Baby

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Baby

by aliciameade

Summary

That tearful kiss shared between Stephanie and Emily wasn't their first—and it certainly wasn't their last.
“I think loneliness probably kills more people than cancer,” Stephanie says as the tears roll down her cheeks unhindered. She’s never understood how her best friend Emily was able to get her to open up to her so easily. She’s shared things with Emily that she had never shared with anyone—not even Davis. Or Chris.

There’s something about the way Emily looks at her like she’s the only other person in the room when she isn’t and even more so when she is. It makes Stephanie want to tell her everything, to hide nothing. It makes her feel like she finally matters to someone again—someone old enough to legally drink, anyway.

It scares her, the intensity of the emotions that overrun her when she spends this kind of time with Emily.

She watches Emily reach for her and for a moment she thinks she’s going to brush away her tears. Instead, her slender fingers curl around the back of Stephanie’s neck and pull her in and Stephanie follows.

“Come here,” Emily whispers just as their lips touch.

It isn’t their first kiss; that had occurred exactly 13 days ago in a similar situation. Except it had happened in Emily’s kitchen, not the couch where they now sat, and Stephanie was crying then, too. She’s not even sure what about anymore—probably something petty. But Emily, freshly poured martinis in hand for them, had paused as she rounded the island, leaned down, and kissed her.

It had been brief. Platonic. Placating. She’d done it as though she hadn’t thought about it, no more serious or meaningful than if she’d patted Stephanie on the back and told her, “There, there.” A peck on the lips. Nothing more.

This was more than that. Not much, but Stephanie felt her linger a beat or two longer than a peck before her other hand comes up to frame Stephanie’s face.

It makes her blood rush. Her pulse race. Something about Emily, so confident and sure and ready
to tell Stephanie that she would be okay, that she was a good person and a strong woman, kissing her, cradling her neck in a way that made Stephanie feel safe and protected made her want to push her way into Emily’s lap. To get as close to her physically as she felt emotionally.

She reaches for her, letting her fingertips graze Emily’s cheeks as she kisses her back. Kisses her more firmly. Leans into her and lets her hands slip lower to feel the warmth of Emily’s neck as Emily smiles against her lips.

Stephanie feels it and it breaks her out of the haze of lust she allowed herself to slip into. She pulls back, ashamed she became so aggressive, so sexual with her best friend who was only trying to make her feel better. She wasn’t trying to start something with Stephanie.

She touches her lips and turns away to try to put space between them but she feels Emily move to follow her. “You’re okay,” Emily says warmly as she helps to wipe away the tears that come flooding back. “Wanna order a pizza?”

It’s all she can do not to say she’s sorry. “God, I’m so embarrassed,” Stephanie says as she tries to come back to herself and ignore the fact that Emily licks her lips before she speaks.

Emily smooths her hair behind her ear and her hand lingers on Stephanie’s forearm. “Oh, because of that?” she says with a quiet chuckle. “No, hey—it’s all good, baby. It’s all good. Just another Tuesday.”

Stephanie feels a little dizzy. “Why do you call me that?”

“What, ‘baby’?”

She nods and smooths her dress over her lap.

“Because I want to.” She feels Emily’s hand resting on her elbow with the slightest pressure as though she’s trying to get Stephanie to turn back to her. “Do you want me to stop?”

The laugh that escapes Stephanie’s lips is as embarrassing as letting her kiss get away from her and she covers her mouth with her hand and closes her eyes tightly.
“What is it?” Emily says with a smile.

Stephanie shakes her head. “Nothing.”

Emily’s hand is making its way up the back of Stephanie’s arm. Her grip becomes a little more firm, not in any way that’s intimidating or controlling, though. It’s grounding. It’s definitely urging Stephanie to turn back to her. “You like it.”

Emily says it so matter-of-factly that even though she wants to deny it vehemently—they are friends and friends don’t use pet names like “baby” and friends don’t start making out while their children play upstairs—all Stephanie can do is shrug. “I-I-I…”

“That’s what I thought.” Emily’s voice is in her ear, her breath warm on her cheek and it makes Stephanie shiver. Stephanie feels fingers under her chin and lets her head be turned until she’s almost nose to nose with Emily. “Come here, baby.”

Emily purrs the words and Stephanie hears the whimper blossom and catch in her own throat as Emily captures her lips.

Stephanie can feel the difference in this kiss. Emily’s not kissing her to comfort her or finding amusement in Stephanie’s unexpected enthusiasm. Emily’s kissing her to kiss her. She’s framing Stephanie’s face once again with one hand while the other, the one that was holding her arm drifts down until it’s resting on Stephanie’s thigh. It makes it difficult to breathe and when she parts her lips to take a gasping breath, Emily’s tongue slips past them.

It’s quick and almost stealthy the way the tip of her tongue catches Stephanie’s upper lip. She doesn’t stop kissing Stephanie but also she doesn’t try it again.

Stephanie’s heart pounds at the sensation, at the simple knowledge that Emily’s testing her boundaries, her affinity or willingness to take their friendly little kiss further.

She answers by copying the action. She slips her tongue out and catches Emily’s lip and Emily’s hand tightens on her thigh. However, her tongue doesn’t let Stephanie’s escape; it’s as though it was lying in wait for it. It chases Stephanie’s and glides over it as the hand cradling her face tilts her head to a more satisfactory angle.
Stephanie feels the walls around her crack. Emily ensnares her. Her grip is firm but not at all unwelcome when she holds Stephanie in place to consume her. She doesn’t let her move as she licks into her mouth and Stephanie fails to stop her moan this time.

She feels Emily’s quick exhale in response and then Emily is pulling away, but not before her teeth tug on Stephanie’s lower lip until it slips out. “Good?”

Stephanie’s drowning in the haze of lust that she’d fallen into minutes earlier but she knows there’s no escaping it this time. She feels herself nodding dumbly in response and then she’s reaching for Emily. She twists her torso and this time she’s the one to capture lips. She can feel the way Emily wasn’t quite expecting her to be so quick and so bold and it fuels the fire lit in the pit of her stomach. Her hands frame Emily’s face but they don’t linger; they slide down until they’re at her neck and then they shove the expensive gray blazer off her shoulders.

Emily’s arm snakes around her waist to pull Stephanie closer. It sends a chill down her spine and she twists until she’s tucking her legs underneath herself. Her hands start to feel like they have minds of their own. She notices one curling around Emily’s neck while she kisses her harder. The other is still but anxious where it rests on her chest just north of the curve of Emily’s left breast.

Emily still has her by the waist and seems to be pulling incessantly. Stephanie’s about to end their kiss and tell her to stop because she has nowhere else to go when Emily’s other hand grasps the back of her knee and pulls. It’s with a surprising grace that Emily guides her up and over until Stephanie is comfortably settled astride her lap. It’s been so long since she’s been in such a position she almost forgot what it was like; almost forgot what to do. Almost.

She keeps Emily’s mouth busy as Stephanie’s hands start to fiddle with Emily’s collar. It’s buttoned all the way up and as delicious as it is, there are too many layers and too many buttons between her hands and Emily’s skin.

There’s one tiny nagging thought at the back of her brain that tells her she should be careful, not be so rash, thoughtless. This is Emily Nelson. She’s powerful. Known. Men cower in her presence. Their children are best friends and if this ends badly she will have to see her again in the future in the school parking lot. Will have to be civil toward her for the sake of Miles and Nicky.

The coolness of Emily’s fingertips gliding along the backs of Stephanie’s thighs under her dress makes her fingers move. She sits back from their kiss so she can see what she’s doing and twists the button of Emily’s stiff white collar. It doesn’t reveal anything, really, not more than an inch or so of Emily’s throat, but it’s enough to take Stephanie’s breath away.
It must be noticeable because she hears Emily chuckle and she manages to rip her eyes away to meet her friend’s. She almost loses her breath again; Emily, infallibly cool, calm, and collected, is visibly aroused. There’s a blush to her cheeks and darkness to her eyes that wasn’t there after the first kiss that afternoon.

It drives Stephanie’s fingers to keep going. She doesn’t have to watch now; it’s easy to trail them down over the crisp white placket and find the next button and undo it.

Followed by another. And another. And another until she’s reaching between them to tug Emily’s blouse out of her pants to undo the last two buttons and her gaze never wavers. It’s intoxicating to see that she can affect Emily this way, that if she brushes her knuckles “accidentally” across the bare skin of her abdomen as she finishes the final button Emily’s eyelashes will flutter and the muscle in her jaw will tighten.

Stephanie opens Emily’s shirt as she leans back in; she can see Emily’s expecting a kiss and it’s thrilling to deny her that, to instead duck her head and press her lips to Emily’s neck as her hands rest on Emily’s bare shoulders. She can feel the vibration of a moan against her lips but hears nothing.

And that just won’t do.

She kisses Emily’s neck again, higher this time, and sucks gently. It’s not hard enough to leave a mark but it fills Stephanie with the same feeling of staking her claim on this woman who’s doing everything in her power to remain stoic as Stephanie bathes her neck with her tongue.

She can feel her starting to crumble, though. Her breath is quick. Her head is tilting ever so slightly to give Stephanie better access. The hands tucked under Stephanie’s thighs aren’t quite so cool anymore, nor are they stationary. They’re starting to move, just an inch or two at a time, but they’re moving higher so Stephanie lifts herself up a little, enough to tell Emily that it’s okay, that she wants her to touch her anywhere she pleases.

When she presses her teeth into Emily’s skin the moan finally escapes. It’s short but loud and Stephanie’s yanked away by her hair so quickly it’s almost painful. Any protest she has to the matter, however, is overruled by Emily’s tongue in her mouth. She’s held in place by Emily’s hand tangled in her hair but it’s not as though Stephanie has any desire to leave. She’d very happily allow Emily to fuck her mouth this way for the rest of her life.

Stephanie is, however, still in control of her own hands and if Emily is going to be so forward and demanding, so will she. Her hands have been resting comfortably on Emily’s shoulders for far too long so Stephanie drags them down. She follows the straps of Emily’s bra—an ivory balconette she
glimpsed when unbuttoning her shirt—until she’s tracing the swells of her breasts. Her touch seems to make Emily kiss her even more deeply so she takes them into her hands, best she can with the bra still in place, and makes it clear that she wants this. That she wants Emily.

While the hand fisted in her hair is as unrelenting as her mouth, Emily’s other hand is less so. With every press of Stephanie’s hands or biting of tongues, it slides higher and higher up her dress until she’s holding Stephanie up by her hair and by her ass.

Stephanie feels starved for oxygen and she’s about to force their kiss to break when Emily does it for her. Their gasps for air are in unison and Stephanie’s about to smile because it’s kind of cute, but she doesn’t get a chance to because Emily’s mouth is on her neck. She’s not as thoughtful or cautious as Stephanie had been and Stephanie can feel the bruise before Emily’s even released her skin. It makes her groan and reach up to hold Emily there. She wants her fingers in Emily’s hair, that gorgeous dirty blonde mane that is effortlessly gorgeous, so she rips at the tie that’s keeping her hair tied into its low, stylish twist until she’s ruffling it out and twisting her fingers into it to press Emily closer.

Emily releases her grip on her hair, then, and immediately Stephanie feels her hand reappear on her chest. She’s tugging at the buttons at the bodice of Stephanie’s dress one-handed in what feels like it must be a rare moment of ineptitude when it comes to lovemaking for Emily because it’s not working.

Stephanie relinquishes her hold on Emily’s hair to do it for her; she makes quick work of it, opening the front of her dress down to the waist where her belt sits. She feels Emily’s mouth leave her skin and when she opens her eyes, she finds Emily watching her. Stephanie takes her in, the way her lips are wet and reddened, how the blush on her cheeks has spread to her neck and chest, how her hair is disheveled thanks to Stephanie’s hands, and Stephanie finds Emily’s hands. She has to pull her left off her ass where it’s been greedily squeezing but it’s so she can guide them both to the buckle of her belt.

Emily’s gaze is unwavering; she doesn’t watch as she undoes Stephanie’s belt, and neither does Stephanie. The sound alone of metal clinking is enough to make another moan take root in Stephanie’s chest. Her chest which Emily’s hands move to as soon as her belt is loosened. Her chest which heaves as Emily’s hands cup her breasts, as they lift them and squeeze them but only for a matter of seconds because then her hands are guiding Stephanie’s arms out of her sleeves. They’re unhooking her bra and dropping it to the floor. They’re gathering the skirt of her dress and lifting it over Stephanie’s head to cast it aside to leave Stephanie straddling her lap wearing nothing but a pair of red lace panties.

She’s not quite dizzy enough to miss the way Emily quirks an eyebrow at her after very obviously noticing the undergarment. “Really? I’m impressed.” Emily’s cool tone is muddled now; her voice is low and rough but still dripping with confidence.
Stephanie has to swallow to get her own voice to work. “Just because it’s been a few years doesn’t mean I don’t want to feel sexy.”

“Oh, you are sexy, baby,” Emily says as her hands start to roam over Stephanie’s bare thighs, higher and higher until they’re both on her ass. She squeezes and gives a tug and it makes Stephanie lean back a little. “Now come here and let me make you feel good.”

Emily doesn’t give direction beyond that. She doesn’t really need to; Stephanie’s at her beck and call now, and she watches Emily lick her lips, lean down, and take her nipple into her mouth.

A word forms and dies on Stephanie’s lips and instead she moans and tangles her hand back up in Emily’s hair. She can feel her starting to suckle on it, gentle at first, her tongue grazing and teasing, then getting stronger and stronger until she cries out in pleasure.

That brings it to an abrupt pause as Emily releases her. “Don’t get the boys’ attention or we’ll have to stop.”

“Sorry,” she says as she tries to guide Emily down to her other breast.

Emily resists. “You’re what?”

“Fuck. I meant I’ll try not to make noise.”

The hands on her ass squeeze and give her a bit of a shake. “I want to hear you. I just don’t want them to hear you.” She doesn’t wait for another response before finally bathing Stephanie’s other breast with her tongue.

“Oh, God,” Stephanie breathes as she looks down to watch it happen. She can see her flesh pulled into Emily’s mouth, can feel her sucking and tonguing at her and it makes her ache. She knows she’s wet; she could feel it the moment she straddled Emily’s lap and she knows it’s only gotten worse. Part of her wants to reach down with her free hand and touch herself right there, right in front of Emily. She wonders what Emily would do if she did that, if she’d sit back and watch Stephanie make herself come or she’d take offense and do it herself.
It’s that thought that makes her do it. The hand not tangled in Emily’s hair reaches between them and she runs her fingers down herself, over her panties, and moans. She knows Emily’s not aware of what she’s doing because she doesn’t stop sucking on her breast or digging her nails into her ass so she doesn’t stop. Her panties are soaked through and it’s exhilarating to be so naughty in plain sight. To touch herself while Emily has no idea.

Her fatal mistake is not controlling her hips. They start to rock against her own touch and it gets Emily’s attention.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

Emily’s mouth abandons her breast so suddenly Stephanie actually tips back, not ready for the loss of tension. Her instinct is to yank her hand away as though she’s been burned, to apologize and ask for forgiveness.

But that’s not what Emily would want her to do. She should never apologize for anything ever.

Instead, she strokes her fingers over herself again while she looks Emily squarely in the eye.

Her brazenness results in Emily being the one to yank her hand away; she holds it in the air between them and Stephanie waits for Emily to chastise her.

Instead, she watches Emily take her wet fingers into her mouth.

She even moans and closes her eyes.

It makes Stephanie light-headed.

Emily kisses Stephanie’s fingertips once she’s pulled her fingers from her mouth. “I was going to watch you ride my fingers, but now…” Her voice trails off and her eyes seem to go a little unfocused and for the first time, Stephanie feels like she’s not the only one caught up in a web of arousal.

The suspense is unbearable. “But now...?”
Emily’s eyes snap to hers and hands seize her waist. Stephanie’s being moved so quickly she doesn’t process it until her head’s falling against the back of the couch. Emily swept her up, into her arms, and back down into the warmth of where she’d been sitting and Stephanie doesn’t let her mind linger too long on how it felt to be held by Emily for that one second. She can’t allow it.

Instead, she trains her focus on Emily who shucks her unbuttoned shirt as she kneels before Stephanie, and Stephanie has to blink and blink again to make sure she’s really seeing what she’s seeing. That Emily Nelson is on her knees in front of her, that her hands are on Stephanie’s thighs and moving steadily higher until her fingers are hooking into the elastic around her waist and pulling Stephanie’s red lace down her legs to toss them over her shoulder.

She feels Emily’s eyes rake over her and she can’t quite believe that this is happening. She’s completely nude on Emily’s couch, their children upstairs and, she guiltily hopes, behind a locked door. She’s less concerned with them catching her with Emily than she is about the fact that her body is on full display in the bright daylight of the afternoon sun pouring through the massive windows of Emily’s house.

Her increasing worry is cut off by Emily’s hands parting her knees and the quickness with which she lifts them to put them over her shoulders.

“Oh, for the love of -”

She doesn’t get to finish the sentence because Emily’s fingers spread her open and her tongue glides over her clit.

Whoever’s name she was about to take in vain turns into a lip-bitten moan as she watches it happen.

It’s too much, though. It’s all too much and she has to close her eyes to prevent her brain from short-circuiting.

It’s been so long; it’s been so long since someone made love to her this way. The last time she had sex had been a one-night stand and the man had done very little for her benefit. She couldn’t even remember the last time someone’s tongue was between her legs. She wonders if she actually forgot what it was like because she’s certain she’s never felt what she feels now as Emily’s tongue laps at her.
Stephanie’s body tries to chase her, to get closer or make her move more quickly but Emily resists it; her hold on on Stephanie’s legs is firm where her arms wrap around them. Her voice is low but steady when she withdraws long enough to say, “Don’t worry, I got you, baby,” before returning to what Stephanie can only label as worshiping her clit.

The statement makes Stephanie whimper and press her heels into Emily’s back, but only for a moment, because in the next she’s being tugged down, bit by bit until she has to shove the pillow behind her up and over the back of the couch so she has enough room. Emily’s literally holding her up, her entire lower body suspended in the air as her shoulders bear the weight that Emily isn’t.

It’s so erotic and wanton and she feels alive.

“Shit,” she breathes before moaning. She hopes it’s not too loud because she never wants this to end, not when Emily takes her clit between her lips to start sucking on it, her tongue still working it in her mouth to the rhythm and pattern that has Stephanie starting to not care if she’s too loud.

Her hands scramble to find something to hold on to. The cushions of the couch are too firm to dig in to and for a brief moment they settle on her breasts. But as good as it feels, it splits her attention too much because the only thing in the world she wants to feel right now is Emily sucking on her.

Her hands end up in Emily’s hair and there’s a moment where Emily pauses as though she’s going to tell Stephanie to keep her hands to herself but she says nothing. Instead, she’s more firm with her mouth and Stephanie’s fingers twist into her hair to pull.

It makes Emily moan, a real, unfiltered response that’s even better than the first she pulled from her with a bite to her neck. The very concept of Emily losing control is enough to kick Stephanie right to the edge.

“God, I’m so close,” she says with a gasp as her back arches. The words are barely past her lips before she’s coming on Emily’s tongue.

The pleasure is almost too much. It rocks her entire body and then it crashes through it again a minute later because Emily doesn’t stop. She doesn’t stop or ease up for a single second even while Stephanie’s writhing in orgasm and as soon as Stephanie is able to take a breath, a second rushes through her.
She knows the sound she makes is a pitiful one. Some mix of a desperate whine and a delirious moan and this time she feels Emily slowing down to ease her down from it and...no.

“Don’t stop, don’t stop, don’t stop,” she begs and pulls Emily’s hair with what is probably too much force but Emily doesn’t protest. Instead, she moans and picks up her pace until Stephanie comes a third time.

When she can breathe again, Stephanie is aware that there are tears trailing down her temples. She’s aware that Emily is shifting how she’s holding her and that she probably should help pull herself up but her arms don’t want to work. She does manage to get her fingers to unlatch from Emily’s hair and she watches through heavy lashes as Emily detangles herself from Stephanie’s legs. She waits to see what happens next, if Emily is going to make her sit up, or maybe pick her up and carry her...somewhere. But she does none of those things.

She sits back on her knees, Stephanie’s feet on her thighs to keep her back straight and not strained, and she waits.

She doesn’t say anything or do anything. She waits and she watches Stephanie watching her as she slowly comes back to herself.

When Stephanie finally heaves a sigh and manages to start sitting up, an awkward shuffle that actually requires her to kneel on the floor with Emily, Emily catches her face between her hands to guide her in for a long, slow kiss.

“You good?” Emily says when they part and it’s the same type of quiet emotion in her voice that had been there when Stephanie had been so embarrassed by getting carried away with a kiss.

‘Good’ feels like the understatement of the decade. Stephanie feels like she can breathe again. She nods and kisses Emily without care or fear that she’s getting carried away.

When Emily pulls back, Stephanie’s pleasantly surprised when she leans right back in for one more kiss, as though she hadn’t quite been ready to stop and regretted her own decision. Stephanie smiles into it and is still smiling when Emily pulls back again.

“I’m going to go check on the boys,” she says as she stands and suddenly she’s towering over Stephanie. “Get yourself cleaned up.”
The position also has the apex of her thighs right at eye-level with Stephanie and it’s all she can do to not press her hand there. Instead, she runs her hands over Emily’s thighs, knee to waist, and then lets her go.

She watches her snag her blouse and Stephanie’s underwear from the floor. The panties get stuffed into her pocket and her blouse gets buttoned as she strides toward the staircase. “You’re staying for dinner, by the way,” Emily says without looking back.

“What am I making?” Stephanie asks as she tries to get her coordination working to grab her bra and dress so she can stand up.

“Nothing. I’m going to order that pizza for the boys,” Emily says as she rounds the staircase and stops, one foot on the first step to look at Stephanie. “But I’m the only thing on your menu tonight.”

The end...?
“Boys!” Stephanie calls up the stairs after kicking the front door closed behind her. “Pizza’s here!” She hears the stampede long before she sees them and thinks it amazing that two little boys can make so much noise. “Use the handrail on the stairs, please!”

When she returns to the kitchen with the pizza she’s surprised to find Emily carrying a pair of wine glasses to the dining table. Stephanie changes her route to follow and is also surprised to find it already set with plates and napkins. “What’s this?” she asks as Emily takes the box from her to set it on the table. She’d expected they’d camp out on the couch and floor and eat on the coffee table.

“Dinner. Go get glasses for the boys. Boys! No, no,” Emily says the moment they start climbing into chairs. “Go wash your grubby little hands first.”

Emily’s working the cork out of the bottle when she gets back and she can’t help but watch her out the corner of her eye as she pours the boys something to drink. Her blouse isn’t tucked into her pants and her sleeves are rolled up to her elbows. It’s not buttoned all the way up to her throat, either. Her hair is still disheveled but it’s in a way that seems purposeful.

Stephanie has to clear her throat at the memory of what it was like to muss Emily’s hair that way. That she’s the one who did that.

“What?” Emily asks and Stephanie can hear it in her tone. She’s still primed and ready to tease Stephanie but not in any way she doesn’t like or want.

She hears the boys fighting over the hand towel in the bathroom and doesn’t look up from her new task of placing slices of pizza on the four plates Emily set. “Was thinking about what your face looked like between my legs.”

The cork pops and she watches Emily almost drop the bottle. She casts her a look and a smirk
because Emily’s flustered. She’s about to comment on it when Emily shoots her a very clear look that tells her it’s best if she bites her tongue.

“Pizza! Pizza! Pizza!” Miles and Nicky chant in unison as they skip back from the bathroom to the table and climb up to sit in chairs next to each other.

“Don’t eat too quickly, Smooch!” she says when she watches Miles take far too big of a bite. “I don’t want you to get sick.” She had expected to sit next to her son but the way Emily had set the table, her only remaining options were the head of the table or across from Nicky, and it wasn’t her house.

She takes her seat and watches Emily ease into the chair at the end of the table with sickening elegance. It seems that the grace is only for Stephanie, though, because as soon as she’s seated Emily’s reaching over to ruffle Nicky’s hair. “What have you guys been playing up there, little dude?”

“We’re building a Lego tower all the way up to the ceiling,” the little boy answers around a mouthful of pizza.

“The ceiling!” Emily gasps in jest. “How are you going to reach up that high?”

Miles shakes his head. “We’re building it on the floor and then we’re gonna lift it up.”

“That’s really smart, Smooch!” praises her son and notices Emily’s quiet laugh. She looks to her in question to find her sipping the red wine she’d poured for the two of them. Emily just shrugs, though, but it’s enough to tell Stephanie that she approves of her son’s innovation.

Suddenly, no one’s eating quickly enough. She wants to tell the boys to hurry up and finish their dinner so she can send them back to Nicky’s room with a movie and full stomachs so they fall asleep early. She can’t stop hearing Emily’s words in her mind. “I’m the only thing on your menu tonight.” She chooses not to ask the boys any more questions about their plans because that will slow them down.

Emily doesn’t seem to get the memo though and lets them chatter away with her until, when she starts an entirely new topic asking Miles if he has a favorite subject in school, Stephanie puts her foot down.
Her left foot kicks into Emily’s under the table and she shoots her a look. She hopes her intention is obvious enough and it seems to be because Emily lifts an eyebrow at her interruption.

“Nicky, stop messing around and eat,” Emily says sharply. “You two are going up to bed when you’re finished.”

The boys groan but then Nicky perks up and looks at Stephanie. “You mean Miles can sleep here?”

“He sure can,” she answers with a smile. “You want to, Smooch?”

Their “Pizza!” chant from earlier turns into one of “Sleepover!” and the last bites of pizza are forgotten on their plates as they both leap from their chairs to run back upstairs, nearly tripping over each other.

Stephanie watches them go and feels Emily’s eyes on her.

“They’re not the only ones having a sleepover tonight.”

Stephanie lets her eyes slide to Emily, still in her chair, now sitting back with her legs crossed, one arm relaxed in her lap, the other lowering her glass of wine to the table. She feels her pulse start to race again. It’s amazing, the effect this woman can have on her, but she has to ask the necessary question. “Sean’s not…?”

“I texted him and told him I had a shitty day at the office and need to reset. Said he better not come within a hundred yards of the house if he knew what was good for him. He won’t be home.”

Stephanie feels the guilt twist in her gut at war with her desire. “I’m sorry—should we be doing -”

“You’re what?”

She balls her fists in frustration; it is so difficult to not apologize. “I’m...um, Emily, don’t get me
“Again,” Emily interjects. “You want to do this again. Because you already did it. I already fucked you.”

It feels like every drop of blood in her body pools in her feet the way she goes cold at the words. She feels dirty. Ashamed. She’s been sitting at the table in a man’s home with their children with her panties stuffed his wife’s pocket after letting her lick her to orgasm. After begging her to.

One second, she’s sitting in her chair feeling like a homewrecker and the next she’s in Emily’s lap. She doesn’t even remember getting up and moving.

But she’s there, straddling her lap at the head of the dining table as they kiss. As Stephanie grinds her hips to try to find relief from the pressure and tension that had barely begun to dissipate even after her third orgasm. In fact, it’s worse than before—it’s worse than not having another person make her come in years. It’s worse because now she knows what it’s like to have Emily Nelson fuck her.

“Please,” she breathes against Emily’s lips as she runs her fingers through her blonde hair.

Emily kisses her again before replying, “Please what?”

She pulls one of Emily’s hands from where they’re gripping her waist and guides it under her dress and between her legs. “Please,” she repeats with a whine as she presses Emily’s fingers to her body.

“Oh, baby girl,” Emily purrs as she tilts her head to lick the mark she left earlier on Stephanie’s neck. Her fingers slide down and back up. “Already? You get so wet for me.”

It’s all Stephanie can do to not scream. Instead, she nods and whispers, “Please fuck me,” before kissing Emily again.
It’s hard this time—it’s not difficult, it’s hard. And fast. Emily’s fingers sink into her and start thrusting. There’s no preamble, no teasing, no working Stephanie up until she’s begging. She’s already begging.

She lets her head fall to Emily’s shoulder and holds on. She holds on while she rides Emily’s fingers, while Emily’s hand grips her ass to control how quickly her hips move. Or at least Stephanie thinks that’s what she’s trying to do, but Emily’s not in control now, not really. She is, and she’s taking exactly what she wants from Emily.

“Harder,” she says with a moan in Emily’s ear.

She feels Emily comply and moans again. Emily’s blissfully merciless Stephanie wonders would it could be like if Emily had a strap-on to use on her. “Oh, shit,” she breathes out as the thought alone almost makes her come.

Emily complies so much that it’s everything but painful. It forces Stephanie off her lap with every thrust. Her entire body is impacted until Stephanie puts her feet on the floor to lift herself. It puts more space between them with the only goal to give Emily more room to work.

Her teeth sink into Emily’s shoulder at the new angle and at the sound of Emily’s broken moan, she throws her head back. Stephanie doesn’t let herself moan again; she never heard the door close upstairs. She settles for gasping breaths and whispers of, “Fuck, Emily, fuck, don’t stop, oh, my God,” until her orgasm sweeps her off her feet and back onto Emily’s lap. She groans into her mouth as she comes.

When she’s able to think about anything beyond the fingers that are still inside her, she’s overcome with the need to apologize. What she did was irrational and rude and terribly risky and she didn’t even ask Emily if it was okay and -

“I knew I liked you,” Emily says as she nips at Stephanie’s neck.

...and maybe it was fine. Stephanie lifts her head and sits back, still on Emily but further back so they can look at each other. It’s clear once again that it’s affected Emily. Everything about her screams arousal. She finds Emily’s wrist to ease her hand away, sighing as her fingers audibly slide from her body.
It’s the same position they were in before—Stephanie in Emily’s lap, arousal-soaked fingers in the air between them—only this time they’re Emily’s fingers, and they’re being drawn into Stephanie’s mouth.

She wants to see Emily’s reaction to it. It’s too good knowing that she can do this to such a beautiful woman. She can hear Emily’s quiet moan when Stephanie closes her lips around her index and middle fingers to guide them into her mouth to the knuckle before starting to withdraw them. She can see the way she wets her lips as Stephanie’s tongue slips between her fingers to clean them as she sucks on them. She can feel Emily’s hips lift beneath her.

It’s the first time she’s felt that and she smiles around the fingers in her mouth until they slip free. Something about Emily makes Stephanie feel like a different person, or maybe the person she forgot she could be: a woman. A smart, confident, sexual, sensual woman.

She leans in and kisses Emily who kisses her back with a hunger that might have surprised Stephanie if she hadn’t accepted the fact that Emily wants her as badly as she wants Emily.

Emily breaks their kiss by pushing Stephanie off her lap. “These pants are dry clean only.”

It takes Stephanie a second to catch up, still unsure on her feet as she steadies herself with a hand on the table, and she laughs. She laughs until she’s doubled over and she hears Miles yelling too, and it only makes her laugh harder. “I’ll tell you in the morning!” she manages to shout.

“What the fuck is so funny, baby?” Emily asks and while Stephanie can tell she’s tried to be hard and biting with her comment, she’s totally failing.

Stephanie waves her hand to try to clear her head and catch her breath so she can stand up straight. “You’re worried about me getting your pants wet?” she finally manages to ask.

Emily’s cold façade cracks and she smiles as she holds her hand up again, parts of it still glistening, as though she’s making a sound point.

Stephanie just knocks her hand aside as she bends to kiss her cheek, then bites her ear as she whispers, “Your pants are already wet.”
Emily’s about to disagree when Stephanie slips her hand between Emily’s legs to curl her fingers into her through her pants.

For once, Emily’s rendered speechless. Instead, she gasps and grabs Stephanie’s wrist but makes no attempt to push it away.

“That’s what I thought,” Stephanie says as she kisses her cheek again, echoing Emily’s own confirmation that afternoon. She pulls away and feels Emily’s reluctance to let her go. Even the way Emily’s looking up at her is starting to look desperate. “Unfortunately,” she says as she channels her best Emily Nelson-ambivalence, “the boys are going to be up for quite some time. Why don’t we slip into something more comfortable?”

She’s already walking toward the stairs when she hears the scrape of a chair behind her and feels Emily following her. She’s close, close enough to touch, but she’s not and something about that, this cat-and-mouse game they’re playing, makes Stephanie’s head spin. She climbs the stairs toward Emily’s bedroom—she tries not to think about how it’s Emily and Sean’s bedroom—and steps aside to let Emily lead the rest of the way.

She disappears for a few seconds into a massive walk-in closet and returns with a few garments in her hand, of which she peels off the top two and hands them to Stephanie. “Machine washable,” she says with a smirk, as though it could almost be an insult, but it’s the opposite. It’s the exact opposite and Stephanie almost preens under the comment.

Stephanie reaches back to push the door closed in case the boys decide to come looking for them and starts unbuttoning her dress. It’s the second time she’s done it today and Emily watches her with as much, if not more, interest as she did the first time. She opens it to her waist, slips it off her arms, then unbuckles her belt. She pulls that completely off, through all the loops, and tosses it onto the bed.

“For later,” she says before pushing the dress over her hips and to the floor. She doesn’t bother picking it up to fold it neatly; it definitely needs to be cleaned and pressed after today.

Emily tilts her head at the comment and a smile slowly grows until she’s grinning; it’s an honest, happy smile and Stephanie returns it. “For later?” Emily asks as she nods at the belt and starts unbuttoning her blouse. She does not, however, take her eyes off Stephanie as Stephanie strips herself of her bra to stand nude in her bedroom before Stephanie snags the pair of silky rose-colored shorts Emily’s given her to slip them on.

She reaches automatically for the shirt but stops. Instead, she watches Emily finish unbuttoning her
blouse to toss it over the arm of a chair in the corner. She waits. She waits until Emily sheds her bra and then she rushes to her. She wraps her arms around Emily’s neck and presses their chests flush as she pulls her down and into a kiss.

Emily’s hands land on her lower back and Stephanie can feel the surprise on Emily’s lips as they kiss. Stephanie knows Emily is desperate; there’s no way she can’t be after what’s amounted to hours of sex, flirtation, and teasing. She could turn and shove Emily onto the bed right now and she knows she would go willingly.

But they can’t. Not yet. She can still hear their boys shrieking with laughter across the hall and she can’t risk being interrupted once she finally has Emily on her back. Or her knees. Or however she ultimately decides she wants her tonight.

She does allow herself the pleasure of reaching between them to cup Emily’s bare breast, to feel the way her nipple is hard as it presses into her palm. She lets her other hand slip under Emily’s arm to reach up to the base of her neck where she presses her fingernails...and then drags them down her back.

It has the exact intended effect and Emily’s whole body shivers as she breaks from their kiss with a quiet but telling moan. “Just wait until I can really get my hands on you,” Stephanie says as she takes a step back, then another until she’s slipping the loaned T-shirt (something soft and luxurious and nothing at all like the cheap ones she sleeps in) over her head.

When she re-emerges, Emily’s still staring at her, still dazed. Stephanie bites her lip and in a decision she may or may not live to regret, hurries back to her. Instead of kissing her, however, as Emily so plainly expected, she goes to work unbuttoning the impeccably tailored designer pants. She unbuttons the first button, then slips the hooks from the eyelets to split the zipper. She pushes them over Emily’s hips and watches them fall to the floor unhindered.

She inhales at the sight; Emily’s bra had been a matching set with her panties, an ivory lace thong that seems to be begging Stephanie to strip it down her impossibly long legs and repay Emily for all her generosities. Instead, she steps back.

“That Hurry up. The boys need a movie and so do we."

Emily finally comes-to at her voice. “Why do we need a movie?”
“Because you need to keep your hands to yourself for a while,” she lies, knowing full well she’s the one who needs the excuse. Stephanie hands Emily the top she’d brought out for herself and when it unfolds in her hand she has no choice but to roll her eyes. “Of course these are your pajamas.”

Emily slips her arms into the sleeves and starts buttoning. “What about them?”

Navy blue silk with white pinstripes. Stephanie considers the fact that they could actually be Sean’s but the shirt fits Emily too perfectly to be his and the matching shorts she steps into are definitely sized for her.

“You’re in menswear every day. Even your pajamas…” she gestures at Emily who’s found a new hair tie on her nightstand and is working on tying her messy hair into a bun.

Emily dismisses her comment with a shrug. “It’s not menswear if a woman’s wearing it.” She breezes past Stephanie but not before spanking her ass on the way to make her yelp. The casual smile she tosses over her shoulder at Stephanie is so sexy it makes her knees weak. “Come on; let’s get the boys set up.”

Stephanie takes a moment to compose herself before following Emily across the hall into Nicky’s room.

“Hey, little dude, what’s cookin’?” Emily says.

The TV is nothing but a bright blue screen. “Miles broke the TV.”

“I did not! Mom, I didn’t break it!”

Stephanie kneels down next to Miles on the floor and hugs him to her side. “What happened, Smooch? Were you trying to change the channel?”

“We wanted to watch a movie and Nicky said to push that button so I pushed it.” He holds up the remote control and Stephanie takes it.

“Which button?”
“This one,” Miles says as he points at the button labeled Input. She points it at the TV and presses it again and the logo of the Blu-ray player’s brand illuminates the screen.

“You fixed it! Thank you!” Nicky shouts and he rushes to Stephanie to hug her. “You smell like my mom,” he says before he hops across the room to his collection of movies. “Miles, come pick a movie!”

Stephanie’s not sure how to respond and Emily seems equally amused when she looks up at her sitting on Nicky’s bed. “Not so fast, buster,” Stephanie says as she corrals her son to pull him in for a hug. “I’m going to make you a deal, okay?”

“Okay.”

“I won’t make you brush your teeth tonight if you and Miles promise to stay in his room so Emily and I can enjoy our movie, too. It’s a movie for grown-ups and I don’t want you to try to sneak downstairs and watch it because you’ll have scary dreams. Okay?”

His nod is wide-eyed; she knows he still remembers last time he tried to watch a PG-13 movie. It had been a long week of sharing her bed with a six-year-old who kicks in his sleep.

“Nicky, you hear that? No toothbrush tonight if you guys stay put.” Emily nudges his backside with her foot. “I’ll even say no bath tomorrow. Promise?”

“I promise!” Nicky says as he starts pulling movies off the shelf. “Miles, come on!”

“Night, dude,” Emily says as she stoops to kiss Nicky’s head. She lends her hand to Stephanie on her way out and pulls her to her feet with a smile.

“Remember our deal, Smooch! This door stays closed tonight.”

“I know, Mom!” Miles says with annoyance.
“Okay. I love you!”

“I love you, too!”

Stephanie pulls the door closed when they leave and has to lean back against it. She’s not used to having to function in a perpetual state of tension and arousal and it’s exhausting.

Emily notices her absence after a few steps and stops to glance back. She stares at Stephanie for a moment. “Don’t make me fuck you against my kid’s bedroom door,” she whispers and then resumes her path.

It leads them back into her bedroom.

“I thought we were watching a movie?” Stephanie says as she lingers in the doorway. The bedroom is daunting in the way that she’ll have to work far too hard to behave if they’re in it.

“We are.”

She watches Emily crawl up the bed, all legs and silk until she turns to sit back against the headboard. She snags a remote control from the nightstand and a full projection screen descends from the ceiling in front of the floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall windows of the bedroom.

“Ah,” Stephanie says. “I see.”

“What’s wrong, baby?” Emily asks with a smile. She pats the empty space next to her. “Come here.”

Stephanie takes a deep breath and crawls up from the foot of the bed just as Emily had. She hopes it’s as sexy as when Emily did it and even if it isn’t, she notices Emily doesn’t take her eyes off her until she’s seated next to her. “Nothing’s wrong,” she says with another deep breath as she grabs the belt she left there earlier to move it out of the way. “I thought we’d be downstairs is all.”

“What’s wrong with this?”
Stephanie closes her eyes as she chuckles to herself. “I’m not sure I can be in bed with you and not have my hands on you.”

“Who said you can’t have your hands on me?” Emily says as she pulls up a movie selection screen and starts scrolling through recently added movies.

Her response takes Stephanie aback, just the slightest, but she recovers quickly. “Oh. Then never mind.” She keeps her hands to herself, though, because she knows Emily expects her to immediately touch her.

“What do you think—*Blue is the Warmest Color*? That would be fitting.”

Stephanie shakes her head. “Directed by a man.”

“But the sex scene is amazing.”

Stephanie scoffs. “What women scissor their first time together?”

Emily doesn’t disagree; she just hums a little and keeps scrolling. “Oh, here we go.”

Stephanie watches her cue up *Unfaithful*. “Oh, that’s...okay.” She squirms because Emily’s quite literally flaunting the fact that she’s in the middle of what’s become a day-long affair. “I feel like we should have popcorn or something.”

“Baby, I told you,” Emily says as she leans down and draws Stephanie’s face to hers by her chin. “I’m the only thing you’re eating tonight.”

“God,” Stephanie breathes against her lips before they kiss. She thinks this is going to be it already, that they waited three whole minutes before breaking, but a scream, a crash, and a shout of, “It’s okay!!” from across the hall makes them stop.

“I know, baby,” Emily whispers against her lips before kissing her again. “I want it, too.”
The words make Stephanie’s fingers curl into Emily’s top but she knows they have to wait. She exhales and nods and leans back into her spot as the movie begins.

“Jesus, fuck, why is it so windy there?” Emily says at the screen and it jolts Stephanie out of her daze just as Diane Lane and Olivier Martinez get blown into one another on some dirty street in New York. “I’m in the city every damn day and I’ve never seen it that windy.”

“Seems like an elaborate and unnecessary ruse to get these two into a bed together.”

“Like she needs a reason? Look at him.”

Stephanie considers the actor. “His nose is super crooked.”

“I love it. He’s almost perfect. If he was perfect he wouldn’t be hot.”

She wonders if Emily finds her hot. And if she does, if that means she doesn’t think she’s perfect, and what parts of her Emily thinks aren’t perfect and how she could make them perfect.

But then Emily might not think she’s hot anymore if she even thinks that now.

“What about Richard Gere?” Emily asks.

Stephanie shrugs. “He’s too old.”

“But he has so much experience.”

“Are they going to make a sex tape?”

“Have you ever made one?”
“No. Have you?”

“Yes.”

“Of course you have,” Stephanie says with a shake of her head. “Is there anything you haven’t done?”

“I haven’t fucked a woman in this bed. Well, not without Sean here,” she adds thoughtfully.

It’s such a flippant comment that Stephanie has to shove her. “You’re terrible.”

“You already know I’m the best.”

Stephanie groans and scoots over until their hips are touching. She turns her body into Emily’s slightly and lets her hand rest on her knee for a moment before it runs up to where her shorts begin.

“That’s better,” Emily says quietly as she covers Stephanie’s hand with her own to guide it a little higher, just until it pushes the leg of her shorts up.

“How do you do that?” she asks as she debates kissing Emily’s neck.

“Do what?”

Instead of answering she shakes her head and presses her lips to Emily’s neck. She doesn’t allow herself to linger even though Emily tilts her head to encourage her to continue. She relaxes next to her and brings her hand up to instead undo a button on Emily’s top and slip her hand into it and cup her breast, toying with her nipple just as the woman on screen trembles from desire and arousal.

She hears Emily sigh, her back arching a little at Stephanie’s touch. “They’re so hot together,” Emily says with another exhale, her body twitching a little as the couple making love get so physical the man asks for the woman to hit him.

Stephanie’s teasing with her touch. She moves from one breast to the other. “I think we’re hot
together.”

“You think so?”

“Mhm.” She catches Emily’s nipple between her fingers to twist it gently and watches the way her jaw loosens a little. “This woman’s so proud of her affair,” she says of Diane Lane’s character as she fucks her lover in the bathroom of a diner while her friends wait at the table.

“Why wouldn’t you be proud of fucking someone like that?”

Stephanie pulls her hand from Emily’s blouse and instead slips under its hem to rest her hand there on her stomach. She only waits a beat before turning her wrist to slip her fingers down the front of Emily’s shorts and between her legs. The lace there is wet and warm and she tries to mask her reaction to it. She wants the only reaction to be Emily’s.

Her reaction is a shaky exhale.

“Why do you do that?” she says as she lets her fingers start to play over the slickness.

“Do what?”

“Act like nothing affects you.” She smiles to herself; try as she might, Emily can’t hide the fact that she’s turned on when Stephanie’s fingers are covered in her wetness. She also loves what’s beginning to play out on screen, the cheating wife angry with herself trying to act like she doesn’t want her lover but in reality, wanting nothing more.

“Tell me you want it,” the man demands as he bends the woman over in the hallway of his apartment building.

“I want you to fuck me.” It’s ripped from her mouth as though it pains her to admit it.

“See?” Stephanie says as she curls her fingers under the edge of Emily’s thong to pull it aside. “See how easy it is to ask for it?”
Emily’s struggle to stay still is becoming increasingly evident as Stephanie finds her clit and starts to tease it. “I already told you what I want.” Her voice is clipped.

Stephanie clicks her tongue and shifts so she can bring her free hand up and trace her fingertip along Emily’s ear and down her neck to make her shiver. “Telling me what I’m going to do isn’t telling me what you want.”

Emily’s head falls back against the headboard and her eyes close. Stephanie thinks it’s the most beautiful she’s ever looked; tense and flushed with her hands starting to fist into the quilt.

She presses harder but keeps a slow pace, one so slow that Stephanie would find it agonizing if it was used on her. “I think I want to keep doing this until the movie’s over. I wonder how much time’s left? Another hour?”

Emily’s silent save for her labored breathing and she opens her eyes to stare with determination at the screen.

“So that’s the way it’s going to be, hmm?” Stephanie says as she leans in to kiss her neck again before she sits back, outwardly content to finish the movie while she learns Emily’s body. “That’s fine. I have all night.”

It’s difficult, she finds, to stay as cool and collected as Emily seemed when it was Emily being the one driving Stephanie crazy. It takes everything in her power to not take her hard and fast like Emily took her after dinner. She focuses on the movie and tries not to think about the fact that she has Emily’s clit between her fingers to stroke it.

Seconds tick by. Minutes. Stephanie’s glanced at the wall clock enough times to know that almost forty minutes have passed when she hears Emily’s deep breath.

“Jesus, baby,” Emily groans and Stephanie knows she’s about to break. She knows and she’s ready for it. “Fuck me. Please fuck me.”

“God, I like the sound of that,” Stephanie whispers as she pulls Emily’s mouth to hers. She claims it like Emily claimed hers, her tongue sliding into her mouth just as her fingers slide into her body. Emily moans again and Stephanie smiles. “Now, was that so hard?”
“Shut up,” Emily growls as she starts to push at her shorts. Stephanie doesn’t help, content to leave her fingers buried in her as she strips herself of her shorts and thong.

It’s then that Stephanie really understands the way Emily carries herself. Being almost dismissive of what’s happening is empowering. It makes her feel like she has nothing to lose and everything to gain to sit back and wait for Emily to give in. It makes her feel like she could kick someone’s ass or bring someone to their knees.

She thinks about how quickly Emily sank to her knees for her this afternoon.

It makes her lift Emily with the fingers she has inside her, almost not caring if it hurts but also taking care that it doesn’t. She does it to get Emily’s attention and it works. She’s gasping as her hips lift off the bed. Stephanie’s quick to move. She’s up on her knees and then on her stomach between Emily’s thighs before the blonde has even let herself relax back to the bed.

“Get down here,” Stephanie says as she crooks her fingers again, this time to get Emily to move down instead of lift up, and it works. She slides down until her head’s in the pillows. Stephanie watches her unbutton her top and cast it aside.

Now she’s sure she’s never seen something as beautiful as Emily Nelson nude, in bed, trembling with desire as she looks down her body at Stephanie. They watch each other and Stephanie feels like it’s another game—who will look away first?—as she tastes Emily for the first time.

“That’s good, baby, that’s good,” Emily coos down at her.

It pisses Stephanie off. Emily shouldn’t be praising her right now. She should be too busy moaning and whimpering and coming to tell Stephanie she’s good.

It makes her want to be better. She’s determined. She shoves Emily’s thigh aside with the hand not inside her to open her further. She works her clit with her tongue, her fingers curling inside her.

She sees Emily start to give in again, her eyelashes fluttering until her eyes close and her head presses back into the pillows.
She moans.

It’s loud and it makes Stephanie swell with pride.

She’d tell Emily how fucking good she sounds if it didn’t require her to stop what she was doing. Instead, she groans and keeps going. She’ll keep going until Emily begs her to stop.

Emily grows restless beneath her, each of her chains of self-control snapping one by one as her hips start rocking up to meet Stephanie’s mouth. As her legs hook themselves over Stephanie’s shoulders to press her heels into her back. As her hands—God, as her hands twist into Stephanie’s hair and pull her in closer.

She comes with a cry that she tries to muffle in a pillow but it’s more than loud enough for Stephanie to hear.

It almost makes her come, too.

She eases Emily through it, briefly considering not letting up just as Emily hadn’t, but she can feel the way Emily recoils from Stephanie’s vigor so she slows it down and slips her fingers out until she’s barely teasing Emily with the tip of her tongue.

She must hit a sensitive spot because Emily’s body lurches. “Stop, stop!” she shrieks before bursting out laughing.

It’s an odd reaction, Stephanie thinks, but it’s also the first time she can ever recall Emily laughing—actually laughing, not sardonically or disdainfully or any of the other ways Stephanie’s heard her laugh over the two weeks they’ve known each other.

Emily swings her leg over Stephanie so she can turn onto her side, still laughing, so Stephanie pushes herself up onto her elbows and knees and crawls back up to flop down next to her.

Her laughter is contagious and soon they’re both in tears from it.

So recently she’d thought she’d found the most beautiful iteration of Emily, but she’d been wrong.
She’d been so very wrong.

It’s this version. This woman who’s let go of every ounce of control that she otherwise commands every second of her life and seems relieved to be allowed to do so.

She smiles at Stephanie as her laughter starts to fade and Stephanie is pulled in by her neck and waist until she’s pressed against Emily’s lithe body to kiss her.

“Why are you still dressed?” Emily whispers against her lips as she starts working Stephanie’s shirt up her body until she has to sit up to finish removing it.

“Because I was too busy getting you to beg me to fuck you to bother,” Stephanie whispers back. She feels Emily huff in what is probably a desire to argue that she had done no such thing. But they both know Stephanie is right. Emily starts with her shorts next, slipping them over her hips and down her thighs. “Is this you telling me I should be naked?”

Emily nods as she kisses her again and Stephanie works her shorts the rest of the way down until she drops them off her ankle over the edge of the bed. She realizes, as Emily’s hand strokes down her back to pull her closer, this is the first time they’ve been fully nude together. It’s a fact that makes her start giggling again.

“What?” Emily asks with a lazy smile.

“I just realized…” she starts giggling again; Emily’s fingers trailing up and down her ribs and waist aren’t helping her get it under control at all, “that we’ve had sex three times today and are just now naked together in bed.”

Emily’s eyebrows lift in surprise, or maybe curiosity. “Good things come to those who wait.”

Stephanie gasps as Emily slips her thigh between hers and presses into her. She’s still so painfully turned on after touching Emily for so long. Her hand slides to Stephanie’s ass and pulls, guiding her right up and along her thigh to make her toes curl.

Emily kisses the corner of her mouth and smiles at her. “And I think you’ve waited long enough, hmm?”
The end...?
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Well, folks...here we are again.

“I can’t,” Emily mumbles into the pillow. She’s face-down. Stretched out. Spent.

Stephanie peppers her shoulders and back with kisses. “You gave me tonight. I don’t know when I’ll be with someone again so let me make the most of it.”

They had, admittedly, made the most of it already. Stephanie’s quite literally lost count of how many orgasms she’s had since their after school martini talk. She’s exhausted but her body is singing as though someone dusted off their old violin to play and it sounds even better than they remember. She’s never felt so amazing during sex before. She hasn’t really stopped to wonder if it’s a girl thing or a gay thing, but it’s definitely an Emily thing.

Emily had her figured out before they’d ever kissed and Stephanie knows that now. She’d soothed her with alcohol and got her to open up and share her fears and secrets and everything that makes her tick—and then she’d used each and every lesson she’d learned to unravel Stephanie until she was on her knees over Emily’s face biting the headboard to stop her voice from waking their children asleep across the hall.

She feels like she could do this forever; she wants to. Her body needs her to. It’s for her physical, mental, and emotional well-being. No woman should be deprived of this.

“Please?” she whines as she kisses Emily’s shoulder again and she watches the other woman turn her head and try to blow her hair, barely still tied in its bun, out of her face to look at her.

“You’re cute when you beg,” Emily says with a smile and purses her lips to get Stephanie to kiss them. Which she, of course, does without a moment’s hesitation. Emily turns away before long, though. “Baby, you’re killing me. I promise I’ll fuck you again tomorrow if you let me sleep.”

Stephanie laughs and moves over Emily to straddle her waist and sit back on her ass, pinning her.
She gets a grunt and a bucking of hips in response but not much more. “I have so much lost time to make up for.” She leans down, making sure to press her breasts into Emily’s back, and bites her neck before soothing the spot with her tongue. “And you make me come so hard.”

She intentionally rolls her hips so Emily can feel exactly how wet she still is and despite all her outward rebuffs, Stephanie feels Emily’s own hips tilt forward against the bed.

“You don’t even have to do anything,” she says as she straightens her arms to find a better angle as she rolls them again. “Just stay right there.”

Emily tries to look back at her but the angle is strained. “You’re not going to hump my ass ’til you come.”

“I might,” Stephanie says with a smile and an only slightly exaggerated moan. It does actually feel incredible but she’s pretty sure anything touching her at all tonight would feel incredible. And that makes her feel wicked. She sits up so she can twist and reach behind her; she has to feel around a bit in the near-darkness but she knows it’s there somewhere because it recently jabbed into her back for 15 minutes.

She finally finds the smooth leather and seizes it. The metal of the belt buckle chimes as she lifts it and she can feel Emily’s entire body tense beneath her.

Emily manages to get herself up onto her elbows so she can turn her head to look behind her. “What’s this?”

Stephanie slowly winds the belt along her right arm and then lets it slide off. She keeps the buckle end in her hand and plays with the metal; the sound got Emily’s attention and, she discovers, the coldness of it tracing down her spine gets her attention even more.

“Shit, what are you doing?” Emily says with a gasping breath as her head falls to hang lifelessly.

Her reaction is astounding and not at all what Stephanie expected.

She’s almost nervous to reply because it feels like they’re standing on a precipice again and the wrong words will be the difference between ecstasy and embarrassment.
She focuses on leveling her voice. “I said I was saving this for later.”

Emily hums.

Her heart starts racing. Emily’s not exactly rejecting what Stephanie is hinting at. She drags the buckle up Emily’s back as she leans back down to breathe into her ear, “And it’s later.”

Emily shivers beneath her. “What are you going to do?” Her voice is doing that thing again that Stephanie’s grown to crave where it drops an octave when she’s turned on.

The knowledge helps Stephanie’s confidence grow. “Don’t worry; you don’t have to do anything.” She rolls her hips again, this time so firmly it makes her sigh in Emily’s ear. Slowly she edges herself higher as she weaves the belt in and out of the buckle until she can reach under the pillow and pull Emily’s left arm out from under it. She slips Emily’s hand through one of the loops and waits for any sign that Emily doesn’t want this.

There is no such sign. Emily allows her to do it, even lifts her head again and watches it happen.

Even puts her own hand through the other loop.

Stephanie tightens her grip on the tail of the belt. “This is okay?” she asks quietly.

Emily seems to chuckle but it doesn’t quite make it out as a laugh. More like staggered breaths. “Where’d you learn how to do this?”

“You don’t get to know all my secrets,” she says as she pulls on the loose end to cinch the homemade handcuffs around Emily’s wrists.

It makes Emily moan and drop her head again. “If you wanted to do this, I had a pair in the drawer,” she says after taking a deep breath. “But points for creativity.”

“I always did love a good DIY,” Stephanie teases as she gives them one more tug for good
measure. “Do you want a safe word?”

“Baby, it takes a lot more than handcuffs to make me need a safe word.”

“Mm, that sounds like a challenge.” Stephanie smiles to herself and then lifts up a bit. “Speaking of DIY: turn over.”

It’s not easy for Emily to turn in her confined space of being trapped between Stephanie’s legs and her hands being bound but she does so. She’s a little winded when she looks up at Stephanie, now astride her stomach, and Stephanie has to take a moment to gather herself. She has her best friend, Emily Nelson, tied up with her belt, naked, in bed, and she likes it.

They both like it.

“Like I said,” Stephanie says as she works her way backward until she’s shifting her stance to straddle Emily’s right thigh just above her knee. She wastes no time in pressing herself against her. “You don’t have to do anything.” She rocks her hips a little and sees Emily’s eyes flash. “I do think your hands should be above your head, though. Would you mind, sweetie?” She says as she points at Emily’s hands.

She lifts her arms and moves them back until her bound hands rest against the headboard behind her and Stephanie feels the power hit her like heroin.

“That’s good. God, you’re beautiful,” she says as she takes in the sight before her. It makes her hips start moving in earnest to drag herself over Emily’s thigh.

Emily seems to tug at her restraints a little. “You don’t want me to do anything?”

Stephanie shakes her head and is struck by the way Emily’s eyes rake over her body at the action. It drips of approval and desire. “I want you to watch me.” Her left hand trails up from her knee, over her stomach, and to her breast. She cups it to squeeze it and she watches Emily swallow. “Since you’re too tired to fuck me.”

“I’m not too tired, baby,” Emily says and Stephanie feels her thigh flex between her legs.
Stephanie intentionally waits to answer so she can moan as she rolls her hips. “You told me you couldn’t fuck me any more tonight, and now here we are.” She rolls them again and starts settling into a rhythm. “Or, there you are.” She brings her right hand up to tend to her other breast. “And here I am.”

“I can do it.” Emily holds her hands out toward Stephanie. “Let me go.”

Stephanie pushes them away and watches Emily drop them behind her head again. “We both know I’m not going to do that.”

That’s when Emily smiles up at her. It’s such a beautiful smile that it takes Stephanie’s breath away.

“You’re gorgeous, baby,” Emily says up to her. “Let me watch you.”

Stephanie’s racing heart seems to skip a beat or two but it finds its pulse again when Emily presses her thigh up into her. “Fuck,” she says with a moan as she pushes Emily’s leg down. “Don’t. Let me.” She leaves her hand there on Emily’s thigh; it offers different leverage as she grinds herself against her.

It feels amazing. Emily’s skin is silky smooth and warm and growing slicker by the second as her hips roll again and again. She watches Emily watch her and she can see her growing more and more aroused. Her hips are starting to lift and twist in time with Stephanie’s.

“You’re so fucking sexy,” Emily breathes.

Her tone makes Stephanie groan and ride her harder. “You like this?”

“Mhm.”

Stephanie feels high. “I bet if I touch you right now you’d be wet for me.”

It makes Emily’s hips lift wildly and she hears her moan.
“But I thought you were too tired?” Stephanie says with the best pout she can manage when every other breath out of her is a moan. “Don’t worry; I’ll be finished soon.”

Emily moans again. “Touch me.”

Stephanie can’t believe her ears. “What?”

“Touch me, baby,” she repeats. “I want to come with you.”

The groan that leaves Stephanie is actually silent; the arousal that shoots through her is almost crippling. She could stop and calm down a little and help Emily catch up but that’s not what this is right now. “I’m too close. I can’t wait for you.”

“She reaches for Emily, easily finding her clit with her fingers.

“Oh, fuck yes,” Emily says with a groan as her hips jump and chase her touch.

Emily is wetter than she’d been after being played with through an entire movie and Stephanie revels in it to drag her fingers through it and bring them to her mouth both for show and for the indulgence.

Emily’s moan is airy at Stephanie’s display and it catches in her throat when Stephanie puts her fingers back.

“Now don’t you wish you’d have fucked me when I asked?” Even Stephanie’s own breathing is a turn on now; she can feel the heat twisting low in her stomach.

“Honestly?” Emily says with something that amounts to half a laugh and half a moan and Stephanie understands. No. This was a wonderful turn of events. “Fuck, baby, that’s so good.”
It starts like a fuse this time. She feels it spark and then sizzle, the heat trickling through her where she grinds herself against Emily. She knows it’s going to hit her hard and her lungs are already starting to fail her.

Something about her must give it away that she’s on the verge because Emily moans something in encouragement, maybe telling her to come, or begging her to come, but there’s static in her ears as her orgasm rushes through her.

It doesn’t let her stay upright and she falls forward onto Emily and she can feel her body rolling under her, can hear her moaning in her ear and feels the sharp scrape of leather as Emily’s arms come down. Her bound hands land on Stephanie’s back and the rough edge of the belt scratches at her.

“Fuck,” she huffs when her senses return. She’s cheek to cheek with Emily and can feel her struggling to catch her breath.

“How are you so much fun?” Emily asks with a stilted voice.

It makes Stephanie laugh and she presses her face into Emily’s neck to inhale her before she wiggles her way out from under Emily’s arms to stop crushing her. “Taking that as a compliment.”

“It was. Untie me.”

She sits up a little to smile down at Emily. “I didn’t hear the safe word.”

“My safe word is ‘untie me.’”

She tilts her head a little. “I don’t know, Em. I don’t think I’m ready to be finished yet.”

Emily shoves her hands in Stephanie’s face and her voice is firm. “Untie me and I’ll fuck you ‘til dawn.”
Stephanie pushes Emily’s hands aside and leans down to kiss her. Emily doesn’t try to keep arguing and Stephanie lets their tongues play until she sits up fully and brings Emily’s hands back to her lap. She loosens the belt and lets Emily pull her wrists free. “That’s an offer I can’t refuse.”

The belt gets ripped out of her hands and she’s ready for it when Emily lifts her to put her on her back and pin her down, hands above her head as she’d made Emily do. She’d been ready for it. Counted on it, even.

But nothing could have prepared her for the sound and sensation of cold steel snapping around one wrist, then the other.

Emily kisses her so hard she sinks into the pillow beneath her head and her entire being seems to ignite.

“Until dawn,” Emily whispers against her lips before beginning to kiss her way down Stephanie’s body.

When Stephanie wakes, it feels too early. She’s only been asleep one, maybe two hours but her internal clock has her eyes fluttering open because it must be 6:30 am and time to get Miles’s breakfast and lunch ready.

She sits up and rubs her eyes expecting to find her son in bed next to her waiting for her to wake up.

Only she’s not at home. And she’s naked. And definitely not in her own bed.

The disorientation passes after a second or two to get replaced by the utter and absolute exhaustion and level of contentment she’s woken with. She jumps as something cold touches her thigh when she lowers her hand and laughs to find Emily’s metal handcuffs still attached to her right wrist. The events of the past 12-plus hours rush back to her and she forgets how to breathe for a few seconds.

When it passes, she fiddles with the cuff but has no idea how to remove it. She can’t imagine there’s not a safety release of some kind, but she also wouldn’t be surprised if Emily had real law enforcement handcuffs that require a key.
She’d ask her if she was there, but Stephanie knows she’s alone. The palpable energy that follows Emily everywhere is absent.

Her mind returns to the reason she’s awake and that she needs to get Miles ready for school. She’s working on finding enough clothes to put on when she remembers it’s Saturday and they should be sleeping in.

However, she can hear his voice downstairs chattering away with Nicky followed by the smooth lilting voice she knows belongs to Emily.

She tries to get rid of the handcuffs one more time to no avail while she uses the restroom. She surveys herself in the mirror; there’s no denying it that she looks like she was up all night having sex and she loves it. She ties her hair back and washes her face with some expensive product Emily has by her sink and it helps perhaps a little.

She tucks her cuffed hand behind her back as she ventures downstairs. Her approach was quiet and it affords her the opportunity to watch Miles and Nicky, still in their clothes from yesterday, sitting at stools at the kitchen island as Emily slides spoons across the counter to them so they can dig into their bowls of cereal.

“Did you finish your Lego tower?” she asks them as she leans back against the counter with a cup of tea or coffee. She’s wearing the non-menswear pajamas she’d stripped from herself last night with a cream-colored silk robe over her shoulders. Stephanie thinks it should be illegal to look so elegant so early in the morning.

Miles shakes his head. “We made it tall enough. But it broke in half when we tried to stand it up.”

“Oh, no, that sucks! Nicky, I swear if I step on one Lego—make sure they’re all picked up today, okay?”

Something about observing this feels dangerous to Stephanie. It’s too close to feeling normal and it can’t feel normal. Emily is her married best friend. Happily married. Mostly. She can’t think about how domestic it feels to come downstairs to Emily making their children breakfast after keeping each other up all night making love.

That’s what it had been, eventually: making love. It had been fucking. It had been sex. But when
Emily kissed her from the second she began touching Stephanie again until the moment Stephanie cried out against her lips in ecstasy, it had been making love.

And it had been dangerous.

She makes a show of her entrance with a loud, exaggerated yawn.

“Mom, you’re up!” Miles says as he leaps off his stool to run over to her and hug her around her knees.

“Hey, Smooch! How’d you sleep?” She turns her back to Emily and holds out her cuffed hand behind her to ask for help.

“Good.”

“What movie did you end up watching?” She feels Emily’s hands on her wrist and with a couple clicks the metal disappears and she brings her freed hand around to pat at Miles’s wild curls. There’s a very distinct grabbing of her ass that follows and she almost makes a sound. Instead, she glances over her shoulder to see Emily pocket the handcuffs in her robe on her way back to the coffee maker to pour a new cup which she places on the counter after adding a bit of milk and sugar.

“The Incredibles. It was so good! I want to be Mr. Incredible for Halloween!”

“That sounds great! Now, go finish your breakfast.” She pivots him and nudges him back toward his seat. “We need to get home. I think we’ve about worn out our welcome here.”

“You don’t have to rush off,” Emily says as she nods at the coffee she poured and sips her own. “Sean won’t be home until after lunch.”

Stephanie takes up her cup and blows over the hot surface as she leans next to Emily. They’re close enough that their elbows graze. “I think it’s probably best if we go.” What she doesn’t say is that she’s a fool and knows better than to do all things she’s done. She’s an expert at ruining things and she’s most certainly set this friendship on the path straight to destruction. “I need to help Miles with his book report and I still have to record this week’s vlog.”
“And what’s this week’s topic?” Emily asks and Stephanie notices her voice lowering. “DIY BDSM?”

Stephanie masks her reaction with a too-big gulp of coffee and it almost burns her mouth. “C’mon, Smooch, finish up,” she says as she steps out of Emily’s orbit so she can breathe. “You have homework and I have laundry.”

“Anything you need dry cleaned?” Emily says as she sets down her cup and heads for the bedroom. “I’m going today; I can stop by and pick yours up on the way.”

She’s heading for the bedroom because she knows that’s where Stephanie was about to go, and she has no choice. Her clothes are still up there. “Clear your dishes when you’re finished,” she says to Miles before she follows Emily.

She fully expects Emily to fuck her the second they step into the bedroom that still smells like sex. Her mind and body are ready for it and she even considers which direction she should angle herself in to land in bed or against a dresser or even the floor.

Instead, Emily hands her a paper shopping bag from a designer store. “Here’s your dress. Don’t worry about the other stuff,” she says with a wave of her hand toward Stephanie. “Keep it. I’ll come by later to pick up your dry cleaning.”

“You don’t have to do that.”

Emily’s hand appears on her waist. “I said, I’ll come by later.”

Stephanie shivers as she looks up at Emily, ready to beg her to kiss her. And she thinks she’s going to. She even starts to lean down, but then she steps back and Stephanie feels the mood evaporate.

“Go home.”

“I, uh…” It feels painfully silent and Stephanie feels like she has a thousand things she wants to say. She manages to contain herself to a, “Thank you. For everything,” and leaves before she can say anything else.
Stephanie’s not sure how long she stays in the shower.

She lets the water cascade down the body that had come alive last night. Every inch of her feels like it’s been rejuvenated. She sings in the shower. She luxuriates in the tropical-scented lather as it travels all the places Emily’s eyes, hands, fingers, lips, and tongue had traveled. The memories make arousal bloom in her and the only thing that stops her from touching herself is the desire to maintain the reality that Emily was the last person to make her come. Not herself, not her vibrator, not the shower head. Emily’s fingers.

She stays until Miles bursts into the bathroom asking where his Leonardo action figure is and she has to promise to get out soon to help him find it.

(It’s under his bed.)

She naps on the couch while Miles plays a game on her iPad. Normally, she hates using technology as a babysitter, but she’s exhausted and still has an entire day of stay-at-home-mom to endure.

She records her vlog. It’s not about DIY BDSM (it’s about allergen-free bath bombs). She dresses up a little more than usual for it; she’s still feeling confident and flirty and the frilly-shouldered white halter dress makes her feel pretty. She has to work a bit to cover up the pair of purple marks on her neck with enough makeup so they don’t show on camera but as soon as she wraps, she wipes it away; she loves how they look on her fair skin.

She helps Miles with his report, listening to him talk about the book he read this week called *Miss Nelson is Missing!* by Harry G. Allard and its moral of The Golden Rule.

She puts her few dry cleaning garments into the shopping bag Emily sent her home with and leaves it by the door. She has absolutely zero expectation that Emily will actually show up to pick up her dry cleaning, but on the tiniest off chance she does, she figures she should be prepared. When she doesn’t show up, she’ll drop it off herself on Monday.

Her usual laundry is next. It’s all bath towels and she hopes in vain that it won’t unbalance her rickety washing machine. It had come with the house and the washer and dryer were the only two appliances she had yet to replace. They got the job done, though, so she was content to hold out until a really good sale came up.
She’s just settling in at the table with a cup of green tea and her computer to read her most recent comments when her doorbell rings.

“Mom! Someone’s at the door!”

“I heard it, Smooch,” she says as she catches Miles barrelling past her to answer it himself. “No, no, no, you know better than to answer the door.” She sends him back in the direction he came from and when she sees the silhouette through the granite glass her heart stops.

There’s only one person she knows who carries themselves that way. She can see the lines and contrasting colors and she knows there’s a suit on the other side. She holds on to the door for support in a way she hopes isn’t completely obvious as she opens it. “Emily. You came.”

Emily strides into her home, one hand in the pocket of her black suit, as casually as if she’d been there countless times, though it’s her first. Her perfume follows and Stephanie feels high again. Just like that. Her presence and her scent and she’s lost. She’s in a three-piece suit on a Saturday and though Stephanie’s only beginning to figure out why she is eternally grateful for it. Her hair is tied back into a low ponytail and that angers Stephanie irrationally; it means she can’t bury her fingers in it. Though she could pull it...

“Not since this morning,” Emily answers as she saunters to the kitchen. She seems amused by her vlog setup and Stephanie’s about to ask her to be careful when her answer finally registers.

She laughs nervously because all she wants to do is sink to her knees and pull Emily’s dress pants down. She laughs because she doesn’t understand how she becomes this person in Emily’s presence, but she knows she loves it.

“Is Miles here?” she asks as she trails her fingers along Stephanie’s counters while she makes a slow loop around the kitchen that is bringing her closer and closer to where Stephanie’s waiting.

“Playing in his room.”

“Miles!” Emily shouts and it makes Stephanie flinch.
“Hi, Emily!” Miles says after he sprints from his room. “Is Nicky here??”

“No, he’s home. Listen, your mom and I need to talk about the phone calls we got from Santa Claus, but if you hear anything at all, he won’t come because it’s top secret about the list you sent to him. Go play in the backyard, okay? We’ll come to get you when it’s safe.”

Miles’s eyes go wide and he’s scampering away without questioning it. The back door slams a few seconds later.

“How did you know he sent a letter to Santa already?”

Emily rolls her eyes. “Please. You probably have him write quarterly letters to keep him focused on good behavior. Hell, that’s a good idea. Maybe I should try it with Nicky.”

“Yeah, I, uh…” she trails off into another laugh because now she’s alone in her house with Emily.

“You doing laundry?” Emily says as she resumes her unguided tour through the house, Stephanie following just far enough behind that she can’t reach if she’s tempted to touch her.

“Um, yeah. It’s Saturday.”

“Saturday is laundry day?” Emily says as she finds the laundry room. She stops in front of the washing machine and then takes a step back as though surveying it.

Stephanie waits in the doorway, confused. “Yes. Why?”

“Figuring out my schedule,” she says a little under her breath, then kicks the washing machine with the side of her gleaming black patent leather Oxford loafer to make it clang. “Up.”

Stephanie chokes. “Excuse me?”

“Get up. Come on,” Emily reaches out and snags Stephanie’s arm to pull her into the room and plant her in front of the washing machine.
“You want me…?”

“I don’t have all day.” Emily undoes the button on her jacket and removes it to hang it from the doorknob, leaving her in her white blouse and vest.

Stephanie’s mind feels like it’s been incinerated. She can’t get her arms to work and even if she jumps she can’t make it up.

“Okay, let’s go,” Emily says with a roll of her eyes as she grabs Stephanie by the waist and lifts when Stephanie jumps.

Her ass lands on the cold metal of the washing machine agitating slowly beneath her. She can’t believe this is going to happen. She doesn’t even know exactly what is going to happen, but she knows Emily’s going to get her off doing whatever it is she’s about to do. She tugs her skirt out from under herself and pulls it up to her waist.

“Good girl,” Emily says quietly as she runs her hands up Stephanie’s legs. It’s the first she’s touched her since that morning but it feels as though it’s been days the way Stephanie’s body responds to it. Her fingers find the elastic of Stephanie’s panties and she pulls them down, immediately pocketing them.

Stephanie makes a mental note to make a trip to the lingerie store because if this is going to keep happening—God, she needs it to keep happening—she’s going to run out of underwear in a matter of days. Her hands reach for Emily but she leans out of range. She realizes Emily’s makeup is done. Her hair is styled. She was on her way somewhere important before she arrived at Stephanie’s home and she doesn’t want Stephanie to tarnish her impeccable appearance.

Her hands disappear and Stephanie braces herself for her touch but nothing happens. She looks down to see what’s taking so long and forgets how to breathe as she watches Emily undo her pants to reveal a neon pink dildo strapped to her hips.

“Oh, my God,” she breathes as she watches Emily pluck a tiny bottle out of her vest’s breast pocket and dribble a few drops of the clear liquid along its length before setting it on the dryer next to them. “What are you doing?”

“I’m going to fuck you on this washing machine, baby. What does it look like?” Emily says with a
crooked smile as she strokes her hand over the phallus a few times, then pulls a purple handkerchief from another pocket. She wipes her hand on it, tosses it aside, and steps into Stephanie’s space.

“Oh,” Stephanie says with a dumb nod. “Okay.” She feels Emily’s hands hook under her knees to lift them until her feet are planted on the top of the washer just like her ass is.

It’s utterly obscene.

“You want a pillow behind you?” Emily says as she runs her fingernails up and down the backs of Stephanie’s thighs. “Might get a little rough.”

She manages to nod again. “On the couch.”

Emily disappears but only for a few seconds. When she returns she has a throw pillow from the couch that she slides between Stephanie and the control panel of the washing machine.

It’s a relief when Stephanie leans back against it.

“Better?” Emily says, hands on her thighs again as they push her open wider.

“Yeah.” She’s been waiting too long for this. Hell, two minutes is too long.

Emily’s eyes flick to hers and hold her gaze. “Ready?”

She tugs at her skirt again to make sure it’s out of the way. She doesn’t want to ruin it and she also needs to watch this happen. “Yeah.”

She watches as the toy grazes her, then slips over her teasingly. Emily’s watching it, too, when Stephanie looks up and something about that is even sexier. She’s about to beg when she sees and feels the tip press into her. She gasps and holds her breath as she watches the entire length disappear.
If she could form any singular word, she would. Instead, she just whimpers and wraps her hands around the edge of the machine.

“Fuck, that’s fucking hot,” Emily says as she adjusts her stance a little and Stephanie figures her words are enough for both of them.

She watches her withdraw completely as though she’s in awe and Stephanie’s ready to beg for it again just as she pushes back into her. It’s steadier this time. More assured. She stays buried deep and Stephanie clenches around it. She wishes Emily could feel it, but she supposes this is more about her than Emily.

And that makes her moan.

Emily’s doing this for her. That’s it. Emily wore a strap-on out of her house and drove to Stephanie’s for the sole purpose of showing her what it’s like to be fucked on top of a washing machine as it goes into the spin cycle to send unexpected vibrations through her.

“We’re alone; let me hear you, baby,” Emily breathes as she starts moving her hips into a rhythm.

She has to let herself lean back. She has to let this woman fuck her because it’s the only thing she needs as much as she needs air. She moans again, this time not holding back and it makes Emily not hold back either.

“God, yes,” Emily says with a broken groan as she hooks her hands under Stephanie’s knees again. She doesn’t even know where her legs can possibly go until they just stay there, suspended in Emily’s hands as she holds them open.

All of it is obscene. How it feels, how it sounds. And she wants more.

“Harder,” she begs and she remembers what she thought last night as Emily fucked her at the dining table. That she would be merciless if she had a strap-on. And she was right. She can’t even moan without it being interrupted by her body being thrown back again and again. She begs, “Don’t stop,” and closes her eyes. Every sense is overloaded and somehow she still wants more. It scares her, the ferocity of the need. All of this is a drug and she’s already addicted.

She feels her left foot get planted back on the machine and she’s about to open her eyes to see
what’s happening next but she’s not quick enough. Emily needs her hand back so she can reach between them and to rub Stephanie’s clit.

“Fuck,” she breathes as her back arches, already winding up. She’s felt like she’s on a hair trigger since she left Emily’s house.

“You going to come for me, baby?” Emily’s breathing hard and she should be with as hard as she’s working. Stephanie just nods. “Good.” She speeds up, somehow, and Stephanie snaps.

She can hear herself, her moans echoing in the small room laced with Emily’s as she comes. She wonders if Emily’s coming, too, and thinks might be by the sound of it and it makes her hips buck harder until they’re both quiet save for how hard they’re breathing.

She finally opens her eyes to see Emily leaning over her, flushed though no less beautiful. Arguably more so.

Now that the moment is over, though, Stephanie’s back is killing her and she struggles to sit up until Emily helps her, taking a step back to slip out of Stephanie in the process.

Emily immediately goes to work using the handkerchief to wipe it off so she can remove it from the harness. It gets tossed on the dryer with the other things she’d brought and then she leans into Stephanie’s space again, hands on either side of her.

“Now will you kiss me?” Stephanie asks and Emily finally lets her touch her. She runs her hands up Emily’s arms to her face, which she’s careful with, to pull her in for a kiss.

Emily sighs through their kiss and it feels romantic and dreamy as her fingertips trail along Stephanie’s legs, never going past mid-thigh as though it would be inappropriate to do so, which is a laughable concept, really. “That was amazing,” she says against Emily’s lips as they kiss slowly.

Emily hums in reply and eases their kiss to an end. She begins putting herself back together and Stephanie tries not to find it cold and disconnected; the only thing preventing it is that Emily stops every few seconds to kiss her or touch her, as though she’s trying to savor every connection before it’s gone. She watches Emily drop her pants to her ankles so she can unbuckle the harness from her hips. She’s not wearing anything else and Stephanie aches to touch her and see how wet she is.
“You’re not going out like that,” she blurts before really realizing it but she’s so glad she did.

Emily looks at her, confused. “Like what?”

She slides off the washing machine to stand. “You’re so worried about your fancy designer pants getting wet and I know you are.” And then she starts to kneel and watches Emily’s entire body tip back to sag against the wall. She’s already kicking one foot out of her pants so she can spread her legs and hands are in her hair before Stephanie even asks, “Can I clean you up?”

“Fine,” Emily breathes, and then she moans when Stephanie’s tongue draws through her wetness. Stephanie hums her observation because she’s far too busy to speak but Emily gives her a breathy, “I know; shut up,” that makes Stephanie chuckle.

It’s decadent, making love to Emily with her mouth. She does exactly what she offered: she laps up the arousal streaking her thighs and clinging to her skin. And then she sucks Emily’s clit into her mouth and listens to the sound of her head hitting the wall and the clang of her shoe as she props it against the machine behind Stephanie. It gives her leverage and she pushes herself to Stephanie’s mouth.

The quickness with which she climaxes answers Stephanie’s earlier uncertainty; she hadn’t come with her, but she had to have been close. It makes her stomach clench that Emily became so aroused by the very act of having sex with her that it only took a couple of minutes until she was coming on Stephanie’s tongue.

She keeps licking her slowly because, honestly, she feels like she could do it forever.

“If you don’t stop,” Emily says as her hands smooth Stephanie’s hair, “you’re defeating the purpose.”

It makes Stephanie smile and she takes one more pointed lick before she sits back on her heels only for Emily to grab her hands and lift her back to her feet. Stephanie can feel their dynamic shift as Emily no longer stoops to kiss her as she dresses.

“Put that away somewhere,” Emily says as she pulls up her tucks her white blouse into her pants before buttoning them. She nods at the toy and harness and bottle laying on the dryer.
“Uh, yeah, I’ll, uh…” Stephanie has to blink a few times because she’s light-headed again at what Emily’s implying. “I’ll put it in my dresser. Nightstand. Thing.”

Emily brushes her hands down her vest to straighten it and reaches for her jacket to swing it over her shoulders with sickening grace. “Text me when you decide so I know where to find it next week.”

Stephanie swallows and has to lean back against the appliance behind her. “Next week?”

Emily buttons her jacket and turns on her heel to walk away.

Stephanie makes sure her dress skirt is in its proper place before she follows but Emily’s already at the front door, holding it open as she pauses to glance over her shoulder. “Saturday is laundry day, right?”

Stephanie snaps her fingers and points at her like she just figured it out, and maybe she did. “Yes, it is!”

“Then I’ll see you Saturday,” Emily says before pulling the door closed behind her.

The tension breaks with her departure and Stephanie all but falls into a chair to hold her face in her hands. It’s still hot and her pulse isn’t even back to normal yet and Emily’s already gone. She thinks she may very well be driven mad by this woman and she’ll happily let the nurses take her away in a straightjacket.

She sighs and finds the strength to stand so she can freshen up before calling for Miles to let him come back in the house. When she returns, she notices the shopping bag still sitting by the front door, forgotten.

But something tells her Emily wasn’t there to pick up her dry cleaning in the first place.

_The end...?_
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

*whispers* We're back.

“It's in the second drawer of my dresser.”

“Good.”

Stephanie is sure to be prompt Monday morning when she drops off Miles at school. The last thing she wants is to have to face Sean after spending much of the weekend in his bed—and in her laundry room—with his wife. She feels like she’s wearing a giant scarlet letter as she walks her son from her car to the school’s entrance. She’s sure that every parent there knows exactly what she was up to over the weekend.

She hugs Miles goodbye and sends him to class to hurry back to the safety of her car. The relief is short-lived, however, when she realizes she’ll be back in seven hours to pick him up with an even narrower chance of not seeing Sean or Emily.

Not that she’d mind seeing Emily.

Not at all.

She’s actually intrigued to discover how their newfound dynamic will play out in a public setting. Maybe she’s even thrilled by the possibilities.

When she returns at 2:30, her heart races and her palms sweat as she waits outside the school for Miles. Sona and Darren and Stacy come and go, all making sure to make some type of underhanded comment to her while she waits.
She’s certain she hears Stacy whisper something that sounds less than proper to Darren while gesturing to her own neck and Stephanie’s ears ring. Her hand flies up to cover the marks left by Emily that hadn’t yet begun to fade—that she hadn’t thought to conceal before she left the house. She revels in their existence; they make her feel sexy and desirable and are a constant reminder of the way Emily had taken her in every sense of the word. Just seeing them as she passes a mirror or window is enough to make her heart pound.

She doesn’t want someone like Stacy sullying them. Cheapening them. She should have covered them to protect them.

The quiet rumble of an engine pulling up behind her interrupts her reverie. It makes her jump and she spins to see who it is; it’s a black BMW.

It’s Sean.

He waves at her from behind the wheel and is wearing a warm smile when he steps out of his car. “Hello, Stephanie.”

She’s unsure if her heart is in her throat or if her stomach is in her feet; maybe it’s both. She fiddles with her hair to try to cover up the marks and makes it a point to not turn her head in a way that will bring them to his attention. “Sean, hi!” she trills. She sounds fake and she knows it and tries to correct it. “How are you?”

“I’m well, thank you.” He comes to a stop in front of her and she turns to face the school rather than him to safely obscure the hickeys from his sight. “Emily mentioned the boys had a sleepover this weekend.”

“Did she? I mean, yes, they did.” She clears her throat and plays with the pendant on her necklace except that reminds her of the moment Emily had taken it between her lips and pulled on it to make Stephanie sit up and kiss her. She drops it back against her chest. “He said he had a super fun time.”

“I thought you were there? She said you had a girls’ night to help her unwind. Lord knows, she didn’t want me around.”

She takes a deep breath and holds it; it would have been nice if Emily had filled her in on their alibi.
—or whatever you would call it. “Yes, right, of course. I meant they were holed up in Nicky’s room most of the night so I don’t know what all they got up to. But they were definitely having fun.” She leaves out the confirmation that she and Emily holed up in a room to have fun, too, and helped one another unwind many, many times. She’s about to pray for Miles to hurry up when she sees him skipping down the hallway toward the entrance. “Smooch!”

“Hi, Mom,” he says as they hug. “Hi, Nicky’s dad.”

“It’s Sean, sweetie,” she corrects.

“Hey there, Miles.”

“Okay, we better go because the cookies I baked today aren’t going to eat themselves!” It works in getting Miles to cheer and start toward her car so she doesn’t have to keep up the small talk longer. “Have a nice day,” she says to Sean with a wave.

She doesn’t wait to look back for his response.

On Tuesday, she doesn’t see either of them.

On Wednesday afternoon, Stephanie sees Emily’s black Porsche in the parking lot when she pulls in and her heart stops.

She parks a few cars away and checks her hair in the rearview mirror and dabs on a touch of lip gloss before hopping out to straighten her sweater and brush off her jeans. Emily’s not waiting with the other parents; in fact, she’s nowhere to be seen.

“Hi, Darren,” she says as genuinely as she can muster. She ignores Stacy.

“Hi, Stephanie,” he bites at her. He might as well hiss for as venomous as it is. “Running Emily’s errands again?”
She grits her teeth. “I told you, I’m not Emily’s -”

“What about me?”

Stephanie feels her heart flutter and her brain buzz as Emily strolls out from the school, Nicky and Miles trailing behind her, to stop next to her. She glances to her left and there she is, wearing a gray pinstripe suit with a navy blue necktie. Her hair is tied up in an elegant twist and she looks to have a pocket watch clipped to her waist.

“We were, uh,” Darren starts. He’s visibly nervous.

“Giving Steph shit about being my nanny, right?”

Stephanie’s eyes go wide. She hadn’t told Emily about that comment from days and days ago and has no idea how she would know about it.

Nor has Emily ever called her “Steph” before.

Darren laughs nervously and looks for help but Sona’s disappeared and Stacy’s looking everywhere but at him. “I mean, I thought...because…”

Emily decides to ignore him and Stephanie feels every ounce of Emily’s focus fall upon her. “Mama needs a drink. Let’s go."

Her hand touches Stephanie’s lower back to guide her away from the school and into the parking lot and it’s all Stephanie can do to not shiver from the contact. She thinks she hears Darren and Stacy chattering behind them but she doesn’t give a shit what they have to say. Emily swooped in like a fashionable knight in shining armor to put them in their place.

“Meet me at home,” Emily purrs into her ear before leaving her side to go to her car. “Nicky! Let’s go!”
Stephanie has to take a moment in her car, parked behind Emily’s Porsche, after Miles jumps out and races Nicky into the house. She lets her head fall back against the seat and she closes her eyes to take a few deep centering breaths as she tries to dry her palms on her jeans.

A sharp rap on her window makes her jump.

“Hey, Dark Side,” Emily says loudly enough to be heard. “Come on.” She doesn’t wait for Stephanie to follow, already halfway to the house when she all but falls out of her Subaru to walk as casually as possible up the drive and into her dream house.

The French music Emily loves is already playing when she closes the door behind her. She can hear Miles and Nicky yelling and running upstairs. Once she leaves her shoes and jacket at the door and walks in, she can see Emily in the kitchen. Her jacket is gone, as is her tie. She’s unbelievably and effortlessly sexy in her gray slacks and sleeveless white blouse as she works the cocktail shaker in her hand.

She looks up at Stephanie’s entrance and smiles a little. “How are you?”

The question catches Stephanie off-guard. It’s so normal, so friendly. She clears her throat. “Um, I’m fine. How are you?” She takes up her usual spot on the other side of the island.

“Work was shit, but I’m good now.” She seems to smile a little more as she’s pouring their martinis.

“Anything that you, uh, want to talk about?” Stephanie scratches at her arm to stop her fingers from nervously tapping on the counter.

“Fuck no,” Emily says with a laugh. She hands Stephanie her glass, taps it with a clink, then takes a long drink. She doesn’t finish it all in one go, though, as she’s seen her do in the past.

“Cheers.” Stephanie drinks and sets her glass down and taps her nails on it a few times. It gets Emily’s attention and she feels a mood start to settle. “I didn’t think I would see you until Saturday.”
Emily finishes her drink. “Why would you think that?”

“I assumed when you said—when you left—on Saturday…”

Emily meanders through her kitchen; Stephanie knows she has a set path, however. “Baby, didn’t they tell you?”

Stephanie frowns a little. “ Didn’t who tell me what?”

“Didn’t they tell you what day it is?” She stops in front of her and leans against the counter, her hand resting atop Stephanie’s.

The shiver she resisted in the parking lot catches up with her and she knows Emily notices it. It starts to muddle her ability to figure out Emily’s riddle. About what is so notable about today and why anyone specific would have informed her. She tries to act playfully defiant as she lifts her chin and hopes it comes across as at least a little bit sexy. “And what is today?”

“Baby girl.” Emily smiles at her again and moves in until Stephanie has to part her knees to let her into her space. The sense of warmth that drifts over her is intoxicating. “It’s hump day.”

Stephanie freezes. She can’t figure out if she heard what she thinks she heard because Emily would never make such a dumb joke and whatever it was she said must be lascivious with the way Emily’s looking down at her. She’s resolving she has no choice but to ask what she said rather than play along when Emily bursts out laughing.

Her hands rest on Stephanie’s shoulders and slide up to curl around the back of her neck. “Hump day,” she repeats.

Wow. Stephanie laughs and hopes her face isn’t as incredulous as she feels. Her shock is lessened by Emily’s fingernails scratching at the back of her neck, teasing up into her hair. “Right. Yeah. Yes, it is.”

“It means I want to fuck you, baby,” Emily says. The laughter is gone but she’s still smiling.
Stephanie blinks. Her body is already responding to the touch and especially those words. “Great, yeah.” Her response is all wrong. She should have thrown herself into Emily’s arms. It’s all she’s wanted to do for the last four days.

Emily’s nose scrunches and Stephanie can’t believe how cute it is. “Are you sure? I didn’t mean to freak you out. You’re so tense right now; I was trying to get you to relax. We don’t have to -”

“Yeah, yes. That sounds...great. Wonderful. Let’s...do it.” She hates how she sounds and closes her eyes to pull herself together and takes a breath. “I haven’t been able to stop thinking about it.”

That is a better answer and she opens her eyes just in time to see Emily leaning down. She closes them again as their lips touch. It’s gentle but it escalates quickly, still managing to maintain a level of softness even as Emily’s tongue starts playing with hers.

She tastes like gin and the memories of all the ways she’s used her tongue between Stephanie’s legs. The thought makes her hands move and the closest place for them to land is on Emily’s ass.

The contact makes Emily pull back with a quiet chuckle. “Slow down, tiger.”

She’s about to apologize and stops herself with a finger to her lips. “I didn’t know how long -”

“An hour.” Emily’s fingers are at work unbuttoning Stephanie’s white cardigan. “Maybe two.”

“That’s uh,” she watches Emily pull the sweater down her arms, “an ambiguous window of time.”

“Why don’t you let me worry about my husband?” Emily says as she lifts Stephanie’s black tee over her head and just like that, she’s topless in Emily’s kitchen. She’s already unhooking Stephanie’s bra when she lifts her head to shout, “Nicky! Close your door if you’re going to make so much fucking noise; I don’t want to listen to it!”

The door slams before she finishes and she smiles down at Stephanie.

“You’re not the only one with parenting hacks.”
Stephanie shakes her head; she disagrees with Emily’s approach but she isn’t going to say that. Her hands find something to do in unbuttoning and unzipping Emily’s pants. They fall to the floor and then she’s unbuttoning her shirt, one by one, from the bottom of her blouse up. She’s in another matching bra and panty set, this one a light blue. “I’ll get you on my vlog one of these days.” Her back arches a little when Emily’s fingertips tease her nipples.

“I think you might die trying.” Emily bends to kiss her again. This time it’s not so gentle and her hands cup Stephanie’s breasts greedily.

Stephanie hears herself moan and her hands fly up to hold Emily’s waist. When she woke up this morning, she didn’t expect to be on the verge of having sex in a kitchen, but there’s no complaint in any singular fiber of her being. She holds on as Emily’s kiss assaults her senses, as her fingers graze and twist and pinch and pull sounds from her throat until her hands get a mind of their own and start to roam. They travel up Emily’s back under her blouse and down to trace the curve of her ass and the backs of her thighs, around them, and up until her left hand fits between Emily’s legs.

She’s wet.

Emily’s breath rushes out of her and her kiss breaks. She hadn’t been expecting Stephanie to do that. To touch her so soon. Being able to surprise Emily like this had fueled much of their endless night together. She doesn’t wait long before slipping her fingers beneath the blue lace to feel just how wet she really is.

It makes Emily’s head tip back as a moan rumbles in her chest. It’s an extremely vulnerable position to be in, both of them. Stripping naked in a well-lit kitchen. In the middle of the day. Windows everywhere. Children upstairs. Husband apt to return at any moment. Stephanie’s hand in the wife’s underwear.

Stephanie finds all of it a turn-on.

Her free hand runs up over Emily’s flat stomach to her bra. She doesn’t bother trying to undo it one-handed; instead, she pushes it up and off Emily’s breasts so she can lean forward and take one into her mouth.

She can feel the tension in Emily’s body, the resistance she’s exerting even as her fingers slide into Stephanie’s hair and she hates it. She’s seen Emily let go and the joy—both sexual and otherwise—it brings her. It irritates her that she’s holding back now when this was her doing. She invited
Stephanie to her home. For sex. And she’s holding back.

So Stephanie stops teasing and slides two fingers up and in until the heel of her hand is pressing hard against Emily’s clit. She hears the gasp that she knows Emily fought and gives her a tug with the fingers inside her.

She wants to watch Emily take this. She wants Emily riding her fingers. She sinks her teeth into the firm flesh in her mouth and pulls at Emily’s hip to try to bring her down to her lap despite her precarious seat on a backless stool. Emily not only resists, she reverses. She takes a step back and Stephanie has to lean forward to keep her hand in place. Another step and she’s forced off the stool and to her feet. Emily kisses her again; she leads with her tongue and it’s hot and wet and it makes Stephanie weak while also strengthening her resolve. She kisses her back with just as much fervor and maintains the slow stroking rhythm into Emily.

They shuffle step by step and Stephanie can see they’re making their way to the couch. The couch is even less private in full view of the front door. She hadn’t thought about that on Friday when Emily had undressed her and put her mouth on her. She was too far gone with desire to care.

She has an awareness now of the risk. It drives her to suck on Emily’s tongue in a way that makes the blonde’s breath hitch. It also succeeds in getting Emily to finally, finally reach for the button of Stephanie’s jeans and undo it. The zipper’s next and then they’re being worked down over her hips until they’re caught at her thighs. She knows she’s going to need to finish the job herself but she doesn’t concern herself with that yet.

She’s much more content to enjoy Emily’s cool hands as they grip her ass to pull her along.

She knows what Emily is doing. She has them turned and set up so she can pull Stephanie down on to her, but Stephanie has other plans.

She’s quick about it; she ducks under Emily’s arm first, then forces her around with the hand between her legs and before Emily has a chance to even try to protest it, she’s on her knees over Stephanie’s lap on the couch.

“What the hell was that?” she says with a crooked smile. Stephanie half-expects her to get up but she doesn’t. Instead, she drapes her arms over her shoulders and sinks further into her new seat and Stephanie has to control the desire to moan at how deep it pushes her fingers.

“That was me deciding to let you take what you want.”
“Let me take what I want?” Emily challenges her but she’s not fooling anybody. She’s already starting to rock against Stephanie’s hand.

Stephanie sighs; it’s as authentic as it is posturing and while she knows what she’s about to say could get her slapped, she decides it’s worth it. “You said you wanted to fuck me, but I know what you really wanted was to get fucked properly.”

The declaration makes Emily pause. Her hips stop and her persistent smirk fades. Stephanie prepares for the worst.

“You think you know how to fuck me better than Sean?” she finally states.

The response is relatively safe so Stephanie pushes her fingers further into Emily. “When’s the last time he made you come nine times in one night?”

Emily’s smirk begins to return as does the rocking of her hips. “You kept count?”

“Of how many times I could get you off? I had to know what I could do to you.”

Emily hums and Stephanie feels her hands move to grip her shoulders as she leans closer and closer until her breath tickles Stephanie’s ear. “You came 14 times for me, baby.”

A shiver runs through her body at that. It’s like it remembers each of those 14 times at once and can’t contain the memory of how they felt just as she can’t stop herself from lifting her chin to press her lips to Emily’s throat. It’s impossible to resist with every inch of skin on display, the way Emily’s hair is clipped back and out of the way.

A hand comes to rest on her cheek and it’s almost like Emily’s cradling her to hold her there. She doesn’t think too hard about it maybe being a loving action rather than one of simple desire for more. Instead, she channels that into what she’s doing, into how much she wants to tease Emily versus make her come as quickly as possible. Into how her tongue traces up along the tendon showing in Emily’s neck until she’s pulling Emily down so she can reach to suck on the flesh just below her ear.
She knows she should be mindful but Emily sighs in her ear and her hips rock a little more quickly and Stephanie presses her teeth into her skin.

It pulls a moan out of Emily and that’s when she closes her lips and sucks. It’s quick but strong and she’s already letting go when Emily leans out of reach.

“Did you just give me a fucking hickey?”

She looks up over the smooth expanse of skin and can see that spot starting to darken. Her instinct is to apologize; Emily’s tone is accusatory and Stephanie knew it was wrong to do it but she couldn’t help herself, nor does she regret it. “Payback.”

She can see the anger flash in Emily’s eyes but she counters it by pressing the heel of her hand hard against Emily.

It works.

It makes the defiant tension in Emily’s body evaporate and she all but slumps forward. It’s as though she’s surrendered at Stephanie’s failure to back down as she loops her arms around Stephanie’s neck and leans into her. She starts rocking in earnest and Stephanie wraps her free arm around her waist to feel her move. Her lips kiss the skin she can reach in the limited range she has, covering her throat and clavicles and chest.

This is what Stephanie wanted out of this encounter. She wanted to make Emily give up her command of control quickly; it had taken hours that first night.

Not today.

Today, she’s given it up almost immediately.

She remains in control in one and only way: how hard and fast she rides Stephanie’s hand. But it’s the only way. Stephanie is in control of keeping her in place, of the marks she’s starting to leave across her chest more freely, of ripping the clip from Emily’s hair so she can wind her fingers into it and pull her into a kiss.
Her own body throbs in arousal; her thighs press together and her hips lift to try to find friction and relief. The fact that Emily had begun to undress her, had clearly had intentions of touching her, rattles around in her memory and she kisses her harder. She wants to make Emily have to force herself away for oxygen. She wants to make Emily forget her own name. To forget she’s married. That she has a man in her life at all. To make sure she never wants anyone but Stephanie ever again.

The very concept makes Stephanie push her hand up harder into Emily, her hips pressing up to drive them further.

“I should have brought it home with me,” Emily says, her sentence broken as she breathes into Stephanie’s mouth between the hot, wet kisses Stephanie keeps demanding from her. She doesn’t clarify what “it” is, but Stephanie knows.

She knows because “it” was buried in her as she sat atop her washing machine on Saturday.

The fact that Emily’s thinking of it, that she’s remembering it right now as she grinds herself into Stephanie’s hand makes her head swim. She hates herself for it, but she has to pull away from Emily’s kiss to catch her breath because thinking about wearing it as Emily rides her is too much. “Shit.”

She feels Emily’s breathy chuckle in her ear, though it’s mixed with her quiet moans “Oh, you like that. You want to fuck me with it, baby?”

Emily being able to speak in complete sentences pisses Stephanie off; it means she should be trying harder to render her speechless. Her options, at least in this exact moment, are limited, however. She wanted to let Emily use her and give up control but Stephanie can feel her pulling back. She’d been teetering on the edge of wild abandon and Stephanie’s own moment of need had given Emily the inch she needed in order to take a mile.

Stephanie rips her hand away; it’s the only power she has now.

Emily’s reaction is immediate.

“What are you doing?” Emily says with a gasp of indignation. She immediately reaches for Stephanie’s hand to pull her back but Stephanie locks her arms around Emily’s waist so she can’t. “I was so fucking close; what the hell, Steph?”
If she was truly angry, Stephanie knows she wouldn’t have called her that, so she leans back enough so she can smile up at Emily’s flushed face of irritation, and then she moves.

She sits so far forward that Emily grabs her shoulders to stop from tipping back and then she’s quick; she stands up, taking Emily with her, for the two seconds it takes to turn and drop her onto her back on the couch.

She literally drops her; she’d have thrown her if she had the strength.

The look of surprise on Emily’s face is one she knows she will never forget and she smiles down at her as she pushes her jeans the rest of the way down and off, followed by her underwear. She reaches for Emily’s next to get them out of the way once and for all.

She hesitates, then. Thinking about the lace in her hand.

“What are you doing?” Emily asks. She’s sitting up to reach for her and already has a hand around Stephanie’s forearm to try to pull her down.

“Just…” Stephanie hesitates one more second, then crouches to grab her jeans and she stuffs the undergarment into her pocket before joining Emily on the couch. She doesn’t miss the smirk Emily’s giving her before she kisses it away as she settles over her; she straddles Emily’s thigh and sighs at the contact she’s been craving for so long.

She puts her hand back, too, but she starts with teasing Emily again. She feels powerful to be able to make the woman whine in frustration and lift her hips. Emily is so wet she can gather it on her fingers as she drags up through her until she’s grinding her fingertips into her clit.

The sound that leaves Emily makes Stephanie smile down at her. She doesn’t say anything; she doesn’t need to. She knows Emily knows Stephanie feels like she’s just won but Emily doesn’t say anything either. She just tips her head back and closes her eyes.

So she kisses Emily the way she wants—hot and deep and hard—as they start rocking against one another. She kisses her until Emily rips her mouth away with a gasp and then she’s panting in Stephanie’s ear as they move as one and Stephanie’s mouth finds her neck again.
There’s a brief moment when Stephanie lifts her head to switch from kissing the right side of Emily’s neck to the left side when she catches her reflection in the window in front of her.

It’s indecent; she can see the way she’s moving against Emily and her blonde hair where part of it spills over the arm of the couch. She can also see the top of Emily’s right thigh, the one not between Stephanie’s legs, as it lifts to wrap around her waist.

It makes her drop her head with a moan and shove her tongue into Emily’s mouth as her pace quickens; her hips swivel against Emily and her fingers work furiously against her and she can feel Emily pressing up into her.

She’s caught by surprise when Emily’s hand disappears from where it had been holding the back of Stephanie’s arm and reappears between Stephanie’s legs. Her fingers slip into her like they’re nothing and Stephanie doesn’t try to stop her. She’s too far gone to care that Emily’s trying to be in some kind of control—or maybe Emily just wants to touch her right now, too.

Stephanie adjusts her position to help them both and it’s like someone poured gasoline on an already raging fire. They move against one another hot and fast and she feels Emily pulling at her, trying to get her to lay on her instead of how she’s propping herself up but she resists; she doesn’t give in until she hears Emily’s voice starting to catch in the tell-tale way she learned so well a few short days ago. She breathes her in smelling of that perfume and sex and it’s all Stephanie can do to not come.

She holds out a few beats longer until she can feel the tension spreading through Emily and the way her hips are lifting incessantly and -

She feels Emily break.

And she breaks with her.

She has just enough wherewithal to lift her head and claim Emily’s mouth before things become too loud.

Part of her wonders, as Emily’s voice reveals just how much she needed this release, if she could get off just from hearing Emily come.
The curiosity is what leads her to slow down her hand and ease Emily through it until she’s quiet and still beneath her. When she opens her eyes, Stephanie smiles at her and starts again, this time only a gentle and slow touch over swollen nerves.

“You can stop,” Emily says with a shiver.

Stephanie’s touch is unwavering. “Do you want me to stop?”

Emily takes a breath as though to speak so Stephanie chooses that moment to press a little more firmly. Instead of words, it’s an exhale and a shake of her head.

Stephanie smiles as she kisses her then wiggles herself until she’s able to lay down fully wedged between Emily and the couch, her head on Emily’s shoulder. She’s too tired to hold herself up any longer.

It affords her, she realizes, the ability to touch Emily in any way she likes with so much ease. She still chooses to be slow and gentle, however, and she can feel the deeper breaths Emily draws now and then when she chooses to be a little more firm or quick.

She doesn’t know, frankly, if it’s enough for Emily to come again. Even if it’s not, she’s not stopping her or telling her to go hard and fast. She’s allowing Stephanie to do as she pleases.

It’s exactly what Stephanie wanted.

She tries not to think about how nice it is for Emily to surrender and trust her in the ways she has. She tries not to think about how she maybe feels like she could lay like this, in her arms making love in the middle of the day, forever. Emily’s fingers trace patterns on Stephanie’s back even as she sighs and moans quietly.

Her ear to Emily’s chest, she can hear when her heart, still beating quickly, speeds up. It’s not but a few seconds later she hears and feels the breath she takes before she comes with a quiet cry.

It makes a tremor echo through her own body, low and soft, but it’s there, and she moans so Emily can know she’s riding same the wave with her again.
The entire moment is peaceful and Stephanie doesn’t dare move or say a word to break it. She’s content to listen to their breaths return to normal and listen to the beat of Emily’s heart, and Emily doesn’t seem to be in any hurry, either.

She feels the patterns being traced on her back resume and she withdraws her hand to let her arm drape over Emily’s waist. She knows they need to get up and dress and get back to normal—nothing feels more normal than exactly where she is—but she can’t bring herself to be the one to break the moment.

Eventually, Emily’s other hand finds Stephanie’s chin and nudges her until she lifts her head, only to be guided down into a kiss.

It’s the most tender kiss they’ve shared and it steals away her breath.

“Thank you,” Emily says when they part.

It almost makes Stephanie laugh but she’s too moved by it to do so. “For what?”

“For this.” Emily kisses her again and Stephanie starts to melt into it, but it ends before she fully can. “We need to get up.”

Her tone is still quiet and it’s almost unsettling; Emily is usually quick to snap back into her commandeering persona. Even when they spent the night together and things turned playful or intense, the Emily she first met always came right back until something Stephanie said or did seemed to get her to take off the mask again.

The mask is still off now and Stephanie watches in a bit of wonder as Emily is careful about moving out from under Stephanie to gather her clothes. She even hands Stephanie her jeans and gives her a tilt of her head as she returns to the kitchen. She gathers the rest of their discarded clothes and shrugs into her blouse, only buttoning two buttons on it. She doesn’t bother with anything else.

“Come on,” she says as she turns for the stairs and Stephanie finally gets her limbs working to get off the couch to catch up with her. Emily hands her tee and she pulls it on as they climb the stairs and she says a quick prayer that the boys don’t choose right this second to run screaming out of Miles’s room and into their half-naked mothers.
They don’t; she does hear them playing but it’s clear they aren’t on the move.

 Entirely unsure of what’s going on, she follows Emily into the bedroom and all the way into the massive closet Stephanie’s so envious of. Emily lets her pass and closes the door behind them. Stephanie feels her hand be caught and that makes her take pause—though she keeps walking—to look down and see Emily holding her hand. She leads her to the settee in the middle of the closet and sits down; she pulls Stephanie right down with her onto her lap and her lips are on Stephanie’s again.

 Stephanie can’t stop the groan; she thought things were finished. They had to be out of time, but she suspects that might be why Emily just put so many doors between them and the driveway.

 They kiss.

 That’s all they do.

 They kiss.

 Emily’s hands don’t wander anywhere but along Stephanie’s back so Stephanie keeps hers in neutral territory as well.

 And they kiss. It’s not rushed. There’s no power struggle or teeth or impatience.

 It’s dangerous in so many ways.

 She doesn’t know how long they kiss but it’s long enough to make her lips tingle from use.

 The chirp-chirp of a car alarm being activated interrupts them and Stephanie feels the word, “Shit,” drift across her lips before Emily kisses her one more time.

 Stephanie moves off her lap, then. Sean’s home and their moment has ended. She dresses quickly, grateful for the mirrors in the closet, and watches Emily do the same, slipping into a new pair of panties before she steps back into her pants. She watches Emily flip her hair to finger comb it out and then watches her freeze.
“Damn it, baby. Really?” she says with a look at Stephanie in the mirror as she tilts her head to get a better look at the mark left on her neck and then down her chest before she buttons her blouse.

“I’d apologize, but women never have to apologize for anything.” She smiles at Emily in the mirror and then takes the few quick steps necessary until she can wrap her arms around her waist from behind. She just holds her for a moment and feels Emily’s hands come to rest on her arms for a few seconds before they guide them away.

Emily turns and she’s smiling, too. She touches Stephanie’s cheek and it’s all she can do not to swoon from the caress. “You should go. I’ll see you Saturday, okay?”

Stephanie resists the urge to launch herself forward and hug her. “You know where to find me. In my laundry room,” she tacks on with a laugh.

Emily’s hand falls away and she nods at the door, a clear signal that Stephanie needs to go, but not before she says, “I want to see your bedroom this time.”

The end...?
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Raise your hand if you love laundry day as much as Stephanie.

Chapter Notes

One teeny tiny note. I love your comments. Truly. However, I'm inclined to point out that just because this fic is rated Explicit and is pure sex, I don't necessarily love the comments that are begging for very explicit acts, some of which I'm very uncomfortable even considering. Cool? Cool. :)

Stephanie knows she’s in over her head.

She knows it the minute she picks up the phone to call Miles’s grandmother to tell her Miles wants to spend the weekend with her when he has done no such thing. But that doesn’t make her a bad mother! Miles loves his grandmother. He doesn’t get to see her that often being as she lives a few hours away in Boston and she’s more than thrilled to have him visit. So is he.

(She knew she was in over her head the very first day Emily invited her into her home.)

She drives him up to Boston Friday after school—she notably did not see Emily at school—and they have dinner together before she returns to Warfield.

The entirety of her Friday evening is spent pampering herself with as many creams and lotions as she can find in her cabinets. She has a glass of red wine while she soaks in the bath. She exfoliates. She shaves. She moisturizes. She puts fresh linens on her bed and allows herself the luxury of sleeping nude knowing her son isn’t going to burst into her room in the middle of the night needing a hug after a bad dream.

She sleeps in. It’s well past 9:00 am when she finally glances at the clock and then she rolls over and lets herself sleep until 10:00 am.
She cooks breakfast for herself, eggs and bacon and fresh fruit all from the farmer’s market. She tidies up around the house. Makes sure her bed is made. Opens the windows to let the crisp fall breeze air out the place. She showers. Shaves. Moisturizes.

She spends an inordinate amount of time deciding which new lacy thong she should wear and ultimately decides to forego one altogether.

The one she stripped from Emily and kept lays in the drawer amongst her own. It’s inconspicuous; no one would know it doesn’t belong to Stephanie.

But she knows.

She does put on the new black lace bra she purchased specifically for today, though.

She hopes Emily likes it.

Her makeup is light but she has a little fun with her hair, parting it on the side instead of the middle; she doesn’t want to seem as though she’s trying too hard. This is just another Saturday. Laundry day. And she always wears coral-hued dresses that stop at mid-thigh when she’s home alone doing laundry.

When she closes the washing machine lid, she has to lean against it for a moment to slow her pulse. Just being in the laundry room arouses her now.

Once it’s past noon, she decides to make herself a real martini. She’d bought a set of high-end cocktail glasses a few days ago. She keeps them in the freezer next to the bottle of Aviation Gin she bought the same day. Vermouth. Gin. A nice big twist of lemon. She sits on the couch with her feet up as she sips it.

She puts on the playlist she’s spent a few days curating to play through the surround sound system. It’s mostly quiet jazz with as many 60s-sounding French songs as she could find online that reminded her of Emily’s house. She reads the newspaper, an actual, physical copy of the newspaper. It’s yesterday’s; she’d picked it up from Davis’s mother’s house, but she doesn’t mind.
She’s on her way back to the kitchen, mind pleasantly warm, to make a second martini when a shadow outside stops her in her tracks.

It passes the curtained window and comes to a stop in front of her door.

Stephanie holds her breath but nothing happens. No knock, no doorbell. The figure just stands there perfectly still.

It’s enough to make Stephanie shiver. She knows who it is. She has a feeling Emily saw her shadow, too, and is deliberately waiting.

So she sets her glass on the counter. Fluffs her hair. Spritzes a tiny bit of Dennis Nylon’s fragrance, Chastity, down her cleavage.

And she opens the door.

She prides herself in not falling flat on her face as she nearly did the last time Emily showed up at her front door. She’d had time to mentally prepare for today and she thinks she keeps her cool, though she doesn’t try to hide the way she can’t seem to get her eyes to move from Emily’s very bare chest.

Emily’s outdone herself this time. Truly. Her black slacks sit high on her waist and the white blazer she wears conceals her breasts—and that’s it. There is no shirt, no vest, at least not that Stephanie can see, between her body and her coat. It’s skin from her neck to her abdomen where the jacket’s single button closes it. Skin that still has the fading marks Stephanie made with her mouth a few days ago.

She finally manages to look up and feels the need to exhale. Emily is stunning as always. Picture perfect. Emily lifts her head, then, too, and Stephanie can feel her eyes rake over her until they’re staring at her from beneath the brim of a black fedora.

“You look beautiful.”

Stephanie has to blink a few times. That’s what she’d been about to say but Emily said it first. “So do you. Um, come in?” she says as she steps aside to let Emily pass.
She removes her hat once she’s inside and places it on the counter next to Stephanie’s empty glass. “Martinis already?” she says as she picks up the glass and twirls it. “Make me one?” It’s not a question so much as a demand.

“Oh course, yeah,” Stephanie says as she closes and locks the front door. She has to approach Emily to retrieve her glass. It feels like gravity pulling her across the room until she’s in front of her to reach for the glass.

Only Emily holds it out of reach.

Stephanie’s about to protest when she feels Emily’s other hand lands on her lower back to pull her in until Emily’s leaning down to kiss her.

She hears herself whimper the moment their lips touch and while she maybe should be ashamed by how obvious her desire is, she decides not to care. Emily is the one who’s come to her. The one who invites her in. Invites herself over. Kisses first.

The kiss is slow and Stephanie loops her arms around Emily’s neck. She feels Emily’s free arm wrap around her waist to pull her closer and Emily sighs when Stephanie glides her tongue through her mouth.

“How ‘bout that drink?” Emily says with a smile when they part.

“Yeah, just…” Stephanie says before pulling Emily down to kiss her again, still soft and slow, until she can convince herself to step away from Emily.

She leaves the glass with Emily, remembering she has three more in the freezer and feels Emily’s eyes on her as she places two on the counter to make the drinks.

“I taught you well,” Emily says with a smile as Stephanie tosses out the splashes of vermouth into the sink and pours the frozen gin.

“I like to think I’ve taught you a thing or two, too,” Stephanie says as she finishes with the twist and carries the drinks back to where Emily is waiting.
Emily takes up one of the drinks and gives it a little swirl. “And what have you taught me?”

“How to make a lonely, single mom come harder than any man ever could.” Stephanie taps her glass to Emily’s without waiting for a response. “Cheers.”

Emily’s drink remains untouched as she stares at Stephanie. It feels like an eternity before she sniffs a little in laughter and takes a drink. “You didn’t teach me that, baby.”

“Well, I’m not as smooth with words as you are and it’s the only sexy thing I could come up with on the spot,” Stephanie says with a wave of her hand as she takes another drink.

“You don’t have to try to be sexy, you know.” Emily won’t stop looking at her and it’s almost uncomfortable. “Is that true?” Emily says after another moment.

“Mm. Very.” Stephanie takes another sip, then laces her fingers with Emily’s to lead her through the house.

“Where are we going?”

“You said you wanted to see my bedroom.”

Stephanie expects to be flooded with memories every time she steps into her laundry room. She did not expect to be flooded with desire and anticipation the moment she stepped into her bedroom hand-in-hand with Emily. It makes her stop short and she hears Emily do the same a beat later. She doesn’t know what to say so she says nothing at all, not until she feels Emily’s lips on the bare skin of her left shoulder.

“So...this is it.”

She hears Emily chuckle in her ear before a tongue traces its edge. “This is cute,” Emily says as she breaks away and starts surveying the room as she did the kitchen last weekend. “Like you,” she adds with a wink that makes Stephanie hide her blush behind another sip. “Let’s see...the second drawer of your dresser.” She watches Emily stop in front of the piece of furniture and glance over her shoulder. “This dresser?”
She nods; she’s opened that drawer at least a dozen times to look at it, to remember what it felt like to have Emily inside her that way. She’d been tempted to use it on herself but she’s managed to wait, knowing Saturday—today—was only days away.

“This drawer?” Emily says unnecessarily as she pulls the drawer open. “Oh, my little Stephanie…” she says what seems to be to herself. “You do like to feel sexy.” She turns halfway with a handful of Stephanie’s new lingerie dangling from her fingers.

Stephanie half-expects her to just pocket them all but she drops them back into the drawer and reaches again. This time she closes it and returns, martini in her right hand, harness and toy in the left.

Stephanie finishes her drink and sets her glass on the vanity. She knows she’s staring at it too long by the way Emily shakes it to get her attention and she smiles shyly when she meets Emily’s gaze.

Emily finishes her drink, too, as she tosses the items onto the bed. She places her glass on the vanity with Stephanie’s and suddenly she’s close enough for Stephanie to reach out and touch again, but she refrains.

“House is pretty quiet. I like the music, though. You’re not going to *Single White Female* me, are you?”

“What? No!” Stephanie wishes could change the music but she’s left her phone in the living room. “I just like it, I would never -”

“Steph, chill,” Emily says with a laugh. “I’m kidding.”

Stephanie takes a breath. “Funny.”

“Is Miles here?” she asks as she steps out of her heels. She still towers over Stephanie by several inches but it’s not as severe now.

“Spending the weekend with his grandmother.”
“Oh?”

Stephanie fidgets for a second until she finds her resolve. “I want you to spend the night. And I don’t want us to worry about waking up our kids.”

“You think I want to spend the night?” Emily asks.

Stephanie can see she’s trying to be cold, but her eyes haven’t left Stephanie’s cleavage since she put down her glass so Stephanie reaches for her hand. She guides it under her dress, between her legs, higher and higher until she’s pressing Emily’s fingers against her body. The way Emily’s eyes darken betray any attempts at rebuffing Stephanie’s boldness.

“I know you do,” Stephanie breathes as she controls how and where Emily’s fingers touch. “And I want to hear you moan my name.”

She feels Emily come alive at that. Fingers slip into her and an arm wraps around her waist. “No underwear?”

“Didn’t want to slow you down,” Stephanie says, voice a little weak as Emily starts fucking her, right there standing in the middle of her bedroom.

“You’re so wet already.” Emily takes a step forward and it forces Stephanie to take a step back. Closer to the bed.

“Have been since I woke up knowing I’d see you today.” Stephanie keeps stepping backward until she feels the bed behind her.

“You want me that bad, baby?” Emily says with a smirk down at her. She feels fingers playing with the zipper on the back of her dress.

“I’ve never wanted anyone more.” She gasps as Emily’s fingers curl inside her. She thinks she might come, still dressed, still standing, if Emily keeps doing that. She reaches for the button on Emily’s blazer and unbuttons it. Stephanie’s hands move right to her bare breasts, covering them both, then leaning in to capture one in her mouth. She hears Emily’s breathing change and it spurts
her on. She unbuttons her pants with her free hand, nipple between her teeth as she shoves them off Emily’s hips to the floor. Her hand roams over the cool flesh of her ass to her waist where she grabs the thong to pull it down one-handed as far as she can reach.

She has Emily undressed in less than a minute.

“Put it on,” she says after letting the nipple slip from her teeth.

“Bossy,” Emily says as she shucks her blazer and kicks her pants aside. She reclaims her hand, then, and Stephanie holds back the groan of loss as she watches Emily suck her off her fingers and strip off her thong before she reaches for the harness to step into it. She slips the toy into place next. “Well?”

“Well, what?” Stephanie dumbly asks before thinking. Then she moves. She turns and climbs onto her bed on her hands and knees and waits there.

She feels Emily following her. “Oh, really?” Hands land on her hips and she has to drop her head; she feels dizzy. “My innocent little Steph isn’t so innocent.”

“You can’t be surprised,” Stephanie manages to tease. “Not after everything.”

“I’m not.” Those hands flip her skirt up and then they’re on her ass, petting her, taking turns slipping between her legs and through all the wetness there, over and over until she’s ready to beg.

But she doesn’t have to.

She feels Emily pressing into her. Slowly. Steady. Completely.

That’s when she finally lets herself moan for the first time. It’s loud and she doesn’t care. She widens her stance a little and presses back, trying to take her even deeper.

“Oh, you sound good, baby,” Emily says and she sounds good, too. Her voice is like velvet and her hands feel like it, too, as they glide over Stephanie’s skin.
She’d intentionally kept her dress on; she wanted to feel like a naughty mistress being taken hard and fast. The only thing, though, is that while Emily is taking her, she’s not taking her hard, nor fast, and all Stephanie wants is to feel her hands on every inch of her body and too much of it is covered.

“Take my dress off,” she breathes before Emily’s even pulled back to thrust in the first true time.

“Little late for that,” Emily replies, though Stephanie feels hands on the zipper again, this time drawing it down all the way. The dress gets pushed up, next, and Stephanie grabs it with one hand to pull it over her head and toss it to the floor.

Emily’s hands feel like they’re petting her as they stroke down her back, between her shoulder blades, once, twice, a third time until they come to rest on her hips. She’s slow. She’s so agonizingly slow every time she pulls back and presses forward that it makes Stephanie groan in frustration as much as it makes her moan in pleasure.

“Faster,” she says through a moan.

“Mm, no, I don’t think so.”

The reply is almost infuriating and Stephanie lifts her head to look over her shoulder. Emily’s smiling at her, as serene as could be while she fucks Stephanie slowly. “Why not?”

“You said I make you come harder than anyone. Don’t question my methods.” Emily says it with a wink and such a genuine smile that it makes Stephanie groan again and give in to however Emily wants to take her. She grabs a pillow and lowers herself to her elbows to rest her head and close her eyes.

Emily’s pace is so steady that it’s maddening. Stephanie thinks she could truly be driven insane with the need for release that she is nowhere near achieving. Every thrust feels like the first, never picking up speed or pushing harder. Giving her a taste but never the meal.

She groans in frustration and tries to speed things up herself, rocking back and forth quickly, only for Emily to tsk at her and move with her instead of against her to negate her efforts.
“Emily…” she says with a whine into the pillow.

“What’s wrong, baby?”

“You’re killing me.”

She hears Emily chuckle. “No, I’m fucking you.”

Stephanie flips her middle finger at her. “And killing me. Just—just—”

“Just what?”

“Go faster. Please?”

“Since you asked me nicely…”

She groans when she feels Emily finally, finally begin to speed up. She almost bites the pillow to muffle it but remembers she doesn’t have to. Instead, she lets the sounds spill from her lips freely hoping they spur Emily on, begging without words.

And then she feels Emily pull out.

“No, why -” A hand to her back keeps her in place when she tries to sit up in protest.

“I said don’t question my methods.”

Emily’s slipping back into her a moment later, this time feeling cool and extra slick and the recognition of what it is, that Emily stopped to supplement Stephanie’s own arousal, makes Stephanie reach a hand out to brace against the headboard.

She holds her breath.
And Emily pulls back and thrusts into her.

Again.

And again.

Faster and harder until Stephanie can’t do anything but moan and try to keep her soul from leaving her body.

It does, though. It leaves her the second Emily grinds her fingertips into Stephanie’s clit.

She can’t breathe and she thinks she might die as every muscle in her body tenses. Coils. Prepares.

“You’re so beautiful when you come, baby,” Emily pants behind her. “Come for me.”

She does.

Her eyes tear and the fire that’s been burning for so long engulfs her. She can hear herself; she would be embarrassed by it if she didn’t know how much Emily liked hearing her. She feels the tickle of hair brushing her arms, lips on her neck, breasts against her back as Emily holds her, buried deep, fingers still but pressing firmly, as she comes.

“Oh, my God,” she says with a sob when she finally can.

Emily’s still kissing her—her neck, her shoulders, her back. Fingernails trace her skin leaving goosebumps in their wake across her back. “Should I stop?”

“No,” she whines but gasps when Emily starts thrusting again. “Yes, I mean. I can’t...stop. But...don’t.” She knows she’s not making sense but Emily stops and she feels her slip from her body. That’s when Stephanie’s body finally gives out and she falls flat to the bed.
She feels Emily move with her, still over her body but the harness is gone and Stephanie revels in the sensation of every curve fitting over her own so perfectly. She hums as Emily’s hands trace down her arms to pull them out from under the pillow and intertwine with Stephanie’s.

They’re both still, then. Stephanie gathering herself. Emily lying over her, holding her hands, until Emily breaks the silence. “Turn over,” she whispers into Stephanie’s ear as she moves onto her hands and knees to give Stephanie the space to do so.

Her limbs are slow to listen but she gets herself turned onto her back and opens her eyes.

She’s grateful she’s lying down when she does because seeing Emily, disheveled hair, face flushed, and smiling at her would be enough to make her knees weak. Instead of collapsing, she can smile back.

“You don’t want me to stop?” Emily says, still smiling as she settles over Stephanie again, this time lying next to her with a leg thrown casually over one of Stephanie’s. She uses it to pull a little and spread her legs.

“Like I could ever tell you ‘no’?”

Stephanie thinks that response is a little too daring, too honest. If Emily considers it as such, she doesn’t make it known. Instead, she brings their lips together and Stephanie feels her fingers tracing lines down her chest, circling the nipples prominent under the thin lace of her bra, down her stomach until they’re framing her clit. They close against it and pull gently and it makes Stephanie’s hips lift and she forgets how to breathe.

Emily’s kiss disappears just when Stephanie’s growing desperate for air. It disappears because Emily’s mouth is on her neck and making its way lower until it’s sucking on her nipple, through the bra that might as well not exist for how good it feels. It moves lower still, to her stomach, and Stephanie parts her legs and watches Emily settle between them. They hold each other’s gaze as Emily’s tongue draws through Stephanie’s wetness.

She groans at the sight and the sensation and she can see the effect it has on Emily. Her eyelashes flutter and her lips close over swollen, sensitive flesh to gently suck and Stephanie’s head falls back.

She doesn’t even try to reach down and grab Emily’s hair.
She doesn’t have the strength after what she just went through.

Instead, she feels. And she listens to her own moans. To Emily’s that come in response. To the indecent wet sounds of Emily’s mouth on her working her up again, coaxing her toward another orgasm that Stephanie so desperately wants to give her.

At the sensation of Emily’s tongue sliding into her, she finds release again. The moans she hears aren’t hers and it thrills her to know how much Emily enjoys this. How much she must like how it feels as Stephanie clenches around her tongue. Pulls it in. Comes on it.

She squeezes it again, purposefully this time, once it’s passed when she senses Emily about to pull back.

The groan of satisfaction that follows confirms her guess and she relaxes. She feels Emily not stopping, though not really working to start anything new. She’s lapping at her. Teasing a little. She feels her cheek rest on her thigh as her tongue continues to play with her, and Stephanie thinks she could fall asleep from how relaxing it is.

Except it’s the exact opposite of relaxing.

Emily Nelson licking her is anything but relaxing.

She sits up a little to watch it again, how she’s in no hurry, has no apparent plan or pattern or intent to move things along. How content she is to be there, making Stephanie feel good. Apparently oblivious that she’s even being watched, so Stephanie bounces her hips a little.

“Excuse you, I’m busy,” Emily says with a glance before going back to her task.

“It’s my turn.”

“I’m giving you your turn.” Emily’s particularly firm with her tongue and Stephanie’s too sensitive for it; it makes her hiss and she reaches to push her away but ends up grabbing her hair and pulling her away. “Oh. I see.”
It takes a second for her to realize what she’s done. How she’s pulled Emily’s hair, how she still is, holding it tightly so she can’t move. It’s a rush of sexual power just like the moment Emily had submitted to her and her belt.

She gives her a little shake. “I said, it’s my turn.”

She watches Emily’s jaw drop at her tone and then it snaps shut. “What are you going to do to me?”

“I’m open to suggestions.” She smiles at Emily and releases her and they both sit up. Stephanie finally sheds her bra as they seem to size one another up, though Stephanie knows she has been given the upper hand now. “I might not grant your request, but I may consider it. What do you want?”

“I want…” Emily’s eyes flit about the room as though she’s looking for something, but they land on Stephanie and they seem softer. “I want you.”

Stephanie smiles at her and sits up on her knees like Emily is to bring them eye to eye. She frames her face gently, thumb tracing her cheekbone. “I’m right here.”

“I don’t want you to fuck me.”

The answer takes her aback a little and she hopes it doesn’t show. As much as she wanted Emily to fuck her senseless tonight, she’d wanted to do the same. “That’s okay, we don’t have to do -”

“No,” Emily interrupts. She takes Stephanie’s hand, the one not touching her face, and starts guiding it between her legs. She’s so wet it takes Stephanie’s breath away. “I don’t want you to fuck me. I want you...to make love to me. Like last time.”

If she hadn’t just forgotten how to breathe, that would have done it for her. She knows she’s in over her head and Emily isn’t making it any easier.

She nods and leans in to kiss Emily gently. She’s soft with her touch, too, when Emily’s hand falls away to allow Stephanie to continue on her own. She focuses more on the kiss than anything, slow
and deep and she feels Emily sigh into it.

She’s slow with her fingers, too. They caress and tease and Emily’s so wet she uses three fingers instead of two and Emily’s hands slide through her hair to hold her there, or hold on, as they kiss. As Stephanie touches her slowly.

She doesn’t know Emily’s even close until she’s gasping against her lips and shuddering in her arms.

“Oh, Em,” she whispers as she holds her until she’s still. The moment is dangerous. The silence between them is dangerous and begs to be filled with dangerous words of affection and Stephanie kisses her to prevent that.

Emily shakes her head and starts kissing her back harder. More passionately. More deeply until Emily’s pulling Stephanie down to lay with her.

She feels Emily’s hands roaming her body, grabbing and scratching and it feels needy. It makes Stephanie feel possessed. It makes her hips rock against the lithe body beneath her and she feels Emily’s lift in response. There’s a moan against her lips and it makes Stephanie rock into her more quickly and suddenly they’re on a track again.

That is until Emily catches her hips with her hands and stops her.

“What? What’s wrong?” Stephanie asks, already breathless.

Emily shakes her head and brings her down with a hand to her neck to kiss her again, hard and deep. She feels Emily’s other hand leave her hip and she can tell she’s moving, reaching without looking, and when their kiss breaks, Emily’s smirking at her.

“How now?” Stephanie says, body on full high alert.

The ting of metal and hush of leather get her attention and she looks to her right to see the harness in Emily’s hand.
“Oh.”

“You still think you can fuck me better than Sean?”

Stephanie feels her heart stop. “I mean…”

“Show me.”

The end...?
This Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for this semi-sapphic movie and the actresses that were cast in the roles of Stephanie and Emily.

“Show me.”

Stephanie hopes her heart resumes beating soon; she feels faint and fainting is the last thing she wants to do when she’s in bed with Emily who’s asking her to fuck her.

Like really fuck her.

It had been easy to talk a big game when Emily was in a different state of mind; when there was no imminent threat of having to prove herself. Emily’s calling her bluff now, though.

“You want me to use it?”

“Was I not clear?” Emily’s voice is stern. Stephanie would find it intimidating if she wasn’t still winded from Stephanie rolling her hips into her up until 20 seconds ago. She knows by now that it’s all an act. Remove the need to be in a position of control, strip from her the power suits, take her away from the people who think she’s something she’s not—even her own husband—and she’s as unintimidating as Stephanie assumes she is herself.

That doesn’t eliminate the fact that the scenario itself is intimidating.

But she wants to.
She sits back on her knees and takes the harness from where it dangles in Emily’s hand. “I’m just going to wash it first.”

Emily smiles. “So courteous.”

“Shut up,” she says with a laugh and backs off the bed to step across the hall to the bathroom.

“Nice ass,” Emily calls after her and she doesn’t look back to acknowledge it because she’s blushing.

She psyches herself up in the bathroom, ignoring the way her fingers tremble as she figures out how to remove the toy from the harness so she can wash it. It’s going to be fine. Emily wants her to do this. Emily just did it to her. Has done it to her twice now. Emily asked her to make love to her. Emily wants her.

She can’t quite bring herself to walk back into the room with the toy in place but she does get herself into the harness. She does her best to not let it show how awkward she feels returning but it’s difficult given her nudity, and the harness, and the dildo in her hand, and the house bright with the afternoon sun.

But something about returning to find Emily naked in her bed—really in it now; she’s pulled the covers back and moved to lie between the sheets on her side, head propped on her fist—instills much-needed confidence in her and she thwaps the phallus against her palm like a schoolteacher with a ruler as she makes her way back toward the bed.

It makes Emily’s eyebrows lift in amusement. “You know you’re supposed to fuck me with it, not spank me with it, right?”

Stephanie considers the object in her hand and the mere suggestion of spanking Emily... “It could be dual-purpose.”

“Don’t even think about it.”
Stephanie stops the little act and drops her arms to her sides, back to feeling awkward with a dildo in her hand.

“Don’t do that. Don’t get all meek and mousey. That’s not you.” She beckons her over with a finger and Stephanie resumes walking. “I’m just not into spanking. I like to slap that cute little ass of yours but I don’t get off on it. On that, however…” She nods at Stephanie’s left hand and the item it holds.

She stops at the edge of the bed. “On this?”

She watches Emily sit up on her knees and make her way to her; she shivers before Emily’s hands touch her because she knows they’re about to. They land on her waist and she watches Emily lean in and then down to kiss the tip of her breast. Teeth pluck at it and then it’s soothed by a tongue and it works like a charm to help Stephanie find her way back into the moment. Emily straightens and kisses her soundly and she feels the toy taken from her hand followed by sure fingers at her pelvis tugging on the harness and she knows Emily’s hooked it into place. A hand slips between her legs to touch her as soon as it’s secure and a quiet moan escapes from her lips.

“Let’s see if I get off on it as well as you do.”

“I’ve never done this before,” she admits as she watches Emily move back toward the center of the bed and lie back.

“Something tells me you’ll figure it out.” Emily bends her knees, feet flat on the bed, and parts them.

Stephanie’s not an idiot; she knows what to do. She’s just not sure how difficult it will be to do it well. Emily was so good at it. If her body could handle it, she’d never want Emily to stop fucking her with it. She wants it to be the same for Emily.

She climbs back onto the bed and works her way higher until she’s on her knees between Emily’s and she sits back and lets her hands rest on Emily’s thighs. She bends down and kisses the top of her knee. “Can we try it differently? At least to start.”
Emily sits up a little to prop herself on her elbows. “Different how? I thought you wanted to fuck me, baby.”

“I do,” she says quickly. “It’s just...when I was thinking about this the other day, you were on top and -”

“You want me to ride you?” Emily’s already back on her knees, arms around Stephanie’s waist and Stephanie feels herself being turned and lowered until she’s the one on her back. “I can do that.” Then she’s astride Stephanie’s hips and Stephanie can’t take her eyes off the toy and how close it is to Emily’s body as she rests against her thighs.

She moves her hands to Emily’s knees and traces them up her legs until she’s holding her hips. “For now.”

Stephanie watches her hips roll forward far enough to bump the phallus strapped to her hips. The motion is hypnotizing as she repeats it again and again. Stephanie can tell it’s working her up; it’s working Stephanie up, too. She’s not sure when Emily found the bottle of K-Y but it’s in her hand and running down from where it’s being dripped onto the tip. It makes her mouth dry as every ounce of moisture in her body is redirected and she watches Emily’s hand wrap around it.

Stephanie can’t actually feel it but her body doesn’t seem to know the difference. Her hips buck up as Emily’s hand strokes down the length. She watches her false appendage slip through Emily’s fist until it’s coated; she wipes the excess on her own thigh, a far cry from the picture of preparation she’d exhibited last week with her handkerchief and perfect makeup. Now she’s tousled and smudged and smeared.

Stephanie finds it exponentially hotter.

She starts rolling her hips again and Stephanie sees the way she presses herself against the slick toy right before she bends forward to slip her tongue into Stephanie’s mouth. Stephanie whimpers into the kiss as her synapses fry. She can’t see it anymore but she can feel Emily rocking and the way it has the toy pinned back against her stomach so she can move against it.

“As you going to fuck me or not, baby?” Emily asks as she slides higher, lips still touching Stephanie’s. She finds one of Stephanie’s hands and guides it to the base of the toy to hold it and
she knows when she’s inside Emily by the way a sharp exhale hits her lips.

She groans as she feels Emily sink back until her hand is touching her body so she removes it to let her take it the rest of the way. She instead reaches to hold her waist, her other hand finally waking up and moving between them to tease Emily’s breast.

“You feel so good, baby,” Emily whispers against her lips before kissing her again, this time hard and deep as she starts rolling her hips again.

“So do you,” Stephanie answers between kisses. She swears she can feel every inch of Emily, hot and wet as she moves on her. She needs to get her mouth on her once this round concludes. She realizes she hasn’t had a single taste of Emily today and suddenly she’s craving it more than anything. She pushes Emily up, not off her but up to get her to sit back. “I said I want you to ride me.” She pushes her hips up next and she glances down to see how it looks to be inside Emily this way. Her hands grip Emily’s hips and start to guide her. “So ride me.”

“Whatever you want,” Emily says with a quiet moan as her head falls back when her hips begin moving in earnest. Her hands cover her own breasts and something about that ticks Stephanie off. She reaches up to knock them away and hold them herself.

Emily’s hands return a second later to cover Stephanie’s. They don’t force them away, though. They hold her there as she starts moving more quickly.

In the short course of their affair, Emily has awoken many things within Stephanie—so much lust and desire and sensuality—but Stephanie feels something come to life in the very core of her being as she watches Emily riding her.

She reclaims her hands and sits up, one arm around Emily’s waist and the other under her thigh. She lifts with one and pushes with the other and Emily lets her put her on her back, still inside her as she leans over her.

“Yes, baby,” Emily says with another moan as she combs her fingers through Stephanie’s hair until her hands fall back to the bed where Stephanie watches them grip the pillow.
Stephanie had moved so quickly her brain’s still catching up to the fact that she’s inside Emily, hips between her thighs, but when it processes it, it hits her like a freight train. She can’t stop her moan as she pulls her hips back and pushes back into Emily.

It’s easier than she thought it would be, made easier still by the look on Emily’s face when she does it again. Emily’s eyes roll a little and the fact that it’s because of her, because of the way she’s starting to thrust into her in a slow, steady rhythm gives her more confidence than any pep talk ever could.

Emily moans again and Stephanie feels her hips start lifting to meet her thrusts at a quicker pace. There’s a sharp pinch to her nipple and Stephanie echoes the moan with a glance down to see Emily’s hand on her breast.

“That’s it,” Emily says with a broken voice as her other hand combs through Stephanie’s hair again. “Fuck me, baby.”

It had made Stephanie’s toes curl the first time Emily said those words and it does it again now. Emily’s hand slips from her hair to frame her face and for a second Stephanie catches her thumb in her mouth. She sucks on it, then she bites it and she watches Emily’s eyes roll again, this time while she presses her head back into the pillow to push herself up into Stephanie harder.

The memory of the way Emily had taken her on the washing machine flits through her mind again and it makes Stephanie sit back on her knees. It makes her push Emily’s further apart. It makes her hold them for leverage as she throws her hips into Emily faster.

The sounds that start spilling from Emily’s lips are like fuel to Stephanie’s fire. Each moan makes her thrust harder and each thrust makes her moan louder. It’s a sinful cycle that has her sweating. Has her moaning, too. She can feel herself getting close despite a lack of direct stimulation. Emily’s voice and the sight and the sounds...all of it is more than enough to get her there.

She watches Emily press a hand to the headboard behind her to brace herself. “Faster.” She watches her other hand fall between her legs to start touching herself.

Emily is touching herself.
All Stephanie can do is comply with the request. “Like this?” she pants.

“Just like that,” Emily says before moaning again. Her hips are still, now. Her entire body is save for her fingers moving fast against her clit. Stephanie wishes she could do it for her but she knows she’d falter and Emily’s too close for her to mess up now. She can hear it in her voice, see it in the tension in her neck and her legs.

There’s a sharp gasp and she watches it hit Emily. She can almost see it, the pleasure rippling through her body until it’s rocking beneath her, thighs clamped against Stephanie’s hips as she moans in ecstasy.

Stephanie’s so caught up in watching Emily come that her own orgasm catches her off-guard. It pitches her forward until she’s on top of Emily. She can feel arms and legs around her, completely wrapped up and she hears Emily’s voice, still nothing but pleasure and Stephanie has a vague realization that her own moment has her hips rolling hard into her at a different angle.

Emily doesn’t tell her to stop; in fact, she has Stephanie pulled in so close she can barely breathe now but she doesn’t let it stop her from continuing once she’s found herself again. She moves hard and steady and she knows Emily isn’t touching herself anymore because both hands are digging into her back. The angle lets Stephanie use her slight weight to her advantage; she uses it to drop herself hard into Emily. The sounds Emily’s making sound strained, desperate.

“Yeah, you love when I fuck you,” she says into Emily’s ear before biting it. She doesn’t know where the dirty talk comes from; she says it without thinking.

Emily just moans in response.

“Say it,” she says as she tries to go faster though it’s difficult with how tightly Emily’s holding her. “Say you love me fucking you.”

“I...fuck, baby,” Emily says with a groan.

Emily’s attempt stokes Stephanie’s fire. “Say it for me.”
“I love you—shit, I’m going to come again—fucking me.”

Stephanie’s heart pounds impossibly harder at hearing those words, that phrase that wasn’t meant to be its own phrase before Emily interrupted herself. The three words sounded beautiful on Emily’s tongue and in her ears.

She doesn’t have a chance to respond because Emily’s coming again. Hard. Stephanie can hear it in her voice, feel it in the way she can’t even pull back to thrust in again. She doesn’t come with her this time, but she’s close.

When Emily’s body starts to go slack beneath her she lifts her head enough to find her lips and kiss her. It’s gentle but insistent; Stephanie’s still painfully turned on and she’s not ready to stop. She’ll let Emily catch her breath, though; she needs to do the same. She feels the legs drop from her waist, then the arms from her back and she eases her body down to pull out of Emily who whimpers at the loss.

She’s not sure how to be quick about removing the thing so she leaves it on as she moves off Emily to flop onto her back next to her.

“Holy shit,” Emily says to the ceiling and Stephanie rolls her head to the left to look at her.

She looks ravishing.

She looks ravished.

“So it was okay?” she asks, still breathless herself.

Emily laughs. “It was great, baby.” Her head turns and then they’re looking at each other. “You really get off on getting me off, huh?” It’s not a question.
Stephanie feels herself blush but she owns it. “Can you blame me?”

Emily smiles at her for a second and then she turns onto her side to face her. “I kinda get off on you getting off, too.”

Stephanie’s suddenly very aware she’s still wearing the strap-on. She can see it in her periphery even as she focuses on Emily’s face and what she’s just said. “You do?”

“Yeah, why wouldn’t I, baby?”

She shrugs and watches Emily bring a hand up to start tracing circles over her stomach. It doesn’t quite tickle but it does make her shiver. “It’s nice to hear is all.”

Emily hums as she leans closer until they’re kissing, slowly and deeply. Stephanie whimpers when she pulls back. “You’re nice to hear,” Emily says before moving to kiss Stephanie’s neck.

The second Emily’s lips reach her breasts she knows where she’s going. She’s infinitely grateful but she’d had every intention of getting her tongue between Emily’s legs but the opposite is moments from occurring.

She doesn’t have it in her to try to stop it and she watches Emily move over her as her lips trail down her stomach. She pulls her own blonde hair out of the way as she shifts further back and before Stephanie’s even finished realizing what’s about to happen her the tip of the toy still strapped to her hips is in Emily’s mouth.

“Oh, my God, what are you doing?” she says with a whine. She didn’t expect this. Was this even normal? Did women do this with each other? The questions that bubbled up fade as she watches Emily take it further into her mouth, almost the entire way before she’s pulling back. Stephanie can tell she’s sucking on it as she moves and she wishes with every ounce of her being that she could know what that feels like.

She’s almost scared for Emily to keep going; she doesn’t know how she’ll react to it, or what Emily would do if she did something like grab her hair and thrust up into her mouth. Thankfully,
she stops. It slips from her mouth with an audible *pop* and Emily’s eyes are on her as she unbuckles the straps at Stephanie’s hips.

She lifts so Emily can pull it off and without a second’s hesitation Emily’s leaning down again, this time to slide her tongue over Stephanie’s clit and suck on it instead.

She does reach down and grab her hair at that. She knows that’s okay to do because Emily’s let her do it in the past. Emily likes her to do it, to pull her hair and press herself closer. She pulls for a second and then releases it. “Wait, wait,” she says through a groan as Emily’s teeth nick her flesh as she pulls back.

“You okay?”

Stephanie nods and rubs her hands over her face for a second. She needs to gather herself for half a second before she looks back down at Emily who’s looking up at her with concern. “Get up here.”

Emily starts to move but Stephanie stops her. “No. I mean…” She spins her finger in the air. She hopes Emily gets it.

She doesn’t seem to right away and Stephanie’s going to have to say it but then, “Oh. Baby, you keep surprising me.” She moves back up Stephanie to kiss her before she gets on her knees, turns, and moves to straddle Stephanie’s chest. She bends forward and then works her way backward, Stephanie gripping her thighs to guide her back and down until Stephanie’s tongue touches her.

She hears Emily sigh and feels Emily’s tongue between her own legs a second later. Her legs get parted wider and she feels her clit pulled between Emily’s lips again to be suckled, tongue working over it again and again. She moans into Emily and does the same. She tastes exquisite and she knows she won’t last long. She was so close when Emily came the second time, and then watching her suck on her, and lick her, and now to have her over her face grinding into Stephanie’s tongue while she sucks on Stephanie’s clit…

She’s coming before she’s ready for it and her hips buck up hard. She feels Emily push them down one-handed and hears Emily moaning in approval. She tries to maintain enough focus on what she’s doing but she knows she’s not being precise with her tongue.
It doesn’t seem to matter, though, because she hears Emily groan and then feels her body quake before Stephanie’s has even finished passing.

“Fuck, baby,” she hears just before she feels kisses on her thighs, down the inside of her left and up the right. She does the same, making sure to suck a mark into Emily’s right inner thigh.

Emily feels heavy atop her as she relaxes, then she’s rolling off Stephanie and turning around on her hands and knees to crawl up and lay next to her again.

Stephanie finds her hand to link their fingers. She’s pleasantly surprised that Emily doesn’t shy away from it. “This really isn’t fair,” she says with a sigh after a few minutes listening to their breathing return to normal.

“What’s not fair?”

“That this is so good but we can’t just do it whenever we want,” she says with a groan without thinking. Her words catch up with her, though, and she’s horrified. “I mean, I didn’t mean - I know we - you’re -”

“Married, yeah,” Emily says calmly to cut her off. “No, it’s not fair.”

She watches Emily turn onto her side to face her so she does the same, unsure what to say so she says nothing. What she is sure of is the need to spend as much time as possible in bed with Emily. She wants to beat the nine times she made her friend climax their first night together. She’s already a third of the way there. And she definitely wouldn’t mind Emily making an attempt to surpass the 14 she gave Stephanie.

“You really like this?” Emily asks as she traces her fingertips along Stephanie’s side.

She’d laugh at the absurdity of the question if she wasn’t so moved by the touch. She catches Emily’s wandering hand and pulls it up to kiss her fingers. “I love this.” Dangerous words threaten to slip past her lips so she kisses Emily’s fingers again to stop them. “I’d do this every day if we could.”
Emily gazes at her and she feels her body ignite again. She knows Emily’s going to take her again from the look in her eye. “Me, too,” Emily says as she brushes Stephanie’s hair back from her face. “Baby, I need a simple favor.”

The end...?
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Well, the movie is now available for private, in-home viewing and I guess you could say I was...inspired.

“Yeah, sure! Anything I can do to help.”

Stephanie keeps one eye on her phone all afternoon. She hasn’t heard from Emily since her acknowledgment—a winky face—that she had successfully collected Nicky (and Miles, of course), after school to watch him while Emily dealt with a work emergency.

She wonders what constitutes in an emergency in the fashion world. An asymmetrical hemline? Men’s shirts that are supposed to be white but are too white? A model with a drug problem? A gay designer with a heterosexual scandal?

Women have referred to her own style choices as a “fashion emergency” in the past, but something tells her Emily’s emergency is a little more serious than Stephanie’s propensity for pairing polka dots with stripes.

She was, of course, more than willing to help Emily. Her best friend. Her...lover. She wonders if she should think of her that way. After all, in the weeks since that first afternoon, she’d wager a guess that they’ve shared more kisses than words. And she does love to talk to Emily, but oh, how she loves kissing Emily.

And if she watches Nicky? It’s a guarantee she’ll see Emily tonight, if only for a minute. And it only takes a minute to share a kiss.

She texts her three more times between the time she feeds the boys dinner and when she puts them to bed in Miles’s room, all to no response. She doesn’t allow herself to worry; Emily’s a busy, important person. She understands her focus needs to be on her job right now.
That said, she’s still relieved when her phone finally chimes with a text well past 11:00 pm.

“Oh my way.”

She’s eager to hear Emily’s voice; she maybe hates herself for it the tiniest bit, and she knows she’s long past the point of no return, which is why she dials Emily instead of responding via text.

It rings twice while she settles on the couch with a fresh glass of wine and then goes to voicemail. Stephanie might be offended if she didn’t know Emily was likely driving so she couldn’t talk.

“This is Emily Nelson, Director of Public Relations for Dennis Nylon Holdings. Leave a message or go fuck yourself.”

She still remembers the first time she heard Emily’s outgoing message; she’d almost choked on her coffee at the unexpected vulgarity.

It makes her smile, now, and maybe it’s the wine or the rush of adrenaline that came with knowing Emily was not only fine but on her way to her house that makes Stephanie sigh into the phone after the beep.

“Now why would I fuck myself when I have you?” She hopes she sounds at least a little bit sexy and tries to make her voice a little poutier. “Unless you’re not going to take care of me tonight? See you soon.”

She knows it’s dirty, even a bit risky to leave such a message on Emily’s phone, but she’s also confident Emily keeps access to her phone under top security and Sean will never hear it. She smiles when she hangs up and finishes her glass of wine on her way back to the kitchen to set it in the sink.

She checks on the boys again, both sound asleep, and she closes Miles’s door quietly. She knows she should probably wake up Nicky and get him ready, but if the boys are asleep when Emily arrives, they’ll have the house essentially to themselves, and after all, Stephanie is only human.

She stops in the bathroom next to freshen up and while she gives her hair a fluff she considers
doing something like changing into the négligée she bought a few days ago on a whim. She’d bought it specifically to wear for Emily, but tonight didn’t feel like the right night for it. Not with the boys in the next room.

The hum of an engine gets her attention and she hurries back to the front door to open it and wait on the porch. She bites her lip as Emily steps out of her Porsche; Stephanie’s never figured out how Emily can make something so blasé and routine be so sexy, but the fact remained: when she does it, it looks like she moves in slow motion.

She also looks...oh, she looks. She’s donning a full tuxedo—pants, shirt, vest, tie, coat—and it’s clear she’s spent the entire day in it. It’s a bit rumpled, black bow tie undone and hanging limply around her neck, the collar of her pleated front shirt unbuttoned, her coat tossed over one shoulder to carry it rather than wear it. It was a deliberate choice; she could have left it in the car for such a simple errand, but she’s using it as an accessory. Her hair had probably started the day tied back in an elegant twist, but it was falling apart now, loose and messy.

It’s a rarity, Stephanie knows, to see Emily in a state less than perfect, at least, beyond the privacy of their trysts, though she personally thinks that’s when Emily looks her best.

It’s dark outside and she’s deliberately opted not to turn on the porch light. The street lights are more than enough for Emily to make her way up to her house, and with no porch light, people are much less likely to notice when Stephanie seizes the two loose ends of Emily’s bow tie to pull her down and right into a kiss outside on the front porch.

She knows it surprises Emily because Emily doesn’t do anything. She doesn’t move or speak and she barely kisses her back before she pushes Stephanie backward with a hand to her chest.

“Not outside,” she says, voice quiet and low and, Stephanie can tell, tired.

“I missed you,” Stephanie says as she watches Emily close and lock her front door.

Emily seems to hesitate for half a second before she turns back around. Finally in the full light of her home, Stephanie can see the toll the day has taken on Emily. She looks tired, too, and, though Stephanie can’t even imagine it happening, seems like she might have been crying.

“Where’s Nicky?”
Stephanie keeps her hands—and mouth—to herself now; her advance had been rebuffed and now no longer seems like the time.

“Asleep in Miles’s room.”

Emily nods and starts walking toward Stephanie; she passes her, but Stephanie feels the graze of her fingers over her own and she watches Emily toss her jacket over the back of her couch. She takes the two steps up from the living room to the kitchen in one and opens the refrigerator, evaluating its contents before closing it. Instead, she opens the freezer and her hand returns with Stephanie’s bottle of gin and no frozen glasses.

She helps herself to the alcohol, a long drink straight from the bottle and she sets it down with a clink.

Everything about Emily seems off, as though one degree removed from who she usually is. Dressed, but rumpled. Her frozen gin, but without the panache of glasses, vermouth, and a twist.

“I’m just going to…” Emily points down the hallway toward Miles’s bedroom and Stephanie waves in response.

She takes a seat on her couch to wait and starts to wonder if her voicemail put Emily off. She didn’t think it would; Emily liked a little dirty talk. They’d shared plenty of it the other night while they…

Stephanie crosses her legs at the knee. Emily’s clearly not in the mood for sex and she’d gotten herself all worked up expecting it. Instead, she works on cooling off, thinking about what her Friday vlog should be. Maybe the top ten uses for baking soda? She grabs her notepad and pen off the end table and starts jotting down everything she can think of: baking (of course), cleaning, drains, laundry, insect bites, refrigerator freshness…

She’s come up with fourteen uses when she notices it’s been an abnormally long time since Emily went to collect Nicky. Curious, she leaves her notepad on the couch and goes to investigate. She keeps her steps light, avoiding the creaky board in the kitchen floor, and is confused to see Miles’s bedroom door still closed.

She checks the bathroom, but it’s unoccupied.
There’s only one last place to check, and her feet stop her in the doorway of her bedroom.

She’s found Emily.

Still dressed, though barefoot, and asleep on Stephanie’s bed in the dark.

The sight does things to Stephanie. It makes her heart feel tight and stomach feel wobbly, but above all it makes her eyes prickle with tears.

Whatever Emily had gone through that day must have been monumental. Emily was infallible. Unflappable. To know she had been through a struggle, one that had drained her to this degree…

Stephanie’s quick about turning off the lights in the rest of the house. She closes her door quietly and tries to muffle the click of the doorknob’s lock with her hand; she’s not expecting anything to happen, but she doesn’t want to risk one of the boys walking in to find them sharing a bed and asking questions.

She undresses, deciding after a long moment to put on an oversized T-shirt before drawing back the covers on the side not occupied by Emily to ease into bed.

The heavy sounds of Emily’s breathing tell her she’s still asleep so she relaxes; waking her is the last thing she wants to do when Emily so clearly needs to rest. She turns her head to the side; she can still see Emily in the faint light of the room. Her face is turned away, asleep on her side as she is, but it’s enough knowing she’s there to make Stephanie smile, even while she sympathizes for her friend.

For her lover.

She turns onto her side, her back to Emily, to get comfortable and falls asleep more quickly than she has in years.

Something wakes her up sometime later. It takes her a few seconds to put the pieces together. Her back is warm. So is her neck, but only in spots, and the spots turn cold as soon as the warmth is
She gasps and her back arches as a hand squeezes her breast.

“There you are,” purrs into her ear. “I got your voicemail.”

Her brain is still foggy, still mostly asleep, but it’s awake enough to know that it’s Emily’s hand on her breast and Emily’s lips on her neck. She groans but quickly gets shushed. She can feel Emily against her, fitted to her back, and hips, and legs. She can tell she’s undressed. Smooth legs shift against her own and there’s no sleeve on the arm that’s under Stephanie’s shirt.

She bites her lip and she shifts her arm so it’s less in the way. She absolutely wants Emily’s hand to be able to go wherever it wants and right now, it clearly wants to be on her breasts.

It moves with purpose, caressing and palming and she has to turn and bite her pillow when fingertips brush over her nipple. Repeatedly. She feels like an instrument Emily’s mastered, tightening the strings with every expert touch, twist, and tug.

It makes her ache and her legs shift, desperate for relief and she hears Emily’s quiet chuckle in her ear before there’s a tongue tracing its edge. The blissful torture on her nipple ceases and she holds her breath as she feels Emily’s hand sweep lower and lower until it slips down the front of her panties.

“Fuck,” she whines and she hears Emily inhale.

“God, you feel so good,” is what Emily follows with.

Stephanie doesn’t have anything to hold on to; just her pillow and the edge of the bed and...and when her hand slips while adjusting her grip, it finds Emily’s other hand under her pillow.

She locks their fingers together and she holds on, breathing hard but not letting her voice make a sound as she writhes against Emily’s touch. A touch that’s so uncharacteristically gentle that it’s almost dizzying. It’s quick, but so light that it’s barely-there but Stephanie can feel it in every nerve of her body. It’s like she can feel every ridge and valley of Emily’s fingerprints as they stroke over her clit again and again. She’s read about the heightened senses people have when they take MDMA and she wonders how she accidentally consumed the drug because she absolutely feels
like she’s on another plane of existence entirely.

She must be making too much noise because the hand she’s gripping wrenches away from her to cover her mouth.

The words, “Come for me, baby,” drip into her ear and she feels her body shut down, every ounce of energy directed to one sole purpose.

She can feel Emily’s legs tangling with hers like they’re trying to catch her and hold her and maybe they are. She knows she’s moving; she can hear the slight whine the springs in her bed and that only turns her on more, though they’re making nothing of the racket they’d made when Emily took her from behind.

And when Emily rode her.

And when she fucked Emily.

She sees stars and bites the hand that’s over her mouth, her own hand flying down to grab Emily’s between her legs to keep her there so she never, ever leaves.

When it passes and her body starts to uncoil, the hand over her mouth slips away and she feels it pull back until it’s beneath her pillow which, she hazily realizes, she’s sharing. The hand between her legs is still there and she slips hers under the elastic of her panties to cover it fully. It’s still stroking her and she moans, this time quietly enough to not earn a shushing, both from the touch and how it feels to feel Emily touching her.

She wants to kiss her. She desperately wants to kiss Emily but their position isn’t right for it, not without twisting and disrupting what is otherwise perfection.

Emily hasn’t even been inside her yet. The realization makes Stephanie feel painfully empty and she tightens her hold on the hand between her legs and guides it lower, using her own middle finger to press Emily’s into her body. They slide in together and she has to turn and muffle her moan in her pillow.

Being inside herself with Emily is…
It makes her clench and that makes her groan because she can feel herself and Emily and she hadn’t really meant to start things right back up again, especially when it should be Emily’s turn, but…

Emily’s mouth is on her neck again. It’s persistent in its pursuit of kissing very available inch of Stephanie’s skin as they start moving in tandem and she feels the sharp sting of a mark being left.

She’s being pulled; she can feel it, with each push of their hands, she can feel the way Emily angles it until she has no choice but to roll onto her back.

A tongue fills her mouth immediately, warm and soft and wet and she moans into it, content to let Emily’s kiss muffle her. She takes her own hand away then, too. If Emily’s going to turn her onto her back and kiss her like that, she doesn’t need any help fucking her.

Not that she ever needs help.

They shift together at the new position, Emily backing up and reclaiming her arm from under Stephanie’s pillow while Stephanie sits up just enough to pull her shirt over her head and toss it aside.

The action gets a chuckle from Emily who kisses her again as soon as she’s laid back down.

The way Emily is kissing her, Stephanie keeps waiting for the moment to turn hard and rough, but it doesn’t. Even the kiss starts to ease, as though the initial desperation of connection had been sated and is now content to resume being sleepy and gentle. Emily’s finger withdraws and Stephanie’s about to protest the way everything’s slowing down when it glides back up to start teasing her clit again, that same soft barely-there way that had made her come harder than she’s ever before from such an unfrenzied encounter.

She even feels Emily settle next to her after one last soft kiss to her lips. She feels her lie down, still close, on her side, lips brushing Stephanie’s shoulder and breath tickling her ear as she touches her.

It creeps up on her like the tide, making her toes curl and her thighs flex and her back arch until she’s coming with a stuttering gasp.
Emily eases her through it and down from it, her touch just as gentle as what had brought Stephanie to climax, but it feels different now. Less purposeful, more just-because and Stephanie’s breathing has evened out when she feels the fingers between her legs slow to a stop.

She’s about to say something, to comment on how amazing it was and to ask Emily how she would like Stephanie to return the favor when she feels warm, heavy, steady breath on her shoulder.

She angles her head a little, trying not to move, to confirm her guess.

Emily has fallen asleep.

It’s bright in her room when she wakes up. She remembers she’d never bothered to draw the curtains before crawling into bed next to Emily who, Stephanie realizes with a sad sigh as she sweeps her arm over the empty space next to her, is gone. There’s no note on her pillow or nightstand bidding her adieu, but she thinks that’s probably a thing that only happens in movies, a cliché gesture of goodwill that a lover will return with bagels and coffee, or had a wonderful time but was late for work and had to rush off and couldn’t bear to wake her.

But there is no note, just the faint scent of her perfume on the sheets and the dampness of her panties to know Emily had been there at all.

She can hear the television in the living room playing the theme song to “SpongeBob SquarePants” and she remembers it’s Saturday morning. Miles has miraculously not bothered her yet and she smiles to herself; he’s getting so independent.

She lays in bed a few more minutes, reveling in the lack of need to rush anywhere and listening the distorted television audio as it filters through her bedroom door until she smells coffee.

A moment of panic grips her thinking Miles has somehow managed to reach the coffeemaker and is about to start a fire when she realizes he knows better than that, and nothing smells like it’s burning.

It’s with a curious smile that she rolls out of bed, changes into dry panties and a pair of shorts and a tank top, and goes to explore.
She can hear them once she opens the door and she’s immediately reminded of the morning at Emily’s house, hearing Emily in the kitchen feeding breakfast to their sons and asking them about their night.

“Miles, does your mom let you have marshmallows?”

There’s a long beat of silence and Stephanie stops in the hallway to wait for the answer.

“Yes!”

She smiles and shakes her head and decides to let it go because when she gets far enough down the hall she can see Emily in a wrinkled tuxedo shirt and what Stephanie recognizes as a pair of her own shorts, almost comically short on Emily’s breathtakingly long legs, with her hair in a loose ponytail as she makes herself at home in Stephanie’s kitchen.

She pauses again and leans against the wall out of sight from everyone.

Emily’s cooking.

She seems to have found what she needed to mix up pancake batter and has them going on the stove while she empties packets of hot chocolate mix into mugs filled with steaming hot water. She stirs them both up, then puts them in front of Miles and Nicky at the counter before sliding the bag of mini marshmallows at them.

Stephanie remembers how dangerous it had felt experiencing this scenario that first time. It had filled her with the need for domesticity, for a partner with whom she could share her life. And now it was happening in her very own home. Emily hadn’t woken up early to sneak off.

She’d left Stephanie to sleep in while she fixed breakfast for the kids.

Again.
That, combined with the image of Emily in a white button-down shirt and not much else in her kitchen holding a spatula with a hand towel over her shoulder…

“There are chocolate chips in the freezer,” she says as she enters the kitchen, earning a chorus of good mornings from the boys and a smile over Emily’s shoulder. “You could add a handful; I’m sure the boys will love it.”

They cheer in agreement and she fetches the chips herself to round the counter and hand them to Emily. “Good morning,” she says as she looks up at her friend...her lover...who looks positively angelic in the morning light.

“Morning,” Emily says with a wink and as she removes the twist tie from the bag of chocolate to toss some into the bowl of batter.

She glances at the boys, busy and distracted with how many marshmallows they can fit into their mugs of hot cocoa. “I didn’t expect you to be—” Emily glances down at her “—here.”

“It is okay that I am?” Emily moves two pancakes off the pan and onto a plate that she puts on the counter to let the boys battle over with their forks.

“Yeah, of course,” Stephanie says quickly. Her fingers itch to touch her; she never got to last night. She gives in quickly to the desire, pausing behind Emily for half a second on her way to the other side of the kitchen where she will get a cup for the coffee Emily’s brewed for them, to let her hand graze over the curve of her ass.

It’s all she dares do at the moment. If the boys were in the living room watching TV, she’s almost certain she’d have Emily pinned against the kitchen sink as she took her from behind.

But they’re not, so she settles for that one touch and she hears Emily’s quiet hum of amusement as she gets her mug and pours her coffee.

“I could get used to this.”
The words are out before Stephanie remembers to censor herself and she grimaces, though it’s unlikely Emily sees it. They’re on Stephanie’s couch, and somehow they’ve ended up close enough for Stephanie to recline against Emily while she plays with Emily’s fingers.

They’re still watching cartoons but the boys are gone, having retreated with full stomachs and high on sugar to play in the backyard. The remote is on the floor by the beanbag chair and neither of them had bothered to retrieve it once they had the room to themselves.

She feels the rise and fall of Emily’s chest as she takes a deep breath. The arm around her shoulders bends to pull Stephanie into a bit of a backward embrace. “Me, too,” is all she says before Stephanie feels the press of a kiss to her hair.

It’s the first real acknowledgment that Emily likes what they’re doing, beyond sex. It makes Stephanie’s heart race at the possibilities that her brain is eager to throw at her. She tries to bat them away; it’s too much, too fast, and nothing is going to change overnight. Instead, she turns her head and lifts her chin and waits because she knows Emily will lean down and kiss her.

And she does.

It lasts a little longer than a peck of a kiss should and it makes her heart race even faster. She turns further and kisses Emily harder until she feels her respond in kind.

“They’re outside,” she says against Emily’s lips before kissing her again. Then she moves away, backing up until she’s on her stomach on the couch and she’s reaching for the shorts Emily borrowed from her.

“What are you doing?” Emily says with a smile as she lifts her hips to let Stephanie pull them down.

Stephanie glances up at her as she pulls on Emily’s knee until she’s lifting it up to put her foot on the couch behind Stephanie’s shoulder. “What does it look like?” she asks as she parts Emily with her fingers and leans down.

Emily doesn’t answer because she’s too busy moaning at Stephanie’s tongue gliding through her.

Fingers thread through Stephanie’s hair but they don’t pull; they just hold and Stephanie sighs as
she lets her tongue twist and flick through wetness that’s increasing rapidly.

She can’t believe she’s doing this, going down on Emily on her couch in her living room while cartoons blare on the TV and while their kids play outside. It feels so normal and real, like a married couple sneaking a quickie after breakfast.

That’s what it is, she supposes. Save for the married part.

She slips two fingers into Emily as she pulls her clit between her lips and she hears her quiet, sharp cry before she comes.

Stephanie looks up at her to watch it and is taken aback to find Emily already watching her, eyes dark and jaw slack as she moans her orgasm. It makes Stephanie moan, too, and she knows she’s going to need her own release after this, even if it’s by herself in the shower later.

“Fuck,” Emily breathes as her hips tilt and her fingers twist a little tighter in Stephanie’s hair. “Don’t stop.”

She doesn’t stop. She picks up where she’d paused, fingers curling, lips sucking, and tongue stroking while they watch each other.

She keeps one ear toward the door in case the boys come back but her other ear is full of the moans that keep spilling from Emily’s lips as she rocks against Stephanie’s mouth until she comes again.

Stephanie moans against her and tries to find relief with the press of her hips against the couch but it’s not even close to enough. She focuses her energy on Emily and bringing her down from her high.

Emily doesn’t ask her to keep going again so she eases back with a parting kiss that is probably a little too romantic (as romantic as kissing a clit can be, anyway). She sits back on her knees and tries to be inconspicuous about wiping her chin on the back of her hand; it somehow feels impolite, though it’s sexy and gratifying all the same.

She watches Emily pull her shorts back on as she tosses a glance at Stephanie. “I bet you’re fucking soaked right now.”
It’s not a question; it’s almost a demand the way she says it. It makes a shiver run down Stephanie’s spine but she manages to get a little sassy with her response. “Maybe. Why don’t you check?”

Emily seems to like it because she smiles and reaches for Stephanie to pull her over until she’s on her knees over her lap. Her hand slips up the leg of her shorts and moves Stephanie’s ruined panties to the side to glide over her and they both sigh. “That’s what I thought,” she says, a little haughtily at her discovery.

“Shut up, I’m so close,” Stephanie dares to say before capturing Emily’s lips with her own. She kisses her hard and feels the way Emily’s fingers move against her, not gentle like they had last night but just as skilled and familiar. It’s hard and fast and exactly what Stephanie wants and she curses into Emily’s mouth as she comes in what is probably record time.

“Damn, baby,” Emily says with a teasing laugh between their kisses and Stephanie just nods.

She kisses her again and doesn’t ask for more. “We’ve pressed our luck enough, I think,” she adds as she slides off Emily’s lap to sit next to her again, now acutely aware of how wet and swollen she is. And she hadn’t forgotten that Emily is in the same state. She knows they could do this for hours (they have, already, many times) and she groans as she falls forward to kiss Emily one more time.

One more time before what? Before the boys return? Before Emily goes home to her husband? Before Stephanie comes to her senses and calls off this affair?

“Can I ask you something?” Emily says with a hint of a smile once Stephanie’s finished her kiss.

“Yeah, of course.” Stephanie smiles. “Anything.”

“I have to go to LA for a couple days next week.”

“Oh, I’d be happy to watch Nicky if you need me to. The boys are getting along so great.”

Emily chuckles and shakes her head. It’s almost as if she’s surprising herself with whatever she’s saying. “No, no. Thank you, though. He’ll be fine at home.” The ‘with Sean’ is unsaid but implied.
“I was wondering if you’d want to come with me?”

Stephanie sits back, out from where she’d basically been draped over Emily. Emily’s asking her to go somewhere with her? Not just somewhere, but across the country with her?

“You’re...inviting me to Los Angeles?”

“Is that stupid?” Emily’s nose does that cute scrunchy thing and she almost seems to be blushing. “I shouldn’t have. That’s too forward, it’s okay—”

“I’d love to.”

Emily freezes and then she’s beaming and, frankly, it makes Stephanie light-headed. “Yeah? Are you sure? Miles can stay at my place. Nicky will love that.”

She nods, starting to feel giddy. “When, exactly?”

“We leave Wednesday morning, fly back Friday night.”

Oh, right. Flights. Plane tickets were expensive, especially last-minute ones. “Okay, I’ll look at airfare today.”

“Oh, no, baby girl, no,” Emily says as she reaches toward Stephanie to take her hand. “We’re taking Dennis’s G6.”

Stephanie nearly chokes. “A private jet? I’ve never been on a private jet before.”

“Well, that doesn’t surprise me,” Emily teases as she squeezes Stephanie’s hand. “I thought it might be nice to get out of Warfield for a while. Away from everyone knowing everything about everyone.”

Stephanie nods. She’s positively elated.
“I’d like to take you out to dinner while we’re there. If you’d like.”

Stephanie sinks into the couch; she has to, she’s almost ready to pass out, because that sounded a lot like, “Are you asking me out on a date?”

Emily glances down at her lap for a few seconds before meeting Stephanie’s eyes again. “Yeah. I am.”

She smiles and gets her body working again so she can sit up and lean in and touch her lips to Emily’s. “Yes, please. I’d like that very much.”

The end...? (It’s so totally not the end.)
“Hi, Moms! Stephanie here.” Stephanie smiles into one of the cameras set up in her kitchen. “My best friend, Emily, and I are taking a girls’ trip to sunny southern California this week. I grew up on the east coast and have never been west of the big Mississippi, so let me know in the comments what I absolutely must do, see, or take on my trip!”

She switches to Camera 2. “It’s with that in mind that today we’re going to make our own travel toiletry bags! All you need is a yard of fun fabric and a few buttons. You can also use Velcro strips or ribbon, or if you’re feeling really fancy, a zipper. Ready? Okay!”

Her subscribers—she thinks of them as a family, really—were helpful in their suggestions. She folds and packs an extra cardigan to protect her from the chill that might roll in late in the evening off the water. Briefly, she considers “forgetting” any outer layers at all; the prospect of doing something obscenely romantic with Emily like strolling on the beach and getting chilly and being offered whatever expensive jacket Emily will surely be wearing is more than tempting.

But she sets the sweater on top of the négligée she’s found the perfect occasion for, and what she thinks might be too many pairs of panties but she also is pretty sure she’s going to need them.

Two-and-a-half days alone with Emily in another city with no looming husband and no dear, darling children to be cognizant of?

Yeah, she’s going to need them.

She didn’t ask Emily what she meant by “it” when she’d texted her last night saying, “Pack it.”
She has to bite her lip when she sees a loop of black leather of the harness peeking out from where it’s buried at the bottom of her suitcase.

Her toiletry kit, the one she perfected to use as her example on this week’s vlog, is the last thing to be tossed into her bag. Her heart races as she zips it. She’s minutes from loading Miles and her luggage into her Subaru to drop him—and her car—at Emily’s house.

With one final check that she has everything she thinks she might need in her purse and anything Miles might want while he has his two-night sleepover with Nicky, she shepherds him out of the house, locks up, and leaves.

She realizes, as she steps into the hired car waiting outside Emily’s home, she has no real idea how they’re getting anywhere. Emily had said they’re taking Dennis Nylon’s private jet, but beyond that, she’s uninformed. She doesn’t know where they’re staying, if they’ll have a rental or a driver in Los Angeles, or even what Emily’s work commitments are while they’re there.

She’s never traveled without an itinerary and there’s something oddly exciting about it.

She slides over to the far side of the back seat and watches Emily take a seat next to her, graceful and dapper as always in what Stephanie surmises is a version of professional travel-casual. Her navy blue suit is tailored but it’s only a two-piece. Simple blue slacks and blazer and a white blouse that’s not even buttoned up all the way, with brown loafers. Even her casual style makes Stephanie feel underdressed when she’d put extra effort into her outfit today. She knew private travel was a luxury and she wanted to fit the part. Her dress is designer, though a full four seasons ago, something from Kate Spade’s 2017 spring collection. She knows Emily probably knows it’s outdated, but she doesn’t comment on it.

“You look nice,” is actually what she says once the driver closes the door and they’re alone in the car for a few seconds before he’s behind the wheel.

“Thank you,” Stephanie replies, feeling a bit like a blushing schoolgirl. Emily can be so hot and cold with her communication and affection, and it manages to catch Stephanie off-guard every time.

Emily’s quiet after that, focused on her phone—texting or emailing, Stephanie supposes—leaving
Stephanie to her thoughts. She wants to make conversation, but she’s not sure what’s okay to do or say with someone else in the car. The driver might be someone Emily uses frequently. It might not be okay if he overhears their conversation, even if it remains mundane and platonic about work or kids. She wants to ask what the plan is or even where they’re going.

She knows they’re heading east out of town. It’s growing increasingly industrial and she’s almost uneasy until they’re parking behind a massive warehouse.

She realizes, as she steps out the car, that it’s not a warehouse but a hangar because there’s helicopter parked and waiting in the middle of the wide open pad of asphalt.

“What is happening?” she says with a laugh as she watches Emily round the back of the car until she’s by her side. It’s only a touch of a hand to her back, but it makes Stephanie shiver.

“The plane is in Teterboro.”

Stephanie starts walking, half a step behind Emily because she was too surprised to move quickly. “So we’re taking a private helicopter to a private plane?”

Emily glances at her. The small smile she’s wearing is almost a smirk and it makes Stephanie feel a little childish in her excitement.

“I’ve never been in a helicopter, either,” she says as she follows Emily into the open bay door of the sleek black and white aircraft.

“The jet is nicer.”

Stephanie leaves an empty seat between them, unsure if it would be suspicious if they sat side by side when there was plenty of room in the six-seat cabin for the two of them.

Her decision is affirmed when they’re joined by a stranger, a man in a suit with a briefcase yelling into the Bluetooth earpiece he’s wearing about the manufacturing industry in China. He sits across from Stephanie and though his words aren’t directed at her, they feel like it as he stares through her in his heated conversation.
She turns to look at Emily in horror that they’re going to have to listen to this the entire trip to the airport to find that she’s already being watched. The tiny smirk is a full-on smile now and it makes Stephanie forget about the man as she returns it.

Whatever complaint Stephanie was about to lodge dies on her lips because Emily’s smiling at her in the back of a helicopter. It’s clear the man doesn’t know Emily; he’s talking factories and steel and he’d barely acknowledged their presence when he arrived. So, she decides to see what happens if she slides over to sit in the middle seat right next to Emily instead of leaving it empty.

The only thing that happens is a slight raising of eyebrows as Emily uncrosses her legs so her foot isn’t encroaching on Stephanie’s leg room.

Stephanie buckles her seat belt and when she sits back, she angles herself enough for her elbow to rest against Emily’s. She feels it lift in acknowledgment but the motion isn’t meant to push her away. A playful bump and a shared glance.

“How long is this flight?”

“Ten minutes.”

“That’s it?!”

Emily nods and turns to look out the window as Stephanie feels a roller coaster-like effect on her stomach and she realizes they’re airborne.

It’s too loud to carry on a conversation, not without putting on the comms headsets anyway, so Stephanie remains quiet in her excitement.

“I feel like Ilsa in Casablanca,” Stephanie finally lets herself say as she and Emily walk across the tarmac from a helicopter to a private plane, its door open and waiting.

Emily glances down at her. “Rick is putting Ilsa on a plane to send her away at the end of Casablanca.”
“I know, but it’s still so romantic and glamorous, walking across the runway ready to get on a waiting plane with someone you—” She catches herself. “With someone.”

Emily doesn’t respond; she steps aside when they get to the steps of the jet, engines already humming. “After you.”

Stephanie’s seen interiors of private planes before—on celebrities’ Instagrams, in movies and the like—but nothing could have prepared her for the reality of stepping into an airplane cabin covered in nothing but white leather and polished wood with gleaming gold (well, probably brass or similar) accents. It was a very, very far cry from the Economy Class on American Airlines that she was accustomed to.

“This is…” She senses Emily waiting behind her and turns around to find her right where she knew she’d be. “Emily, I don’t even know what to say.”

Emily smiles and gestures toward the back of the plane. “Lady’s choice.”

Stephanie yearns to pop up onto her toes and kiss her but the cabin door is still open, crew are milling about doing their final checks and loading their bags, and the cockpit door is also open with the pilots readily visible. They’re not alone, and this is Dennis’s plane and crew. Instead, she claps through a barely contained squeal and spins back around, nearly skipping through the aisle until she decides on the only row that has a pair of seats instead of singles.

She knows Emily might choose to sit alone, but she’s certainly not going to be the reason for it. She sees Emily watching her over the top of the seats and sees her making her way closer until she’s stopped at Stephanie’s row. She glances toward the front of the plane, then nods at the empty chair next to Stephanie.

“Is this seat taken?”

The whole situation already has Stephanie overdosing on endorphins, but Emily teasing? Being humorous? The compliment in the car. The elbow nudge on the helicopter. Stepping aside to allow Stephanie to board first. That pick-up line a second ago. She fights to get her joy under control lest it is off-putting and motions for Emily to sit.

“By all means.”
Emily joins her as she tosses her coat onto the seat across the aisle and though she’s still busy at work on her phone, she seems much less closed off than she had in the car.

“I really don’t know how to thank you for this,” she says as she watches Emily’s slender, strong fingers manipulate her iPhone in a way that shouldn’t make Stephanie jealous.

Emily looks up from her phone, turns toward Stephanie, and leans in and kisses her. It’s soft and brief, but it makes Stephanie tingle all the same. “I think you’ll find a way.” She punctuates the suggestive sentence with one more kiss and then she’s back at her phone and Stephanie realizes they’re already taxiing toward the runway.

She hadn’t even heard the cabin door close or felt the plane start to roll, caught up in her thoughts as she’d been.

And if they’re moving, that means there’s no one on the ground to see them through the windows, and the cockpit door is sealed, which means…

She sets her purse on the floor, not even realizing she was still holding it, turns in her seat and reaches for Emily. She catches her with a hand to the back of her neck to pull her back in. She wants a better kiss, a bigger kiss, one that will leave them both breathless and she smiles into it when Emily doesn’t pull away from her.

She feels Emily’s fingers slide into her hair followed by the heavy clunk of what she knows is Emily’s phone hitting the floor. It makes her stomach flip, but that might be from the plane taking flight, though Stephanie’s pretty sure it’s Emily and not the plane.

Stephanie has half a mind to unbuckle her seat belt and crawl into Emily’s lap but they’re barely off the ground. She doesn’t want to seem too eager or desperate despite not having been together since the morning after Emily spent an unexpected night at her house. She keeps herself in check, hands not straying into PG-13 territory. It’s enough—more than enough, really—to make her happy. Heck, even Emily looking at her with any level of affection, platonic or otherwise, makes her happy.

When she feels Emily’s hand on her waist pulling her closer, but not escalating things more either, she sighs and settles into her seat and against Emily.
There’s something just as arousing (maybe even more so) about hot and heavy making out than jumping right to sex. Perhaps it’s about a mutual agreement that it’s enough, at least for now, to simply be close and kiss. She knows more will come later. She doesn’t know when, but she knows it will only be a matter of hours. They’ll be in Los Angeles by the evening and she knows exactly what she wants for dinner.

Emily’s phone interrupts their kissing and Stephanie can’t help but smile when Emily groans in annoyance as she pulls away to reach down to retrieve it from the floor and answer it with a very gruff, “What the hell is it now, Dennis?”

She smiles again when Emily lets her continue however she likes while she bosses around her boss, and how Stephanie likes to continue is to make sure she’s familiar with the way every inch of Emily’s neck tastes today.

As happy as she repeatedly tells herself she is to not need more right now, the need is beginning to grow. She lets her hand rest on Emily’s knee and enjoys the way she tilts her head at different angles to encourage Stephanie to continue or move to a new spot.

When it sounds like the phone call is wrapping up and Stephanie is making plans to drag Emily over to the couch to finally get some relief, she hears through the phone what sound like multiple voices speaking at once and she feels Emily sigh.

“This doesn’t warrant a call with the board—”

She seems to get cut off which Stephanie knows is a rarity. She sits back in surprise and watches Emily pinch the bridge of her nose in annoyance.

The subsequent exchange clues Stephanie in to the fact that Emily’s ended up on a conference call with the Nylon Board of Directors. It’s fascinating to watch Emily...not falter per se, but for her place to be checked. Apparently, an entire board couldn’t be fucked in the face. Even Emily wasn’t that powerful.

But speaking of fucking…

Stephanie maintains her air of innocence best she can while her lips continue caressing Emily’s
neck. She lets herself run out of skin, kissing to her collar before she nudges it aside to move lower until she’s undoing the next button on Emily’s shirt to expose her collar bones to Stephanie’s lips.

Emily’s reaction isn’t strong, but Stephanie does see her fingers flex where they rest on her lap.

She doesn’t think Emily will actually let her do it. She’s sure she’ll be stopped when she keeps unbuttoning until her shirt is open. She’s sure Emily will politely nudge her away when she leans over to trail her lips over the swells of her breasts. She’s sure Emily will sit back to prevent Stephanie’s wandering hand from undoing her bra under her shirt to push it up and away so she can tease the hardened tips to further attention and not lean forward to make it easier for Stephanie.

That’s the first time she hears Emily react, a kind of a swallowed gasp that she covers with a cough. Stephanie glances up at her and she sees her put her phone on mute before she asks, “Are you going to stop and let me focus on this call?”

“No,” Stephanie says with a smile before returning to her task, one hand on Emily’s breast to guide it back to her mouth while the other moves to Emily’s pants to start working on the pair of buttons there. She struggles for a moment, one-handed, but when they give way she’s filled with a rush of arousal and adrenaline. She glances down to watch herself pull at one side of Emily’s pants to try to split the zipper but it doesn’t part as easily as she expects it to, the expensive material too pliant. She’s about to sit up so she can use both hands when she sees Emily’s hand move from where it sits in her lap to hold the other side.

When Stephanie pulls again, the zipper parts easily and she can see the scalloped edge of light pink satin.

She nicks the firm flesh in her mouth with her teeth and hears a shaky sigh above her. It serves only to encourage her further and she doesn’t hesitate to slip her hand into Emily’s pants. She does sit up for that; she wants to see Emily’s face. She’s as light as she can be, barely grazing over the soft satin beneath her fingertips and she sees the way her eyelashes flutter at Stephanie’s touch.

She’s about to ask if Emily still has the phone on mute when she speaks sharply into the receiver, something about getting a photographer from the New York Post to be conveniently placed at an event to ensure tabloid-esque coverage of another designer’s misstep. Stephanie’s still not sure what the emergency requiring this mid-flight phone call with so many people could be, but she’s sort of grateful for it. It’s giving her a new playground, something different than kids upstairs or a husband on his way home. She waits until Emily’s finished speaking before she leans in to kiss her. It’s a quiet kiss, slow and soft and Stephanie’s able to tease Emily’s tongue without any resistance.
She slides the back of her fingernail down the satin as far as she can reach, then twists her wrist to drag it back up. She feels the soft rise of flesh through the satin and smiles to herself at the sound of Emily’s quick inhale and tilt of her hips.

Her touch is moving down again when Emily turns her head away so she can speak once more; she still sounds confident and in business mode and Stephanie finds it incredibly sexy. She waits until Emily seems to be finished speaking, then guides her with her free hand right back into another kiss as she presses the tiniest bit more firmly. Emily’s hips tilt again and Stephanie knows she’s asking for more.

There’s a lot about this relationship—for lack of a better moniker—Stephanie enjoys, but none more so than the confirmation (or, at this point, the reminder) that Emily enjoys it, too, is aroused by her, is more than happy to sit back on an airplane during a business call and allow Stephanie to touch her.

She’s as light with her tongue as she is her touch and pride rushes through her when she feels Emily shiver. She can’t help herself and slips her fingertips under the satin, eager to feel the effect she’s had so far. She finds slickness and has to stop herself from making some type of cheeky comment. Instead, she catches Emily’s tongue between her lips and sucks on it.

She feels fingers twist into her hair for Emily’s response and Stephanie hums at the tightness of her grip.

Emily pulls away to speak again and this time, Stephanie doesn’t wait idly for her to finish. She leans down to take Emily’s nipple into her mouth again, having to pull against the hold Emily has on her hair but she’s allowed to move without much of a fight. She finds a pattern with her fingers, a slow, gentle circle and above her, she hears Emily hiss a quiet, “Yes,” as her back arches and hips lift.

It’s an unknown how long the phone call may last; it could be over in a minute or an hour. She could touch Emily like this, slowly and lazily to drive her mad with need. Or, she considers when she feels Emily’s legs part further and her hips start moving to match her speed, perhaps the tiniest bit more quickly than Stephanie’s pace, she could see just how professional and in-control Emily is when she really needs to be.

She presses a bit more firmly, pads of her fingers rolling back and forth. She must be hitting a nerve just-so because Emily’s knee keeps bouncing as though in reflex. She smiles against Emily’s breast, amused by it, but she adjusts to make it stop. Instead, she speeds up, pausing now and then to dip her fingers lower and into Emily to feel her and draw more wetness up with her fingers.
It reminds her of their first night together, watching a sexy movie while Emily tried to be defiant as Stephanie teased and massaged her clit until she finally begged for it.

The memory makes her teeth nick Emily’s nipple again and her hips jerk in response. She glances up and though it’s difficult at the angle, she can tell Emily’s eyes are closed and her cheeks are tinted pink.

Her own impatience gets the best of her. She can feel how much Emily wants her and Emily is the only thing in the world Stephanie wants right now. She slides off her seat to the floor and temporarily abandons Emily’s clit, licking her fingers quickly before reaching for the waistband of Emily’s pants to pull them down.

They slide easily, Emily lifting to help, and she doesn’t bother trying to get them over both of Emily’s shoes. One’s enough so she can move between her knees, hands on Emily’s thighs to part them. She can feel Emily’s hand in her hair, combing and pulling, and she doesn’t even look up at her before she does it.

There’s something empowering about that, not looking up for permission she knows she has. It’s erotic in a way she’s still getting used to, to lean in, pull the strip of satin to the side, and taste Emily.

She hears Emily stutter and lose her place in whatever it is she’s saying to the Board and it fills Stephanie with pride. She takes Emily’s swollen clit between her lips before she’s found her place in her sentence and she feels a sharp tug on her hair. It almost feels like a warning or a request to stop but the very next second she’s being pulled in closer.

She hears Emily grind out a frustrated, “Never mind,” instead of ever finishing her thought and Stephanie wonders if she’s ever had to do that before.

Feeling victorious, she glances up to find Emily’s eyes no longer closed; now they’re locked on her so she tightens her lips and pulls back, taking Emily’s flesh with her until it slips from her mouth. “That sounds really important,” she says quietly. “Don’t let me distract you.”

She can tell Emily’s about to respond until she remembers her phone isn’t muted. Instead, Emily pulls her back in and Stephanie’s more than happy to oblige.

They’ve made love many ways during their short affair. Stephanie has loved them all but Emily
parting her legs and asking for Stephanie’s mouth—sometimes verbally, sometimes in other ways— is arguably her favorite.

(Okay, it might be tied with being invited to sit on Emily’s face.)

She’s generous with her tongue this time, first taking care of the arousal that’s starting to drip before lapping slowly at Emily’s clit.

She feels Emily’s leg, the one free of pants, lift to rest over her shoulder so Stephanie adjusts, wrapping an arm around her leg and pressing closer. A second later, she hears a quiet hum and feels a vibration and for a moment she’s shocked and excited that Emily has somehow produced a sex toy but when she looks up in curiosity she sees that it’s the seat and not a toy that’s humming as Emily presses a button to make it recline.

“Fuck,” she whispers between strokes of her tongue; it’s even hotter than an unexpected vibrator because Emily’s making herself as comfortable as she can to let Stephanie do as she pleases while Emily suffers through her business call.

She takes a particularly strong swipe and hears Emily’s breath catch. There’s a delay where Stephanie knows there wouldn’t otherwise be between that sound and the moan that finally comes. “Jesus fuck, baby,” follows and Stephanie assumes the phone’s back on mute. Or, at least, she hopes it is for the sake of Emily’s reputation...though the concept that it might not be is titillating, Emily getting too caught up in how Stephanie makes her feel to forget her professionalism and letting a conference room full of executives hear her moaning.

She lets herself believe that to be the case and doubles her efforts as though she’s daring Emily to keep quiet. She’s had to be the one to bite her lip and cover her mouth more than enough times and it’s fun to be on the other end of things for a change.

When she hears Emily’s breath catch, she presses inside, first with her tongue, just because, then with her fingers, firm and sure as they slide easily. She curves them and watches Emily’s hips lift off the seat for a second before they’re pushing closer.

“Then find another venue, Dennis, what the fuck do you want me to do about it?” Emily’s voice is clipped and Stephanie can tell she’s more than impatient to end the call.

It’s the least Stephanie can do to be entertaining Emily, she thinks with a shrug to herself as she
fucks Emily slowly, fingers moving in long strokes. She’s rougher and quicker with her tongue; she’s always loved the way Emily reacts when she gets the angle right, that spot that’s always ‘a little to the left’ that makes her toes curl.

She knows she finds it without guidance this time when the heel of Emily’s shoe scratches at her back. It’s digging into her and trying to reel her in closer and she really can’t get any closer so instead, she presses more firmly into that spot with her tongue.

“Fuck, that’s—that’s not my fucking job. That’s why we have Elena. Why isn’t Elena on this call if this is about an event? She’s your events person. Not me. Fuck!”

Stephanie doesn’t know which, if any, of the curses are directed toward her but it doesn’t matter. Emily’s not pulling on her hair anymore. She’s just holding Stephanie there, hips starting to buck out of rhythm.

Stephanie wonders what she should do. Emily’s close; so close Stephanie can taste it. Literally, she thinks with a smile. Should she stop, or back off to let Emily unwind before it’s too late? Or should she keep going and see if Emily will allow her to take her all the way to orgasm and back during her phone call?

“Fuck, don’t stop, baby,” Emily says with a groan to answer Stephanie’s debate.

She hums in response and glances up to see Emily’s eyes locked on her, dark and intense. She looks like she’s being fucked on a private jet, disheveled and half-naked in a white leather seat and Stephanie can’t help herself. She takes her free hand back from where it’s been holding on to Emily to keep her close. She doesn’t need to do that now; Emily will do that on her own. And she reaches under her dress, between her thighs, under her panties to touch herself.

She moans at the much-needed relief and she can see it on Emily’s face that she knows what Stephanie’s doing.

But she doesn’t do anything to stop her.

Instead, she says, “God, I can hear how wet you are.”

The words make Stephanie shiver and all she can do is hum and close her eyes because every ounce of her energy is devoted to other things.
“Hey, hey guys,” Emily barks and it makes Stephanie flinch at the unexpected change in tone. “You need to figure this shit out on your own. I’m going to stay on the call so I know what stupid decisions I’ll have to fix for you tomorrow, but consider me gone.”

She hears the sound of a dozen voices yelling at once as Emily turns on her speakerphone for the call and Stephanie’s genuinely impressed that Emily’s doing exactly what she said she would. She looks up again in time to see her toss her phone into Stephanie’s empty seat, look down at her, and say, “Fuck, you look so good, baby.”

Stephanie winks and feels even sexier in doing so than she had seconds earlier despite everything.

Emily’s louder now, like the nights she spent at Stephanie’s house with Miles at his grandparents’ house. Uninhibited. Uncaring that they could be caught because there’s no one to catch them, no one to interrupt them. They’re thirty-five thousand feet in the air and alone, save for two pilots behind a locked door with much more important things to pay attention to. It makes Stephanie moan, too, no longer concerned with whether or not Emily’s call is muted. Emily’s hand, the one not resting on Stephanie’s head, is on her breast and Stephanie watches the way she plays with her own nipple, memorizing the patterns of touching, twisting, and tugging so she can repeat them later.

It’s with a gasp and a whimper that Emily comes, tense and unmoving for an eternal second until she snaps and her hips buck in a way that makes it almost impossible for Stephanie to keep her tongue on her with any sort of precision, but it doesn’t really matter now.

She groans her appreciation for it; she loves when Emily comes for her like it’s some kind of twisted gift, one that Emily chooses to give her. It’s everything she can do to stop her own orgasm. She yanks her hand away from herself to hold Emily’s thigh to keep from suffocating between them (not that she’d mind…) and feels the tiniest quiver of ecstasy make her clench and her own hips rock forward for friction that isn’t there.

Her reason to wait will be worth it, she reminds herself, as she waits until the body above her is finished twisting in release. Once Emily’s calm again, her fingers starting to comb through Stephanie’s hair, she gets off the floor, makes quick work of slipping her panties off, and moves to straddle Emily’s lap. She takes her hand, the one that’s been in her hair for however long she was on her knees, and guides it between her legs.

Emily’s slow to react and she takes immense pride in that, that she’s still trying to recover. It’s not as though Stephanie needs a massive effort on her part for this anyway. She guides Emily’s fingers into her, sees the way she looks up at her, still dazed but there’s a hint of familiar smirk returning
that disappears as soon as Stephanie leans down to kiss her.

She’s moving as soon as their lips touch, rocking and holding Emily’s hand in place firmly against her so she can grind against it as she claims Emily’s mouth with her tongue. She loves when they’re like this, raw and sensual and a bit dirty and she loves when Emily lets her take what she wants when she lets her be in control. She’s pretty sure by now that Emily wants Stephanie to be in control sometimes, that Emily likes when Stephanie does things like tie her up or pin her down. She’s sure Emily likes it as much as Stephanie likes being told to get on her hands and knees to be taken from behind.

It’s a good set-up they’ve got going, she thinks. The give and take, their little games of dominance and submission that haven’t started to challenge Stephanie’s personal boundaries yet, but she thinks they might sometime soon. Maybe while alone together on this trip. She’s kind of in the mood to be tested.

The possibilities and scenarios that assault her imagination are so distracting that it doesn’t even register with her that she’s close until she’s already coming, moaning against Emily’s mouth, lips touching but not really kissing as she feels Emily’s tongue darting in and out, still teasing even as Stephanie starts to come back to herself.

She doesn’t hear the angry, arguing voices on the phone anymore so the call must have ended or maybe Emily hung up, but she’s grateful all she can hear is their heavy breathing and the loud hum of the jet engines carrying them farther and farther away from Emily’s husband.

The thought makes her lips curl into a smile and she kisses Emily again now that she’s of sound mind once more and she lets her hips resume rocking. Not hard, or fast, but enough to be able to feel Emily still inside her. It’s enough to get Emily participating again and Stephanie shivers as Emily’s fingers curl and press into her.

“Was that your way of thanking me?” Emily says with a lazy smile when Stephanie has to pull back to moan.

It takes her a few seconds to rebuild the events of the past couple of hours, their conversations and references, until it clicks. “It’s a start,” she says as suggestively as she can. She knows the impact is probably lessened a bit by the way her eyes keep trying to close and how hard she knows she’s tightening herself around Emily’s fingers, but she doesn’t care much. They can have their verbal tête-à-tête another time when Emily’s not knuckle-deep inside her and when she’s not making Stephanie help her to lift her dress over her head and off so she can pull Stephanie down at a new angle that puts her breast in Emily’s mouth.
It forces Stephanie to shift higher up Emily’s body, but it’s easy with how far back the seat reclines, almost 180º.

What it also allows her, she discovers by accident when she’s balancing herself to work her way up on her knees, is that now she can reach behind herself and find Emily again, even wetter than she’d left her.

It’s not the best angle, and she has to choose between sitting up and touching Emily or bending forward to have her nipples kissed and licked. Her own need wins out for a while, until her nipples are too sensitive to withstand more attention. Then she sits back, sits up nice and straight because even if it’s narcissistic, she knows she looks good in this position and reaches back and into panties she long ago should have stripped from Emily to find her clit, warm and swollen with need as she rides Emily’s fingers.

She feels Emily’s hips lift beneath her and it reminds her of what it was like to have Emily sitting astride her this way and despite the numerous positions they’ve tried with Emily’s strap-on, something as basic as this has yet to happen. She’s allowed Emily to be the one in control if Emily was wearing it which has put Stephanie (very willingly) onto her back, or her hands and knees, or the washing machine.

If it wasn’t packed away in her suitcase stored somewhere on the plane, she’d stop and retrieve it and take care of that oversight right here and now.

But, that will have to wait for another time, maybe tonight at their hotel. The thought makes her hips move more quickly, rolling again and again against the fingers that are inside her. They’re both moving, now, and Emily’s lifting her hips like she’s fucking her with them, and she’s really not, Stephanie’s seated too high, across her stomach, for it to have any effect but it’s probably less about trying to fuck Stephanie and more about the way Stephanie’s fingers are framing and squeezing Emily’s clit as it slides between them with every thrust.

Emily’s free hand finds Stephanie’s left breast and she’s not really doing anything more than holding on, but Stephanie doesn’t mind. She can do all the work for now; she knows Emily will more than return the favor(s).

“Fuck,” she whines, feeling the pleasure starting to coil inside her again. She can’t believe she’s doing this, she never can believe it when it happens, but now it’s even more unbelievable because opening her eyes for a second to look down at Emily, she can see the window next to them and nothing but blue sky and clouds and she’s literally flying.
Emily’s saying something, she can’t tell what though. Her ears are ringing from how hard her heart is beating but she’s nodding as she says it before her eyes slam shut and her head tilts back and her back arches off the seat and Stephanie comes with her.

She almost falls backward because she can’t bend forward without surrendering her ability to touch Emily but an arm around her waist catches her. There’s so much adrenaline and arousal flowing through her veins she wonders how she’s ever supposed to stop this. She wonders how they ever manage to stop, to act like platonic friends around each other, ever. It’s amazing to her that they can ever do anything but do everything they can to make each other feel this way.

A hand glides up her sweat-soaked back and she’s forced to slide backward until she can’t reach Emily anymore, and she’s brought down. Emily wants to kiss her and who is she to deny Emily that? Or anything, for that matter.

She hears herself moan into it, and she’d be embarrassed by how turned on she still is if Emily didn’t chuckle through their kiss knowingly. She’s still stroking Stephanie slowly but she can tell Emily’s working toward reclaiming her hand.

“How long until we land?” she asks before moving to kiss Emily’s neck, lapping at her skin and relishing the taste. She’d broken a sweat, too.

Emily laughs again and it sounds magical to Stephanie. “Save some for tonight, baby.”

“I’m never going to get tired of this,” she admits as she sinks her teeth into Emily’s neck, not hard enough to leave a mark or even inflict much pain; just enough to make Emily gasp because she knows Emily likes when she uses her teeth.

And she does gasp. But it’s followed by a hand on the side of her face, guiding Stephanie away until she’s looking down at Emily, a thumb stroking Stephanie’s cheek. “Hey, we’re good, right?”

Stephanie’s confused by the question. Of course, they’re good. They’ve been “good” since Day One. Did she say too much? Was that too revealing? Too open or honest? After Emily telling her she could get used to lazy Saturday mornings at home with Stephanie, she thought something like feeling insatiable around Emily would be less than problematic.

“Yeah,” she says with a smile that she hopes doesn’t betray her worry. “We’re good.”
“Good,” Emily replies and guides her down into another kiss, this one so soft and gentle it makes Stephanie’s toes curl in a different kind of way. “Let’s get dressed,” she says when they part. “I bet you brought a crossword puzzle book or something, didn’t you?” she adds with a smile.

Stephanie thinks about the book of vacation-themed Mad Libs in her purse; she’d bought it yesterday thinking it could be fun to see how much it would take to get Emily worked up over a story being so ludicrous, but now she feels like she might get teased about it with the way Emily’s asking her.

“Um…”

“I knew it,” Emily says with a grin before starting to sit up with the help of the electronic buzz of her seat, making sure to not topple Stephanie off her lap in doing so. “You’re so fucking cute. Let’s do it together. Let me up so I can use the bathroom?”

Stephanie blinks at her and she imagines she must look a bit owlish; she had expected Emily to mock her but instead, she’s happy and ready to play a game with her. “Sure,” she says happily as she backs off Emily’s lap and onto very unsteady legs. It’s not made any easier by the plane hitting a small patch of turbulence as she does so and she wobbles, Emily catching her with hands to her waist.

Then, as though she couldn’t help herself, Emily’s leaning in and taking Stephanie’s nipple into her mouth again, nothing rough or harsh, just soft warmth and gentle pressure and a tongue swirling around it. It makes Stephanie squeak and brace herself on Emily’s shoulders and she watches her finish before she leans to the right to give the other the exact same treatment.

She feels dazed by the time Emily sits back and not exactly turned on in the way she has been; she’s not desperate for an orgasm or writhing in need, but she feels heady and a bit drunk or maybe high and she wonders if maybe she is. Maybe Emily, especially this Emily who’s gentle and caring and giving, is her drug of choice.

If so, she knows she’s already addicted.

The end...? (It's so totally not the end.)
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Raise your hand if you love soft Emily!

After the hired car, commuter helicopter, and private jet, Stephanie almost expects the black Lincoln Navigator that Emily and she are led to after landing in Van Nuys. Emily allows her to enter the spacious backseat before following and like their drive to the helipad in Connecticut, she decides she’s probably supposed to keep her thoughts to herself.

Emily’s texting again but after a minute or two, she’s on a call. Stephanie’s about to let herself get a twinge annoyed that she’s still working when it’s long past business hours on the east coast until she recognizes the tone Emily is using and knows she’s called home to check on Nicky. Guilt overwhelms her; she’d been planning to call to speak to Miles when they got to wherever they were going and now it feels like she should have checked on him while they were still in flight.

She watches the conversation, hoping and waiting for a turn so she can speak to Miles (and if she doesn’t get one, she’ll call herself as planned), and after a few minutes, Emily’s telling Nicky to put Miles on the phone and she’s handing the phone to Stephanie with a smile.

“They’re having an Avengers marathon.”

“Oh, those movies are so violent,” Stephanie says with a frown as she puts the phone to her ear. “Smooch, are you there, sweetie?”

“Hi, Mom!”

It’s a relief to hear his voice even if she only said goodbye to him that morning and only for a couple of days. But that’s what being a mother is; she learned that the moment the doctor placed him on her chest in the hospital delivery room. Whether for a minute or a week, she missed her son all the same.

He fills her in on the movie marathon—they’re watching every movie in The Avengers’ world—and
tells her they had noodles for dinner (Thai take-out, she learns from Emily after the call) and that tomorrow, Sean is taking them to the trampoline park. It fills her with an immense amount of dread and anxiety and she makes him promise repeatedly he will be careful, wear a helmet, and not jump from anything that is taller than his bed.

When she finally tells him she loves him and hands the phone back to Emily, she finds Emily to be watching her. She doesn’t know for how long, but she’s wearing a soft smile that makes Stephanie blush.

“He’ll be okay,” Emily says as she pockets her phone in her jacket. “We took Nicky there for his last birthday and he loved it.”

“Oh, good,” she says, only partially reassured.

“And it was a clean fracture; he was only in a cast for three weeks.”

Stephanie gasps in horror, heart in her throat, and she considers leaping from the moving vehicle to get on a plane back home. “What?!”

“I’m kidding, Steph,” Emily laughs.

She presses a hand to her chest, heart racing. “Oh, my God.”

“He’ll have fun.” Emily reaches across the space between them and takes Stephanie’s hand from her chest to interlace their fingers. “Don’t worry.”

The gesture is so thoughtful and intimate that it does nothing to help her heart slow. She suspects if the word “sorry” existed in Emily’s vocabulary, she would apologize for scaring her that way.

She nods and focuses on her breathing and the way Emily’s thumb keeps brushing back and forth over her skin to dispel the influx of worry.

“I made dinner reservations for us tomorrow.”
She looks up from their hands to see Emily watching her carefully at the topic change. It feels a bit like Emily is trying to distract her. “You did?”

“I said I’d take you on a date, didn’t I?”

Stephanie glances toward the driver who seems to pay them no mind before looking at her again. She notices the small purple mark she left low on Emily’s neck not that long ago, flushing at the memory, and nods. “And I’m looking forward to it.”

Emily smiles. “Me, too.” Then she pulls their hands up and kisses the back of Stephanie’s hand and Stephanie has the distinct understanding of what it means to swoon. “But that’s tomorrow.”

“And tonight?” Stephanie thinks her voice might be unsteady, but whether from the unexpected moment of tenderness or the possibilities of pleasures to come, she’s unsure.

“Tonight, we’re going to be lazy. I can’t wait to be in bed in sweats and drinking a beer.”

Stephanie barks a laugh, so caught off-guard by Emily’s response, and covers her mouth apologetically. “Casual Emily? I’ll believe it when I see it.”

“I’ve been casual around you before,” Emily says with a hint of a smile that makes the memories of a still-sleepy Emily half-dressed in her kitchen making pancakes for their children flutter around Stephanie’s mind.

She has to take a steadying breath to try to push them away; that night and morning together had been something out of a fantasy and it was difficult to stop picturing a future with this woman once she let herself start. “Beer? Really?” she manages to stay with a calm voice.

“Everyone needs to let their hair down now and then. You should try it sometime.” Emily adds with a wink that makes Stephanie blush despite there being nothing particularly suggestive about it. If anything, Emily was telling her she was too uptight which...wouldn’t be the first time someone’s told her that. She thought she’d been doing a better job at relaxing more but maybe she needed to try harder?
“You might want to keep yours tied back tonight, though,” she quips and she bites her lip at the color that appears on Emily’s cheeks. It’s not easy to fluster Emily but apparently telling her in a not-so-subtle way she’ll have her face between Stephanie’s thighs in a few hours is one way to do it.

Emily shakes her head and goes back to her phone but she’s using it one-handed now, Stephanie’s hand still occupying her other.

Stephanie is as unsurprised by their arrival at a luxury hotel with an Art Deco flair as she was by the private car from the airport. She’s accepted this to be the nature of the vacation she never dreamt she’d take.

Emily lets go of her hand when their driver opens the door for them and Stephanie stops herself from being disappointed by that. She’s still talking herself down from how she shouldn’t miss the contact after only a few seconds when it’s taken up again once they’re both out of the vehicle. She even holds it while giving her name to the bellhop to bring their bags from the car to the room.

She holds it while they walk from the car to the hotel’s front desk, letting it go only so she can check in, and then she takes it again to walk to the elevator.

Stephanie has half a mind to kiss her in the elevator; they’re alone in it and she’s always wanted to do something inappropriate in an elevator, but she decides to refrain. Instead, she thinks about how nice her hand fits with Emily’s and how safe and protected it makes her feel.

They exit onto the eighteenth floor and find their room near the end of the hall, which Emily opens with a keycard. She hands the extra key to Stephanie as she does so and opens the door to a suite.

She can’t stop the sound that comes out of her mouth and Emily glances at her from where she’s hanging up her purse and blazer and stepping out of her shoes. “What?” Emily says with a smirk.

“This room is insane,” she gushes before taking off to explore it. They’d entered into a living area occupied by a couch, armchair, television, and a small table and chairs. A spacious bathroom is next, complete with a whirlpool tub and shower stall that, intriguingly, is equipped with two shower heads.
The bedroom is the final room in the suite. There’s a king-sized bed in the center of it and she remembers moments ago while checking in that Emily had been asked by the attendant if she’d prefer a suite with two beds instead upon glancing at Stephanie by her side.

Emily had declined.

She’s still thinking about the two nights they’ll spend together when she senses Emily behind her; she smells her perfume and it’s the only warning she has before Emily’s arms wrap around her waist.

The embrace makes her gasp and she hears Emily chuckle in her ear before a kiss is pressed to her temple. She puts her arms over Emily’s to try to keep them there longer and she’s relieved when they don’t immediately try to let her go. In fact, they squeeze her tighter and Stephanie feels Emily’s body warm against her back.

“What were you thinking about?” Emily asks, her lips still grazing Stephanie’s skin from her ear down to her jaw.

“Spending as much time in this bed with you as I can,” she answers truthfully.

“Oh?” Emily’s breath is hot against her neck before she feels her lips, soft and wet. One of her arms slips out from under Stephanie’s and her heart starts racing when she feels Emily’s hand running down the top of her thigh to her knee, then reverse to move up along her inner thigh.

Emily doesn’t stop until Stephanie’s whimpering at the hand that fits between her legs. It’s just there, unmoving but present.

“What were you saying?” Emily breathes into her ear before biting it. “Something about needing to tie my hair back?”

Stephanie feels weak already; the release she had 35,000 feet in the air was amazing but not nearly enough for as worked up as she was. Is. She nods and feels Emily’s fingers slip into her panties to touch her. It’s lazy and slow and gentle and Stephanie feels her body starting to sag in their embrace. “Em…”

“Hmm?” Teeth nick the curve of her neck before being soothed by a tongue.
A slender finger slips inside, all the way, to make her moan before retreating to touch her again. “Please.” She’s starting too quickly to not care what she wants and is ready to accept anything Emily might want to give.

“Go on,” Emily says as she reclaims her hand to nudge Stephanie forward.

Without the contact, Stephanie’s mind is clearer. She had a specific desire when she’d managed to be flirty in the car and it snaps back into focus with a painful level of need.

She turns to walk backward. She wants to watch Emily watch her until she’s sitting on the end of the bed. Emily’s eyes are dark and her long, messy locks are already pulled back into a low ponytail and Stephanie’s thighs clench. It hadn’t been that way when they arrived in the suite and the meaning isn’t lost on her. She stops the moan that wants to escape. She doesn’t want to appear too desperate even though she’s ready to combust. Instead, she leans back to prop herself up with her arms behind her and tries to keep her mind on the fact that Emily is already willing to do what Stephanie wants.

“Take off your shirt.” She tries to sound firm as she says it. She remembers how Emily has told her to strip in the past and tries to emulate the attitude. She doesn’t know if Emily will, if she will be amenable to such a command right now, but she sees a look of curiosity pass over Emily’s face before fingers start moving to unbutton her white blouse until she’s letting it fall to the floor.

She doesn’t move, doesn’t advance toward Stephanie in any way, and she wonders if they’ve entered into some kind of mutual agreement. “And your pants,” she adds to test the waters.

They fall easily to be kicked aside.

She bites her lip at the sight, at the light pink lingerie set she’d all but ripped from Emily’s body earlier. She knows the panties are ruined; they’d been soaked before Stephanie had pulled them to the side to lick her.

“On your knees.” It comes out more like a question than she wants it to but despite past forays into shifting their dynamic—the memory of tying Emily up with her belt takes over her mind and makes it difficult to breathe—she doesn’t want to push it too far or too quickly.

Emily seems to smirk at her but she does it. Emily Nelson sinks to her knees at her request.
She exhales and reaches for the skirt of her dress to start hiking it up inch by inch until she has to tug it out from under herself. “Come here.” The power is intoxicating and she can’t stop the moan when Emily bends forward to crawl toward her on her hands and knees in nothing but a bra and panties. She looks so good Stephanie can hardly believe this is reality.

Emily stops when she reaches her and Stephanie’s legs fall open on their own as though under a spell but Emily doesn’t do anything. She’s waiting for Stephanie’s permission.

“God,” she breathes at the thought. She knows she’s so wet it’s probably soaking into the bedspread by this point. “Undress me.”

Emily smirks again and straightens on her knees to reach for the elastic around Stephanie’s hips and pull until the panties are gone. The position has them almost eye-to-eye and Emily’s stare is intense. “You like telling me what to do?” she asks.

“Is it okay?” Stephanie replies quickly.

“Do you like it?”

She nods, impatience setting in.

“Then it’s okay.”

Stephanie feels the approval in every inch of her body and with it comes renewed confidence that makes her lift her chin, feeling somehow defiant as she opens her legs again, stopping Emily before she can start ridding Stephanie of her dress as she’d requested. “Make me come with your mouth.” She swallows. “Now.”

Emily hums and Stephanie feels her hands gliding up from her ankles over her calves to her knees where they gently push them wider. “I thought you’d never ask,” Emily breathes as she leans down and Stephanie watches as her face moves between her thighs.

She feels her tongue next. She’s on fire and Emily is somehow cooling and fanning the flames at the same time and Stephanie opens her legs wider, already wanting more as she moans.
“You taste so good, baby,” Emily says with a glance up at her before her tongue is back to draw circles around her clit in a way that Stephanie knows is going to make her come way too quickly. The fact that Emily can do that, knows exactly what to do to get her off because she’s done it enough times to learn, makes her stomach lurch.

“Fuck,” Stephanie moans again. It’s beginning to be difficult to hold herself up to watch but Emily looks so good with her eyes closed like she’s lost in what she’s doing. And what she’s doing is starting to grind her tongue against Stephanie and she can see almost everything and her hips twitch without her permission.

It seems to encourage Emily and Stephanie feels (and sees) her tongue move faster and she knows she’s not going to be able to stop the too-quick orgasm bearing down on her like a freight train.

“Em, God, I’m—”

Emily looks up at her again to lock their gaze and the second Stephanie tips over the edge, the moment heat begins to flood her, Stephanie sees her move and then feels the soft warmth of her tongue sliding into her body and that’s when her arms give out.

She falls back on the bed as she comes, her body clenching around Emily’s tongue again and again. It presses deeper still and fingers start rubbing her clit as though trying to get her off instead of easing her through it. It’s almost brutal in its insistence.

It works because Stephanie feels like the orgasm is endless, going far too long in a way that might be worrisome if she wasn’t almost in tears from ecstasy. Maybe it was two back to back? She can’t make sense of anything other than the immense level of pleasure throbbing in her veins.

It doesn’t stop until Emily’s tongue retreats. Her fingers don’t, however, and they’re still touching Stephanie with purpose.

“Oh, my God,” Stephanie chokes out. She’s never come so hard so quickly, not even when she made Emily fuck her at the dining table. She doesn’t know if it’s from the quick power trip or the appetizer on the jet or the fact that they are where they are, but she doesn’t care.

“Tell me to stop,” Emily says and it feels like a challenge. When Stephane glances at her, she’s licking her off her lips.
“Don’t you dare,” Stephanie groans, hips starting to rock up against Emily’s touch. “Fuck me,” she says with a gasp. The carnal need is raw and shocking; she hadn’t thought she was this desperate when they started but now she wants to rip her dress off and demand Emily ruin her. She’s never felt this way with anyone before; sex was fine. Fun. It had it moments. But this...she can’t even call it sex. It’s never just been sex with Emily. It’s more like...a revelation. “Please, fuck me.”

“I am, baby,” Emily says as her fingers press harder. “I am.” Her tongue eases inside again and Stephanie pulls her knees up to help with the angle. It works and Emily moves with her, free hand coming up to wrap around Stephanie’s thigh to push it back further until her knee is against her chest.

Stephanie pulls the other back herself and she feels as dirty as she feels sexy when she feels Emily’s tongue fucking her, now easily able to slide down into her with the angle. Her mind is blurry and pure need makes her hand reach down and knock Emily’s out of the way to rub her own clit. She wants Emily to think of nothing but what her tongue is doing.

She hears Emily moan and hopes she likes it, that she likes watching Stephanie touch herself and be this wild and demanding.

Her other hand now free, it comes up to hold Stephanie’s leg back for her. Her fingers dig into the tender flesh of Stephanie’s thighs in a way she knows will leave bruises but she doesn’t care. She’s too far gone with the need for Emily to obliterate her very soul to care.

There’s a tiny, minuscule part of her brain that thinks about the fact that there could be people in the room next door hearing this. That someone in the nearby high-rise could be watching through the uncovered window. But as soon as the thoughts register her lust twists them and it turns voyeuristic. She hopes they hear it; she wants everyone to know how good she’s being made to feel. She wants someone to see it, this beautiful woman pinning her knees to her chest to fuck the sense out of her with her beautiful, dirty mouth.

A streak of consciousness zips through her and for a heartbeat she’s mortified by her perverse thoughts and then it’s gone, driven away by Emily’s tongue curling inside her and her own fingers stroking again and again. Her free hand fists in the duvet and she forces her eyes open and lifts her head to look down to see Emily leaning over her. To see glimpses of her tongue before it disappears again.

“Fuck,” she pants and looks away. It’s too much to watch and feel. She can’t even get the words out that she’s close but Emily’s moaning like she knows, like she can feel it, and Stephanie rips her hand from herself because the only thing in the world she wants to feel when she comes is Emily’s
tongue fucking her.

She can hear Emily; she’s moaning almost as much as Stephanie is and she manages to spare a thought to wondering if she’s touching herself. At some point, she’d started holding her own leg back again. “Come with me,” Stephanie begs and she tries to hold on a few more seconds but she can already feel it starting.

She hears what sounds like a hum of an agreement, some version of an, “Uh huh,” as the grip on her leg tightens and she can’t hold on any longer.

It’s so strong it’s almost painful. She swears. Moans. She feels like she could scream or cry or both. It’s still going but starting to slow when she can finally hear something other than herself and it’s Emily, and there’s no uncertainty. Emily is coming, too.

“Yes, baby,” Stephanie says, still moaning because Emily’s tongue is still slipping in and out of her and when she cracks her eyes open again, Emily’s shuddering and flushed and looks like she’s in another world.

“Fuck,” rings out the second Emily’s tongue pulls out of her and before Stephanie can process it Emily’s on top of her and her tongue, the one that just finished doing the most sinful things Stephanie’s ever experienced, is in her mouth. It’s the first time they’ve kissed since the flight.

Stephanie wraps her arms around her, clinging to her even as Emily’s rocking her hips against her. Her back is slick with sweat and Stephanie can barely keep up with the kiss. She doesn’t have her senses back in quite the right places yet and it feels messy and uncoordinated but it also feels like that doesn’t matter one bit.

“Touch me,” Emily whispers between kisses.

Stephanie has to work to get her arm between their bodies; Emily doesn’t make much room for it but her hand finds her nonetheless. The panties are gone and she wonders when Emily took them off but then she doesn’t care. Emily’s so wet and she groans as she drags her palm over her.

It makes Emily shiver and thrust against her so she holds her hand still and presses it against her. She understands what Emily’s asking for and she doesn’t mind. She maybe loves it when Emily uses her like this because it makes her feel needed. Emily’s clit is so swollen Stephanie can feel the way it drags over her palm with every roll of her hips and it makes her mouth water, but that’s not
what this is about now. This is about Emily wanting to be kissing her when she comes again and Stephanie wouldn’t trade that for anything.

There are no words after Emily’s request. It’s hot and fast and rough and the way the back of her knuckles are pressing against herself by accident could yank Stephanie right over the precipice again if she’s lucky. She shifts her legs and then it settles the right way and Emily’s hips rocking into her over and over makes it feel like they’re truly fucking each other.

And they are, she knows, but it’s never been like this, not without their toy.

Cool air invades her space and she opens her eyes to see Emily above her; she’s holding herself up on straightened arms like she does when she’s using that toy. Her dark eyes are on Stephanie and her jaw works like she’s trying to say something but all that comes out is a moan before she’s collapsing to kiss her again as her body jerks and rolls into Stephanie’s.

Stephanie groans as her pleasure follows; it’s not as blinding as the others were, but she knows it will take a lot to match that intensity again.

Emily’s body is heavy over hers and she can feel how hard she’s breathing. “Oh, my God, baby.” It’s muffled between the bed and Stephanie’s shoulder. “Fuck.”

The ability to form sentences hasn’t returned to her yet so she sighs and runs her fingernails down Emily’s back, light and gentle. Her other hand is still trapped between them and she can’t help but wiggle her fingers. It makes Emily twitch a few times until she’s kissing her again in a way that Stephanie knows is intended to draw this moment to an end.

She relishes it as Emily works on detangling herself until she’s crawling higher on the bed to collapse on her stomach.

Stephanie has to turn her head up to see her; she’s still at the foot of the bed, though notably higher than they’d began and she knows it’s because Emily literally drove her up, so she pushes herself backward to be side by side.

“How are you still dressed?” Emily says with a winded smile.

Stephanie manages to shrug and find the words. “Got impatient.” She tugs at the neckline of her dress, now noticeably twisted and bothersome.
“Then take it off now,” Emily says and sits up to start pulling at Stephanie’s dress until it’s over her head and gone. Emily lays right back down as soon as she’s thrown it aside and Stephanie can’t help but smile at her. She’s so cute in her own ways.

The removal of Stephanie’s dress doesn’t appear to be for any reason other than Emily’s desire for it to be gone. She doesn’t make another advance or run her hands hungrily across the newly exposed skin. She just lays down and glances at Stephanie and returns her smile, both of them still breathing harder than usual but almost back to normal. But as content as Stephanie is to lie in bed with Emily for an indefinite length of time, her need to know what happens next gnaws at her until she breaks. She asks her question to the ceiling.

“So, do you have to go in for a meeting tonight? Or a site visit? Or…?”

“Fuck no,” Emily laughs and she hears her pat her own bare stomach absently. “I have to be somewhere at noon tomorrow, but I’ll be back before dinner.”

“Oh, that’s fine; I can entertain myself for a few hours.” Emily’s answers make her happy. They’re in for the night. No one has to be up at dawn tomorrow. Their date is tomorrow.

“I wasn’t asking for your permission.” Emily’s voice is direct enough that it makes Stephanie take pause and glance at her but the tension in the corner of her mouth betrays her attempt at dominance.

“Not now, anyway,” Stephanie retorts with confidence and she flinches hard when Emily moves but the only thing that happens is that her pillow gets yanked out from under her to drop her head to the mattress with a jolt before it’s thrown at her with a curse. She laughs into it and pushes it aside; she loves when Emily’s like this, allows her to play and play along. The mask is coming off more quickly each time they’re alone together and she hopes maybe this special and particularly intimate length of time together might get the mask retired for good.

“You’re lucky I like you,” Emily says as Stephanie sits up to put her pillow back where it belongs.

“I know,” she answers with a smile as she reaches back to unhook and remove her bra. It’s not intended to be suggestive; it’s felt weird wearing only a bra in bed—of all the things to be wearing, why continue wearing the most uncomfortable option?—but Emily’s eyes fall to her chest anyway and she’s barely braced herself by the time Emily’s moved in to take the right one into her mouth while her hand tends to the left. “God, Em…”
Emily looks up at her while she makes a show of pulling Stephanie’s nipple between her teeth and she’s barely using any pressure, just enough to hold it, but it makes Stephanie wince and moan all the same. It slips from her mouth and then she ducks to the left to swipe her tongue over the other tip before she’s sitting up and rolling out of bed to leave Stephanie dizzy and breathless.

“I’m ordering room service.” Emily walks away, stripping her bra as she goes, and disappears for a few seconds until she’s back with a small black portfolio which she tosses on the bed near Stephanie. “Decide what you want while I call for our bags.”

Stephanie’s still clearing away the sudden haze that came with Emily’s teeth on her nipple but she does remember something about leaving their luggage with a bellhop and surely they should have been delivered to them by now?

Emily sits back on the edge of what’s become traditionally “her” side of the bed when they’re sharing one. It also happens to be the one with the phone, which she picks up and presses a button on as she points at the portfolio and then at Stephanie again.

“Okay, okay,” she mumbles as she pulls it toward herself to flip it open to an extensive multi-page menu. She listens to Emily’s brief and direct half of the phone call while deciding if she wants breakfast for dinner because Eggs Benedict sounds so good right now but she could have breakfast for breakfast in the morning.

“Nelson, Emily. Our bags haven’t been delivered. No, we haven’t left since checking in. Clearly, your guy needs to knock louder because neither of us heard it. Bring them now; I’ve never had to wait so long for something so simple.” She hangs up and does a double-take when she catches Stephanie watching her. “What?”

“They tried to deliver them and we didn’t hear them knocking because—”

“Because we were fucking,” Emily finishes. It makes Stephanie blush because now that she’s not drowning in a sea of lust the concept that some poor bellhop probably heard Emily fucking the daylights out of her and saying all manner of unholy things. “They’re probably getting off to it in a bathroom somewhere right now.”

Stephanie groans and hides her face. She’s too caught up in her own embarrassment to notice Emily creeping up on her. She grabs Stephanie around her middle and yanks her across the bed with a panicked shriek until she’s sitting haphazardly in Emily’s lap.
“Don’t worry, baby,” Emily says with a grin. “I’ll answer the door when they get here. Give ‘em a nice big tip.” Her tongue presses into her cheek in a manner that is very lewd and Stephanie shoves at her dramatically.

“Don’t you dare!”

“Maybe they’ll join us for a threesome. Do you want me to ask? Or would you only like that if it was a woman? It could be a woman, I guess, but men are usually the ones who—”

“No threesomes!” Stephanie interrupts. “No, thank you. And...please don’t suck his dick for bringing our bags to us? That’s just his job.”

Emily’s hand strokes up and down Stephanie’s forearm a few times and it makes her shudder in disgust. “So, a hand job then?”

“Emily!”

“What’s wrong, baby?” Emily laughs. “Don’t want me touching someone else?”

Stephanie’s heart stops at the question. It’s so direct and even though she knows they’re both being playful and dramatic, it’s very, very loaded and Emily seems to be expecting an answer.

A distant but determined knock on the door saves her from having to lie and Emily kisses her soundly before guiding her off her lap and back onto the bed. She watches her step into the bathroom and return wearing a white bathrobe which she ties on her way into the other room.

Stephanie’s heart explodes in a fit of panicked relief at her exit. That had been way too close, way too entrapping and she didn’t want to ruin this trip before it’s barely begun by saying something stupid. She hears a quiet exchange between Emily and a man and then the loud click of the door being closed and deadbolted. Emily returns with their two bags in one hand and a garment bag over her shoulder. She sets Stephanie’s on the open luggage rack sitting in a corner before tossing hers a few feet away to land on the floor near the bed. The garment bag, presumably holding things Emily cares about, gets hung up in the closet.

When she returns she makes it a point to wipe her chin and Stephanie’s seen her do it enough times
that it sparks instant recognition. It’s accompanied by a wink.

“Screw you,” Stephanie grumbles much to Emily’s delight if her laughter is anything to judge by and she refocuses on the forgotten menu. She’s just grateful she’s not being pressed to answer Emily’s recent question.

They eat dinner in matching hotel bathrobes sitting in bed. It had been a quick debate between the table and bed but Emily’s desire to be lazy won out without resistance from Stephanie. She didn’t really care where they ate as long as it was together.

Stephanie had stared, wide-eyed, as Emily placed their order. She repeated Stephanie’s first, some type of Asian chicken salad before rattling off her own. It started with a cheeseburger which didn’t surprise Stephanie given Emily’s earlier declaration about being lazy and drinking beer, but then it kept going. Fries. A vanilla milkshake. An order of pork dumplings because Stephanie’s salad made her want Chinese food. A slice of cheesecake—two slices of cheesecake once Stephanie got her attention to ask for one, too. A six-pack of Stella Artois on ice.

“How are you seriously going to eat all that?” Stephanie asks incredulously once they’ve balanced the trays and plates of food around them on the bed where they sit.

“Dennis is paying for it, so who cares?” The beer is the first thing she’d grabbed upon its arrival and she opens Stephanie’s for her before opening one for herself. “Cheers.”

“What are we toasting?” Stephanie says before tapping her bottle to Emily’s.

“How Seven Deadly Sins.”

Stephanie freezes at that, beer not yet to her lips. “What?”

“How Seven Deadly Sins,” she repeats. “Pride: the bullshit I do for a living,” she starts counting on her fingers. Greed: this trip. Lust…” She looks at Stephanie and doesn’t expand on it; she doesn’t need to. “Gluttony.” She gestures at the unnecessary amount of food around them. “Wrath, which will be me tomorrow. Sloth, a.k.a. lying in this bed drinking this beer.”
She doesn’t continue and Stephanie’s well-aware of the one sin missing from the list. It’s her biggest as of late, tied only with lust. “And envy?” she dares.

Emily looks at her. “And envy.” There’s a beat of silence and then Emily drinks so Stephanie follows suit in relief that that conversation is over. “Find a movie on the TV,” she says with a brighter tone. “No porn, though.”

“No?” Stephanie laughs, still a little unnerved by the conversation as she finds the television remote.

“Hotel porn is shit. We can make our own later.” She winks when she says it and Stephanie almost knocks over the beer she’s setting on the nightstand.

“What?!”

“It’ll be a hundred times hotter. We can sell it and become millionaires. Maybe I can finally pay off my fucking mortgage. Cheers to that, too.”

Stephanie stares at her in shock waiting for her to break but she doesn’t. She reaches for a French fry and bites it in half. “I think you’re joking, but…” She can’t quite bring herself to just agree because what if Emily is serious about that? In any capacity? With or without the commercialization? She could never do that; what would Miles think when he finds out when he’s older? Or his friends? She can see a 16-year-old Miles and his high school buddies at a friend’s house and one of them pulling up a video their older brother found of her and Emily on the Internet and—

“We’re not making a sex tape,” Emily says with an amused snort that breaks Stephanie’s horrible daydream. “I can’t have that kind of publicity.”

Stephanie deflates in relief and then she’s embarrassed when she notices it’s sullied with a hint of disappointment. The concept is brand new; she’d never considered such a thing, but right now, it seems like it could be interesting. “Oh. Okay.”

She feels Emily watching her and tries to look busy with her salad by stabbing her fork into it a few times before shoveling a stack of lettuce and spinach into her mouth.
“Oh...my...God.” It’s the same tone Emily took with her when she found out about Stephanie’s major lapse in judgment with her late half-brother.

“What?” She says it like Emily’s crazy, mouth half-full and face warm.

“You want to make a sex tape!”

Panic fills her but it’s the kind of panic she knows will explode into laughter and teasing, and maybe kissing. “I never said that!” It wasn’t a lie; she absolutely did not say those words.

“Oh, you just did, you pervert!”

She knows Emily is playing but it ruffles her all the same, maybe because she kind of thinks she maybe is, a little bit. “I’m not a pervert!”

“The brotherfucker wants to make a sex tape.” Emily’s looking at her with annoyingly beautiful wide eyes as though Stephanie's managed to scandalize her.

“Don’t call me that.”

“But you did. You fucked your brother.”

She feels the shame creep up the back of her neck that she’s spent the better part of the last two years putting behind her. “Half-brother. It was a momentary lapse in judgment. It’s not like we grew up together. We didn’t even know each other when it happened.”

“And what about all the other times it happened?”

She squirms at that and tries to hide her discomfort in another bite of salad. She’d never told Emily her sexual affair with Chris had continued beyond the first time but it seemed as though Emily saw right through that omission.

Emily doesn’t press that detail further. “I’ll think about it,” she says instead. “But we’d need rules.
I think I trust you, but I wouldn’t survive something like that leaking.”

She flushes at that, at Emily reconsidering something because she’d [correctly] assumed Stephanie might be into it, but it’s her statement that she thinks she trusts her that digs deeper. She’s always assumed Emily didn’t trust anyone at all. She puts down her salad and reaches for her beer to take a drink and try to calm down. The last thing she needs in her ongoing battle to keep a tight lead on the reins of her feelings for Emily is Emily doing thoughtful things for her (sexual or otherwise) and saying she trusts her. “Deal,” she says. It’s non-committal at best since Emily hadn’t agreed to it to begin with.

She tries to change the topic by pulling up the pay-per-view movies on the television, scrolling through them until she settles on some late-90s romantic comedy that earns a snort of amusement and distaste from Emily. It works, and the dangerous topics are moved to the back seat in favor of commentary on the cheesy romance on screen and silence while they eat and drink. It’s an easy type of quiet that settles between them; there’s no verbal sparring or Emily needling Stephanie for a laugh. And when they clear off the bed to go to sleep, the robes come off and the kissing returns.

It’s the same kissing they’d shared on the plane before Stephanie had slid to her knees. It’s slow and warm, and the desperation she so often feels with Emily isn’t there. There’s no need to rush because someone may come home or interrupt them and no one has to leave. It’s a rarity for them to be in bed together and not be at the mercy of a sexual need demanding to be quenched. That has already happened, at least for today, and though Emily’s tongue on her lips and in her mouth makes her pulse race she clings to the comfort that comes with simply lying in bed with Emily as they slowly kiss. She knows there will be more tomorrow, or perhaps later tonight, but for now, this is enough.

She cannot stop the thought, however, that eventually none of this is going to feel like enough, not the laughs or the kissing or even the sex, because she knows she’s going to need more and she knows she’s not going to get it.

This is straight-up to be continued now...
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

There is...a lot here. So, you know. Read with caution.

Waking up next to Emily is one of Stephanie’s favorite things.

And being woken by Emily’s lips grazing her shoulder is...extraordinary.

It’s early; she can tell by the light in the room, but it feels like she’s been allowed to sleep in for hours. She tries not to stir, to not let Emily know she’s awake just yet. She wants to wait and see what Emily will do: if she’ll stop and go back to sleep or keep at it until she draws a response from Stephanie.

She smiles to herself and savors the featherlight kisses that trail along her shoulder, the tickle of hair as they progress from her shoulder toward the base of her neck and the light scrape of fingernails as they shift her hair to the side. She resists the need to shiver at the fingertips tracing patterns over her hip and thigh. She knows Emily wants her, likes her, maybe even trusts her, but it’s easy to convince herself it could all be a ruse when she’s awake and has something to give Emily.

Experiencing it when Emily thinks she’s not aware of it is breathtaking. There’s no need for her to be keeping up a façade now. It’s authentic and vulnerable and when Emily’s lips are warm at the back of her neck she gives in and reaches for the hand on her hip to pull it around her waist. “Good morning,” she mumbles, wiggling backward into the warm body behind her.

Emily sighs and tightens her arm around Stephanie’s waist. Stephanie giggles at the tickle of a nose behind her ear and it’s easy, so easy to believe this is real life, that this is how she can wake up every morning.

“Morning,” Emily’s voice is low, gravely with sleep and a hint of something more. They’re both nude and Stephanie can feel Emily’s chest against her back and hips fitted behind her rear. There’s the subtlest shift of them at Stephanie’s wakefulness.
Stephanie presses her face to her pillow to hide how hard she’s grinning; waking up like this, to a soft, warm Emily who’s cuddling her, who is almost trembling with desire, is too much.

Lips trace the shell of her ear. “Make love to me,” drifts over Stephanie and it makes her sigh. Emily asking for it with those words, the few times it has happened, does more to Stephanie and her emotions than any of the desperate, dirty things they’ve shared.

Stephanie hums and turns over in her arms, ready to do just that but the look on Emily’s face when she sees her makes her pause. There’s a level of fear in her eyes that urges Stephanie to reach for her and trace her fingertips along her brow and cheek. She knows better than to ask what’s wrong; Emily only shares when she wants to. Instead, she tries to pour her willingness to listen and how much she cares into the kiss she gives her as her hand trails across Emily’s stomach.

It’s slow this time; nothing like it had been yesterday when they’d arrived. Stephanie loves it when it’s wild and raw but when it’s like this, the rare occasion that it is for Emily to whisper a request for gentility, for Stephanie to take care of her, she has no words for it.

Their lips only part so Emily can breathe when she needs to until she’s gasping and clinging to Stephanie in pleasure.

Stephanie acts like she doesn’t notice the tears in Emily’s eyes when they open after and meet hers for a moment before Emily moves hastily to get out of bed to disappear into the bathroom. The sound of the shower turning on follows and Stephanie sighs, heart aching for whatever it is that has so clearly been gnawing at Emily for so long.

Stephanie passes the time while Emily’s away by first calling Miles to check on him and remind him to be careful at the trampoline park. She freshens up and dresses and takes a walk to find a bite for lunch. She’s never been to Los Angeles and it’s nothing like Warfield or New York City. The hotel seems to be in the middle of everything, or at least in the middle of a lot of things, and she sips a latte as she strolls past boutiques and restaurants, window shopping and enjoying the sunshine until a dress in a window catches her eye.

It’s cute and midnight blue with a diamond-shaped keyhole in the bodice; she doesn’t recognize the name of the designer on the storefront and hopes it translates into an affordable price tag. She’d brought a dress for dinner tonight but it wasn’t new. She knows Emily values fashion—though she has suspicions she doesn’t love it quite as much as she portrays herself to—and she does want to look nice tonight, so she steps into the shop to ask to see the dress in her size.
She doesn’t hear from Emily all day which doesn’t exactly surprise her, but it does bug her. She knew Emily would have to work on this trip—it’s a business trip, after all—but she can’t help that she misses her.

Her stomach growls when she’s checking her makeup for the third or fourth time; it’s well past 6:00 pm and she realizes she has no idea what time their dinner reservations are for. When it ticks past 7:00 pm she starts to worry; she knows Emily’s an important person and works long hours regularly, but they’re supposed to have a date and Stephanie has been waiting for this night for weeks and—

The runaway train of thoughts is interrupted by the sound of the door opening and closing and she breathes a sigh of relief. It wasn’t that she expected Emily to stand her up; after all, she brought her across the country for this date, but she was beginning to worry that it would have to be canceled or rescheduled.

She steps out of the bathroom to say hello and stops short when she sees Emily. She looks drained as she loosens her tie and removes her jacket.

“Is everything okay?” Stephanie says as she hurries over to her. She stops short at the memory of Emily rebuffing her greeting at her house last week when she seemed equally worn out and keeps her hands to herself.

She keeps them to herself until Emily has her wrapped up in a hug. It’s sudden but welcome and Stephanie holds her tightly. They don’t kiss or speak and Stephanie understands it’s what Emily needs at this moment: to be held and nothing more.

Minutes seem to pass before Stephanie feels a kiss touch her forehead as Emily steps away. She resumes undressing as she makes her way toward the bathroom. “Dinner’s at 8:00. I’ll be ready in a few minutes.”

“Oh. Great,” she says with a wave Emily can’t see before biting her thumbnail for a minute in concern. As much as she’s looking forward to tonight, she doesn’t want to force Emily to go out again when she’s so clearly tired. Then again, she’d stated she’d be ready so they would be on time for their reservation and even if she told Emily they didn’t have to go, she can’t imagine she’d listen. She can’t imagine Emily doing anything anyone says, least of all Stephanie.
Stephanie waits at the table in the sitting room. When Emily returns, she appears to be her usual self once again, as though she somehow washed away the exhaustion she’d arrived with. Her style tonight is on the more formal end of the spectrum, though somehow more casual than what Stephanie’s used to seeing her in when she’s coming from the office. She’s paired a flowing white blouse that is as flattering on her figure as her other expertly tailored shirts with gray trousers. Her hair is down and loose and, Stephanie thinks, begging to have her hands in it.

She leaps to her feet filled with the need to be formal for some reason. Maybe it’s because it feels a lot like Emily’s arrived to pick her up for their date even though all she did was walk into the room.

“You look nice,” Emily says as she crosses the room with an effortless grace that still manages to make Stephanie’s heart stop, but not as much as her heart stops when Emily leans down to kiss her without further preamble.

It’s over before Stephanie has a chance to react and she knows she’s blushing when she stammers, “Thank you. So do you.”

Emily’s hand drifts down to make her shiver until it traces the dress’s neckline. “Is this new?”

Stephanie nods. Her heart’s stuck somewhere in her throat from the gentle brush of Emily’s fingertips along her décolletage. She’s suddenly hyper-aware of the cutout in the bodice that she’d banked on getting Emily’s attention; she’s wearing her most effective bra and she knows her cleavage looks good but is also very on display. Emily doesn’t mention anything about it, though, nor do her fingers travel down to graze the exposed skin there as Stephanie both hopes for and prays not to happen. She doesn’t want to miss their reservation and if Emily touches her there, they won’t be getting out of the hotel room any time soon.

“You ready to go?” Emily says as she takes half a step back and starts to smirk in a way that at least gives Stephanie a warning to try to brace herself. “I need to show you off.”

Nothing, however, could have prepared Stephanie for that. Her reaction must be evident because Emily chuckles and reaches out to take her hand.
“Let’s go; the car’s downstairs.”

The restaurant they arrive at is so covered in ivy that it might as well be a hedge. Stephanie struggles to identify the entrance. It’s an unmarked, unassuming black door and there’s a zip of adrenaline when Stephanie thinks perhaps Emily has brought her to a secret speakeasy known only to the more elite crowds. She keeps the comment to herself, feeling a bit foolish for it, and instead smiles up at Emily who offers her elbow to Stephanie.

She takes it, of course. She tucks her hand into the crook of Emily’s elbow as they walk toward the mystery door which Emily opens and holds for Stephanie.

She takes her elbow again once inside and allows Emily to guide them through a library—a library?—toward a podium. She half-listens as Emily gives her name too caught up in the ambiance of the restaurant. It’s so earthy-feeling that it surprises her; Emily’s house is cold and sterile and it is the very antithesis of that. It’s wooden beams and dark curtains and low light and candles and ivy crawling over the walls even inside. The staff’s uniforms are dark as well, solid black with a black vest, though she notices a few of them daring a pop of color with a pocket square.

They’re led to an alcove along a wall with a single table and pair of chairs framed by curtains drawn back along each framing column. It’s one of several along the wall, but it is almost completely private, curtains separating the alcoves as well. Multiple light fixtures hang from the ceiling above the table though they’re not intrusive nor too bright. The table is already set with a place setting intended for an appetizer and wine glasses and Stephanie doesn’t realize she needs to move until she feels Emily gently remove her hand from her elbow to angle her toward her seat.

She sits and is surprised by the menu that is somehow in her hand. Then she notices Emily seems to be laughing.

“What?”

“Are you okay?” Emily says with a chuckle. “You haven’t heard a word I’ve said since we got here.”

She wonders if that’s possible. “Oh, sor—I’m just…” She stops herself and takes a breath. “Em,
this place is so nice.”

Emily seems pleased with that. “It comes highly recommended.”

“By whom?”

“Tom Ford.”

She blinks. “The designer?”

“Do you know another Tom Ford?”

Stephanie shakes her head and works on getting a hold on her nerves. She’s looked forward to a night like this almost since she met Emily and it’s happening and so far, it feels perfect. Her need to verbally respond is thankfully interrupted by a waiter arriving to pour glasses of water, the bottle of which is left behind on the table. It’s just long enough that she has her thoughts organized when he departs.

“And what does Tom Ford recommend to eat?” she asks as she opens the menu.

Emily opens hers as well and Stephanie looks up to watch the way her eyes scan down the listings. “I asked. He suggested the burrata and the halibut.”

Stephanie glances back at the menu to read about the dishes and notices both of them are indicated as being gluten-free. She doesn’t remember mentioning her avoidance of the protein and she has eaten non-gluten-free things around Emily before, but it seems evident that Emily made a concerted effort to find out and remember.

“Okay. Who am I to question his taste?” She closes her menu and sets it aside and is lucky enough to watch Emily return to hers to decide.

The lighting is so flattering to Emily’s already striking features that it makes Stephanie need to take a sip of water. Once Emily sets the menu aside, she leans forward, hand reaching across the table until it’s midway, hand open and palm up.
Stephanie can hardly believe it—can hardly believe anything about this trip. She slips her hand into Emily’s and her heart warms at the way Emily’s smile reaches her eyes. People can see them. There are dozens of people in the restaurant and while they have a private area, it’s still open. In fact, it’s almost less private than an unassuming table in the middle of the floor. She almost feels like they’re on stage. And Emily’s holding her hand. In public. At a romantic restaurant. Lit by candlelight. On a date.

“So. What trouble did you get into today without me keeping you in line?”

Briefly, Stephanie considers fanning herself. Emily’s being so kind and romantic and flirtatious that it’s almost too much to handle. She’s dealt with it in small bursts before, but with this trip, it’s feeling like a marathon exercise and the runner’s high has definitely kicked in. “Well, after I posted bond and got out of jail—” she smiles when Emily scrunches her nose at her knowingly bad joke “—I went for a walk. I’ve never been here before, so—”

“You’ve never been to L.A.?”

“No,” Stephanie answers with a shake of her head. “I grew up in Philly and my family didn’t really take big trips. And then I met Davis and he basically dragged me kicking and screaming out of the city and into the suburbs. I hated it at first; now I can’t imagine living in a big city like this again. I already worry when Miles wants to play outside, and if we were in some big metropolis? Yikes.”

“No trips?”

“I mean, sure, we traveled a bit, but we mostly stayed in New England. We did go to Montreal once. That was fun. Oui, oui!”

“No Disneyland?”

“Never.”

Emily’s quiet for a moment and Stephanie feels like she’s being scrutinized. She tries not to squirm under Emily’s gaze. “Maybe we could come back some time and bring the boys,” Emily finally says.
Stephanie has to blink twice. Did Emily just suggest they take another trip together? In the future? With their children?

“That would be fun,” she says with a nod. Emotions well up inside her and tell her to do something like cry or say something like she lo—

“Okay. Let’s keep that in mind.”

“Yeah, yes. I will definitely... keep that in mind,” she says with what she hopes isn’t too nervous of a giggle.

“So that’s it? You went for a walk?”

Stephanie has to channel her focus into her words because the way Emily’s thumb is brushing back and forth over her hand is distracting. “Well, no. I went for a walk to explore the area. I had lunch at a cute little bistro and I did a lot of window shopping,” she laughs. “Prices here, they rival New York’s.”

Emily nods at her. “You bought that today.”

Stephanie glances down at her dress and smooths the skirt over her lap with her free hand. “I did, yes.”

“You bought it for our date?” Emily’s hand squeezes hers at the word and she feels her eyelashes flutter.

“Um, yeah, I did.”

“You know I’m a sure thing, right? You didn’t need to have your tits out to get me into bed tonight.”

Stephanie blushes furiously and tries to reclaim her hand as apologies that don’t include the word ‘sorry’ start rattling around in her brain; instantly she’s swallowed by shame and embarrassment but Emily holds firm to her hand.
“Hey,” Emily says firmly enough that it makes Stephanie stop trying to figure out how to cover the peekaboo aspect of her dress. “I didn’t say I didn’t like it. You look beautiful.”

“Oh.” She clears her throat. “Um, thank you.”

The reason she’s blushing changes when Emily’s gaze drifts down to very obviously land on her cleavage, the curves of which are on display. Knowing she chose the dress to get Emily’s attention this way was one of the reasons she’d purchased it but that doesn’t stop the excitement and arousal that spikes when the appreciation for it is so clear on Emily’s face.

“I’m not going to be able to make it back to the hotel without getting my hands on you.”

Every ounce of heat and moisture in Stephanie’s body collects in one place and it makes her shiver.

“So, have we decided?”

The waitress’s voice makes Stephanie jump and she feels Emily’s hand tighten in amusement.

“She’s going to have the halibut. I’ll take the mushroom pappardelle, and we’ll share the burrata.”

Stephanie’s vaguely aware Emily’s ordering for her but she’s struggling to hear over her heart pounding in her ears.

“And we’ll take a bottle of Chardonnay. Marcassin, if you have it? Perfect, thank you.”

There’s a lengthy period of silence and Stephanie realizes the waitress is gone. She exhales, not even knowing she’d been holding her breath.

Emily chuckles. “You good?”

“Good. Great,” she says, feeling like the words are too big for her mouth for some reason. She
reaches for her water and hopes the wine arrives soon.

“You know, we can close that curtain,” Emily says with a tilt of her head toward the one open side of their alcove.

Stephanie’s pounding heart stops.

“Close it and come sit on my lap and I’ll fuck you, baby.”

It resumes beating at roughly one thousand times its usual pace and she’s so embarrassed but her hips actually tilt at the suggestion. Just like that, she’s turned on and she knows herself well enough to know it’s not going to go away until she finds relief. She glances at the curtain drawn back on Emily’s side. All she would have to do is pull the tie around it and it would billow down and across and cocoon them away from prying eyes. Eyes that could still see if someone grazed the curtain as they passed nudging it open for a moment. Or the waitress or a busser or server arriving with their order. She hates herself a little for how much those possibilities affect her. She doesn’t want to be aroused by the thought of strangers watching her have sex but this isn’t the first time she’s imagined it, and it’s not the first time she’s been turned on by it in the last twenty-four hours.

She feels Emily’s hand shift, changing the angle until the tickle of a fingernail scrapes her palm. Once, twice, a third time and that’s when Stephanie understands what she’s doing, what the very rhythmic, hypnotic motion is mimicking and she doesn’t remember standing up, but she is, and she must have done it right when a server returned with their wine because the young man seems startled.

“Oh. Sorry,” she says as she sits down again and she hears the click of Emily’s tongue, a chastisement for forgetting herself and using the only word that is inappropriate to Emily. “I mean, excuse me.”

She waits, hands fidgeting in her lap as the server goes through the fanfare of allowing Emily to sample the wine he’s brought before pouring Stephanie’s glass, topping off Emily’s, and nestling the bottle in an ice bucket he’s positioned in the corner of their alcove.

She feels Emily’s eyes on her once he leaves and she looks up to find her smiling wickedly over the glass of wine in her hand.

“Shall we toast?” Emily says, as though she hadn’t just told Stephanie she’d fuck her in the middle
of a restaurant.

“We...shall,” Stephanie says after wetting her lips. She picks up her glass and she can see the wine betraying how affected she is; she’s trembling and it’s obvious.

If Emily notices, she doesn’t comment on it. “To tonight,” she says as she lifts her glass in a salute before sipping.

“To tonight,” Stephanie repeats.

Routine dining activity is frequent after that, and she is grateful. The burrata arrives and allows for a break in the tension. Entrees follow soon thereafter and she’s relieved that her arousal eases enough that she can once again carry on a conversation. Emily’s also curbed her suggestiveness and they fall into easy conversation.

“So, where did you grow up?” Stephanie asks. “I don’t think you’ve mentioned it before.”

“I haven’t.” Emily’s fork seems to slow its journey from plate to mouth and there’s an awkward length of silence before she swallows and adds, “I don’t really like talking about my childhood.”

“Oh! That’s okay. Why don’t you tell me about your day instead? What exciting things does Dennis have going on out here?” What she’s really angling for is any insight into Emily’s emotional morning and why she returned looking like she’d been steamrolled.

“We’re really going to talk about my day at the office?” Emily says with a hint of a frown.

Stephanie has the sudden feeling she can’t say anything right, which isn’t foreign to her at all but it’s not something she’s been made to feel by Emily very many times. “I’m just making conversation,” she says and she knows she sounds defensive by the way Emily’s eyes snap to hers but she ignores it and presses on. “I don’t know that much about you but I would like to.”

“Oh, you don’t want to open that door, baby. Trust me.”

Stephanie sets down her fork to focus only on Emily; it’s then that she notices for the first time that
Emily’s wedding ring, that beautiful sapphire that’s adorned her ring finger since they met and Stephanie once adored before she learned to despise it, is absent. She takes a breath at all the possible things it could mean and decides not to ask her about it. “I do, though,” she says cautiously. “You’re my best friend and…and it feels weird to me that I don’t even know where you grew up. Or if you have a brother or a sister. Or where you went to college.” She bites her tongue when she hears how many details she’s requesting when Emily just told her she didn’t want to share anything at all.

Emily’s sharp stare drops and she pushes around the pasta on her plate, not making an effort at the moment to actually take a bite. She doesn’t snap at Stephanie for pushing but she does seem deep in thought so Stephanie doesn’t say a word. She waits and watches the way Emily fiddles with her fork until she spears a slice of mushroom.

“I’m from Michigan.”

Stephanie’s heart swells at the tiny bit of personal information shared and she tries not to press for more. “Really?”

Emily glances up and she seems oddly vulnerable for sharing something as basic as that. “Why does that surprise you?”

She chooses her words carefully. “You’re so sophisticated; I assumed you were raised…well, I didn’t expect the Midwest.”

Emily sits up straight and it’s then Stephanie realizes she’d been slouching, as though trying to hide, and she’s never seen Emily do that before. “Enough about how I was raised. What about you? Any other siblings you slept with?” She winks as she says it and Stephanie feels the heaviness of the moment evaporate.

“Emily!” she says with a huff and a furtive glance out across the restaurant in a moment of paranoia. “No!”

“Siblings you haven’t slept with?” she goads with a toothy bite off pasta her fork before she waggles her eyebrows at Stephanie.

God, Stephanie loves when Emily teases her way more than she thinks she probably should. “I’m an only child,” she says pointedly. “Well, you know what I mean.”
Emily hums and seems to be thinking as she takes a sip of wine. “You said you went to Barnard?”

“I did, yeah.”

“That’s an all women's college, isn’t it?”

Stephanie narrows her eyes; she can already feel it coming. “It is.”

“Were you one of those girls who got drunk at a sorority party and made out someone who took you up to their room only to tell them after they ate you out but before you returned the favor that it was a mistake and you were just drunk?” There’s a beat of silence and Stephanie doesn’t dare respond. “Or maybe you did fuck them,” she continues thoughtfully. “You knew what you were doing the first time you fooled me.”

The vulgarity is not lost on Stephanie; it manages to fill her with equal amounts of shame and pride and she tries to mask it with a drink but she knows Emily sees right through her.

“You did,” Emily says with a smile that feels almost predatory. She even leans forward as though ready to share a secret, eyes sparkling with mirth but dark with what Stephanie is quick to recognize as desire. “How many women have you slept with?”

She balks at the question. “What? Are we—are we comparing lists now? How many women have you slept with?”

“Seven. Answer the question.”

Jealousy, or maybe envy, flares inside Stephanie. “Four,” she admits. “And I’m going to make you forget about those other six women tonight.”

Her aggressive flirtation takes Emily aback and she finds delight in watching her fumble for the confidence Stephanie just knocked off-kilter. “Not if I make you forget about the other three first,” Emily finally says.
Stephanie squirms again; the arousal she’s been fighting all evening is threatening to overtake her self-control. “Okay,” she says with a breathy laugh and directs her attention to her dinner. “This is delicious and I want to finish it and I’m not going to be able to if we don’t behave.”

Emily smiles as though she’s won and visibly relaxes. “Sure. Eat up, baby.” It’s an innocuous enough statement but it still drives right between Stephanie’s legs because she knows Emily chose those words with purpose. “The sooner we’re out of here, the sooner I can lick that sweet little snatch of yours.”

Stephanie drops her fork. “Okay! Okay.” She doesn’t even know why she’s saying ‘okay’ but it’s the only word she can find at the moment.

Emily reads her disorientation loud and clear and Stephanie’s as horrified as she is elated to see the smirk on Emily’s beautiful face as she leans back to reach for the tie holding the curtain in place. She pulls it and it falls in one quick swoop just as Stephanie imagined it would. It’s more than a little suggestive and all that needs to happen is for Stephanie to do the same on her side.

She’s about to when their waitress appears again to refill their wine glasses. She watches Emily talk to the server, hears something about how they would prefer not to be bothered as she gestures toward the one closed curtain and Stephanie watches with rapt attention as the waitress smiles and nods and does them the favor of untying and closing the curtain on Stephanie’s side.

And just like that, they are alone.

She can still hear the restaurant, the conversations of the patrons on the other side of the curtains behind each of them and to her right. But what she hears most is the sound of Emily’s chair scraping the stone floor as she moves back from the table.

It’s an invitation for one thing and one thing only. There’s color in Emily’s cheeks now and Stephanie knows she’s as turned on as she is. It’s the only thing that makes her legs work as she slides her own chair back to step around the table until she’s at Emily’s side.

She expects to be pulled down into her lap as Emily had already suggested but instead, she gasps as Emily’s hand lands on her knee and runs up her thigh and between her legs. Her fingers stroke over the soaking wet lace and Stephanie has to put a hand on the table to support herself as she whimpers.
“Oh, baby girl,” Emily says, low and so sexy as she removes her hand and immediately brings her fingers to her mouth to suck on them. All her movements have a hint of urgency to them that Stephanie thinks may have to do with their present location. Or maybe it’s just out of desire.

It startles Stephanie, lost in a sexual fog when Emily stands and backs her up against the only solid wall of their space. Her shoulders connect with a thud and she watches in awe as Emily lowers herself until she’s kneeling. Hands run up Stephanie’s legs again until they’re on her ass and she feels her thong get pulled down and she has to close her eyes; she cannot believe she is doing this in a restaurant.

She feels Emily’s mouth on her thigh, under her skirt, moving higher until her warm, wet tongue slithers over her clit.

“Em,” she whispers, hands grappling for something to hang on to but finding nothing along the wall. “Fuck.”

Emily seems to take that as permission to continue because a hand at the back of Stephanie’s knee guides it up and over her shoulder and she bites her lip to muffle her groan as two fingers slide into her while a tongue laps at her clit.

She pries her eyes open to look down and manages to find a moment of amusement in that she can’t actually see Emily; her head is literally up Stephanie’s skirt and there’s something so hot about that that it makes her hips buck which makes Emily’s tongue and fingers move more quickly.

What she can see, however, are the feet of the people sitting a few feet away behind a curtain. She can see the legs of people who walk past the previously open side of the alcove.

And if she can see the feet of their neighbors, that means they can just as easily see her one black-stilettoed foot on the ground and Emily kneeling in front of her and she can actually feel herself become wetter at the thought.

She can hear it, too, even over her own heavy breathing and the white noise of the restaurant. Emily’s fingers are moving hard and fast, as is her tongue, and it’s audible how sloppy she is but she can’t help it. She can’t help what Emily does to her and she reaches down, under her skirt, to thread her fingers into Emily’s hair to hold on as she bucks her hips against her face again and again until she bites the back of her hand as she comes.
She feels Emily ease her through it which is almost a disappointment after the lack of mercy she’d been shown yesterday, but here and now is not the place or time to get that kind of unraveled.

When it passes, Emily sits back on her heels, still kneeling, though no longer hidden under Stephanie’s dress. Her fingers slip out but don’t leave her; they stay, teasing her clit in a way that sends tiny aftershocks through her.

“Oh, my God,” Stephanie whispers down at the look of pride smiling up at her; Emily’s chin is wet and she makes no moves to do anything about it. “I can’t believe…” She doesn’t finish the sentence because Emily’s fingers are starting to press gentle circles against her in a way that she knows Emily knows is key to her pleasure. “We have to stop.”

“You came so fast.” Emily’s voice is quiet but she’s not exactly whispering and it makes Stephanie tense in worry that someone might have heard. If they did, nothing happens. Her fingers are moving with more purpose and Stephanie’s sense of shame begins to dissipate again. “We have more time.”

It takes every iota of strength she has to reach down and push Emily’s hand away from her body. “Then stand up and let me return the favor,” she says, making a pointed reference to Emily’s suggestion that she’d been some sort of a pillow princess in college. She never was, and she never would be.

Emily does stand and Stephanie reaches to pull her down into a kiss. It’s hot and tastes like herself and she uses her tongue like Emily used hers on Stephanie. She rotates them in place until she has Emily pinned against the wall and that in itself is a turn-on for Stephanie. She tries not to get distracted, though. She lets Emily suck on her tongue as she blindly unbuttons Emily’s pants. She slips her hand into them as soon as they’re open to find Emily wet and swollen. She can feel the wetness on the back of her hand where it brushes against Emily’s pants and she moans into her mouth at how aroused she is.

“Fuck me,” Emily whispers between kisses and Stephanie nods as she pushes lace to the side with her thumb so she can sink her fingers into her. She holds them there, so deep the palm of her hand presses hard against Emily’s clit, and kisses her with desperation and need before she starts moving.

Emily hadn’t teased her so Stephanie doesn’t either. She fucks into her with short, hard, quick strokes. She has to stop after every few because it’s growing louder with how soaked she is.

But then Emily adjusts her stance, widening it and the slight extra space almost eliminates the
sound if Stephanie stays aware of her angle. It almost results in her pants falling, though, and even if their feet may give away what they’re doing, pants around ankles would absolutely be damning. Stephanie grabs them with her free hand and holds them against Emily’s hip. They’re lower than they were and it gives her even more room and she pulls back from their kiss to watch Emily’s face as she withdraws, only to push back in with three fingers instead of two.

Her head falls back against the wall and a moan rumbles in her throat behind tightly pursed lips and Stephanie presses her mouth to that rumble, sucking at her neck as she fucks her just as hard and fast as she had been before the extra finger.

Emily’s starting to thrust back against her, an almost awkward desperate grinding circle in her upright position but that doesn’t matter. All that matters is that Stephanie is going to make this woman come in the middle of a restaurant and she doesn’t give a fuck if they get caught.

“Come for me.” She says it in full voice and it makes Emily’s eyes open in surprise followed by a lip-bitten moan. “Come for me, baby,” she repeats to make sure Emily knows she said it purposely.

She feels the tell-tale flutter around her fingers and can’t stop the knowing smile from curving her lips and she watches Emily fall apart against the wall of a restaurant.

Emily is silent in her orgasm but Stephanie knows it’s not without effort. The tension in her neck and arms tells her that much.

She keeps her fingers nestled deep until it’s over and Emily’s taking recovering breaths from her struggle to control herself. Stephanie can hear it when she removes her fingers and if it wasn’t so fucking hot she could find shame in it, but she feels like she may have just flushed the last bit of her shame down the drain.

It’s silent as they stare at one another, Emily still coming down from her high and Stephanie feeling like she’s at the top of her own. Then Emily stoops to kiss her, arms around Stephanie’s waist to pull her close. It’s passionate but soft and Stephanie doesn’t stop the quiet moan it generates.

When their lips part they both remain close and Stephanie can feel Emily’s quick breaths against her lips; they’re still dripping with desire and she takes an agonizing step backward to put space between them as she tugs Emily’s pants back into place. “We should go,” she says as she hurries back to her side of the table and the cloth napkin she feels terribly guilty about using to dry her hand even if she licks her fingers first (which she does).
“What?” Emily still sounds a little dazed but Stephanie knows she’s coming with a tease. “No dessert?”

“You just had dessert,” she tosses back, tongue still loose with its words as arousal lingers around them.

“Mmm, yes I did,” Emily purrs behind her and she knows the embrace is coming and melts into it, letting Emily hold her as soft, wet kisses trail along her neck. That’s when Emily’s hand wanders a different direction than before, this time up and into the cut-out of Stephanie’s dress and into her bra until she’s cupping her bare breast, nipple caught between her fingers to squeeze it.

She staggers forward a step, needing to throw her arm out against a wall but all it connects with is the curtain on her side of the booth and gives easily, pressing into the space of the people sitting there.

She freezes, an eternal second as she yanks her hand back and hears Emily chuckle in her ear before biting it, but nothing happens.

“Now we really need to go,” she says as she pulls Emily’s hand out of her dress and adjusts her breast back into its proper place before she turns. “Do I look okay?”

“You look like you just had your pussy eaten in the middle of dinner.”

She feels hot all over, all kinds of shame slamming back into her that was absent not a minute ago. But it’s also excitement at hearing the words, the reminder of what had happened, that it hadn’t been a fever dream or a fantasy (though she knows she will fantasize about this at least once). “That’s not helping,” she says as she futzes with her hair to smooth any spots that got riled up when she was pinned against the wall. “Fix your shirt,” she says with a nod at Emily. One side of her blouse is tucked into her pants, caught by accident when Stephanie buttoned them.

Emily glances down and pulls it out and then plucks it away from her back; Stephanie wonders if it was clinging to her from sweat.

“I can’t sit down or I’m going to ruin this dress,” she says quietly, feeling antsy that their server will return any minute to find them standing awkwardly around the table.
“Just sit; I’ll send it down to be dry cleaned tonight.” Emily sits down as she says it, as though she’s not already soaked her trousers.

“And if it soaks through, it will be totally visible,” she argues, gesturing at her dress to point out the dark-but-not-dark-enough color that will reveal any hint of moisture on the fabric.

“Then stand,” Emily says with a shrug as she leans forward to snag her curtain and pull it back and over the hook, not bothering to retie it.

Stephanie gasps and feels exposed even though her side is still closed and she’s dressed and nothing inappropriate is happening.

As though she’d been waiting, a thought that makes Stephanie’s stomach twist in a questionable way, their server returns seconds after Emily draws the curtain.

“How was everything?” she asks with a friendly smile.

“Mouth-watering, thank you,” Emily says with an equally friendly smile as she pulls a credit card from her purse to hand it to her rather than asking for the check. “And we’ll take the bottle home with us.”

“Of course; I’ll cork it for you.” She enters their space and smiles at Stephanie who dances awkwardly in place.

“Just stretching my legs,” she explains unnecessarily and she hopes it doesn’t smell like sex but she’s pretty sure it does.

“I’ll be right back,” the waitress says with a parting smile as she steps through the open half of the curtains and Stephanie exhales in relief.

It makes Emily laugh. “Calm down; even if she knows, she’d never say something. Go to the bathroom and clean yourself up. You’re giving me anxiety hovering like this.”
She doesn’t know why she didn’t think of that herself (probably because she was in an aroused state of panic). “Right. Good idea,” she says with a deep breath before stepping around the table and down the step to the main floor. She glances around until she spots a sign for the restrooms and makes her way on wobbly legs.

They’re laughing when they leave the restaurant hand in hand. If feels like they could be drunk but she knows they’re not; the bottle of wine in Emily’s free hand is still half-full. They’d gotten too distracted with each other to sit and drink.

There’s no one specific reason they’re laughing; it started as anxious giggles from Stephanie when the hostess said she hoped they’d come again and was worsened by Stephanie being bold and stopping them in the library (which was also the main bar area) to turn and kiss Emily in full view of the busy room. It had earned a couple male wolf-whistles but a girl yelling out something like, “Get that hot bitch, mama!” was what really set off the gigglefest.

“Which one of us is the hot bitch and which is the mama?” Stephanie asks when they part. Emily’s smiling so genuinely at her it drives her to pop up and kiss her one more time.

“Oh, you’re definitely the hot bitch,” Emily says after the kiss.

Stephanie has half a mind to argue that; she doesn’t hate her own appearance by any length of the imagination, but she knows Emily could have been a model if she’d wanted. “Thank you,” she says before grabbing her hand and leading them out of the restaurant and down the path to the sidewalk.

Emily must have notified their driver that they were on their way out because the black sedan rolls up less than a minute after they stopped. She hadn’t even had a chance turn around and start kissing Emily again.

It’s then that she decides it’s on each other that they’re drunk. With every touch and kiss and lingering look they share, Stephanie feels herself slipping deeper and deeper into a heady mix of lust and need and joy. It’s never been like this for them; their life together (if you can call it that) back home is stolen moments and secret rendezvous and maintaining façades of the happy family and the strong single mom. She feels like her old self, her college self, her pre-mommy brain self who she always thought was fun and carefree and not worried about how much processed sugar is in the cereal she has in her kitchen cupboard.
“Get in,” Emily says with a push from behind until they’re clumsily falling into the back seat of the car.

She expects the need to be proper and at least mostly platonic as they have been with the drivers (this is a different man than had driven them from the airport) but Emily all but falls on top of her once she’s closed the door to start making out with her, hot and heavy.

The driver pays them no mind and Stephanie forgets they’re not alone until Emily’s peeling herself away to leave the car and she notices they’re back at the hotel.

Emily doesn’t wait for her; she’s halfway through the lobby by the time Stephanie catches up with her, walking as quickly as she can on unsteady legs and four-inch platform stilettos. In fact, she passes her, rushing to the elevator to press the button and turn back with a lip-bitten, shy smile to lean against the wall next to the door hoping Emily takes her bait.

She does and they’re kissing like they were in the car, like they were in the restaurant, but now they’re in the hotel elevator bank.

It dings and as soon as she hears the doors open she slides out from Emily and into the blissfully empty elevator to do exactly what she’d wanted yesterday.

Emily follows and the doors aren’t even closed yet when Stephanie pulls her back into a kiss. She knows they don’t have that much time before they arrive at the eighteenth floor, so she’s quick about reaching under Emily’s shirt, nails scratching her back along the way until she finds and unhooks her bra. She hears Emily’s breathing change in response and she breaks their kiss to push the silky white blouse up, along with the loosened bra, so she can lean in and take Emily’s nipple into her mouth.

Her fingers tend to the other and she hears the sound of Emily's hand slamming against the wall next to her for support as she sags into Stephanie. Fingers weave into her hair, tight and a little controlling but they don’t pull her away. They push her closer and she hears Emily swear as she swirls her tongue and pinches her fingers.

She stops at the chime signaling their arrival and tugs Emily’s shirt back down, though with her bra unhooked it doesn’t sit right. That’s no matter, though; they don’t have far to go.

She leaves and Emily follows. She’s still digging for the keycard in her purse, something she
regrets not having ready when they were still in the lobby when Emily pins her front against the locked door, hands under her skirt to grab at her ass. It’s bare, not that the thong covered it anyway, but that’s long gone and she has a suspicion it’s in Emily’s pocket. Emily’s mouth is on her neck and it’s making Stephanie see stars.

“I can’t...Em...let me...open it…” she gasps as one of Emily’s hands reaches between her legs from behind and just like that, they’re having sex in the hallway.

There’s a faint beep and suddenly she’s falling through the door into the dark hotel room and the heat of Emily is gone. She turns to see her with her own key in her hand which she drops to the floor as she steps out of her shoes.

She strides forward and Stephanie braces herself for what she hopes is about to happen. It’s a fantasy that’s fluttered around her brain for a few weeks and she lifts her arms to wrap them around Emily’s neck just as hands land on her hips and she gives a hop.

She wraps her legs around Emily’s waist and kisses her as she lets herself be carried through the suite.

A few seconds later she lands in the middle of the bed with the distinct feeling she had literally been thrown onto it. When she opens her eyes, Emily’s standing at the foot of the bed unbuttoning her blouse with quick fingers to cast it aside with the bra Stephanie had already unhooked. Her pants fall next along with black lace and Stephanie’s still dressed.

She starts to sit up to fix that but Emily’s already reaching for her ankle to slip her heel off, then the other.

“Turn over,” Emily says as she kneels on the bed and starts crawling toward her.

The sight makes Stephanie whimper but she does as she’s told and she feels the warmth and weight of Emily straddling her thighs.

Her skirt gets pushed up and she feels the cool air hit her skin only to be replaced by warm hands kneading her flesh and for a second, when Emily’s hands suddenly stop and one disappears, she thinks she’s going to be spanked.
The thought scares her and thrills her and she grips the pillow above her head waiting for it.

It doesn’t happen though. Instead, she feels the zipper on the back of her dress being lowered until it stops at her waist. Hands push the sides open and with a slight tug and release, she feels her bra unhooked. Part of her is disappointed; the bra really did make her breasts look amazing and she’d wanted Emily to see her in it but as she shoves at Stephanie’s dress to get her to work together to get her arms out of sleeves and straps she decides not to care.

It gets pulled down her body and she feels the comforting pressure of Emily lift as the dress gets pulled down her legs to be tossed somewhere, but the weight is back a second later. This time it’s heavier and she knows Emily’s leaning forward. Hands find her own and fingers weave together to push them into the mattress on either side of her head as teeth bite the curve of her neck.

She whines at the sting but it doesn’t hurt. Not one bit. She tilts her head to offer more of her skin to Emily’s mouth and it’s given immediately.

With it comes a subtle tilt of Emily’s hips against her ass that pushes her own hips into the bed and she moans. She’s been so turned on for so long now that the barest hints of pressure feel like so much more. She regrets letting her pleasure be known because it makes Emily continue it; she starts rolling her hips against her ass like she’s fucking her slowly. The pressure is so indirect that it’s maddening and Stephanie tries to spread her legs to tilt her hips at a sharper angle to at least try to let Emily grind her into the bed but she can’t, not with Emily’s legs framing hers the way they are.

She has to lie there and take it and the surrender makes her remember when she’d done this to Emily once. Only Emily had been tied up with Stephanie’s belt, though the way Emily has her hands pinned now is no different.

She hears Emily moan as her pace quickens. Teeth and lips and tongue start to move across Stephanie’s neck and shoulders and back in unpredictable ways and all of them make her shudder and groan.

“Want me to put it on?” Emily asks, voice warm at her ear as her tongue traces it.

Stephanie’s entire body tenses as the offer; they way they both seem to feel right now, she knows Emily will absolutely wreck her tonight whether or not she has something strapped to her hips.
She shakes her head. “I just want you.”

The weight disappears again but the warmth stays. “Roll over.”

Hands help her as she struggles to, confined between Emily’s legs as she is. When she’s on her back she looks up to find Emily staring at her like she’s about to devour her whole and Stephanie thinks she’s more than okay with that.

Emily slides up a few inches and then she’s leaning down to fill Stephanie’s mouth with her tongue. The desperation is so hot and mutual that it makes her wrap her legs around Emily again to pull her hips down against her body.

It works and Emily’s rocking into her like she was before, but now it’s against Stephanie’s clit and she groans into the kiss as she tangles her fingers into Emily’s hair. “Don’t stop,” she breathes into her mouth before kissing her again. “Please, don’t stop.”

One of Emily’s hands reaches past her and Stephanie knows she’s just pressed it against the headboard behind her for leverage because all at once, the grinding doubles in pressure and pleasure and speed.

She can hear herself; her moans are high-pitched and whiny and she thinks she’s saying words but she doesn’t know what they are. All she knows is Emily’s mouth on hers and her hips grinding her closer and closer to another orgasm.

“She...that...fast…” Those are words. She thinks. Is it a sentence? Maybe? Emily listens though and speeds up and Stephanie wrenches her mouth away from the kiss so she can breathe.

Emily’s lips move to her face and neck and whatever they can find.

It starts between her legs where Emily’s body rubs into her over and over and curls down through her legs and up through her stomach and chest into her mind. It feels out-of-body like she’s watching from above as Emily pushes her into orgasm.

She knows she’s loud; it feels like she’s making up for having to be silent at the restaurant and she can hear Emily’s words of encouragement in her ear, telling her, “Come for me, baby.”
Telling her, “You’re so fucking beautiful.”

Telling her, “You drive me fucking crazy.”

Telling her, “I love you.”

The clouds in her mind are blown away by the words she thinks she hears and she falls silent but the pleasure doesn’t stop; she’s still coming and she can’t move or speak or do anything but hold on to Emily to make sure she doesn’t leave.

When the tremors fade and she can open her eyes, all she can see is the ceiling and room around her. Emily’s face is next to hers; she can feel her labored breathing against her shoulder. Her back is warm and slick beneath Stephanie’s hands like it is always is when they do this and it’s not lost on her that Emily puts so much of herself into their lovemaking.

Wait.

“Emily?” her throat is parched and her voice is rough.

“Don’t.” It’s sharp and stern and she can feel Emily’s body tensing.

“But—”

Emily lifts her head and she’s wearing the same look of fear she was this morning. “I said, don’t.” She leans down and kisses Stephanie with bruising force. “Just fuck me.” Another kiss that’s difficult to keep up with. “Please, just fuck me.” Her voice is desperate with the second plea so Stephanie just nods.

“How?” she asks between kisses that are somehow growing even more demanding.

“I don’t care, just—” Emily’s voice breaks over the sentence and Stephanie opens her eyes to see her crying, eyes shut tightly to try to stop the tears that are already on her cheeks and falling onto
“Okay,” she says as she kisses her back. “Shh, it’s okay.” She kisses her again and brushes the tears away as she does so. “Lie down.”

Emily rolls off her to land on her back next to Stephanie and she quickly sits up to do her best to check on Emily without being aggravating but she’s too slow; Emily’s hands are covering her face and Stephanie honestly can’t tell if she’s laughing or crying behind them.

Whichever it is, she doesn’t want Stephanie seeing it so she ignores it and instead slides down the bed until she’s ducking under Emily’s leg to settle it over her shoulder as she lies between them. She keeps one hand on Emily’s thigh and the other parts wet flesh so her tongue can find her quickly.

“Fuck yes, baby.” Emily’s hips thrust up at her so Stephanie pushes them back down, having to use her elbow since her hands are both occupied.

She licks at her quickly and then remembers how amazing Emily made her feel last night. She slides her tongue down and slips it into her, hot and wet and she feels Emily’s body clench around it and they both moan. She decides to keep it there and the fingers that are holding her open switch to start rubbing the clit she’d been licking.

Emily won’t stop writhing and she gives up trying to keep her still. It’s clear she’s working on taking whatever she needs and Stephanie does her best to give it to her until she’s pushing on the back of Emily’s thigh just as had been done to her. It tilts Emily’s hips up and makes it easier to keep her tongue inside her and Emily reacts so strongly Stephanie thinks she’s about to come.

Instead, Emily’s pulling away from her until she’s on her knees, leaving Stephanie dumbfounded.

“Get up here and lie down,” Emily says with a point to the bed and it makes Stephanie’s blood run even hotter.

She crawls up and turns over and she’s already tucking her arms between Emily’s legs as they straddle her face to bring her down and onto her tongue.

Emily leans back but grabs the headboard for support and starts moving, hips grinding forward
again and again as she rides Stephanie’s tongue.

The view, Stephanie muses as she groans at how good Emily tastes tonight, is not unlike that of the painting that hangs in Emily’s home. She drags her nails down Emily’s arched back, then wraps an arm around Emily’s hip so she can get her fingers on her again, slipping back and forth across her clit.

“Fuck, baby,” she groans and Stephanie can feel her trembling and knows she’s close so she doesn’t falter her rhythm.

For the briefest of moments, her own arousal dares her to reach down and touch herself so they can come together, but not now, not this time. This is only for Emily who deserves Stephanie’s complete and undivided attention as she stiffens her tongue and pushes it up as far as she can. It’s not easy, Emily’s body clenching and almost pushing it out but she pushes back.

“Oh, God. Fuck. Fuck!” Emily’s body shifts and she falls forward to hold herself up with the headboard. It pulls her off Stephanie’s tongue and the angle isn’t right anymore so she quickly adjusts, catching her clit between her lips to suck on it, hard, as she slides fingers into her instead to give her something solid to bear down on.

She opens her eyes to take in the view and sees Emily already staring down at her, watching intently. Stephanie moans because that’s all she can do right now and Emily moans in response, hips pushing down so hard that Stephanie’s grateful there’s no pillow beneath her head to hinder it.

Emily’s eyes are open as she comes.

Stephanie has no idea how she does it. She’s coming so hard that her voice is making Stephanie’s ears ring. So hard that it’s running down her hand and dripping on her neck. But Emily’s eyes don’t leave hers, not for a second of what seems like an endless climax.

She’s never experienced anything like it and her body betrays her determination because with one desperate shift of her thighs her own body rocks into orgasm and she sees the effect of it on Emily’s face as she fights to keep her eyes open as Emily did. Her eyes flash and her lips start to smile and Stephanie whines pitifully in what she means to be an apology but something tells her she needn’t be sorry.

When it’s over, when they’re both quiet save for labored breathing, Stephanie lets her eyes fall
closed. Her brain is trying to process the evening and it’s a dizzying summary of events as it catalogs the memories. It manages to file away the food and the wine and the laughs and the sex but leaves one thing bouncing around like a pinball. Three words that she knows she heard. Three words Emily immediately tried to pretend didn’t exist. Three words that Stephanie has been thinking about for a while.

She feels Emily move off her and with it comes cool air against her skin that’s wet with sweat and with Emily and it drives alertness into her like a shot of adrenaline and she starts to sit up.

“Oh, God,” Emily says, voice still gravely but no longer winded. “Look at you.”

Stephanie looks at Emily, not herself, and finds her sitting up against the headboard looking lazy and sated. “What about me?”

Emily leans forward with a smile and cups her jaw in a way Stephanie thinks might be in advance of a kiss but instead, it swipes down her chin and neck all the way to her chest and she can feel the slickness of arousal being wiped from her skin. She watches Emily rub her hand over her own thigh and the lust that is still in her head dares her to lean down and lick it. But she doesn’t.

“You are fucking incredible. That’s what.” Emily leans over and kisses her and Stephanie starts moving into Emily’s lap whether she wanted her there or not.

Stephanie plays with messy blonde hair; it’s more wild than ever and she smiles to herself as she combs her fingers through it in a way that gently tugs Emily’s head back, but not in any way that would cause a sting. Emily’s arms settle around her waist and Stephanie can’t help but think how easy this all is.

“We’re so good together,” Stephanie starts. She needs to revisit what Emily’s said. Desperately. And she doesn’t want her to bolt.

“Yeah, we are,” Emily says with a smile and Stephanie jumps as fingers pinch her ass playfully.

“Who’d have ever thought?” Stephanie chuckles before leaning in to steal a kiss because it feels right. “Thank you for inviting me on this trip.” She kisses her and settles into it this time, teasing her way into Emily’s mouth until the temperature starts to rise again. Until she’s rocking slowly in Emily’s lap. Until Emily’s hands are on her breasts.
She lets her lips travel from Emily’s, along her jaw and over her cheek and down to her neck where they make Emily shiver, and up to her ear to confess as Emily had.

“I love you, too,” she whispers before moving back to kiss Emily before she can do anything else.

She’s ready for it when Emily tries to push her off her. She locks her arms around her neck and holds on. They're still kissing but she’s not forcing Emily to. Hands shove at her hips and knees to try to push Stephanie backward but they don’t try hard enough. There’s no way Emily couldn’t overpower Stephanie if she needed to. They keep pushing at her and Stephanie can hear the frustration in the sounds Emily makes until she’s being pulled in, closer and closer until she can scarcely breathe with how strongly Emily’s arms are wrapped around her, with how hard she’s being kissed.

As suddenly as it shifted from rejection to desperate connection it breaks and Stephanie takes a gasping breath as Emily’s head drops to her chest and the crying starts.

It’s serious this time, uncontrollable sobs that wrack Emily’s body as she clings to Stephanie.

Stephanie holds her, one hand on her head and the other stroking gently up and down her back. She doesn’t shush her or tell her it’s okay. She wants to let Emily cry as much as she needs to because, Stephanie suspects, she almost never allows it to happen.

Her heart aches as much as it swells; she’s felt like she’s waited a lifetime to feel this way about a person. She didn’t even know that she was missing out on anything until Emily started creeping further and further into her life. Tonight, the final piece of the puzzle settled into place and she feels whole. She cries, too, her tears falling into Emily’s hair when she kisses the top of her head.

Ten, maybe fifteen minutes pass before Emily’s sobs subside. Stephanie knows she’s already trying to figure out how to hide or explain away what just happened and she won’t have that. Not anymore. She’s tired of Emily hiding.

“Hey,” she says as she tilts Emily’s flushed, tear-stained face up toward hers. She kisses her and then kisses her again, and when she pulls back and Emily starts to speak, she kisses her once more. After that one, Emily doesn’t seem ready to defend the moment their lips part so Stephanie slowly, gently eases herself out of her embrace until she’s standing. She reaches for Emily’s hands and pulls her up, too. “Take a shower with me.”
Emily just nods and follows as Stephanie walks backward to lead them around the bed and into the bathroom. The only light she turns on is the one associated with the exhaust fan so they have just enough light to not trip.

She has to let go of one of Emily’s hands to open the glass door of the shower and turn on the faucet for both shower heads but she keeps hold on the other to make sure she doesn’t flee. She’s never felt something so delicate before as Emily’s current state. She imagines if a butterfly were to land on her shoulder right now, she would shatter.

She waits until the water runs warm and then steps in, pulling Emily with her and she’s relieved when Emily reaches behind herself to pull the door closed. It means she’s aware despite it seeming a bit like she’s in a trance.

The water hits Stephanie first and she hovers for a few seconds, tilting her head until the water has her hair slicked back and out of her face. “Okay, come on.” She pulls Emily into it next and the distance is just right that the second fixture rains warmth on Stephanie’s back.

She watches Emily’s eyes close as the water hits and her head tilts back in the autopilot kind of way one has in the shower. She soaks her hair and then drops Stephanie’s hand. It makes her panic for a second but all Emily does is turn to put her face under the spray and rub her hands over it.

When she lifts her head again she turns to look at Stephanie, she looks more like herself than she had a few seconds ago. “Come ‘ere,” Emily says with a soft smile as she reaches for Stephanie and pulls her into her space to kiss her.

Stephanie’s surprised, to say the least. Emily seemed so out of it just moments ago but now she’s kissing her with renewed energy and Stephanie feels herself getting lifted again. She wraps her legs around Emily and hisses as cold tile presses into her back. It heats up quickly, though, stoked by Emily’s lips and hands that grip her ass to support her and her body that brushes against what is still aroused.

Emily breaks their kiss and Stephanie’s lips chase hers only for them to be out of reach. She whines and opens her eyes and sees Emily watching her. Emily licks her lips, a move that makes Stephanie wet her own, and then she can see the nervousness in Emily’s eyes again. She’s about to tell her it’s okay when—

“I love you.”
Emily says it like she’s trying it on for size and as soon as the words are past her lips she exhales as though relieved.

Stephanie smiles. She’s feeling giddy now. “I love you, too.”

Emily starts to smile, too. “I love you.”

Stephanie laughs and touches a hand to her cheek and watches in awe as Emily leans into the touch. “I love you, too.”

Emily’s smile splits into a grin and she surges forward to kiss Stephanie. It makes her head connect painfully with the wall and she actually groans and turns away from the kiss because of the ache.

“Oh, shit, are you okay?” Emily says with a laugh that’s laced with concern. One of her hands comes up to cradle the back of Stephanie’s head.

The throb in her skull quickly fades when she opens her eyes to see the way Emily’s watching her and waiting for an answer and she nods. “Never better,” she breathes before pulling Emily back into the kiss.

She’s in love. They’re in love. Stephanie’s never romantically loved someone so fiercely in her life and it scares her as much as it thrills her. Admitting it out loud and knowing it’s mutual seems to have tripled her feelings. She starts crying again, tears of happy disbelief that get washed away and as blissful as she feels, she can’t stop the one thought nagging her.

For as much as she loves Emily, she knows almost nothing about her.

She’ll work on that next. Right now is not the time, because right now, Emily’s guiding Stephanie’s hand down and between her own legs in what is a very clear instruction to touch herself.

She moans against Emily’s mouth as their fingers move together over her clit and it echoes around them, amplified in a way that makes Emily smile. The smile triggers a need to tease in Stephanie and she licks at Emily’s lips before parting long enough to ask, “What were their names?”
Emily seems confused. “Whose names?”

“Exactly,” Stephanie breathes before kissing her again.

Emily seems to figure it out after a few more seconds because she gets a pretty harsh thrust of her hips to shove her harder against the wall with what might be an attempt at cursing her out, but Emily’s mouth is too busy with Stephanie’s to enunciate.

“We’re not sleeping tonight,” Stephanie states when there’s a second to breathe. She always feels insatiable with Emily but tonight is something else entirely. There are no words for the level of desire she has.

“No,” Emily agrees as she stoops to get her mouth on Stephanie’s breast. The angle isn’t great so Stephanie lifts it for her to help.

“We should finish showering so we can get back in bed where this is easier,” she says with a laugh that turns into a moan when her own fingers grind just right.

Emily lets her breast slip from her lips and she straightens. “Not until you make yourself come.”

“Gladly,” Stephanie says with a nod, moving quicker.

“God, I’m going to fuck you all night,” Emily growls, eyes dark and predatory and though Stephanie had been getting close it yanks her right over the edge with a cry.

“That’s it, baby.” She feels Emily’s hands stroking the backs of her thighs until she’s quiet and being lowered to stand on her own feet.

Stephanie leans against her, still catching her breath, and shivers when Emily’s hands seem to be everywhere, on her head and face and shoulders and breasts and stomach and ass and arms and it’s almost finished when she realizes there’s a loofah in her hand and Emily’s bathing her.

“Oh, wow,” she says dumbly as she watches Emily’s hands on her breasts and then they move down until the loofah’s between her legs, gentle and soft as she’s guided under the shower to rinse
off. She’s also given the wonderful view of Emily doing the same to herself, all soapy lather and hands swirling over her own body until they’re washing down the drain.

Emily shuts off the water after a couple more minutes and they wring their hair and smile over fluffy white towels as they dry off and then try to dry each other off in what almost devolves into a wrestling match until Emily has Stephanie thrown over her shoulder—which Stephanie protests endlessly but secretly loves—to carry her out of the bathroom and back to bed where, this time, Emily pulls the duvet and sheet down before dropping Stephanie onto it with a squeal.

Emily’s on top of her a second later and they’re kissing. They’ve kissed so much Stephanie’s lips almost ache but she can’t stop, won’t stop for anything, except to say, “I love you,” and to smile when Emily replies, “I love you, too.”

To very much be continued...
If someone had asked Stephanie Smothers a year ago if she would ever wake up wrapped up in expensive bed sheets, designer perfume, and a drop-dead gorgeous woman in a hotel suite in Los Angeles on a Friday morning (or any morning), she’d have told them they were delusional for concocting the scenario.

But as the arm draped across her stomach shifts in early-morning wakefulness and as the soft, warm body presses closer with a sleepy sigh, she thinks that person could have been prophetic.

The clock on her nightstand tells her it’s just past 4:00 am. The time difference has both of them stirring despite having allowed each other to fall asleep only an hour earlier. When that had happened, there had been space between them; they’d needed it to physically cool off. But they’re both in the middle of the bed again and Stephanie uses the arm around her for leverage to roll over and kiss the lips that are relaxed and a little chapped but nonetheless irresistible.

It makes Emily twitch in surprise, eyes closed to not see it coming, but she kisses her back immediately. “Why’re you awake?” she mumbles against Stephanie’s lips. The kiss ends but their lips remain touching.

There are a lot of reasons Stephanie’s awake beyond her internal clock. There’s still adrenaline coursing through her system. Hormones are still pumping through her veins. Hormones that make her shift so she can touch her lips to Emily’s neck, first gently in a way that makes her chin lift and then with slow, wet kisses that make her draw a sharp breath. “Because I love you.” She smiles as she says it. She can’t believe she’s able to say it. “Why’re you?”

There’s a loud exhale, then silence, then a hand in her hair pulling her up to kiss her hard.

Stephanie giggles into it; she’s exhausted by all measures of the word but that doesn’t stop her from pushing Emily onto her back to climb over her and settle herself between her legs to keep kissing her. She’s the type of happy she imagines exists only in fairy tales when the princess finds her Prince Charming.

Though in her case, her Prince Charming is more like a Dark Queen. A dark queen who drags her nails down Stephanie’s back to draw a shudder from her. Or maybe she’s a sorceress; Stephanie certainly feels bewitched.
Stephanie feels like she’s supposed to be waiting for an answer to a question she doesn’t remember asking. All that matters is that Emily’s starting to grow restless beneath her and the hands that have been caressing and scratching at her back are sliding down until they’re on her ass to squeeze it and pull Stephanie closer.

A whimper escapes the lips Stephanie is kissing. Her heart, holding a steady, warm pace, skips a beat and then starts pounding. She can feel Emily shifting beneath her, parting her legs and tilting her hips to gain contact Stephanie hadn’t really been thinking about providing quite yet.

She slips her tongue further into Emily’s mouth as she gives a purposeful roll of her hips and is rewarded by a quiet moan.

“Really?” Stephanie asks with a smile when they part. “Again?”

“Don’t act like you’re not already wet.” Emily punctuates her retort by reaching further until she slips her fingers between Stephanie’s legs from behind to call her bluff.

Stephanie bites her lip as her smile grows and she doesn’t let herself moan. It’s fun to not be the [only] one desperate in the middle of the night for once. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“No?” Emily slips into her easily. The angle’s not great but a squeak escapes Stephanie anyway. “Liar.”

She doesn’t deny it again because her body betrayed her words. Instead, she shifts and sneaks her hand down to slip her fingers between Emily’s legs to find out just how awake she is.

*Very* is the answer and she lets Emily sigh before she kisses her again. She’s soft. Gentle. Slow. “Touch me,” she whispers to Emily because she wants to do this together. She lifts her hips to let Emily reach her more easily and then she settles.

There’s no blinding intensity or suffocating need this time. She doesn’t even feel like what either of them is doing will lead to climax (though she thinks, knowing them, it will). Their kisses are as slow as their touches and she feels like they’re almost re-learning how to kiss. They keep finding new angles, new pressures, new spots along jaws and necks that respond to lips and tongues and teeth and it makes Stephanie feel like she’s made of warm molasses melting and melding with Emily.
It’s so slow and quiet that it sneaks up on her and she whimpers in quiet pleasure, eyes closed as she kisses Emily harder in the moment and contentment rushes her when she hears Emily follow. It leaves her tingling, her heart racing.

“Did you wake me up for sex?” she asks with a lazy smile after a few seconds.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Emily parrots. She withdraws her arm from being pinned between them to wrap it around Stephanie’s back. If she’d been intending to move off Emily—she wasn’t—she wouldn’t have been able to.

“Liar.”

As they kiss again, Emily pulling the covers higher over Stephanie’s shoulders because they’d slipped down, it’s so easy for Stephanie to forget Emily’s not really hers. So easy to forget Emily is married to someone else. That she has an entire life that doesn’t include her.

She turns away under the guise of snuggling further into Emily to hide the tears that sting. They’re getting on a plane tonight and flying back to their separate lives and there’s nothing she can do to stop that.

When she wakes up again it’s to the alarm on Emily’s phone. She frowns and scoots across the space that’s again appeared between them while they slept and locks both arms around one of Emily’s. “No,” she says with a pout.

She hears Emily chuckle through a yawn and feels the tension as she stretches lean muscles. “I actually have to go to work today, baby.” There’s a gentle tug as she tries to ease her arm from Stephanie’s hold.

Stephanie lets go with another pout and tilts her head up into the kiss Emily places on her forehead but has to ask, “What do you mean you actually have to go to work today?”

There’s a beat of silence and then Emily moves down to kiss her lips. “I meant instead of staying in bed with you all day and ordering room service. Which is what I’d much rather do.”
Something sounds off but Emily’s already out of bed and she has no choice but watch with hungry eyes as Emily’s lithe, nude body walks away toward the bathroom.

“You can’t leave without a quickie!” she shouts just as the door closes and waits with bubbly anticipation.

It reopens a second later. “Then get in here and shower with me. I can’t be late.”

Emily kisses her before she leaves for her important meeting, taking off her hat (which matches her suit) to do so. “I love you,” Emily says before kissing her one more time. Stephanie thinks Emily looks a bit like a child with a new toy every time she says the words. She wonders how often she says them to Sean, and if she looks, or ever looked, at him the way she looks at Stephanie. She knows Emily and Sean have chemistry; she’s seen it with her own eyes. But she didn’t get the same vibe from Emily with Sean that she gets from Emily with her. But she’s also biased.

“I love you, too.”

She tries not to think about all the things that might or might not mean as she flips the deadbolt on the door to lean against it for a moment, lips still warm from Emily’s kiss. Despite all the unknowns—and the even scarier knowns—she feels like a child with a new toy, too.

Stephanie’s third and final day in Los Angeles is spent much like her second: entertaining herself until Emily returns. She packs her small suitcase so it’s ready to go and wonders if Emily will notice if she tucks the blouse Emily had worn on their date into her bag.

Emily’s stolen enough of her panties by now; she figures it’s a fair trade.

She leaves the hotel to take a walk in the opposite direction she’d gone yesterday. She has lunch and calls Miles when she knows he’ll be home from school at Emily’s house.

When Sean answers the phone, it’s a harsh reality check. She smiles through the pleasantries. “LA is great. Emily’s still working. Yes, we tried a really great restaurant. I’m not sure what time. May I
speak to Miles, please?”

Her son’s voice, at least for the moment, distracts her from looming heartache.

She’s almost back to the hotel when Emily texts to say she’s on her way. That distracts from the heartache as much as it amplifies it because Emily finishing work means it’s time for their romantic getaway to end.

She decides to wait for Emily in bed; she’s been given no indication of a time they need to leave for the airport so she chooses to roll the dice and hope they don’t have to grab their bags and depart the moment Emily returns.

She strips and then slips into the négligée she had yet to make use of it; both nights went from clothed to nude with no in between (and she was very okay with that). She freshens up and settles into bed to wait until she hears the door unlock. Then she quickly turns onto her side, flips the sheet off her, and props her head up on her fist while her other hand rests on her thigh. She hopes she looks sexy and she waits, hearing the sound of Emily setting things down on the table in the other room before she enters.

“Well, hello,” Emily says with a soft smile as she slows in the doorway. “What is this?” She gestures toward Stephanie as she starts undoing the cufflinks on her sleeves.

“Well, welcome home,” she says, willing her voice to sound as sultry as Emily’s when she doesn’t even try. “Or, welcome back, I guess. Since this isn’t home. I’ll shut up now.” She grits her teeth through a smile; *trying* to be sexy isn’t something that comes very naturally to her but it doesn’t seem to bother Emily who’s made her way over to stand at the foot of the bed to gaze down at her.

Her cuffs are loose now and she’s working on unbuttoning her shirt. “You buy that today?”

“No,” Stephanie replies with a scoff. “As if I’d run out and buy a piece of lingerie to wear just for you while you’re toiling away at the office all day? Please.”

Emily’s shirt falls to the floor and her eyebrows arch in interest. “No?”

“No. I bought it a while ago.”
“Is that so?” Emily’s smiling at her as she kicks her pants to the side. “So it’s not for me?” Her bra and panties go next. Her eyes are bright as she bends to put her hands on the bed and then she’s crawling toward Stephanie. It’s slow, agonizing even, and Stephanie knows she knows exactly what she’s doing.

Stephanie shivers when Emily’s fingertip grazes the back of her knee and she gives in and rolls onto her back. “I didn’t say that.”

“Then it is for me?” Emily’s advance ceases and she sits back, kneeling astride Stephanie’s thighs.

Stephanie nods. “Do you like it?” Her early confidence falters under Emily’s appraisal and she has to fight the urge to cover herself where the sheer material leaves little to the imagination.

Emily’s hands rest on Stephanie’s waist and she can feel the thin fabric shift against her skin. “I love it.”

She shivers again when Emily’s fingertips start roaming; there seems to be no pattern or destination. It does feel like Emily’s almost mapping or memorizing the curves and planes of her body. She can see the pounding of her heart in the way it makes the material quiver. She’s already too worked up. (Too worked up for what? She’s not sure.) She lifts her hands to Emily’s knees to help ground herself. “When do we have to leave?”

“You’re so beautiful, baby.” Emily’s fingertips slip under the hem of the négligée to tickle the sensitive skin of her thighs. “We have time.”

“I’m not trying to be neurotic——” she has to pause to take an unsteady breath when a fingertip traces a line along the juncture of her thigh “—but exactly how much time do we have?” She glides her own hands up strong thighs to gain back some control (or at least reduce Emily’s).

She can see the reason for her question sink in with Emily and her bravado fades the tiniest bit; her posture sinks and her teasing fingers stop. Stephanie moves her own thumbs to try to negate that, grazing ever so gently between Emily’s thighs. It makes her draw a breath and Stephanie watches Emily’s hand take hers to guide it between them fully before she leans down.

“Enough time for this,” Emily whispers over her lips before kissing her.
It makes Stephanie whimper and she adjusts her hand to better touch Emily. She feels her settle above her and she thinks, at that moment, there’s no way two people could ever fit together more perfectly in the bedroom.

They don’t say much on the way to the airport. Stephanie’s filled with melancholy at the inevitable end of their escape and she wonders if Emily feels the same.

Emily stops her by the hand once they’re out of the car and on the tarmac, the Nylon jet waiting for them and she turns, surprised to see a soft smile. “We’ll always have LA,” Emily says with a wink.

Stephanie considers swooning in earnest but instead, she grabs Emily’s shoulder to steady herself. Emily remembering her excitement from the other day, how she felt like she was in *Casablanca*, indulging her, even wearing a hat just like Humphrey Bogart’s (which may or may not have been on purpose, given Emily’s style)...it makes her head swim. “I said I’d never leave you,” she replies. She hadn’t said that of course; it’s only a line from a movie but it resonates with her so deeply she almost believes she did.

“And you never will.” Emily’s looking at her with such sincerity Stephanie feels the world around them melt away and Stephanie knows, she knows she’s being a dumb, hopeless romantic right now but as much as she can believe she’d said those words she believes that Emily believes them, too. It makes her tear up but as soon as she turns away, embarrassed, Emily catches her by the chin to turn her back. “Here’s lookin’ at you, kid.”

Stephanie knows they don’t kiss in the movie next; Ilsa gets on the plane and leaves Rick because she has no choice.

But Emily does lean down and kiss her, soft and gentle and she’s smiling again when she straightens. “Don’t worry; I’m coming with you.”

Stephanie’s laugh is watery and she brushes away tears with her free hand; her other ended up in Emily’s at some point during their silver screen reenactment. “I’d hope so.”

Emily turns and offers her arm to Stephanie as she’d done on their date and Stephanie holds on to her tightly as they cross the expanse toward the waiting aircraft. “I do have to get back to Nicky.”
Her tone sounds like she’s teasing but Stephanie would never try to make something about herself when it was about someone more important like Emily’s son, but she can’t help but say, “Is that the only reason?” She glances up at Emily who has her head down, a smile playing at her lips again.

“You want me to say I’m going back because of you.”

Stephanie hasn’t figured out how to answer yet when Emily stops and steps back, letting go of Stephanie’s arm. She’s confused for a second until she realizes it’s because they’re at the stairs of the plane. She steps onto the first one and turns, pleased that it brings her eye to eye with Emily, even makes her have to look up a bit, though Stephanie still doesn’t know how to respond.

“You might have something to do with it, too.” Emily seems to be blushing but it’s hard to tell; the sun has set and she’s standing in a shadow. “Now let’s go,” she continues with a wave of her hand to get Stephanie to turn around and board.

She does and takes the same seat she’d had on the trip out and she smiles at Emily as she settles next to her and puts her arm around Stephanie’s shoulders. Emily’s confession on the stairs was trite in a way; of course, Emily would return home to her family. She would never disappear and abandon everyone.

But it still means something to Stephanie nonetheless.

It’s agonizing, the car ride from the heliport to Emily’s house. Stephanie knew better. She knew better than to let herself get so tangled up with a married woman. The three days spent in their bubble had been three of her happiest in recent years and now she has to return to the status quo. Her Single Mom Life and a cold empty bed and wild, passionate moments relegated to scheduling and secrecy. The trip had been a blessing and a curse; she’d been granted a glimpse of a life she could have—or could have had—if things played out differently. Nonetheless, she’s grateful for what she’s experienced and she can only hope that this is only the beginning, even though it feels a bit like an ending.

But they didn’t and she swallows the lump that appears in her throat when they turn onto Emily’s street.
“Thank you.”

Stephanie looks up from where her hand sits in Emily’s—she notices her wedding ring is back—to see the other woman already watching her. “For what?”

“For coming with me.”

Stephanie has to smile despite her sadness. “I’m the one who should be thanking you. It was so generous and I felt so fancy and—”

“I don’t mean for taking a girls’ trip with me, Steph,” Emily says with a soft smile and a shake of her head.

“Oh.” Stephanie squirms a little, unsure what Emily means until a hand comes up to touch her cheek just before Emily leans close to kiss her. It’s soft and warm and Stephanie can’t believe she’s doing it in the car with a driver Emily had addressed by name when they’d landed and who had asked her a few conversational questions about work and she’d asked him about his daughter’s science fair project. She knew the man behind the wheel and he knew her and if he were to glance in his mirror, he would see her kissing someone who is not her husband. But Emily kisses her anyway; it’s not hurried or stolen. “Oh,” Stephanie repeats, this time a little breathless, when it ends. She understands, or at least she hopes she does, that Emily’s thanking her for more than her sparkling conversation.

Emily’s lips touch hers once more and then she’s pulled into a hug that she doesn’t expect but melts into greedily nonetheless. “I love you,” drifts past her ear and Stephanie turns her face to press into Emily’s neck and inhales to breathe her in for what feels like one last time.

“I love you, too,” she says before kissing Emily’s neck and then it ends.

Emily pulls away as the car rolls to a stop and Stephanie lifts her head to see they’re parked outside Emily’s house. “Miles should already be packed up; want me to send him out to you?” Her hand is on the door handle, half-pulled but not yet open. “Or did you want to come in?”

It suddenly feels more difficult to breathe; three days ago Stephanie would have jumped at the chance to accept an invitation into Emily’s home but now it feels like a dark and foreboding haunted house with something lurking inside ready and waiting to destroy her.
“You can send him out, please.”

Emily nods and the pop of the car door sounds like a nail in a coffin and Stephanie tries again to rein in her doomsday mood but she’s gone from three days of perfect ecstasy to cold, hard reality and she’s never done well with loss, even if it’s a temporary one. She watches Emily step out of the car and turn to offer her hand to Stephanie to help her out and to her feet. It’s difficult to not automatically lean in and kiss her as she does so; she’s been able to do it whenever she wanted and it was a quick, easy habit to develop.

She resists the urge and feels a squeeze of her hand like Emily knows what she’s thinking. Then her hand is dropped and Emily waits for her to step out of the way before she closes the door. The driver hands them their bags from the trunk with nothing more than a smile and Emily turns to walk up her driveway toward the front door.

Stephanie follows until she’s next to her car and she blindly looks for her keys in her purse while she watches Emily climb the steps and open the door. Her son greets her immediately and she stoops to pick him up and Stephanie watches Emily pepper his face with kisses and she can hear Nicky squealing with laughter. It makes Stephanie smile but then Sean appears in the doorway and her smile falls. Emily sets Nicky down who disappears back into the house and Stephanie can’t seem to look away as the husband and wife kiss their hellos. It’s more than a quick peck but at least Emily’s not all over him the way she was the first day they met.

When it ends, Sean looks past Emily and they make eye contact. She jumps, startled as though she’s been caught staring which...okay, maybe she was. He waves so she waves back and turns to her car to hurriedly unlock it and toss her purse and bag into the back seat to wait for Miles.

Thankfully, she doesn’t have to wait long. He bounds down the steps shouting his goodbyes and he runs toward her. Her heart swells, the agony and feeling of defeat pushing aside for the love she has for her son whom she’s missed terribly.

She crouches down to catch him as he barrels into her. “Oh, my Smooch! I missed you!” She hugs him and appreciates that he returns her affection in kind instead of pushing her off him in embarrassment.

“Nicky broke my Ninja Turtle,” he says when he finally does wriggle himself out of her arms. He’s already digging in his backpack like he’s going to take it out and show her.

“You can show me when we get home. Hop in, buddy,” she says as she opens the door for him to climb into his seat and buckle himself in. “Did Nicky apologize?”
“Yeah. He gave me his Donatello because he broke my Donatello.” He’s digging in his backpack again and Stephanie lets him.

She closes the door and moves to get in but she glances at the house one more time. The front door is closed and her heart sinks that she didn’t take one last look at Emily before she disappeared but movement catches her eye and she looks up. Emily’s standing in the second-floor window, that beautiful hall where the bedrooms are, a bedroom where Stephanie has slept and done so much more. She’s alone, her hat and jacket gone, and she’s leaning against the railing that runs along the window watching Stephanie.

Emily smiles at her and Stephanie finally relaxes; it might not be a great situation to be in, but at least she’s not in it alone.

“Sleep well.”

Stephanie stares at the text that’s arrived around 10:00 pm. She wishes the words were being said aloud to her, Emily’s honey voice in her ear as they drifted to sleep together. But she’s alone on her couch with a glass of red wine and an episode of some murder-centric docuseries on TV that’s managed to keep her attention and distract her from the loneliness.

She second-guesses her reply a few times before she commits to it. “I miss you.”

She wants to add that she loves her but despite her confidence that Emily’s phone is secure and would never incriminate them, she’s too nervous that such a thing could lead to their unraveling. She watches the ellipsis appear and disappear a few times before Emily’s reply comes through.

“I know, baby.”

It’s as irritating as it is easy to go back to her routine the next day. It’s Saturday and Miles has her up early begging for his favorite breakfast that he’s been deprived of for two whole mornings. She listens to the cartoon he watches in case it gets too inappropriate (SpongeBob can get a little crass at times) while she carries a basket of colors to the laundry room. It’s mostly Miles’s clothing but
in a delicates bag on top are the pieces of lingerie she’d worn the past few days.

She tries not to think about how Emily’s hands felt touching her over the thin barely-there material of the négligée before she’d removed it from Stephanie’s body. She tries not to think about Emily’s semi-regular visits to her on Saturdays for laundry day as she closes the door of the washing machine to start it but the memories of what Emily’s done to her in that room make her have to lean against the machine and put her head down for a minute.

There’s now a memory of Emily in every room of her house. The kitchen where they’ve kissed and where she woke up to Emily making breakfast for their children. The living room where they sat comfortably together and Emily asked her on a date to Los Angeles. The couch where they made quick, daring love. Her bedroom where she’d found Emily asleep as though it was the only place she could find peace (and so much more). The dining room table which had been scandalized on a previous laundry day, Stephanie bent over it with her dress around her hips and her underwear around her knees as Emily thrust into her again and again.

The unexpected memory as she moves through the room makes her lightheaded and she has to stop and lean against a chair and focus on her breathing as she’d just had to do in the laundry room.

“Are you okay?”

She exhales slowly and then opens her eyes and smiles at her son who’s stopped mid-stride on his way to his bedroom. She hates lying to her son. “I’m fine,” she says anyway.

If Saturday was agony, Sunday is torture.

She knows that in the morning, she may bump into Sean at drop-off and have to face him for the first time since the trip. For the first time since she and Emily shared I love you s. She will have to exchange pleasantries and he may ask further about the trip as he makes polite conversation like the fine man she knows he is. The fine man whose wife she is carrying on an incredibly passionate affair with.

She doesn’t hear from Emily all day. She picks up her phone to text or call her at least a dozen times every hour. She’s trying to give Emily space, though she knows Emily didn’t ask for space. But Emily also hasn’t contacted her since they parted ways on Friday so she assumes she should respect that.
It’s a struggle to fall asleep again tonight as it had been last night. She tosses and turns until her heartache-driven over-tired mind pulls her out of bed and to the drawer where she’d folded and tucked away the blouse she’d borrowed (stolen is such a harsh word) from Emily. She brings it to her face and inhales; it smells like Emily’s perfume and the tiniest hint of the passion they’d shared while she wore it on their date. Maybe it’s creepy or maybe it’s cute, but Stephanie sheds her nightgown and replaces it with Emily’s blouse.

It’s easier to fall asleep after that.

She wakes to her usual Monday alarm; early enough to get up and get herself fully presentable and feed Miles a healthy breakfast before taking him to school.

She’d slept precious few hours; she remembers checking the time when she laid back down and it was after 3:00 am. 6:00 am is now painfully early. But after swiping away her alarm she notices a notification for one new text message. Her heart races as she opens it hoping it’s from Emily.

“I have to pick up Miles today,” it says. It’s timestamped 5:37 am. She knows Emily has to get up early to make it into the city for work; she probably sent it while she was getting dressed in her incredible closet where they’d spent many, many minutes kissing in the past. “Playdate at your place?”

It’s as run-of-the-mill as their other texts were before things changed between them but “playdate” has a whole new meaning and every possible emotion sweeps through her from happiness to arousal to anticipation to relief.


The three hours of sleep suddenly feel like eight; her energy is sky-high and she hops out of bed ready to face the bitchy parents at drop-off. She’s even ready to face Sean if she has to because she knows she’s going to be fucking his wife this afternoon and even if she knows it’s so very, very ethically and morally wrong, she can’t help but love it.

She’s about to rush out of her room to start breakfast when she realizes she’s still wearing Emily’s blouse like it’s a robe with nothing under it and she freezes, turns back, and changes into a pair of sweatpants and an old T-shirt before leaving to wake up her son for school.
She doesn’t see Sean in the fifteen minutes she’s at school walking Miles to his classroom and checking in with his teacher about her plans for a class holiday music program. She’d been so mentally prepared for it after Emily’s text message that she’s disappointed it doesn’t happen. Her disappointment fades, however, once she’s on her way home to tidy things up and get ready for the playdate.

She rushes through her vlog (using tongs and a pair of microfiber cloths to quickly and easily dust the slats of blinds) so she has enough time to take a bath. She wants to exfoliate and shave and relax. She knows she doesn’t need to spend so much time pampering herself—Emily already loves her—but she wants to look and feel and smell nice for her because Stephanie loves her, too.

“Why did you change your clothes?”

Stephanie looks down at Miles who’s looking up at her in confusion as they walk down the hall of Warfield Elementary. “What do you mean?”

“You look like it’s garden day. Are we planting something?”

She covers her mouth to hide her initial reaction, which is to laugh, and shakes her head. She’d dressed as casually as she dared, trying hard to not look like she was trying too hard. Jeans and a tee and a cardigan. “No, sweetie. I spilled on myself so I had to put on different clothes.”

“Oh, okay. So no gardening?”

“No, Smooch.”

“Who’s gardening?”

She looks up from her conversation to find Emily walking her way. Her style and demeanor are as effortlessly flawless as always, hand in the pocket of her black trousers and a red pocket square in
her black tailored jacket. Her blouse is white and the jacket is unbuttoned; she’s wearing a vest, too, and Stephanie’s taken back to the first day they met; the outfit is similar enough that she wonders if maybe she can be the one to yank what might be a false shirt off her.

“No one,” Stephanie says when Emily slows to a stop a few feet away. She has to root herself to the floor to stop from running to Emily’s arms. She can tell Emily’s happy to see her even with her usual cool demeanor; Stephanie’s been learning to read her eyes more and more and she’s finally found the commonality present whenever they see each other after being apart. “Hello,”

“Hey,” Emily says with a slight smile and then she glances down at Miles. “Where’s Nicky? We’re coming over to your house today.”

“Another playdate?!?” he shrieks excitedly and then takes off running back toward his classroom and for a few seconds, she and Emily are semi-alone in the hall.

“You’d think he didn’t just spend all day with Nicky. And all night twice last week,” Emily says.

Stephanie smiles and tilts her head. “I guess sometimes you can’t help being excited to spend more time with your best friend.”

Emily’s feet move and for one thrilling second, Stephanie thinks she’s going to be kissed in the middle of the school in front of other parents who are milling about waiting for children or talking to each other. “I wouldn’t mind doing a little gardening,” Emily says as her path shifts and instead Stephanie’s left with a brush of their hands which, she learns, thrills her just as much. And the innuendo of her words... *God.*

She turns to watch Emily walk away as if an unseen force between them demands it. Besides, she thinks as she lets her eyes roam, no one can wear a tailored suit as well as Emily Nelson and that should be fully appreciated from all angles. She follows but at a pace slow enough that won’t put her back in the boys’ classroom before everyone returns to have to greet and bid farewell to Mrs. Kerry again.

She hears them before she sees them leave the classroom, already chattering excitedly in voices far too loud for indoors, talking over one another despite what seems to be a mutual goal on deciding what game they are going to play first. They’re almost running, little backpacks empty save for what is most likely a few pieces of paper bouncing on their backs. Emily follows, the most graceful, sexy shepherd ever to shoo a pair of children down an elementary school hallway.
“No running!” Stephanie says as they break into a sprint as soon as they’re past her. “Don’t you
dare cross that parking lot without me, buster!”

“You’re going to have to trust him to look both ways eventually.” Emily’s hand touches her elbow
to turn her so they can follow the boys together.

The excuse for gentle public contact thrills her again. “I know, but first grade isn’t going to be the
year for it. How was your day?”

“Shitty. Yours?”

“Productive,” she answers with a nod and then notices Darren, Stacy, and Sona all conveniently
waiting outside the school entrance with their own children—and Miles and Nicky.

“Another playdate with strong martinis?” Darren asks with one of his snide smiles Stephanie’s
grown to hate.

“Let’s go, Smooch,” she says, ignoring him as she takes her son’s hand.

“You don’t seriously like hanging out with her, do you?”

She hears Stacy behind her and she knows the question is directed at Emily; she’d be more
offended if it was directed at her instead. Either way, her back stiffens and she refuses to turn back
and engage; instead, she helps Miles double-check looking both ways.

“What exactly is that supposed to mean?” It’s Emily, and Stephanie keeps a sharp ear and uses
Miles’s untied shoelace as an excuse to stop and crouch to tie it so she can listen.

“Come on; what could you and Mary Poppins possibly have in common?”

“Why do you care who I spend my time with? Or Stephanie.”

“Because you should hang out with us instead.”
“Why would I ever want to do that?”

“I have a green card,” Darren says with an exaggerated whisper. Stephanie has to shush Miles to make him wait while she continues to pretend to tie his other shoe to keep listening.

“You think I don’t know how to get weed?” Emily says it with a laugh and it earns a panicked round of shushing which is amusing given Darren’s confidence a second earlier. “You know what? You can all go fuck yourselves. Stephanie is a great person and you don’t deserve her friendship even if you were smart enough to want it.”

The outburst almost makes Stephanie laugh but she’s too stunned by Emily leaping to her defense once again when the catty parents dared try to defame her.

“Mom, that’s too tight!”

“Oh, shoot!” she says when she realizes she’s tugged Miles’s shoelaces much too tight. She loosens and reties them and she’s just straightening from her crouch when she sees Emily breeze past her, walking with clear purpose.

“Let’s go, baby.”

Stephanie feels herself pale and not from standing up too quickly. There’s no way the other parents didn’t hear that, but if they’re reacting to it, she can’t hear it over the voices of their kids and the ringing in her ears and the heart thudding in her chest.

“We’ve trained them well,” Emily says as the boys run to Miles’s room and slam the door.

Stephanie laughs but feels guilt settle in her; she never used to tell Miles to go play in his room, until she started needing privacy. He seems to like it, though, and she tells herself he probably likes the sense of autonomy it gives him. She’s still stepping out of her shoes when an arm wraps around her waist and a hand sweeps her hair back to make room on her neck for the lips that follow.
“I think the other parents heard what you said,” she says. She leans back into Emily’s embrace instead of turning to kiss her.

Emily’s hold on her is as strong as it is gentle and it has them shuffling forward in the general direction of Stephanie’s bedroom. “What did I say?”

“You called me ‘baby.’”

“And?”

“Friends don’t call each other ‘baby.’”

“And?” Emily repeats, this time with a playful bite to the curve of Stephanie’s neck that makes her eyelashes flutter. She’s trying really hard to make a point right now but that point is starting to become smaller and smaller the more she thinks about all the places their bodies are touching.

“What will they think?”

“Let them think what they want. No one would believe them anyway.”

The words land wrong with her and she tries to pull out of Emily’s grasp but fails and instead finds herself being pushed more speedily toward her room. “Why wouldn’t anyone believe them?”

Emily laughs, low and warm in her ear, and it makes it difficult to stay miffed at her. “Come on, baby. They’re always gossipping about someone. No one takes them seriously.”

She relaxes a little at Emily’s clarification. “And if they gossip about us and it makes it back to Sean?”

“Then I’ll deal with it.”

One of the hands around her waist starts moving lower until it slips between her legs. It makes what was already a loosely coordinated shuffle fall apart and she can’t move. Emily’s hand is so
“Why the hell are you wearing jeans?” Emily asks as her other hand starts tugging at the button on them. “When have you ever worn jeans in your life?”

She can’t help but chuckle at Emily’s irritation. “Wanted to make you work for it,” she admits. “But I’m having some regrets right now.” She forces herself forward again, step by step doing her best to ignore the fact that Emily’s hand is rubbing the seam of her jeans against her just right.

“Should we feed them first?” Emily asks as they make their way past Miles’s closed bedroom door. “So they don’t interrupt us.”

Stephanie shakes her head and finally breaks into a normal stride after grabbing Emily’s hand away from her to pull her along. “Miles knows what snacks he can help himself to.”

She yanks Emily into her bedroom and closes the door behind them, immediately pressing Emily back against it while she locks it. She’s already leaning in when Emily leans down to kiss her, hands in her hair, then on her breasts, then on her jeans to try to push them down. The onslaught of affection and lust is dizzying and she clings to Emily, arms around her neck as she lets Emily start to undress her.

She only lets go when Emily pulls her arms off her to push her back a step so she can lift Stephanie’s shirt over her head and off. She misses the embrace for a second but only until she realizes that her hands are now free to hurriedly undress Emily, too.

“Why are you wearing so many layers?” she asks between kisses as she pushes Emily’s jacket off her shoulders while she finishes stepping out of her own jeans. The blouse is sleeveless under her vest and she runs her hands over Emily’s strong upper arms.

“Wanted to make you work for it,” Emily smirks before kissing her again and backing her up a step toward the bed.

“Is this what you were wearing?” She doesn’t finish the sentence, too busy trading kisses, but her fingers hook into the collar under Emily’s chin, ready to pull if Emily confirms her suspicion.

Emily doesn’t respond right away; she’s too busy making Stephanie’s knees weak with what she’s
doing with her tongue and the way her hands are grabbing greedily at Stephanie’s ass. Finally, she nods as she says, “You remember?”

“How could I forget?” Stephanie kisses her again. Hard. And yanks.

It comes off with a pop and she pulls it out of Emily’s vest and tosses it aside, immediately going to work on the buttons of her vest until she’s pushing that down and off her arms, too. She has Emily’s bra unhooked, sides of the band in both her hands and Emily’s hand down the front of her panties when there’s a knock on her door and a rattle of the doorknob.

“Mom!”

“Fuck,” she whispers, head dropping to rest against Emily’s chest as she strips the bra down despite the interruption and brings her hands back up to cover Emily’s breasts. “What is it, Smooch?” she calls, trying to sound normal.

“Can we have popcorn?”

She whimpers, Emily’s fingers starting to rub with purpose, and lifts her head again to speak. “You can have carrot sticks! You know where they are.” It’s met with not one but two voices of complaint.

“Let your kid have popcorn,” Emily says with a smile.

“He can’t use the microwave unsupervised. Are you going to go out there and make it for them right now?”

“Eat the carrots, Nicky!” Emily says and pushes Stephanie back. It’s clear her intent is to get her on the bed but Stephanie turns them and instead pushes Emily onto it, topless.

Stephanie waits, standing between Emily’s knees as they listen to more protests before there’s silence and, after several agonizing seconds, the sound of Miles’s door closing again. Then she falls right to her knees and reaches for the button and zipper of Emily’s pants to undo them and pull them down, Emily helping to kick them away and Stephanie groans.
“Seriously?” Emily isn’t wearing any underwear. “I thought you wanted to make me work for it?”

Emily laughs and lets Stephanie push her knees wider. “Within reason. Are you complaining?”

Stephanie shakes her head and moves in to let her tongue lick through Emily.

They both moan and she glances up to see Emily leaning back a bit, watching her as she likes to do. Her hand rakes through Stephanie’s hair as her hips tilt toward her. “I missed you, too.”

It has been days since Stephanie sent that text that she watched Emily start and restart her response to, only to get something slightly less disarming in reply. But Emily remembers, and remembers it enough in this very moment to mention it. It almost makes Stephanie tear up because it’s a reminder they both want this to be different and they can’t have it that way; it’s so easy to think Emily isn’t in it the same way she is when she has a husband until she goes and says something like that.

“And not just because of this,” Emily adds after another quiet moan.

Stephanie has to close her eyes so she doesn’t cry.

“We should get dressed,” Stephanie whispers against Emily’s lips. She knows it’s been long enough that they’re really pressing their luck in getting interrupted again. The boys will entertain themselves only so long before they start asking about dinner or decide they want a change of venue and start wondering why their mommies are hiding in Stephanie’s room.

Emily’s nails drag down her back, around her hips, down her thighs and back up until she’s touching Stephanie again. “Or I can make you come one more time.”

Stephanie bites her lip through a quiet moan as she lets her forehead fall against Emily’s; they’re sitting up in bed, Emily’s back to the headboard and Stephanie astride her lap. “I don’t think I can.”

Emily doesn’t respond, at least not verbally; instead, she kisses Stephanie. It’s soft and slow and so is her touch; it’s gentle and almost relaxing. She settles into it, content to allow Emily to try and
Stephanie has no expectations; her body has been sated and the desperate sexual desire is gone. She just wants to be close to Emily, to breathe her in, to feel her everywhere. Her hands roam aimlessly through Emily’s tousled hair, down her arms and over her chest. There’s something so...reassuring, so grounding about having Emily’s breasts in her hands. She can’t explain it, and it’s not inherently sexual. She tries to rationalize it and decides it has something to do with domesticity and motherhood, a commonality between them. She’s still thinking about that when Emily’s fingers press just right to make pleasure zip through her and she slumps forward to wrap her arms around Emily’s neck.

“Okay, maybe I can,” she says as she lets her hips start rolling.

She hears Emily hum in agreement, feels her lips on her shoulder and though her touch is a bit more purposeful now, it’s still soft and gentle. Warmth spreads through her, starting where Emily’s fingers touch her and traveling up to her head and down to her toes until she’s gasping and trembling in quiet ecstasy.

Emily’s free hand wanders over her back until it slides up the back of her neck, fingernails scratching lightly to make Stephanie shiver as the gentlest of tugs pulls Stephanie back so they’re looking at each other. Emily kisses her soundly. “I love you, baby,” she says when they part.

Stephanie feels the words in her very bones. “I love you, too.” She leans in to kiss Emily again and sighs at the way Emily’s arms wrap around her waist to pull her closer.

They’re still for a long moment then, holding each other, kissing when their lips are drawn to one another by an unseen force.

She knows this has to end soon—whether “this” is this moment together or their affair, she really doesn’t know, but she can feel it. It’s been three months since this began and affairs like theirs, hot and passionate, refuse to stay hidden forever. It’s only a matter of time before it blows up. Before they forget to draw the blinds or avoid a window. Before their lusty gazes linger too long. Before gossip fails to be explained away.

Before Emily decides to stop putting her family unit at risk and ends things with Stephanie.

Stephanie hugs her fiercely at the thought and feels it returned in kind. She doesn’t know how long they stay like that; she doesn’t let go until there’s a knock on her door again and her son’s voice asking if they can have noodles for dinner.
She sits back and is floored to see tears on Emily’s cheeks.

“Oh, sweetheart,” Stephanie whispers as she brushes them away and kisses her, and kisses her again, and again until Emily starts to nudge her off her lap because reality is hungry and demanding their attention.

She wants to ask why this continues to happen, what emotions Emily’s experiencing to bring her to tears when they have these moments of intense intimacy, but she knows the answer could very well kill her before it even has a chance to end.

She has to ask, though.

She resolves to do it as soon as they have real privacy once again.

“I’m going to ask my mom if she want to see Miles this weekend, okay?” she says with another kiss to Emily’s lips. “Spend the night with me Friday.”

“Okay,” is all Emily says as they climb out of bed and start handing each other articles of discarded clothing. “Friday.” The way she says it makes Stephanie think that she knows something’s coming, too.

To be continued...
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Hello, my friends! Our favorite Murder Moms are back! And a bit of darkness may lie in wait for them...

Stephanie drives Miles to her mother’s house after school. She crosses paths with Emily during pick-up but their pleasantries are brief knowing they will see each other in a more private setting in a few hours.

She doesn’t spend her time that afternoon pampering and prepping herself for a night alone with Emily; as much as she wants to, she makes an effort to put the brakes on letting her body be the one in control. Tonight is supposed to be about communication, open and honest even if it’s difficult and painful. She knows it’s necessary.

She hopes it’s for the best.

They kiss when Emily arrives; it happens so suddenly the front door isn’t even finished closing and it’s Emily who initiates it. She strides forward to pull Stephanie into her arms and kiss her as she drops the designer bag she’s brought with her on the floor.

She can tell Emily wants to escalate things; she’s demanding with her kiss and rough in the way her hands pull and grab at her body. It takes everything she has to catch Emily’s insistent hands, slow down their kiss, and bring them up between them to kiss her knuckles.

“Later, okay?” she asks with a kiss that she hopes feels decisive. She doesn’t have the willpower to resist another onslaught like she just experienced.

Emily whines in irritation and it’s so cute Stephanie can’t help but kiss her one more time, but she backs out of reach before it gets out of hand again. “Since when do you make us wait?”
“Since I have dinner waiting.” She turns and pulls Emily with her toward the kitchen.

“You made dinner?”

“I have dinner,” Stephanie corrects. She would have made something amazing for Emily tonight if she’d had time but it was a long drive to and from her parents’ house. Instead, she’d picked up a variety of sushi and laid out what she thinks is a nice little spread.

“You didn’t have to do this, baby,” Emily says even as she drops Stephanie’s hand to pick up one of the plates Stephanie had set out for use.

Emily’s eagerness makes her happy; it feels like she’s providing for her and she would do almost anything to be able to provide for Emily every day. As quickly as she thinks this, however, it’s replaced by melancholy; there’s a reason she asked Emily to spend the night tonight: they have a few things they need to discuss.

“Well, we need to eat, so,” she replies with a smile that feels forced as she joins Emily in picking and choosing pieces for her plate. She feels Emily’s eyes on her.

“What’s going on with you?”

“What do you mean?”

She can see Emily pointing at her with the chopsticks in her hand. “You’re being weird.”

“No, I’m not.” Stephanie flashes a smile at her but she doesn’t meet her eyes. She knows she’s being weird. “Do you want to sit at the table? Or we can eat on the couch.”

“Couch,” Emily says before popping a roll into her mouth. She doesn’t wait for Stephanie’s agreement or invitation; she takes her plate and one of the glasses of white wine Emily’s poured for both of them and backtracks the way she came to drop a kiss on Stephanie’s cheek.

She can’t help but lean into it and then she’s alone in the kitchen. She can see Emily settling in on the couch, her jacket already tossed aside, sleeves unbuttoned and rolled up nearly to her elbows.
She knows Emily will have her collar unbuttoned, too, and her shoes are probably discarded next to the couch as she sits.

Emily makes herself at home in Stephanie’s house in a way Stephanie’s never been comfortable doing in Emily’s. There’s an aura of ease that starts to surround an otherwise tense Emily and it looks so, so good on her. Especially when it seems to be Stephanie and her home that cause it.

“Are you coming or what?”

Emily’s voice interrupts her thoughts and she grabs her chopsticks and glass of wine to join her on the couch. She’d been correct; Emily’s unbuttoned and relaxed and sitting cross-legged on the couch and she smiles at her.

“Couldn’t decide what I wanted,” Stephanie offers as an excuse for her tardiness in lieu of an apology. She weaves between Emily’s knee and the coffee table and fully expects the swat to her rear end that comes as she passes, but she yelps anyway. Emily’s vibe and playfulness do wonders, she notices as she joins her on the couch, to erode her anxieties. They still linger, though, and every time she imagines asking the first question, her palms start to sweat.

“How was your day? Figure out how to end global warming in today’s vlog?” She knows Emily’s teasing.

“Not for lack of trying,” she says with a sigh of fake frustration. “What about you? How was yours?”

Emily hums and shakes her head. “You know we don’t talk about my day.”

Stephanie sees her chance and takes it, but not before a shaky breath. “Why don’t we?”

Emily looks up from her plate; she seems surprised that Stephanie’s questioning her. “What?”

“Why can’t we ever talk about your day?” She tries to keep her voice steady; serious but gentle. Insistent but calm. “I want to know about your life, Em. Outside of how you spend it with me.”
“You don’t need to know about my life.” Emily says it with a bitter laugh and what Stephanie would have once been offended by she now recognizes as a defensive tactic.

“Except, I do.” She sets her plate on the table and shifts closer to Emily; Stephanie can see the tension starting to creep through her, the lazy comfort of minutes ago fading into stoicism. “I love you.” She says it with conviction and reaches out to rest her hand on Emily’s leg in an effort to reinforce that. “And I want to love all of you. No, that’s not right. I already know I do. I just want to know what makes you you.”

Emily laughs again but it’s more sad than dry this time. “You really don’t.”

“You can’t know that.”

“Oh, but I do.” Emily sets her plate down, too, and unfolds herself to sit facing forward and something about that begins to feel foreboding.

“You don’t get to decide that for me.” She surprises even herself that she hasn’t yet bent to Emily’s will and dropped the subject. “What could possibly be so confidential about Dennis Nylon that you can’t tell me about some stunt he pulled to make your life hell? Or about something really amazing you did?”

“This isn’t about my job.”

“Then tell me about your life!” Stephanie’s heart is racing now; she and Emily have never argued before. She’s not sure if what’s happening right now is really an argument, but it’s something exhilarating that makes her brave. “You never tell me anything. I practically had to beg you just to tell me you’re from Michigan. I don’t know anything about your parents, if they’re still around, if they got divorced when you were a kid. I don’t know where you went to college or what you majored in.”

“Why does any of that matter?” Emily almost yells it but she’s still rooted in her spot on the couch and Stephanie knows if she was angry, truly angry, she would put distance between them. Maybe even leave.

“Because it’s who you are!”
Emily gestures at herself. “You don’t need to know any of that to know who I am! I’m right here. You know who I am.”

“And you know everything about me,” Stephanie tries. “I want you to. I want you to know when I had a bad day and that my mother has a gambling problem that she won’t admit, and when I had Miles, I almost lost him—” her voice catches; she hadn’t been meaning to revisit that but her need and desire for Emily to know all of her is so very real. She takes a breath and she knows she’s on the verge of tears. “I almost lost him. All of those things are who I am.”

Emily seems taken aback by her outburst and softens. “What happened with Miles?”

Stephanie shakes her head. “I will tell you. I will tell you all about it. But right now, I want to learn who you are.” She shifts to sit on her knees and moves closer still. She takes one of her hands in her own but Emily pulls it away after a second or two. She tries to not be hurt by it. “Why won’t you let me in?”

Emily’s trying to stare her down and it’s not working. Stephanie’s dug in and she’s not going to let this be swept under the rug again. She’s too invested in this, in them, to accept that.

“I’m not a good person.”

It takes Stephanie a second to realize Emily actually gave her some kind of an answer. “What? Of course, you are.”

“I’m really not,” Emily says with another wry chuckle as she turns away so Stephanie can’t read her face.

“Yes, I do.” She reaches for Emily’s again, desperate for some kind of connection, one that may console Emily from the turmoil Stephanie feels twisting inside her. She doesn’t pull it away this time and Stephanie considers it one tiny victory. “You love Nicky more than anything; I can see that plain as day. You’d do anything for him.”
Emily pushes her free hand through her hair and Stephanie can tell she’s pulling on the roots in frustration. “That doesn’t make me a good person.”

“Yes, it does!” she says with an insistent squeeze of Emily’s hand.

Emily shakes her head and reaches for her wine to take a long drink of it. She still won’t meet Stephanie’s eyes. “It really fucking doesn’t.”

“Then tell me why it doesn’t.”

“I’m having an affair.”

Stephanie’s heart stops. Jealousy and anger flash and then she realizes it’s she with whom Emily’s having the affair. It’s become so easy to erase Sean from the picture and pretend Emily is her wife. She snaps her mouth shut when she notices it’s open from that initial shock and hopes Emily continues.

“It’s not like I’ve never fucked someone outside my marriage before,” she continues; Stephanie knows her choice of words is her way to protect herself. “But he’s always known about it. It’s never been…” She drifts into silence and Stephanie tries to will her to keep going.

When she doesn’t, she quietly prompts, “It’s never been…?”

Emily takes a breath. “Like this,” she finishes and it sounds watery. She still has her head down, staring at the floor or the table; anywhere but at Stephanie.

She again refuses to continue. “And what is ‘this’ like?” Stephanie prods. She can see the cracks in Emily’s façade clearly now; she itches to take a pickaxe to them and break it down once and for all.

Emily glances at her sidelong, but only for a brief moment. “Like you don’t know.”
“No, I don’t. Why do you think I’m begging you to tell me?” She almost laughs as she says it.

Emily pulls her hand away but, to Stephanie’s pleasant surprise, it’s only to rejoin them at a more comfortable angle. “I don’t…” She hesitates. Takes a breath. “I don’t love Sean. I never have.”

Stephanie’s heart feels like it’s going to pound its way out of her chest. She waits. She can’t risk saying a word or moving a muscle lest she breaks the spell.

“I don’t love people.” She seems to be drifting, eyes unfocused as she stares at nothing. “I tried that a few times. Everyone left. Everyone always leaves.” She huffs a sardonic laugh. “But I do love Nicky. I love my sister.”

Stephanie’s ears ring; finally, something.

“And I don’t know why but for some fucking reason, I love you.”

She winces. It’s as backhanded of a statement as they come.

“But I wish I didn’t.”

She must make some type of sound because Emily glances her way and the focus returns to her eyes as she realizes what she’s said.

“I wish I didn’t because you’re a good person. I don’t deserve you and you don’t deserve the shit that comes with me.”

“Em, that’s not—”

“Don’t say it’s not true. You don’t know.”

“I know I don’t. That’s why I’m asking you to tell me.” Stephanie knows she’s crying; she can feel the tears warm on her cheeks, but she doesn’t bother with them. Instead, she pushes herself closer until she has her free arm—Emily’s still holding her hand—around her shoulders. She almost
pushes her way into her lap but she doesn’t want Emily to feel trapped. “I love you, Emily. I’m not going to leave you.”

“Hope.”

Emily blurs it out and then covers her mouth and closes her eyes. There are tears in the corners of them.

Stephanie tries to wait for her to continue but nothing comes. “Hope? What do you hope for?”

She shakes her head. “My name,” she says with a shaky breath.

“You hope for your name? Sweetheart, I don’t underst—”

“My name is Hope.”

Stephanie freezes. She feels the room start to tilt and when her lungs start to burn, she takes a breath. “I don’t—what? I don’t understand.”

“I changed it. I had to, when—” A sob escapes her and Stephanie’s need to comfort her overpowers the fear and confusion. She squeezes her hand and tightens the arm around her shoulders. “My sister. She left me. Abandoned me.”

“What? Why would she do that? When?”

“We...we ran away. When we were 16. After our father died.”

“You ran away from home?”

Emily nods. She’s starting to drift again, staring into space. “There was a fire. People were looking for us. We’re twins and—”
“You have a twin sister?” She regrets it as soon as she says it; it had been a kneejerk reaction to some very intense information and not the time or way to respond to it.

She bobs her head. “Faith. And Charity. We were triplets. Charity was stillborn so it was just the two of us.” She twists her wrist, the one Stephanie’s holding, like it’s uncomfortable and Stephanie’s eyes move to it and the flames and charity symbol tattooed there. “But we had to split up. The cops were saying it was arson. We didn’t want to be arrested. Or sent back home. Our mother is…” She doesn’t finish the thought. “We were supposed to meet up again, later. But she never showed up.”

“Is she…?” Stephanie says gently.

“Dead? No,” Emily laughs, bitterly. “She’s like a cockroach. Strung out on heroin. Honestly, I don’t know how she’s still alive. That shit should have killed her years ago. We’d put her in rehab but she’d check herself out. She found me, came looking for cash. Again and again. I couldn’t handle seeing her that way; she wasn’t the person I used to know. So, I gave her everything I had, changed my name, moved, and erased my life so she couldn’t find me ever again.”

The pieces start falling into place for Stephanie. Emily’s skittishness. Her need to keep everyone (but Stephanie, it seemed) at arm’s length. Her defensiveness and her airs and her privacy. “That’s why...when I took your picture...?”

“Bingo.” Now it’s humor, or maybe dismissiveness? that Emily is using to deflect, but at least she keeps talking. “But, she found me. Fucking Facebook.”

“Where is she now?”

“California,” Emily says with a slow nod like she’s confirming a hypothesis, and Stephanie thinks maybe she is.

“LA?”

“Mm.” Emily lifts her eyebrows, nods, and sighs. “Or, she was. She could be anywhere now.”

Everything made sense. The impromptu trip. Emily’s exhaustion while there. The wild emotional release when she told Stephanie how she felt about her.
“What did she want?”

“A million dollars.” She laughs after she says it, then pulls her hand from Stephanie’s to cover her face for a minute before rubbing her eyes and then turning to look at her, finally, for the first time in what’s felt like ages. She looks like she’s been steamrolled, eye makeup smudged and face pale. “Pocket change, right?”

“A million…” Stephanie loses her breath at the statement. “Do you even have—”

“No, I don’t have a million dollars.”

Stephanie waits; they’re both silent and so she waits.

And Emily crumbles.

“I can’t let her hurt Nicky.”

She crumbles into Stephanie’s arms in tears and she catches her. Emily, so strong and poised and tall feels so small in her arms, her body wracked by sobs.

“What? No. No, no, no,” Stephanie says as she holds her, mind spinning. “Nothing’s going to happen to Nicky.” She doesn’t know what Emily’s sister—Faith?—could possibly have said to cause this reaction.

Emily shakes her head furiously and clings to her like she’s a lifeline so Stephanie holds her more tightly. “Okay. Okay, we won’t let anything happen to him. I promise.”

She doesn’t know how long they stay like that on the couch, Emily crying and Stephanie holding her. Eventually, the tears stop and before Emily can recoil and try to make excuses, Stephanie gathers her up and helps her to her feet and together they walk to her room.

Emily sinks onto the bed looking defeated and allows Stephanie to undress her. She unbuttons and removes her blouse and then her pants. As soon as they’re off, Emily turns and crawls to her side of
the bed and Stephanie helps her get under the covers and tucked in. She kisses her cheek before leaving the room. She makes quick work of cleaning up their forgotten dinner, locks up the house, turns off the lights, washes up, and slips into bed.

She expects to find Emily already asleep but she’s not; instead, as soon as Stephanie’s in bed, Emily turns over and presses herself close, an arm around Stephanie’s waist and her face pressing into her shoulder. It reminds her of a sleepy cat trying to demand attention and she rests her hands over Emily’s arm and slips a foot between hers.

Stephanie’s terrified. Emily said so much and she has so much to piece together. Her drug-addicted sister is threatening her child’s life. She’s in a loveless marriage. She trusts no one. She refuses to let herself love anyone.

But she trusts Stephanie.

She loves Stephanie.

“It’ll be okay,” she says quietly with a twist of her head to kiss the top of Emily’s. “I promise.”

“You can’t promise that.” Emily doesn’t quite sound like herself. Sad, tired, afraid, spent. All of the above.

“Too late.” She kisses her again and finds her hand to lock their fingers together. “I already did.”

It’s the first night they spend together without making love.

Stephanie doesn’t even miss it.

It’s what she wakes up to, though.

She wakes up to the tickle of hair across her arms and the warmth of lips on her chest and the tease of fingertips between her legs. It’s not the first time she’s been woken by Emily touching her body,
but it’s the first time she’s woken by Emily touching her body.

She gasps and her back arches and the fingers slip into her. They glide so easily she wonders how; she’d been sound asleep and wasn’t having sexy dreams. She hadn’t been even remotely aroused when she’d fallen asleep.

She wonders how long Emily was touching her before she woke up because the need that hits her is overwhelming, like she’s been teased for hours without release. She bucks into the touch, desperate for speed and friction as she feels her nipple bathed with the warm wetness of Emily’s tongue.

She hasn’t even opened her eyes yet this morning and she’s already on the verge of climax.

“Please.”

It’s the only word she manages before moaning. She reaches for Emily; she wants to touch her, to rake her nails down her back, grab her hand and press it close while she grinds against it.

Only her arms don’t move.

They can’t. It’s like they’re stuck and she has a moment of panic before the scrape of metal gets her attention.

She groans and pulls against the pair of handcuffs that have her wrists chained together and tied to her own bed, now understanding why she can’t touch Emily.

“You’re okay?” Emily murmurs against the curve of her breast.

Stephanie almost laughs because she is most decidedly not okay, but she knows that isn’t what Emily means.

“God, yes,” she breathes and arches into the harsh suck at her breast that follows her consent.
Emily’s descent is quick, then. Her kisses down Stephanie’s abdomen are hurried as she moves down and between her legs which she’s quick to open to accommodate her frame. The fingers never leave her and Emily’s tongue finds her.

The first thing Stephanie sees when she opens her eyes this glorious morning is the gleam of the metal ensnaring her wrists. It sends even more excitement and arousal coursing through her veins and she casts her eyes down to see Emily between her legs licking her in a way that feels like she’s daring Stephanie not to come. There was no slow build-up, no burning tease. Everything’s gone from zero to sixty and Stephanie’s arms flex against her restraint as she lifts her hips again and again.

If she was dared not to come, she fails. She comes with a sharp cry at a perfect curling of Emily’s fingers.

She’s still catching her breath when she feels Emily rise from where she’s been lying to instead be on her hands and knees. Stephanie’s vision is still hazy and Emily’s hair is hanging down and obscuring her view but she sees enough to know what’s coming next.

She’s already nodding when Emily asks, “Can I fuck you, baby?” Hands push and pull at her hips. “Turn over for me.”

It’s awkward. Difficult. She can’t use her hands and the rotation wrenches the links of the handcuffs together and it’s almost claustrophobic. She’s about to say something when she feels Emily behind her, leaning over her with the tiny silver key to unlock the band on her left wrist.

Stephanie pulls it free in relief and then she hears the cuff snap closed again. She looks to see it locked around one of the rods of the headboard, still chaining her to it. But she has her left hand free.

This was not at all how she expected her morning to go after the way their night had ended, but there’s not a complaint anywhere in her body as she pushes herself onto her knees and elbows to wait for it.

Emily’s hands are everywhere. Her lips are everywhere. She can feel the warmth of her tongue and the chill from the air and the brush of her hair and the graze of her breasts. The press of cool, slick silicone that Stephanie knows will soon be warm as it eases into her.
She hisses; it doesn’t hurt, but there’s more pressure than usual. Then she gasps when it reaches more deeply than it ever has. Her palm, the one still chained, slaps against the wall between the metal rods to push back against it and she hears Emily moan.

“Is that—” She can’t speak when Emily pulls back, every inch making her toes curl. She stops short of withdrawing completely and she finds her voice again. “Is that new?”

“All Stephanie manages is a whimper but that is, thankfully, good enough for Emily who begins to set a pace, slow and steady that allows Stephanie to get used to the upgrade in size.”

All Stephanie can feel are Emily’s hands on her hips and Emily inside her and she groans once they fit together perfectly again.

The only things she can feel are Emily’s hands on her hips and Emily inside her and she groans once they fit together perfectly again.

It seems to be the green light for Emily. Her pace increases and Stephanie widens her stance and she hears Emily praising her. Something about being good and pretty and wet but all she can really process are the intense levels of pleasure sparking through her with every thrust.

She’s already delirious and then there’s a pause, a painful, excruciating pause when Emily stops—she stops!—but only for a second and then there’s a quiet buzz. Stephanie can feel it inside her, faint but there, and she moans at the understanding that it’s more for Emily than it is for her.

Emily moans, too, and she resumes, now quicker than her previous pace. Stephanie can tell, even in her haze of sex, that the pleasure is throwing off Emily’s focus. But she doesn’t care. Not one bit. She slides her free hand down, past her stomach and between her legs. She reaches to feel the shaft as it moves; it’s firm and ridged and slipping in and out of her with speed but irregularity and she moves her fingers to her clit.

She presses hard and rubs it. Grinds her fingers into it. It makes her moan and she hears Emily echo it. Her thrusts are getting to be less and less like thrusts and more like grinding circles once she’s pressed in deep and it feels immeasurably more intense than what she’d been doing.

“Fuck, don’t stop,” Stephanie whines when she does it again. “Stay—don’t—God!” is all she can say but it’s enough. She feels Emily’s weight heavier against her. Feels her hips swiveling as Emily chases her own pleasure.
“I’m—” is all Emily says before Stephanie breaks.

She comes. Hard. She hears—and feels—Emily come with her, their hips rocking and jerking together, the toy unpredictable inside her. She can’t think but she thinks enough to remember the way Emily likes to refuse to stop when she’s touching her and what it does to her so she doesn’t stop touching herself. It’s almost painful but she doesn’t stop, fingers grinding into herself as Emily grinds down into her and in a flash, it turns to ecstasy as another climax sweeps her into bliss.

Lips are on her back again. They kiss and lick and nip. The vibration is still deep within her, faint but pleasing and she feels Emily shift and hears it click off. She whines at the loss as Emily withdraws completely and she lets herself melt into the bed to stretch out on her stomach.

She feels Emily disappear, hears the rustle of things being removed and set aside and then Emily’s back. Her return is marked by gentle fingertips trailing up the back of Stephanie’s thigh, over the curve of her ass and her lower back to make her shiver, and finally along her spine until they thread through her hair to scratch at her scalp in a way that makes her entire body break out in goosebumps. They stall there in response to her reaction and she feels Emily lie down next to her, a long, smooth leg resting over Stephanie’s.

It’s all so utterly soothing and relaxing Stephanie nearly drools from it. When it stops she nearly protests; Emily’s hands are on her arm and they’re working on something and it’s not until her hand falls limp to the bed she remembers she’d been handcuffed to it.

She groans at the memory and from the supreme state of relaxation she’s been lulled into and shivers again when the touch returns, playing with her hair and tickling her back.

Emily chuckles at her reaction and Stephanie feels another kiss between her shoulder blades. “Good morning.” Emily’s voice is low and rumbles against her skin.

Stephanie takes a deep breath to respond but all she manages is a long sigh and she buries her face in her pillow to encourage Emily’s fingers to travel up the back of her neck again.

She’s never experienced something like this, to be woken from sleep at such a level of arousal, to be taken in such a way, with such intensity and unspoken connection, and for it to unwind into the state of relaxation she finds herself in now. The connection is still there in all the points their bodies touch and even where they don’t. She can feel Emily’s eyes on her, how they travel over her body to follow the path of her fingertips. It’s a struggle to not fall back asleep. She doesn’t want to miss a single second of this experience.
It’s a wonder she ever sleeps at all when they’re together. Every minute together is paired with the looming fear that it could be one of their last. There’s no way their love affair can continue forever as she would like it to.

“I love you,” she mumbles after turning to rest her cheek on her pillow.

The tickling fingers on her back drift around her ribs and a strong arm slips under her stomach to roll her onto her side and tug her backward until she’s fitting into Emily’s embrace. The arm doesn’t leave; it keeps her there, holding onto her tightly as though Emily is as fearful of the inevitable end as she is.

Her eyes snap open.

She knows she has a dark side. Has tried to avoid it, hide it her entire life.

But it’s always there lurking in the background waiting for an opportunity to have its day in the sun.

And it seems it’s waking from hibernation.

To be continued...
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Hi, my loves. I know this was an abnormally long wait for an update to this fic; apparently, my mind is not as dark as Stephanie's so it took a bit to hatch this.

Stephanie Smothers is a good person.

She reminds herself of this daily when she applies moisturizer at the bathroom mirror in the mornings and when she tucks her son into bed each night.

She’s made mistakes; nobody’s perfect. Some of them have been bigger than others, but that’s true for everyone. She doesn’t regret those mistakes. They’ve made her who she is today and she likes herself, for the most part. There are things she’s done that she knows if people knew about them, they’d expect her to be remorseful. Embarrassed, even.

What happened between Chris and her when they were teenagers is one of those things. She can rationalize away the judgment; they were both in mourning, they had an innate connection, there was intrigue in the way Chris looked so much like their father and Stephanie looked so much like her mother. There was a wedding photo of their shared parents on the fireplace mantle of her childhood home they’d gazed at together; it was almost spooky, the resemblances. They might have found it...kinky, in a way.

All of those things led to what transpired between them the day they met and the connection they felt was the reason it continued long enough for Stephanie to find herself knowingly pregnant by him while desperately clinging to a lie that it wasn’t his; it was her husband’s.

Her husband died angry knowing the truth.

That, she does regret. That she hadn’t been able to apologize for her dishonesty.

But she’d learned from an early age that when you loved someone, you should hold on to them. Do what you can to help them and support them and protect them. Try your best every day to make
them happy even if you have to sacrifice your own happiness.

Even if that means doing something unsavory.

It’s business as usual for a time. Parent-teacher conferences. Miles and Nicky’s school holiday program (she sits with Emily—and Sean). Three weeks of the boys being on winter break and being a 24/7 stay-at-home mom. Sometimes she watches Nicky, too, and it’s more of an excuse for Emily and her to see one another than it is to give Sean a break from taking care of him all day.

Her Excel spreadsheet grows by the day as she plans. Phone numbers, names, addresses. Dates and times. Flight numbers. Dollar amounts.

Emily insists she hasn’t heard from Faith since Los Angeles whenever Stephanie asks. She wants to know if her sister is still demanding money, still threatening Nicky.

“I’m only trying to help,” she says when Emily gets upset.

“I know,” Emily replies with a sigh and some kind of physical contact. Stephanie’s never quite certain if it’s to indicate an apology for getting irritated or out of a need for comfort.

She decides it doesn’t really matter.

They eat leftover Thanksgiving turkey after they spend the holiday apart. They kiss under the many sprigs of mistletoe that Stephanie places throughout her home. They go to the winter carnival in the town square and Emily kisses her at the bottom of the ice slide while Nicky and Miles run up its stairs, in full view of everyone. No one seems to notice. Or if they do, the gossip never makes it back to them. Stephanie’s heart had been in her throat when Emily did that.

When the countdown on television reaches zero in Times Square, they kiss while their children sleep on the floor having failed in their valiant attempt to stay awake and ring in the new year.

They cook together. Shop together. Emily spends more and more time at Stephanie’s house and Stephanie can’t help but wonder what Sean thinks of it all. Her frequent absence must be glaringly
obvious to him. She wonders if he thinks it means Emily’s just unhappy or if he might think there’s more to it than that.

She doesn’t dare ask Emily and she avoids crossing paths with Sean at all costs.

It’s the weekend after Valentine’s Day when Stephanie asks Emily to spend a Saturday night with her. It’s under the guise of having their own belated night of romance and Emily readily agrees. And while Stephanie plans to indulge in that wholeheartedly, she also has an ulterior motive.

“Hi, baby,” Emily says when she arrives. Her suit is a dark red, almost the color of blood, and Stephanie wonders if she chose it to acknowledge the recently passed holiday.

She leans up into Emily’s kiss, tugging on the lapels of her jacket to give herself a bit more lift.

“Mom?”

Miles’s voice cuts through their moment and she almost falls backward if not for Emily catching her by the elbow.

“Hey, buster, I thought you were picking out the toys you’re taking tonight?” she says as she tries to mask her panic. When she turns she finds Miles standing in the hall a few feet away, a Buzz Lightyear figure in one hand and an Iron Man in the other as if he had come to ask her opinion.

His face is full of uncertainty. “You’re kissing Emily?”

She hears Emily clear her throat and she doesn’t know if it’s to speak, to not laugh, or out of discomfort. There’s no clarification from Emily and Stephanie has no choice but to respond.

“Just saying hello to my best friend,” she says as she hurries to him intent on ushering him back to his room to finish his part of packing to go spend the night at Emily’s house before Sean arrives. She doesn’t want Sean waiting in the house while he finishes.
“That was like when she kisses Nicky’s dad.” He seems curious more than anything as she takes both action figures and puts them into the overnight bag open on his bed.

She’s feared this for months. She knows Miles is a smart, observant child. She knows Emily and she aren’t always the most cautious when they’re together and away from other adults. They had been extremely prudent at first. They kept their distance, waited until any present children were distracted or absent before sharing words or touches that could prompt a question or a story that gets shared with a father.

It wasn’t always easy and they were growing careless as their comfort with one another grew. Their little escapade has grown into a full-blown love affair that’s lasted through autumn and into late winter. It felt so normal to pick up Nicky and Miles from school and often come home to find Emily already there and waiting, sometimes with a snack set out for the boys (sometimes it was even a healthy one) that it was difficult to not hold Emily’s hand while they stood side-by-side in the kitchen asking the boys about their day. It was difficult to not settle back into Emily’s arms the moment they sat together on the couch and the boys shared the bean bag chair. More often than not, she gave in.

It isn’t her fault that she can’t resist being close to Emily the moment Emily opens herself to her and invites her in with something as simple as a touch. It isn’t her fault that more than once she falls asleep there in Emily’s arms on the couch only to be stirred awake either by Emily or Miles when it’s time for bed.

It isn’t her fault that sometimes they forget to be as quiet as they should be when spending the night together with one or both of the boys in the house.

Stephanie is confident Miles has no idea what any such sounds mean; he’s too young to really understand sex and she doesn’t have plans to teach him about it with any kind of specificity for at least another year unless he asks a question that warrants it.

His ignorance, however, doesn’t assuage the fear boiling up inside her as he still seems to be thinking about what he witnessed. Nor does she know how much Nicky knows about sex and what he might be teaching Miles.

“Sometimes grown-ups like to kiss each other,” she says in response to his statement. She desperately wants to avoid lying to her son. Telling the truth isn’t an option; Miles is too young to be trusted to keep such a secret if she tells him she loves Emily that way. “Do you want to take anything else tonight?” Her hands refuse to be idle and she straightens his bedding needlessly.
“Nicky says you and his mom like to wrestle.” His voice is timid, as though he knows he’s sharing some type of secret information.

Her hands slow their smoothing of his comforter. That is a much more direct statement than commenting on a kiss. Much less simple to explain away than it being a greeting. “Nicky told you that?” she says, hoping her worry doesn’t come through in her voice as she stands and turns to him. “What else did Nicky tell you?”

“Just that you like to wrestle,” he says with a shrug. “Can I bring Unikitty, too?”

Stephanie sighs in relief at his continued innocence and the change of topic. She’s making her way toward the net suspended in the corner of his room that serves as the home for his many stuffed toys to retrieve it when she sees Emily in his doorway. Her entire outfit has been changed; the burgundy suit is gone and she’s wearing a worn-out tee from Barnard College that is a size too small and a pair of black yoga pants, one of which used to belong to Stephanie and both of which reside in a drawer that, at some point, became home to several items belonging to Emily.

“Who likes to wrestle?”

Stephanie’s not even finished reacting to Emily’s very, very poorly timed arrival and topic return when Miles is relaying what he’s just told Stephanie, to which Emily replies, “We sure do!” with a grin.

She rushes into the room, hands out to grab Miles and pick him up and crash them playfully onto his bed. “What about you?” she says as her tickling fingers make him squeal with laughter. “Do you like to wrestle?”

Stephanie watches it play out: Emily rough-housing with Miles in a way she never was good at, making him shriek and laugh and move on from his curiosity by letting him win. She doesn’t surrender too quickly, though, letting him have a good battle until, with his head in her stomach like a battering ram, he gets her onto her back to flop across her middle and pin her and declare himself the victor.

She doesn’t realize she’s crying until Emily brushes away a tear as she bends to kiss her cheek, Miles’s packed bag in her hand, to lead him out to wait for Sean and Nicky to pick him up.

Embarrassed, she finishes drying her eyes and follows. They end up in the living room and, to her
surprise, Emily claims the bean bag chair instead of her usual spot on the couch and pulls Miles down to pile in next to her.

“Are you and Nicky going to finish your secret project?” she asks him in a stage whisper.

“What secret project?” Stephanie asks as she takes a seat on the couch. Her stomach feels floppy and her heart doesn’t seem to know where it should position itself in her chest. This is too real, too normal, too domestic.

Emily smiles at her and starts to say something but she’s cut off by Miles desperately and loudly shushing her to the point of clapping both of his hands over her mouth.

“It’s a secret!” he emphasizes, eyes wide in panic as he stares at Emily.

Stephanie has to try not to laugh (and cry) at the reaction. “You know we don’t keep secrets in this house, Smooch,” she scolds, but there’s no authority behind the statement and she knows it. She also knows she’s a big fat hypocrite.

She watches Emily twist her neck to free her mouth. “Maybe ‘surprise project’ is a better name for it. What do you think, bud?”

“Surprise project?” he says, as though he’s trying the phrase on for size. He nods. “Okay.”

“And I don’t get to know about this surprise project?”

“If you did, it wouldn’t be a surprise. Duhhhh,” Miles says with a dramatic eye roll.

Stephanie lets the “duh” slide in favor of...everything that’s happening right now. “Right, of course. When do I get to know what the surprise project is?”

Her question is met with a tight-lipped smile and a shrug from Miles; she looks to Emily for an answer only to see her copy his response.
It’s so adorable she could cry. Again. “I can’t have you two ganging up on me.”

“Oh, baby,” Emily says with a teasing pout, “don’t worry. I promise you’ll like it.”

Miles nods in agreement, still mum on the matter as though if he speaks he’ll ruin the surprise. His eyes light up a second later at the sound of a car in the driveway and he’s climbed out of the chair and is halfway to the door before Stephanie’s even made it to her feet.

“What are you guys cooking up?” Stephanie asks as she offers her hand to Emily to pull her up out of the low chair.

“You’ll see,” Emily says with a sly smile as she ducks down to touch her lips to Stephanie’s, hands still clasped.

They follow Miles who has the self-restraint to wait at the door instead of sprinting to Sean’s car in youthful excitement of a sleepover with his buddy.

Emily squeezes her hand. “I’ll walk him out.”

Stephanie looks up at her, a shared understanding between them. “Thank you,” she says before crouching and opening her arms. “Come give me a hug, Smooch!” She wraps him up in a bear hug when he does. “I love you.”

“Love you, too.”

She sits back on her heels and hears Emily say, “Ready to go, little man?” A hand ruffling his curls comes with it and it makes Miles laugh.

It also makes him look up at her and say, “Love you,” before letting himself out of the house.

“Love you, too,” Emily replies without pause as she steps away from Stephanie to follow him out the door, barefoot.
Stephanie feels dizzy like she’s in a parallel universe where she married and had a child with a woman named Emily and not a man named Davis...or Chris. It’s not as though she wasn’t aware that Emily cared for Miles. They’d grown closer over the months just as she and Emily had. It was inevitable, really, when Emily was becoming more and more a mainstay in their lives. Some weeks they spent more days together than apart. Emily was becoming a provider, a caregiver. She’d tuck him into bed, sometimes with Stephanie, sometimes by herself.

She even volunteered in his and Nicky’s classroom a few weeks ago. Stephanie was certain she’d never seen jaws drop so quickly when Darren, Stacy, and Sona walked in to pick up their children that afternoon to see Emily in semi-casual clothing cleaning up the aftermath of a fingerpainting session.

So it shouldn’t knock her off her feet this much to witness Emily taking on what can only be labeled as a parental role in Miles’s life. She knows she’s done the same with Nicky, though he spends more time with Sean than he does Stephanie unlike how much time Miles spends with Emily.

She’s still kneeling when Emily returns. She looks so light and fresh-faced Stephanie doesn’t know how she looks so happy living this double life. She doesn’t have time to ponder on it, though; her mind is too preoccupied with the shared moments between Emily and Miles to think about that right now.

Emily’s smiling as she locks the door and hits all three switches to kill the porch, foyer, and kitchen lights. “What are you doing on the floor, baby?” she says as she strides toward her and extends her hand. “Come on; it’s time to get you out of these clothes.”

“This isn’t what I had in mind when you said you were getting me out of my clothes.” Stephanie glances down at the tank top and shorts she’s been changed into. Emily had led her to the bedroom and Stephanie’s body had come alive at the familiar route, the only thing able to overcome her emotional response to domestic bliss.

She’d been sorely disappointed only to be handed clothes to put back on as soon as Emily had stripped her naked while sharing nothing but a soft kiss or two while she politely rebuffed Stephanie’s wandering hands.

But she can wait; the overwhelming, almost uncontrollable lust that sparked their affair has, after so many months, settled into burning embers instead of a roaring fire. Constant, quiet, yet hotter than the flames that birthed it. She can wait because she knows it will be amazing when they come.
back to it later.

“Come on,” Emily says before biting her bottom lip and tugging Stephanie back toward the living room. She seems so happy and relaxed all Stephanie can do is smile and follow until she’s being pulled down onto the couch.

“What exactly are you up to?” she asks as Emily puts on some romantic comedy. It’s a bit of a surprise, Emily choosing such a thing, but she’s been working on stopping herself from assuming anything whatsoever about the woman.

“I want to just sit here and make out with you.” Emily smiles as she says it and Stephanie’s being pulled into her lap before she even finishes responding to it.

It’s so easy, so natural to sink into Emily. She’s been doing it for months and, frankly, it’s never been difficult, even from Day One. Emily had kissed her and hesitated in pulling away and Stephanie had melted.

She melts again now as she slips her arms around Emily’s neck to kiss her. It’s slow and hot and all the things that make her heart pound and toes curl and it’s only kissing, but she’s sure that kissing alone could be enough to be satisfying if it’s all they ever shared physically.

But she’s really glad they share a lot more than kisses.

“You just want to make out?” she asks with a nudge of her nose against Emily’s. “During a movie in the dark like we’re teenagers?”

Emily’s hands sweep under the edge of Stephanie’s shirt and brush over warm skin and she kisses her again before she responds. “What’s wrong with that?”

“Nothing,” Stephanie mumbles against her lips. She edges her kiss a bit more aggressive and fails at hiding the shiver that follows Emily’s quiet moan.

“Maybe I’ve been thinking about kissing you all day.” Emily’s hands roam a little more but never toward intimate territory.
Stephanie sighs at the confession and tightens her arms and leans back to entice Emily to lie down with her.

She resists so Stephanie whines and Emily’s hands finally slip down to her ass and squeeze it in wordless reply to her protest.

“But I want you on top of me.” Stephanie tries again, letting most of her weight pull at Emily’s shoulders in hope that her lack of subtly will do the trick.

She gets excited when Emily begins to lean with her but then she sits back again. “I’ll be on top of you later.”

Stephanie groans at the words and tries to stand up with the intent to drag Emily to her bedroom to experience just that but Emily keeps her rooted in place on her lap. “Why are you making us wait?” She runs her hands up under Emily’s adopted college tee and palms the soft, bare flesh beneath it to try to tempt her. However, she seems unfazed.

“Oh, don’t worry, baby,” Emily says with the pouty tone that Stephanie once found mildly condescending but now only finds incredibly hot. “I’ll make it worth the wait.”

Words like that are why she finds it hot so she nods. There are no more words after that for a while save for those of the movie that is playing in the background. The desperate arousal that began to spike wanes to a simmer again and Stephanie relaxes, content (for now) to share the slow, lazy kisses that promise so much more yet to come.

It distracts her from her goal for the night. It’s not until they’re in bed, breathless and recovering and she’s saying, “I love you, too,” that she remembers it.

She takes one more beat while Emily rolls off her to lay side by side, spent from their mutual release, staring at the ceiling.

“Hey, Em?” she says after clearing her throat.

Emily hums in response.
“Can we talk?”

There’s a pause, and then, “No good conversation ever begins with those words.”

Stephanie laughs nervously. “No, no. I promise it’s not like that.” It’s not like that at all and she feels bad she might have sparked such a worry in Emily. She also relishes the fact that such a thing is even possible: make Emily worry she was going to have The Talk.

She hears Emily take a breath. “We’re talking now, aren’t we?”

“Yeah.” It’s Stephanie’s turn to take a breath. “Um, I’ve been thinking—”

“About?”

“I want to be with you. For real, I mean.”

There’s another lengthy pause and Emily doesn’t say anything, but she does find Stephanie’s hand and link their fingers.

“I’m tired of pretending we’re something that we’re not. I’m tired of worrying that someone might find out and what might happen if they do. I’m tired of sharing you.” She notices her heart is racing when she stops talking; she hadn’t realized what it would feel like to admit those things out loud.

“Are you asking me to get a divorce? Because I can’t. We don’t have a prenup; Sean will take half of what I’ve managed to keep him from spending.”

“I’m not asking you to do that.”

“Then what are you asking me to do?”

Stephanie takes another deep breath. “I want us to...run away together.”
There’s more silence followed by a bark of laughter. “We can’t just run away together, baby. Are you crazy?”

“I’ve been thinking a lot about it and—”

“You’ve been thinking about it?” Emily sounds amused in the darkness, but at least she doesn’t sound mad.

“Did you and Sean ever take out those life insurance policies?”

The question hangs in the air for a few extra seconds. “Yes,” Emily answers slowly. “We’re not going to kill Sean for the insurance money. Are you fucking crazy?”

“No, no, of course not!” Stephanie rushes.

“Then stop beating around the bush, Dark Side. What have you been plotting in that brain of yours?”

“Have you heard from Faith lately?” She asks the question tentatively; it’s always a sensitive topic, and for good reason.

“What? What does she have to do with any—” Emily stops mid-word.

“Is she still threatening you?” Stephanie continues. “Extorting you? Threatening Nicky?”

“Why are you bringing her up right now?”

Stephanie thinks about the one and only photograph Emily ever showed Stephanie of her and her sister as teenagers. “You’re identical, right? That means fingerprints, DNA...”

“They figured out how to tell the difference between identical twins’ DNA.”
“And you’ve been paying attention to that research because…?” Stephanie’s on thin ice with this entire conversation and while she knows it, it seems as though it might only be a shallow pond to fall into should it crack. “I know you’re going to think I’m crazy—”

“No, but I think whatever you’re about to say is probably crazy.”

“What if…” She takes a steadying breath and hopes Emily doesn’t do something like call the police. “What if you invited Faith to visit you here and…and what if Emily Nelson was found murdered in her own home?” She holds her breath and feels Emily sit up next to her, can see her looming tall in the near darkness.

“Did you just suggest killing my sister?”

“She torments you.” Stephanie tries to resist the urge to backpedal and say it’s a terrible idea but she knows it’s really not, other than the parts about murder and insurance fraud. “All she does is cause you grief. She threatens to ruin your life, to hurt Nicky. And you’re not happy here, Em, I know it. We could do it and your life insurance would help us get resettled somewhere with the boys, and—”

“If I’m dead, how do we have the insurance money? Sean’s my beneficiary.”

It takes Stephanie a second to realize Emily hasn’t thrown her out of her own house at her outlandish and highly illegal plan that involves killing her own flesh and blood. “Change it to me.”

“What?!” Emily scoffs.

“Don’t tell Sean; you don’t have to tell a beneficiary that you removed them from a policy. I’ll collect it and when Sean challenges it I’m going to explain that I know about the affair he’s been having with his T.A. I’ll say you were planning to leave him so you changed it in case he tried to hurt you once you told him because I’m your best friend and I’m the only person you could still trust to care for Nicky.

But if we do this right, I won’t have to tell him anything because as soon as your body is found, I’ll tell the police that he was cheating on you and refusing to let you out of your emotionally abusive marriage and that I knew you were planning to ask for a divorce and that he must have snapped when you told him.
We’ll need to start the paperwork to make me Nicky’s legal guardian. Sean will never sign it but if we’re halfway there when you die and he gets arrested for your murder it will be easy for me to petition the court to push it through. Sean will be in prison. Emily Nelson will be dead. I will gain custody and then Stephanie Smothers will disappear.”

“You’re going to fake your death, too?”

“I’m going to disappear on a nature walk with the boys as soon as I have the money and custody. You disappeared and changed your identity once; you can do it again and do it for all of us. New names, new social security numbers, new passports. You’ll leave the country as soon as Faith is gone and we’ll join you as soon as we can.”

There’s an excruciating length of silence and all she can hear is her own quick breath, the adrenaline of revealing her plot making her blood rush.

“All this so we can be together?” Emily finally says.

Stephanie sits up and moves close, kissing Emily’s bare shoulder. “I’d move mountains to wake up next to you every day.” Emily’s hand has remained in hers the entire conversation but it shakes loose now only to relocate to rest on Stephanie’s thigh.

“I should just divorce him.”

It’s the first real admission that Emily wants to leave Sean and the weight of that drives Stephanie to keep kissing her wherever she can reach. Not in a frantic way, but soft, warm kisses on the curve of her shoulder and the length of her upper arm. “You’ll never escape her, Em,” she says quietly. “If we’re to be together, I don’t want her haunting us. I can’t put Miles in danger.”

She feels Emily’s fingertips tickling her inner thigh in the way she does when she’s hinting at touching her with more purpose. Stephanie can’t quite believe she would be in such a mood in the middle of this conversation, even if they are having it naked and in bed. But the way her own body responds to it, how her knee tilts a bit toward Emily in a way that is inviting, makes her feel guilty for whatever judgment she was about to pass.

“You’d really kill for me?”
Stephanie reaches to touch Emily’s chin and turn her face toward her and down into a kiss. She holds it for several seconds, lips simply touching. She doesn’t know how she arrived at this place in her life to have this conversation. To even consider such a possibility. She doesn’t stop to wonder why Emily isn’t horrified by any of it.

Stephanie Smothers is a good person.

She nods and pulls Emily’s hand higher between her legs. “Anything.”

*To be continued...*
“When is she supposed to get here?”

“Whenever she decides to show up...if she even remembers what day it is. What the hell are you wearing?”

Stephanie looks down at her choice of clothing: black jeans and a generic black hooded sweatshirt and black work boots. “It’s utilitarian.”

“‘Utilitarian’?”

“Yes,” Stephanie says as she finishes descending the stairs in Emily’s home and stuffs her gloves in her pocket. “These are low-shedding fabrics. But I bought everything cash from the thrift store so even if they do find a fiber, it will be a dead end.” She stops to tuck a small bag into Emily’s suitcase and then joins her in the kitchen to accept one of the two martinis Emily’s holding. “What shall we toast?”

There’s a knife on the counter and she eyes it for a moment. Emily was using it to carve their twists.

“I think we toast to freedom.” Emily’s dressed more normally, though there’s no three-piece suit today. She’s in navy slacks and a gray turtleneck and loafers—not heels. She’ll be traveling tonight and has dressed for stylish comfort.

“To freedom,” Stephanie says with a nod as they lift their glasses to drink. They finish the drinks in one go.

Emily is packed; a surreptitious selection of clothing that no one will ever notice absent from her closet packed in a new suitcase, also purchased in cash. She’ll be ducking out the back door at dusk, walking to the bus station, and taking the Greyhound into New York to catch a flight. Stephanie will be waiting at her home for his Friday sleepover when Sean drops off Nicky and Miles after the movie Emily sent them to, a plan to shield Nicky from the trauma of walking into his house and seeing his mother dead.
“I realize it’s a little late to ask this, but should I be concerned about how readily you planned to commit first-degree murder?” Emily asks as she lifts Stephanie’s empty glass from her hand.

Stephanie expects it to be refilled but instead, the glasses are immediately washed and returned to the freezer as if they’d never been used. “Just don’t cheat on me and you have nothing to worry about,” Stephanie says with a teasing tone.

Maybe I’m the one who should be worried, Stephanie hears flit through her head. She did come up with quite the plot to off Emily’s twin sister and has felt very little remorse about it. Faith is a waste of space from how Emily’s described her; a hopeless addict who’s nothing but a drain on the system and those who attempt to care for her out of obligation. It began with frustration that Emily wasn’t hers and hers alone and in a matter of minutes, her brain leapt from, “How can we be together?” to “Faith has to die.” She knows it’s not normal.

As readily as Stephane had suggested it, Emily had agreed to it. Emily had no hesitations about the proposed murder of her own sister. Stephanie can still feel the multiple orgasms she’d been given immediately thereafter.

The memory makes her shiver and she steps around the island to meet Emily and pulls her down into a kiss.

She knows she shouldn’t be turned on right now; murder shouldn’t be sexy but this murder means she’s one very big step closer to her Happily Ever After with Emily. No more Faith, no more Sean; just Emily, Miles, and Nicky and a new life as a real family.

It feels like a honeymoon and it hasn’t even begun yet.

She’s reaching to unbutton Emily’s pants to take her right there and then in the kitchen one last time before they part for what could be weeks—they’ve been trying to make up for the upcoming separation for the past month—when there’s an irregular and impatient knock on the door.

“Showtime,” Emily says as she buttons her pants and kisses Stephanie soundly one more time. “I love you.”

The adrenaline that kicks in is unlike anything she’s ever felt. “I love you, too.”
She steps into the kitchen pantry to wait out of sight until Emily gives her the signal. She leaves the door ajar so she can still see and hear; her curiosity about Emily’s twin sister (and their plan) demands it.

She hears Emily’s footsteps fade into the click of the front door opening.

“Oh, holy shit. We got a Rockefeller in the family!”

Stephanie’s almost startled; it sounds just like Emily if Emily had smoked two packs a day for half her life.

“You wish,” Emily’s smoother voice replies and there’s an extended silence until two pairs of footsteps, Emily’s clicking loafers and a heavy scuff of boots.

“You look like shit. You’re using again.”

Stephanie sees Emily pass the kitchen toward the living room and when she slows her pace, Stephanie jumps. Faith is a mirror image of Emily; she feels like she’s seeing double but the differences between them are evident. If Faith sounds like she’s smoked two packs a day she looks like she’s smoked three, on top of alcohol, heroin, meth and any other vice Stephanie can think of.

“You could stop trying to fix me. Save us both the disappointment.” Faith is dressed in ripped leggings, a tee with some kind of logo on it, and a military-style jacket. She flops onto the middle of Emily’s sprawling white couch and drapes her arms along the back of it like she owns the place. She’s grinning as she says the words, bad teeth and pasty skin.

Emily remains standing and though she appears relaxed, Stephanie can see the tension along the back of her neck. “If I wasn’t perpetually disappointed in you, what else would I do to fill my time?”

Faith smacks her gum and gestures at the room they’re in. “If I were you—and I practically am, right?—I’d be day-drinking and fucking my hot husband. Am I right? Did I nail it?”

Emily looks at the ground for a second and nods as she scratches her nose. “You got me.”
“Where is the hot piece of ass anyway, huh? At the bank getting my cash? Hope they give your kid a lollipop.”

Emily’s back straightens as she lifts her head; Stephanie knows she wants to tell Faith to never speak of Nicky again but that’s not the game they’re playing now. “And then they’re picking up pizza for dinner. Ham and pineapple still your favorite?”

“You fucking know it.” Faith pats her stomach and then her hand slides down until it clutches rudely between her legs. “Wanna trade places when he gets home? I haven’t had a good fuck in weeks.”

Stephanie has to bite the inside of her cheek at the crassness and the irony.

Faith has no idea that’s exactly what’s going to happen. Minus the sleeping with Sean part.

“Maybe next time. I’ll get you a drink. What do you want? Water? Apple juice?” Emily’s walking toward the kitchen and makes eye contact with Stephanie. She seems calm as she moves on and Stephanie hears glassware clinking on the countertop.

“Fuck you,” Faith says with a snort and a hoarse laugh. “I know you got a full bar. Gimme a whiskey. You got whiskey, don’t you?”

“I have whiskey.” The sound of a cork popping out of a glass bottle follows and then Emily passes the cracked door again, a tumbler of amber liquid in her hand which she hands to Faith. Then she sits down next to her, on the far side of the couch to force Faith to turn toward her and away from the kitchen (and Stephanie).

“Your support of my sobriety is outstanding,” Faith says before she drinks half of it.

Stephanie can tell it pains Emily; she knows Emily did support her numerous attempts—self-imposed or otherwise—at sobriety and it can’t have been easy putting alcohol into her hand.

“It’s a special occasion, isn’t it?” Emily smiles at her sister. “Figured out what you’re going to do with the money yet? I’m dying to know.”
“Yeah, I’m gonna go to Iceland.”

Emily’s surprise is genuine. “Iceland?”

“Yeah, man. I’m gonna get fucking blasted and watch the Northern Lights.” Faith laughs as she says it and Stephanie can’t help but compare it to the laugh of the stoner burn-outs she remembers from high school. “Gonna be the best goddamn trip I’ve ever taken. Get it? Trip?”

The surprise fades to chagrin and Emily’s jaw sets firmly. “Good to know you have big plans for my money.”

“Yeah. I’m gonna go on, like, a world tour. Try the best smack every country has to offer. Gotta get over to Afghanistan and try that shit right from the source.”

Faith shares her plan to travel the world to shoot up in the way one talks of a wine tour of Italy to sample the best of the regions. Tuscany Merlot, Piedmont Moscato, Lombardy Chardonnay, Afghan opium. Stephanie can see on Emily’s face that she still wishes she could do something to help her. She’s disappointed in her sister’s weakness. Maybe she’s disappointed in her own failure to save her.

The disappointment leaves Emily’s eyes, though, and Stephanie sees them grow cold.

“I tried to help you. So many times. And this is how you repay me? You’re going to take everything I have and shoot it up?”

“Oh, boo fucking hoo. Are you going to cry about it? I know you don’t want me around.”

“I always wanted you around. You’re the one who left me. You always leave. You take and you take and you take and then you leave. You’re a fucking plague.” Emily’s hand lifts; it’s on its way to her hair but it stops at the neck of her shirt and she tugs on it.

The signal.
Adrenaline kicks in again. She’s run through this innumerable times in her head. She and Emily even rehearsed it so Stephanie would know how it would feel.

She puts on her gloves and her fingers tighten around the thin nylon rope in her hand.

Their final rehearsal this week had led to Stephanie taking Emily roughly from behind, rope around her neck just tight enough to be on the side of pleasure, not pain.

She pushes that sinful memory away; she has to execute it for real now. There’s no room for error. All or nothing. Her heart pounds in her ears and her palms sweat inside her leather gloves as she creeps out of the pantry. Faith is oblivious to her presence or advance. Emily has her locked in an argument that keeps moving blame for things from one sister to the other. Stephanie doesn’t hear the words; it’s just a loud hum as she steps closer. One foot after the other, light steps so Faith doesn’t hear her approach. Their rehearsal taught them to make sure the shade was drawn over the window immediately behind Emily so there would be no reflection of Stephanie’s sneak attack.

The blue nylon rope hangs between her hands, looped around her palms, then her wrists so she has enough leverage. Emily does a good job of keeping Faith engaged and distracted; she gives away no clues that something is about to happen. Not once do her eyes flit toward Stephanie even as she comes to a stop behind Faith.

Her thumbs run over the twisted braiding of the fibers in her hands as she double-checks the length she’s given herself: not too short, not too long. She hesitates; she wants to give Emily a chance to say goodbye.

Emily senses her pause and cuts into Faith’s argument. “Thank you.”

It catches Faith off-guard. “Thank you? For what?”

“For giving me my new life.”

Stephanie can see tears in Emily’s eyes when she says it and it makes her act quickly. She has to or she’ll second-guess herself. She can’t hesitate again. Faith could turn and see her. She could lose her nerve. Everything they’ve planned could fall apart in an instant if she doesn’t—

A flick of her wrists, a foot pressing into the arm of the couch, a pull, another loop around the neck
to cinch it and another pull.

It’s more difficult than practicing on Emily had been; Emily didn’t fight back. Stephanie didn’t *strangle* her.

Faith is not small and Stephanie is not big; her leverage against the couch is the only thing that keeps Faith from struggling enough to get to her feet; if she manages that, it will be over and they’ll have to take drastic, more violent measures to make sure she doesn’t escape.

Emily watches her do it. Watches her struggle as Stephanie’s arms burn from the strain as she tightens the rope another inch.

As the struggle starts to wane Emily moves closer. She rests her hands on Faith’s legs and presses to stop them from kicking. She shushes her. She whispers something about winning a canoe race and the gasping gurgle of her fight for oxygen abruptly stops with a crack of the hyoid bone with one final tug on the lead end of the rope.

Stephanie feels faint. The tunnel vision closes in and the floor seems to slip from under her feet and she’s sure she’s about to hit the floor (wherever it flew off to) when arms catch her.

“Steph, baby, breathe.”

Emily’s perfume acts like smelling salts and she gasps for her own much-needed oxygen. Her vision is still blurry but she can feel Emily holding her close, can feel the kisses she’s peppering on the top of her head. She manages to lift her chin and her oxygen is immediately cut off by Emily kissing her.

And kissing her.

And kissing her.

She kisses her until Stephanie wonders if they’re going to have sex while Faith’s dead body sits on the couch.
She cringes internally at how aroused she is and blames it on the adrenaline and not the murder itself, though the number of times she’s had to tell herself that such a thing isn’t a turn-on tells her that...maybe it is. And maybe it is for Emily, too.

“We need to move, baby,” Emily whispers against her lips and Stephanie knows time is of the essence.

They separate and Stephanie pretends not to notice Emily wiping tears off her cheeks as she turns away to grab the stack of her own clothes left waiting on the counter for this purpose.

“Get her boots. I’ll get her jacket and shirt,” Emily says as she tosses the clothes on the floor next to where Stephanie kneels to untie and yank off Faith’s heavy, worn-out boots and shove them in a waiting duffle bag. Unwashed socks go next followed by the jacket and tee Emily hands her. The leggings are last to go before they redress her in one of Emily’s blouses and pair of trousers.

Emily combs out Faith’s hair to tie it into one of her signature twists, one last effort to make her look less like Faith McLanden and more like Emily Nelson as Stephanie stuffs the rope into the bag with Faith’s clothes. She watches Emily secure Faith’s hair with a clip and then yank the large sapphire wedding ring off her finger to slip it onto Faith’s.

They’re banking on Sean’s grief that the subtle differences between them will go unnoticed. That he’ll refuse an autopsy when the cause of death is so obvious. That the medical examiner won’t conduct a full-body examination and toxicology which could lead to suspicion.

The hairstyle and designer clothes on Faith’s lifeless body do make her look more like Emily than when she’d arrived. It’s enough to spook Stephanie and she finishes her clean-up quickly. She needs to dump the evidence, get home and take a shower to ensure nothing of Faith remains on her, wait for Sean to drop off Nicky and Miles, and then wait for the inevitable phone call.

As far as Sean knows, Stephanie’s picking up the kids so Emily can have the house to herself. Another day of needing to “reset.” He’ll come home in a few hours to find his wife strangled in a seemingly random home invasion. They’ve already opened drawers and closets and cabinets and rifled through them haphazardly as though a burglar had been searching for loot. Most of the damage was done upstairs in the master bedroom, Emily’s jewelry collection having been ransacked. It’s all in a small drawstring bag sitting with Emily’s clothes in the bag waiting to leave with her for the bus station. The valuables will be sold here and there for Emily to live off of while she waits for Stephanie to join her.

They meet by the back door once everything is as it should be.
“So that’s it, then,” Stephanie says as she glances at Faith’s body. There still seems to be terror on her face and it’s haunting. “I’m a murderer. First-degree. And you’re my accomplice.”

“It was a crime of passion, baby. We had to do it to be together.”

For a split-second, Stephanie thinks there surely were dozens of different, legal ways they could have accomplished that but there was no going back now. “I’m going to miss you so much,” she says instead of what she was just thinking.

“Me, too, baby. Come here,” Emily says as she pulls Stephanie into an embrace. They stay that way for a moment and then share one final kiss before wordlessly agreeing it’s time to go. She’ll be sneaking through the hedge to walk to her car parked a few blocks away.

Stephanie takes one final glance at the house; she knows she’ll return to it. She’ll have to as she goes through the motions of mourning Emily’s untimely death.

She notices Emily doesn’t look back.

__________________________________________________________

To be continued...
Chapter 15

When Stephanie’s cell phone rings with Sean’s name on the screen, she sends the boys to the backyard to play.

“Hello?”

She’s met with the gasping sobs of a broken man. “She’s gone.”

“Sean? Is that you? What’s wrong?”

His voice is strained, choked with tears. “Emily. She’s—someone—”

“Just take a breath. Tell me what happened.”

He does and in that second of silence, Stephanie can hear the chatter of many other people in the background. “She’s gone, Stephanie. I came home and found her…” He breaks into tears again and she works on drumming up her own as she allows a believable amount of time to pass to come to the conclusion he can’t put into words.

It’s not as difficult as she thought it might be to start crying; imagining Emily being murdered is an easy catalyst for tears. “Oh, my God. No!”

“Can you please look after Nicky tonight? I can’t have him here. The police say the house is a crime scene. I can’t let him see this.” He sounds destroyed.

“Yes, of course,” she says, working up plenty of tears. “Anything. Anything for Emily.” Her voice cracks over her name. “Let me know how I can help.”

“You’re a saint. Thank you. I need to go. I’ll call when you can bring Nicky home.”

Stephanie cries in earnest when she sets her phone down. Everything was so easy with Emily by her side but she’s gone and she has to see the last leg of this journey through alone.
Emily will be on a plane now somewhere over the Atlantic. They won’t communicate again for some time; they can’t risk it once the investigation begins. They won’t communicate at all until Stephanie, Miles, and Nicky show up at Emily’s new front door.

*Their new front door.*

She cries because she misses the woman she loves.

__________________________

Three days pass before Sean asks her to bring Nicky home.

The first night had been easy; he was excited to spend the night with Miles. The second, he asked if he could go home and she had to explain that she was watching him for a little while. The third, he cried that he missed his mom and dad.

That had been a difficult night for everyone. Lying to a little boy that he’ll see his parents soon, knowing he’s going to be told his mother is dead when she is very much alive…

If murder wasn’t already an egregious sin, setting it up so a little boy would mourn his mother unnecessarily…

She doesn’t let herself think about it.

When she arrives at Sean’s house, it’s in a far worse state than she and Emily had left it. It’s as though the police upturned every single thing, or maybe Sean had lost his mind when he found his wife strangled in their living room.

There are dark smudges on the walls and counters, fingerprint powder that has been left for someone else to clean up. The white couch is gone, leaving a noticeable void in the heart of the home.

Stephanie keeps an excessive distance between herself and Sean once they’ve hugged in grief. It’s a
habit she needs to establish quickly, though it’s not a difficult one. Frankly, she’d like to have nothing to do with the man ever again, let alone be in the same room with him, but to accomplish one she’ll have to tolerate the other.

Nicky’s not ill-placed dramatics of the night previous are absent now and while he’s happy to be home, he doesn’t question why he had to stay at Stephanie’s house. He does ask where his mother is.

Stephanie grits her teeth while Sean tells him to wait in his room and he’ll talk to him soon.

“What did the detective say?” she asks once he’s upstairs. She refuses to ask how Sean’s holding up. It’s clear the answer is, “not well,” but she doesn’t need to be a source of sympathy for him.

“They’re investigating it as a burglary gone wrong. They think whoever did this didn’t expect someone to be home in the middle of the day and panicked.”

“That’s terrible,” she says with fake shock. “She was in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Sean doesn’t seem convinced by that but he doesn’t explicitly disagree. “The police are interviewing everyone she has—had contact with. Don’t be surprised if they reach out to you.”

“No, of course. I’ll do everything I can to help.”

The funeral is a stark reminder of Emily’s aversion to casual human connection. Stephanie recognizes Emily’s boss, Dennis Nylon, from his advertisements attending with a smattering of similar high-fashion types she assumes to be Emily’s coworkers. To equal levels of astonishment and irritation, Darren, Sona, and Stacy are there with their children as though they gave two shits about Emily beyond either wanting to be her friend so they could tap into her A-list resources or to criticize her lack of helicopter parenting.

No one resembles someone who could be Emily’s mother and that makes Stephanie’s heart hurt. It’s a useful thought to get some tears flowing when she catches Stacy watching her with something akin to suspicion. She doesn’t want to be stoic but to be an emotional wreck would be just as question-inducing.
A thought, a tiny hint of guilt flits through her mind that someone’s daughter is being buried right now and the girl’s mother has no idea.

She blinks it away and holds Miles a little closer.

She single-handedly organizes the wake; Sean is useless and his mother wasn’t able to come, still recovering from hip replacement surgery, so Stephanie has to do it.

It seems the town’s gossip committee is feeling their own type of guilt for the way they treated Emily and even Stephanie, and she’s forced to grin and bear the brunt of their attempts to rid themselves of such regrets.

“You’re a real saint to help her family out like this,” Darren says sheepishly after having the gall to use one of her own recipes and compliment her vlog after teasing her for so long.

She tries not to flinch; it’s the second time she’s been referred to as such since she took someone’s life and it doesn’t sit well with her. “I’m not a saint. I—Emily’s my friend. She’d do the same for me.”

Nicky refuses to speak to her when she puts him to bed once everyone’s gone home. She doesn’t blame him; death is confusing and upsetting and she can’t imagine having to deal with it at such a young age. She wishes she could tell him it was all a trick, that his mom is waiting for him and he’ll see her again soon.

She contemplates it briefly but it will only stir more confusion in him and it should be Emily who discusses with him why this happened, not her.

She also can’t trust such a little boy to keep that type of thing a secret from his father.

Instead, she simply says, “I know your mother loves you very much.”
Another week passes before a detective knocks on her door.

He’s loud and cocky and borderline condescending when he asks her, “Just how close are you to Sean Townsend?”

The question is out of left field and she blinks in surprise. “Excuse me?”

“Some of the folks around here mentioned you’ve been spending quite a bit of time at his house.”

“Detective Summerville,” she says as her back straightens and she regrets her nicety of offering him tea, “what are you implying?”

He laughs loudly and holds up his hands as if surrendering. Or in defense. “I’m not implying anything. I was repeating an observation made by others.”

Stephanie finds it convenient that neighbors would only now take notice of her spending time at the house. She’s there far less often than she ever was when “Emily” was alive but now that she’s dead, they begin to gossip that Stephanie’s already swooped in on her grieving widower?

She’s offended, not for that but for the lack of gossip that she spent countless afternoons with Emily while Sean wasn’t home. Why? Because it was two women spending time together?

“I don’t appreciate their implications,” she says defiantly. “If I’m at Sean’s house it’s because I’m helping with his son, who is best friends with my own son. We’re not engaged in some torrid love affair. If that’s what you’re after, you should be taking a closer look at who Sean spends his time with.”

At least the offensive question set up her first breadcrumb perfectly.

It gets his attention and his cockiness shifts to genuine interest. “Is there something in Sean’s life we should be looking at?”
“Try someone.” She says it and then feigns regret as though she shouldn’t have said anything.

The detective pulls a tiny notebook from the breast pocket of his jacket and flips it open while clicking a pen. “Do you have a name?”

She shakes her head and wraps her arms around herself. “I only know what Emily told me.”

“And what is that?”

“I shouldn’t. It’s probably nothing.” She knows he won’t let it go.

“Miss Smothers, we have reason to believe Emily’s homicide wasn’t a burglary gone awry.”

“Why? What did you find?” She knows they found nothing; nothing, that is, but a poorly staged crime scene.

“I can’t tell you that, but I can tell you that any information you have may be helpful.”

She takes a breath and nods. “Emily told me a few weeks ago that she was going to ask Sean for a divorce.”

That information is definitely new to the detective and he almost quivers with excitement in its revelation. “Did she say why she wanted a divorce?”

“He was—or is, I don’t know—having an affair with his T.A. at the university where he teaches. She was scared, and I’d never seen her scared a day in my life. But she was scared when she told me that. Like she was scared of what he might do if she tried to leave him.”

“And you didn’t think to alert the authorities?”

She sets her jaw firm at the return of his condescension. “I didn’t think he would actually…” She
trails off to let Mr. Man-in-Charge reach the conclusion on his own; she’s planted the seed for what might have happened and unless he connects the dots himself, he won’t place enough importance on the theory.

“And are you aware he took out a four million dollar life insurance policy on Emily less than a year ago?”

She hesitates for dramatic effect, then nods. She has to be partially honest now.

“What’s interesting to me, though, is that last month, Emily made you the sole beneficiary. I guess you really were her best friend.”

She nods again. “I told you: she was scared. She was afraid of Sean, of what he might do. She didn’t want her son to suffer if something happened to her.”

“You talked about the possibility of Sean killing her?”

“Not in so many words, no.” She rubs the back of her neck. Her nerves are real now; she can’t misstep. One chink in the armor is all it will take. “She said she wanted a safety net. Just in case. It’s why we started guardianship paperwork, too.”

“Emily was going to make you the guardian of their child?”

“Like I said: it was all a safety net. A back-up plan in case...well...in case.” She shrugs at the obvious.

“I see. Well, I guess this means you’re getting four million dollars once we finish our investigation into Ms. Nelson’s death. Assuming you had nothing to do with it, of course,” he adds with an unnerving smile.

She ignores his bait. “Does Sean know about me being the beneficiary?”

“Not as far as I know; he hasn’t tried to file a claim or contacted them at all according to the agent. With a payout of this size and with the circumstances, you can expect them to open their own
“No, of course,” she says, nodding in understanding. “Do you think I should wait to file for any reason? I don’t want to interfere with your investigation.”

He scribbles in his notebook as he shakes his head, then clicks his pen and puts them both back into his pocket. “That won’t be necessary. Thank you for your time, Miss Smothers. We’ll be in touch. If you think of anything else that might be of interest, give me a call.” He hands her a business card and shows himself out of her home.

When the door closes she breathes a sigh of relief and sinks onto the couch to hug a throw pillow to her chest wishing it was Emily.

Sean finds out about the life insurance policy when Stephanie has to ask for a copy of Emily’s death certificate. She’d tried to avoid going through him but no one would provide her the required documentation because she wasn’t Emily’s next of kin.

“Why would she do that?” He looks almost as broken as he did after Emily’s death. It was clear he had yet to even think about collecting on her death which was, Stephanie supposed, admirable. “That was so I could support Nicky if anything ever happened.”

*And that’s exactly what it will be used for.* “I don’t know, Sean.” She can’t tell him the reason she told the detective; it’s not yet time for him to know. “But I promise, I’ll help with Nicky in any way I can.”

He agrees to put in the request for the needed paperwork regardless of his confusion and Stephanie offers to make dinner for him.

It’s the least she can do, given the circumstances. It’s the least she can do as she slowly takes everything that ever mattered to this poor man.

He learns a week later that Emily’s put into her will that should anything happen to Sean, custody
of Nicky is to be granted to one Stephanie Smothers.

He shows up on Stephanie’s doorstep irate, pounding on her front door demanding to know what he did to deserve this.

She calms him down with chamomile tea and reassurances that Emily’s decision was only in Nicky’s best interest and Sean has nothing to worry about. That the guardianship will only be enacted should something happen to him as well and surely, nothing will change.

Sean is arrested three weeks later.

According to the news, he is a possessive husband who was engaging in a torrid affair with a college student. He snapped when his successful wife found out and tried to divorce him. He’d strangled her with a rope (the police had found a rope just like it in his gardening shed) in a fit of rage, then staged the house to make it look like someone had broken in to burglarize the home. Much of her jewelry appeared to be missing and the police uncovered one piece, a diamond and ruby necklace, at a pawn shop just a few miles from Warfield.

The shop’s security cameras weren’t recording at the time and no one remembers who sold them the necklace. It’s the only piece of missing jewelry that will ever be found. The rest, Stephanie knows, will be disassembled and sold separately as gemstones and precious metals over time to shops outside the United States.

She rushes to the police station as soon as the breaking news report about his arrest ends. No one has contacted her, but then again, no one would know to do so.

She arrives prepared, a certified copy of Emily’s Last Will and Testament and partially signed guardianship papers in hand should they be necessary.

There’s press everywhere, local news trucks and reporters from New York City are parked outside the station. They pay her no mind and she speaks to the officer at the front desk about the situation and her concern for Nicky Townsend’s well-being, and do they know where he is and if he’s okay?

Her concern is genuine; she doesn’t know how long Sean’s been in jail. She doesn’t know where Nicky is or if he understands what’s happening. He’s surely scared and upset; his life has been in
turmoil for weeks since his mother died and now this.

She’s given the name and phone number of a Child Protective Services counselor and several more phone calls are required once she arrives at their office. Calls to lawyers, to law enforcement, to agency directors until she’s signing paperwork stating who she is and where she lives to allow Nicky to be released into her temporary custody.

It’s clear he’s upset: he won’t even speak to Miles on the car ride to her house. She knows he knows what’s happened; the counselor took care of educating him on where his father is, but (of course) not the specifics of why he is there.

She lets the boys have whatever they want for dinner and stay up as late as they want. They build a fort in the living room and the three of them fall asleep there together.

The trial is arduous. Stephanie watches much of it play out in the news headlines. The jury selection. The recap of the arguments that were made each day. The evidence that was presented. She lives with constant, haunting worry that something will go wrong. That she and Emily made an error along the way. That one day the police will knock on her door with an arrest warrant for the murder of Faith McLanden.

More weeks pass.

She’s called to testify by the state’s prosecution.

“Can you describe your relationship to the victim?”

“Emily Nelson and I were best friends. Our sons are in the same class at Warfield Elementary.”

“Can you please share with the court what you told Detective Summerville on April 26, 2018 with regard to Sean Townsend’s personal relationships?”

Stephanie recounts what she’d told the detective about Emily confiding in her about Sean’s affair, her desire for a divorce, and her fear of the consequences. She’s asked to share the details of
becoming the beneficiary of Emily’s life insurance, the guardianship paperwork they’d started, and the temporary custody of Nicky she’s been granted.

Sean’s defense attorney grills her about the details of her relationship with Emily. Why she trusted her so much as to give her millions of dollars. To trust her with her son. He stops short of saying the words, but she knows the implication he’s making. He wants the jury to think there’s more to the story. That Sean wasn’t the only unfaithful spouse.

All he needs to do is put enough doubt in the jurors’ minds to get them to return that Not Guilty verdict.

He doesn’t.

Stephanie watches the sentencing coverage on the news, heart in her throat and tears on her cheeks while she packs.

Sean Townsend will spend forty years in Bridgeport Correctional Center for the murder of Emily Nelson.

Stephanie Smothers is granted sole custody of Nicky Townsend in accordance with Emily’s will.

Stephanie and Miles Smothers and Nicky Townsend are reported missing by a concerned citizen on July 19, 2018.

To be continued...
Chapter Notes

My friends, the end is very near...

The forged documents Emily procured for everyone before she left town are impeccable.

The TSA officer doesn’t give Alyson Barrett and her sons Devon and Connor a second glance after checking their passports.

Regardless, her heart doesn’t stop pounding. Its reason for pounding changes once the jet leaves the runway, though.

It pounds because she’s on her way to Emily.

It’s not easy to find her way to the house. Greek is not an intuitive language. There are no Latin roots to help her identify street names or make an attempt at a conversation. She did what she could to teach herself in advance without leaving breadcrumbs. Please. Thank you. Water. Restroom. East/west/north/south. Son. Σας παρακαλούμε. Ευχαριστώ. Νερό. Τουαλέτα. Ανατολή/δυτικά/Βόρειος/Νότος. Υίος.

She hands the taxi driver the address with a smile.

Her knee won’t stop bouncing even when Miles points it out with a laugh. She’s excited. She’s nervous. This is going to be a big change for her, for the boys. It’s a new beginning in every sense of the phrase and it’s almost intimidating to think about: Emily’s waiting for them.

At least, she hopes she’s waiting for them. They haven’t spoken in months. She has no idea if Emily is where they’d planned to meet. She could have run off and started her new life without Stephanie. She might have met someone else. Had second thoughts about everything. Or maybe
she’d simply seduced Stephanie to get her to do her bidding and rid her of life’s inconveniences.

The house looks just like it did on the real estate website where Stephanie had found it. It’s the very picture of Greece set into the steep hillside high above the water amongst other homes, white walls and blue roof and a stone staircase leading up to its front door. She’d purchased it under her new name with a small down payment. (She would never be so careless as to drop a few hundred thousand dollars on international property after inheriting millions and before disappearing.)

Alyson Barrett has a very normal, very unsuspecting mortgage that will be paid in due time.

The shutters on the house are open; she notices that from the bottom of the steps, suitcase in hand and Nicky and Miles already racing one another up the stairs. It means someone has at least been in the house. Of course, it could be the seller, or the real estate agent, or a cleaning service.

She’s trying to steel herself for the possibility that Emily hadn’t waited for her. That she’s thrown away her entire life, killed a person, put an innocent man in prison and took his child all for nothing.

She climbs the stairs, chin held high to try to psyche herself up. If Emily sees them coming, she doesn’t want to appear sad or afraid. She’s excited underneath the apprehension and she takes the steps faster as she nears the top.

The door is closed and, she discovers when she tries it, locked.

The boys have already found a soccer ball, probably one that escaped its owner and rolled down the hilly walkways too quickly to be caught, and they’re playing with it in the small courtyard. They’re noisy and it doesn’t seem to earn anyone’s curious attention.

She considers knocking but then decides she shouldn’t knock on the door of her own home. She does, after all, have a key.

She lets herself in and holds her breath. She half-expects Emily to be standing in the foyer, arms open to greet them.

Instead, the house is quiet, dark save for the natural light, and as far as Stephanie can tell...empty.
She sets down her bag and ventures deeper, calling for the boys to come inside. It’s clear the house has been lived in. There are dishes in the sink, a martini glass on the counter, food in the refrigerator and cabinets. She’s scared to go upstairs. Scared of what she might find, or worse, what she might not find in the bedrooms and closets.

She forces herself, though. Up the stairs and into the first room which is furnished with a single bed, dresser, chair, and child’s desk, but otherwise empty. The second, also furnished, also empty. And the third, furnished and empty but also not empty. The bed is only partially made. A book sits on the nightstand of the unmade side. A silk robe drapes over the back of a chair.

She paces through the room in a slow circle. She doesn’t recognize anything in the room until she gets to the robe. She can’t help but run her fingers over the soft fabric as she lifts it.

Emily’s perfume.

Stephanie could and would never forget it and there is no doubting it’s her robe. That Emily was here so very recently.

It makes Stephanie’s heart race again, excitement filling her veins. She drops the robe and hurries through the other rooms to see if Emily is perhaps tucked away in one unaware that anyone else is in the house, though they’re all vacant.

She’s left with jittery excitement and disappointment.

She’ll have to wait until Emily comes home.

Stephanie busies herself unpacking her meager baggage. She couldn’t clear out her entire house; that’d be far too suspicious. Instead, she brought things like a few of her favorite dresses, photos no one would notice had disappeared, Miles’s baby book, and the Barnard T-shirt that had come to be Emily’s more than her own.

She lets the boys pick which of the two single rooms they want and is relieved they agree on who gets which.
She finds more than enough ingredients to put together a Greek salad for everyone dinner. She knows it’s dumb and Emily would surely roll her eyes at it, but she doesn’t care. She also knows Emily would smile as she did so.

She keeps an attentive ear on the door at all times waiting to hear keys in the lock through dinner and while she puts away what’s left of it.

Settling in a cozy armchair in the living room, she watches Nicky and Miles invent some kind of game where they play together on the floor. They’re going to have to work on remembering to use their new names. To make the trip, Stephanie had told them they were playing pretend. She’s going to have to tell them soon that they have new real names. That she does, too.

It’s quiet. There’s no television, no chiming iPhone, no sounds of passing cars. If she strains, she can hear the sound of music and crashing waves in the distance and laughter and boisterous conversation from another house. It’s quiet and comfortable and the long day’s travel catches up with her until she nods off.

“Mom? Mom!”

Stephanie startles awake, first panicked by Miles’s outburst, then realizing it’s Nicky’s voice.

She sits up, blinking her eyes to get them to focus and they land on Emily. Her Emily. On her knees in the doorway with her son in her arms. She’s crying in a way Stephanie’s only ever seen her cry once before as she holds him close.

“Emily! You’re here!” Miles shrieks in surprise and runs to join them and all Stephanie can do is watch. Watch as her entire life finally comes home.

“I missed you, little dudes!”

_God, how she’s missed that voice._
She knows she’s crying, too, and covers her mouth before the sob escapes. She must not catch it in time because as soon as it does, Emily’s eyes meet hers for the first time in months.

It’s agony to wait one second longer but she’s waited this long; she can wait until Nicky’s had his moment with his mother who’s come back from the dead for him.

When his arms do slip from around her neck, she kisses his cheek and whispers in his ear, then does the same to Miles before standing.

Stephanie stands, too, and rushes forward as soon as Emily steps past the boys.

“Oh, my God,” Stephanie says with a sob as Emily’s arms wrap around her. Her own encircle Emily’s neck and she hugs her as hard as she can.

“Hi, baby.” Emily’s voice is watery, too and Stephanie breathes her in. She’ll never forget what it feels like for Emily to hold her this way, so desperately, so fiercely that she can feel it etching into her very soul to erase all the worry and doubts that had been trying to creep up on her.

But Stephanie pulls back the few inches necessary so she can lift her head and find Emily’s lips waiting for her.

They’re as soft and warm as she remembers them. It feels almost like a first kiss, full of nervous excitement. It feels familiar as ever, though and Stephanie feels herself sink into Emily as much as she feels soaked in by her. It’s slow and safe, a kiss of reconnection and grounding oneself and when they part, Stephanie lets her forehead fall to rest in the hollow of Emily’s throat. She smells the same. Tastes the same. Her skin and hair—several inches shorter than it used to be—have been kissed by the Mediterranean sun and it looks good on her as does the white linen slip of a dress she’s wearing.

“I missed you so much,” Stephanie croaks through a choked sob.

She feels Emily’s hands on her back, stroking aimlessly. Just touching. “I missed you, too.”

Stephanie knows they have so, so much to discuss and catch up on, but it will have to wait until the boys are asleep and they’re alone. So instead, she nods and tries to bury herself more deeply in the embrace.
When Emily suddenly jumps, they both look down to find Miles and Nicky at their feet, each of them hugging one of her legs. Neither of them had questioned their mothers kissing. Stephanie is relieved by that; Miles asking her about it had been stressful. Maybe not hiding it from them normalized it.

“You guys getting jealous?” Emily says with a laugh and Stephanie feels her arms slip away, and it’s okay because Emily’s only reclaiming them so she can rest her hands on their sons.

Nicky nearly climbs her like a tree once he has an arm within reach and she allows it, letting him pull himself up until he’s in her arms. He’s still crying and she kisses him while offering a small smile of what Stephanie assumes to be an apology but there’s no need for that. Nicky should absolutely be her priority and she shakes her head as she reaches for Miles’s hand.

“Okay,” Miles says with a sharp nod.

Stephanie glances back when they’re halfway to the stairs that lead to the bedrooms and her heart aches as much as it swells at the look of relief, love, and happiness on Emily’s face as she speaks quietly to Nicky.

She can’t imagine being separated from Miles as long as Emily tolerated being away from her son. She’ll never be able to repay her for her sacrifice.

In Miles’s new bedroom, the two of them make quick work of unpacking his one small suitcase that contains a few changes of clothes and a handful of his favorite toys. At the bottom of it all, Stephanie finds a large sheet of paper that’s well-worn and folded in half. She’s about to open it when she hears Miles shout, “No!”

“Whoa, excuse me, we don’t yell when we’re indoors,” she admonishes and then gasps in shock when he snatches the paper from her hands. “Miles! Where are your manners?”

“You can’t see it!” he says as he hurriedly shoves the paper under the pillow on his bed as if Stephanie won’t be able to access it there. “It’s a surprise,” he says with his signature pout when he turns back again and she feels bad for snapping. She also vaguely remembers Miles and Emily
conspiring about a secret surprise months ago.

“Okay, but we need to remember our inside voice and to not grab things from other people.”

“I know. I’m sorry,” he shrugs and she decides to let it slide.

“All right. Let’s get you ready for bed. Are you sleepy?” They’re seven hours ahead now and while the sun is beginning to set in Santorini, Greece, it’s just past lunchtime in Warfield, Connecticut.

Thankfully, he nods. She’d suspected the travel would wear him out. He didn’t sleep at all on the flight that had them waking up before dawn. He and Nicky were having too much fun to sleep. She helps him change into the Batman pajamas he insisted on bringing and walks with him to the bathroom so he’s sure he knows where it is if he needs it in the middle of the night.

They’re walking back to his room with minty breath and a clean face when she hears Emily’s voice making its way up the stairs. She slows her steps so she can catch a glimpse of her again. It’s still hard to believe any of this is real, that Emily’s in her life again and there’s no more hiding, no more hoping a husband doesn’t come home, no more secrets.

(Well...a few secrets.)

She sees her round the one curve in the staircase, Nicky on her hip and his little suitcase in her other hand. She must have had the same idea that Stephanie’d had to get him set up in his room and they exchange smiles again before Stephanie steps back into Miles’s.

“Okay, buster, let’s test out this new bed,” she says and Miles jumps into it and climbs into the middle like he’s slept in it for years.

“It’s good,” he says with a nod.

“Good.” She sits on the edge of the bed and tucks the covers around him before bending down to kiss his forehead. “I’m going to be just down the hall, okay? I know new houses can feel funny at first. You can come find me if you need to. Or just call for me and I’ll come check on you.”
“I’ll be okay,” he says with a confidence that shouldn’t feel bittersweet. He’ll always be her little boy, but every day he grows up a bit more.

“I know you will be. We’ll talk about our new house in the morning, okay?”

He nods and wiggles further under the sheets to make her chuckle.

“Okay. Goodnight, Smooch.”

“Night, Mom.”

She kisses him again, then stands to draw the curtains so the morning light won’t be so bright.

She passes Nicky’s room on her way to her own and pauses in the doorway. Emily’s in bed with Nicky, curled up together talking. Nicky’s oblivious to Stephanie’s presence, too enraptured with his mother to notice, but Emily sees her.

Stephanie expects her to wink but instead, her eyes fill with tears and she blinks quickly to try to stop them and only partially succeeds. She smiles despite them and nods toward the wall, toward what is about to officially be their bedroom and Stephanie understands. Emily will be in soon.

Stephanie freshens up from her travels but doesn’t bother changing. She’ll allow Emily to handle undressing her and there won’t be a need to put clothes back on again until the morning. The thought makes her warm and lightheaded; it’s not as though she’d forgotten that she’d be reuniting with Emily in more ways than one today. She was just so caught up in being in any kind of measurable proximity with her once again that she hadn’t had a chance to think about it.

But now that she’s thought about it, she can’t shake it.

She wants Emily to take as long as she needs to with Nicky, but when she does come to bed…

“Whatcha thinking about?”
Emily’s voice so close behind her makes her jump and then melt into the arms that wrap around her waist where she’s standing aimlessly in the middle of the room.

“You,” she answers simply.

There’s a quiet hum in her ear followed by lips on her cheek, and then she feels Emily unwind from her to take her hand. “Come on; I want to show you something.”

Stephanie follows her, hand-in-hand, out of the bedroom to what Stephanie had envisioned when she was looking at the property as potentially a craft room, or a study, or an office of some kind. It’s still an empty room waiting to be personalized, but it also leads to a small balcony on the sea-facing side of the house.

There’s a chair and a small table there along with an empty wine bottle tucked next to the wall and Stephanie suspects Emily likes to sit and read or whatever it is she’s been doing for the past four months (she can’t wait to hear about it all).

Her thoughts are interrupted when Emily steps to the side to not block Stephanie’s view and when she does, it takes Stephanie’s breath away.

“Oh, wow…” she whispers. The sun hangs low in the sky, casting orange and yellow and pink hues across the sky where they’re mirrored in the ocean. It’s utterly brilliant; she’s never seen anything like it.

It brings tears to her eyes, or maybe that’s caused by Emily moving to hold her from behind to look out over the island and ocean together.

“Beautiful,” Emily whispers in her ear but when lips touch her neck, Stephanie wonders if maybe Emily wasn’t referring to the sunset.

She leans against the railing and sighs. Warmth crawls through her and though she’s painfully desperate, she’s in no rush.

Emily and she have all the time in the world now.
She senses Emily may feel the same; her kisses aren’t hurried or demanding, but they are thoughtful in their placement and pressure. Her hands rest on Stephanie’s waist but they’re not idle. They’re slow and sure as they slip under the edge of Stephanie’s blouse to graze the smooth skin of her abdomen. Warm as she is, she shivers.

“God, I missed you,” Emily mumbles against the curve of Stephanie’s shoulder before biting it playfully.

“Mm, do go on,” Stephanie teases.

Emily’s hands breeze higher under her shirt but stop short of reaching the edge of her bra before they move down again. “I missed the way you feel.”

She smiles to herself and reaches behind her to find the back of Emily’s neck to rest her hand upon. The tickle of a nose grazing her ear makes her bite her lip.

“I missed the way you smell.”

Stephanie’s body is still responding to that when the warmth of a tongue glides up her neck from shoulder to pulse point. It lingers there until breath drifts over her ear.

“I missed the way you taste.”

She can’t stop the moan that escapes her lips at that, especially when Emily’s hands are moving higher again, and she knows they’re not going to stop this time.

“I missed the way you sound,” Emily purrs as her hands frame Stephanie’s breasts over smooth satin. Stephanie arches into the touch and when she does, she feels Emily’s chest pressing into her back. She knows she’s braless; she can feel it.

It’s all she can do not to crumble; the fact that her hips are pinned against the balcony railing by Emily’s is her only savior. She twists her neck to seek out Emily’s wandering lips and they find hers quickly.
It’s a soft kiss at first, a gentle connection. But then Emily’s hands tense in reflex and Stephanie can’t hold back anymore. She parts her lips to capture Emily’s, not just touch them. She hears Emily react, a quick inhale before she returns the instant passion in kind. The hands that were so recently content to graze and hold now grab and squeeze and the only reason Stephanie’s tongue isn’t in Emily’s mouth is that Emily’s is in hers.

She whines against it, trapped as she is with a limited range of motion. When their lips part solely so Emily’s teeth can nip at her neck, Stephanie breathes, “Take me to bed.”

There’s no stumbling backward blind shuffle through the room and across the hall. Emily breaks away from her, grabs her hand, and pulls to make quick work of the distance. Stephanie follows more than willingly and they both pause in the hallway, a mutual listening to see if their children are asleep.

They’re met with silence so Stephanie pushes forward, her free hand on Emily’s lower back to quietly close the door behind her. She doesn’t bother waiting for something so trivial as Emily to turn back and pin her against that door. She just pushes past her, still hand-in-hand, and pulls Emily with her until they’re tumbling into a bed Stephanie’s never been in.

Emily’s lips are on hers before they’re even lying down. It feels so good just to have Emily’s weight pressing her into the mattress that her hips tilt to try to find friction. “Em...” she whines again, one hand tangled in the messy blonde hair she hasn’t gripped in so long while the other runs down her body. Emily’s skin is as warm and smooth as she remembers it, the strength in her arms evident as she supports herself over Stephanie.

She’s grateful for the dress Emily’d chosen to wear that day. Its spaghetti straps allow Stephanie to re-stake her claim quickly even if it’s only one side of her body since Stephanie’s right hand is busy keeping Emily’s mouth on her own.

Not that it seems to be trying to leave.

Stephanie’s free hand skirts down Emily’s side until it’s tugging at her dress, bunching it between her fingers to inch it higher and higher until her palm finds the bare skin of her thigh. She feels her react, tongue sliding more desperately against Stephanie’s. She shifts and for a second, Stephanie’s upset because Emily’s hips aren’t between her legs anymore but then she’s back, settling next to Stephanie, almost straddling her thigh but not quite.

Sure fingers sweep down from Stephanie’s neck, over her chest, straight to the button on her pants that she’s irate about wearing. She should have changed after all, at least into a dress or something
a little more forgiving. It doesn’t slow Emily down, though, and there’s a pull at her waist and the button gives. Those sure fingers graze up her stomach, then twist and start to slide down, catching on the edge of her panties.

The fact that Emily’s not waiting, not even bothering to undress ignites a desperation in Stephanie she didn’t think possible. Her hips lift in anticipation and her own hand runs up Emily’s inner thigh until—

“God,” Stephanie thinks she says. It may not have actually been a word; maybe more like a sound. Emily definitely didn’t form a sentence or even a word; instead, she groaned through their kiss as Stephanie’s fingers slid between her legs just as her own slipped between Stephanie’s.

Emily’s wet, soaked, and she knows she’s in a similar state. It’s been too long and Emily’s fingers know her so well.

They rock together, messy, needy. Fully dressed.

“Baby,” Emily breathes against her. “Shit, I—”

Stephanie nods and moves her fingers more quickly; she knows Emily’s already close and it’s a relief. She was about to come embarrassingly fast but now she’s not ashamed.

She wants to scream but has to settle for sinking her teeth into Emily’s shoulder when Emily’s kiss breaks away to press into the pillow. It muffles Emily’s moan from traveling beyond their room but she’s so close to Stephanie’s ear that it rings clear. She flies over the edge with her, clinging to Emily best she can with her one free arm as she sinks her fingers into Emily to feel her climax for the first time in so very long.

She feels Emily do the same and there’s a long, eternal moment of heavy breathing and stillness that feels a lot like missing pieces settling together.

When Emily finally lifts her head, she’s smiling sheepishly. “I didn’t mean to—”

“I’m flattered,” Stephanie says with a teasing smile as she lifts her head a bit to kiss Emily.
Emily jostles her a little in protest but connected as they still are, it translates differently and Stephanie fails to cut off the moan before it escapes.

“Okay, yeah, I barely lasted as long as you did,” she says against Emily’s lips and tries to deepen the kiss but Emily pulls back.

Her cheeks are flushed and her eyes are as dark as they are bright. “Did I mention that I missed you?”

It’s difficult to not be flattered when someone like Emily tells her such things. “Once or twice,” she manages to flirt.

“Then have I mentioned I love you?” Emily whispers as she leans in again.

“It’s been a while,” Stephanie manages before her lips are captured. She knows she’s crying again; she can feel the warm tears trickling down her temples as Emily, her love, her everything kisses her and kisses her and kisses her. They’re starting to move against one another again and as deep as the need remains, the frenzy has lessened. She eventually turns her face away to urge Emily’s lips to her neck, and so she can finally reply, “I love you, too.”

She hears a hitch in Emily’s breath at the words, and then Emily’s taking her hand away and sitting up to tug at Stephanie’s shirt. “You’re wearing too many clothes.”

“So take them off,” Stephanie says as she lifts her shoulders off the bed to let Emily pull it up and over her head. Her pants go next and with them, her underwear, as she gets rid of her bra herself. She reaches for Emily’s dress next and it lifts up and off to be tossed aside with the rest. Then she sits up to hook her fingers under the thin strip of elastic at Emily’s hips and works them down, marveling at Emily’s long, toned, now tanned legs. “I feel like you’re even more beautiful than when you left.” She lets her eyes roam up Emily’s body, still sitting up in bed, their legs barely touching. “Did you get more beautiful?”

Emily laughs and shakes her head. “I’m just finally happy.”

The words land low and warm in Stephanie and make her breathless. “Oh.” The warmth travels up her chest and down her legs until it’s unbearable. “Lay down.”
“You lay down,” Emily counters, lifting a hand to nudge Stephanie’s shoulder.

She shakes her head and counters, too, both hands pushing at Emily’s shoulders. “You can wait your turn.”

“I’ve waited four months,” Emily says as she gives in and lays back.

“So have I.” Stephanie moves over her as soon as she’s down and claims her lips. She lets herself rest against Emily, not bothering to try to keep her weight off her. She knows Emily loves it and whimpers when Emily’s arms and legs wrap around her, everything pulling her down and impossibly closer. As though Emily cannot get her close enough.

Stephanie moves her lips to Emily’s neck, over the golden skin and straining tendons as Emily moves beneath her, already writhing impatiently despite having release not ten minutes earlier.

But Stephanie’s not judging; she’s ready again, too.

She has to use a bit of force to move backward; Emily’s strong and her arms hold firm until Stephanie rolls her shoulders to get them loose enough to move down as her hand cups Emily’s right breast to hold it as her lips cover the tip.

Emily’s restless; nails rake over Stephanie’s back though it’s not painful. Her hips won’t stop moving and Stephanie can feel how much she’s needed every time they tilt just-so against her stomach. She lavishes attention on Emily’s breasts, mouth on one and hand on the other until hands land on her shoulders and actually push her down.

“Oh, my God,” she says with a laugh as she shuffles down. “I was getting there.”

“I don’t need foreplay,” Emily pants as she lifts her head to watch as Stephanie settles between her legs, arms hooking around her thighs so her hands can rest on Emily’s stomach.

“Maybe I just wanted to make you feel good.” She turns her head to kiss the warm, soft skin of Emily’s inner thigh and feels fingers thread through her hair to tighten and pull.
“Baby.” Emily’s voice breaks over the word as her hips lift, begging.

Stephanie lets herself be guided; it’s so hot to be so wanted, and even if she wants to prolong Emily’s pleasure, she also really, really wants her mouth on her and if that’s what Emily wants…

“Fuck,” Emily breathes as her hips buck at the first touch of Stephanie’s tongue between her legs.

She tastes exquisite and Stephanie moans as she runs her tongue through her again, fingers pulling at flesh to expose more of Emily to her mouth. She’s also so, so wet and Stephanie’s hips press into the bed wanting their own relief. She indulges that, starting to rock against the bed and the covers that are bunched up beneath her and uses the motion to her advantage. She tucks an arm beneath her chest so she can press two fingers into Emily. She’s warm and Stephanie can feel it as she squeezes her, an unhindered moan escaping from both of them.

Stephanie curses as she licks at Emily’s swollen clit, all desire to tease or torment flying out the window when she feels how much Emily needs her. She laps at her, making love to her with everything she has so Emily knows just how much Stephanie missed her. How much she needs her, too. She thrusts into her in time with her own rocking and she knows she’s going to have to stop herself from coming; she only wants to give her pleasure to Emily but for now, she can fuck with abandon.

She’s grateful the bed is solid. She knows the one she left behind would be making an awful racket.

Emily’s heels drag over her back and shoulders until she’s holding her own knee back against her chest, her other hand still clutching Stephanie’s hair as she writhes and rocks. It makes Stephanie press a third finger into her and she fits so perfectly inside that she keeps them there, buried deep, curling and stroking with the tips of her fingers as she pulls Emily’s clit between her lips to suck.

Emily’s being too loud; they both know it, and Stephanie desperately hopes the boys don’t come knocking in curiosity, at least not before she makes Emily come in her mouth.

There’s a harsh pull on her hair and the leg that’s not pulled high presses against her ear and Stephanie has to lift her hips away from the bed to stave off her orgasm because Emily’s about to come.

She sucks hard, tongue stroking the sensitive flesh, and she feels Emily quivering from within
before her body bucks with release, hot and hard and Stephanie has to work to keep her fingers deep and her mouth on her.

All the times they’ve shared this, the innumerable orgasms Stephanie has given her...none of them have felt like this.

It’s intense and long and Emily’s moan is weak and airy as though all energy has been diverted to one thing so while it doesn’t sound like it’s hard, Stephanie can feel it in the way she clutches around her. In the way her back arches and her thighs tense. It’s in the way her neck strains and her head twists from left to right and back again until they’re looking at one another, Emily breathing hard and Stephanie still licking.

“Get up here and lay down.” Emily almost growls it but the lust that her body’s awash in removes all bits of potential threat from her tone.

Even so, Stephanie shivers in anticipation as she gives up her spot to climb on slightly wobbly hands and knees until she’s hovering above Emily.

She lets herself be pulled down into a kiss. She already knows she’s done, about to be destroyed, with the way Emily’s tongue works in her mouth. It’s only a prelude, a preview of what’s about to be done elsewhere and she doesn’t resist when Emily sits up to push her onto her back.

Stephanie parts her legs immediately but Emily’s descent stalls at her breasts much like her own had and she arches her back and whimpers when teeth tease her nipple. She senses Emily’s hand near her head, searching blindly until it finds the pillow it was looking for. Then she sits up on her knees, all messy hair and swollen lips and arousal as she stares down at Stephanie.

She seems almost lost for a moment, as though she’s struggling for words until she finally just groans and pulls at Stephanie’s hip to get her to lift up to slide the pillow beneath her.

They don’t usually use one, but when they do, it’s for a reason. When they do, it’s because someone’s going to be on their stomach for a while.

She bites her lip at the thought and watches Emily move back and down until she’s lying between Stephanie’s thighs. She doesn’t take a moment to tease or taunt. She just says, “Fuck,” and presses her tongue into Stephanie while fingers slide over her clit to start rubbing.
It makes Stephanie’s hips come off the pillow with a sharp gasp; she hadn’t been quite ready for such a high level of stimulation but after a few seconds it feels like it’s not enough. She settles again and parts her legs wider as she squeezes the tongue that’s working its way deeper inside until she’s being properly fucked with it.

Her moans are more like breathy whimpers as she tries to watch. It’s difficult, though. Emily’s already relentless and Stephanie was so close to climax before she’d even laid down and she just gives in. She doesn’t want to fight it or wait.

She comes.

She comes hard and now she knows why Emily was so quiet despite it. She can barely breathe as ecstasy overtakes her and drowns her. Her hands twist into the bedding beneath her and then they twist into Emily’s hair, both of them frozen in place as Stephanie throbs.

As soon as it begins to ebb Emily resumes, though she’s less demanding. Stephanie appreciates it; she’s on fire and as good as it feels it’s also almost painful and Emily’s tongue slipping out of her to gently tease her clit instead is a welcome relief.

It works her up again despite her oversensitivity but this time she’s able to sit up, to prop herself on an elbow and watch this beautiful, exquisite woman make love to her with a kind of mutual passion she’s never experienced with anyone but her.

She trembles as Emily’s eyes meet hers and this time she’s able to keep her eyes open while Emily makes her feel worthy of the stars. She whimpers and Emily moans in understanding as her tongue moves more quickly until Stephanie comes with a gasp and a lip-bitten moan as they watch each other.

Emily pulls back after a few moments but her hand just replaces her tongue. She’s even gentler now, though, just brushing back and forth as she sucks a bruise into Stephanie’s thigh.

Stephanie knows what she’s doing; she’s catching her breath because she’s not finished and it makes her hips twitch in reflex which earns her a smirk in response.

“Shut up,” she laughs. “You are so good at that.”
The smirk only grows so all Stephanie can do is roll her eyes and fall backward to stare at the ceiling while Emily has her way with her.

She can have her way with her all night.

She doesn’t give a flying fuck. They have four months of separation to make up for.

Emily starts again, the softness of her tongue peeking between fingers that are pressing a little more firmly and Stephanie gives up and yanks the other pillow, the one beneath her head, out to press it over her face so she can moan as loudly as she needs to.

It takes her a bit longer this time, and instead of an explosion of lightning, it’s more like rolling thunder that has her shuddering with aftershocks every time Emily’s lips place a kiss against her. She tosses the pillow to the side to breathe and when she glances down, Emily’s still smirking up at her.

“God, I love you,” Stephanie pants. Her voice crackles and it’s a reminder that she’d just been moaning in ecstasy at the top of her lungs.

“I love you, too,” Emily says after taking one more indulgent lick. She shifts a bit until she has her face propped on Stephanie’s thigh to rest, still looking up at her with a smile. “I can’t believe you’re here,” she adds after a few quiet seconds.

“Were you doubting me?” Stephanie tries to sit up a little.

Emily shakes her head and waits to answer until she’s finished licking through Stephanie again, making them both twitch. “It was hard not knowing how long it would take.” She licks again and Stephanie has to bite down on a moan.

“I’m dying to talk to you about everything but I can’t when you’re doing that.”

“Do you want to talk or do you want me to do this?” Stephanie watches her do it, tongue pressing flat against her to grind into her.
“Oh, my…” her breath catches because as over-sensitive as she is, whatever Emily’s doing is perfect. “That, do that.”

Emily’s agreement is nothing more than a moan and a neverending circle with her tongue that makes Stephanie shove the pillow over her face again.

It treads the line between too much and not enough until Emily’s fingers sinking into her tip the scales toward ‘not enough,’ until she’s begging for harder and faster which her body should not be able to handle at this point, but she’s on a different plane of existence entirely and she’s been driven there by the woman she adores.

She begs until Emily stops.

She stops.

“What are you doing?!” Stephanie gasps when Emily pulls away from her without warning.

“Giving you what you want,” Emily says, breathing nearly as hard as Stephanie as she rolls off the bed to cross to the dresser.

Stephanie already knows and she has to bite back another moan as she watches Emily slip a pair of briefs up her legs, then work a dark purple silicone phallus through the O-ring. They’re new; definitely not what they’d used back in Warfield, and the fact that Emily had purchased new toys once she arrived in Greece…to be ready…

She just turns over and gets on her knees and sinks forward, ready to bury her face in the pillow again.

A hand connects with her ass and it’s not exactly gentle. It seems like maybe it was on purpose with the way it rubs at the spot it just slapped and it makes her moan again. She lets Emily hear it, wants her to know it was okay, that she liked it, but instead of doing it again, Emily sinks into her.

Stephanie just whines. It’s all she can do at this point. Whine and whimper like the wrecked thing she’s become as Emily’s hands grip her waist to start fucking her.
She’s not slow but she’s steady, giving Stephanie a minute or two to get used to it before she picks up speed.

“God, yes,” Stephanie groans before biting the pillow and twisting her fists into it.

It’s the green light for Emily who stops being any kind of gentle and instead fucks into her with the same level of abandon that Stephanie already feels.

It’s so hard and so fast and so deep that it should hurt and Stephanie’s eyes do tear but they tear in pleasure as the sounds of their wild lovemaking fill the room, moans and skin on skin and wetness as Stephanie struggles to stay on her knees when all she wants is to collapse and be fucked right through the bed.

Instead, she pushes up higher for an even better angle and she can hear Emily behind her, swearing and half-words and gasps and she knows they’re going to come together.

The thought whips through her brain and she tightens her grip on the pillow, turns her head the tiniest bit to let Emily hear more of what she’s making her feel to help get her there more quickly because Stephanie’s on the verge.

Her voice catches. Skips up an octave. Her hips jerk and she can’t stop it but she doesn’t need to. She feels Emily fold herself over her back, sweat and breasts and hair clinging to her as she keeps thrusting into Stephanie again and again until they’re both moaning, Stephanie into the pillow and Emily into Stephanie’s back as they climax together, a wild, uncontrollable orgasm this time that has Stephanie half-wondering between explosions of pleasure how much of a mess they’ll be after.

When it passes, she soaks in Emily’s weight above her, how hard she’s breathing, that somehow she’s still kissing Stephanie’s back and shoulder and neck. “I love you,” Emily exhales before sucking at her neck to leave a mark. “Fuck, I love you so much.”

Stephanie can only hum in response. She’s too spent for anything else, even words, but she’ll be sure to respond to that as soon as she’s able.

It must be ten, fifteen minutes before Emily starts to peel herself away, leaving both of them with a shiver as the air hits hot, damp skin. Stephanie gasps when Emily pulls out and she feels the motion of Emily leaving the bed, hears the thunk of the strap hitting the floor, and then she’s back in bed. Stephanie has the distinct sensation that she’s being gathered up and she savors it, weakly
trying to help get herself turned onto her side until she and Emily are tangled up together, a picture of exhausted bliss as they kiss.

“I love you, too,” Stephanie finally manages and Emily beams. She’ll never get tired of that. Of Emily’s pure, almost innocent (though she’s the very opposite of innocent) fascination with loving and being loved in return.

Emily kisses her again, then kisses her nose and closed eyes and forehead and then her lips again. None of it is demanding now. No one’s trying to start anything. It’s connection out of pure necessity and Stephanie can feel it in her bones.

“So,” Emily starts with another kiss to Stephanie’s brow, “what took you so long?”

Stephanie takes a breath to answer but instead, she lets out an exhausted sigh. “I’ll tell you everything tomorrow.”

She hears Emily chuckle deep in her chest where she’s tucked. “That’s fine, baby. I’m just glad you’re finally here.”

Stephanie tightens her arm where it wraps around Emily’s waist. “Me, too.”

It’s hard for her to believe any of this is real. The past four months, six months, year have been a blur filled with memories she could have never imagined experiencing. But she’s in Emily’s arms again. On the other side of the world. In a house they will share. With their sons who are already as close as brothers. New names. Anonymity. A new life together.

She’s home.

To be continued...
**Epilogue**

**Chapter Summary**

This is it, my friends. Thank you for taking this little detour from the movie’s plot of missed opportunity with me. It was an absolute joy of a story to tell!

Life with Emily is everything Stephanie had dreamed it could be.

They spend the first several weeks turning their house into a home, furnishing and decorating it beyond the minimal things Emily had done while she waited. It’s fun to hang curtains and bicker and compromise and then kiss when they’re finished. They go shopping to fill their closets and drawers since everyone arrived with little more than the clothes on their back. They take the boys to the market to pick out fresh produce. They hire a tutor to start teaching the boys Greek so they’ll be more prepared to re-enter school come September.

They hire one for themselves, too, and Stephanie’s perpetually annoyed that Emily’s better at it than she is. “I’ve had more time to practice, ἐρό μου,” Emily says when Stephanie gets too frustrated. It doesn’t really help her irritation, but she kind of loves that Emily already knew how to call her “baby” in the native tongue before she’d arrived.

They both take up small part-time work. Not out of necessity, of course. They have some $3.5 million tucked away in bank accounts throughout the Mediterranean. It’s only to break up the days and keep hands and minds busy with activities they enjoy. Stephanie spends three mornings each week at a bakery. She loves it, and they also never need to buy bread at the market.

Emily volunteers at the youth center that organizes the soccer league Miles and Nicky join. It makes Stephanie smile to herself every time they and the boys get on their bicycles to head down the hill for practice. What would Darren, Stacy, and Sona think? Emily Nelson voluntarily working with children! Emily Nelson would never. Dillon Reid, however, loves it.

She finds herself wondering more than once what those three might be up to. If they pretended to care when Stephanie and the boys disappeared, too. If they gossiped and tried to start rumors and if any of their rumors were accurate. She wonders if her dedicated vlog audience misses her. She wonders how Sean is faring in prison. She thinks about maybe sending him a note, an anonymous one of course, in a year or two simply informing him that Nicky is safe. He’s surely heard what happened; maybe he’s even been questioned on the matter of their disappearance. Maybe he finally
figured out what really happened.

They keep an eye on news from the United States and read *The Warfield Observer* online over a private VPN connection as the stories about the search for the single mom and her two boys who disappeared without a trace become shorter and shorter and move deeper down the page until the last one, just two paragraphs long, states that the search has been called off and the local police and FBI still have no leads.

They buy a boat; not a yacht and nothing outlandish, just a twenty-six-foot daysailer that lets them get off the island and onto the sea to relax in the sun, to let the boys snorkel off-shore, to fish like the locals. Neither of them knows how to sail it so they take lessons until they can.

The first time they try it without their instructor, they’re excited. Their neighbor agrees to take the boys for the evening and Stephanie packs a picnic of fresh fruits and cheeses and a bottle of wine. They get the craft out of the harbor and into the bay under the starry sky to make love, only to have the wind not be in their favor for the return. Their lack of experience quickly devolves into frustration on Emily’s part and helpless amusement on Stephanie’s as they drift. Stephanie repeatedly tells Emily, “Just use the outboard, that’s what it’s there for,” to which Emily replies, “We’re *sailing*. We’re supposed to *sail*.”

Stephanie kisses away her frustration and convinces her to give in to the convenience of the motor and Emily immediately books more advanced lessons with their instructor so it never happens again.

She learns new things about Emily and herself every day.

She learns that Emily likes to wake up early to watch the sunrise over a strong cup of coffee from their balcony before going for a run.

It’s an intense route, Stephanie learns the first time she joins Emily on her morning workout. There seem to be no such things as flat roads in Oia and if they’re not running uphill they’re climbing stairs so they can run down and back up the next.

“Καληµέρα, Dillon,” the elderly woman who lives on the corner says with a wave as they pass. “Morning,” Emily replies with a smile, sometimes in English, sometimes in Greek. She sits by the road every day in a rocking chair working on something; knitting, weaving, cleaning vegetables. “Καληµέρα, Alyson,” she waves on their way home. Her name is Antonia and she adores their boys. She looks after them sometimes and they always come home filled with local folklore stories to share, along with a homemade sweet.
Stephanie finds herself thinking more and more often that this is it: this is what The Greats meant when they wrote of paradise.

She’s thinking of it as she sits on the floor of their home trying to learn yet another game the boys have invented involving dice, a bouncy ball, and a plastic toy horse and glances up to see what Emily’s doing; all she’s doing is watching them with a soft smile on her lips.

“Connor, baby, come upstairs with me for a minute,” Emily says and stands, holding out her hand for Stephanie’s son to take. “You, too, Devon.”

“Why?” Miles asks as he pops up and skips over to her, followed by Nicky.

“I want to talk to you.”

“You can’t talk to them here?” Stephanie asks from the floor, confused and a hair suspicious as to why Emily needs to take their sons upstairs to talk to them as if they had a secret to share.

“It won’t take long,” Emily says with a smile before they’re heading upstairs.

She hears them above in Miles’s room; there’s a squeaky drawer in his dresser and she hears it open and close followed by several minutes of silence.

It makes her nervous, though she can’t pinpoint why and she plays with the dice while she waits, rolling and re-rolling to see if she can get all four of them to come up the same.

She looks up when she hears them coming back down the stairs and she can’t help but notice that both boys have their hands behind their backs doing a poor job of hiding what they’re holding. Emily’s aren’t behind her back but she can tell something’s in her hand by the way her fingers curl and Stephanie’s eyes snap to hers.

“Go on,” Emily says with a nudge to the boys’ backs once they’re in the middle of the living room floor where Stephanie still sits.
“These are for you,” Nicky says with stately purpose as he thrusts his arm out, a bouquet of yellow daffodils and purple crocuses in his fist.

“Oh, thank you,” Stephanie says as she accepts them. Now she really is nervous because clearly, there’s something going on. “What about you, Smooch? I know you’re hiding something, too.”

He nods and reveals a folded up piece of paper, the same one Stephanie remembers him snatching from her to hide their first day in their new home. He unfolds it and it takes a couple tries to get it right-side up and facing Stephanie and when it does, her voice catches and her eyes tear.

It’s a crayon drawing, very clearly done by Miles and Nicky of all four of them holding hands, Emily and Stephanie in the middle. Across the top in sharp, uneven capital letters is written, “Can we be a family?”

“So, how about it, baby?” Emily says after a few seconds when Stephanie’s gaze lands on her, now with her hand up and an open ring box sitting in her palm, its diamond glittering in the sunlight filtering in through the windows.

Proper words don’t seem to come to mind. Her vision blurs with tears and she can see Emily’s shape as it kneels to join her on the floor. Arms wrap around her and she’s already nodding when Emily whispers, “Marry me?” She feels the boys join in, hugging her from the side and from behind and she’s never felt so whole.

“Yes,” she finally manages. “A thousand times, yes.”

The end

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