work the problem out—whatever it is. I don’t want to be alone again. If you can’t be supportive of my decision, you can at least not sabotage it.” She let out a shuddering breath and blinked as her eyes pricked with unshed tears.

“Damn, Ginger.” He reached out and hugged her stiff body. “I’m sorry. I had no idea you felt that way.”

“Now that you know, what are you going to do?”

“I can’t promise I’m going to like the guy, but I’ll butt out. And try my damndest to look the other way when I see you guys sucking face.”

She laughed, finally relieved. She would’ve hated to be at odds with Trevor over anything, much less Shane. “Thanks.” She unbent and hugged him back. “You’re the best brother any woman could ask for.”

* * *

Shane waited until Ginger came back. He hoped whatever talk she needed to have with Trevor hadn’t gone too poorly. Her brother seemed juuuuuust a trifle overprotective. Shane would’ve approved of that if Trevor hadn’t thought he needed to protect Ginger from him as well.

Soon they emerged from the barn. Trevor shot him a glance and went off, while Ginger came toward Shane. She looked so sweet and sexy, her hips sashaying. The movement was even more provocative because she wasn’t doing it on purpose.

“So… Everybody still alive?” he said.

“Barely, but he’ll behave. It’ll mean the world to me if you can be gracious to him in return.”

“Hey. Gracious is my middle name.”

She chuckled. “Sure, SLAP-y.”

He cringed. “You know about that?”

“Yup.” She peered up at him. “Do you remember mine?”

“No.” He frowned. “That puts me at a disadvantage. What is it?”

“Grant.”

“Seriously? That’s it?”

She nodded. “After Ginger Grant from Gilligan’s Island.”
He felt completely lost. “Is that in the Caribbean?”
“Nope. An old TV show and Dad was a fan. Do you feel advantaged now?”
He snorted and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. “We should get going.”
“Where?”
“Back to the city. Trevor’s right. We can’t be doing the things I want to do to you at your parents’ house. I don’t want your father shooting at me or your mother poisoning my food.”
“I can’t go yet.”
“Why not?”
“I told them I was staying for a few days, and they were so excited. I don’t take a lot of time off or visit often.”
“How come?”
“Well. For holidays, we split our time at your family’s and mine.”
He stared at her, aghast. “Is it nice at my family’s?”
“Honestly? Not always.” She chewed on her lower lip. “The dinner last night was pretty decent since your dad wasn’t there. It can get pretty tense when your parents are together. Oh, and Dane.”
“That I can believe.”
“But you know…your parents live in L.A. Mine don’t. So I don’t see them as often as I’d like.” She put a hand over his chest. “Pretty please?”
“Okay. I’ll stay here with you too then.”
“Really? But—”
He kissed her. She opened up to him instantly, as though she’d been dying for his touch. He groaned into her mouth. “No buts,” he said firmly as he traced the delicate line of her smooth jaw.
“Okay,” she whimpered.
He pressed little kisses all along her neck. She shivered, and her grip on his shoulders tightened. Damn she was responsive. She probably wasn’t even aware of the tiny rocking movements of her hips that were driving him insane. He wanted to strip her and take her in the grass…except…
He pulled back. “We have to go inside.”
“But—”
“Lusty wench. Behave.” He slapped her lightly on the ass and took her elbow, starting them back to the house.
She ran her teeth across her lower lip and gave him a dark look that promised retribution. Shane shook his head. He didn’t care. His ring was back on her finger, and that was all that mattered.
Chapter Fourteen

Ginger had laid out a new toothbrush and razor for Shane to use. She giggled behind a hand at the baggy, old pajamas Trevor had lent him.

“You should’ve told me you didn’t pack,” she said. “I would’ve driven you to the store so you could pick up some stuff.”

“Wasn’t thinking very clearly this morning. I just had this overwhelming urge to come out here and get you back.”

She grinned, stupidly happy. “Well, this’s your room.” She gestured around. It was the absolute smallest room in the house, but it had a bed. Her mom had put a set of fresh sheets over the mattress.

“At the opposite end of the hall from your room,” Shane mused, looking around. There was a tiny desk by the window, which overlooked the barn. He rapped the desk with a knuckle. “And quite fragrant, if you leave the window open.”

She chuckled. “Should’ve expected that when you barged onto a farm.”

He kissed her. “Well then. Good night.”

“Night.” She closed the door behind her.

Everyone seemed to go to bed early on the farm, but Fraser explained everyone also got up early. Like five thirty, before sunrise early.

Shane lay on the small bed and stared at the ceiling. He supposed that wouldn’t be too bad if he could get himself to fall asleep soon.

The night before he’d dreamed about his parents. Probably flashbacks. His memories seemed to be coming back as he spent time with the people who’d been in his life before the accident.

So far most of the dreams had been pretty shitty. Had he had any good ones? Probably he had, and they probably had featured Ginger. He wished he could remember them. He wished he could remember what Ginger’s favorite colors were, her favorite food, the sound of her voice when she sang—if she sang at all—and their first date and first dance and first kiss and first sex…
His mind drifted, and the tension slowly seeped out of his body. He fell asleep…

…then a hand roaming over his chest and belly woke him up. “What—?”

“Shh…” Ginger put a finger over his lips. “Trevor’s a light sleeper.”

“What are you doing?”

“Finishing what we started earlier.”

“You naughty girl.” Even as he mock scolded her, his body came to life, his cock hardening.

She slipped her hand lower and grasped it. “Ah-hah. Somebody’s happy to see me.”

“Damn, Ginger…”

“Don’t make any noise. Somebody’s going to hear.” She kissed him then, her mouth open and carnal. She licked his tongue, teasing and taunting him to thrust inside her, and he groaned against her and pulled her down over his body.

Ahh, yes.

Without breaking the kiss, she squirmed until she was straddling him. She rocked, her flesh hot even through the layers of clothes between them. She was absolutely shameless as she sought her pleasure. And it was so damn hot it was all he could do to stop himself from pounding into her now.

He pulled her nightgown up until it was bunched under her armpits. She wasn’t wearing anything underneath, and the moonlight gave her a silvery otherworldly glow. She was so beautiful, it made him shake.

She was his.

He buried his face between her gorgeous breasts and inhaled her orchids and butter cream scent. He brought a nipple toward his mouth, and flicked his tongue over the tip, liking the way it beaded. She tightened her hands in his hair, and with a grunt, he took the whole nipple into his mouth and sucked hard.

She bucked, her back arching. She pushed her torso into his face, and he cupped her ass in his hands, squeezing and fondling as he tormented her breast. The other one trembled, its exposed nipple beading like it could vicariously experience what he was doing to the one in his mouth.

He pulled back, dragging the extended nipple between his teeth. Ginger muffled a moan with her hand. He took the other one into his mouth. He wasn’t tender anymore, rough with his teeth and lips and tongue. She writhed against him, wrapping her arms around him tighter and silently begging for more.

His mouth still on her tit, he pushed her thighs apart wider. She was dripping wet, her nether lips swollen and so damn slick. He ran his fingers up and down, careful to bump into her clit every time, but not with enough pressure to make her come. He wanted to drive her to the edge, hear her beg him to fuck her. He
wanted her filthy and desperate and out of her mind with need.

“More,” she moaned, her voice low and uneven.
“Not yet, babe.”
“You…are…evil.”
“And you like me that way.” He brought his juicy fingers to his mouth and licked. “Damn, you taste amazing. You have no idea what I want, do you?”
“Shane…”

* * *

Ginger teetered at the edge. She was going to die if he kept teasing her like this.

Tunneling her hands into his hair, she pulled him up for a kiss. He didn’t even hesitate. His talented mouth…Oh yes. He plundered her like he had every right to, and she loved it. She wanted him to know she belonged to him and him only. She didn’t want him to ever think about how he might end up like his parents, especially his father. She wouldn’t let him.

She moved against him and moaned with frustration. He was still in the pajamas, which were getting in the way. She rolled them over, and Shane adjusted his position so they wouldn’t fall off the small mattress. “You’re entirely too dressed,” she muttered. She reached down and undid all the buttons, laying his chest bare. When he reached for the bottoms, she slapped his hands away. “I’ll handle this.”

He cocked an eyebrow. With a wicked grin, she pulled them down slowly, unwrapping him like a birthday present. His cock sprang out. She licked her lips at the glistening tip. The veins on his shaft seemed to pulse.

She pulled him deep into her mouth. Salt and the heady flavor of Shane flooded her senses, and she moaned. He was too big for her to suck to the hilt, so she used her hands to compensate.

He hissed out a curse.

“Shhh,” she said. “You’re going to get us caught.” She resumed, licking and tasting and sucking all over his cock, leaving no part untouched. Her fingers delicately played with his balls, weighing and caressing them.

His breathing grew choppy. He braced his feet flat on the bed and thrust into her mouth, careful not to gag her. His hands clenched into fists, and the muscles in his stomach were rigid. She could tell he was close. Yes, yes.

The last time he’d come on her. This time she wanted him to come inside her so she could taste his climax.

Suddenly he grasped her arms and pulled her up. He devoured her mouth like she was a feast after a famine, while he shoved two fingers inside her. She was
so primed they glided in with no problem. His kiss muffled her cry as her walls tightened around his fingers. She needed more.

“Fuck, you’re so damn hot.” He thrust them in and out, only up to two knuckles. She tried to move, have them deeper inside her, but he kept an arm around her waist, trapping her.

“Shane, please…”

“Tell me.”

“I want you inside me,” she whispered heatedly in his ear. “I want you hard and hot and fucking me, claiming my body. Making me yours.”

“You’re already mine,” he said against her nape. “But damn… Do you have a condom?”

“Don’t need one. I’m on the pill.”

“But in Thailand, you said—”

“I lied.” She’d had to in order to stop him from taking her fully.

“You bad, bad girl,” he whispered and flipped her over.

She spread her legs as wide as she could, so wanton in her need. He took his weight on his elbows and plunged into her in one, harsh stroke.

She bit her lower lip at the most incredible sensation. He was so big, he stretched her to the limit. It felt like he was filling every empty corner of her body and heart.

He pushed in and out of her, each thrust hard and controlled. The delicious friction caused her walls to tighten and clench, and she tightened her jaw to contain a scream. Her breasts bobbed, and even the slight movement of the cool air seemed too much for her overly sensitive nipples.

He changed the angle of his pelvis, bumping and grinding into her clit. Her vision whitened, and she let out a silent scream as a fiery orgasm incinerated her every nerve ending. He soon joined her, his mouth pressed against the spot between her neck and shoulder as he shuddered and emptied into her.

He rolled to his back, taking her with him. He breathed roughly, sweat beaded along his hairline. With a soft smile, she traced every perfect line of his beloved face.

“Even if you don’t remember everything, you haven’t changed that much,” she whispered when they could breathe normally again.

“You mean, I’ve always been a great lover?”

She giggled. “Dirty and demanding.”

“See? Just like I said.”

She laid her cheek against his chest, listening to his heart beat. Da-dum, da-dum, da-dum. So comforting. So real. She closed her eyes. This was exactly the way it should be.
She yawned. “I should probably go back.”
His arms tightened around her. “Stay a little longer.”
“But—”
“If you fall asleep, I’ll carry you to your room.” He kissed her on the forehead.
She smiled. “Okay.”

* * *

The next morning Ginger opened her eyes in her own room and smiled to herself. Shane wasn’t just a great lover. He was the greatest lover. She just couldn’t tell him because he wouldn’t be able to fit his head through his tee-shirts.

She walked out into the hall to use the bathroom and almost ran into Trevor. “Sorry. Hi.” She grinned goofily.
“Morning.” He frowned. “You know… You really should be a little more quiet. You kept me up quite a while last night.”
Her jaw dropped. Before she could respond, he walked down the stairs.
She put her hands over her flaming cheeks. Great. So her brother had heard everything. At least her parents were heavy sleepers.

When she made it downstairs, her dad had already finished with breakfast and gone out to check on his cows with Trevor. Ginger sat at the table as her mom placed a mug of steaming coffee in front of her.
“Good morning,” Zoe said cheerfully. She had on her red apple apron, which she only wore when she was in an exceptionally good mood. “How are you feeling?”
“Not bad,” Ginger said.
Shane was at the table too and gave Zoe his most charming smile when she put more bacon on his plate. “You’re an amazing cook, ma’am. I bet not even Mark’s fancy chefs can make bacon this good.”
She gave him a side-eye, her lips twitching in a suppressed smile. “Who’s going to believe that?”
“Me. And Ginger. And anyone else who’s eaten your food.”
Zoe laughed and put a plateful of scrambled eggs, bacon and home fries in front of Ginger. “Eat. You’ve lost too much weight.”
“All right.” Ginger dug in. Zoe had fretted after she’d come back to the States with Debbie. But she hadn’t known exactly what was wrong, and Ginger hadn’t told her.
She also hadn’t told Shane, and didn’t plan to. Better to leave that pain in the
past. It still hurt when she thought about it, and what would be the point of telling Shane now? Debbie had the right attitude—that it just wasn’t meant to be, but heaven would bless her again when the time was right.

Zoe went to the kitchen to look at what kind of dessert to make for lunch and dinner. Ginger leaned over to Shane. “Hey,” she whispered.

“Hmm?”
“Did Trevor say anything to you?”
“About what?”
She leaned closer. “Our noise last night.”
“No. Why?”
She pulled back with a scowl. “I see.”
“What’s that expression for?”
“I know what’s going on. And here I thought Trevor really heard something.”
“ Heard what?” Zoe asked, coming back to the table with a pitcher of iced tea.

“Nothing,” Ginger said quickly. “I was having a dream and apparently talked in my sleep.”
“Well, don’t mind him. The slightest little noise will have him up and prowling the house.” Zoe put a hand on Ginger’s shoulder comfortably. “More bacon, Shane?”
“Please.”
Ginger pushed her plate his way. “You can have mine too.”
“No, you’re going to eat all that.”
She stuck her tongue out at him and ate almost all of her breakfast before excusing herself to go track down Trevor.

The farm didn’t make much profit, but Fraser still worked it anyway. He said it was good to keep busy doing something physically demanding even in old age. “Keeps me young,” he said.

Finally she found them together in the vegetable garden.
“Trevor, can I talk to you for a moment?” she called out.
He wiped his face with a towel and came over. “What’s up?”
“Noisy, am I?”
Trevor shrugged.
“Since you have such amazing hearing, what kind of noise was it? A nightmare? Sex?”
“Jeez. Stop. You’re my sister.”
“I knew it.” She pointed a finger. “You were just saying that to make me behave.”
“So sue me. I’m your big brother.”
“Shane and I are engaged. You shouldn’t act so…Puritanical.”
Trevor winced. “I don’t want to imagine you doing anything with any guy.”
Then he got a far-off look. “By the way… About what you said yesterday…”
“What about it?”
“Is it true? He cut all communication with you after going to South Africa?”
“Yes. Why?”
Trevor’s eyebrows pulled into a deep V. “Nothing.”
She tilted her head. “If you know something, can you tell me? It’s important.”
He looked away. “I don’t know anything.”
“Really?” she said, fishing for any information he might have.
“Hey. I’m not spying on you and Shane, despite what you think.”
Trevor went back to helping their dad, but her internal bullcrap alarm clanged loud and hard. Trevor knew something.
But why wouldn’t he tell her?
Chapter Fifteen

Shane and Ginger left the farm after two more days. They hugged Fraser and Zoe—only Ginger hugged Trevor—and promised to visit again soon, maybe even spend the Fourth of July with them. That had perked up her parents so much that Shane had felt guilty. Just how little time had Ginger spent with them on holidays?

He hadn’t wanted to drive separately, but she didn’t want to leave her car behind, and he didn’t think Mark would appreciate him leaving his precious Aston Martin at the farm.

“Follow me to my place,” he said.
“I don’t need to. I know where you live.” She blinked up at him. “Do you?”
“Of course I do.” Mark’s GPS had Shane’s place programmed. Technology was a wonderful thing.
“Fine. The loser owes the winner lunch.”
“Oh, I think we can do better than that,” he said. “Lunch and twenty minutes of slow head.”
“You’re on,” she said, then dashed to her car.
He let her go first. It was unfair to pit an Aston Martin against a Nissan. He waited ten minutes, then started.
It didn’t take that long, only a couple of hours. The late morning traffic was pretty light. Still he hadn’t spotted Ginger’s car, which was odd, but she’d probably had to stop for gas or something along the way.
When he was about five or so blocks away from his penthouse, he finally dialed Ginger. He had no doubt she knew where his place was, given how long they’d been together. But he hadn’t seen her at all, and she could be in trouble… maybe a blown tire or something.
“Hello, Loser,” she answered.
He laughed. “Who are you calling ‘Loser’? I’m almost at my place now.”
“That makes you the loser. I’m already in your living room.”
What the hell? “How did you get there so fast?”
“I know a shortcut. I’m guessing you just let your GPS guide you?”
He heard her chuckle with satisfaction and had to grin. “I’ll be there in two minutes to pay up.”

He pulled into the underground parking garage at his place. Whistling, he got into the elevator. He didn’t think he’d be happy if he’d lost to someone else, but it was Ginger. Besides, lunch and burying his face in her afterward? That felt more like a gold medal than a penalty.

The elevator stopped on the top floor, and he stepped into the penthouse. It was huge, with an open layout and floor to ceiling windows that overlooked the city. At night, the view would be dazzling.

The kitchen had four gas burners and a griddle, plus two ovens and a built-in microwave. An enormous stainless steel refrigerator occupied the center, and pots and pans hung from hooks on the high ceiling. “Was I a great cook?” he asked.

“No. But you let one of Mark’s chefs design the kitchen for you. You wanted it to have everything.” She ran her hand along the marble countertop. “It was your way of telling me you wanted me to have the best. You bought it after we graduated from college.”

“Where did we go?”
“Berkeley.” She smiled. “You only got in because your brothers made a huge donation in your name, I think.”
“How come?”
“You applied past deadline because you heard it was the only school I applied to.”
“Seriously? You didn’t have a backup school?”
“I didn’t want to go anywhere else. It was Berkeley or nothing.”
“Good thing you got in then.”
She grinned. “I know.”

“Where was I supposed to go?” he asked. He was certain his parents had particular expectations, especially Salazar, who undoubtedly wanted to pretend to visit him so he could screw the young things on campus.

“An Ivy League school.”
“I see.” Probably any top-tier university with hot coeds would’ve been acceptable. He looked around. “Where do I keep the takeout menus?”

She reached over and opened the top drawer in the kitchen. “Here.” She pulled out a sheaf of them. “We have Chinese, Italian, Thai and basically everything else. If they don’t deliver, you have the concierge on your speed dial.”
“What are you in the mood for?”

“Mmm.” She considered. “How about a pepperoni pizza?”

“Works for me.” He ordered a large pepperoni pizza and a bottle of Coke Zero and mineral water. The bored-sounding girl on the line said it’d take about thirty minutes. Perfect, he thought.

He tossed the phone on the countertop. “We have half an hour,” he said. “So I move that we have dessert first.”

“Dessert?”

“I believe you won the bet.” He walked toward her, herding her over to the kitchen island. Her face flushed, her eyes brilliant and dark.

She licked her lips. “What if the delivery guy comes early?”

“Time to live dangerously.” He stripped her of her shirt and bra and dropped to his knees in front of her, undoing the clasp on her shorts and pulling them and her panties down her smooth legs, all the while peppering her belly with feather-light kisses.

He dipped a thumb between her legs and grunted with approval at how wet she already was. “Were you thinking about this while you were waiting for me?”

“A little,” she said, her voice unsteady.

He pushed at her legs. “Spread wider and tilt your hips forward. Lean back against the island.”

She did as she was told. He licked a wet path down her belly until he reached the slick prize between her legs. He tongued it gently, licking with just the tip. A tremor ran through her, and he blew on it, then breathed in her scent. Here it was darker and heavier with her feminine musk. He wanted to hear her scream her brains out in his kitchen. Then in his living room. And bedroom. And everywhere else in the penthouse.

He pushed his tongue into her folds and she moaned softly, pushing her sex toward his mouth. He gripped her pelvis, holding her there so he could eat her up.

As he licked and sucked on her clit, she threw her head back, her hair hanging loose. The position pushed her breasts out, the pink tips erect, and the soft mounds jiggling with every labored breath she took. Did she have any idea how fucking gorgeous she was? Everything paled next to her.

He pushed his tongue as far as he could into her tight channel, savoring the way she tasted and felt. She was wound tight, so close that a little nudge and she’d fall apart. She was also damn vocal about what she wanted—harder, faster, yes there, oh my god.

Her voice and demands drove him. He wanted to feel her climax burn through her with keen desperation that left him aching.
He coated his thumb thoroughly with her slick juices until it was drenched. Then increasing the pressure of his mouth, he brushed her tight rosette with it.

Her hands dug into his hair. “Oh my god. Shane!” She spread herself wider, completely open to him. Her knuckles whitened as she screamed and came apart. Her legs gave out, and he caught her before she hit the floor.

She shuddered in his arms. “Oh my god…” she moaned.

He kissed her on the mouth. She responded greedily, her body apparently still primed. “I want you inside me so bad,” she whispered against his mouth as she licked her own juices from his lips. “Please.”

He unbuttoned and unzipped his pants. His cock sprang out, fully erect and hard as marble. “Ride me,” he ordered.

Biting her lower lip, she gripped his shaft and levered herself onto him. She was so slick he slipped right in. He bit back a groan. Holy hell. That felt amazing. Like a hot, moist velvet glove…

Her walls clenched around him as she moved. He rubbed a finger around her folds, getting it wet. As she found her rhythm, he teased her anus then pressed into it.

Sucking in a deep breath, she slowed then stilled. “Shane…”

“Does it not feel good?” he murmured, his mouth traveling over her collarbone.

“It…does, but…”

“Shhh. Don’t overthink it. Just enjoy it.” He licked the pulse on her neck.

“Haven’t we done this before?”

She swallowed before shaking her head.

“If you don’t like it, tell me and I’ll stop.”

She moved again, thank god, and he kept his rhythm on her anus synced to hers over his cock. She whimpered, the sound thin with need.

A knot of pleasure tingled in his groin, and he gritted his teeth as he held himself back. Ginger’s pleasure came first.

He braced his feet on the floor and thrust into her harder, increasing the pressure and speed. She watched him, her darkened eyes on his. Her breasts bobbed, and she panted faster. “Yes, yes, yes.”

“Come for me, Ginger,” he said.

She clenched her teeth, then threw her head back and screamed as he kept pumping into her. Her walls tightened and milked his cock, making him hiss as an electric sensation spread all over him. She looked like a goddess, her golden hair cascading around her, and her body glowing with pleasure.

Unable to wait anymore, he gripped her ass hard as he ground into her. “Mine,” he grated out, then let go and came inside her.
Her arms relaxed around him. The kiss she gave him was cotton candy sweet.

Content with the world, he kissed her back leisurely. Then sighed when the intercom buzzed.

Her belly growled on cue, and she pulled back with a giggle. “Lunch.”

He grazed her stomach with a finger. “Your wish is my command.”

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Ginger munched on a slice of pizza as she looked around the penthouse.

Everything was immaculate; it hadn’t changed at all since the day she’d come over to return the engagement ring. The housekeeping had kept the place in tiptop shape, and all the photos and albums on the mantle over the fireplace were dust-free.

Shane pulled three of the albums and brought them to the low table where their pizza was spread out. “So. Are the pictures inside all mine?” he asked.

“No. Some of them are mine and some are your family photographer’s.” She flipped opened the black one. Shane had never let her peek inside it before, calling it “a bunch of old family photos and stupid stuff”.

Inside were pictures of Shane as a baby, then his transformation into a toddler…a boy…then a man. He hadn’t been the happiest child. Kids generally weren’t shy and awkward in front of cameras, especially when they were handsome and generally outgoing. But Shane’s smiles were either stoic or obviously staged at the photographer’s direction. And he wasn’t the only one. His siblings also posed like store mannequins, and his parents were just as stiff, even in the shots where they had their arms around each other.

“Do you remember any of it?” she asked, looking at him.

“No. I just know we weren’t all that happy.”

“Things could change, you know,” she said. “Ceinlys was so…relaxed at the dinner. I’ve never seen her like that before.”

He shrugged. “I guess.”

“What about your dad? Has he called you yet?”

“Nah. And I don’t really expect him to. He never wanted me anyway.” He gave her a rueful smile that made her chest tight. “Yeah, I remember that much. Anyway, let’s not talk about that boring stuff. If you want to look through the photos, feel free. I’m going to nap now that I’m full.” He patted his stomach.

“Join me?”

“If I nap now I’m not going to be able to fall asleep tonight.” She wanted to look at the rest of the albums, especially the ones he’d never let her see.
He nodded and closed his eyes. Soon he was snoring softly, his face slack and relaxed. She pulled an afghan over him and turned back to the albums.

Finally she reached a red one. She hadn’t seen that one either. She’d never understood why he’d kept so many if he didn’t want to show them to anybody. He certainly hadn’t looked at them much.

When she flipped the pages, an envelope dropped to the floor. She picked it up. It held something stiff inside, maybe a few photos he hadn’t yet mounted? There were only two words on the envelope—Re: Ginger.

Tilting her head, she opened it. Six photos spilled out onto her hands, then fell to the floor as she started shaking violently.

Her vision hazed, her mouth going dry. She blinked a few times, trying to focus on them, to see the details. Her heart pounding erratically, and something bitter and nasty coursed through her veins. She clenched her teeth as her stomach twisted hard, pushing the pizza back up.

She fell to her knees in front of the glossy photos. They were of her…and some men. They were in some kind of club, but she didn’t recognize the location. And she didn’t recognize anybody else in the pictures except herself.

But in the photos, she was laughing with the men. One of them had his hand on the small of her back and was leaning close, his face a handsbreadth away from her breasts. He wasn’t an ugly man, but she would’ve never allowed somebody she didn’t even know that kind of liberty, even if she’d been single.

Then there was another one of her dancing and laughing. Again, surrounded by men. They looked at her, and it appeared they were eye-fucking her even in the dim light.

Somebody buying her a drink. She accepting it with a flirty grin and a hand on the collar of his shirt.

She slowly gathered them up. They had to be photoshopped. There had to be some kind of inconsistency with the shadows or colors or…something that would show that they weren’t genuine.

Her body went alternately hot and cold as she studied every single square inch of them. She couldn’t see anything that looked wrong. And being a photographer herself, she knew what to look for.

What if whoever was behind them was really good? What if that was how they were able to make them look so authentic?

Who would make something like these and send them to Shane? A jealous woman who wanted Shane for herself? But Ginger had never noticed anybody like that around. He’d always been careful to let people know he was with Ginger and Ginger only.

She didn’t have any stalker or psycho ex-boyfriend either. She’d dated a boy
before Shane, but that had been her freshman year of high school. The last she’d heard, he was a successful lawyer, happily married with two kids.

She reached for the envelope. The front had Shane’s name and address, and some PO box for the sender who hadn’t bothered to put down his—or her—name. It was postmarked the previous May.

Now it made sense. His erratic behavior. His leaving. His refusal to talk to her.

Anger exploded in her chest, stealing her breath. She was shaking so hard, she couldn’t even cry out in fury. Her eyes grew hot with unshed tears. He should’ve confronted her with them. Given her a chance to explain. She’d deserved that much, hadn’t she?

At the same time, a small part of her knew why he hadn’t. He’d never had any role model. That had been before his siblings had settled down, and his parents’ marriage had been a train wreck. She could just see him asking Salazar for advice. “Well, son, you should’ve expected it. That’s always how relationships go. There are other fish in the sea.”

The fury turned into an aching sense of loss and betrayal. She tried to blink away the tears, but they coursed down her cheeks anyway.

She stuffed the horrible pictures back into the envelope and shoved it into her purse. She was about to leave, then stopped at the sight of Shane. Quickly she scribbled a note for him on a napkin:

_I just remembered something I have to do. Don’t worry about me._

She was going to find out who’d sabotaged her relationship with Shane and stolen one of the most precious things in her life. And then there would be hell to pay.
Chapter Sixteen

The first thing Ginger did when she got home was boot her laptop so she could look up the address. The PO Box was located in Cincinnati, Ohio. She could probably call the post office and ask who was renting it.

The United States Postal Service site pulled up the number. When she dialed, the clerk said there must’ve been an error since the PO Box number didn’t exist. “You might want to contact the sender for the right address.”

“I don’t have their number or anything,” she said.

“Oh. Then I don’t know. Do you at least know their full name or the company name?”

“No, I’m afraid not.”

The man sucked his teeth. “Don’t know what to tell you then.”

“Thanks anyway.” She hung up. Dead end.

She bit her lower lip. Why did she think it’d be easy? She’d thought she’d trace the address, find whoever was behind this and confront them. Were there any fingerprints on the envelope? She stared at it dubiously. Cop shows always had people handle evidence with gloves on. She doubted there was anything usable left after Shane and she had touched the envelope with their bare hands, assuming that the sender had been careless. It looked like it had all been carefully planned.

Who could help her figure this out? Shane’s family had private investigators on retainer to handle delicate situations, but she didn’t want to use them. She wasn’t certain that they’d be discreet until she got to the bottom of this. Their loyalty was to Shane, not her.

Then she snapped her fingers. Trevor!

How could she not have thought of this? She picked up her phone again and speed-dialed her brother. He’d always said he had contacts. Maybe they could dig around. When he didn’t pick up, she called her parents’ farm. Zoe answered the phone.
“Hi Mom. Is Trevor there?”
“No, he had to leave suddenly.”
“For what?”
“He said it was classified.” Ginger could imagine her mother rolling her eyes. Trevor threw that around so many times that they weren’t sure if it was for real or a code word for “I don’t want to talk bout it.”
“Did he say when he was coming back?” Trevor didn’t answer his phone or check voice mail when he was on his “classified” assignments.
“No. Are you all right, Ginger? You sound harried.”
“I’m fine,” she said. “I just remembered something I had to tell him, but it’s not urgent. I’ll wait until he’s back. Love you.”
“Love you too, dear.”
Ginger tapped her finger on the edge of her phone. Another bust. What should she do next? Just cold call a few investigators and see? But the really good ones didn’t work for just anybody. She’d heard rumors that even Justin Sterling had had to get an introduction at one point.
She called Debbie. “Hey, can we meet?” Debbie was her last hope.
“I’m in downtown right now. You want to meet for coffee or something?”
“Sure.”
“Actually let’s have dim sum. I didn’t eat lunch, and I’m starving.”
“Okay, that’s fine, too.”
“Meet me at Golden Dragon in half an hour or so then. If I get there early I’ll order for you.”
Ginger put the envelope back into her purse and drove to the restaurant. Debbie liked it because it had fabulous Chinese food, and most importantly, she got to eat free there since it was owned by one of her second cousins. The place was gorgeously appointed in rich gold and red and dragon motifs. The hostess recognized Ginger and led her immediately to the private dining room in the back.
Debbie was in a cute sunflower yellow dress with spaghetti straps. Expertly pedicured toes peeked through her matching sandals. She pushed her shoulder-length black hair back when she noticed Ginger and gestured at the empty high-backed chair. “I just got here. Finished my soup. The lobster’s very good today.”
“Is lobster ever not good?” Ginger took the seat. It was amazing how much food Debbie ate and still managed to stay thin.
Debbie chortled. “True.” Her sharp gaze zeroed in on Ginger’s face. “So what’s up? You don’t look like a carefree, ‘I’m in love’ kind of woman. I thought you reconciled with Shane?” She glanced at the ring on Ginger’s finger.
“We did, and it was great, but that’s not why I wanted to see you.” She pulled
out the photos inside and explained what they were. And how she couldn’t trace anything back to the sender.

Debbie stared at the pictures. “They’re really good. Wow. They look so authentic.”

“That’s the problem. I think they’re the reason Shane pulled that disappearing act.”

Debbie’s head snapped up. “Damn. That sucks. Why didn’t he say something?”

“I don’t know. Maybe he just freaked out. You know his family history. And these pictures… Shane probably looked for signs of manipulation and couldn’t find any.” He was a talented photographer himself and knew what good photoshopping could do.

Debbie scowled. “So you can’t tell if they’re photoshopped either?”

“If they were of somebody else, I would’ve thought they were real.”

“Eeek.” She rested her chin in her hand. “What do you want to do?”

“I want to find the person who did this.” Ginger explained what she’d tried.

“So it looks like I’ll have to hire a pro for the job, and I’d like your help.”

“How?”

“You guys have an investigator on retainer, don’t you?”

“Yeah, we do, for vetting new employees and other stuff. But I don’t know the guy personally. He only deals with Dad. I’ll ask when I call him tonight.”

Debbie scowled. “But the guy might be really expensive. Dad likes to splurge—you get what you pay for, blah blah blah blah blah.”

“I’ve got the money,” Ginger said. Dane had paid her plenty.

“Okay. I can’t promise anything…but hey, if Dad says no, we’ll find somebody else. It doesn’t matter.” Debbie narrowed her eyes. “I want to know what bastard did this to you, so I can set them on fire and watch them burn.”

Ginger hugged her friend. “You’re the best.”

* * *

“Ginger!”

His breaths came out in white puffs in the frosty air. He could barely make out anything in the darkness, but the way his voice echoed said the place was barren.

The sound of breathing grew louder as he ran. His heartbeat increased, each da-dum louder that the one before.

Where was she? He was so damn alone…
Finally he saw someone not too far ahead. He ran toward the figure,
knowing it was Ginger. Nobody else was in the dark place except her.

She was standing in a puddle. Ginger turned her head slowly, her gaze unfocused and dim. She didn’t smile or wave. Her arms dangled by her sides, and there was a wet red stain on her thin, white dress. His gut twisted as he saw it was blood. “Ginger…”

The pale skin over her collarbone split. More blood spilled out.

“Oh my god, Ginger.” He reached out for her, pulled her close.

She didn’t make a sound, but more of her skin peeled open like an invisible knife was being pulled across her.

Fear chilled him. He held onto her, tightening his arms around her. “Stop!” he screamed, but more lacerations appeared on her skin and face. “Ginger!”

“Shane…?” she whispered. “It hurts.”

“Somebody help!” Panic bubbled in his throat. “Help!”

“Help!” Shane jackknifed into a sitting position…then blinked at the bright light shining into his eyes. He put a hand over them. Sweat filmed over his body, and his heart was beating fast and hard.

What the hell had that been? It didn’t feel like a lost memory coming back. He buried his head in his hands, his heart starting to slow. Stupid nightmare. He looked around.

Alone.

“Ginger?” he called out. “Ginger?”

No answer. Panic re-spiked his pulse. He rolled to his feet, bumping into the table. The empty pizza box and napkins fell on the floor, but he ignored them.

“Ginger, where are you?”

He looked everywhere. Where was she? Was she okay?

There had been so much blood. He ran a hand over his face, trying to regain some perspective. It was just a nightmare. Not real. She was probably fine. He dialed her number.

“Hey, Shane,” Ginger said.

“Where are you?”

“I’m out. With Debbie. Are you okay?”

Was he okay? He stared at his shaking hand. Jesus. He clenched it and dragged in some air. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m fine.”

“I left you a note on the pizza box.”

“You did? Uh, yeah. I didn’t see it. I…” He swallowed. “I was just worried.”

Who was Debbie? Oh yeah… Ginger’s best friend. “Okay then. Have a good time. When are you coming back?”

“Not sure yet. I have a lot of work to catch up on since I took so much time off. Even when I’m not working for clients, I have paperwork and stuff.”
He wanted to see her now, to make sure she was okay, but he also didn’t want her to see him like this. “Okay. Yeah, that’s fine.” He hung up and tossed the phone on the counter and rested his elbows on it, burying his face in his hands. Had he always overreacted after bad dreams? What an embarrassment.

Or was it just that particular dream? Jesus, it had felt real! He could still smell Ginger’s blood.

He breathed through his mouth. She’d been cut every time he touched her or said her name. Even his panic-scrambled brain could pick that up.

He dug the heels of his palms against his eyes. It was just a stupid dream. It didn’t mean anything.
Chapter Seventeen

Ginger didn’t go back to Shane’s penthouse after she finished the dim sum with Debbie. Instead she’d gone to her apartment to give herself some time to process everything that had happened.

How the discovery of the photos had changed so many things so fast…and so irrevocably. She’d been convinced that even though Shane didn’t remember everything—and the issue of what had made him leave in the first place hadn’t been resolved—they might be able to make their relationship work. She couldn’t have been more wrong.

The pictures established a pattern. They were clearly the reason Shane had left her the first time. And he had run off again when Dane had told him about her ex-boyfriend. Apparently, all it took for him to hightail it was an insinuation that she might not be faithful.

Would she be asked to pay for the sins of his parents forever? She’d always been true to Shane, always been extra careful not to give the wrong impression because she was aware of his background.

But one set of photos had destroyed everything.

She closed her eyes, trying to block out the painful twist in her heart, and clenched her jaw. What if there hadn’t been just one set? What if there had been more, and the ones she was holding were just the final straw?

No way to tell, but there was one thing she knew for sure—if he didn’t trust her, she couldn’t continue to be with him. Her word should be able to trump even “evidence” like this, no matter how perfectly photoshopped.

Her phone rang. Before Ginger could say hello, Debbie squealed. “Daddy said yes!”

Ginger sat up. “Really?”

“Yup. He said, ‘That’s horrible. I like Ginger.’” Debbie giggled. “I think he likes you because he thinks you’re a calming influence on me. Anyway, he sent me information for the family investigator. I’ll forward it to your email so you
can contact him yourself. Apparently he’s very good and very discreet. Also, no connection to the Pryce family. I checked.”

“Oh my god, thank you!”

“Keep me posted!” Debbie hung up.

Soon, a message popped up in Ginger’s inbox with a name, number and email address. No other info.

Ginger typed out a short memo to the investigator, scanning and attaching copies of the pictures and envelope. She was just about to click SEND when she hesitated. *If I find out who it is, then what?* She’d been furious earlier and wanted whoever it was to pay. But now that she’d had some time to process the situation, she wasn’t so sure. She could probably deal with a random stalker, but what if it was somebody closer?

Ceinlys, for example, had always thought Shane could do better than Ginger.

A knot of pain formed at the base of Ginger’s neck. She stood up and stretched, rotating her neck around and massaging her shoulders.

It didn’t help.

She sat down again and closed her eyes. *Whoever it is, the first thing is to know.* She hit SEND and closed the laptop. It was done. She would just wait for the report.

* * *

Shane puffed out a breath as he stood outside Dane’s penthouse. The bastard was inside, but taking his sweet time answering the door.

A blonde finally opened it. She was in nothing but a silky red robe…which stuck out prominently in the chest area. “Hi?”

“Where’s Dane?”

“He’s, like, in the back? Should I get him?”

“Don’t bother.” Shane shouldered past her.

Dane’s place was professionally done with minimal personal touches. No family photos, no favorite books or movies. Just a large wall-mounted TV, recessed lights illuminating a collection of crystal figurines from Swarovski, and expensive furniture. It looked like a model home rather than a place somebody actually lived.

“Hey. Are you, like, barging in?”

Shane gritted his teeth. “Dane!”

His brother emerged from the master suite in a robe. “What do you want?”

“How? I tried to, you know, stop him, but he came inside? Who is he?”

“How the hell can you date somebody who can’t talk without turning
“Wow. Are you, like, rude or what?”
Dane smiled at the blonde. “Why don’t you get dressed? I’ll see you later.”
“You call me, honey?” She beamed at Dane, gave Shane a dirty look, and disappeared into the suite.
“Scotch?” Dane said.
“You know where Ginger lives, don’t you?” Shane said.

Shrugging, Dane poured a glass. “I thought she was living with you now. Didn’t you run after her to her parents’ place?”
“What the—? Have you been spying on me?”
Dane gave him a bland look. “I noticed Mark was missing one of his cars.”
Shane scowled, unsure whether to believe him. “Ginger’s probably at her place. I just don’t know where that is.” He didn’t want to contact Debbie. She was like a bulldog on steroids.
“Not surprising. She moved after she came back from South Africa.”
“So…her new address?”
Dane rattled it off, and Shane put it into his phone.
“Why are you going after her?” Dane said. “Maybe she doesn’t want to be with you right now.”
“My god, your assholeness really knows no bounds. Do you have any friends? Anyone at all you actually like?”
Dane gave him a look. “I liked grandmother Shirley, but she’s dead. And Blake is a friend.”
Shane tilted his head, curious about a person who would be friends with Dane. “Is that Blake male or female?”
“Male. Blake Pryce-Reed. One of our cousins. Now, back to the subject. You didn’t want to be around Ginger when you took off. You left the entire damned continent and cut off all communication with her. So don’t act like she can’t feel the same way about you. That would make you a hypocrite.”
That gave Shane a pause. He still couldn’t remember what had made him leave the way he had. “Do you know why I left?”
Dane shrugged. “Not really. Something about some pictures.”
“What pictures?”
“I don’t know, since you never discussed them with me.”
Shane frowned. “Does Mark know?”
“Highly doubtful. You kept a lot of things to yourself, and he’s not the person you would’ve gone to for relationship advice. Back then Mark’s record for dating the same woman was about three months.”
The blonde reemerged from the bedroom suite. She kissed Dane on the mouth. “Don’t forget to call me?”

“Don’t worry.”

She gave Shane another dirty look before leaving. Shane stared at his brother. “What’s the attraction of a woman like that?”

“Dumb and blonde.” Dane smiled slightly. “Just my type.”

Shane shook his head. “Never mind. I’m leaving now.”

“If you’re smart you’ll take my advice. Just let Ginger have some time to herself while you see the specialist I arranged for you. If you really want to know about your past, you’ll have to do it yourself instead of relying on others to fill in the blanks. People are notoriously unreliable and self-serving. And until you can resolve the past issue that had you disappearing, there’s always a chance it could come back to bite you in the ass later. What are you going to do then, when you might be married with kids?”

No way. Shane knew he’d never abandon Ginger and their children. God, just the idea of raising children with her made his heart tight with emotions.

But the part of him that had been shaken by the nightmare wondered if it was wise to ignore Dane’s advice. Even if the dream hadn’t been his lost memory, it might be related to his fears or something.

“Who’s the specialist again?” he asked.

“Dr. Jamie Marsh. I’ll have my secretary send you the info and the scotch you didn’t get at Éternité.”

* * *

Shane hadn’t called or contacted her in any way in the past week. Ginger didn’t know what to think of that. He’d seemed so sincere about them being together at the farm, so she’d been certain he’d pressure her to move in with him immediately. Even though a small part of her was glad he wasn’t calling every day, another part of her ached. She poured herself the last of the ridiculously expensive scotch Shane had bought her and downed it. Once upon a time she’d hated the stuff, but somewhere along the line she’d grown to like it…because he liked it.

Did he feel as empty as she did? Could he?

The investigator also hadn’t reported any progress. She gnawed on her nails. It’d only been a week. Even if he was one of the best—and Debbie’s dad wouldn’t hire somebody less than the best—it would take him some time. He also had other clients, most of them his regulars probably.

At least her freelance business was still doing well despite all the
cancellations. Several of the clients who’d canceled at the last minute sent her referral business, their way of apologizing for what had happened. Ginger also spent her free time getting caught up on paperwork.

When she was alone at night, she stared at the photos while drinking scotch. She’d begun studying the people around her every time she went outside, wondering if one of them hated her enough to pull something like this.

Damn it. She rubbed the spot between her eyebrows. She didn’t want to be paranoid or suspicious of people like that. Good people far outweighed the bad. Why let this one jerk ruin it for her?

There was a knock on her door, and she glanced at the wall clock, frowning. It was already after ten.

She shoved the pictures back into the envelope and opened the door. Shane stood there with a bouquet of Thai orchids. He looked good, his shirt and pants straining in all the right places to remind her of his awesome, chiseled body underneath. He also had gotten a neat haircut, although the five o’clock shadow along his jaw lent a certain roguish charm.

“Hi,” she said almost stupidly, suddenly aware of how badly she was dressed. She’d thrown on a ratty old tee-shirt and cotton boxers earlier after her shower.

“Hi yourself.”

“What are you doing here?”

He shrugged and gave her a cockeyed smile. “I was in the neighborhood.”

The alcohol felt all too warm in her belly, and she swallowed. She tightened her hand around the doorknob, trying to rein herself in before she launched himself at him. *There is no future between us without trust.* “How did you get my address?”

“Dane had it.”

“Did you tell him I owed you money or something?” she joked. She couldn’t imagine why else Dane would’ve been helpful.

He shook his head. “I told him I needed to see you. Can I come in?”

She stood there, her mouth suddenly dry. Why was he here all of a sudden? “It’s not a good ide—”

A small frown creased his forehead, then he stepped around her and was inside before she could stop him.

Her already small apartment seemed to shrink a bit. Shane took in the messy living room. Nobody had vacuumed the place while she’d been out of the country, a layer of dust was on everything…and she hadn’t fully unpacked yet either. Her IKEA couch had a pile of clothes on the back, and her small dining table held a mountain of loosely arranged papers. She cringed when she noticed
dirty plates in the sink. *Oh well,* she thought. *Shane might as well learn—again—that she wasn’t the best housekeeper.*

“If you need help packing, I can hire movers,” he offered.

“What?” she said.

He gestured around. “You’re packing, right? I can get you some movers. Take care of the lease.”

Her lips formed a silent O, but she was nodding inside. He undoubtedly thought that she was getting ready to send her stuff over to his place. “I’m not moving. I’ve just been busy, which is why I haven’t finished unpacking.”

“Oh.” Shane glanced at the couch.

She sighed. Since he wasn’t going to leave until he’d said his piece, she might as well humor him... for now. The key was to win the war, not the minor skirmishes along the way. “It’s clean if you want to sit down. Just push my stuff to the side.” She slipped into the kitchen and put the plates in the dishwasher, which was already full. She dumped some detergent in and started a cycle.

He moved her notebooks over to the table and sat down. “So. You still have things to do?”

He blinked.

“You left me a note saying you have stuff to do. I was wondering how much longer you’re going to be ‘doing things’."

She leaned against the dining table. It hurt to look at him, but at the same time she couldn’t look away without feeling like her heart would split in half. How could she love a man who didn’t trust her?

*Shane stood in front of her locker, his stance stiff. Girding her loins, she stared at him, then cleared her throat. When he didn’t move away, she said,*

“What do you want?”

*He shoved a box at her. “Here.”*

“What’s that?” She looked down and gasped. *It was the latest Nikon, with every cool feature she could dream of. She’d been salivating over it except she could never afford something that expensive.*

“A new camera.” *He pushed it toward her. “For you.”*

*She took a step back. “Jeez, Shane, no. I can’t accept that. Take it back.”*

“You can take it,” he said, shuffling his feet. “I broke yours.”

“You know how much that thing costs? Mine was old. Not worth nearly that much.”

“I’m sure it was new and worth quite a bit when you bought it.”

*She crossed her arms. “Look, I’m not taking this overpriced camera just to make you feel better.”*

*He blinked, the tension leaving his jaw. “You…don’t want it?”*
“This isn’t about me or the camera.” Before he could respond, she raised a hand. “Forget it. I didn’t tell my parents, so you won’t be called into the principal’s office or get into trouble, okay?”

He shook his head, looking a bit mulish. “It’s not okay. I’m not doing this to bribe you.” He swallowed, then tilted his chin until he was gazing straight into her eyes. “I’m sorry.”

His voice was so low she’d thought she’d imagined it. The muscles in his jaw flexed as she gaped at him. “Did you say something?”

“I’m sorry,” he said more loudly, the set of his shoulders growing tight. He didn’t try to add “if you felt offended” or “if you felt hurt.” Just a simple apology, and he kept his eyes on hers even as a dark flush suffused his cheeks.

He was honestly, genuinely sorry.

She chewed her lower lip, debating what to do as she studied him. Her dad often said that what separated the men from the boys was that a man knew when he was wrong. And what separated cowards from the brave was the latter were able to acknowledge that they were wrong out loud.

Shane had always been like that—doing his best to rise above his circumstances. That was the reason she’d opened her heart to him all those years ago, and that was why she still loved him despite everything.

“I honestly don’t know.” She sighed, feeling empty and aching. “There are things that need to be resolved if we’re going to stay together.”

“What are they?”

“They’re—” Her phone buzzed. She glanced over, debating whether to ignore it or take it.

What if it was the investigator? She’d asked him to contact her immediately with whatever information he found.

“They’re…?” Shane prompted.

She sighed. “Give me a second.” She reached for the phone, needing to check.

It was the investigator. He’d sent one short text:

Source confirmed. Shane Pryce.
Ginger stared at the text, unsure what it meant. Shane Pryce. There had to be other Shane Pryces out there.

Why would Shane send a set of photoshopped photos to himself from Ohio? It didn’t make any sense.

On the other hand, Debbie had been so confident in the private investigator’s ability. And the PI had no reason to make anything up.

She gripped the edge of the table as her knees started to shake. Spots appeared in her vision, swirling around. A familiar voice called out to her, but it was strangely muted—there seemed to be cotton balls in her ears. Then everything faded away.

When she opened her eyes, she was looking at Shane’s face, which was only a few inches away from hers. His complexion had paled, gone almost bloodless as he stared down at her. Where was she?

She was on a couch—her couch. All her notebooks and things were scattered on the floor. Her lips were dry, and she licked them. “Get me my phone.”

“I can call you a doctor,” Shane said.

“No. My phone.” She winced at how weak and whiny she sounded. But she didn’t have a lot of energy, and she didn’t want to argue.

He brought her the phone from the dining table. She checked the text. It was still there. Source confirmed. Shane Pryce.

Her fingers shook as she typed a response: Shane Pryce is the one who made the photos? Is that what you’re saying?

Soon he replied: Mailed. Don’t know who took the photos. Do you know which Shane Pryce? There are a lot of people with that name. Don’t have the full name, but the two middle initials are L. A.

Her stomach churned violently, and she put a hand over her mouth. Unable to wait any longer, she rushed to the bathroom and threw up everything she’d had earlier that day.
“Ginger, are you okay?” Shane rubbed her back, his big hand warm and soothing.

She closed her eyes as they teared up. He seemed to have no idea he was at the center of her misery. Or was that an act too? His medical records said he didn’t remember, but that was based on what he’d told them, not something doctors could check independently. It wasn’t like they could read his mind.

She couldn’t look at him. It made her want to throw up again. She opened her mouth to tell him to leave, but her throat was so raw all she could do was croak, “Get out.”

“Ginger—”

“Get out!” She hung her head, scrunching her eyes shut. “Get out!”

Shane hesitated—she could feel him hovering near her. He had to leave before she did something she didn’t mean to. “Get…out.”

Finally he said, “Call me.” Then with a final pat on her back, he left her apartment.

* * *

What the fuck had happened back there? Shane stopped in front of his car and spun around to face her apartment building. Her unit still had the lights on.

She hadn’t been upset at first, but something had really done a job on her. His instincts were screaming at him to stay with her, but she’d looked like she’d shatter if he breathed wrong. He had to back off, give her some time to recoup before they both did something they’d regret later.

It had to be the text she’d gotten. He should’ve insisted that she ignore it until they got their issues figured out first. He’d been planning to have her move in with him and get rid of her apartment. He’d been fully prepared to tie the knot ASAP.

He needed to know what was in the text to fix the mess. He called Mark.

“What does the family do when we want something somewhat shady taken care of?” he asked.

“Uh.” Mark cleared his throat. “What kind of shady stuff are you talking about?”

“I want to look at somebody’s texts.”

“Oh, that kind of stuff.” A short pause. “You, ah, wouldn’t be trying to hack into Ginger’s texts or anything, would you?”

“What if I am?”

“It’s better if you don’t. I don’t know what happened between the two of you that you left the States and ignored her, but you can’t have any meaningful
relationship if you have to monitor her every move. Not even Dad did that with Mom. If you can’t trust her a hundred percent, then you should stop seeing her.”
   “It’s not like that, Mark.”
   A sigh. “You’re a smart guy, so I’ll quit nagging.”
   “The person I should be calling?” Shane prompted.
   “It should be on your phone. Listed under The Man, your nickname for Benjamin Clark.”
   Shane thanked Mark and found The Man.
   A cold, professional female voice answered. “Yes, Mr. Pryce?”
   “I want Ginger Maxwell’s texts for the last three weeks sent over. Her number is…”
Debbie was a true friend. She didn’t wrinkle her nose at the mess that was Ginger’s apartment, she arrived in pajamas…and she came in carrying two cartons of chocolate ice cream and three boxes of Godiva truffles.

“I’m not letting you spend the night alone. We’re having a sleepover, just like back in high school,” Debbie said, explaining away her yellow Winnie the Poo pajamas. “You sounded absolutely wretched over the phone. What’s wrong?” She sat on the couch, giving Ginger a spoon and a carton.

Ginger took a bite of the sinfully rich ice cream. “The investigator your Dad referred me to came through.”

“Okay… That’s good, right?”

Ginger blinked as more tears came. “I don’t know. I wish I’d never tried to find out.”

“Why? What did he say?”

“Shane mailed the pictures.”

“What? Like your fiancé Shane?”

Ginger nodded as her face was too scrunched to speak.

“That rat bastard. Can I set him on fire?”

“No. I don’t want to see you go to jail.”

“If we get even one female juror at my trial, I’ll be acquitted.” Debbie ripped open a box of truffles and handed it to Ginger. “Here.”

“Thanks.” Ginger stuffed a piece into her mouth.

“I knew the Pryce family was messed up, but wow. Shane takes the gold medal for the fucked up asshole division. Who mails himself fake pics of his girlfriend? And for what reason?”

“That’s what I don’t understand. It wasn’t like we were married and he was trying to avoid paying alimony or something. All he had to do was break up with me. It would’ve hurt like hell, but I would’ve moved on.”

“Seriously.” Debbie started to spoon her ice cream up with more fury. “Just
because he’s a messed up psycho doesn’t mean everyone else is.” Her face took on a pensive look. “Wow, you know…what he did almost makes Dane look normal.”

Ginger snorted, then sobered. She still couldn’t believe everything had been lies—his courage to be able to say he was sorry when he knew he was wrong even back in high school, and the way he’d been always so true to her. She still loved him.

“Hey,” Debbie said, reading her look. “You dodged a bullet.”

“But it hurts.” Ginger swallowed a big lump. “Instead of feeling relieved, I want to crawl into a hole and never come out.”

“Aw, sweetie.” Debbie hugged her. “It hurts now, but it won’t hurt forever. Just give it some time. There are billions of men out there. Surely there’s one for you.”

“Yeah…you’re right.” But Ginger couldn’t help but think that the only man for her was Shane.

* * *

Source confirmed. Shane Pryce.

Shane Pryce is the one who made the photos? Is that what you’re saying?
Mailed. Don’t know who took the photos.
Do you know which Shane Pryce? There are a lot of people with that name.
Don’t know his full name, but the two middle initials are L. A.
Shane stared at the texts. Whoever had sent them to Ginger was unidentifiable. Probably a burner phone, the report had read.

It had been four days since Ginger kicked him out of her apartment, and the number of questions swirling around in his head was staggering. He didn’t understand what had been meant by “made” the photos. That was an odd way of putting it, and just added to the mystery of why she was so worried about them, and why she’d reacted the way she had three nights ago.

The hollow in his heart grew worse. An attempt at meditation—he’d remembered it was Iain’s favorite way to relax and re-center himself—hadn’t helped. Instead, it had only accentuated how empty he was inside.

If he could just reach that sanctuary… He closed his eyes. He knew it was out there somewhere, but his memory still had too many holes. He threw a book at the wall. “Damn it!”

He found his keys in the bottom drawer in his office. The housekeeper had kept his place immaculate, always dusting and vacuuming, wiping things down and putting them away. He’d looked through the photos in the albums,
wondering if they contained clues. None of them were bad enough to cause that kind of reaction from Ginger.

There was one place he hadn’t looked yet. Given the rather pricey lock on the door, maybe that was where he’d stored expensive cameras and other equipment. Still, he should check.

The lock clicked, and the door opened silently. Thick curtains were drawn tightly across the windows, and the room was pitch black. He flipped the switch on.

Lights illuminated photos. Lots and lots of them that had been carefully processed and hung. Most were frameless, mounted on stiff canvas, letting the pictures stand on their own.

He traveled slowly along the walls, studying the pictures. Had he taken them all? Was she upset about one of the ones in the room?

Most of them featured Ginger. Her in the sunlight. Her in the shadows. Her gorgeous, bare back. The close up of the smooth lines of her shoulders and collarbones. The black and white shot of her smiling face with only her lips in a vivid bright rose tone. There was one with Ginger lying on a bed of diamonds, her arms crossed over her bare torso.

Every one of them showed her in various moods and states of dress—or undress. He stared at them, like he was seeing Ginger for the first time ever. This was what she’d been to him—his light, the meaning of his life.

His breath rushed out, his knees weakening like pillars of wet sand. What the hell was he doing, trying to figure everything out before approaching her again? That wasn’t fixing the problem; it was avoiding the problem because he knew he’d had something to do with her breakdown the other night. Otherwise she wouldn’t have asked him to get out.

He grabbed his car keys. It was one o’clock in the morning, but he didn’t give a damn. He was going to see Ginger now.
Chapter Twenty

Shane pounded on Ginger’s door. He’d considered calling, but he didn’t want to give her time to get her defenses up. No more walls, he thought. He was going to talk to her and they were going to get everything sorted out that night.

Finally the door opened, and a petite Asian woman glared up at him. “What do you think you’re doing?” Her arms were crossed and her jaw jutted out, but the tough routine was ruined by her yellow Winnie the Pooh pajamas. “Do you know what time it is?”

“As a matter of fa—”

“That’s right, it’s after one. Ginger just fell asleep, so I say you get the hell out of here before I call the cops for harassment and public disturbance. And I’m sure they’ll think of some other charges to tack on if I ask nicely.”

He squinted. “Are you Debbie?”

“The one and only. And you’re Shane, the world’s biggest jackass. So nice to meet you and good-bye. Don’t ever darken Ginger’s doorstep again. I’m going to get her a Rottweiler as soon as the pet shops open tomorrow. An early Christmas present.” She bared her teeth.

“I don’t think pet shops sell Rottweilers.”

“For the right price they’ll get one.”

He sighed impatiently. “Look, I’m not here to fight with you.”

“Oh, but I am sooo here to fight with you. I don’t want you anywhere near Ginger.”

“Can we not talk in the hallway? The neighbors are going to hear everything.”

“When did you start caring so much about Ginger anyway?” But Debbie came out with keys jangling in her hand and locked the door. “Come on.”

She flip-flopped her way down the hall and past a heavy metal door that let out onto the emergency stairwell. After Shane had walked past her, she shut it and spun around to face him. The smooth steel platform was just big enough for
two people.

“Now nobody’ll hear us,” she said, her voice echoing slightly.

“You know about the pictures, don’t you?” He didn’t wait for a response.

“What are they?”

“Oh, that’s funny coming from you. Are you saying you have no idea?”

Shane was starting to get tired of the woman’s sarcasm. “Would I be here if I did?”

Debbie laughed nastily. “I honestly can’t say. You haven’t done anything to prove that you’re a sane individual. The only reason I’m standing here with you alone is because I’ve studied Shaolin wushu since I was eight.” She looked at him cockily. “I’m the stereotypical bad-ass Asian chick, so don’t try anything, buddy.”

“Just tell me!” Shane bit out between clenched teeth.

She crossed her arms. “Last May some photos were mailed to you from Ohio. They were somewhat incriminating, and they featured Ginger. Of course she didn’t actually do any of those things. But whoever photoshopped them is really good because Ginger said they looked totally legit.

“So okay, they explain why you disappeared and cut all communication with her. I guess you were so pissed off and felt betrayed that you felt like you couldn’t talk to her. I get that, I really do. Given, you know, how fucked up your family is and all.” The woman stepped forward and put a finger in his chest, jabbing him for emphasis. “But Ginger should’ve been given a chance to explain herself before you just cut her out like that. Seriously, how many years had you guys been dating? You should’ve known she would never do anything to hurt you.”

Shane stared at Debbie. Her words were like blows to his gut, but he’d had no idea. He still couldn’t remember anything about the pictures she was talking about. “Is that why she’s been avoiding me? She found out about the photos?”

“No, it’s much worse. I’ll tell you the whole story since you’re supposedly all amnesiac and everything.” The cynical twist of her lips said she didn’t believe that. “She tried to figure out who would do such a hateful thing to the two of you. When she couldn’t trace it herself, she hired a pro. And he discovered that the person who mailed the photos to you was…”


“Ding ding ding!” She stepped back and spread her arms wide. “You get the grand prize for being the biggest jerk in the world!”

“It wasn’t me!”

“Oh, but how can you be so sure? You can’t remember, can you?”

Bitterness surged inside him. “Okay, fine, I don’t remember. But what
motive would I have for doing something like that? It doesn’t make any sense!”


“Debbie, you have to believe me. I had nothing to do with the photos—”

“It’s not just the stupid photos, okay? You know why she went all the way to South Africa to see you face-to-face? Did you ever wonder?”

As a matter of fact, he hadn’t. But now he realized that maybe… “She said she couldn’t get in touch with me over the phone or email,” he said almost numbly as dread spread in his belly like cancer.

“She had work here. She had to cancel bookings to go see you. What do you think could have been so urgent that she had to go halfway around the world to see you in person?”

“I don’t—”

“She was pregnant!”

He clenched his hands, feeling like the floor under him had suddenly turned into quicksand. Ginger had never said a word about that. Neither had his family. There had been no sign of an infant at her parents’ farm, or in her apartment.

“What happened to the baby?” he whispered.

“She lost it on her flight back to the States.” Red rimmed Debbie’s eyes, and she sniffled. “Thankfully the plane landed soon after she started hemorrhaging. They rushed her to the hospital, so she was okay, but was too late for the baby.”

No, no, no. His mind emptied of everything but that one word: no.

“She was in shock, in pain, and she couldn’t call the one person who should’ve been with her. So she called me instead. She didn’t even tell her family because she was so worried about how they’d react. And it goes without saying your family never found out. I pretended like I went to meet her in Amsterdam for a shopping spree.” She breathed out harshly.

Shane doubled over, raising a hand. He couldn’t listen to any more. God, the pain… What the hell had he done?

But Debbie wasn’t finished. “Ginger’s a good person, get it? She’s one of the sweetest and gentlest people out there, always worried about others, and you don’t even begin to appreciate her. You’ve got no idea what you have because you’re so stuck being worried about whatever you think is more important than making her happy. If I were in your shoes, I’d kiss the ground she walks on every day.

“You don’t deserve her,” she said. “You never did, and I can’t believe she’s even given you a second chance. I sure as hell wouldn’t have.”

“Stop,” he croaked. Self-loathing closed around his throat, and he couldn’t
breathe. How could he have hurt Ginger like that? What the hell was wrong with him?

He gripped his head as he fell slowly to his knees.

Ginger gave him a coy smile while taking his picture.

“What picture did you take?”

“Young funny face?” she said with an embarrassed giggle.

“Don’t think so.” He reached over and grabbed her camera before she could stop him. It was the best digital camera on the market—his present for her birthday. He viewed the shot. “My lips?”

“You do have lovely lips,” she said primly, not quite meeting his gaze.

“I do, don’t I?” He grinned. “But then so do you.” He leaned in and brushed his mouth over hers.

The shape—the wide, Cupid-bow upper lip sitting over a perfectly curved bottom one. The texture—soft, plump and yielding. Then the taste—sweet fruit and cream with a hint of spice.

He licked the seam between her lips with the tip of his tongue, teasing and coaxing. She opened up with a sigh, then suddenly flicked his tongue with hers playfully. Her mouth curved into a smile as he deepened their contact and wrapped his arms around her. It was a kind of miracle—a simple kiss that made him feel like the king of the world.

Their first kiss…

The stairwell spun, or maybe it was him that was spiraling down. Shane couldn’t tell—darkness filled his vision like spilled ink. Something hard and unyielding pummeled his body, and he welcomed the physical pain. He deserved it. He deserved much worse.

Ginger… Their baby… She should’ve beaten the shit out of him when she’d come to Thailand.

A muffled scream. A small pinprick of light.

Then all black.
Chapter Twenty-One


Lines. So many damn lines and beeps and machines and people and hands.
The faces were hazy, like they were shrouded in white. There was a
pervading smell of bleach.

His head hurt, and his body felt like it had been pummeled with a meat
tenderizer. A woman murmured something to the people around him, and stuck a
needle into the IV. Soon a pleasant fog spread around him and the pain faded. He
tried to figure out what was going on. He’d been at Ginger’s apartment…

*Ginger… The baby…*

He gasped as the pain twisted in his heart. He clutched at his chest, his hand
shaking.

“Oh my god, what’s wrong with him?” a woman cried out. “Is he having a
heart attack?”

“No,” came an uncertain voice. “I’ll get the doctor.”
Somebody disappeared, and the people around him rearranged themselves.

“Shane, can you hear me? Do you know who I am?”
He stared at the person. The haze started to clear. “Mom.”
She put a hand over her mouth. Her skin was thin and dull. Deep lines
revealed her age, and there was hardly any makeup on her face. “Yes, my baby,”
she said, her voice shaky. “Yes, it’s me.”

“Ginger…?”

“Not here,” Dane said, his face expressionless. “What were you doing at her
place?”

“Needed…to talk to her.”

“Did she push you down the stairs?” Vanessa had her arms wrapped around
herself like she was cold, but there was fire in her eyes.

“What?”

“They found you at the bottom of a stairwell. I don’t know why you’d use
the stairs when they have an elevator in the building.”
“I decided to work off some excess energy and use the stairs. Then I slipped.”
“The dispatch said a woman called,” Vanessa insisted.
“A good Samaritan. We should give her a reward.” He made a weak waving motion. “Stop badgering me. I’m tired.”
Vanessa immediately backed down. “I’m sorry.”
Shane looked at the anxious faces of his family—minus Salazar.
Naturally. “What time is it?”
“Around five a.m.,” Mark answered.
“Jeez. Go home and get some rest. I’m fine. Just conked my head. I’ve done it before and survived. I’m sure I’ll survive this time.” He swallowed. He had to get them out of there. Immediately. “Please.”
Dane shrugged. “Let’s go. It’s not like we have the medical expertise to do anything.”
“He has a concussion. He needs us with him,” Vanessa said.
Dane looked at her, then at Shane, then back at her. “What does Barron think about you being out at this hour?”
“Barron? Who cares? Just because he’s Justin’s great uncle doesn’t mean he gets to tell me what to do.”
“And the fact that you’re carrying his heir in your belly right now…”
“Has nothing to do with anything!”
Dane cocked an eyebrow and pulled out his phone. “Let’s test that theory, shall we?”
“Argh! You are such a jerk!” Vanessa stormed out.
“Everyone, out. Let him rest in peace,” Dane said, herding everyone away from the bed and toward the door.
When he was alone, Shane closed his eyes and placed a hand over them. Everything had come back to him. How he and Ginger had met. All their amazing firsts. And the engagement…
He’d hesitated for so long before proposing. He hadn’t been sure if he could be the kind of man who deserved a woman like Ginger. But he hadn’t been able to give her up either. He’d told himself he could just improve. Become a man worthy of her by making her the happiest woman in the world because there was no way he would ever fall out of love with her.
“I couldn’t love you more if my life depended on it,” he’d told her, opening the ring box.
Instead, he’d hurt her.
Those fucking photos…
Shane tapped his fingers on the table as an expert studied each picture with care. He hadn’t seen anything that hinted that they were fake, but he’d probably missed something. Some people were just that damn good at Photoshop.

“If these were photoshopped, it’s a very good job,” the expert said, scratching his jaw. “I’m not saying they’re one hundred percent authentic either, but…” He pushed all the pictures back across the table. “I’d consider them authentic.”

Shane’s hand tightened into a fist. The man had to be mistaken. Even doctors screwed up now and then. “Thanks for your time,” he said tautly and paid the man. Shane slipped the pictures into his jacket pocket and got up. He’d prove that man wrong. Then come back and tell him so.

A second opinion…then a third…fourth…fifth…sixth…

Everyone said the same thing the first man did: the photos were authentic. And they all added a caveat to cover their asses in case they were wrong —“there’s a small chance…”—but it always came with a but.

But they were authentic.

Well maybe they were. And maybe there were good reasons why she was draped all over those other men. She might have been dizzy at that time. Or tired. Women did that all the time, right?

Ginger had no idea about the photos. Shane considered talking to her about them, just get the whole confrontation out of the way. But he couldn’t. Every time he tried to talk about the matter, his throat would close up. If he showed the photos to her…maybe she’d tell him the same thing all those damned experts had told him—they were real.

He had to leave for a while. Go somewhere far, far away so he could be alone and get some perspective. Staying in L.A. was torture—and he wasn’t as good an actor as his father. He couldn’t put his arms around his fiancée and fake a smile while wondering about the damned pictures.

Tears trickled down from under his hand. He was the biggest fucking failure in the world.
Chapter Twenty-Two

Ginger got up at around nine, feeling incredibly well-rested. There was a scent of coffee in the air. She stretched, grinning, and went to the kitchen. “Hey, early bird. Mind if I steal some?”

“Go ahead,” Debbie said from the couch, her voice listless.

Ginger brought her coffee to the living room and sat next to her best friend. Debbie had a blanket wrapped around her, and she was staring into the middle distance. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Come on. I know something’s up. Tell me.”

She sighed. “It’s Shane.”

Ginger almost spat out her coffee. *Crap.* Debbie had been threatening to confront him and beat him up for a while now. “What happened?”

“He came over.”

When she didn’t continue, Ginger said, “When?” Sometimes it required two mules and a wagon hitch to pull information out of Debbie, especially when she was in a funk.

“Last night after you went to sleep,” Debbie sighed again.

Ginger rolled her wrist. “Annnnd?”

“I spoke to him in the stairwell.”

“About what?” she said, when her friend didn’t continue.

“The photos.” Debbie blinked away tears. “Please don’t be mad, but it just infuriated me when he showed up and acted all normal. Like he didn’t destroy you with the things he did. So I set him straight. Told him everything.”

Ginger licked her dry lips. “Including my…” She couldn’t say the word.

“The thing that happened in Amsterdam?”

“Yes.”

“Oh my god…” Ginger put her hands on her cheeks. “You shouldn’t have.”

“Why shouldn’t he know? It was his baby too, and he should suffer—
assuming he’s even capable.”

“There was no point in hurting him, Debbie,” she said. “It’s in the past. What could I accomplish by letting him know now?”

“I wanted him to suffer, too. It’s not fair that you’re the only one who had to deal with the whole thing.”

Ginger hugged her friend, touched by Debbie’s fierce protectiveness. Guilt pricked her heart—she’d burdened her friend with so much.

“Anyway.” Debbie cleared her throat. “I told him. I’m sorry if you didn’t want him to know.”

“Okay, well… How did he react?”

“He, um, sort of sank to his knees and fell over.”

“What? Did he fall down or something?”

“Uh, yeah.” Debbie bit her lower lip. “All the way down the stairs. One full flight.”

“Oh my god.” At least her unit was on the second floor. Shane would be bruised, but he should be all right.

“I totally panicked.” Debbie twisted her hands in front of her.

Debbie talked big and cocky, but she’d grown up in a moneyed, privileged environment. Seeing something like that would’ve been traumatizing. “Are you all right?”

“I’m not the one who fell down the stairs.” Debbie sighed. “There was blood.”

Ginger’s heart stopped. “What?”

“He… I think he hit his head. It was matted with blood by the time I reached him.”

“No!” Ginger jumped to her feet. Her mind blanked except for the image of Shane lying in his own blood. “Do you know which hospital they took him to?”

“Yeah, but Gin—”

“He’s my fiancé.” She threw on a shirt and shorts, then pulled her hair into a ponytail. “I want to make sure he’s okay. You should’ve woken me up.”

“I didn’t want to bother you. You were so tired you slept through the siren.”

Ginger shook her head. She’d been suffering from insomnia for the last few days, but that didn’t mean she was okay finding out about Shane just now.

“Which hospital?”

Debbie told her. Ginger grabbed her keys and rushed out.

* * *

Shane was in a private wing. Ginger hurried along the antiseptic corridors until
Vanessa abruptly stepped in front of her.

“What are you doing here?”

Being in her second trimester hadn’t seemed to slow her down. Shane’s younger sister was immaculately dressed in a sleek black and red dress and a pair of fashionable stilettos—the baby bump barely showing. “I’m here to see Shane, of course.”

“Don’t you think you’ve done enough?”

“Um… I’m sorry?”

“I just find it strange he was injured in your apartment building. He doesn’t have any friends there.”

“He came by to see me, but I was asleep.”

“Oh really?” Vanessa folded her arms. “So how did you find out?”

“A friend told me. She happened to be staying at my place last night.”

“She?” Vanessa arched a perfectly plucked eyebrow.

Ginger clenched her hands. “What are you implying?”

“I don’t know, to be honest. I can’t make any sense out of what’s going on between the two of you. What I know for certain is that you hurt him, Ginger. I’ve never seen him like this before. If this is supposed to be true love, why are you causing him this pain?”

“I didn’t mean to,” Ginger said. “Please. I need to talk to him.”

“No way.”

A familiar-looking man came into the corridor and put an arm around Vanessa’s stiff shoulder. “What are you doing here? I thought you said you were going to get some snacks for the junior.” He put a hand on her belly.

Ginger’s eyes widened as it clicked—this was Justin, Vanessa’s husband.

“I was, until I saw her.”

Justin gave Ginger a warm smile. “Shane’s inside, but you might not want to visit for too long. He hasn’t been resting well, and he’s moody and irritable.”

“Thank you.” She dashed past as Vanessa was opening her mouth to protest. She had to see Shane.

* * *

“Why are you so confrontational?” Justin asked, handing Vanessa a cup of low-fat yogurt and a spoon at the hospital cafeteria.

“She just makes me mad.” Vanessa devoured the yogurt. She was starving… again. Even though she was snacking all the time, she hadn’t gained much weight yet. Some of her friends had said she would blow up like a blimp after she had the baby. It was apparently known to happen.
“But she’s Shane’s fiancée. I don’t know if their relationship is something you want to get involved in too much. You remember how mad you were when Barron got heavy-handed?”

“Well…yeah. But this is different. Think about it—nothing about her and Shane adds up! Mom thinks it’s strange too, but she’s too busy with the divorce.” Vanessa had been against it at first, but now she agreed with her mother’s decision. She’d never seen Ceinlys so relaxed. On the other hand, Salazar had turned into a brittle shell of his former self. “If my parents can go their separate ways and be happier for it after decades of marriage, I think Shane and Ginger can do the same thing now, rather than later after the ceremony. I’d hate to see them stay together just out of stubbornness, or because they’re, you know, used to being a couple, not because that’s what they truly want.”

“Shane’s a pretty smart guy. I’m sure he’ll do the right thing.”

“But Ginger?” Vanessa sighed. “I tried to view everything positively. No really, I tried. Stress isn’t good for the baby, right? And I might have been wrong about what we saw back in winter. But to somebody like her, Shane’s a great catch. Rich, handsome, smart—like you said. And the same age, so she can get the money without having to put up with some rich old geezer. I just feel a little cynical.” She pursed her lips. “And now I feel bad for being cynical.”

“Baby, it’s okay. You’re protective of the people you love, and the pregnancy hormones are just making everything seem worse than it is.”

She put her spoon down next to the now empty cup, which Justin tossed into the trash. “I saw Shane cry.”

“When?”

“Last night. I went back because I forgot my phone in his room. I tiptoed in, thinking he was asleep, but he was crying.”

“Did he see you?”

She shook her head. “He had a hand over his eyes. He looked so hurt, I started to tear up too, and left before he noticed me. I didn’t want to injure his pride on top of everything else.” She blinked rapidly.

Justin put a comforting hand on her arm. “Hey, you did the right thing.”

“I just can’t help but think it’s got something to do with Ginger.”

“Listen,” he said. “If she’s really that bad for Shane, then I will personally see to it that she never bothers him again. Would that put your mind at ease?”

Vanessa stood up, ready to go back to Shane’s room. “You’d really do that for me?”

“That’s the least of what I’d do for you.” Rising to his feet, Justin kissed her gently. “Now, can I get you to wear some sensible shoes? Those heels look great, but they also make me nervous with you pregnant and tottering around like that.”
She scoffed. “Tottering? Whatever. I can still outrun you, four months pregnant and in heels.”

He bent and swept her up off the floor, eliciting an eek! He kissed her on the mouth and started carrying her toward Shane’s room. “Go ahead and try.”
Chapter Twenty-Three

Ginger stepped inside the private room. It was big, more like a luxury hotel than a hospital, with a TV and a game console, and its own private bathroom. There were a few vases and pots of flowers to liven things up.

Still, like other hospital rooms, it had only one visitor’s chair.

Shane was in the middle of the bed. There was a huge bruise on his right temple, its darkness stark against his unusually pale complexion. His eyes were closed, and a needle was stuck into his lean forearm. Machines next to him beeped and pinged, monitoring and recording his vitals. She couldn’t remember the last time he’d looked this awful. All their time together, he’d always been the pillar of strength and incredible health.

How badly had he been hurt?

“Vanessa?” he rasped, opening his eyes. Then he stilled as his gaze focused. “Ginger.”

“Hi.” She swallowed and approached him. “I heard you came by.”

His face softened for a moment like the time he’d proposed to her. Then he looked away.

She wiped her suddenly clammy hands on her shorts. “Um. How are you feeling?”

“Like a jackass.” When he faced her again, his eyes were no longer soft. They glinted like a naked blade. “Why are you here?”

“I heard you hurt yourself. I’m sorry. Debbie didn’t mean to, and—”

“If you’re worried about your friend, don’t. I never mentioned her or you.”

His jaw clenched. “How long were you going to hide it from me?”

Her lower lip trembled. “I…” She brought her unsteady hands together. Fresh sweat slickened her palms. “I didn’t want to tell you.”

“Didn’t you think I should’ve been told? It was my child too.”

“It’s been almost a year. What could change by telling you? It would’ve only hurt you.”
“You should’ve wanted to hurt me!” He hurled one of the vases at the wall facing her.

The delicate crystal shattered, the bouquet of bright red roses exploding. Ginger cried out.

“If you didn’t want me to comfort you, you should’ve at least wanted to hurt me just as much as I hurt you!” Veins stood out in his forehead.

“You didn’t remember.”

“But you didn’t know at that time, did you? You thought I’d betrayed you.”

The door to the room opened, and Iain rushed in. “Are you okay?” he said, then saw Ginger and Shane and the broken vase and scattered flowers.

“Get out!” Shane said. “Get out and don’t let anybody come in until we’re done!”

Iain nodded once and left, closing the door behind him.

Shane drew in a shuddering breath. “You didn’t even say you were pregnant when you came to see me in Johannesburg. Did you think I was a monster?”

“I was in shock,” she said, her voice shaking. “I couldn’t even speak once I realized you were with another woman. All I could think was that it was over. I regained some of my composure back at my hotel, but by then it was too late. I didn’t think you’d open the door again. And it wasn’t like a woman needs to be married to have a child, right? I thought I’d raise it on my own and let you and your family know later. It wasn’t a big deal. I didn’t even want child support.”

His face turned bloodless. He bit his lower lip, which just began shaking.

“Then I started to cramp and lost the baby.” She hugged herself, her vision blurring with tears. The flight had been atrocious. Her belly had twisted all day, and she’d just assumed she’d eaten something bad. But when she sat down to pee, she’d started hemorrhaging. There had been so much blood, and she couldn’t even make a sound from the pain shooting through her womb.

A cabin attendant knocked on the lavatory door. “Hello?” came a male voice. “We’re about to land. Please return to your seat and fasten your seat belt.”

Ginger gasped. Her hair stuck to her sweaty face, and she pressed her hand against her opening, willing the baby to stay inside. More hot blood gushed down. “C-can’t,” she panted.

“Ma’am? Are you all right?”

“I’m bleeding.”

“Ma’am?”

“My baby. I think I’m losing my baby.” Oh no, no, no.

A female cabin attendant unlocked the door from the outside and slipped in. Her hand flew to her mouth as she took in the scene. She immediately went
outside. And everything else was a blur until Ginger opened her eyes at a hospital.

“My baby?” she whispered at the first nurse who came to check in on her.

“I’m sorry,” she said, genuine concern coming through despite a heavy accent. “I’m so sorry.”

Ginger covered her mouth to stifle a sob.

Tears glistened in Shane’s eyes. “I should’ve known. I should’ve been there.”

“Don’t think about it anymore. I’ve come to peace with it.” Debbie had helped. Her mother had also had a few miscarriages, and she’d done everything she could to comfort Ginger while they were in Amsterdam.

Babies are heaven’s gift. Sometimes the gods feel sad about life’s suffering and take them back before they reach this world. It’s never about you or your circumstances. Your baby’s back in heaven, sound and happy. When it’s your time, you’ll see him. Or her. And they’ll recognize you and love you because you’re the only person they’ve been intimately connected to.

“You’re a cruel woman, Ginger,” Shane said. “It’s like you know all the ways to punish me.”

“Shane, I didn’t do this to punish you.”

“I remember the photos,” he said, his voice wooden. “I tried to verify them. Everyone said they were authentic. But I had no idea they would trace back to me if anybody were to check.” His jaw bunched. “I didn’t think to check. I couldn’t even acknowledge their existence without wondering what if. What if you told me they were real or that you wanted to leave me? That you didn’t think it would work anyway. That I would end up like my dad. And if I begged you to stay with me, you would, but only to be like my mom—with all those other men to give you what I couldn’t.”

She reached out. He pulled away.

“I want to rest,” Shane said, his voice without inflection. “The doctor said I should relax and focus on recovery.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Why? You didn’t do anything wrong.” He stared resolutely out the window. “Just…go.” He turned, his shoulders angling away from her.

Tears flowed silently down her cheeks. She couldn’t seem to draw in any air as the memory of her loss and the image of Shane with his back turned away from her cut into her heart like a shard of diamond.

It was over. There was too much hurt and pain and regret, and she just didn’t know how to go back and undo it all.

She pulled off her engagement ring and put it on the bedside table. She’d known it would come to something like this when he regained his memory…and
the truth about why he left was exposed. But this was so much worse. It wasn’t because they didn’t love each other or care. The pain and hurt and circumstances just made it impossible for them to stay together.

Ginger managed to walk out. The door closed behind her with a soft click. Her knees felt like rubber, and she started to collapse. A pair of strong arms caught her.

“You okay?”
She looked up. Iain. Of course. Vanessa and Justin stood next to him. Tear tracks were ruining Vanessa’s perfect makeup, but she didn’t seem to notice.
“I’m fine,” Ginger said. “Thank you.”
“Ginger, I can’t even…” Vanessa covered her mouth. “Oh my god, I’m such a bitch.”
“You didn’t know.”
“I’m still a bitch.” Vanessa hugged Ginger. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”
Ginger hugged her back, oddly comforted by the touch. But that wasn’t enough to stop the tears flowing down her cheeks. Or her heart from breaking all over again.
“You absolutely have to stop moping.”
Shane glared at Vanessa. “And you have to stop nagging.”
“You were discharged a week ago, and you’ve been stuck in this penthouse ever since. It’s ridiculous, even for an artiste type like you.”
“They had to cut a section of my hair for the stitches,” he said. “I’m not going out looking like Frankenstein.”
“It’s grown back.”
“Not enough. It still shows.”
“Then shave your head!” Vanessa threw her hands in the air, pacing back and forth across his living room in her impractical high heels. “You can’t just stay holed up here anymore. I won’t allow it. I insist you go and do something about the situation with Ginger.”
“Why the fuck would I want to do that?” he said, feeling the weight of the engagement ring in his pocket.
She covered her belly with her hands. “You can’t use the f-word! My baby can hear it.” Then she suddenly stilled. “Oh my god.” She paled. “I’m sorry.”
“No. Stop. Don’t change because of me. I want you to be absolutely thrilled with your baby and show it.”
“Shane…”
“You owe me that much for being a pain in the ass while we were growing up.” He was happy for Vanessa and excited about his nephew. He wasn’t going to let the news of Ginger’s miscarriage diminish his sister’s joy. It was his to bear. “I’ll stop cursing if you’ll stop nagging.”
Vanessa sat next to him on the couch and took his hand. “Shane. Don’t you want to find out who sent you the pictures?”
“Ginger already tried. She said they came back to me.”
“That’s the weird thing. You didn’t send them, right?”
“Of course not.”
“That’s what I thought. So who did? Whoever’s behind this did it on purpose to put a wedge between you and Ginger. They need to pay.” She tightened her mouth. “If you won’t investigate, then I will. I’m going to unleash everything I got.”

“You mean Barron Sterling? You’re going to ask him for a baby christening gift, and it’s going to be to seek out and destroy whoever sent the photos?”

“Maybe.” She flushed. “Hey, he’s family too. Besides, nobody knows revenge like Barron.”

“Yeah, because that old man’s a psycho. You’re marrying into a psycho family.”

Vanessa made a face. “He’s not a psycho. He’s actually kind of nice.”

“Of course, he is. He does everything you want him to so long as you pat your belly while you ask.”

She gave him a withering look. “Back to the photos. Don’t let them get away with it.”

Shane squeezed her hand and looked at the picture of Ginger he’d placed on the mantel. She was smiling in that sunny way of hers. Seeing it never failed to brighten his day, no matter how foul a mood he was in. Now he’d never see it again.

He hadn’t done anything about the photos, and felt a vague lack of energy about them at this point. Nothing would change even if he found out who was responsible. Punishment would have been icing on the cake, but what was the point if there was no cake? If he couldn’t turn back the clock…

On the other hand, Vanessa was right. It wasn’t good for him to turn into a hermit, and he wanted to know who’d wrecked his and Ginger’s life together. And the baby…

He closed his eyes at the pain. It gutted him to think about the tiny life that never even got a chance. If Ginger hadn’t had to make that long, arduous flight, or suffered such shock and stress, would their baby have been born by now?

He opened his eyes. “You know what? That’s a great idea. I’m going to get whoever this motherfuc—uh, bad guy—is, and serve his head on a silver platter to Ginger.”

* * *

Ginger had huge amounts of work to do, but for some reason she couldn’t muster the motivation. She changed the wording on her website to indicate she was fully booked for the next six weeks and hit “publish.”

She couldn’t look at the happy couples and pretend she was thrilled to be
there anymore. If that made her a horrible person, so be it. But that was probably better than crying. She’d do the weddings she’d already booked, but that was it.

She closed her laptop and stared at the ceiling. It’d been over a week now, but Shane was constantly on her mind. Every day the memory of him seemed to grow stronger, more vivid. And the pain in her chest would intensify and pulse through her body.

Her phone rang, playing the cheery Brady Bunch theme. She hit the speaker button. “Hello?”

“Hey, heard from Mom you tried to reach me. What’s up?”

“Nothing much.” Except for getting my heart broken all over again. “Where are you?”

“Classified.”

She sighed. One day, she’d finally remember not to ask.

“So, when’s the happy day?” Trevor asked.

“What?”

“The wedding. Shane told me there was a misunderstanding between the two of you, and you guys were back together. Gotta mean there’s a definite wedding date sometime soon, right?”

She swallowed and drew in a breath. She would have to announce this to her family sooner or later. “There’s not going to be a wedding.”

Silence.

It was so long she thought the line got disconnected.

“What the fuck?” Trevor finally exploded. “He ran out on you again?”

She winced. “It’s not like that.”

“He told me he wasn’t going to do that kind of shit.”

“Trevor, cut it out. Let me talk.”

“No, I’m going to kick his ass. Cut off his balls. Break his knees—he’s never gonna be able to run again. I swear to god, he’s gonna cry like a fucking—”

“Stop! Can’t you just be quiet and let me talk for a moment?”

“Why? So you can defend the douchebag?”

She growled. “If you keep talking, I’m never going to answer your calls again. Ever.”

She could hear him breathing heavily over the line, but he finally said, “Okay. Say your piece.”

“Thank you. Now, about Shane and me. It just couldn’t be helped. Nobody’s a villain here.” She told him about the photos and the confrontation at the hospital—minus the miscarriage. “We hurt each other so much through all this, and I don’t even know if love is enough to make things right between us. Sometimes too many things are said and done.”
“The pictures… You said they’re the reason why Shane left in the first place?”

“Yeah. When he investigated them, everyone said they were authentic. He couldn’t bring himself to confront me…and I totally understand that. My mind went blank with pain when I thought he was with another woman. All I could think was that I was in a nightmare, made that much worse because I never thought he’d turn out to be like his father.”

Trevor cursed.

“And he wasn’t, okay? So I’d appreciate it if you don’t try to put a contract on his head or whatever other ‘classified’ thing you feel like doing.”

“Ginger, do you love him?”

“Of course I do.”

A heavy sigh. “Okay. If I told you I can fix this, would you believe me and not do anything rash?”

“I appreciate the thought, but how are you going to fix this?” When Trevor didn’t say anything, she said, “If you threaten Shane into staying with me, it’s not going to work. And I’ll kick your ass and make you cry.”

“You can kick my ass even if I fix it,” Trevor said, his voice surprisingly grave. “I’ll be in touch.”

***

Whoever had sent the photos had to be damned good. Shane had enlisted multiple top investigators in the country who worked for his family, the Sterlings and the Lloyds, but none of them had been able to come up with anything useful. They could confirm that the person who’d mailed the photos wasn’t Shane—it had been somebody pretending to be him. But they couldn’t figure out who had done it.

Shane stared at the reports and blew out a frustrated breath. Now that he couldn’t find the perp, he wanted to know who was behind it even more. Who would hate him and Ginger so much that they’d do this?

“Think more money would do it?” Shane asked Mark over a drink at La Mer, one of Mark’s restaurants. Unlike Éternité, it was ocean-themed, with giant aquariums that held numerous exotic fish and crustaceans. Even the walls and partitions were made of fish tanks. Shane preferred the soothing blue of La Mer over other restaurants when he felt agitated. “There’s plenty more to throw at it.”

Mark shook his head. “If it was just money, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.” Mark swirled his scotch. They’d opened the Macallan Sixty Year Old from Dane.
“Shit. I feel like I’m missing something.”
“Maybe you are,” Mark said. “Sometimes the bad guys are a lot closer than you think.”
Shane nodded, ruminating. “You think it was Dad?”
“Whoa. Dad? Seriously?”
“He never liked me. He always tried to teach me how I was no better than him. And you saw how he couldn’t bother to come to the dinner or the hospital while I was there.”
“He probably stayed away because of Mom. Things are getting really nasty between them. Maybe his lawyer told him to limit contact with us or something.” Mark sighed. “Dad has his flaws, but he’s not sneaky like that.”
Shane snorted. “You haven’t seen him in action. He had a lover in the town where my high school was. I bet the real reason why he was mad about me going to Berkeley is because he’d already slept with every coed in the area.”
“You’re being too harsh.” Mark frowned. “I don’t think he would’ve done anything on purpose to hurt you. And if he ever was in your face, that’s just the way he is sometimes, especially when he thinks he’s being challenged.”

The maître d’ came to their table with a familiar man. Shane scowled when he realized it was Trevor. What the hell? La Mer wasn’t his scene at all. Ginger’s brother was the kind of guy who finished off his burgers and fries with an ice cold beer. Besides he was way overdressed for his usual self—a button-down shirt and slacks? What was next? A tuxedo?

Even in the dim interior light, the hard lines on Trevor’s face were unmistakable. His gaze was direct and purposeful, and his impatient gait moved him from a spot behind the maître d’ to one right in front of Shane and Mark’s booth.

He sat without waiting for an invitation.
Mark raised an eyebrow, then gestured at their server for another glass, which appeared instantly. He poured a finger for Trevor. “Here.”
“Thanks.” He swigged it down and blinked. “Wow, good stuff.”
“Better be. That was at least two thousand bucks you just poured down your gullet.” Shane smiled dryly when Trevor choked and coughed. “What do you want?”
“It’s about Ginger.”
Shane’s heart twisted. Damn, that hurt…and it might never stop hurting. She’d been his everything.
“Do you love her?” Trevor asked.
Shane gave him a cold look.
“I’m serious. Do you love her? I need to hear you say it while looking me
straight in the eye.” Trevor made a V with his index and middle fingers and pointed them at his own pupils. “Say it.”

Shane locked gazes with him. “I love her. Always have.” The words burned, salt in his still-bleeding wound.

Trevor pushed his empty glass at Mark and signaled for more. Mark glanced at Shane, who nodded. Trevor downed the second one just as fast as the first, then rubbed his mouth. “I don’t even know where to begin. But…” He breathed out. “I’m the one who sent the photos.”

Shane stared, his brain unable to process for a moment. Then a fiery fury exploded in his chest, incinerating every rational thought and vestige of control. “You son of a bitch!”

He launched himself across the table. Glasses fell and shattered on the floor as he smashed a fist into Trevor’s face. Shane grabbed Trevor’s collar, pulling his arm back for another punch, but Mark grabbed his wrist. “Shane, no!”

Hand pinned, Shane yanked Trevor sharply toward him instead, head-butting him, knocking him from his chair and having the satisfaction of seeing blood spurt from his lips and nose. “I’ll fucking kill him! I swear I will,” Shane snarled, pulse throbbing in his temples.

“No! Jesus man, what’s the point of hitting a guy who’s not fighting back?” Mark wedged himself between the two other men. “Look!”

Shane glared at Trevor. Mark was right. Trevor didn’t even have his arms up, and blood covered his face and shirt. Yeah, like Shane would give a damn about that. What Trevor had done damn near destroyed Ginger…and Shane too.

Mark continued, “He’s Ginger’s brother. Are you really going to kill him?”

No. Ginger adored him.

Breathing roughly, Shane released the collar and rose to his full height. His hands dug into his hair, then clenched until his scalp hurt. He paced in a tight circle, doing his best not to step over to Trevor and start kicking him in the ribs. “Fuck. Fuck! Why did you do it?”

Was it out of hatred for Shane? He knew how much antipathy Ginger’s brother had for him. Trevor had always made the point that Shane wasn’t good enough for her, no matter how rich he was. Once, over a drink, he’d said, “Dunno why you bother. You probably can’t make her happy. You’re just too… broken,” when Shane had announced his intention to follow Ginger to Berkeley.

Mark signaled the waiters to clean up the broken glass. “We’re going to continue this in my office,” he said in a low voice. Customers were craning their necks, and one or two had cell-phones out. Mark whispered some instructions to the maître d’, who had appeared as if by magic, and then pushed the other men toward the back of the restaurant.
The moment they were in Marc’s office, Shane stopped, planted his feet and faced Trevor. “Start talking.”
Chapter Twenty-Five

Ginger stared at the ceiling. The TV was playing a Korean drama. She didn’t understand a word without the subtitles, but reading seemed like too much trouble to bother with. A woman and a man were talking in complete gibberish, and occasionally hooting with laughter.

   Romantic comedy. Always a fun genre. And hey, if she couldn’t have real romance, she could at least live vicariously through others who did.

   Until her control would suddenly break down and she’d start sobbing.

   She’d gotten better though. The intervals between her crying jags were getting longer. At this rate, she would be functional in about three months. Maybe four.

   Somebody knocked on her door. “Hey, Ginger. It’s me—Debbie.”

   “It’s unlocked!” Ginger yelled.

   Debbie came inside, carrying a big purple and yellow tote bag that matched her dress. She’d been stopping by every day, ostensibly to bring food. Ginger knew better, but played along anyway. “So what delicious thing did you bring this time?”

   “Just some bacon wrapped scallops. Oh, and cheesecake.”

   “That sounds good. Does your housekeeper know you’ve been filching food?”

   “She does, even though she pretends like she doesn’t see it. She thinks I need to eat more.”

   No kidding. Debbie was thin enough to blow away in a stiff breeze.

   “Let me put the scallops in the fridge,” Debbie continued. “I want to eat the cheesecake first.”

   “A woman after my own heart,” Ginger said. She needed the sugar and fat.

   Debbie puttered around in the kitchen, then brought out two small plates.

   “You know,” she said, as she placed a slice in front of Ginger, “I should get you something for your birthday.”
“It’s not until next month.”
“Still. An early birthday present is never a bad thing.”
Ginger put a forkful of cheesecake in her mouth. It tasted sinfully good.
“What are you thinking of?”
“Um. Don’t get mad…” Debbie flushed.
“Did you order me a custom dildo or something?”
“No!” Debbie giggled. “I bought you some housekeeping.” She sobered.
“Please don’t take it the wrong way, but you haven’t even finished unpacking
your bags from Thailand. I just thought it’d be nice if you had a couple
professionals to help you clean up. And maybe it’ll make you feel better, too.”

Ginger took a look at her place. Two of her suitcases still stood in a corner
between the kitchen and the living room. A thick layer of dust had settled over
her shelves and framed photos, and even her TV showed the lack of care, where
her fingerprints had smudged up the dust. Clean laundry sat in two baskets, and
she’d been picking things out of there to wear, not giving a fig about the
wrinkles. The only reason why the place wasn’t overflowing with garbage was
that Debbie generally took it out when she left.

When had she turned into such a pathetic, dependent pig? Ginger had never
been neat, but this was horrific even for her.

Was this her way of getting over Shane? If so, it was a dumb, dumb way. If
they ran into each other in the future, what would she look like? Some wild,
unkempt woman with wrinkled clothes and hag-hair, while he was masculine
perfection?

“You know what? You’re right,” Ginger said. “It’s about time I did
something about my place.” She got up. “Don’t bother with housekeeping. I’ll
take care of it.”

“But—”

She hugged Debbie. “You’re the best friend ever. I’m sorry I made you feel
like you have to mother me. I won’t make you worry again. It’s about time I get
out and make myself busy. It’s better than sitting here and pine over what can’t
be.”

Debbie smiled. “I’ll help with the cleaning. Because god knows you need
some.”

They picked up every piece of trash off the floor. Ginger dumped all the dirty
clothes from her suitcases into the bathroom to be laundered. It was too bad
about the clean, but wrinkled clothes, but she hated ironing. She’d have to find
some other way to make them look more respectable. She also tossed every
expired item and stuff that looked wilted and gross into the black plastic bag
Debbie held open. Debbie wiped things down, while Ginger cleaned the
windows and vacuumed.

Three hours later, the apartment finally looked presentable. “Ta-da!” Debbie said, spreading her arms wide. “We do good work, don’t we?”

“Yes!” Ginger did a small fist pump. “I’m ready to face the world.”

Debbie has great instincts, Ginger thought. Somehow, getting the apartment straightened up had cleared her head, revitalizing her. “Maybe I should hire professional housekeeping after all,” Ginger said. “I’ve always been horrible about cleaning up after myself.”

“I know people who can do it for cheap,” Debbie said. “And they’re very good. My mom has them come in twice a month.”

Somebody knocked on the door. Ginger took a peek, and her mouth dried. It was Shane.

“Who is it?” Debbie asked from behind her.

Ginger moved a few steps away from the door. “Shane,” she whispered. “He knows I’m in here,” she added almost numbly. Why had she just thought she would be ready to face the world? Shane was that world. The wound was still too fresh for her to pretend it didn’t hurt anymore.

“So? If you don’t want to talk to him, ignore him. This is your home.”

“Ginger, I know you’re in there!” shouted Shane.

Debbie narrowed her eyes. “Wow, he’s noisy. You know what, let me get rid of him.” She pushed Ginger out of view and yanked the door open. “Hey, keep it down before we call the pol… Trevor?”

Ginger blinked. Trevor?

“Don’t try to tell me Ginger’s asleep. It’s too early,” Shane said.

For once Debbie stepped aside without arguing. Ginger stepped in front of the door.

Shane looked like…Shane. She didn’t know how else to describe his confidence, the way his broad shoulders seemed to invite her to rest her head there, or the warmth he elicited in her. It wasn’t just sexual, but emotional and deep, like in his arms was exactly where she belonged—her cocoon, her safe and sheltered world.

But stress had etched lines in his forehead and brackets around his mouth. His cheekbones stood out more prominently than before, and the skin under his eyes was a few shades darker. She wanted to reach out and cradle his head gently against her heart, but instead she clenched her hands at her sides.

The two men stepped inside. Dark stubble covered Trevor’s square jaw, and his hair stood up like it hadn’t been combed in weeks. He’d lost his usual swagger. Shockingly, he was wearing a dress shirt and slacks. She’d never seen him in anything nice, not even for his college graduation, so it took her a while
to accept that it wasn’t some kind of doppelganger. What convinced her was the bloody shirt. And the wadded tissue stuck in one nostril. His upper lip had swollen to the point that it looked like a sausage.

“What happened to your face?” she asked, focusing on her brother. He was easier to deal with than Shane. “Or is that classified?”

Trevor inclined his head sideways. “He punched me out.”

“What?” Her gaze darted to Shane, who looked fine, not a speck of blood on him. It didn’t make sense. Trevor was deadly with his fists, and he wasn’t the type to let another guy hit him and get away with it. “Did you two…fight?”

“If you can call it that,” Shane said, his voice cold. He jerked his chin at Trevor. “Tell her.”

Trevor dragged his huge hands through his hair. He breathed out hard—not quite a sigh but not quite a sound of exasperation either—and swallowed a few times.

Ginger’s heart began to race. She’d seen Trevor do that a few times, and inevitably the news was bad—once, when she was in high school, he’d had to tell her somebody had run over their dog. “What is it, Trevor? Did something happen to Mom and Dad?”

He shook his head. “They’re fine.”

She let out a breath she hadn’t realized she’d been holding. If they were okay, whatever Trevor had to say was probably not a big deal. “Just spit it out.”

“The photos you were talking about.”

Every cell in her body stilled. “What about them?”

Trevor broke eye contact and looked down. “I was the one behind them.”

She blinked a few times, then laughed a little tremulously. “What?” He’d always wanted to be a comedian, except none of his jokes were funny. Maybe he’d gotten tired of doing whatever he’d been doing and decided to try his hand at stand-up comedy again.

“The pictures…” He sighed. “I didn’t mean anything bad to happen.”

A giant claw seemed to squeeze her neck and chest. “You didn’t mean—?”

What did you think would happen when you sent pictures like that?”

“I just thought it was shitty that he”—Trevor gestured at Shane—“didn’t appreciate you. You guys had been together for so long, and…well, he kept dragging his feet about proposing and, you know, doing the right thing. So I thought I’d show him that you had other options. I wanted to let him know if he didn’t act soon, he was going to lose you.”

“That was your plan? Make me look loose so Shane would try to chain me down?” Her voice started to rise. “You wrecked over a year of our lives!”

Trevor shook his head sorrowfully. “I didn’t know the pictures were like that.
I had a guy make them and mail them, but I hadn’t seen them until now. They were just supposed to show you having a good time and men looking at you, checking you out with, you know, admiration and all, to demonstrate you had other options. Not like you hanging all over them.”

“You have no idea what you did. I told you to stay away from our relationship.” Trevor had always been too protective, but this crossed the line. “I thought the man I love didn’t want me anymore—wouldn’t want our baby either.”

“Well, if you had been pregnant, I would never ha—”

“I was pregnant!”

Trevor paled. “What?”

She pointed a trembling finger at him. “I was pregnant, and I lost the baby on my way back from South Africa. That was why I missed my connection in Amsterdam and stayed there for so long.”

“Oh my god, Ginger. I didn’t know…”

“I didn’t tell you—or Mom, or Dad—because what would be the point? By the time I came back, I was finished with my medical treatment, and the doctors said I was fine—physically. But you…you wrecked so much.”

He buried his face in his hands, his shoulders shaking. “I’m so sorry.”

She looked away. She felt…hollow. How could her brother have done this?

“Me, too.”

“Ginger—”

“I’d appreciate it if you’d just leave now. Unless you have any more confessions about how you destroyed something that’s important to me.”

Trevor reached out, but she scooted back like his hand was a viper. His face crumpled, now a complete ruin. Debbie took one glance at Ginger, stepped around her and escorted him outside.

The door shut behind them, leaving Ginger and Shane alone.

* * *

Debbie sat next to Trevor in the stairwell. She didn’t trust him to be on his own without doing something stupid—men could be hot-headed and dumb at the best of times, much less when they’d received a blow as nasty as the one Trevor had just gotten.

He buried his face in his hands and sobbed, the sound pulling deep from his gut. She’d never heard a grown man cry like this. She looked up at the ceiling, blinking away her own tears. All that pain and hurt, and all because Trevor was overprotective of his sister. She couldn’t even kick his ass for Ginger.
“Did she suffer a lot? Her baby…” Trevor asked, his voice thick. “Jesus, what the fuc—what am I saying? Of course she suffered.”

“She had some pain, but she also had an excellent team of medical professionals who did everything they could to make her comfortable.”

He shook his head. “I killed her baby. If she hadn’t been flying, it would’ve been okay.”

“Maybe, and maybe not. Sometimes things just…happen, and it’s nobody’s fault.” It was such a comforting mantra, such a good guiding principle, for easing one’s shattered soul.

He wept some more, then finally said, “Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For being there for my sister. Now I know why you went to Amsterdam and took her on that ‘shopping spree.’”

Debbie gave him a lopsided smile. “It was nothing.”

“I should pay you for that.”

“Shut the fuck up. I did what any good friend would’ve done. The sightseeing cheered her up, so that’s more than enough for me.”

“I’m glad she had you there.” He sniffed hard and stared at a spot straight in front of him. “She’ll never forgive me, will she?”

Debbie shook her head. “If you really think that, you don’t know your sister very well. She’ll forgive you soon enough. The girl’s just not capable of holding a grudge.” She put a hand on his back. “But you gotta do something here, okay? You have to make up your mind that you’ll never, ever meddle in her life like this again.”

“Jesus, never.” He looked at her, then clutched her free hand. “I swear it.”

Debbie nodded. “I believe you. Now let’s give our couple some time to work things out.”

They stood up slowly, like a pair of old people. “They’re going to get back together, right?” Trevor said.

“I don’t know.” She frowned. What Trevor had done was so big, she wasn’t sure exactly how Shane and Ginger would deal with it. “Let’s hope so.”
Chapter Twenty-Six

Ginger’s legs quivered, then folded beneath her. She extended an arm to catch herself, but Shane wrapped his arms around her before she could hit the floor.

She closed her eyes at the sweet sensation of having his body pressed so tightly against hers. Nobody else could make her feel so protected and wanted and cherished.

Except…she wasn’t sure about what she felt anymore. Her brother had done incalculable damage to them both, but especially to Shane. If he hadn’t sent the fake photos, Shane would’ve never left the States or had the accident or lost his memory. He’d missed out on so much in the past year—his brothers’ engagements and his sister’s marriage.

And then there was their baby. Shane had always wanted children. He adored them.

He ran a thumb over her cheek. “Stop crying, Ginger. You’re going to make yourself sick.”

“Already feel sick.” She squeezed her eyes shut as more tears flowed, and pressed a fist against her heart. “It hurts.”

“I know.” He kissed her forehead, then swung her up and carried her into the bedroom. He put her down on the bed and curled around her, warming her cool skin. His shirt was soaked now, but she couldn’t stop crying.

“You must be so angry,” she said through the lump in her throat.

He merely sighed and rubbed her back. Ginger clenched her hands. He was probably too angry to even talk about it. She couldn’t imagine how she’d feel if their positions had been reversed.

She buried her face in his warm chest and inhaled his familiar, comforting scent. For now this was more than what she’d expected. She’d think about the rest later.

* * *
Shane rubbed Ginger’s back. She slowly calmed as time passed, and eventually fell asleep.

Did she have any idea her tears were like acid eating into his soul? He touched her face gently. If she had, she would’ve swallowed them, done her best not to hurt him. But that was why he loved her so much, and why he was so scared of being with her. She made him feel everything so intensely, all the way to the center of his heart. When she wasn’t around, it was like he wasn’t truly alive. He would go through all the right motions, do what was expected…but he wouldn’t feel anything.

After a time, he carefully disentangled himself and stood up. He hated to leave her side, but there were things to do. She probably didn’t have anything edible in the fridge—she was terrible about grocery shopping—and he didn’t want her hungry. They had an important thing or two to discuss. The sharp object in his pocket kept pricking his thigh.

Moving quietly, he went to the living room. There, he called the family concierge. “The dinner I requested some weeks ago on my return from Thailand.”

“The one you didn’t show for?” No rebuke, just confirmation.

“That’s right. I want it now.” He gave her Ginger’s address. “It’s a small apartment, and you have to be absolutely quiet because there’s a woman sleeping.”

The concierge didn’t miss a beat. “Anything else, sir?”

“That’s all.”

“Consider it done.”

* * *

The light coming into the bedroom was quite slanted. Ginger blinked, then rubbed her raw and gritty eyes. It didn’t help much.

She looked at the clock. A little after five…

Gasping, she got to her feet. Her skin felt tight from dried tears, and she splashed some cold water over her face. The fleshy parts under her eyes were puffy, but there was nothing to be done about that now.

“Shane?” she called out as she emerged from the master bedroom.

Some classical music was playing softly on a stereo—not hers, since she listened to music on her iPod and didn’t own an external speaker. With a small frown, she walked down the short hall and stopped dead at the entrance to her living room. Small, fragrant candles were everywhere, their tiny flames giving her apartment a soft buttery glow. Thai orchid blossoms were scattered all over
the floor, and a thick, white cloth covered her humble dining table, which was set for two. A couple of covered silver trays sat in the center. Stiff ivory covers embroidered with silver and gold upgraded her two chairs into something that looked like they could fit right in at a restaurant as fancy as Éternité. A bottle of rose champagne was chilling in a shiny bucket full of ice.

“Hi,” he said from the balcony. He came inside, leaving the door open.

“Hi,” she said, suddenly shy.

“How are you feeling?”

“Better. Thank you.” She tucked her hair behind an ear. “I wasn’t sure if you were still here or not.” Wasn’t sure if you’d walk out of my life forever.

“One day you’ll never wonder about that.” He put an index finger under her chin and tilted it upward. “I’ll never leave you again.”

Her mouth parted. That was the last thing she’d expected him to say. Hope stirred, but she didn’t dare… The moment felt too fragile and fleeting—a dream. If it’s a dream, I never want to wake up.

“We should eat,” he said. “I haven’t eaten anything since brunch.”

“I didn’t eat anything all day.”

He pulled out a chair. “You should take better care of yourself.”

She sat down and spread the thick cotton napkin over her lap.

He settled to her left and uncovered the platters on the table. “I didn’t know when you’d be up, so I arranged for cold soup and cold meat. Along with some salad and bread and cheesecake.”

“Wow.” Shane ate well, and he almost always got what he wanted, but this was an amazing setup on such a short notice. “This is incredible.”

He smiled and discreetly popped the champagne. They clinked glasses without a toast. Her brain was too sluggish after that emotional wringer—plus the unplanned nap—to come up with something snappy, and Shane didn’t seem interested in coming up with anything either.

The cool pink bubbly tickled her throat. Despite her nerves, she hummed appreciatively at the perfect blend of berries and oak. It was difficult to feel tense while drinking champagne this amazing.

He plucked two bowls of soup sitting on a bed of ice and placed one in front of her. It was refreshing and flavorful. She licked her lips. She couldn’t believe how hungry she was.

They ate in silence, but it didn’t make her uncomfortable. There was something very companionable and lovely about just being with him.

After she polished off two slices of cheesecake, he poured her the last of the champagne. “You don’t want any more?” she asked, glancing at his empty glass.

“Probably better if you have it.” He placed the bottle by the clean platters. “I
debated the wisdom of bringing Trevor here and having him tell you everything. I thought it might help you to know, but I should’ve thought about how you would feel, hearing that your brother did it.”

She took a big sip. The food and alcohol seemed to have somehow blunted her reaction to that. It still hurt, but not enough to make her cry all over again.

“How did you find out?”

“He tracked me down at La Mer to tell me.”

Stunned, she almost dropped her glass.

Shane gave her a small, ironic smile. “I was looking into who’d masterminded the whole thing, but none of the investigators were able to find anything. Then voilà, he confessed to it.”

“Why were you looking into it?”

“Honestly? I was planning to bring you their head on a silver platter.”

She bit her lip. “I spoke to him a few days ago and told him that the photos messed up everything. I guess he felt guilty. I don’t even know what to say, except that I’m sorry.”

“Sorry? Why? Trevor’s a big boy. It has nothing to do with you.”

“But he’s my brother.”

“Ginger.” Shane held her hand in his and squeezed. “If we had to pay for all our family’s sins, we’d spend our lives apologizing. For example, I know Dane forced you into going to Thailand. And Vanessa wasn’t very nice to you after you came back. My parents were never gracious to you—”

“That’s not true.”

“Fake smiles don’t count.” Shane put a finger over her mouth. “Do you realize how much time we lost because of those damn photos? Let’s not let them take more, okay? Every moment with you is too precious to waste.”

Something hot and sweet blossomed in her chest. This man always knew what to say and do to make her heart flutter. You would think that after being together for over ten years, she would be immune.

She kissed his finger. “Okay.”

He slanted his mouth over hers, his hands cradling her face with infinite care. She opened up to him in every way, her heart and soul bared to him. He was everything she’d ever dreamed of, everything that made her life brighter and worth living for. He groaned deeply in his throat, and carried her to the bedroom.

There he put her down in the center of the bed. His knuckle grazed her skin as he pulled her shirt and shorts away with infinite care. She trembled at the feathery sensation. Goosebumps rose, and he traced the same path with his hot mouth as he disposed of his own clothes.

As her body grew tight and slick with anticipation, her heart raced, swelling
with emotion. She’d never imagined she’d have this again with Shane. It was a miracle.

“No, baby, you’re the miracle,” he whispered against her lips, and her eyes widened as she realized she’d spoken aloud. “You have no idea how precious you are.”

He claimed her mouth, hungry, hot and wet. She kissed him back eagerly, putting her hand behind his neck and caressing his beloved face. Her blood heated at the throaty moan he made, and she wanted him inside her, connecting them in the most intimate way a man and a woman could be.

Instead he took his time kissing her. When he finally pulled back from her mouth, he gently pinched her nipples, licking the path between her breasts.

“When I lost my memory, I sometimes dreamed of a sanctuary. I just knew it was out there somewhere for me, but I thought it was a place. But now I know it’s you I was searching for all along.”

“Shane,” she sobbed. “Make love to me.”

Desire suffused his face. He linked their hands together, one on each side of her head. “I love you, Ginger,” he said, filling her with one smooth stroke. His darkened eyes bore down on hers as he set a sweet rhythm. “I love you. I love you.”

Pleasure unfurled in her belly, and she felt like her heart would explode with tenderness. “I love you,” she said. “I love you, love you, love—”

He swallowed the rest with his mouth. She arched into him, wanting him to feel how fast her heart was beating for him. She’d never been this exposed and vulnerable, but she felt safe and secure in his arms. He adjusted his angle, turning every thrust into an unbearable jolt of pleasure. Ecstasy sizzled through her veins, and she tightened her fingers around his as she came apart.

“You’re the only one, Ginger,” he groaned into her neck then exploded inside her.

She squeezed his hands. She knew.

***

“You need to move in with me,” Shane said with a small groan. “This bed’s too damn small.”

She giggled. “I think it was designed for cuddling.”

“We can cuddle in my bed more comfortably.” Shane’s was a California king.

“Okay.”

“Oh, and I almost forgot…” He reached back and picked up his slacks off the
floor.

“I’m not doing your laundry,” she half-joked. Unless it was cotton, she was afraid to wash anything in his closet given most of his clothes cost more than what she made in a month.

“Don’t worry. I’m not marrying you for your housekeeping.”

She started to laugh, and then froze. Her heart pounded as he pulled out the engagement ring. He kissed her knuckles, his mouth lingering over her sensitive skin, then slid the ring back on her hand. “There. Now it’s back exactly where it belongs.”

“Shane…”

“Third time’s the charm.” He smiled. “What do you say?”

“You’re right.” She smiled back. “And, yes.”

His smile turned into a huge grin. “Oh, and we’re getting married ASAP.”

“We are?”

“Yep. Don’t want Trevor to get any ideas.”

“I don’t think he will.” She paused. “Are you ever going to be able to forgive him?”

“Probably. At some point. Because you love him and you’re going to forgive him…and he’s your brother,” Shane said, then kissed her on the mouth again.

When he pulled back, she was breathless, her cheeks flushed and her body tingling with need again. “So how soon is ASAP?”

“In a week or two?”

“We should wait until Mark’s wedding at least.”

“That late?” Shane scowled. “I need to cement my future”—his fingertips traced the curve of her breast—“make sure the best thing that’s ever happened to me doesn’t get away.”

She laughed. “You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me. And I’m not going anywhere,” she said with a throaty moan as his lips glided down her belly.
Epilogue

–Fifteen months later

Shane pulled Ginger behind the barn. “Do you have any idea how long I’ve been waiting to drag you out of that living room?”

She giggled as his lips found the sensitive spot on her neck. Her parents had been too busy oohing and aahing over their first grandchild to let them go so easily. Besides, Rachel Pryce was not an easy baby to ignore, with her charming smile and bright eyes that were the exact carbon copy of her mother’s.

It was only because Trevor’s arrival had interrupted them that Shane had gotten a chance to get Ginger and himself out, leaving their sleeping baby in the excellent care of his in-laws.

Her laughter soon turned into a soft moan. She had no idea what she did to him these days. Motherhood suited her, and she literally glowed.

It had been the most nerve-wrecking nine months of his life—Shane hadn’t even allowed her to carry a cup of water, just in case. But it had been soooo worth it.

He pressed his hard cock against her belly as she rocked against him. Damn, she was hot.

“Hey! Ginger! Where did you go?” came Trevor’s loud voice. “Rachel wants her mommy!”

Sure enough, a piercing cry followed.

Shane closed his eyes, gritting his teeth. “I’m going to kill your brother.”

“Poor baby.” She leaned in and whispered, “Maybe later tonight,” her breath hot in his ear, then pulled back and gave him a wicked grin. “I still remember what you did when I snuck into your bed that time,” she said, cutting her eyes meaningfully toward the second floor of her parents’ house.

He licked her mouth. “Go, before I forget where we are.”

She gave him a sassy look and sashayed away. His body was still rock hard,
but his heart swelled with contentment. This was exactly what he’d wanted for himself and Ginger.

“Hey,” Trevor said to Shane after handing off the crying baby to Ginger.

“Hey.”

“Rachel’s gorgeous.”

“That she is.” Shane paused for a moment. “Please don’t interfere in her life when she starts dating.” He smiled slightly as he said it.

“I won’t.” Trevor raised his hands, palms out, his expression solemn. “I’ve learned my lesson. But I’ll be on call for you when she’s old enough to date. She’s bound to attract a few assholes.”

Shane’s jaw flexed. Trevor was most likely right. The world was full of assholes. “Okay.”

“Maybe we can team up.”

“I’ll think about it.”

Ginger came toward them, Rachel cradled in her arms. Trevor nodded at them and returned to the house.

“What were you talking about?” she asked.

“Protecting our precious.” He kissed Rachel’s smooth forehead. She gurgled.

“She’s such a treasure. She already gives me so much joy it makes my heart ache.” He pulled Ginger close and squeezed, careful not to crush the baby between them. “You and Rachel are the best things that ever happened to me. I told you I didn’t think I could love you more. But that’s not true. It is possible for me to love you even more. You’re my everything.”

“You’re my everything, too, Shane.” She laid her head on his chest. “You have always been my one and only.”

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About Nadia Lee

*New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author Nadia Lee writes sexy, emotional contemporary romance. Born with a love for excellent food, travel and adventure, she has lived in four different countries, kissed stingrays, been bitten by a shark, ridden an elephant and petted tigers.

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The Billionaire’s Forgotten Fiancée

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