

A Bit Of Bad Luck Part 7

A Surprise Arrival

The gravel driveway crunched softly under Jules's sneakers as he moved through the darkness, each step careful, almost apologetic. The night air was cool and thick with the scent of pine and lake water. Somewhere in the distance an owl called out, then fell silent.

The lake house stood ahead of him, a dark silhouette against the star-scattered sky, broken only by a single warm rectangle of light glowing in an upstairs window.

That light held him. Pulling at the deepest, most terrified parts of him.

Jules slowed, heart hammering so hard he could feel it in his throat. A primal dread settled in his gut, heavy and cold, telling him that he should turn back. He stopped a few metres short of the porch, staring up. For a moment he thought he saw a shadow move across the glass. Then a sound drifted down through the open window, a feminine groan, or was it just the breeze blowing through the air and rustling in the trees?

His stomach dropped. Had he been wrong to trust Amari?

The old nickname surfaced back into his mind. *Bad Luck*. There had always been stories; half-legend, half-warning, about Amari Luck back in school and the wreckage of women he left in his wake. Even if they had been true, Jules had laughed them off. Everybody changes, and Amari had turned into their friend when they needed him the most. Their saviour, even. The man who had given them a roof and Jules a job when everything was falling apart.

But the image of him in the shower burned behind his eyelids: that massive, dark cock swinging heavy between his thighs. Multiple times bigger and thicker than Jules, even soft. A weapon of pure masculine excess, a terrifying display of biological dominance. Jules had tried not to stare. He had told himself size didn't matter. Rose wasn't the kind of girl to be impressed by that. She wanted love, connection, safety. Not... that.

She's upstairs sleeping. That's all. You're being paranoid. She's tucked up under the covers, exhausted from the fresh air and the water. You're going to walk in, kiss her forehead, and laugh at how paranoid you've become.

He was almost at the porch steps when all around him suddenly exploded in white.

Headlights swept across the pine trees, blinding and sudden. Jules froze, his muscles locking up as a car roared up the drive, tyres crunching over the gravel, beams curling through the darkness like twin blades. Panic flared. He dropped into a frightened crouch, scanning for a place to take cover, but there was none. The car slowed to a crawl and stopped a short distance from him. The engine died, but the lights stayed on him for a second longer, pinning him in their glare, before they finally clicked off.

The car door clicked opened, and a woman stepped out into the moonlight.

She was striking in a way that felt dangerous. Late twenties, tall and athletic, with rich dark skin that seemed to drink the moonlight. Her hair was pulled back in a sleek, practical ponytail that accentuated the elegance of her features; high cheekbones, full lips and intelligent eyes that narrowed the instant they locked onto him.

She wore a simple black tank top that clung to the firm curves of her chest and jeans that hugged her powerful thighs. Even in the dim light, she radiated a calm, unshakable dominance. The kind of woman who did not suffer fools.

She closed the car door with a soft, deliberate push and walked toward him with an aggressive stride.

“Who the fuck are you, white boy?”

Her voice was low, clear, and edged with steel.

Jules snapped upright too quickly, his movements jerky and uncoordinated. He raised his hands in a clumsy, instinctive gesture of surrender, his palms open and shaking. The words tangled in his throat, suffocating him.

“I... I... I’m Jules.”

She stopped a few paces away, arms folding across her chest. The movement made her breasts push out. She looked him up and down with an unimpressed gaze.

“You’re trespassing on my family’s property in the middle of the night, Jules.” She stated, her tone flat and dangerous. “Give me one good reason I shouldn’t call the police right now.”

“I’m sorry... I didn’t mean... Wait, what did you say? This is your family’s property?” Jules blurted, relief and confusion colliding. “You’re related to Amari? Amari Luck?”

Her eyes sharpened, the pupils contracting as she scrutinised him. “You know Amari, huh? I’m his cousin. Sierra. Now, why don’t you explain why you are sneaking around the house in the dark like a thief?”

Jules swallowed hard. His voice came out thinner than he wanted. “My girlfriend’s inside. Rose. She came up here with Amari. I was meant to join them in a couple of days, but I... I decided to surprise her. Drive up early.”

Sierra studied him for a long, uncomfortable moment. Her gaze flicked over his rumpled clothes, the tension in his shoulders, the way his eyes kept darting toward the glowing upstairs window. A small, sympathetic smile touched the corner of her mouth. She saw the doubt in him; she smelled the suspicion.

“Surprise them,” she repeated, her voice dry and laced with a mocking irony. “Looks more like you’re checking up on them.”

She glanced past him toward the side of the cabin, where the sleek, black silhouette of Amari’s convertible sat in the shadows. Her expression shifted into a flicker of mild

surprise. “He’s actually here. I thought the place would be empty this week. He told me I could bring the little ones up for a holiday.”

“Little ones...?” Jules asked.

Sierra’s voice dropped, firm and quiet. “They’re asleep in the back seat.”

She stepped closer, the dominance in her posture unmistakable.

“Why don’t you wait right here. I’m going to go inside and make sure you are who you say you are. And don’t make any noise, you wake my kids up and I’ll rip your balls off.” She said in a voice that was half tease, half promise.

Without waiting for an answer she turned and walked toward the porch, her movements smooth and purposeful. The cabin door opened with a soft creak, then closed behind her, leaving Jules alone in the dark.

Jules turned his head toward the car. In the faint, dying glow of the interior light, he could just make out two small, curled shapes in the back seat: a boy around six and a girl perhaps four. They were slumped in the deep sleep of childhood, mouths slightly open, their breathing steady and peaceful.

He stood frozen on the gravel, heart still racing, the upstairs light still burning in the window above him. The silence of the woods returning, stretching out like an eternity as he waited.

Sierra closed the front door quietly behind her and stood for a moment in the dimly lit living room, listening. The house was warm, the air heavy with the faint scent of sex and woodsmoke. From upstairs came the unmistakable steady groan of a bed protesting under the weight and movements atop it. It was punctuated by low, wet sounds and a woman’s breathless moans.

She bit her lower lip. *Still the same old Amari*, she thought.

She climbed the stairs slowly, bare feet silent on the wooden treads. The moans grew clearer with every step. Rose’s voice; high, desperate, and completely undone; spilled out into the hallway, echoing with a hunger that Sierra recognised all too well.

“Fuck yes... oh god, yes! Give it to me... give me that big black cock... pound me, Amari! Fuck me harder!”

Sierra reached the open bedroom doorway and stopped.

The scene in front of her was pure heat and sweat and ownership. Amari was on his knees behind a pale, curvy blonde, one hand fisted in her golden hair, the other gripping her hip as he fucked her with deep, powerful strokes that caused her ass to wobble with every thrust.

Their sweaty bodies were slick and shining in the low lamplight. Rose's heavy breasts swung violently beneath her. Her mouth was locked open in a silent scream of pleasure, eyes half-lidded, lost completely in the sensory overload.

Amari's face was a mask of focused domination, the same expression Sierra had seen years ago when she used to catch him with girls in the back rooms of family parties or the guest cabin. Even then, years younger than she was, he had fucked like a man who knew exactly what he was doing. And that cock... Sierra's gaze locked onto it. It was still the biggest and most impressive piece of anatomy, she had ever seen. Thick, dark, glistening, disappearing into this blonde slut's stretched pussy.

Sierra felt a sudden, sharp ache between her thighs. Her nipples tightened against the thin fabric of her tank top. She had spent years chasing men built like her cousin, men who could fuck the way he fucked. And no matter how many orgasms they could give her, most of them had been complete disasters outside the bedroom. Unfit for relationships. Unfit to be the father figures she wanted for her two kids.

"Fuck... Amari... I'm going to milk you dry all night long... I want every single, delicious drop..." rose moaned, her voice breaking into a sob of ecstasy.

Sierra watched for another few seconds, taking in the way they moved together; not just fucking, but claiming each other in a way that went beyond just a physical pleasure. The way Rose pushed back to meet him. The way Amari's free hand stroked down her spine with a tenderness, like she was something precious.

Then Sierra pushed the door wider and leaned against the frame.

"You might want to rethink the 'all night long' part," she said, voice cutting through the lust like a blade.

Rose let out a sharp, piercing scream.

She scrambled forward on pure instinct, yanking a pillow in front of her, desperately trying to cover her body even as Amari pulled out of her with a wet sound. He stood in a calm movement, chest heaving, sweat running down the hard planes of his torso. His cock jutted out thick and rigid, shiny with Rose's arousal, the heavy head still leaking.

"What the hell, Amari? Who's this?" Rose's voice cracked as she clutched the pillow to her chest, eyes wide with pure shock.

Amari's expression shifted from lust to recognition in a heartbeat. He grabbed a discarded sheet from the floor and wrapped it around Rose's shoulders, shielding her, before reaching for a pair of shorts and yanking them up over his throbbing erection.

"Sierra." His voice was rough. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

Sierra's gaze flicked down to the bulge he was failing to hide in his shorts, then back up to his face with a small smirk. "Hey, cuz. Still up to your old tricks, I see."

Amari dragged a hand down his face like he was trying to wipe the last hour off his skin, whilst figuring out some lost memory. "This was the week you were coming to holiday?"

“This is the week.” She stepped fully into the room, arms folding across her chest. “You told me the house would be free. The kids are asleep in the car right now.”

Amari’s brow furrowed hard. “I had it written down as next month...” He shook his head once, then his voice dropped, warmed, genuine. “The kids are downstairs? Okay. Give me a second up here to get sorted.”

Sierra’s eyes moved to Rose, who was still clutching the sheet, hair a wild golden mess, lips swollen, thighs shiny. The girl looked thoroughly, beautifully fucked.

“That’s not the only surprise I brought you two lovebirds,” Sierra said. She turned fully to Rose. “Your boyfriend is standing outside, sweetheart. Some cute stuttering white guy... Jules, I think he said?”

The colour drained from Rose’s face so fast it looked almost cartoonish. Her stomach dropped like she’d missed a step on the stairs. A cold flush spread through her hands and up her arms until her fingers went numb around the sheet. For one terrible second she couldn’t breathe.

“Oh fuck...” The words came out thin and cracked. “This can’t be happening. Did he hear us? Amari, do you think he heard us?”

Amari’s head snapped toward the window, then back to his cousin, voice sharp. “He’s really down there? What did he say?”

“Caught him creeping around the driveway like a lost puppy, when I drove up” Sierra confirmed, almost conversational. “Said he was here to surprise you, but looked more like he was here to try catch you two out. Guess he was right though, huh? I told him to wait out on the porch until I could confirm who he was.”

Rose’s hands were shaking now. The sheet trembled with them. “What do we do? Amari... he’s actually here!”

Sierra tilted her head, studying the two of them with the look of someone who’d seen every possible version of this mess before. “Well. You got caught red-handed... But I’m sure he’ll forgive you and take you back. He looks the type. The kind of guy who’ll cry a little and then desperately forgive you. Anything to keep hold of you. Even if you have been slutting it up behind his back.”

Amari’s voice cut through the room low and firm, the same tone he used when something actually mattered. “It’s not like that, Sierra.”

She raised one eyebrow, as if to question the sincerity of Amari’s defence.

He glanced at Rose, quick, protective, then back to his cousin. “This isn’t just fucking. It’s real. We love each other. We’re together. We just... we thought we had a couple more days before we had to sit him down and tell him the truth.”

Rose’s eyes filled. Tears gathered bright and fast at the lower lashes, but underneath them something else burned; relief, certainty, a fierce, quiet joy that made her chin lift. She reached for Amari’s hand without looking away from him. Their fingers laced, tight, deliberate.

“I want to tell him,” she said. Her voice was steady despite the emotion thickening it.

“Tonight. No more waiting. No more secrets or lies. I love you. I want the future we talked about.”

Amari’s grip tightened. He leaned down and kissed her; soft at first, then deeper, possessive, full of the kind of promise that left no room for argument. When he pulled back, their foreheads stayed pressed together for a long second, breath shared.

Sierra watched them in silence. Then a quiet, surprised laugh escaped her. “Well, shit. Look at you baby cuz, getting all soft in your old age.” She shook her head, smiling despite herself. “It’s kind of cute, actually.”

She turned to Rose again, tone practical, almost brisk. “You should jump in the shower, first though sweetheart. Breaking a man’s heart is one thing. Doing it while you still look like you’ve been ridden hard and put away wet is something else entirely.”

Rose gave a shaky, almost hysterical little laugh and nodded, the sound catching in her throat.

Amari kissed her once more, forehead to forehead this time, gentler. “I’ll go down and tell him to wait in the kitchen. You take your time. Get cleaned up. I’ll be right there with you when you’re ready.”

He looked at Sierra. “Come on, cuz. Let’s get the kids inside and put them to bed.”

Sierra paused in the doorway. Her gaze flicked back to Rose one last time. The sharp edges of her expression softened into something almost kind.

“It was a hell of a way to meet you,” she said quietly. “Welcome to the family, I guess.”

Rose managed a nervous, watery smile. “Yeah... hi.”

Amari and Sierra left the room together, their voices already dropping into the logistics of carrying sleeping children inside and making up the beds. Rose sat alone on the edge of the bed for a moment, sheet still wrapped around her, heart pounding, the taste of Amari still on her tongue.

A deep, aching sadness settled in her chest for what she was about to put Jules through. He didn’t deserve this. He had never deserved any of it. But stronger than the guilt, stronger than the fear, was the fierce, bright certainty that tomorrow she and Amari would finally be free. Free to love each other openly. Free to build the life they had only whispered about in the dark.

A Different Kind Of Love

Jules sat at the heavy oak kitchen table in the half-dark, hands wrapped around a glass of water he hadn’t touched. The house felt too quiet. Sierra had given him the briefest of looks

as she and Amari fetched the children from the car. Amari carried both kids inside, the little boy tucked against one shoulder and the girl against the other, both still deeply asleep, their small faces peaceful against his chest. Sierra had followed with a couple of small bags, mentioning she would get the rest tomorrow. Jules had opened his mouth to offer help, but the words came out as little more than a whisper. Neither of them heard him.

Amari had only said, low and careful, "Wait in the kitchen. Rose will be down soon."

No greeting. No surprise. No questions about the long drive or who was covering his shifts. Just that.

Something was wrong. Jules could feel it in the air, in the way Sierra's eyes had held a flicker of something that looked too much like pity, in the careful distance Amari kept. The wait seemed more agonising than the entire drive up. Every minute scraped against his nerves.

Then, the silence was broken by the soft thud of footsteps on the old wooden stairs.

Rose appeared in the doorway, and for a heartbeat, Jules felt a surge of his desperate love for her. She looked breathtaking, though there was something fundamentally different about her. Her golden hair was damp from the shower, clinging in dark waves to the nape of her neck. Her cheeks were flushed, a lingering rose-hue that didn't look like the result of hot water alone. She wore simple pajama bottoms and a loose, oversized top that draped over her curves, making her look fragile and soft, yet inexplicably distant.

When her eyes met his, the smile she offered was small, fragile, and saturated with a crushing sense of apology.

"Rose..." Jules said, smiling in sad hope.

She didn't answer. She walked straight to him, the scent of vanilla and soap trailing behind her, and leaned down to press a gentle kiss to his forehead. She wrapped her arms around him in a tight hug, pulling him close. Her voice was a ghost of a whisper against his hair.

"I love you... I'm so sorry."

The dread that had been coiling in Jules's stomach all night finally sank its teeth in. He knew. Before she said another word, he knew.

Amari entered quietly and sat on the opposite side of the table, giving them space. Rose pulled back from the hug, her hands lingering on Jules's shoulders for a moment before she walked around and sat beside Amari. She looked at Jules across the table, eyes already shining.

"We need to tell you something, Jules."

Jules stared at them, his vision blurring. His voice came out rough, a jagged sound that tore through the quiet. "Just say it."

Rose took a slow breath. "Something has happened between me and Amari these past weeks... I've... I've fallen in love with him. We've fallen in love with each other. I'm so sorry, Jules. We're... we're together now."

The words hit him like a punch to the gut. For a second Jules couldn't breathe. Then the anger rose like a blinding rage, fast and hot.

"Is this about his cock?" The question tore out of him before he could stop it. "Is that what this is? Because he's bigger? Because he can fuck you better?"

Rose flinched, a visible shudder running through her, but she didn't look away. Her voice remained quiet, steady, and devastatingly honest.

"It's everything, Jules. The way he kisses me. The way he listens when I talk. The way he makes me laugh until my sides hurt. The way he touches me. And the way he makes my heart and my soul feel... complete. Like I've finally come home. A different kind of love."

Tears finally spilled over her lashes, tracing wet paths down her flushed cheeks. She wiped them away with the back of her hand, her expression one of genuine grief.

"I'm so sorry. I never wanted to hurt you like this. I love you, Jules. I still love you. But the more time I've spent with him, the more I've realised that the love I feel for you has become something different. It's deep and real and it's never going away... but it's the love you have for your best friend. For family. For a brother. Not the kind of love that makes you want to build a whole life with someone."

Jules's chair scraped back as he stood. His voice cracked with fury and pain.

"You planned this," he spat, turning his gaze toward Amari, who sat there with a calm, stillness. "You gave us a place to live. You gave me a job. You acted like a friend, all so you could get close enough to steal her from under me."

Amari didn't rise to the anger. He kept his voice low and even.

"I didn't plan this, Jules. I care about both of you. I still do. What happened between Rose and me... It just happened. There was no stopping it. And once it did, it was like we were meant for each other. I'm sorry you're hurting. Truly. Whatever you need; space, time, help finding a new place, we're here for you. That doesn't change."

Jules's face crumpled. The anger drained out of him as quickly as it had come, leaving only raw, broken grief. He sank back into the chair and covered his face with both hands. The sobs came hard and ugly.

Rose was around the table in an instant. She dropped to her knees beside his chair and wrapped her arms around him, holding him while he cried. She stroked his hair in the same tender way she used to when he was stressed or sick.

"You don't deserve any of this, Jules," she whispered, her voice breaking. "I hate that I'm the one hurting you like this. You deserved so much better from me. You're the sweetest man I've ever known. You're going to find someone who loves you the way you deserve. I know it. And I'll always be here. Always. As your friend. As your family. That part will never change."

When the worst of the convulsions passed, leaving Jules breathless and trembling, he wiped his face with shaking hands, his skin blotchy and his eyes swollen.

"I should go," he rasped, his voice a ruined shadow of itself. "I'll just drive back tonight."

"No." Rose pleaded. "Not like this." Amari stated.

Their voices overlapped, a synchronised wall of refusal. Amari's tone was firm, the voice of a man taking charge of a crisis. "Stay until morning. Please. You're exhausted, Jules, and your head isn't clear. The roads are pitch black and dangerous. Just get some rest. We'll figure out everything else, in the daylight."

Jules didn't have the strength left to argue. The fight had been bled out of him. He gave a single, defeated nod.

Amari stood. He didn't touch Rose in front of Jules. He looked at her with a gaze of profound endearment and strength, and said quietly, "I'll be upstairs if either of you need anything."

Then Amari stepped around the table. He didn't offer any empty words or forced apology. He simply placed a firm hand on Jules's shoulder, held it there for a second, and pulled him into a short, solid hug. It wasn't dramatic. It wasn't lingering. Just the quiet, steady pressure of one man acknowledging another's pain without trying to fix it or explain it away. When he stepped back, he gave Jules's shoulder one final squeeze, then turned and climbed the stairs, leaving the two of them alone in the quiet kitchen.

Rose moved quietly around the living room, pulling blankets and pillows from a cupboard. She made a soft nest of duvets and sheets on the floor in front of the dark fireplace, the way they used to when they were younger and broke and happy with almost nothing.

They lay in the dark for a long time without speaking. The only sounds were the occasional creak of the old cabin and the distant lap of water against the shore. Jules stared at the ceiling, eyes burning, the weight of everything still pressing on his chest. After a while his voice came out rough and small.

"I keep waiting to wake up," he said. "Like this is just some shitty nightmare and you're still mine."

Rose didn't answer right away. She just squeezed his hand tighter in the dark. Another silence stretched between them. Then, quieter still, Jules spoke again.

"You always did want a lake house."

Rose turned her head on the pillow, eyes shimmering in the dim light. He could see the sad, gentle curve of her smile. She gave his hand another soft squeeze.

"I did," she whispered. "It's even more beautiful here in the daytime, Jules. The way the light filters through the pines, the water reflecting the blueness of the sky. You'll see in the morning."

They talked in low voices for a long time; about nothing important and everything that mattered. About old memories. About the future that no longer included them as a couple. About how some things could still remain.

Near the end, Rose's voice softened even further.

"I love you, Jules. That will never, ever change. You'll always be my best friend. We'll always be family. Promise me that won't change. That you won't push me away... I know I don't deserve that. But I hate the thought of us losing each other completely."

He looked at her face in the dim light; the face he had loved for years, and felt the last of his resistance crumble. The idea of her loving someone else was agony. The idea of losing her completely was worse.

"I promise," he said.

She smiled, small and sad and grateful, then rested her head on his shoulder the way she had a thousand times before. Within minutes her breathing evened out into sleep.

Jules lay still, staring at the dark ceiling, feeling the warm weight of her against him. Outside, the lake was silent. Upstairs, the man she now loved was waiting. And he knew, nothing would ever be the same again.

A bitter self-loathing curled in his stomach. Even now; after everything, he still loved her. Part of him was already starting to accept it, already rearranging his future around this new, smaller place he would occupy in her life. He hated that part of himself most of all. The part that would rather keep whatever scraps she offered than lose her completely.

He closed his eyes and breathed in the scent of her hair, knowing he would never be able to hate her the way he wanted to.

The Morning Light

The first grey light of dawn slipped through the cabin windows in thin, watery bands. It was barely seven. The living room still held the deep quiet of early morning, broken only by the soft, even rhythm of Rose's breathing.

Jules lay on his side on the makeshift bed of blankets and pillows they had made the night before. Rose was curled against him the way she had a thousand times over the years, her face relaxed in sleep, one hand resting loosely near his chest. For a long moment he simply looked at her. The familiar curve of her cheek, the way her blonde hair spilled across the pillow. Something in his chest twisted hard and then went still.

He eased out from under the blankets with careful, deliberate movements so he wouldn't wake her. Standing over her for a few seconds longer, he let himself feel the full weight of it; the end of something that had once felt permanent. Then he turned away, pulled on yesterday's clothes, and quietly left the house.

Outside, the air was cool and sharp with pine. Mist still hung low over the lake. His little car sat where he had left it the night before, looking smaller and more tired in the morning light. He slid into the driver's seat, turned the key.

Nothing. Not even the ghost of a click.

He tried again, his grip tightening on the steering wheel. The same dead, hollow silence answered him.

Jules sat back, exhaled through his nose, reached down to pop the bonnet and got back out. He knew the car better than most people knew their own hands. Within a minute he had found it; a blown fuse in the ignition circuit. Simple. Annoying. Fixable, if only he could find a garage that sold them.

He was still bent over the engine when a shadow fell across the open bonnet.

"Well," a low voice said, dry and faintly amused. "It's really not your day. Or your week, from the look of things."

Jules straightened. Sierra stood a few feet away, arms folded, wearing a soft grey hoodie and jeans, hair still slightly damp from a shower. She looked wide awake and yet entirely unimpressed by the hour.

"It's just a fuse," he said, holding it up between two fingers. "I'll need to find a garage for a replacement."

She tilted her head, studying him with new interest. "You actually know what you're looking at in there?"

"I've kept this thing running for six years, with next to no money." Jules replied, his voice raspy. "Kind of had to learn."

A small, unexpected smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. "A man who can diagnose his own problems and fix them. Kinda hot, if I'm honest."

Jules blinked, caught off guard by her bluntness. Heat touched the back of his neck. Sierra nodded toward her parked car. "Garage won't open for another couple of hours. But I know a place in town that does decent coffee and even better breakfast. Come on. I'll drive you."

He hesitated. "I don't want to impose..."

"You're not. I'm offering." She was already turning back toward the cabin, her movements fluid and commanding. "Amari can handle the kids for a bit. Give me five minutes to sort it out."

Twenty minutes later they were on the winding road that led toward the small town at the base of the lake. Sierra drove with the same calm authority she seemed to bring to everything. Jules sat in the passenger seat, watching the pines blur past, trying not to think too hard about the woman sleeping back at the cabin or the man she had chosen.

The café was a low wooden building with a wide porch and the smell of coffee and bacon already drifting out into the cool morning air. Inside it was quiet, only a few early locals. Sierra chose a corner table by the window and ordered for both of them without asking; black coffee for herself, the same for him, plus bacon, eggs, toast, and fruit.

When the waitress left, Sierra leaned back in her chair and looked at him directly.

“So,” she said. “How bad is it in your head right now?”

Jules gave a short, humourless laugh. “About as bad as it looks.”

He looked out the window at the grey morning.

“Good. At least you’re not pretending like it’s ok,” She wrapped both hands around her mug, the steam curling around her fingers, her gaze never wavering from his. “Listen to me, Jules. What happened up there; the betrayal, the shock, it’s shitty. It hurts. It’s going to keep hurting for a while. But if you let it convince you that you’re finished, that there’s nothing left worth having, then you’re making a much bigger mistake than she did.”

Jules stared down at the scarred wooden table. “Easy for you to say,” he whispered, the words tasting of salt and defeat.

“Is it?” Sierra’s voice stayed even, but something sharper moved underneath it. “You think I don’t know what it feels like to be betrayed? Or to love a man who decides the only thing that matters is how many women he can fuck? I used to chase that type. The wild ones. The ones who made everything feel dangerous and important.”

Jules looked down at his coffee, his mouth tightening. He didn’t speak, but the quiet admission in his posture was clear enough.

Sierra continued, her eyes darkening as she reached back into a memory she clearly despised. “Faith and Kobe... they are my angels. But their father was one of them. On-again, off-again for years. He’d show up when he wanted sex, or money, or a place to crash. Never when the kids needed him. Never when I needed him. Just noise and empty promises. And then he was gone again, chasing whoever came next, while I sat at home waiting.”

She took a slow, deliberate sip of her coffee, the silence stretching between them, before setting the mug down with a definitive clack against the table.

“I got rid of him. Got rid of all of his type from my life. Because at some point you realise the tough-guy, big-dick, no-responsibility act is just another way of being weak. What a woman actually needs; what I need, is someone who shows up. Someone who’s steady. Someone who will love her like it’s a job he’s proud of, not a hobby he picks up when he’s bored. That’s a real man.”

Jules looked up. His eyes were rimmed with red, glistening with unshed tears that mirrored the grey morning light.

Sierra’s expression softened for a moment, almost reluctant. “From where I’m sitting, I don’t see a man who failed. I see a man who loved someone hard and still has something

left to give. That's not weakness. That's something to be celebrated. Something to be proud of."

He swallowed, throat working. He had expected pity. Or worse, polite agreement that Rose had simply outgrown him. Instead Sierra was looking at him like he was still... intact. The idea was so foreign it almost hurt. For a moment he couldn't meet her eyes, afraid that if he did she might take the words back.

"I keep thinking... women want men like him. Not me." He confessed.

"Some women do," Sierra said simply. "Rose does, apparently. They seem a good fit, from what I can see. But that doesn't mean every woman does. And it sure as hell doesn't mean the ones who want something different are settling."

She tilted her head, studying him with that same unflinching gaze. "Trust me... you're gonna do well for yourself. But dry your eyes... I've still got an image to keep. Can't be having the locals thinking I've gone all soft now."

The dryness of the delivery pulled a surprised, watery laugh out of him. Sierra's mouth curved in response, not quite a smile, but close.

Breakfast arrived. They ate in a quieter rhythm after that, the conversation turning lighter, though the undercurrent never fully left. Sierra asked about his work at the hotel, about how he'd ended up there, about the ridiculous things guests did at three in the morning. She listened like she actually cared about the answers.

Every so often, Jules found himself admiring the beauty of her, tracing the clean, strong line of her jaw, the rich, mahogany depth of her skin glowing in the morning light, and the way her white teeth flashed when she suppressed a smile. Each time, she would hold his gaze just a second too long, acknowledging his gaze with a silent confidence.

When the bill arrived, Jules reached for it instinctively.

Sierra raised a perfectly groomed eyebrow. "You're really going to fight me on this?"

"Absolutely," he said, his voice firmer now. "It was a pretty sweet pep talk you gave me. Got to pay you back somehow!"

She watched him pay, her gaze lingering as he left a generous tip. "A true gentleman and a good tipper. You really know how to turn a lady on." She teased.

Outside, the town was starting to wake up. Jules held the café door open for her. As she stepped past him, her shoulder brushed his chest. She didn't move away immediately. Instead she slipped her hand into the crook of his arm, linking them together with casual certainty.

"Come on," she said. "I'll show you the rest of the town while we wait for the garage to open. You're stuck with me for a little while longer."

Jules glanced down at her as they started walking. The morning sun caught the curve of her hip, the full, rounded shape of her ample backside in the jeans, the easy strength in the

way she moved. Something low and unexpected stirred in him; not the desperate, broken wanting he had felt for Rose, but a quieter recognition.

This wasn't the end for him. The future didn't feel completely empty. Sierra squeezed his arm once, as if she could feel the shift, and kept walking.

Rose woke slowly, the way she always did when the light was still soft and the air still cool. For a few seconds, she remained suspended in that hazy borderland between dream and reality, reaching automatically for the familiar warmth that should have been beside her. Her hand found only empty blankets.

She opened her eyes. And Jules was gone.

Rose sat up slowly, the sheet slipping down her shoulder, and stared at the place he had occupied only hours before. The memory of the night returned in a quiet, heavy wave: his face in the kitchen, the way his voice had cracked, the broken sound of him crying against her shoulder. She had done that. She had looked into the eyes of the man who had loved her for years and told him she no longer wanted the life they had built together.

A sharp, familiar ache settled under her ribs.

She pressed the heels of her hands against her eyes and breathed through it. The guilt was still there, real and heavy, but it no longer sat alone. Beneath it something steadier had taken root: the knowledge that she had told the truth. That she had chosen the life that actually fit.

A burst of high, delighted laughter cut through the quiet of the house. Another giggle followed, then Amari's deep voice, warm and playful, drifted from the kitchen.

She rose, pulled on the soft oversized shirt she had left draped over a chair, and padded barefoot toward the sound.

When she reached the kitchen doorway, she stopped. The scene framed before her was so vivid, so unexpectedly tender, that it felt as if she were back in one of her dreams again.

Amari stood at the wide wooden counter in a white T-shirt and low-slung sweatpants, a dish towel thrown over one shoulder. On either side of him stood his niece and nephew. Kobe, the older one, had a serious expression as he carefully cracked an egg into a bowl that already contained far too many. Faith, smaller and more chaotic, was vigorously stirring something with a wooden spoon almost as big as her arm, sending little flecks of batter across the counter and onto Amari's shirt.

"Careful, Chef's assistants," Amari said solemnly. "We are creating masterpieces here. Precision is everything."

Kobe looked up, eyes wide. "Uncle Amari, I got egg on the floor!"

Amari gasped in exaggerated horror. "Who is this Uncle Amari you speak of? I am Chef. Only Chef. And Chef does not like his eggs on the floor, he likes them sunny side up... silly sausage!"

Both children dissolved into giggles. Kobe tried to look stern and failed completely. Faith abandoned the spoon entirely and leaned against Amari's leg, still laughing.

Rose stood frozen in the doorway, one hand resting against the frame. Something warm and almost painful bloomed behind her breastbone. The picture in front of her was so simple, so ordinary, and yet it felt like the clearest vision of a future she had ever been given. Amari with children. Amari patient and silly and completely present. Amari as a father.

The longing for it hit her with a force that stole her breath.

Amari glanced up and caught her watching. The playful expression on his face softened into something quieter and deeper.

"Look who decided to join the kitchen staff," he said. He rested a hand lightly on each child's shoulder. "Faith, Kobe... this is Aunt Rose."

Kobe peered at her with open curiosity. Faith gave a shy little wave with her wooden spoon, sending another small arc of batter onto the floor.

Rose stepped fully into the warmth of the kitchen, a radiant smile breaking across her face. "Hi, you two... do you need some help?"

Faith tilted her head. "Are you Uncle Amari's girlfriend?"

The question was so direct, so completely without judgement, that Rose felt heat rise in her cheeks. She looked at Amari. He was watching her with a quiet, steady patience, as if the answer belonged entirely to her.

"Yes," Rose said, and the word came out clear and certain. "I am."

Amari's mouth curved. He reached out, caught her hand, and tugged her gently closer so he could press a brief kiss to her temple. The children watched with the wide-eyed attention of an audience who had just been given important new information.

"Well then," Amari announced, turning back to the counter with exaggerated seriousness, "Aunt Rose is now official co-chef. Faith, your turn on eggs, show her how we crack them without making the shells disappear into the bowl. Kobe, you're on toast duty. And try not to set anything on fire this time."

Rose let out a laugh; a sound that was surprised, genuine, and light, as if a weight she hadn't realized she was carrying had finally evaporated. She stepped into the warm, buzzing space they carved out for her, the transition feeling seamless, as if she had always belonged in this specific orbit of noise and affection.

Within minutes she was helping Faith tip the cracked eggs into the pan while Amari guided Kobe through buttering toast with far too much enthusiasm. The scene was a masterpiece of beautiful disorder. Batter and egg ended up on the counter, on the floor, and somehow on Rose's cheek. Amari wiped it away with his thumb and then, when the children were briefly distracted by the toaster, leaned in and kissed her properly, slow and warm and full of quiet claim.

When he finally pulled back, he didn't move away. He searched her face, his eyes scanning her expression for any lingering doubt or shadow of the night before.

"You okay?" he asked, his voice dropping to a soft, intimate register.

Rose slid her arms around his waist and rested her forehead against his chest for a moment, breathing him in. The solid heat of him, the faint scent of soap and sleep still clinging to his skin, the steady beat of his heart under her ear.

"I really am," she whispered, her voice muffled by his shirt. "I promise."

He pressed a tender kiss to the crown of her head. "Sierra took Jules into town to pick a spark plug, or something, for his car. So, we've got babysitting duty for a few hours. If that's alright with you?"

Rose tipped her head back to look at him, smiling. "I couldn't think of a better way to spend the morning."

Amari's eyes darkened with playful heat. His hands slid to her sides, fingers finding the sensitive spots just above her hips.

"I mean... I could think of one better way," he murmured against her ear, sending a shiver down her spine. And then he tickled her.

Rose let out a startled, helpless giggle and tried to twist away, which only made him more determined. The children immediately abandoned their culinary posts, their eyes lighting up with mischief.

"No tickling in the kitchen!" Faith announced with the absolute authority of a four-year-old who had clearly heard the rule before.

Amari paused, pulling back with a look of theatrical offense. "Who said that was a rule? I am the Chef! I make the rules!"

Kobe pointed an accusing finger. "You did! Last time!"

"Slander," Amari declared. "Pure slander." Then he lunged.

Chaos erupted. Rose and Amari chased the shrieking children around the wide kitchen island, ducking and weaving, tickling whoever they could catch. Faith was surprisingly fast. Kobe relied on pure slippery determination and the occasional strategic use of a chair. Batter was forgotten. Toast was abandoned. The cabin filled with the bright, unrestrained sound of children's laughter and the deeper, warmer sound of two adults who had nowhere else they would rather be.

At one point Amari caught Rose around the waist from behind and lifted her clean off the floor while the children howled with delight. She was laughing so hard she could barely breathe, her head tipped back against his shoulder, her hands gripping his forearms. When he set her down he kept her close for a second longer than necessary, his mouth brushing the side of her neck in a promise meant only for her.

Rose turned in his arms, still smiling, and looked at the two children now collapsed in a giggling heap on the kitchen floor. Then she looked at the man in front of her; the same man who had once been nothing more than a high-school warning, now standing in a sunlit kitchen with egg on his shirt and absolute certainty in his eyes.

This was the future she craved.

Amari. Children. The noise. The mess. The joy and laughter. Belonging.

She reached up, cupped his face, and kissed him once more; soft, sure and overflowing with love, while the children made exaggerated sounds of shock behind them.

When she pulled back, Amari rested his forehead against hers.

“You look happy,” he said quietly.

Rose nodded, her eyes bright with unshed tears of relief.

“I’m so happy.”

Something New

They pulled back into the gravel driveway just around midday. The mist that had hung over the lake earlier had burned away, leaving the water bright and flat under a clear sky. Jules’s car sat where he had left it, the bonnet still propped open from the morning’s diagnosis.

Sierra switched off the engine and sat for a moment, one wrist resting loosely on the steering wheel, watching him climb out.

“Go on then,” she said. “Let’s see you at work.”

Jules walked over to his car, crouched by the open fuse box, and fitted the new fuse with the quiet efficiency of someone who had done the same job more times than he cared to count. When he turned the key the engine caught immediately, settling into a low, steady idle. He let it run for a few seconds, then shut it off and closed the bonnet with a soft, final thud.

Sierra had got out and was leaning against the side of her own car, arms folded, the sunlight catching the rich brown of her skin and the sharp line of her collarbone. She had been watching him the entire time.

“You made it look easy,” she said, her voice carrying a hint of appreciation.

“It is easy once you know where to look.” Jules replied.

“Most men would’ve spent twenty minutes waving a torch around and pretending they knew what they were looking at, before calling the repair company.” A small, dry smile touched her mouth. “You just fixed it. It’s really sexy.”

Jules felt heat climb the back of his neck. He wiped his hands on the rag he'd pulled from the glove box, more for something to do than because they needed it. The smart move was obvious. Thank her for the lift, get in the car, and put some distance between himself and the lake-house. Between himself and the woman still inside it. Between himself and the unexpected current that had been running under the morning ever since breakfast.

He reached for the door handle. Sierra's voice stopped him, calm and almost conversational.

"You really just going to get in and drive off?"

Jules turned. She pushed away from her car and took a couple of slow steps closer, hands still loosely crossed under her breasts. There was no hardness in her expression, only that same direct, assessing look she seemed to give everything.

"I've been hitting on you since the café," she said, her tone blunt and devoid of pretence. "The coffee, taking your arm, the compliments... and you're still standing there like none of it registered. Or maybe you're just terrified."

She stopped just a few feet from him, looking directly into his eyes.

"So I'm going to make it simple, because I don't do the long game of hints. Are you going to ask me out, or not?"

The words landed with quiet force.

Jules felt the familiar pull of the last twenty-four hours rise up hard; Rose's face in the kitchen, the broken sound of her voice when she told him she loved him differently now, the way the future he had counted on had simply disappeared. Part of him wanted to say it was too soon, that he wasn't ready. Another part, smaller but stubborn, recognised the woman in front of him for what she was: clear-eyed, direct, and offering something instead of taking it away.

He exhaled slowly, the breath leaving him in a long, shaky shudder that seemed to carry away the last remnants of his hesitation.

"I didn't want to assume anything," he said. "Or put you in an awkward position."

"You're not assuming. I'm telling you." Sierra's mouth curved, dry and almost amused. "I like you. You're kind. You're steady. You didn't flinch when the kids came into the conversation this morning. That matters to me more than you probably realise. I know you're hurting. I know you need time to heal. But so do I... so, maybe we try getting there together."

Jules stood there with the sun on his face and the quiet of the driveway pressing in around them. The pain of the night before was still there, solid and real, but it no longer felt like the only thing left in him. Something else had begun to sit beside it; cautious, uncertain, but present.

He shifted his weight, finally meeting her gaze without looking away.

“Would you like to have dinner with me sometime?” He asked.

“Sometime?” She countered, with raised eyebrows.

“Tonight, then?” He finally managed.

Sierra’s expression warmed, the sharpness softening into something closer to satisfaction. A warmth spreading across her features.

“Yes,” she breathed, the word a soft exhale. “I’d love to. I’ll ask Amari if he’s good to watch the little ones again.”

“Or...” He hesitated, then pushed the rest of the sentence out before he could talk himself out of it. “Would you like to bring the kids along too? I’d like the chance to meet them properly. It’d be fun”

For a moment Sierra looked genuinely surprised. Then a slower, deeper smile moved across her face.

“You want to bring my kids on our first date?” She asked, her voice tinged with disbelief.

“If that’s okay with you,” he replied softly.

She studied him for a long second, the sunlight bright on her cheekbones. When she spoke again her voice was quieter, but no less certain.

“Most men would rather chew glass than voluntarily make the effort to spend time with someone else’s kids. You’re standing here asking for them.” She stepped closer, close enough that he caught the faint citrus scent of her shampoo. “Yeah, Jules. That’s more than okay with me.”

Jules felt something in his chest ease, not the ache of the last day, but a small, unexpected space opening beside it.

Sierra reached out and gave his forearm a brief, firm squeeze, the same straightforward contact she had used in the café, but this time it felt like a promise.

“Tonight, then. And don’t go changing your mind and disappearing back to the city, the second I turn around.”

“I won’t,” he promised.

“Good.” She turned toward the house, then glanced back over her shoulder, the dry edge returning to her voice. “And Jules? Next time a woman hits on you this clearly, try noticing a little sooner. Save us both the suspense”

She walked up the porch steps without waiting for an answer, leaving him standing in the driveway with the unfamiliar, cautious feeling that the day had tilted in a direction he hadn’t expected.

Jules closed the driver’s door, locked it, and followed her in.

Sierra walked straight into the kitchen, Jules a few steps behind her. The air inside still carried the faint smell of eggs and toast from the morning. Amari was at the sink rinsing a pan. Rose sat at the table with Faith on her lap, helping the little girl colour in a page from a half-finished activity book. Kobe was on the floor nearby, carefully lining up a row of toy cars.

Sierra dropped her keys onto the counter with a soft clink.

“Hey, there you are!” Amari said smiling towards them both. “How did you get on in town, I was going to call and ask if you wanted to pick up some steaks. Thought we might all enjoy some BBQ for dinner tonight”

“Change of plan, cuz,” she said, matter-of-fact. “Jules is taking me and the kids out for dinner tonight.”

The kitchen went briefly quiet.

Amari turned off the tap and looked over, one eyebrow lifting. Rose’s hand stilled on the crayon. Faith glanced up, curious. Kobe kept rolling a car back and forth, but even he seemed to sense the shift in the room.

Rose recovered first. She offered a small, careful smile.

“That’s... good,” she said, softly. “I’m glad, you’re sticking around Jules.”

There was genuine warmth in her voice, but underneath it sat something more complicated; surprise, a flicker of relief that Jules was ok, or trying to be. She looked at him for a moment longer than necessary, then returned her attention to Faith’s colouring as if the moment had never happened.

Amari dried his hands on a dish towel, the corner of his mouth tugging upward.

“All right then,” he said simply. “You guys have a fun time tonight. Rose and I, will do our own thing.”

By early evening the light had turned gold. When Sierra finally emerged from the bedroom, the transformation was visceral. The practical, protective mother who had spent the day in leggings and an oversized t-shirt had vanished, replaced by a woman who looked like she had been sculpted for desire.

She wore a deep emerald-green slip dress that clung to her curves, the silk shimmering with every shift of her hips. The neckline plunged in a daring V, teasing the swell of her breasts and the smooth, mahogany expanse of her chest, while the hem hit mid-thigh, showcasing legs that were toned, powerful, and endless. Her hair, previously tied back, now cascaded down her back in a wild, glossy mane of curls that smelled of coconut and warmth. She had added a touch of gold jewellery; thin hoops that framed her face and a delicate chain that rested in the hollow of her throat, and a swipe of deep berry lipstick that made her mouth look lush and inviting. She didn't just look beautiful; she looked sexy.

Jules felt the air leave his lungs. He stared, momentarily paralysed by the sheer magnetism of her presence.

“Wow, Sierra,” he managed, his voice sounding thick and strained in his own ears. “You look... incredible.”

Sierra’s lips curved into a slow smile. She stepped toward him, the silk of her dress whispering against her skin, and handed him his jacket from the hook by the door.

“Thank you, handsome,” she purred, her voice a low, sultry vibration. “Ready when you are.”

In the kitchen doorway, Amari appeared, his presence as commanding as ever. He had one hand resting possessively on Rose’s shoulder, pulling her close to his side. Rose looked at Jules, her expression a complex tapestry of guilt, tenderness, and a quiet, settled peace. She gave him a small, private nod.

“Have a good night,” she said softly.

Sierra shifted back into her role, shepherding the children toward the door with a firm but loving hand. Kobe was already a whirlwind of energy, chatting a mile a minute about ice cream, while Faith held Sierra’s hand, her wide eyes fixed on Jules. She studied him with an open, piercing curiosity, as if she were a small judge deciding exactly which category of man he belonged in.

Jules stepped forward, opening the passenger door for Sierra with a steady hand, then helped the children into the back, ensuring they were buckled in.

Sierra leaned back, that dry, assessing expression returning to her features, though there was a new, softer glint in her eyes.

“Still time to change your mind,” she teased, her voice humming with a challenge.

Jules met her gaze, his jaw setting. “I’m not changing my mind.”

She held his stare for a long, heavy second, the tension in the small space of the car becoming thick and palpable. Then, she settled back into the leather seat with a satisfied sigh.

“Good,” she said. “Because, I’m starving.”

“Me too, Mommy!” Faith called out. And the car dissolved into laughter.

The restaurant Sierra chose was a low-ceilinged place near the water, the kind of family-run spot that still had paper placemats and a specials board written in chalk. They were seated at a corner booth where the children could see the small aquarium built into the wall. Kobe immediately pressed his face to the glass. Faith sat up on her knees to get a better look at the fish.

Jules ordered for the table once Sierra gave him a small nod that said she was fine with him taking the lead. He asked the children questions that actually required answers instead of the usual polite noise adults made around kids. When Kobe knocked over his

water glass halfway through the meal, Jules simply moved the plates, mopped up the spill with napkins, and asked the waitress for another without making a fuss of it. Sierra watched him the entire time, one elbow on the table, the corner of her mouth turned up in quiet approval.

“You’re good with them,” she said later, while the children were distracted by the dessert menu.

Jules shrugged, a little self-conscious. “They’re good kids. That makes it easy.”

Sierra’s eyes stayed on him a moment longer. “You need to learn to take a compliment, Jules. Most men manage to make all this look so hard. Like it’s a chore. You treat them like family.”

“Thank you,” Jules smiled at her compliment.

After dinner they walked the short stretch to the ice-cream shop two doors down. Kobe wanted chocolate with sprinkles. Faith wanted strawberry and then changed her mind three times before settling on the same. Jules paid, carried all the cones until they were safely outside, and only then handed them over. Sierra took hers with a playful look.

“You’re really committing to the gentleman act tonight, aren’t you?”

“It’s not an act,” he replied softly.

“I know,” she said, and for once there was no edge in it. “And I love it.”

They were halfway back to the car when Faith, still negotiating the last of her ice cream, tripped on an uneven bit of pavement. The cone went flying. Pink ice cream hit the pavement and, more dramatically, the front of her dress. She stared at the mess for a second, lower lip already trembling.

Jules was crouching before the first tear fell. He had a packet of wet wipes from the restaurant still in his jacket pocket. He cleaned her hands, dabbed at the dress as best he could, and spoke to her in the same calm voice he had used at the table.

“Hey, It’s only ice cream. Happens to everyone.” He said, then pressed a little of his ice cream onto his shirt, causing her to giggle through the tears. “See. Now we are both messy monsters together! We’ll get cleaned up back at the house, ok?”

Faith sniffled, nodded, and let him wipe her chin. Sierra stood a few feet away, watching with an expression that was harder to read than usual.

They decided to head back earlier than planned. By the time the car turned onto the gravel driveway of the lake house, both children were deeply asleep in the back seat, heads tipped toward each other, the remnants of ice cream sticky on their fingers.

“I’ll get Faith,” she whispered, her voice sounding like velvet rubbing against stone. “You okay with Kobe?”

Jules nodded and reached for the back-door handle. Sierra’s hand closed around his wrist before he could open it.

She stepped in close, backed him against the side of the car with one smooth movement, and kissed him.

It was not soft or careful. Her mouth was warm and certain, her full body pressed flush against his, the soft weight of her breasts and the unmistakable press of hard nipples through the thin fabric of her top. One of her hands stayed on his wrist; the other slid up to the side of his neck. She made a low sound into the kiss, almost a moan, and for a few seconds Jules forgot how to breathe.

When she pulled back she stayed close enough that he could still feel the heat of her.

“Thank you for tonight,” she said, her voice a low, sultry rasp. “For all of it.”

Then she stepped away, opened the rear door, and carefully lifted Faith with a maternal grace.

Inside the house, they moved in near silence. Sierra carried Faith down the short hallway to the small bedroom the children were sharing. Jules followed with Kobe, the boy’s head heavy against his shoulder. They settled both children without waking them. Sierra pulled the blanket up over Kobe’s shoulders, smoothed Faith’s hair once, and then nodded toward the door.

“I’ll be down in a few minutes. There’s a bottle of red on the counter if you want to pour us both a glass.”

Jules nodded and turned toward the stairs. He had taken only a couple of steps when a sound reached him from the far end of the hallway; low, intimate, the soft rhythm of a mattress and a woman’s muffled voice trying very hard to stay quiet.

Jules froze. His breath catching in his throat.

The door at the end of the hall was ajar, leaving a narrow, golden sliver of light spilling across the dark floorboards. The sounds were unmistakably sexual.

He stood there for a long second, the wine forgotten, the taste of Sierra’s kiss still burning on his lips. The conflict in his chest; the lingering ache for Rose and the new, electric pull toward Sierra, warred within him. Then, driven by a compulsion he couldn’t name, he took one slow step toward the light leaking through the door.

What He Has To Offer

Jules stood peeking into the narrow band of golden light that came cutting through the ajar door.

Rose was on her back, thighs spread wide around Amari’s hips, the soft flesh of her inner thighs trembling with every slow, deliberate roll of his body. The lamp on the nightstand threw warm amber light across her pale skin and the much darker body covering her, painting the contrast in stark, intimate detail. Amari was buried deep inside her, moving

with heavy, powerful strokes that made her full breasts sway and bounce, nipples tight and flushed.

His cock looked enormous between them; thick, dark, and glistening, the heavy shaft stretching her open on every thrust until the pink edges of her cunt clung wetly around him. Even when he was hilted, the thick base remained visible, a crude reminder of just how much she was taking. Her hands were locked around his shoulders, nails digging crescent marks into his skin, and her face; the same face Jules had kissed a thousand times, was open in raw, unguarded pleasure, lips parted, eyes half-lidded and glassy.

“Fuck... Amari...” she whispered, the words almost a sob, breath hitching every time he bottomed out. “I can feel every inch of you. God, you’re so thick... it’s stretching me so much...”

Amari braced himself on one forearm and rolled his hips harder, driving into her with a wet, heavy sound that filled the quiet room; skin meeting skin, the slick glide of her arousal coating him. Each time he pulled back, the thick shaft emerged shiny and dark, ropes of her wetness clinging to the veined length before he sank it back inside her in one long, deliberate thrust that forced her body to yield. Rose’s head tipped back against the pillow, mouth open, a high, helpless sound escaping before she bit down on her own wrist to muffle it. Her free hand clutched at the sheets, twisting the fabric as her pussy fluttered and clenched around the relentless stretch, thighs quivering against his hips.

Jules’s stomach twisted. Arousal hit him at the same time as the nausea, hot and immediate, coiling low in his gut. His cock was already hard, pressing painfully against the front of his jeans. He hated the effect it had on him. He hated that watching the woman he had loved for years take another man’s cock; a cock that made his own look small, that filled her in a way he never had, was the hottest thing he had ever seen. The wet sounds, the way her body opened for it, the broken little noises she made... it all went straight to his dick even as his chest ached.

A soft footstep sounded behind him.

Jules stiffened. His pulse jumped. He half-turned, mouth already opening with some instinctive, clumsy excuse already forming on his tongue about how he’d only just looked, how he hadn’t meant to watch, how he was about to leave.

Sierra didn’t give him the chance.

“It’s ok...”

The single word was soft, but absolute. She kept her eyes fixed on the gap in the door, breathing slow and controlled.

“Keep watching.”

Jules’s throat worked. The half-formed excuse died. He turned back to the narrow opening, heart hammering, cock still aching against his jeans.

Sierra pressed up behind him, the faint scent of her perfume cutting through the thicker smell of sex drifting from the room. For a long moment she just watched, her breathing

slow and controlled, eyes fixed on the same gap in the door. Then she leaned in, her mouth near his ear, voice barely above a whisper, warm against his skin.

“He’s still as big as I remember.”

Jules flinched, but she placed a steady hand on his hip, fingers firm.

“I used to see him bring girls back to family parties,” she murmured, eyes still locked on the bed. “Even when we were younger. I’d catch them in guest rooms, in the back of cars. Always the same thing. That cock stretching them open, them coming apart like they couldn’t help it. So big. So hot...”

Her hand slid slowly around his waist, then lower, until her palm cupped the hard ridge of his cock through his jeans. She squeezed once, deliberate, feeling how thick and strained he was.

“I might be done chasing men with big dicks... but it doesn’t mean I stopped getting wet fantasising about it... watching a woman take it.”

On the bed, Amari slowed, then pulled out completely. The thick, heavy length of him came into clear view for them to see; dark, heavily veined, and soaked with Rose’s wetness, the flared head glistening under the lamplight. A thin string of her arousal stretched between them before breaking. Rose made a soft, protesting sound at the sudden emptiness, hips twitching.

Amari guided her onto her hands and knees with firm hands. She went willingly, back arching, ass lifting, presenting herself to him without hesitation. He knelt behind her, one hand spreading her open. Jules and Sierra could see the flushed, shiny pink of her pussy, still gaping from the stretch. Then he pushed back inside in a single, deep thrust that forced a broken moan from her throat, her body rocking forward under the force of it as he buried himself so deep her ass rippled with the slap of his body against hers.

The new angle gave Jules a perfect, explicit view. He could see exactly how wide her pink pussy stretched around the dark shaft, the delicate lips thinned and pulled taut, clinging desperately to every thick inch on the slow withdrawals. A wet, glossy sheen of her arousal coated the entire length, catching the lamplight each time Amari dragged himself almost free before sinking back in. The contrast was brutal; pale, swollen folds forced open around that heavy black cock, the stretch so complete it looked almost impossible. Amari’s hands gripped her hips hard enough to leave faint marks, holding her steady as he began to fuck her with longer, deeper strokes. The wet sound of their bodies meeting grew louder, heavier, rhythmic slap-slap-slap of skin and slick cunt taking him to the root. Rose’s arms trembled under the force of it; she dropped to her elbows, face pressed into the pillow to muffle the high, desperate sounds she couldn’t stop making, her ass still tilted up in offering.

“God, yes... just like that,” she gasped, voice cracking. “I love how you fill me. I love this cock. Don’t stop... please don’t stop. It’s so fucking big... I can feel it in my stomach...”

Sierra’s fingers tightened around Jules through the fabric, then worked his belt open, then the button and zipper. Cool air touched his overheated skin for half a second before her warm hand wrapped around his bare cock and pulled it free. He was already leaking, the head flushed dark and wet. She stroked him once, firm and deliberate, thumb spreading

the precum, then held him still at the base so he could feel every pulse of his own heartbeat against her palm.

“Look at her,” she whispered against his ear, breath hot. “Tell me what you see.”

Jules’s throat worked. He couldn’t look away from the place where Amari was sinking into Rose again and again, the thick shaft disappearing completely inside her until his hips met her ass.

“She’s... stretched,” he managed, voice rough and wrecked. “Around him. Taking all of it. She looks like she’s never been this well fucked... like that cock was made to ruin her.”

“That’s right.” Sierra’s thumb slid over the head of his cock again, slow and filthy, spreading the wetness already leaking from him in a steady bead. “That pretty little pussy used to be yours. Now look at it. Look how greedy it is for his big black cock. Listen to how wet she is for him.”

Amari’s pace increased. He reached beneath Rose, found her swollen clit, and rubbed in firm, relentless circles while he continued to fuck her with deep, powerful thrusts that made her whole body jolt. Rose’s spine arched sharply. A sharp, muffled cry tore out of her as she started to cum, her pussy visibly clenching and fluttering around the thick cock still driving into her; tight, rhythmic spasms that milked him, clear wetness flooding out around the base with every thrust. Her thighs shook hard. She pushed back against him, trying to take him even deeper as the orgasm rolled through her in waves, soft, broken sounds spilling into the pillow.

Sierra’s strokes grew faster, surer, twisting on the upstroke, matching the exact rhythm of Amari’s hips. Her grip was tight, practiced, the wet sound of her hand working Jules almost as obscene as the one coming from the bed.

“That’s it,” she breathed, voice turning rougher, hungrier. “She’s cumming all over him. Look at her. Look how hard she’s shaking. She’s completely his now, you see that don’t you? And now it’s your turn to accept that... your turn to become mine. I want to feel you explode. Right here. Watching them. Give me every drop you’ve got while you watch that big black cock ruin her.”

Jules’s whole body locked. Pleasure tore through him so hard his vision blurred at the edges. He came in thick, heavy pulses across Sierra’s fingers and the dark wood of the doorframe, rope after rope of hot cum striping her hand and the wall, biting down on a groan that still managed to escape as a broken, helpless sound. Sierra kept stroking him through it, milking every spurt with slow, deliberate twists, her mouth against his ear the entire time, whispering praise while she forced every last drop out of him.

“Good,” she whispered. “Just like that. All of it. Empty it all for me while you watch.”

When the last tremor left him, Jules sagged against the wall, breathing hard, cock still twitching weakly in her slick hand. Inside the bedroom the mattress creaked as Amari slowed, still buried deep inside Rose, murmuring something soft and low against her shoulder while her body continued to tremble and flutter around him, aftershocks rippling through her open, used pussy.

Sierra released Jules slowly, wiped her cum-slick hand on the inside of his shirt with casual, intimate ownership, and then took his wrist.

“Come on,” she said quietly, already leading him away from the light. “My room. Now.”

Jules followed, legs unsteady, the image of Rose stretched open around Amari burned permanently behind his eyes.

Sierra closed the bedroom door behind them with a soft click. The only light came from a small lamp on the dresser, throwing warm shadows across the bed and the bare wooden floor. Jules stood just inside the threshold, still half-hard, the front of his shirt damp where she had wiped her cum-slick hand. The taste of humiliation and leftover arousal sat thick on his tongue.

He couldn't look at her.

“I shouldn't have...” he started, voice rough, almost cracked. “Watching them like that... cumming like that... it was...”

“Hot!” Sierra's voice was quiet but absolute. She stepped in front of him, close enough that the cool silk of her dress brushed the front of his jeans. The heat of her body reached him even through the fabric.

“Look at me.”

He did. Reluctantly. His eyes met hers for only a second before flickering away again.

“It was hot,” she said, tone even, almost conversational. “Watching a big black cock claim a woman like that is hot. Watching you get so hard you couldn't help yourself was hot. You don't get to be ashamed of it. Not in this room. Not with me. Own it.”

Jules swallowed. The words landed, but the deeper insecurity rose right behind them, sharp and familiar.

“I can't give you that,” he said, quieter now. “What he was giving her. That size. That power. I don't have... that. So what am I supposed to offer you?”

Sierra studied him for a long moment, head slightly tilted, eyes moving over his face like she was weighing something. Then a deliberate smile curved her mouth.

“Let me show you what you have to offer... Take my heels off.”

The order was soft, but it left no room for argument.

Jules hesitated only a second before dropping to one knee. The floor was cool under him. His hands were unsteady as he reached for the first strappy black heel. He unbuckled it carefully, feeling the delicate weight of her ankle in his palm, then slid the shoe free. Her bare foot flexed against the wood. He did the same with the other, slower this time, thumbs brushing the high arch as he eased it off. Sierra flexed her toes once, then lifted one foot and rested it lightly against his thigh, the sole warm through the fabric of his jeans.

“Kiss them.”

He bent and pressed his mouth to the top of her foot. Soft skin, the faint residual scent of the evening still clinging to her. He moved lower, lips trailing over the high arch, then each toe in turn, slow and deliberate. When she offered the other foot he did the same, lingering longer, letting the heat of his mouth sink into her skin. The act felt intimate, more exposing than anything that had happened in the hallway.

“Good,” she murmured. “Now work your way up.”

He kissed along her ankle, the delicate bone, then higher, following the smooth, strong line of her calf. The muscle shifted under his lips when she shifted her weight. When he reached the sensitive hollow behind her knee she made a low sound of approval, soft and dark. His hands settled on the backs of her thighs as he continued upward, mouth open and warm against her skin, tasting the faint salt of her. The emerald dress had ridden higher with every inch he climbed; he could feel the building heat of her the closer he got.

Sierra reached down, gathered the hem of the dress in both hands, and slowly peeled it upward. Jules leaned back on his heels to watch as the silk rose; over the full curve of her hips, the narrow dip of her waist, the heavy sway of her breasts, and finally over her head. She dropped it aside without ceremony. The fabric whispered as it hit the floor.

He had never seen a Black woman naked before.

The rich, deep brown of her skin glowed in the low light, smooth and luminous where the lamp touched it. Her breasts were full and heavy, the dark nipples already tight, the wide areolae a striking contrast against the softer flesh around them. Her waist curved in sharply before flaring into full, powerful hips and a round, high ass that looked strong enough to grind a man into the mattress. Between her thighs the outer lips of her pussy were fuller, darker, already parted enough that the inner pink showed; a vivid, intimate contrast against the deeper brown of her skin. She was already shiny with arousal, a thin gleam of wetness catching the light along her folds.

Jules’s mouth went dry. His cock twitching harder than ever before.

Sierra looked down at him, completely unselfconscious, one hand resting lightly on her own hip.

“You like what you see?”

He nodded, unable to find words. His throat felt too tight.

“Then show me.” She stepped closer, the heat of her body washing over him, and settled one hand in his hair, fingers firm, guiding.

“Kiss me here.”

She drew his mouth to the soft, warm skin just above her pubic bone. He obeyed, lips parting against the smooth plane of her lower belly. “And here.” Higher, to the heavy underside of one breast. He kissed there too, slower, breathing her in. “Suck.”

Jules obeyed. His mouth opened over the dark peak of her nipple, tongue circling the tight bud before he sucked with growing confidence. The soft, heavy weight of her breast filled

his hand as he drew on her, feeling the nipple harden further against his tongue. Sierra made a low, pleased sound that vibrated through her chest. He switched to the other breast, giving it the same slow, deliberate attention; lips sealing, tongue flicking, then deeper suction, while his hands stroked up the backs of her thighs and over the full, firm curve of her ass. The skin there was smooth and warm, the muscle dense under his palms.

Sierra's fingers tightened in his hair, not pulling him away, simply holding him exactly where she wanted him, controlling the pressure of his mouth.

"Lower," she said eventually, voice rougher, thicker. "On your knees properly. I want your mouth on my pussy."

Jules sank lower until his knees pressed into the floorboards. The scent of her hit him first; warm, musky, already very wet, the rich smell of aroused woman rising straight from between her thighs. She lifted one leg and hooked it over his shoulder, opening herself completely. The movement spread her, and he could see the darker outer lips parted, the vivid inner pink glistening, a thin string of wetness already stretching. He leaned in and dragged his tongue through her in one long, slow lick from the bottom of her entrance all the way up over her clit. The taste of her flooded his mouth; salty, sweet, thick. She was soaked; her arousal coated his tongue immediately.

"That's it," she breathed, the words almost a sigh. "Good boy. Now get to work. Eat me properly. I want to feel that tongue."

He did. He licked her with focused, devoted attention; broad, flat strokes through her pussy that gathered every drop of wetness, then tighter circles around her swollen clit, then sucking the little bud gently between his lips. Sierra's hips rolled against his mouth in a slow, deliberate grind. Her hand stayed in his hair, guiding him, correcting him with small, precise tugs when she wanted more pressure or a different angle. Every time he found the rhythm she liked, her breath hitched.

"Suck it," she ordered, voice dropping lower. "Harder. Yes... just like that. Don't you dare stop."

He sealed his lips around her clit and sucked harder, tongue working the underside in firm flicks. When she was trembling and visibly close; thighs quivering against his cheeks, she pushed his head lower still.

"Tongue in my ass," she said, the words filthy and completely calm. "I need to feel you there too."

Jules hesitated only a fraction of a second before he obeyed. He spread her open with both hands, thumbs parting the full cheeks of her ass, and dragged his tongue over the tight, clean pucker. The skin there was softer, hotter. He circled once, then pushed the tip of his tongue inside as she pushed back against him, taking him deeper. The intimacy of it; the trust and the absolute dominance in the act, made his recently spent cock twitch hard against his thigh, filling again with a sharp, almost painful rush of blood.

Sierra moaned openly now, no longer trying to stay quiet. The sound was low and raw. She kept him there, alternating between having him tongue her ass with slow, thorough strokes and return to her clit, until her thighs started to shake in earnest against his shoulders.

“Don’t move,” she ordered, voice tight, almost strained. “Stay right there and take it.” She came hard.

A sudden, powerful rush of wetness flooded his mouth and chin as she squirted; hot, clear fluid pulsing in strong jets that soaked his lips, his tongue, the entire lower half of his face. The orgasm was loud and unrestrained; her hips jerked forward, grinding through every wave while she held his head in place with both hands. She coated him thoroughly, the wet heat running down his neck as she cursed and praised him in the same breath, voice breaking.

“Fuck... yes... just like that... good boy... take it... fuck, you’re so good with that mouth... don’t waste a drop...”

When the last waves left her she finally released him. Jules stayed on his knees, face wet and shiny, the taste of her still thick on his tongue, breathing hard. He looked up at her with dazed eyes, lips parted, chin glistening.

Sierra gazed down at him for a long moment, chest rising and falling, dark nipples still tight from his earlier attention. Then her eyes dropped to the hard cock standing against his stomach, flushed and leaking again.

A slow, satisfied smile spread across her face.

She planted a hand on his shoulder and shoved him backward onto the bed. He landed with a soft bounce, still staring up at her. Sierra climbed onto the mattress and straddled his thighs, the wet heat of her pussy hovering just above his cock. He could feel the damp brush of her folds against the head, teasing.

“Looks like my white boy loved his first taste of chocolate,” she said, voice low and amused.

She reached down and gave his cock one slow, deliberate stroke, thumb spreading the precum over the sensitive head.

“Let Mommy show you what you’ve been missing all these years.”

She rose up, positioned him at her entrance, and began to sink down onto him; hot, slick, and impossibly tight, as the door to the rest of the world closed behind him.

Morning light poured through the kitchen by the time everyone finally gathered. The smell of coffee and toast filled in the air. Amari stood at the stove finishing eggs. Rose poured juice for the children. Jules sat at the table with a mug between his hands, still slightly damp-haired from a quick shower, trying very hard to look normal. Sierra moved around the kitchen with her usual calm efficiency, though there was a faint, satisfied looseness in the way she carried herself.

For the first few minutes the adults spoke in careful, polite tones. No one daring to mention the sounds that had travelled through the walls last night.

Faith suddenly looked up at Sierra, syrup from her toast on her chin.

“Mommy?”

“Yes, baby?”

“You need to go to singing school.”

Sierra blinked, the coffee pot pausing mid-pour. “I’m sorry, sweetie?”

“Singing school,” Faith repeated earnestly. “I heard you last night. You were doing karaoke in your room. You did not sound good, Mommy.”

There was a beat of absolute silence.

Then Amari let out a short, startled laugh from the stove, the sound cracking the tension like a dropped plate. Rose pressed her lips together hard, shoulders shaking as she turned toward the fridge to hide her face. Jules stared very hard at his coffee, a reluctant smile already pulling at the corner of his mouth despite every effort to keep it down.

Sierra raised an eyebrow at her daughter, the corner of her own mouth twitching. “Karaoke.”

Faith nodded, still completely serious. “It was loud. And it was a weird song. You kept saying ‘yes’ a lot. But the singing was bad.”

Amari turned from the stove, grinning openly now. “I heard it too, Faith. It sounded like someone was trying to murder a love song in the middle of the night.”

That did it. Rose laughed openly, the sound bright and helpless. Jules’s carefully maintained composure broke and he laughed with her, the sound surprised and genuine, rolling up from his chest before he could stop it. Even Sierra’s mouth finally curved despite her best efforts, a low chuckle escaping as she shook her head.

“All right, little critic,” she said to Faith, reaching over to wipe the syrup from her chin with a napkin. “Mommy will take the feedback under consideration.”

The tension that had been sitting over the table like a low cloud dissolved into easy, slightly embarrassed laughter. For a moment it felt almost normal; just a family breakfast, sunlight warm on the wood, the ordinary clink of cutlery.

Sierra let the moment settle, then changed the subject with her usual directness, voice steady again.

“So. Plans for the day. What are we doing?”

Amari glanced at Rose, a quiet look passing between them, then back to the table.

“Actually... Rose and I were talking earlier. We were thinking of heading back to the city this afternoon. Give you and the kids the place to yourselves for a proper few days. You came up here for a holiday with them, after all.”

Sierra looked at him for a second, then at Rose, who gave a small confirming nod.

“That’s decent of you,” Sierra said. She turned her gaze to Jules. “What about you? You planning on escaping with them, or... do you want to stay on a couple more days? Help me with these two. Lake’s nice this time of year.”

Jules met her eyes. The question was casual on the surface, but there was a clear invitation underneath it. He thought of the city, of the shared apartment waiting for him. Then he looked at the two children still eating toast, at Sierra standing there waiting for an answer, and felt the same cautious openness that had started in the driveway the day before.

“Yeah,” he said, the word coming easier than he expected. “I’d like that. Sounds fun.”

Sierra’s expression warmed, just a fraction, something soft flickering behind her eyes. “Good.”

Across the table, Rose watched the exchange. When Jules glanced her way she gave him a small, genuine smile; soft, a little complicated, but real. He returned it. No words passed between them, but something settled in the look: an acknowledgment that the old shape of things was gone, and that whatever came next might still be all right.

Amari set a plate of eggs on the table with a quiet clink.

“Settled then,” he said. “We’ll pack after breakfast.”

The conversation moved on to ordinary things, the children’s plans for the lake, whether there were still marshmallows left for later. Sunlight continued to pour through the windows. For the first time since the night of the confrontation, the house felt like home, for everyone.

The Life They Want

They stepped into the apartment just after seven. The city felt different after the lake house; denser, louder, less honest. Traffic moved in restless streams far below the windows. The air inside still carried the closed-up scent of a place that had been empty for days. Amari locked the door behind them with a quiet click while Rose set her bag down by the couch. She remained standing there a moment longer than necessary, keys still loosely held in her hand, as if the simple act of coming home had suddenly become heavier than she expected.

Amari watched her.

She had been quiet on the drive back. Not cold, not distant; simply turned inward. For long stretches she had kept her gaze fixed on the passenger window, eyes tracking nothing in particular, as though she were still seeing the wide silver water, the dark line of trees along the shore, the two children running ahead of them down the path to the dock, sneakers kicking up little clouds of dust.

He crossed the room and came up behind her. His hands settled lightly on her waist, thumbs brushing the soft dip just above her hips.

“Talk to me,” he said.

Rose let out a slow breath. The tension in her shoulders eased as she leaned back into the solid warmth of his chest. For a moment she simply stood there, letting his body steady hers.

“I keep thinking about the lake,” she said, voice low. “About Faith and Kobe. The way Kobe jumped into your lap like it was the most natural thing in the world. And Faith... the way she made you braid that little piece of her hair and you just did it. Like you’d been doing it for years.”

Amari’s hands tightened slightly on her waist. She felt the shift in his breathing against her back.

Rose turned in his arms so she could see his face. Her eyes were bright, serious, a little glassy with the weight of what she was about to say.

“I watched you with them and something just... settled in me. I’ve never felt that before. Not with anyone. I kept imagining what it would look like if they were ours. Or if we had our own. A little boy with your mouth. A girl who inherited that quiet stubbornness of yours. I couldn’t stop the pictures. And the more I let myself look at them, the more it stopped feeling like a maybe and started feeling like something I didn’t just want, but something I desperately need.”

She reached up and touched his jaw, her thumb brushing the edge of his bottom lip. Her hand was not quite steady.

“I don’t want to wait, Amari. I don’t want to be careful and sensible and put it off for years while we ‘figure life out’. I already know. I want your children. I want to carry them. I want the whole messy, beautiful, chaotic life that comes with that; the sleepless nights, the tiny clothes, the way you’d look at me when I’m round and pregnant and slow and yours in a way I can’t ever take back.”

Amari was quiet for a long moment. His hands moved from her waist to the centre of her back, drawing her in until there was almost no space left between them. She could feel the steady, strong beat of his heart against her chest.

“I’ve been thinking about it too,” he said finally, voice low and rough around the edges.

“Every time I looked at you with them. The way you were with Faith when she got scared of the dark water; how you didn’t rush her, just stayed close until she was ready. The way you looked at me across the table that last morning like we already were a family. I want that. I want you pregnant. I want to watch you grow our kid inside you. I want to put my hand on your stomach and know he’s in there because of us. I want all of it.”

Rose’s breath caught. The sound was soft, almost broken.

She pressed her forehead to his. Their noses brushed. For a few seconds they simply breathed the same air.

"I'll be ovulating in three days," she whispered. "I tracked it. I didn't even mean to at first. But after the lake I couldn't help it, I started working it out, counting, paying attention. Three days, Amari."

He closed his eyes for a second, as if the words had landed somewhere deep. When he opened them again the look in them was dark and certain, stripped of every last hesitation.

"Then we don't wait. We just go for it."

She agreed, the words almost fierce. "We don't wait."

The kiss that followed was slow and deep and full of everything they had not said out loud until now. It wasn't frantic. It wasn't desperate in the way of new hunger. It was the kind of kiss that felt like a promise being sealed. Amari's fingers slid up into her hair, cradling the back of her head. Rose's hands curled into the front of his shirt, twisting the fabric, pulling him closer still.

When they finally broke apart they stayed close, foreheads touching, breathing the same warm air.

"I love you," Rose said against his mouth, the words quiet and absolute. "I'm so in love with you it scares me a little. And I want your babies. As many as you'll give me."

Amari's answering smile was quiet and intense, the kind that reached his eyes and stayed there.

"Then that's what you'll get."

For a long while they simply stood there in the middle of the quiet apartment, holding on to each other and to the future they had just decided, without reservation, to begin.

The elevator climbed with its usual low mechanical hum, the sound steady and faintly metallic in the closed space. Jules leaned against the mirrored wall, the paper bag of takeout warm against his hip, grease already beginning to darken the bottom corner. He watched his own reflection without really seeing it and let the last few days settle over him again, heavier and more real now that he was alone.

It still surprised him how quickly he had adapted. Not just to the heartache of Rose's betrayal. But to Sierra's advances and bluntness. The same sharpness that had stopped him cold on the driveway that first night, no longer unsettled him. He had learned the rhythm of it: the way she tested, the way she pushed just to see whether he would yield. And he had started answering in kind. A dry remark here. A quiet challenge there. Nothing loud, nothing performative. Each time he did, he saw something shift in her face; a brief flicker of surprise, then something warmer, more exposed, as if she had not expected him to meet her there. She liked that he didn't fold. She liked that he was learning how to stand inside her weather without flinching.

The nights had been their own education. Once the children were asleep and the house had gone still, everything changed. They had fucked with a focused, almost deliberate hunger that still left him aching the next morning. Sometimes it was slow and deep, her voice low

against his ear as she told him exactly how she wanted to be touched. Sometimes it was harder, Sierra directing every movement with that calm, absolute authority that admitted no argument. One night she had taken him into the guest room; the same bed where they had stood in the dark and watched Amari take Rose, and made him bend her over the edge of it. She had looked back at him over her shoulder, eyes dark with amusement and heat, and told him to show her he could fuck just as well as Amari could. The taunt had landed exactly where she intended. Something proud and raw had risen in him. He had given her everything he had, until her fingers clawed at the sheets and her voice broke on his name.

They had meant to stay for a couple of days longer. A burst pipe in the upstairs bathroom of her city apartment had forced the change of plan. The building manager's call had been apologetic but firm; water was already coming through the ceiling of the unit below. They had packed that morning with the children still half-asleep and soft with dreams. Before he left she had kissed him in the doorway, one hand curled in the front of his shirt, and reminded him that the babysitter was already booked for Friday. And how much they couldn't wait to spend date night in the city together.

The elevator doors opened with a soft chime.

Jules let himself into the apartment and closed the door behind him with care. For a moment the place felt empty. The lights in the living room were off; only the faint, sodium glow from the street reached through the windows, laying long pale rectangles across the floor. The air was still. He set the bag on the counter, the paper rustling louder than it should have in the quiet, and almost called out, then stopped.

Sound carried from the bedroom.

Not loud. Not hidden either. The door stood ajar, a narrow band of warm lamplight cutting across the hallway floor like an invitation no one had bothered to disguise. They were not expecting him for another two nights, after all.

Soft, wet sounds. The low shift of a mattress under moving weight. A man's quiet exhale, controlled and deep. Jules moved before he fully decided to. He stopped just short of the doorway, close enough that the light touched the edge of his shoe, close enough to see.

Amari sat on the edge of the bed, knees spread wide, one hand resting lightly on the back of Rose's head. She was on her knees between his thighs, completely absorbed in what she was doing. Her mouth worked over him with a hunger Jules had never seen from her, not in all the years they had been together. Wet, eager, almost greedy. The soft, filthy sounds of her sucking filled the quiet room: the slick glide of lips along thick shaft, the wet pull when she drew back, the quiet, filthy noise of saliva being pushed ahead of her mouth. Spit shone on her chin and ran in thin strands down the dark, veined length every time she pulled off.

She took him deep; deeper than he would have thought possible, until the fat head of Amari's cock nudged the back of her throat. She made a small, choked sound, eyes watering, throat visibly working around the intrusion, and stayed there for a long, deliberate moment before pulling off with a slick, gasping wet sound only to sink straight back down again, cheeks hollowed, nose pressed almost to his stomach.

Jules's first instinct was to turn around. To leave the food, walk back out, give them the privacy the closed door would have granted.

Then Sierra's voice rose in his memory, clear and uncompromising.

Keep watching.

And later, in the dark of her room, her mouth against his ear, the words soft and absolute:

It's hot. You don't get to be ashamed of it. Not with me. Own it.

Rose gagged softly around the thick length, the sound wet and helpless, a little choked moan vibrating around the cock stretching her throat. Jules's hand fell to the front of his jeans. He squeezed once, hard, feeling how full and aching he already was, the pressure almost painful. Then he worked the button open, drew the zipper down, and freed himself.

The cool air of the hallway touched overheated skin. He wrapped his fingers around his cock and simply held it, pulse hammering against his palm, eyes fixed on the scene in front of him. A clear bead of wetness was already gathering at the tip.

Rose pulled off with a last, slow, filthy suck that left Amari's cock gleaming and heavy, a thick string of spit still connecting her bottom lip to the flushed head. She looked up at him, lips swollen and shiny, breath short and ragged.

"I can't wait any longer," she said, voice rough and ruined from the way she had been using her throat. "I need it. I need you to fuck me. I need you to breed me."

The words landed in Jules ears. His cock twitched hard in his hand, another clear bead of wetness welling at the tip and beginning to slide down the underside, as the full meaning of what he was about to witness settled over him.

Rose didn't wait for him to answer.

She rose from her knees, mouth still shiny with spit, and climbed straight into his lap. Amari's hands went to her waist as she straddled him, the thick, spit-slick length of his cock rising heavy between them. She reached down, wrapped her fingers around the base, and guided the fat head. She was already soaked, and when she sank down, the stretch punched a broken, high sound out of her throat.

"Fuck yesss, oh my God!"

She took him in one long, slow descent, thighs trembling hard, the thick shaft forcing her open until she was seated flush against him, every last bit of him buried inside her. For a moment she just sat there, forehead pressed to his, mouth open, breathing in short, shaky pulls as her body adjusted to the way he filled her so completely. She could feel him throbbing against her cervix, the pressure deep and overwhelming.

Then she started to move.

She rode him with deep, rolling hips, rising until only the swollen head remained inside her, before dropping back down in one greedy motion that took him to the root each time. Amari's hands gripped the full curves of her big ass, helping her, spreading her, but he let her set the pace. Rose's head fell back, mouth open, the words already spilling out of her in a continuous stream.

“You’re so fucking big, baby. God, I love it so much. I’m addicted to this dick! I can’t get enough of how you stretch me.”

She ground down harder, circling her hips so the head of his cock dragged repeatedly against the front wall of her pussy. Her breasts bounced with every movement, nipples tight and flushed. Amari leaned in and took one into his mouth, sucking hard, tongue working the sensitive peak, and Rose cried out, fingers locking tight in his hair.

“Yes, suck them... they’re going to be so full when you get me pregnant... fuck, Amari, I want that, I want my tits heavy with milk for your babies. I want you to suck them when they’re full!”

In the doorway, Jules’s hand tightened around his cock. He stroked slowly, eyes locked on the place where Rose’s body swallowed the thick dark shaft over and over, her pussy stretched obscenely around him, wetness gleaming on both of them. The words she was saying made his stomach twist with the same toxic mix of pain and heat that had ruined him the first night.

Rose’s first orgasm hit her while she was still riding him. She slammed down hard and stayed there, grinding in tight, desperate circles, shaking violently. A high, broken moan tore out of her as her pussy clenched and fluttered hard around the cock buried inside her, milking spasms that forced clear wetness to spill out around the base of him and soak his lap. Her whole body shuddered through it, mouth open, eyes unfocused.

She didn’t stop.

She kept riding him through the aftershocks, slower now, using the oversensitivity, until it became almost too much and she collapsed forward against his chest, still impaled, still pulsing weakly around him, breath coming in broken little gasps against his neck.

Amari kissed the side of her neck, then her jaw, then her open mouth, slow and deep.

“You ready for more?” he asked, voice low and rough.

“Yes,” she breathed, already nodding, already rolling her hips again in small, needy movements. “I need it harder. I need you to fuck a baby into me.”

He lifted her off him as if she weighed nothing and turned her, putting her on her hands and knees in the centre of the bed. Rose arched her back immediately, presenting herself without shame, knees spread wide. Amari knelt behind her, one hand between her shoulder blades, pressing her chest firmly down into the mattress so her ass stayed high and offered. He lined the thick head of his cock against her entrance and pushed back inside in one long stroke that forced a cry out of her into the sheets.

Then he really started fucking her.

Deep, powerful thrusts that rocked her whole body forward with every impact. The wet, heavy slap of his hips against her ass filled the room. Rose pushed back to meet every stroke, greedy for it, her fingers twisting in the sheets.

“Yes, fuck me Amari. Give me that big cock... Pound me, baby. Fuck... yessss, just like that!”

Amari's hand slid under her, found her swollen clit, and rubbed in firm circles while he kept driving into her. The dual stimulation was too much. Rose's second orgasm tore through her harder than the first. Her arms gave out completely. She dropped to her elbows, face pressed into the mattress, screaming into the sheets as her pussy locked down around him. He fucked her straight through it, never slowing, using the way she clenched and shook, until she was sobbing with pleasure and still pushing her hips back for more.

"Don't stop, please don't stop... I still need your cum. I need you to fill me up... please, Amari, I need it so bad."

He pulled out only long enough to flip her onto her back. Rose's legs went up immediately, knees hooked over his elbows as he folded her open and drove back in to the hilt in one brutal stroke. The new angle let him go even deeper. Every thrust punched against her cervix; a deep, almost painful pressure that made her eyes roll back and her mouth fall open in a silent cry.

This was the position that broke her open completely.

Amari braced himself above her, arms locked, and started to pound; hard, fast, relentless jackhammer strokes that made the headboard slam against the wall in a steady, violent rhythm. The sound of their bodies meeting was continuous now; thick, wet, and relentless. Rose's hands clawed at his back, his shoulders, the sheets, anywhere she could reach. Her voice had gone high and desperate, almost broken.

"Right there, oh fuck, right there... you're hitting it, you're so deep... breed me, Amari. Please, please, please... flood my womb, I want every drop... I want your babies, I want to feel you cum so deep, that it's dripping out of me for days. Give it to me..."

She came again, hard. The orgasm ripped through her in waves that made her whole body seize, back arching clean off the bed. Her pussy clamped down so tightly around him that he growled, the sound low and raw in his chest. Still he didn't stop. He kept pounding her through it, using the way her cunt fluttered and squeezed him, chasing his own end while she shattered underneath him, legs trembling in his grip, tears of pure overload slipping from the corners of her eyes.

"Fuck, I'm close," he rasped, the words strained, almost broken.

"Yesss!" Rose's eyes locked on his, glassy and wild, pupils blown wide. "Do it. cum inside me! Breed me! Give me your babies... I need it, I need all of it..."

Amari drove in one final time, buried to the root, and started to cum hard.

Rose felt it the second it began.

The first thick pulse of heat exploded against her cervix, so hot and sudden it tore a raw cry from her throat. Then another. And another. Heavy, powerful spurts flooding her in long, searing jets, painting her insides, filling her in a way nothing else ever had. She could feel every distinct throb of his cock as it kicked and pulsed deep inside her, the thick ropes of cum pumping out of him in relentless waves until she felt almost overfull, stretched, claimed, marked from the inside.

“I feel it...” she sobbed, legs locked tight around his waist, heels digging into his back to hold him as deep as he could possibly go. “Fuck, baby... it’s so hot, there’s so much... don’t stop, give me all of it, every drop... fill me up... I can feel you flooding me completely!”

Her own orgasm detonated at the exact same moment, bigger and more violent than any of the others. It crashed through her in blinding white waves, her pussy clamping down and milking him greedily, pulling every last pulse of cum deeper into her womb while she shook and cried out his name like a prayer.

In the doorway, Jules came hard.

The sight of Rose taking that load; the way her body arched clean off the bed, the broken, ecstatic sounds tearing out of her, the knowledge of exactly what was being pumped into her right then, ripped the orgasm out of him with brutal force. He stroked himself furiously through it, ropes of cum spilling over his fist and onto the hallway floor in heavy pulses, his whole body locked and shaking, eyes never leaving the bed even as his vision blurred.

Amari and Rose never noticed he was even there. They were too far gone and lost in each other.

Amari collapsed forward, still buried inside her to the hilt, still pulsing with the last aftershocks of his release. Rose pulled him down into a deep, open-mouthed kiss, arms and legs wrapped tightly around him, holding him inside her as if she could keep every drop locked in place. Their kiss was slow and wet and full of everything they had just done; love, lust, possession, the future they had just begun.

When they finally broke apart, Rose’s voice was soft, wrecked, and completely certain.

“I love you,” she whispered against his mouth. “I’m so in love with you. I want to give you so many babies. As many as you’ll let me.”

Amari kissed her again, deeper this time, one hand sliding down to rest protectively over her lower stomach where his cum was already settling, warm and thick inside her.

Rose’s lips brushed his ear, her voice dropping into a low, satisfied purr.

“I want to fuck all night. Fill me up, over and over.”

Epilogue - One Big Happy Family

The ceremony was small and private, held in the late-afternoon light of a garden that had begun to bloom with the early hints of Spring. The air smelled faintly of cut grass and the Petunias that climbed the low stone wall. Golden light slanted between the trees, catching in the soft folds of fabric and the edges of hair, turning everything gently luminous.

Rose stood opposite Amari in a stunning ivory dress that draped softly over the full, heavy curve of her belly. At thirty-four weeks pregnant with twins she moved a little slower, a little more carefully, but she looked somehow more beautiful than she ever had. The fabric caught the light every time she shifted her weight. Her skin glowed. Amari, dark suit

perfectly cut to his broad shoulders, watched her as if the rest of the world had fallen quietly away. There was no performance in his gaze, only a deep, steady certainty.

Jules and Sierra stood a few steps to the side as the only witnesses. Sierra's hand rested lightly in the crook of Jules's arm, her thumb moving once in a small, private stroke against his sleeve. Faith and Kobe, solemn and proud in their little formal outfits, held the rings on a velvet cushion between them and tried very hard not to fidget. Kobe kept glancing up at Amari for approval. Faith stood a little taller than usual, chin lifted.

The officiant's voice was calm and clear in the still air.

"Today we gather not only to join these two people in marriage, but to welcome the two new lives already growing between them. In a little over five weeks, a daughter and a son will enter the world. May this family continue to grow in love, honesty, and the kind of courage it takes to choose one another every day."

Rose's eyes shone, bright with unshed tears she did not bother to hide. Amari's hand found hers and held on, his thumb brushing once across her knuckles.

They spoke their vows in quiet, steady voices that carried just far enough. When the moment came, both of them said "I do" without hesitation. Amari leaned in and kissed her, one hand resting protectively over the high, round curve of her stomach as if he were already shielding the children inside. The kiss was soft and certain, lingering just long enough to feel like a promise sealed in front of everyone who mattered.

Sierra was the first to step forward. She hugged Rose carefully around the belly, mindful of the twins, then turned to Amari and held him for a second longer than necessary, telling him how proud she was of him. When she stepped back she turned just enough to murmur against Jules's ear, low enough that only he could hear:

"We're next. Don't think you're getting out of it, so start working on those vows."

Jules felt the corner of his mouth lift. He didn't argue. He only covered her hand with his for a moment.

Rose found him a short while later, while the others were still talking in the soft scatter of conversation. She took his hand, her fingers warm and a little swollen from the pregnancy.

"Thank you for being here. For all of it." She said quietly. "It means so much to us."

Jules shook his head once, as if to downplay it. "I'm glad I am. I'm happy for you, Rose."

Rose's mouth curved in a small, genuine smile. "I know. That's why it matters."

Rose glanced at Amari, who was speaking with the officiant a few steps away, then back to Jules. Her voice softened even further.

"We've decided on names, thought you should be the first to know. The girl will be named Ruby, after Amari's grandmother. And the boy..." She paused, almost shy, the words clearly carrying weight. "We want to name him Jules. If that's all right with you?"

For a second he couldn't speak. Something tight and unexpected rose in his throat. When he did find his voice, it came out rough.

"It's more than all right. It's an honour. I'm proud to share it with him."

Amari, standing close enough to hear, simply nodded once toward him; solid, grateful, and without any need for more words.

They gathered for the single photograph the photographer had been asked to take. Rose and Amari stood in the centre, her back resting lightly against his chest, his hand still spread protectively over her belly. Jules and Sierra took their places on one side. Faith and Kobe pressed happily against their legs, the ring cushion now forgotten in Kobe's small hands.

Amari looked at the small group around them and spoke the thought that had been sitting quietly in all of them.

"Summers at the lake house," he said. "All of us. Every year."

Rose smiled, eyes still bright. "One big happy family."

Sierra's arm slipped around Jules's waist. Faith grinned up at them, missing a front tooth. Kobe held the cushion like a prize.

The camera flashed.

In the captured moment they were all smiling; a family, complicated and deliberate, already turning toward the years ahead.

The End.