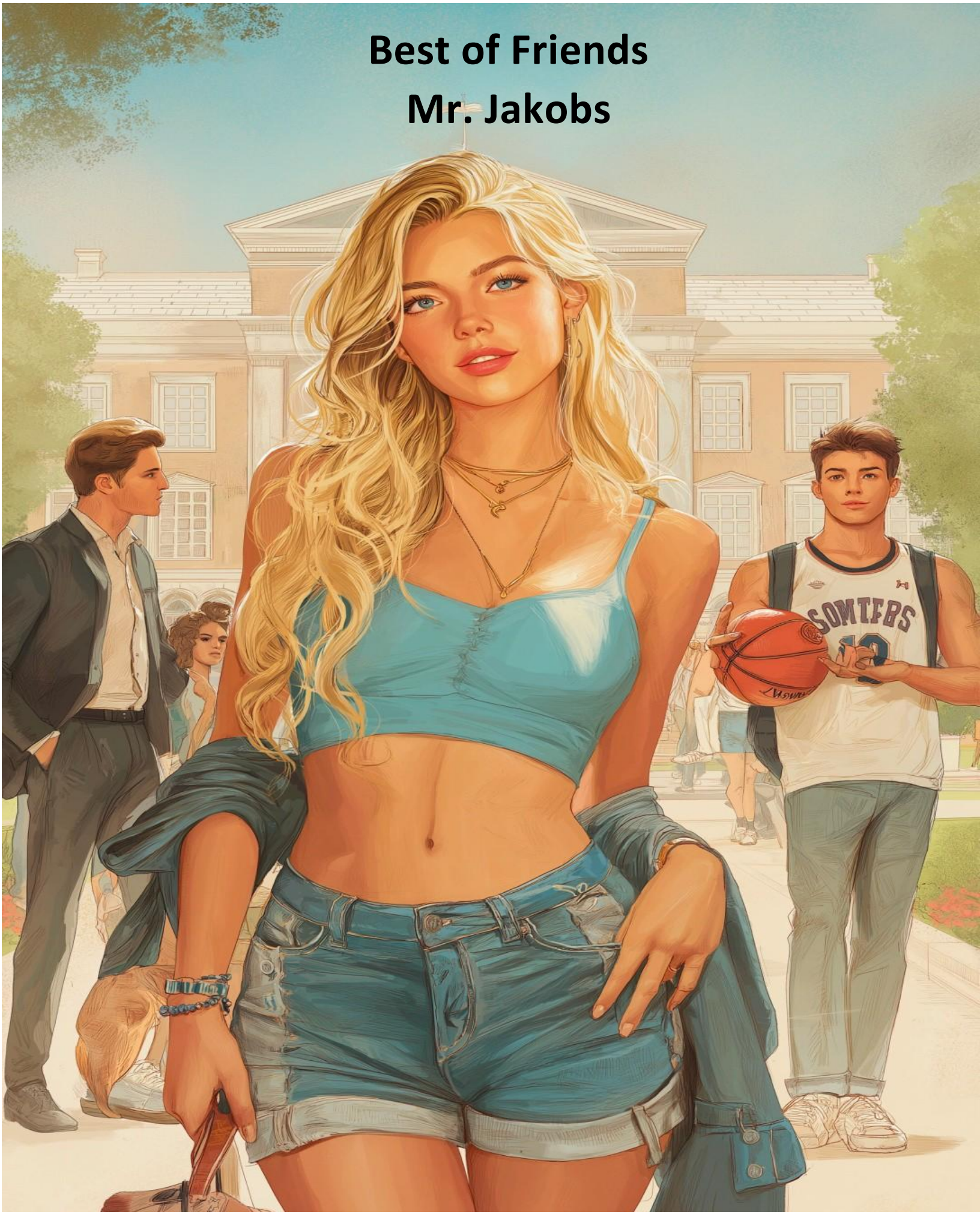
Best of Friends

Mr. Jakobs



Chapter 1 - Best of Friends 1 - Settling In

“All Jack said was I look pretty,” Rachel said as she inspected herself in her oversized vanity mirror.

“I don’t know... You didn’t get a weird vibe from it?” Noah asked. Rachel looked back at him and shrugged.

“It was just a comment,” She said, adjusting her black up bra before running her fingers through her blonde, wavy hair.

“I don’t know, I’m not sure I trust the guy,” Noah said. He was sprawled across Rachel’s king-sized bed, scrolling lazily through his phone as the setting sun streamed through the large bay windows.

Noah never could get over how nice Rachel’s apartment was. It blew his shared dorm room out of the water. For a college student, she lived a very different life from most students. Even at a place as prestigious and wealthy as Godfrey.

“I think you’re being unfair. His jokes might not always land, but he’s a good guy.” Rachel puckered her lips and fixed her makeup. Noah glanced at her reflection in the mirror, heart skipping as he found her blue eyes.

Her beauty never ceased to stun him.

“I don’t know, I think you’re too trusting. He’s dropping those ‘little comments’ because he likes you,” Noah replied.

Rachel looked back at Noah.

“He does not!” She said.

“Yes, he does,” Noah replied humoursly. Rachel laughed.

“Ok, well maybe a little. But I think you’re being too suspicious, as always. His friend group has been so welcoming to us. And you have to admit, it’s made freshman year a lot easier.” Rachel walked over to the pile of clothes pouring out of her double-wide closet and began sorting through it. “God, it’s impossible to find anything in this small closet… Is my dress on the bed, babe?”

“I thought you said you were going to give away some clothes to make space,” Noah teased.

Rachel glanced up at him with a deadpan expression.

“I did! This is only about a fourth of what I had,” Rachel said.

Noah laughed as she sat up and glanced around the bed.

“I guess you haven’t gotten used to living like us common folk yet.”

“Stop! I’m not that bad, am I?”

“No, you’re fine. I’m just teasing.”

Rachel laughed softly as she tossed a shirt aside. “Do you see the dress anywhere?”

“No dress, sorry,” Noah said. He watched Rachel rummage through her pile of clothing, wearing only her bra and panties.

“Did you actually look?” Rachel asked.

“I did. There’s nothing here, babe.” Noah eyed Rachel as she dropped to her knees and bent down to peek into the closet. Giving him a full view of her backside.

“You know, if you can't find it, we could always stay home. Jack will have another party. He’s been having one almost every weekend lately,” Noah said.

“Oh yeah? And what would we do instead?” Rachel asked.

“I could think of a few things.” Noah tried to sound seductive, but it fell flat, as usual. Rachel continued searching for a moment, then stood up in excitement.

“Found it!” She said, holding the black, plunging dress up against her chest. It accented her curves beautifully.

“Ah darn,” Noah said. They caught each other’s gaze as Rachel finally registered Noah’s double meaning.

“Ahhhhh, now I see,” She said with a laugh.

“What?!”

“Could think of a few things, huh?”

They laughed together as she swayed her hips playfully and stepped into the dress.

“I’m sorry, I couldn’t help it,” Noah said.

“Uh-huh, sure... well, I guess we’ll have to save those ideas of yours for later,” she said.

And that was the contrast of Rachel. She fit the trope of a beautiful small-town girl. She had grown up rich, and her parents ensured she was well-mannered. But more and more, Noah was realizing there was something wild in her. In truth, there was something wild in them both. Ever since coming to Godfrey, the two had been gradually experimenting with their new freedom. It started innocently enough. They went to a few of Jack’s parties and mingled with his friends. Leaving early to make sure they got to classes on time the next morning.

Then they started staying later. They started drinking more.

Then, they tried edibles for the first time. And then mushrooms.

With every passing week, they grew more confident and bold.

Noah was grateful for the experiences, but it seemed like Rachel lived for them.

It wasn't until one night in particular that Noah noticed something deeper forming between them. They were at a crowded DJ set, and Noah watched as Rachel danced in the middle of the floor. The music was so loud that Noah felt it vibrate through his chest. He had stepped away for a moment to grab a drink. When he turned back around, he saw that Jack had stepped in close to dance with Rachel.

Tall, dark, handsome Jack.

Noah remembered Jack looking over at him and mouthing the words.

"Is it cool, bro?"

He couldn't have known what that question actually meant. But Rachel did. He stared at her a moment, both uncertain what would happen if she went with him.

He smiled nervously and nodded, and so they went.

Because, despite everything, deep down, Noah wanted to see it.

The two began to dance. Bodies pressed together closely as Rachel glanced at Noah with a smile, biting her tongue.

Noah both loved and hated that memory.

"You sure you don't want to just stay home tonight?" Noah asked weakly.

"Noah, we just got out of Herferd. We have to enjoy these four years while we can."

"And we won't have time after that?"

"You know what's going to happen. We're going to graduate, find good jobs, settle down, have kids—"

"We're having kids now?" Noah interjected. Rachel laughed.

"I'm just saying! This is our time to have fun! Not sit at home and watch TV."

"Well… we wouldn't be watching TV…" Noah sat up and grabbed Rachel's waist. She let out a playful yelp as he pulled her onto his lap. Noah leaned in for a kiss, and she pecked him gently back. Excited, Noah went for another, and Rachel promptly placed a finger on his chest and pushed him back.

"Ah ah, I just did my makeup."

"Aw, man," Noah said, squeezing her gently.

"After the party. Now, listen to me, mister," Rachel dragged her finger across Noah's chest. "You need to learn to take life by the horns. I know there wasn't much to do in Herferd…"

“And no friends to do them with,” Noah said blandly.

“Yes, but now we’re at an elite college right by the city. We could eat at a different restaurant every night and still not have tried everything this place has to offer. We need to get out as much as possible and experience all we can!”

Noah always did admire Rachel’s positive energy. She was a shooting star, one he always felt he could barely keep up with. Despite her controlling father, she had achieved everything she could in Herferd. She graduated valedictorian, was cheerleading captain, and even ran several volunteer groups outside of school.

And just like in Herferd, she was already flourishing at Godfrey. Noah nodded in agreement.

“No, you’re right. I just... with Jack... especially his finds I.... I don’t know...” Noah stopped as he felt his chest begin to tighten.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Rachel said, gently rubbing his shoulder.

“I guess… I guess a part of me wishes we hadn’t befriended them?” Noah said. Rachel's eyes widened.

“Wait, you don’t want to be friends with Jack?”

Noah shrugged.

“I mean, maybe?"

“Why?”

Noah couldn’t put his finger on it. It was a gut instinct, something deep inside himself that commanded him to turn and run the other way. But, he could give no answer.

“Noah,” Rachel said, “you can’t keep pushing people out forever. And Jack, he really is a good guy. He’s been nothing but helpful since we moved here.”

“Yeah, I know…”

“He was there for you when you were having car trouble. He was there for me when I was having trouble finding my classes.”

“I know, I know,” Noah closed his eyes and shook his head.

“So what is it?” Rachel wrapped her arms around Noah’s neck.

“He reminds me of Brian.” Noah felt goosebumps rise on his skin. He couldn't remember the last time he'd said that name out loud.

“Oh…”

“Yeah.”

“Listen, what happened back then. The way Allison—”

“We don’t need to talk about it,” Noah said. He pushed Rachel off his lap as he stood, burying his memories as fast as they resurfaced. His heart thumped in his chest as the walls began to close in around him.

Noah focused on his breathing and clenched his fists tightly. He wasn’t at prom. Allison and Brian weren’t here. That was the past.

Noah took several deep breaths.

“Are you alright?” Rachel asked gently. Noah nodded.

“Y-yeah, that wasn’t as bad as some of the other times,” he said.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have brought that up,” Rachel said gently.

“It’s fine.” Noah didn’t turn to look at Rachel. He didn’t want to appear any more vulnerable than he felt.

“I guess I’m just shocked,” Rachel said. “I really thought this group was helping you feel at home. Coming to Godfrey was a big step for both of us. It’s a totally different world compared to Herferd, and I’ll be honest, it’s been a hard transfer for me. Having Jack and his friends around has been really helpful. I guess I didn’t realize you weren’t feeling the same...”

“Don’t get wrong. They’ve been decent. It’s just… god, how do I explain it?” Noah turned to Rachel. She looked nervous, eager to help him feel better in any way she could. He hated it when she looked that way. He didn’t want her to think that she needed to take care of him. Allison always did. She made sure to remind him almost every day. He couldn’t let that happen again.

“It’s ok, take your time,” Rachel said with a smile. Her warm voice was a welcome reprieve.

Noah let out a long sigh.

“Leaving Herferd was our chance at starting over. You got your freedom, and I got a chance to start fresh. I guess, part of that for me was also changing myself. I don’t want to be an outsider anymore. I don’t want to be part of something that pushes me out.”

Rachel nodded. “Do you feel like Jack and his friends are doing that?”

“I don’t know. Don’t get me wrong, they’ve been incredibly helpful. But, it’s like my gut is telling me something is off,” Noah said.

Rachel stood and walked over to him.

“What happened to you on prom night…”

“Rachel...”

“Let me finish, please,” Rachel said gently. “What happened was a nightmare. And those ‘friends’ of yours weren’t your friends. I’m not trying to tell you how to feel, but I truly believe

we can build a real friendship with these people.” Rachel wrapped her arms around Noah’s waist, hugging him tightly from behind.

“You really believe that?” Noah asked.

“I do.”

“And you don’t think all the name-calling and the jokes about me still being a virgin are a red flag?” Noah asked.

Rachel laughed softly.

“Well, I think they’re just teasing you. Plus, we both know you’re not a virgin.”

Noah turned to face her, and Rachel stood on her toes to meet his lips. They kissed deeply. His anxiety floated away as her sweet, soft lips touched his. He nearly went in for another, but restrained himself this time. Rachel’s fingers slid up and down his arms as she pulled away and gazed deeply into his eyes.

“Can I say something?” She asked.

“Sure.”

“I know making new friends is hard for you. And while it doesn’t have to be with Jack and his group, at some point, you’re going to have to start trusting people again.”

Noah sighed. “I know.”

She squeezed his hands tightly.

“You feeling better?” She asked.

“A little bit.”

“Do you want to cancel tonight?”

Noah shook his head. “No, it’s alright. It’s just a party. Can I ask you something, though?”

“Of course.”

“What do you like about those guys, anyway?”

“Hmmm…” Rachel stepped away and fixed her hair. “I think they’re honestly really fun and nice. I know they can be rough around the edges sometimes. Mike and Ethan, especially. But that roughness feels safe. I guess in a way, they remind me of home. Plus… if I were being honest… I think the parties are a lot of fun!” Rachel shrank away with an embarrassed grin.

Noah laughed. “I should have known.”

“Don’t judge me!”

“I’m not!”

“Jack can throw a good party.”

“Believe me, I know. Plus, if I recall, you didn’t get out to parties too much in Herferd.”

Rachel nodded slowly.

“God, my dad was so strict. My whole time in high school, I never ONCE went to a house party. Ever!”

“Wow, really? I didn’t realize he was that bad.”

“You have no idea.”

“I guess he always did seem a little cold now that I think about it.”

“A little cold is putting it lightly.”

“But he did well for himself,” Noah added. Rachel rolled her eyes.

“Yeah, and he’ll always make sure to remind you about it, too. Dangles it over your head like a carrot.” Rachel mimed holding a carrot high in the air, then walked back to her desk and grabbed her phone.

“I didn’t get to do anything in Herferd,” she continued. “My Dad never let me out of the house, and when he did, I had strict curfews. He installed a tracker on my phone and made me text him every few hours when I was out.”

“Jesus,” Noah said.

“I know! It was like a prison. But now…” Rachel let out a little jump of excitement, “he isn’t around to say no to parties, and I am actually getting a chance to have some fun!”

The excitement in Rachel’s voice was contagious. She was right, this was her moment. It was their moment. Noah couldn’t let the past stop him from having a future.

“Alright, you convinced me,” he said.

Rachel raised an eyebrow. “You don’t sound convinced.”

Noah laughed. “I just have a feeling Jack’s going to make a move on you.”

“They always make moves on me,” Rachel replied. She stared at him a moment. “You know I would never do something like... like she did.”

“I know,” The words caught in Noah’s throat.

“I mean it, Noah,” Rachel said. “I wouldn’t do that.”

“I know,” Noah said again. Then, with a laugh, those fateful words slip out of his mouth. “But I mean... a little fooling around wouldn’t be a deal breaker.”

Noah never knew exactly why he said it, and he would never forget the abrupt look of shock on Rachel's face.

"Wait, what?"

"I'm sorry, it was a stupid joke I... forget I said anything."

"That didn't sound like a joke, Noah," Rachel said.

Noah laughed uncomfortably.

"I... I guess I'm just saying like, when you and Jack were dancing that other time..."

"Yeah?"

Noah cleared his throat and shrugged. "It was kind of fun."

Noah and Rachel stared at one another as fire danced between them. When Noah couldn't take the silence any longer, he spoke.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Are you being honest?" Rachel asked.

Noah hesitated.

"Yes," he said softly.

"Then don't be sorry," Rachel said. She examined him for a moment. "Can I be honest?"

"Sure."

"I think it could be fun, too."

Noah swallowed and nodded.

"Ok," he said.

"So what does it mean?" She asked.

"I think for now it means we have a party to go to," Noah said.

Rachel smiled and shook her head.

"Alright, sounds good to me. Come on, we don't want to be too fashionably late." Rachel adjusted her dress and grabbed her small handbag before turning to the door. Noah took a deep breath as he followed her into the unknown and a new beginning.

Chapter 2 - Best of Friends 2 - Spin The Bottle

Noah sat nervously in a circle of peers, hands clenched as a bottle spun in the middle of the dorm room. The bottle slowly stopped, landing on a girl named Mel. Noah let out a deep breath. If that bottle had moved a few more inches, it would have been Rachel.

“Fuck…” Jack said, looking at Rachel with hungry eyes.

“Don’t look so sad Jack, you still get make out with me,” Mel said, leaning forward into the center of the circle.

"Yeah yeah..." Jack stared at her a moment before glancing back over at Rachel. Then he leaned toward Mel, beer in hand, and promptly stuck his tongue down her throat. His eyes never left Rachel as his hand wrapped around Mel’s neck. Mel hungrily kissed Jack back, nearly headbutting him in the process.

But why wouldn’t she? After all, this was Jack. He was one of the hottest, wealthiest students at Godfrey. His only rivals also happened to be his best friends.

Ethan, Luke, and Mike.

All of whom now sat in the spin-the-bottle circle with Noah and Rachel. Noah often remarked that when the four were together, they looked like a boy band. Rachel found it just as funny as he did.

Jack was the traditionally handsome rich whiteboy, and he was a master at flaunting his wealth in humble ways. He was chiseled, lean, and dark-featured. Of all his friends, Jack was certainly the brightest. Even now, as he aggressively made out with Mel, Noah could tell the wheels were turning in his mind. It was a stark contrast to Mike, who sat next to Jack with a goofy grin slung across his face.

"Fuck Jack, how long are you going to take?" Mike's words were slurred, Noah was honestly surprised he was even coherent after the amount of shots he'd pounded back.

If Jack was the suave intelligent group leader, Mike was the simple-minded sidekick. Though Mike made up for it with his bulking muscles, faded haircut, and revealing clothing. Without a doubt, Mike was the most physically attractive of the four.

Jack pulled away from Mel, who leaned back in a stupor and giggled with her friend. "Am I detecting jealousy?" He asked.

Mike snorted. "The fuck would I be jealous for? Mel!" Mike leaned over to the overly-tanned brunette. Mel, who was equally tipsy, squinted at him.

"What?!"

"Fuckin… make out with me," Mike said. Strangely, his complete lack of candor worked well for him. Without hesitation, Mel shrugged and immediately locked lips with Mike. It took only a few seconds before his hands trailed up Mel's shirt and began fondling her C-Cup breasts. It seemed Mike made it a point to act purely on instinct, and strangely, Noah admired him for it.

"You're fucking disgusting Mike," Ethan, the group's all-star college athlete, said. Mike pulled himself away from Mel, a string of saliva trailing off their lips and falling into the circle's center.

"What?! Jack was just doin' it!" Mike shouted.

"At least have some tact. Fuck man, Rachel are you seeing this guy?!" Ethan asked. He leaned closer to her as his eyes drifted up and down her body.

Noah had seen it before. Any chance Ethan had to speak to Rachel, he would. Noah had found them alone on more than one occasion. While Noah could see it, Rachel seemed oblivious to what Ethan was trying to do. Even now, she simply let out a warm laugh while enjoying the moment.

"Oh I'm seeing, Mike… you are very very gross," Rachel said. Ethan leaned over and nudged her shoulder.

"We seriously can't take this guy anywhere," Ethan wrapped his arm around her, squeezing her tightly. He held her for a moment too long before letting Rachel go.

"Oh, he's not that bad," Rachel countered.

"He is, in fact, that bad," Jack said.

Luke, the quietest of the four let out a soft laugh. "You're one to talk Jack."

Ethan looked at him with surprise. "The hell you talking about man?"

Luke smirked. "I can't take you three anywhere."

"Shut the fuck up, you barely come out as it is," Jack said.

"Now you see why," Luke replied blandly. He looked at Noah and gave him a knowing smile.

Noah always wondered how Luke had found his way into Jack’s crew. Sure, he was handsome, in fact often it seemed like Luke got the most attention when the four were in a room. But his moody demeanor, tattooed arms, and painted nails made him an odd fit.

"Luke, I think you need to get your friends in line. They are getting rowdy," Rachel said as she swooped underneath Ethan's attempt at another side hug and scooted closer to Noah.

"You're asking the impossible," Luke replied, taking a swig of his beer before leaning his head against the wall.

"Very funny Luke. So are you getting in on this next round or what?" Ethan asked. Luke shook his head.

"After seeing you and Mike kiss twice, I think I'm good. I'm surprised you have the willpower to keep going" Luke said.

"Don't listen to that guy, we have to keep playing," Jack insisted. "One more round, at least one more."

"Agreed. Mel, Kate, you two doin' this or…." Mike said. The pair of rosey-cheeked girls looked at each other before collectively giggling.

"Sure…" Mel said.

While it was masked in an innocent game, Noah could see what was happening. The group had already spun the bottle six times, but the bottle hadn't landed on Rachel. It was clear the game wasn't going to stop until it did.

As Noah fixated on the green bottle in the center of the room, He felt Rachel squeeze his arm tightly.

“This is so exciting! I'm so happy I’m getting a chance to do this,” Rachel whispered into Noah’s ear. Noah could smell the alcohol on her breath, but her smile was innocent and genuine. She was having the time of her life.

"I'm so glad babe," Noah replied.

"Are you having a good time?" She asked. Noah smiled gently. It took everything inside him not to bolt out of that room with Rachel in hand.

"I am having a good time," Noah said softly. Rachel smiled and bit her lip.

"Good! I'm so we're stepping out of our comfort zone!' Rachel said.

"You two should be proud," Jack said. Noah and Rachel looked over and saw his hand resting on the bottle. "You two ready to play?"

Rachel looked up at Noah. As always, her eyes and her love gave him peace.

"Yeah," He said. "We're ready."

“Ok, round seven. My turn at the wheel!” Jack said.

“Fuck that! You just went loverboy,” Ethan shot back, nudging the bottle out of his hands while looking at Rachel. “Everyone’s still clear on the rules, right? Whatever the bottle spinner says goes, if I say kiss we kiss…” He paused a moment and looked at Rachel, “And if I say you have to take your shirt off…”

“No, come on,” Noah spoke before he thought, which made the group hollar in laughter.

“Someone's making Noah jealous! Afraid it’ll land on Rachel and we’ll get an eyeful of those tits huh?” Jack said. The group continued to laugh, save for Noah and Luke. Noah glanced at Rachel, surprised to find her blushing and laughing quietly with them.

“You can’t fucking force people to do shit like that, it’s fucked up…” Luke said plainly, giving Noah a nod.

“I never fucking said she’d be forced to do anything! If it lands on her, she can either do what I say or she can take a shot.” Ethan replied. Luke gave him a smirk as he bit one of his nails.

"What if she wants to do neither?" Luke countered. Mike let out a groan.

"Bro shut the FUCK up dude, fucking philosophizing or some… some shit…" Mike grabbed a handle of vodka, but Jack promptly stayed his hand.

"Let's slow it down, Mike."

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Bro, chill. Obviously, it's just a game. No one's going to do anything they don't want to do, right Rachel?"

Rachel adjusted into a cross-legged position as she bounced excitedly.

"Of course! And I know you guys would never bully me into anything, right?" She said. All three immediately erupted in a chorus together.

"No, never!"

"Bro what?! NO!"

"W-what the fuck is happening?"

“All the same," Luke interjected, "Don't forget there are four guys in this circle. Better not ask for anything too crazy, or you might end up butt fucking your bro.” Luke’s words were cool and collected, the joke landed perfectly. Everyone, including Noah, began to laugh.

Luke was right, the odds weren’t in their favor. Seven sat in the circle. Four guys and three girls. Noah’s objective was simple, get Rachel out of the game before the bottle landed on her. It would be easier said than done, but if he could just…

"So…. are you in?" Ethan asked Rachel.

“I’ll do it!” Rachel shot out, causing all eyes to turn on her.

“Do… what?” Ethan asked. Rachel smirked, dimples appearing on her rosy cheeks as she raised a wobbling finger.

“If it lands on me, I’ll fucking take my shirt off. But you gotta promise that no matter who it lands on, you’re taking your pants off.” Rachel’s words were slurred, Noah placed a hand on her shoulder.

"Hey, Rachel, maybe we should…" Noah was cut short by the sound of a bottle spinning.

“It's a fucking deal!” Ethan said. The circle went silent. Music bled through the bedroom door from the living room. It pulsed through Noah’s body as he watched the bottle begin to slow.

It couldn’t land on her, the odds weren’t in their favor… it couldn’t.

The bottle slowed, then stopped right in front of Rachel. Jack, Ethan, and Mike looked at Rachel with pleading disbelief.

“Jesus fuck bro…” Mike said, and while it might not have been the most graceful way of expressing the shock of the group, he was right.

Jesus fuck.

“Rachel?” Noah said weakly. She looked at him, then back at the group. Her bright smile never left her blushing face. Noah couldn’t help but smile back. She was simply having fun. Drunk, innocent fun, and seeing her happy like this made him happy too. He had to let her live, they both had to live.

“So like, are you gonna do it?” Ethan asked. Rachel shrugged her shoulders.

“I don’t know, you gonna pull your pants down?” She replied, Mel and Kate snickered as they glanced at Ethan. He smirked and stood up slowly.

“Shit, if you wanted to see my dick, you could just say so.” Ethan slid off his grey joggers and let them drop to the floor. Noah’s went wide, Ethan wasn't wearing any underwear. His dick was on full display. Even flaccid, Ethan’s cock was larger than anything Noah had ever seen. He immediately turned his eyes, blushing as he heard the other guys begin to laugh.

“Jesus… a little more warning next time,” Luke said blandly.

“Ethan you're such… a fucking dumbass…” Mike shouted between laughs. Noah felt his heart racing, he looked over to Rachel out of instinct, his heart freezing in place when he saw her staring straight at Ethan's cock.

Her mouth hung open as her eyes went wide. She shook her head in disbelief before covering her mouth. Then, she looked at Noah with the widest smile he'd ever seen.

"I can't believe he fucking did it!" She shouted. Rachel turned back to Ethan and bit her lip. Noah heard Ethan laugh.

“You fucking like that, huh?” He asked.

“Holy shit, Ethan! Are you fucking getting hard?!” Mel shouted, screaming before erupting into high-pitched laughter with Kate.

“Come on man, we don’t want to be part of your fucking performance kink,” Luke said.

“She fucking wanted me to take my pants down!” Ethan replied.

“Congratulations, now put your pants back on,” Luke said.

“No, not until she holds up her end of the fucking bargain.” Ethan pointed at Rachel, who still stared at his growing cock with wide eyes.

"It gets bigger than that?!" She said, laughing as she looked at Jack with disbelief.

"Oh, it gets bigger." Ethan placed his hands on his hips and thrust forward proudly. The group recoiled in response.

"We don't need to see HOW big my dude!" Jack said through tears of laughter.

Rachel was shocked, Noah could see it on her face. Nothing in Herferd could have prepared her for guys like these. They were attractive, rich, confident, and most importantly, experienced.

“We’re waiting,” Mike said, “Don’t be a pussy, Rachel.”

"Oh my god, rude!" Rachel shot back. Luke nodded in agreement.

"Fuckin… sorry… uh... don't bitch out?" Mike said. Luke shook his had.

"Mike, just stop while you're ahead."

Noah didn’t dare look in Ethan’s direction, it was embarrassing enough knowing that Rachel was still staring at the largest cock she had probably ever seen, but having to sit next to her while it was happening was the pinnacle of shame.

A familiar feeling of powerlessness found him. Within it, a certain level of peace. Whether Noah liked it or not, he didn't hate what was happening. He wanted to run from it, he wanted it to be over, and yet it was right where he wanted to be.

“Fine, a deal's a deal, right?” Rachel slipped the straps of her dress off her shoulders and slowly pulled it down, revealing her perfectly shaped breasts in a black laced bra. The three looked at each other, then back at Rachel. Triumph spilled over their faces.

“Damn Rachel, you’ve got the best fucking rack I’ve seen,” Mike muttered. Noah grimaced at the comment, glancing at the three to see how much they were ogling his girlfriend.

They were getting a piece of her at that moment. It was just like Allison. Noah felt himself getting hard, heat and anguish flashed through his body as his dick throbbed.

“You need to go topless though!” Ethan said. His massive cock throbbing in excitement. Rachel laughed as she bashfully covered her chest with her arms.

“That wasn’t the deal! You just said I had to take my shirt off.”

“What the fuck? Are you serious? My dick is fucking out!” Ethan pointed at his cock, which made Rachel laugh even more.

“No one said you needed to show your dick Ethan! That’s on you. Who doesn't wear underwear?!” Rachel looked over at the other girls, who happily laughed with her. It was clear they were all thoroughly entertained. In fact, everyone in the room seemed entertained, even Luke.

Noah wasn't sure how to feel, the warmth and excitement of the group was fun. But the overwhelming tightness in his chest drug him down, the slowly growing bulge in his pants made him shake his head with shame.

Jack placed his hand on the bottle and looked at Rachel.

“Whoever the bottle lands on next has to go topless. Completely topless,” He said. Rachel leaned forward, her cleavage popping out of her bra. Noah felt his heart racing, things had already gone way farther than he was comfortable with. He reached out and placed a hand on Rachel’s shoulder.

“Rachel, maybe we should…”

“Fine, but regardless of who it lands on, you will have to go full nude!” Rachel shot back. Jesus, she was still treating it like a game. How could she not see what was happening? Noah looked helplessly around the room.

“That’s not good enough, these fuck faces love getting naked,” Luke said, catching Noah’s eye as he spoke. “Not only will you have to go full nude, you’ll need to compare dick sizes with Ethan.” Rachel let out a gleeful laugh.

“Yes! AND compare dick sizes with Ethan.” Rachel looked at Jack, who in turn looked at Ethan with a raised eyebrow.

“Come on man…” Ethan spoke under his breath, giving Jack a pleading look.

"I don't know man it's… it's kinda."

"Come ON bro…" Ethan begged.

It was clear their intentions were all the same. This entire spin-the-bottle game, their entire plot, was to see as much of Rachel as they could get. Noah had hoped that Logan’s extra dare would stave off Jack. But it was a meager hope.

“Fuck, fine! We’ll compare dick sizes…” Jack said, putting his hand back on the bottle and looking up at Rachel. "Are you ready?"

"So ready," Rachel replied

The bottle spun. Twirling in the center of the room as Noah watched helplessly.

Chapter 3 - Best of Friends 3 - Just Do It

The bottle spun, grinding against the wooden floor as the group watched silently. Noah felt his heart racing.

It had already landed on Rachel once, what were the odds it could happen again? It wouldn’t, it would land on someone else and this stupid game would end. Noah would laugh with Rachel, leaving before these three could come up with any more plans to see her naked.

The bottle slowed. Noah felt his heartbeat in his ears.

The bottle stopped right in front of Rachel.

“No fucking WAY bro! Let’s go!!!” Mike shot up from the ground while Ethan and Jack fist-bumped each other. Their gambit had paid off. Noah looked at Rachel in disbelief. She stared at the bottle, appearing just as stunned as he was. Noah wanted to say something, but it felt as though his mouth was sewn shut.

There was no way she’d do it. Absolutely no way she was going to show these guys her tits. It would undo everything they had built together, it would completely change their friend group. Rachel had to see that, she just had to.

“Well… a deal’s a deal…” Jack stood up and walked next to Ethan before promptly dropping his pants. The two glanced at each other awkwardly before Ethan took two steps away.

“You don't need to stand so close bro,"

“Do you want to see Rachel’s tits or not man?” Jack stepped closer, causing Rachel to shake her head and look away in embarrassment. Her face was beat red, her smile never dimming. Noah glanced at the two naked men. Unlike Ethan, Jack was still soft. Even so, it was clear that Ethan was the larger of the two, despite Jack’s noticeably above-average size. Noah felt a rush of anger wash over his body.

In every way, these two outclassed Noah, and both wanted as much of Rachel as they could get. What was worse, Rachel didn't seem to hate what was happening. Certainly, her curiosity was innocent, but she was interested all the same.

“So… are you going to do it?” Ethan asked. Rachel stared at them both with wide eyes as her fingers trailed over her lips. The room was quiet, and that quiet was slowly filling with the sexual tension between these three. Noah's hands shook as he cleared his throat.

“Rachel… seriously, you don’t have to do this.” He spoke firmly, happy to see Rachel glance at him with a welcoming smile.

“Come on Rachel! I literally just compared dicks for you. A deal is a deal,” Jack said. Ethan nodded in agreement.

“It’s true, we've both put ourselves on the line here Rachel, don't leave us hanging out to dry,” Ethan said, his cock pulsing as he shifted his weight. Rachel didn’t acknowledge them, she didn't even look at them. Her eyes remained fixed on Noah.

“This is fucking crazy!” She said to him. She blinked slowly as she pushed a few loose strands of hair past her rosy cheeks.

“Yeah, I know. Which is why you don’t have to do this,” Noah replied.

“It’s not fucking crazy, it's college life bro! We’re just having fun,” Mike chimed in. Noah gritted his teeth, these three were like vultures. But so far, it seemed like he was the only one being bothered by what was going on. Even Luke and the other girls watched in amusement.

Noah had to play it cool, the last thing he wanted was to drive Rachel away. It couldn't end like it had with Allison, things had to be different.

"What do you think?" Rachel asked, leaning forward and letting her nose touch Noah's. He could smell the alcohol on her breath. "You think I should show them?"

Noah stared into Rachel's eyes. He was speechless. He didn't know how to take the question. If Rachel was genuinely asking for his opinion, then the answer was obviously no.

At least, his gut reaction was no… but his throbbing cock seemed to be telling a different story.

"Yeah Noah," Jack said. "You think she should show us her tits?"

"I think she should, it's only fair after all," Ethan added. Rachel glanced their way and bit her lip.

"I've never gotten to do something this crazy before, should I make them jealous?" Rachel spoke softly, her innocent tone seemingly out of place for such a taboo question. It was clear that this was just still fun and games for Rachel. She didn't care about them, she only cared about Noah. That's why she was asking, that's why she was so entertained. She would never do anything without asking him. Noah let out a deep breath. Rachel wasn't anything like Allison, because Rachel actually cared about him.

That was enough to put Noah's mind at ease.

"Totally your call babe." Noah felt his cock pulse at those words. This could actually happen, Rachel was on the verge of showing the group something only Noah could have, and it was a huge turn-on. Rachel stared at Noah a moment longer, tapping her fingers against her thigh before sighing and shrugging.

"You know what? Fuck it…" She stood up and unclasped her bra with one tug and let it fall to the floor.

The room went silent. Everyone was staring at Rachel, even Luke. Jack's once-soft cock quickly began to swell. Rachel stood, resting her weight on one leg, accentuating the curves of her hips and legs. Something about her being half undressed made her round, perky breasts pop more than normal. She flipped her hair, giving an embarrassed smile as the room took her in.

Noah knew that Rachel was attractive, he knew that she was more attractive than any other girl in their small town of Herferd. But this moment was teaching him a valuable lesson. Rachel wasn't just a pretty small-town girl. She was arguably one of the most attractive women at Godfrey.

And he was beginning to realize just how dangerous that was.

"Wow… she actually did it," Mel said blandly, glancing over at Jack's now throbbing member. "Even managed to get Jack hard… good for you." She and Kate glared at Rachel, who simply laughed as she squeezed her breasts gently.

"I did, didn't I? Does that mean you think I'm hot?" Rachel asked.

"Fuck, you are so fucking hot…" Jack said, his mouth wide open. Noah was getting nervous, no one was laughing or joking anymore.

They were eyeing Rachel hungrily. They wanted things to escalate. Mike cleared his throat and grabbed the bottle.

"So… next person the bottle lands on… has to touch my cock." Mike looked up at Rachel, as did everyone else in the room.

"Jesus…" Logan shook his head and slowly stood up, "Look, this is getting fucking weird. I think I'm done for the night." He stood and made his way to the bedroom door, glancing back at Rachel once more before opening it slightly and sliding out of the room. Luke had the right idea, Noah knew he had to get Rachel out of this situation. But he didn't, he watched as the guys waited for Rachel's response.

"Hmmmm…" Rachel looked at Mike, biting her finger as she glanced over to Noah. She bounced with excitement, and Noah's eyes fixated on her breasts. "I don't know… what do you think babe?"

Noah scoffed as any sense of safety quickly evaporated into thin air. She couldn’t be serious, she had to know that would be crossing a line.

“Noah?” Rachel asked again. He stared at her, taking in her beautifully sculpted body, becoming just as dumbfounded as every other male in that room. He cleared his throat.

“I mean, do you want to?” That wasn’t what he wanted to ask. Truthfully, he didn’t want to know the answer to that question either. Rachel let out a nervous laugh and shrugged.

“You only live once, right?” She said playfully.

“Y-yeah, you only live once,” Mike replied, seemingly shocked by the answer. In fact, the whole room seemed shocked. But none more than Mel and her friend, Kate, who made no effort to hide their contempt.

“Wait, Rachel, are you seriously thinking about touching Mike’s cock?” Mel asked. Her disgust almost as palpable as her disbelief.

“Only if it lands on me!” Rachel said, looking at the group. “There’s still seven of us in this circle! That means Mike is risking one of the guys touching it just as much as me.” The group was silent, murmuring in discomfort and sexual energy.

Rachel gave the group a confused look. “Why's everyone getting so weird? This is just a game, right? We're just having fun!”

“I mean… as fun as this is, I’m not touching anyone’s dick,” Jack said, pulling up his pants and stepping away from the circle. Mel nodded and fixed her hair.

“Yeah… I’m not up to touching Mikey’s crusty cock either, we have standards after all. Right Kate?” Mel glanced at her friend, who kept her eyes transfixed on the bottle in the center of the room.

“I mean… I’ve already touched it so…” Kate trailed off, remaining in the circle. Mel scoffed and shook her head.

“Jesus you two are sluts. Do what you want, but I think I'm all set.” She stood, adjusting her dress before walking over to the bedroom door. She threw it wide open, exposing Rachel's half-naked body to the entire party. Rachel immediately wrapped her arms around her breasts as several guys stared with wide eyes.

“Yo!! What the fuck are yall doing in there?!” Countless eyes peered into the room as phones began recording Rachel.

Rachel’s smile vanished immediately, and as she scrambled to pull her dress over her chest, Mel watched with a devilish smile.

“Congratulations Rachel, you’ve got all of them wrapped around your finger now. You’ll be the talk of the school in no time. Especially after sucking them off like that.” Mel spoke loudly, making sure enough in the party heard before fading into the crowd.

“Mel what the fuck?!” Jack said, promptly chasing after her.

Noah felt his face redden as he scrambled for Rachel’s bra. Those few seconds felt like ages, and while he didn't dare look at the crowd, Noah could hear them all the same.

“A fucking cuck session bro…”

“I knew she was a slut…”

“That didn’t take long…”

This couldn’t be happening. He was supposed to have left this kind of thing behind in Herferd. Noah glanced at Rachel, his heart sinking when he saw her glazed-over eyes. Everything began to form into a haze. He wrapped his arm around her and led her through the crowd.

“I think I want to go home…” Rachel said softly.

“Don’t worry Rachel, we’re going home.” He glanced over at Ethan, surprised to find he was still undressed.

His cock fully erect as he looked at Rachel hungrily.

“Don’t worry Rachel, you can finish sucking me off next time!" He shouted through, and the room roared with excitement.

Noah felt Rachel shrink into his arms, he grit his teeth and pushed through the countless phones pointed in their direction.

Jesus, it was just like prom night.

Chapter 4 - Best of Friends 4 - Prom Night

Noah stood alone in the boy's bathroom. He fixed his hair while checking himself in the mirror. As usual, he hated what he saw. He wore a suit that was far too big for him, in a blue color that washed out his pale skin. His hair, cut by the town barber, looked like a mix between a bowl cut and perm despite his best efforts to show the old man a picture of what he wanted on his phone.

Noah was eighteen, tonight was supposed to be the highlight of his otherwise unremarkable high school years. More importantly, this was supposed to be the night he would sleep with Allison for the first time. Noah wanted to feel confident and excited. Instead, on one of the biggest nights of his life, he felt like a joke.

And while Noah tried to downplay prom night, the truth was it had consumed his mind ever since Allison had said those fateful words.

"If you play your cards right Noah, I might let you get lucky after prom."

The idea of losing his virginity with Allison made Noah's heart leap with excitement. Allison was finally ready, he couldn't screw tonight up.

Noah stepped into the school hallway. A few students came and went from the gymnasium, while others loitered in the hall with their friends. Noah could hear the DJ still playing loud music, which meant the slow dances hadn't started yet. That was good, he could still manage to turn this night around. He would make sure his dance with Allison was one she would never forget.

Noah walked past several couples taking amongst themselves, avoiding eye contact as he made his way back over to Allison. She waited for him near the gym's entrance, staring at her phone in disinterest.

She was dark-haired and olive-skinned, with an athletic build that caught the eyes of everyone around her. It was funny, only a year ago Allison was a lot like Noah. Skinny, timid, and a social outcast. Then, over last summer break, she had bloomed into a beautiful young woman. She joined the cheerleading team and became part of the popular social circles, all the while dragging Noah along with her.

And with that newfound beauty and status, came a new Allison. One that held Noah to a higher standard, that made it clear she was uncomfortable with his looks, attitude, and nervous disposition. Things had changed, Noah knew that. But tonight, that was going to change. He was finally going to convince her he was still worthy of being her boyfriend.

Noah walked up to Allison. She looked up from her phone and inspected him closely, grimacing as her eyes trailed down his suit.

"I thought I told you to get cleaned up," She said dryly. Noah let out an uncomfortable laugh.

"Sorry, I really did try," Noah replied. Allison shook her head and laughed before offering Noah her arm.

"God, you're hopeless. Come on. We're going to miss the big dance unless we get in there."

"R-right, lead the way." Noah took her arm. Allison sighed.

"I told you, don't stutter, it makes you look like a wimp."

"Sorry..."

The two walked into the gymnasium, and as usual, the eyes of countless boys trailed over Allison. She looked back at them, smiling as she led Noah over to a table with a few open seats. He was relieved to see his good friend Brian waving them over.

"Hey guys! Over here!" Brian said enthusiastically, loosening his tie as Allison and Noah approached. As soon as Allison saw Brian, her expression lit up with excitement. She released Noah's arm and rushed over to him.

"Brian! Oh my god, you look so cute!" She opened her arms and wrapped them around Brian's neck, and he in turn wrapped his giant arms around Allison's waist, lifting her into the air. She squealed in excitement as he twirled her around.

Brian was a football player, standing over six feet tall with a body chiseled out of stone. He moved Allison around like she was a toy, making her laugh in a way Noah hadn't heard in weeks. He did his best to smile through it. Noah had to remind himself time and time again that Brian and Allison were just good friends. They had known each other well before Noah had ever met Allison, so he had no right to be upset about how close they were.

"You look beautiful tonight." Brian dropped Allison onto the ground, his eyes immediately eyeing her ample cleavage.

"Brian stooop!" Allison slapped Brain's chest. They stood close, laughing as Noah approached the table and cleared his throat.

"Noah!" Brian said with a big smile. He walked over to him and greeted him with a burly hug before taking a step back to inspect Noah. "Jesus, what's up with the suit?"

"I told my mom it was too big…" Noah replied weakly. Brian shook his head before looking at Allison.

"You approved this?" He asked her.

"Believe me, I told him to try and fix it. But as usual, he is beyond repair," Allison said with a laugh. Brian sighed deeply.

"I guess some people got it and some don't… well, if you need someone to take his place for the night, let me know." Brian smiled at Allison, and she smiled back. Their eyes locked, Noah felt his stomach churn.

"Noted," Allison said.

"I'm... I'm still here guys," Noah said weakly. His quivering voice made Brian and Allison burst into laughter.

"Relax Noah, we're kidding!" Allison always gave the softest smile after teasing him, it put Noah at ease. At least, to some degree. Brian glanced at the two for a moment, his confident smirk never leaving his face.

"Well, I mean, I was half-kidding. There's no way you can go out on that dance floor like that Noah, they'll laugh you out of here in a heartbeat." Brian said.

The DJ's loud music stopped. Slow music began to play overhead. Couples made their way to the dance floor, wrapping their arms around each other as the lights dimmed.

"Right on time," Brian looked over at the dance floor.

This was it, this was Noah's moment. He glanced at Allison, only to find she was avoiding his eye contact.

"H-hey Allison," He said.

"Yeah?" She replied. Noah pretended he couldn't hear the discomfort in her voice.

"Do... do you want to dance?" He asked her. Allison looked to Brian, who shrugged.

"Oh Noah..." Pity poured out of Allison's mouth.

"I-I've been practicing and..."

"I told you not to stutter!" Allison turned from Noah.

"I-I... I'm..." Noah couldn't get the words out, he felt sweat forming over his body. He just wanted to do this right, he needed Allison to see how great of a boyfriend he could be.

"I think Brian might have a point, Noah. Maybe it would be better if we waited for a little bit. Like until more people are on the dance floor? That way you won't stand out as much," Allison said. Noah felt his heart sink in his chest.

"Oh... yeah that... that makes sense..." He didn't know what else to say.

"It's for your own good man," Brian assured.

"Right..." Noah replied. As he spoke, two lanky seniors appeared from the crowd, waving at Brian.

"Hey! Travis, Larry!" Brian waved the two over, greeting each of them with a big hug. They were also a part of the football team, two tall athletic individuals who bled into the canvas of Herferd High's backdrop.

"Brian! See you already managed to find Allison," Travis said, fist-bumping Brian before looking at Noah. "Oh, hey man. Didn't even notice you there, nice suite by the way."

"Isn't it lovely?" Allison chimed in, resulting in the group laughing.

"This is actually kind of perfect. Allison and I were about to go dance and catch up. You two mind keeping this guy company?" Brian asked.

"Yeah... we'll keep him company," Travis said. Noah could sense the venom in his words. Not willing to face the embarrassment of what was happening, Noah kept his eyes glued to the table.

He wanted to protest, he wanted to tell them that he was going to dance with Allison first, not Brian. But before he could even manage to muster up the words, Allison and Brian were walking away. Noah could hear Allison's laughter fade into the crowd as Travis and Larry pulled two chairs close to Noah.

"Long time no see loser," Travis said. Noah didn't reply.

"Can't believe you're letting Brian get the first dance man," Larry added. "Seems like a pussy move if you ask me."

Again, Noah didn't answer. Instead, he glanced over at the dance floor and saw Allison wrapping her arms around Brian once again. She pushed her body close to his as Brian's hands slipped down her waist. They swayed gracefully, their faces moving close together as they spoke to one another. Noah could only imagine what they were saying, he could only wonder what words Brian used to make Allison laugh so genuinely. She never took her eyes off him, and even laid her head on his chest at one point as Brian enveloped her in his embrace.

That was supposed to be Noah, this was supposed to be his moment. Instead, he watched the man he wished he was whisking Allison off her feet.

He heard Larry and Travis still speaking, but their words were muffled. Noah was completely fixated on the couple, the best friends, the memory he had longed to make his own.

The music shifted once again, the DJ threw on salsa. The dance floor erupted with excited couples. Brian and Allison kept up with the fast-paced tempo, swaying with one another as their hands explored each other. Allison turned around and rubbed her ass against Brian. She moved with a sensuality Noah had never seen before. In their entire two years of dating, Allison had never touched Noah the way she was touching Brian. She thrust herself into him, and Brian happily grabbed her waist and swayed with her.

Their movements were in sync, a perfect rhythm. As if they had done this many times before. Noah felt jealously welling up in his chest. He took several breaths and tried to calm down.

They were just friends, this meant nothing. Allison said they would dance together too, she would be dancing with him soon. To his relief, a chaperone made their way over to Brian and Allison, parting them and redirecting the two to dance facing each other. Allison and Brian laughed, before promptly embracing one another and continuing to sway with the beat of the music, pulling each other close.

It was all Noah could stomach. He looked away from the dance floor, only to be met with the unpleasant smiles of Travis and Larry.

"Did you hear a word I said loser?" Travis asked.

"No," Noah said dully.

"He was too focused on his girl man," Larry said with a laugh.

"Oh yeah... look at her. She's all over Brian, huh?" Travis said.

"No she's not, they're dancing," Noah shot back.

"She dance with you like that?" Travis asked.

Noah didn't reply.

"Uh-huh, thought not."

The music stopped. The couples parted as the DJ switched over to a group dance track. Brian and Allison made their way back over to the table, Brian's arm hanging around Allison's shoulders. Noah spotted the glistening layer of sweat on Allison's forehead as she approached him.

"Hey Noah, Brian and I are going to go and get some air outside really quick. That last dance was crazy. Are you good to wait here?"

Noah felt his throat tighten as he tried to speak up.

"Well…I was kind of hoping you and I could dance?"

"Well…" Allison looked up at Brian. "I mean, that was the last big dance… so there's not anyone up there… it's just group dancing now..."

"I mean that's ok, it can just be us." Noah hated how weak he sounded, he hated even more the uncomfortable laugh Allison gave between Travis and Larry's snickers.

"Well, I don't know. I think that'd be kind of embarrassing," Allison said shortly. "Plus I'm so hot, I could use a chance to cool off."

"Y-yeah, ok." Noah slouched in his chair. "I guess... I guess I can go with you guys?"

"No, I don't want it to seem like a third-wheel thing, you know? It's better if you wait here." Allison spoke definitively, Noah knew that meant there was no room for negotiation.

"Oh… ok," Noah said quietly.

"It'll only be a second, don't pout."

"I'm not pouting, I'm totally fine."

"I'll make it up to you when I get back, ok?"

"Alright," Noah didn't bother to look at them.

"We'll be back in no time bud," Brian said. Noah didn't answer. He felt Allison place a hand on his shoulder before the two walked off, leaving Noah alone with Travis and Larry at the table. He could feel their gleeful gaze upon him, and it took everything he had to hold back the tears in his eyes.

"Bro, that was painful to watch," Travis said with a laugh.

"Ok," Noah said blandly.

"Why the fuck would you let Brian dance with her before you man? Aren't you her boyfriend?" Larry asked.

"They wanted to go first, it's no big deal," Noah said quickly, but even he didn't believe his own words. This was supposed to be their special night. This was supposed to be their time. Instead, Brian was getting Allison all to himself.

"Jesus, she's really got you simping doesn't she?" Travis asked.

"Looks like you've been fucking demoted bro... she's reserving boyfriend privileges for someone else," Larry added. Noah felt his hair stand on end.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Noah Asked. Travis and Larry glanced at each other before bursting out laughing.

"What's so funny?" Noah said. Travis pulled out a flask from his jacket and took a swig before handing it to Larry.

"You haven't picked up on it, have you?" Travis asked. Noah could feel his heart racing in his chest, he didn't want to ask the next question, but did so all the same.

"Pick up on what?"

"You know that Brian is fucking Allison, right?" Travis' words were flat, slamming into Noah like a sledgehammer. A spark of reality had just ignited a bomb Noah had been staring at for years, one he pretended was never there.

"No he's not," Noah barely managed to blurt out the words, he went numb. The smiles of the pair sunk into him like daggers.

"Yeah, he is," Travis insisted.

"He's my friend, he would never do that!" Noah felt like a child throwing a tantrum, it made him feel pathetic.

"What are you, twelve? Look, you have to know by now that Allison gets who she wants, and Brian is who she's wanted for years. The only reason Brian didn't want her was because she was too skinny and nerdy for him, but now…" Travis pretended to squeeze at a giant pair of breasts with a mocking smile. "She's grown, a lot. Allison's gotten hotter in pretty much every way. You didn't deserve her before. But now? Every guy in the school wants to fuck her. Including Brian. So, she's been fucking him behind your back the whole year." Travis said. Noah ran his fingers through his hair. He knew the words were true… but he couldn't bring himself to believe it. It had to be a bad dream.

"Dude stop, you're going to make him cry," Larry said between laughs.

"B-but… why would she do that? She could've just broken up with me…" Noah felt like he was arguing with himself rather than Travis. He could feel his world lifting around him.

"Because that's what makes it fun? Because you're too stupid to see what's going on? I don't know. Probably because Allison can do whatever she wants with you. You're a fucking pushover." Travis glanced over at Larry who had completely buried his face in his hands at this point, laughing softly at the sight of Noah's pain.

"I don't believe you," Noah replied.

"Yeah, sure you don't. You know where they are right now?" Travis asked.

"Dude…" Larry glanced through his fingers. "Stop, this is too painful."

"No, fuck this kid. It's time someone told him. Where is Allison right now, Noah?" Travis pressed the question. Noah cleared his throat.

"They had… they had to step out to get some air."

"Why didn't you go with?"

"Because… because Allison said she didn't want it to seem like a third wheel thing…" Noah felt stupid saying the words out loud. But his mind did its best to protect him, creating a shell around the truth being presented to him. He had to believe Allison, anything less would be devastating.

"Do you hear yourself right now?" Travis asked.

"I believe her, that's all that matters."

"Uh-huh, right. Well, if you're so sure, why don't you head down to the basement level and check out the boy's locker room." Travis leaned back in his chair. Noah stared at him in a complete daze.

"How… how would you know where they are?" Noah asked. Travis smirked.

"There's a lot you don't know about Allison man."

_

Noah walked down the basement steps. The sounds of the gymnasium faded into the background. It was quiet, only a few flickering lights illuminated the hallway as he silently walked toward the boys' locker room. Every step felt like he was sinking into the earth. He wanted to turn back, he wanted it not to be real. He wanted to stand in front of that bathroom door and see that no one was in there. That this was all just a big stupid trick.

But Noah's hope didn't still his heart when he saw that the locker room lights were on.

Noah heard moaning inside, followed by the dull slaps of flesh. Then he heard Allison's voice.

"Oh god, right there, oh fuck!"

Noah's vision tunneled, his body was moving on its own. He took several steps forward and peered into the bathroom.

Allison was pushed up against the blue lockers, her dress pulled up above her waist as Brian straddled her from behind, ramming himself into Allison with hard aggressive thrusts. His hands were wrapped around her waist, his pants resting at his ankles. Allison looked back at him, ecstasy pouring over her face as they locked eyes.

"Don't stop!" She said. It made Brian grit his teeth.

"Oh my god you are so fucking tight, this feels so good without a condom," Brian slammed his girthy cock deep into Allison's soaking pussy.

"Your special treat for prom baby," Allison replied, placing a hand on his chest.

"I can't believe Noah just let us walk off like that," Brian said. "The idiot didn't even try to stop us."

"Hush, he's good-natured, he means well," Allison pushed her ass into Brian, which resulted in him picking up his pace. His balls slapped into her thighs with each aggressive thrust.

"He's still a virgin right? He hasn't gotten a chance to fuck you?"

"He's still waiting for his turn, just like you asked," Allison said with a laugh.

"He still thinks you're a virgin too, right?" Brian pulled down Allison's dress, revealing her giant tits. He grabbed one with his hand and squeezed it before tugging at her nipple.

"He does, he thought tonight was going to be the night we lost our virginity together." Allison spoke through moans, rolling her head back as Brian took her without remorse.

"Too bad, I took care of that a long time ago. What a loser," Brian continued to laugh. "He won't even be the first to fuck you without a condom."

"No, I saved that for you," Allison said with a smile.

"Why do you stay with him? You should just dump his ass and be with me."

"Stoooop Brian," Allison moaned, Brian slammed her into the lockers and pushed his entire length into her pussy. Allison's legs quivered in response as her ass cheeks pressed against his stomach.

"Promise me he'll never get you fuck you like this," Brian said, pulling out his cock and slapping it against Allison's ass cheeks.

"Baby! Put it back in, please!"

"Promise me," Brian commanded. Allison bit her lip as she wiggled her ass.

"I promise. He'll never get to fuck me like this. If he's lucky, I'll let him do me missionary..."

Brian turned Allison around and slammed her back into the lockers. He lifted her leg up and slowly slid himself back into her. She kissed him deeply as he slowly pumped in and out of her.

"Say you belong to me," Brian said.

"I belong to you baby, only you get to fuck me," Allison said.

"That's what I like to hear," Brian wrapped his fingers around her neck, then continued to fuck her without mercy.

And through it all, Noah watched. This wasn't what was supposed to happen, this was supposed to be their night together. Noah couldn't even tell where he was anymore, he couldn't truly see what was in the locker room. This was the first time he had seen Allison naked, the first time he had heard the sounds of sex. The first time he'd heard a woman moan like that before.

Noah's body was moving before he could think. He stepped forward into the locker room.

"A-Allison?" He didn't know what else to say. Allison's eyes darted to Noah and widened.

"Noah! What are you doing here?!" She pushed Brian off of her, his giant cock slurping out of her pussy as she quickly began putting her dress back together.

"What… what are you…"

"This isn't what it looks like," Allison said quickly.

"B-but…"

"This isn't what it looks like!" Allison said again. Noah's whole body shook. He could feel his cock swell as he eyed the juices dripping down Allison's thighs.

"You said you were… you were going to get some air…"

"Noah, please, let's not make this more than what it is," Allison said. At those words, Brian let out a laugh.

"Noah…" He spoke with confidence, seemingly unphased by Noah's arrival. His charisma forced Noah to look at him. "How long were you watching?"

"I… what?" Noah was confused by the question. He saw Brian glance at his obvious bulge.

"How long were you watching me fuck your girlfriend?"

The question made Noah's face go beet red. Brian didn't wait for Noah to answer.

"You liked it, didn't you?" Brian asked.

'W-what?! I... I..." Noah couldn't get the words out, his hands shook at his sides. Brian stepped towards him.

"You know, I never got how a loser like you got with someone like Allison. It never made sense to me." He looked back at Allison. "I mean, don't get me wrong. As a friend, you're a great guy but… you do not have what it takes to be with someone like her. At least, that's what I thought, until just now."

"What... what's that supposed to mean?"

"You're perfect for each other, aren't you?" Brian stepped forward and stuck his hand into Noah's pocket.

"H-hey! What are you doing?!" Noah tried to push Brian's hand away, but Brian pulled out Noah's phone and pushed him into the lockers with a forceful shove.

"Relax, I'm doing you a favor. I know you're a virgin, and I know you wanted to fuck Allison tonight. But we both know that's not going to happen." Brian twirled the phone in his hand and stared at it for a moment. "Honestly, I felt kind of bad at first, you know? I mean... your girl is cheating on you. She's getting fucked by a way hotter guy... and that guy is your friend no less. But now, I genuinely think this is for the best."

Brian glanced up at Noah and smirked. "You don't actually want to fuck her. You want me to fuck her, and you want to watch, don't you?"

"T-that's not-" Noah stumbled over his words. Everything was happening so fast, he could barely make sense of what Brian was saying. "I walked in on you two, I didn't..."

"Just shut up man. Here" He shoved the phone back into Noah's hands. "You're going to film us, got it? That way, you can watch me fuck her as many times as you want."

Noah stared at his phone blankly.

"Why are you doing this?" Noah asked. Brian raised an eyebrow.

"Why? Because I can, and because she wants it... and because you're a little cuck who will let me do whatever I want to your girl."

"Brian!" Allison shouted. Brian rolled his eyes and looked at her.

"What?"

"That's enough." Allison's words wavered through the air.

"You want me to stop?" Brian asked. Allison rubbed her arm and looked to the floor. "See? This is what I'm talking about. You know what's the most fucked up thing about this Noah? I think she likes this more than you do, it's why she hasn't dumped your ass for an entire year." Brian turned away from Noah and walked over to Allison, who slowly backed into a row of lockers.

"Brian…" Allison glanced over at Noah, long enough for them to make eye contact.

"I'm going to fuck you in front of him, and then I'm going to cum inside you. Tonight was going to be the first time getting to creampie you, and Noah isn't going to screw that up."

"We can't do this," Allison shot back.

"Fine, then leave." He stepped back from Allison and looked at Noah. "Same goes for you, you don't wanna see it? You want to just imagine me fucking her? Then leave. But I know you don't want that, that's why you watched us for so long. You want to see me do what you can't." Brian's eyes darted back to Allison. "And you, if you don't want me to fuck you in front of your boyfriend, the exit is right there."

Neither of them moved.

Noah stared at the phone in his hands, still as a statue. His chest tightened as visions of Allison moaning swarmed his head.

"I'm not going to do this," Noah said softly. He heard Brian sigh.

"Look, even though you are a fucking loser, you're my friend. I'm trying to help you out. I'm going to fuck Allison regardless of what you do. I'm cumming in her tonight no matter what. So if you don't want to watch, just go. We'll wrap up here and meet you in the gym." Brian began slipping off Allison's dress.

"Brian…" Allison moaned. Her dress fell to the floor, leaving her only in her underwear.

"Leave whenever you want, I honestly don't care…" Brian shoved his hand between Allison's thighs, pushing his fingers into her slick pussy. She gasped in ecstasy, spreading her legs as Brian began to line up his throbbing shaft with her entrance.

"Good girl." Brian pushed himself back inside her, holding her leg up in the air as he began power fucking Allison with all his might. Noah couldn't stop his eyes from drifting upward, he couldn't stop himself from turning on his phone's camera. Allison looked past Brian and made eye contact with him.

Hunched over and shaking, Noah pressed the record button.

"Holy fuck!" Allison screamed. Her whole body began to shake, juices dripped onto the floor.

"That's right, just enjoy it," Brian said, grabbing Allison's other leg and hoisting her into the air. His hands slid onto her fat asscheeks, his fingers dug into her flesh as he pushed her against the lockers and fucked her without remorse.

"Oh god, Brian, oh fuck!" Allison began to quiver again, it made Brian grit his teeth and groan.

"Fuck, I'm about to cum. I'm about to fucking cum inside your girlfriend!"

Noah felt shame flood his body, the level of arousal made him sick. His cock pulsed as he held the camera steady, even zooming in to make sure he had a good angle of Brian's cock entering Allison's dripping pussy over and over. Allison watched Noah hungrily as she wrapped her legs around Brian.

"You fucking love my cock, don't you?" Brian said.

"Y-yes! Oh fuck, don't stop!" Allison's eyes remained fixed on Noah.

"Good girl, now tell him the truth. Tell him you never wanted to fuck him. Tell him you only ever wanted to me."

"I never wanted you, Noah! I always wanted Brian, oh my god!" Allison's body shook as Brian pushed his dick deep inside her. His balls began to pulse and Allison's juices poured onto the floor. Brian thrust slowly a few times, and Noah watched as his best friend filled his girlfriend.

Tears welled in his eyes. He didn't know what to think anymore, but he never stopped recording. He moved to get a better angle of Allison. She looked over at him and smiled weakly. Noah focused the camera on that face.

He let that smile sink into his mind and anchor deep into his psyche.

Then, he felt himself cum in his pants. But even as the hot sticky mess spread across his leg, he didn't stop recording.

That's when he heard an eruption of laughter behind him.

Noah turned, horrified to see Larry and Travis standing in the locker room, pulling out their phones as they stepped toward the three.

"Holy fucking shit I can't believe what I'm seeing!" Travis kept his camera camera steady on the couple. Brian dropped Allison to the floor and turned to them. Allison tried to stand, but her shaking legs made it impossible to do so.

"You even got Noah recording?! Jesus what a fucking loser," Larry said as he walked toward Allison. "Looking hot as always Allie."

"S-shut up..." Allison reached for her dress and slowly began to put it back on.

"You guys just missed the show, but don't worry, Noah got most of it. I'm sure he'll share the video if you ask nicely," Brian said.

"Are we going to get a turn this time?" Larry asked.

"You know the fucking rules, blow jobs only, that pussy is mine and mine alone." He turned back to Allison. "Isn't that right?"

"Y-yes Brian… I'm all yours." Allison said softly.

"And you're going to take care of my friends too, right?" Brian was calm, forceful, and completely in control. It was as if he had Allison under a spell.

"Of course I will. I'll do whatever you want me to do baby." Allison dropped her dress and got onto her knees.

"See what I mean Noah? Now, keep recording like a good little bitch, and watch this," Travis said, keeping his phone pointed at Allison as he walked up to her and pulled his small dick out.

Noah didn't say a word. He remained frozen, completely numb, still recording as Larry shoved his cock into Allison's willing mouth.

He kept filming as Brian and Travis laughed, as his mind drifted away, as the room went dark.

Chapter 5 - Best of Friends 5 - Damage Control

Noah sat in Rachel's living room as he watched his recording of Allison on silent, staring deep into her deep blue eyes while she was fucked relentlessly against the lockers. He had lost count of how many times he'd watched this video, and how many times he'd promised himself he'd delete it. But despite the immense amount of pain it brought him, Noah couldn't let it go.

Rachel walked through the kitchen into the living room, Noah minimized the video as he gave her a nervous wave. Rachel raised an eyebrow.

"Everything alright?" She asked him.

"Huh? Yeah! Everything is fine. Are you feeling any better today?" Noah asked. Rachel sighed and shrugged.

"I don't know, kind of? Mary texted me and said the girls have already started seeing the video pop up on their feeds." She plopped down on the couch next to Noah. He glanced nervously at his crotch, relieved to see his bulge wasn't noticeable.

"Did… did you watch the video?" He asked. Rachel nodded.

"The good news is everyone started recording after I had my dress back on, so no nudity thank god. Still, people are saying I blew Jack and his friends…"

"Because Mel couldn't keep her mouth shut," Noah tried to temper the frustration in his voice, Rachel shook her head and laughed.

"Honestly it's so childish! It reminds me of the girls back at Herferd."

"Yeah, I guess so. So you're not worried about it?" Noah watched as Rachel gazed at Godfrey's Victorian skyline through the living room window. She leaned her head on his shoulder and sighed.

"Honestly? Not really. Sure, I'm embarrassed. But nothing actually got out, this will all die down by the next time a party comes around." Rachel seemed sure in her words, Noah wished he shared her confidence.

"Yeah, you're probably right."

"But, there is something else that bothers me about all this…" Rachel said.

"Yeah?"

"I mean, I took my top off in front of four guys…"

"Yeah…"

"And you were right there."

"I know." Noah felt his stomach churning, he did his best to steady his breath and slow the trembling in his hands.

"You didn't try to stop me." Rachel paused, clearly waiting for Noah to give some kind of answer. But there was no answer to give.

"I'm not sure what to say," Noah replied softly. He felt Rachel wrap her fingers around his arm and squeeze it tightly.

"It's ok, I don't know what I'm trying to get at, so I guess we're even," Rachel said with a nervous laugh.

"Are you disappointed in me?' Noah asked. Rachel's head shot up.

"Disappointed? Why would I be disappointed? If anything, I thought you were disappointed in me." Noah could see tears welling in Rachel's eyes. "I thought once we walked out of that party, you were for sure going to break up with me."

"I would never break up with you over something like that, we both said it was ok," Noah replied. Rachel shook her head.

"No, we didn't, you tried to stop me several times. I was too drunk–"

"That's not true."

"It is though. After everything you've been through… I thought for sure–"

"Rachel." Noah moved his fingers underneath Rachel's chin and brought her eyes to his. He moved his hand gently across her soft cheeks, brushing away her tears. "You are nothing like Allison."

"You mean it?" Rachel asked softly.

"Absolutely. What happened at that party is something we both agreed to, you wanted to have some fun, and I went along with it."

"Does that mean you liked it?"

Noah paused, retracting his hand and slumping down into the couch.

"I shouldn't have, right?"

"I don't know," Rachel replied, slumping down with him. "Would… would it help to hear that I liked it? Or does that make it worse?"

Noah laughed uncomfortably.

"I think it makes it better? If I'm being honest, I liked it too."

"Oh thank god," Rachel said with a sigh of relief. "At least we are on the same page."

The two were silent for a moment, giving Noah enough time to build up the courage to ask the question most pressing in his mind.

"What did you like about it?"

Rachel adjusted a strand of her hair. "Oh god… I don't know. It was exhilarating. I never had a chance to do something like that before. I liked getting to explore myself, and... well... I liked how they looked at me…"

Noah felt the bulge in his pants begin to swell. Rachel glanced at him nervously.

"Was that bad to say? Should I stop?" She asked. Noah shook his head.

"No, keep going."

"Well, I mean, if I'm being completely honest. I liked seeing them too… I didn't really get to date around all that much in high school and…"

"And Jack's friends are built like Greek gods." Before Noah had a chance to slump into self-pity, he felt Rachel grab his hand.

"You know I love you, right? You know I love you more than anything else in the world, and I would never leave you for one of them." Rachel's words were so profoundly sincere that they passed over Noah like warm sunlight.

"I know Rachel," Noah said. "I know it with all my heart. But I also know that you're human and that what I said is true. Jack's friends are all liable to become models after college."

"I mean, you said it, not me," Rachel said.

"Jesus you are blushing so much right now," Noah laughed and tickled Rachel's side. She giggled and immediately curled into a ball.

"Oh my god stop! You're embarrassing me! Do you have any idea how shameful it is admitting this to your boyfriend?"

"Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to admit I liked watching you stare at them?" As soon as Noah said it, he felt a tension pass over them both. Their eyes locked, and Rachel bit her lip.

"Did you really like seeing me like that with other men?"

"I did…" Noah's words were timid. Rachel's fingers trailed down his legs and over his throbbing cock.

"Did it turn you on?" She asked. Noah was terrified to answer, but his trust in Rachel outweighed his fear.

"A lot, actually." The words slipped out before he had time to think about them. Rachel's hand gripped his shaft through his pants, he moaned softly.

"Holy shit, you are rock hard right now."

"It's your fault."

"Well, if it's my fault, I guess I should take care of it then, huh?" Rachel slowly unzipped Noah's pants, and he happily laid back on the couch as his member popped out of his pants.

For a small-town girl with little dating experience, Rachel knew her way around Noah's cock like no one else. She puckered her lips and kissed it gently, never losing eye contact with Noah as she slowly trailed her way up to the tip of his throbbing member.

"I think it's only fair you get a reward for letting me have some fun," Rachel said before opening her mouth and swallowing Noah whole.

The warm sensation of her mouth wrapping around his shaft washed over him like a wave. As her tongue licked the base of his cock, he gently thrust himself upward. Noah grabbed the back of Rachel's head, pumping himself into her gently as she blew him with long, deliberate bobs.

The gag reflex on her was out of this world. Rachel seamlessly buried Noah's shaft deep into her throat with each head bob, smashing her soft lips into the base of his pelvis before twisting her mouth side to side. Her painted fingernails trailed up his arms before gently grabbing the sides of his biceps. Noah moved her hair out of the way, watching hungrily as she worked him over.

Rachel slowly moved up Noah's cock while grabbing the base of his shaft, smiling as it plopped out of her mouth and slapped against his belly. The sight of that beautiful face smiling up at him was nearly enough to make Noah explode.

"Does it feel good?" She asked him.

"Very, did you want to take this to the bedroom?" He asked. Rachel responded by kissing the side of his cock.

"I want to make you feel good today, just relax for me." Rachel licked Noah's tip before slowly engulfing him once more. Her pace quickened as one of her hands trailed up his chest. Noah couldn't help but moan in ecstasy as he watched this goddess work him over like a pro. He was in absolute heaven. He still couldn't believe that someone like Rachel had decided to be with him.

He was the luckiest man alive.

Noah grit his teeth as he felt himself creeping closer to the edge, but before she was able to finish him off, there was a knock at the door. Rachel jumped off Noah, wiping her mouth as the two awkwardly stood at attention.

"Who is it?!" Rachel squeaked.

"It's Jack," Jack said from the other side of the door. Rachel stared blankly at Noah, who quickly motioned her to open the door while he folded his rock-hard dick back into his pants.

"Oh, uh… coming!" Rachel slowly made her way to the door, eyeing Noah to ensure he was fully put together before she opened it. "Just… hang on a moment. Just need to get some things in order in my house… but don't worry, the door will open very soon! I will be opening the door before you know it!" Rachel spoke far too loudly, nearly shouting by the time Noah had zipped his pants up.

"Uh… Alright," Jack replied from the other side, clearly confused. Noah gave Rachel the thumbs up, and she flung the door open wide.

"Jack!" She screamed.

"Rachel…" Jack replied smoothly, not able to hide his amused smirk. "Everything ok in here?" he asked.

"Everything is great! Just great, Noah and I were hanging out is all," Rachel said pointing to Noah, who had already made his way behind the kitchen island to hide his obvious erection.

"Hey Jack," He said meekly.

"Hanging out huh? Is that what they're calling it these days?" Jack asked. Rachel and Noah both laughed in loud, awkward unison.

"That's a good one!" Rachel screamed again, making Jack chuckle.

"Is it cool if I come in?" Jack asked.

"Of course," Rachel said, awkwardly bowing as she stepped aside for him. Jack strode into the living room, running a hand through his jet-black hair before adjusting his golden watch. He wore a linen button-down along with black dress pants, a look that complemented his dark features and chiseled jawline. Noah couldn't help but notice Rachel's eyes lingering on him, but she couldn't blame her. As always, Jack was nothing less than stunning.

"It's actually good both of you are here, I wanted to talk with you guys."

"You did?" Rachel and Noah said in unison. Jack nodded as he walked over to the couch and sat down, spreading his toned arms over its back.

"Yeap. I wanted to clear the air about what happened the other night."

"Oh, that?" Rachel scoffed before letting out a forced laugh. "That little party game? That wasn't… it was nothing… Just another day in college life right?!" Her attempts at sounding nonchalant made Noah instinctively clear his throat. Jack laughed softly.

"Well, as happy as I am to see you're unphased by it. I am not. What Ethan and Mel did was out of line, and I wanted to come and make amends," Jack said.

"Shouldn't Ethan and Mel be the ones making amends?" Noah shot back, surprised to hear himself say it. Jack sighed and nodded slowly.

"Well, you're right about that one. I tried to talk to Mel about it, but as usual, she's being difficult. Ethan on the other hand is really broken up about it. That's actually why I came by, the guys wanted to offer their apology and I'm their messenger."

"Really?" Rachel said, sounding more surprised than suspicious.

"Yeah, really. We like you guys, the last thing we wanted were videos and rumors passing around the campus because of us. So, as a peace offering, we wanted to invite you out to come out to dinner with us and hang."

"Dinner… and hang?" Noah asked, sounding more suspicious than surprised.

"Yeah, no parties, no assholes with phones. Just a group of close friends getting dinner in the city before heading back to my parent's loft. They've left it to me for the semester, so we were planning on chilling there. You're both welcome, of course."

Rachel and Noah looked at each other with surprise. Noah cleared his throat as he shifted in his chair uncomfortably.

"And who exactly would be there?" Noah asked cautiously.

"The usual suspects. Ethan, of course, and the rest of the guys. There'll be a few new faces you might not know, but they're all good people from campus." Jack said.

"When would this be happening?" Rachel asked. Jack gave her a gentle smile.

"Tonight, actually. Sorry for the late notice, but that's life at Godfrey. Everyone's moving a mile a minute. So, what do you two say?"

"Noah? What do you think?" Rachel turned to Noah. He couldn't tell if she was nervous, excited, or both. But he knew the last thing he wanted was to be around that group again.

Still, Jack's kindness was hard to turn away from, and Noah didn't want to be the person who kept Rachel caged. He did his best to breathe deeply and remind himself that this wasn't Herferd. He wanted to believe that people could be good, that there wasn't always someone trying to stab him in the back.

Just like Rachel, he wanted to be free from his past life too, and it started with trusting in something.

"I mean, we didn't have anything else going on. I guess I don't see why not?" Noah answered. Rachel's eyes brightened with excitement.

"Wait, really?! You want to go?"

"Yeah, we were talking about trying to get into the city, there really isn't a better time," Noah answered.

"Perfect!" Jack clapped his hands together and stood up from the couch. "We better get going then, I got a reservation at Dorsia and it's about an hour's drive from here so we don't have a ton of time. You two ready to get going?"

"Wait, right now?! I'm not even dressed, how long do we have?" Rachel sprung into action, rushing over to the bedroom and rifling through her clothing piles.

"Like, maybe twenty minutes before we're late and give up the table," Jack called out playfully.

"Ok hang on! I wasn't ready!" Rachel began rummaging through the clothes on her bed, pulling off her shirt and exposing her backside to Jack and Noah. It made Noah's cheeks burn when Jack didn't look away.

"I keep forgetting that I've seen you topless, Rachel," Jack said. Rachel glanced over her shoulder at him and blushed.

"Hey, that was a one-time deal! No peaking." Rachel scooted out of view as Jack chucked to himself and looked at Noah.

"What about you my man, you want to change to?" He asked. Noah looked down at his very plain outfit, quickly putting together that they weren't going to be going to a small-town diner, and a hoodie wouldn't cut it.

"I… didn't bring a change of clothes," He said softly.

"Oh no worries, I always keep some spare things in the trunk of my car, we'll get you sorted. Might be a little baggy but better than nothing."

"Right…"

Rachel burst out of the bedroom wearing an expensive white halter dress along with her gold jewelry. Noah's eyes locked in on her, trailing down Rachel's neckline to her exposed cleavage as his heart leaped from his chest.

"I don't have any time to do my makeup, do you think I look alright?" She asked Noah, doing a spin for him.

"I can assure you, you are more than alright," Jack replied. Rachel gave him a stink eye before stepping toward Noah.

"I didn't ask you, I asked Noah," She said, making Noah's heart race even more.

God, he loved this woman.

"Jack is right, you look amazing," Noah said, walking over to her side. She smiled as she wrapped her arms around his waist.

"Then we are ready to go! We'll need to stop by Noah's place to get him some clothes though."

"No need, I already got that covered," Jack said quickly. "Come on love birds, we got placed to be!"

The three exited the apartment, and while Noah was in an incredibly upbeat mood, it never occurred to him to ask why Jack had shown up to Rachel's place unannounced, or what he might have said differently if Noah hadn't been there.

Chapter 6 - Best of Friends 6 - Party Night

Noah sat nervously in the back of Jack's car, drowning in the spare suite he had loaned him. Noah knew Jack was tall and built, but he had no idea of the size difference between them until now. Noah tugged at his baggy jacket, taking in the fine interior of Jack's car. Sleek cream leather lining decorated the car's seats, accented by black details along its sides. The car's roof was glass, allowing Noah a full view of the skyline above. It rode silent, the only sound being the jazz playlist Jack had turned on in the background.

Rachel sat in the front seat, her delicate form glowing in her white halter dress. Noah stared at her with a sense of admiration and respect. She looked right at home amongst the elegance surrounding her. It became clear to Noah that, unlike him, Rachel never belonged in a small town. She was always meant for something more.

None of that mattered to Rachel, however. She smiled in the same innocent manner she had since high school, looking back at Noah gleefully as they entered the heart of Delborn City. Jack's wealth and lifestyle seemed to have no effect on her, Rachel was just happy to be experiencing life with Noah.

But it wasn't due to Jack's lack of trying. It frustrated Noah that he had offered Rachel the front seat. But in her usual fashion, Rachel countered by saying.

"Only if Noah is ok with it."

And because of that, Noah was.

"So, what do you two think of the city so far?" Jack asked, turning off a ramp into the city's center. Glowing amber lights flowed overhead, illuminating the ornate architecture of old and new buildings. Young individuals and students sprawled the busy streets, and Jack drove through it all without struggle.

"It's amazing!" Rachel said energetically. She pressed her face against the car window like a child. "It's more beautiful than I realized!"

"Well, we are in the downtown district. Some parts are a lot rougher than this."

"Do you guys come here often?" She asked. Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes and no. Honestly, I wish Godfrey had a city campus, every time I come downtown it feels like I'm not here enough."

"Honestly, now seeing it? I totally get it. I thought Godfrey was big…"

"But it's nothing compared to the city," Jack stopped at a red light, looking over at Rachel. The two caught each other's gaze. Electricity flowed between them while Noah watched silently.

"And you fit the city perfectly," Jack said softly. Rachel blushed and fixed her hair.

"I definitely don't feel that way." She glanced back out her window. An awkward silence hung in the air before Rachel jumped in her seat. "Oh my god! Noah look!"

"Huh, what?" Noah said, looking out his window.

"It's that retro-tech store you were telling me about! Remember the one from your reels you shared with me?" Rachel pointed at a large storefront with a Neon sign with the glowing words 'Tech Noire.' Noah couldn't help but let out an excited laugh.

"Holy shit, there it is!"

"We have to go Noah! You've always wanted to go!" Rachel said.

"I'd stop off if I could, but we'll be late, unfortunately," Jack said between their banter.

"Oh don't worry about it, that's a Noah and me date. You'd be an awkward third wheel." Rachel said with a laugh. Jake smirked and shook his head.

"Noted." Jack cut between the streets, bringing the three to the front of an ornately sculpted building. A line of expensive cars rested in front of them, valets dressed in black tuxedos servicing each car with smooth efficiency.

"Oh, did we take a wrong turn? Rachel asked. Jack glanced over at her with a smile.

"Nope, this is it. Dorsia's." He said cooly.

"THIS is Dorsia's?" Rachel said in shock, she looked back at Noah, giving a him wide-eyed expression that caused him to laugh.

"It's a tough place to get into. Hopefully, they won't boot us out for being late." Jack replied.

"Uh, are you sure Noah and I are dressed enough for this?" Rachel asked as she began to quickly adjust her dress.

"She's right, I feel out of place in this baggy suite," Noah added. Jack glanced back at Noah through the rearview mirror.

"What the hell are you guys talking about? You look fine!"

"I don't feel fine." Rachel and Noah said in unison. A set of valets came to Jack and Rachel's door. As they opened them, Jack adjusted his suit and smiled at them both.

"Just follow my lead and you'll be fine."

The doors opened, Jack stepped out while the other valet offered his gloved hand to Rachel.

"Madam," He said. Rachel touched her chest with her fingers and laughed gently.

"Oh my, so fancy!" She took the valet's hand and stepped out of the car, grasping onto her gold clutch tightly as Jack walked over to her side. The valet on the driver's side entered the car, adjusting the back mirror and seeing Noah slumped in the back.

"Will you be exiting sir?" He asked.

"Huh oh uh… yeah just give me a second here…" Noah fumbled over his door, struggling against the lock several times, failing to open it.

"The door is locked, sir." The valet said.

"It… it is?" Noah asked.

"Yes sir."

"Right," Noah fumbled with the door a little while longer, failing to find a way to unlock it as his face flushed red. After a few more moments of struggle, the valet cleared his throat. Noah looked at him through the rearview mirror.

"Could you… could you open it for me?" Noah asked bashfully. The valet's eyes never left Noah as he clicked the unlock button. Noah gave him a polite nod.

"Thanks."

"Please exit sir," The valet replied. Noah nodded and promptly stepped out of the car.

As his heart raced, Noah saw Jack leading Rachel through the large double entry doors with his arm wrapped around hers. Noah tried to catch up with them, fumbling over his baggy dress pants with every awkward step. The doors closed in his face, Noah lost his footing, resulting in him slamming into the glass and leaving an imprint of his face. A service worker glared at Noah with disdain before opening the door for him.

"T-thanks," Noah said weakly.

He had never felt more out of place in his entire life.

Noah fumbled into Dorsia's. A dimly lit space with a high-end industrial aesthetic. Chandeliers hung over wooden tables and black leather chairs, and every dinner guest was more well-dressed than the last. Several couples passed Noah by, giving him a look of confusion as they did so.

God, he really didn't belong here, Noah began to feel his anxiety welling up in his chest. Rachel had left him for Jack. She had taken his arm and happily walked into a better life without a second thought. Noah clenched his hands as he aimlessly wandered the receiving lobby.

But before his thoughts took him to a dark place, he saw Rachel standing in front of the service desk, both hands resting on her clutch as she looked through the crowds…

For him.

And as soon as she spotted Noah, Rachel's eyes lit up as a smile stretched over her face. She waved at Noah with playful articulation of her fingers before walking over to him. Soft piano music played in the background. Rachel's body swayed gently under warm overhead lights. Her smile glowed as she reached for Noah and embraced him. His arms wrapped around her in return. He squeezed her tightly as her head buried into his chest.

"I found you," She said gently.

"You waited for me," Noah said.

"Of course I did," Rachel replied. She looked up into his eyes, leaning forward to kiss him on the lips gently. "I'm sorry I left you behind, I thought you were right behind us."

"Yeah well, Jack seemed more focused on you than me," Noah said, doing his best to mask his resentment.

"Oh, I'm sure he didn't mean anything by it." Rachel said gently. She stepped to his side and rubbed his back with her fingernails. "Remember, they're our friends."

"Right…" Noah looked around the dining area, taking in the countless high-class folks surrounding them. "God, I look like a clown."

"Oh Noah stop! You look very handsome!" Rachel said with a laugh.

"What are you talking about, I'm drowning in this thing!" Noah said, matching Rachel's upbeat attitude. She always had a way of calming him, it was as if the world melted away, and it was them. Only them.

"Well, what do you expect when you put something together last minute?" Rachel wrapped her arm under Noah's. "Next time we come here, we'll make sure to get you a suit that fits better. But for now, let's be grateful Jack had a suit you could borrow. We wouldn't have gotten in otherwise."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Noah admitted. Rachel squeezed his arm gently.

"We can feel out of place together, ok?" Rachel looked up at Noah, smiling as their eyes met.

"Deal. Now let's go find these guys." Noah said.

"They're this way, come on," Rachel took Noah's hand and led him to a long, very full dinner table.

Jack's interpretation of a few friends may have been slightly different to what Noah was accustomed to. He counted over a dozen dinner guests, all laughing and surrounding the four stars of Godfrey. Noah took a deep breath and tried to relax the tension in his shoulders.

Sure, there were a lot of guests. But Noah reminded himself it wouldn't be so bad if they sat at the end of the table. Hopefully, by keeping themselves hidden, they could get through this night without another incident.

"Hey, love birds!" Jack waved at Noah and Rachel, pointing to a pair of empty seats directly across from the four. "We saved you some seats!"

Noah gave Rachel a pleading glance. She squeezed his arm and leaned into his ear.

"It'll be fine." She whispered. Noah sighed and nodded, sitting alongside Rachel in the center of the table.

The four stared at them with gleeful smiles. For a moment, the conversations around the table died at the sight of Rachel. It was a response Noah had become accustomed to. As the silence began to creep over the table, Ethan spoke.

"You're looking good tonight Rachel, glad you could make it," He glanced at Noah, giving him a polite nod. "Oh, and nice suite bro. Swear I've seen it before."

"It's my spare, he didn't have time to head home to change," Jack interjected. Ethan snapped his fingers.

"Yes, now I see it! I knew I'd seen that one before. Gotta admit, it's a little big for you though."

"I'm well aware," Noah said dully. Mike, already three shots deep leaned over the table and laughed loudly at nothing in particular.

"This motherfucker looks like… uh… you know… like uh…" Mike tripped over his words while Jack and Luke looked at him in dismay.

"Mike, if you're going to open your mouth, make sure you've got something ready to say," Luke said cooly, he turned his attention to Noah.

"Despite it being a little large, the suite looks good on you man."

"T-thanks," Noah said, feeling a smile forming on his face.

"Luke's right, you pull it off bud. We'll have to get you into my tailor at some point and get you one of your own." Jack added with a smile.

"Yeah, that could be nice," Noah said, rubbing the back of his neck uncomfortably. His eyes scanned over the four. While Ethan's attention was glued to Rachel's cleavage, Jack gave him a hard kick from under the table, making Ethan jump in the air slightly.

"Fuck, dude what?!" Ethan said.

"Don't you have something you want to say?" Jack asked nodding toward Noah and Rachel.

"I do? Oh… right yeah…" Ethan looked back at the two and smirked. "Hey guys, I'm sorry for the way things went down the other night, it wasn't my intention to give people the wrong idea."

"You sure about that? Screaming I had sucked your dick across the party seemed pretty intentional," Rachel countered. Her words were sharp, making Ethan coil back and laugh uncomfortably.

"Seriously, I know the comment I made when you guys were leaving was… well it was bad."

"Telling everyone I'd finish blowing you is a little more than bad, some might call that sexual harassment," Rachel said curtly. Noah looked at her with some surprise.

"That's not what I said," Ethan countered quickly

"It is, in fact, what you said," Luke added, taking a slow drink from his beer.

"Well, it's not what I meant! It came out wrong, alright?" Ethan looked at Rachel, a genuine look of dismay rolling over his face. For once, he actually looked like he might be remorseful.

Might being the keyword. Rachel sighed and shook her head.

"I don't know… Noah, what do you think?" Rachel placed her hand on Noah's arm, making him blush instantly. He cleared his throat and shrugged.

"I… I mean he seems sorry. I think it's fine." Noah's words were tempered. Truthfully, a part of him wanted to tell this entire group to fuck off, to leave him and Rachel alone. But he didn't want to live in isolation anymore, and he certainly didn't want to drag Rachel down with him. He wanted friends, he wanted a change.

"See! He's cool with it, everyone is cool here!" Ethan said before looking at Rachel. "We're cool, right?"

Rachel stared at him playfully, their eyes locking as she drummed her fingers against the table.

"Fine, I accept your apology, for now. But you owe both Noah and me free drinks." Rachel demanded.

"Deal, I'll buy you guys a round."

"No, not a round. You will buy us drinks," Rachel said.

"Drinks?"

"Yes, drinks."

"How many?"

"Until I'm drunk," Rachel said. Ethan smirked.

"Till you're drunk, got it," Ethan offered his hand to Rachel, and she reached over the table and shook it. "Let's have some fun."

–

The night began to spin together for Noah. After several shots and a dinner that was way more expensive than Noah wanted to think about, the group broke off and headed to Jack's loft. Like everything else that night, Noah found himself in a world of wealth he'd seen on television screens. The lobby alone was breathtaking, lined with clean cuts of marble and antique furniture, Noah found himself doing double takes more than once.

Rachel appeared to share his astonishment, regularly looking at him with humorously wide eyes as the two made their way past the doormen and into the lobby's golden elevator with the rest of Jack's guests.

When the elevator doors opened to Jack's penthouse loft, the entire group gasped.

"Make yourselves comfortable. There's more drinks in the fridge," Jack said cooly. The group fanned out, many of which made their way over to the oversized white couches in the loft's massive living room. As Rachel and Noah sat at the corner of a couch, she leaned into his ear.

"I thought I knew what rich was, but this is something else!" She whispered. Noah nodded slowly.

"I seriously feel like I don't belong here," Noah whispered back.

"I know exactly what you mean, how long before they find us out do you think?" Rachel and Noah laughed in unison, but before he could answer her, a very drunk Ethan sat on the fur carpet in front of them with two beers in hand.

"And what are you two whispering about over here?" Ethan asked, handing Rachel one of the beers. Noah grimaced as she took it from him.

"Nothing that involves you," Rachel said shortly. Mike and Jack followed closely behind, wasting no time surrounding Rachel. Noah couldn't help but notice their eyes trail up and down her body, making it clear they were only interested in one thing.

Rachel.

Noah's incredibly beautiful, increasingly drunk girlfriend sitting next to him. Rachel's cleavage tastefully poured out of her dress, appearing ready to out at a moment's notice.

"So, I've got a question for you two." Ethan's words were slurred.

"Here we go…" Jack said under his breath, scooting in closer to hear.

Noah sighed.

"What's the question?" He asked.

"How the hell did you two meet?" Ethan said. Rachel lit up at the question, grabbing Noah's hand while smiling brightly.

"Awe! You guys are curious how we met?!" Rachel asked.

"I mean, yeah. How you two ended up becoming a thing has me very… very curious," Ethan said. Rachel might have not picked up on the back-handed comment, but Noah did. Though he couldn't blame Ethan for being confused. Rachel was a league in her own, even Jack's group of friends would've had a hard time finding someone like her.

"Well, it was prom night, and both Noah and I weren't at prom," Rachel's eyes never left Noah as she spoke.

"Damn, so you two snuck off, huh?" Ethan said with a smirk. Rachel laughed warmly and shook her head.

"No, we didn't sneak off! I actually wasn't allowed to go to prom, so I decided to go to a little ice cream shop instead. Looking back it was pretty pathetic, but it was the closest I could get to a celebration. And guess who I found sitting in that ice cream shop alone?" Rachel gently rubbed Noah's shoulder, causing his cheeks to flush red.

"It was pretty weird seeing you there, I honestly was shocked you didn't have a date that night," Noah said.

"I'm shocked too, Noah I could get, but you? How the hell didn't you have a date already?" Ethan asked.

"If you MUST know, I didn't have a date because I had recently broken up with my boyfriend. Plus, like I said, I wasn't allowed to go in the first place. So, I decided to do something by myself. Noah was the big surprise though, I couldn't believe he hadn't stayed at prom with his girlfriend."

Ethan and Jack both reeled back in shock.

"Wait wait, you're telling me that Noah had a girlfriend at the time, and you didn't?!" Ethan said.

"Why is that so shocking?" Rachel said with a laugh.

"Well, I mean... I guess it isn't..." Ethan gave Noah an apologetic look before continuing. "So wait, you had a date that night then Noah?"

Noah felt his heart race as memories of Allison being slammed against the lockers poured back into his mind.

"Yeah... I did," He said.

"So why wasn't she with you at the ice cream shop?"

"... we broke up that night," Noah answered softly. Rachel gave his hand a gentle squeeze.

"Fuck dude, sorry to hear that," Ethan said awkwardly.

"Yeah..." Noah's mind swam with the moans of Allison.

"But it brought us together," Rachel said gently. Noah smiled and nodded.

"Yeah, I guess that's true." He said.

"So what did you do to win her over? How did you approach her?" Ethan asked.

"I… I didn't do anything, she approached me." Noah replied. Ethan's mouth dropped, and the rest of the group seemed equally shocked.

"Wait, she made a move on you?" Ethan asked.

"Yeah," Noah replied.

"Jesus…" Ethan slumped back against the coffee table and took a swig of his beer. "So it was love at first sight then?"

"For me it was," Rachel said bashfully. "Though, I can't speak for Noah."

"Oh, it definitely was," Noah replied immediately. The group erupted in laughter.

"Yeah no shit," Jack said.

"Man, I got to be fucking honest, that is not how I expected that story to go, but then again, I don't know what I expected," Ethan admitted. He stared at the couple for a while before shaking his head. "You know, you two really are cute together. You're also a lot of fun, I'm seriously sorry I fucked up the other night. I took shit too far, let my dick get the better of me." Ethan sounded profoundly sincere, despite his inebriated state.

"It's alright. Water under the bridge at this point," Noah said. Ethan shook his head.

"No man, it's really not though! For real, I feel like shit. I honestly don't know what I was thinking."

"Ethan, we're good," Noah said, turning to Rachel. "Right?"

"Of course we are!" Rachel said, her cheeks rosy from the last few drinks she had. "Plus, if we're being honest. Before you shouted your bullshit across the party, we kind of liked what was happening."

At those words, the energy in the group shifted. Everyone went silent, as if a spell had been cast over them. Noah could feel the surge of desire swell up from the group as his heart dropped.

"Wait, what do you mean?" Ethan asked. Rachel bit her lip and looked at Noah apologetically.

"Well…" She said softly. "We talked about it and… I don't know… it was kind of hot?"

Noah couldn't believe what Rachel was saying. He knew she meant it in the most innocent way possible. But now, there was no going back.

"Really," Ethan looked back at Jack and Mike, the awkward smile on their faces signaling that there was a clear opportunity they wanted to pounce on.

"So let me get this straight," Jack chimed in. "You two enjoyed it when Rachel stripped in front of us."

Noah's face went beat red, he could feel his heart pounding in his chest. But he didn't correct them, and he didn't stop Rachel from answering.

"Yes, we did," Rachel said, immediately covering her face in embarrassment once she did. "Oh my god, I can't believe I'm saying this! Please don't judge us!" She leaned into Noah and laughed warmly. While he wanted to laugh with her, the best he could manage was a forced smile.

"No judgment here," Jack said quickly. He glanced at Ethan, then back at Rachel. "Well, if you guys liked it, would you want to play another game?"

"Another game?" Noah asked timidly.

"Yeah, something fun, something you both will like," Jack said with a smile.

Noah glanced over at Rachel.

"What do you think?' He asked her softly. Rachel bit her lip and squeezed his arm.

"I mean… it could be fun. Are you ok with it?" Rachel asked.

"What exactly is this game?" Noah asked, doing his best to hide his trembling voice.

"It's pretty straightforward, it's called pop the balloon. Each of us will have a balloon attached to us, and several competitors will have to pop all of them as fast as possible." Jack looked back to the rest of the party. "I know a few girls would also be open to playing. So it would be Rachel competing against them."

"That doesn't sound so bad!" Rachel said with a smile.

"Yeah, except the balloons are put right on our cocks, and the only way you can try to pop them is with that fat ass of yours," Mike shouted. Noah could feel the blood drain from his face.

"Wait… you guys will be naked?"

"What? No man! We'll have our pants on, it's a dry-humping game." Ethan corrected. "Don't listen to Mike, he's fucking drunk."

"So, what do you two think?" Jack asked. Noah took a deep breath and looked at Rachel. He already knew what his answer was, he already knew what he wanted to see.

"Rachel?" He asked. She leaned and kissed him on the cheek.

"I'm only going to do it if you want me to," she answered.

Rachel meant those words, and it made Noah want to do it all the more.

"I think it's worth trying," He answered.

Jack smiled. "Then let the games begin."

Chapter 7 - Best of Friends 7 - Balloon Popping

The four lined up in the living room, balloons attached expertly to the front of their pants while Rachel and two other girls prepared themselves for the competition. The rest of the partygoers had awkwardly circled around the group, some paying more attention than others.

Noah stood at the end of the lineup, cheeks beet red as he stared at the group of onlookers interested in the show. He glanced down at his oversized trousers, grimacing at the red balloon he'd placed to be popped. As much as he wanted to share in the group's enthusiasm, he couldn't help but have second thoughts.

He glanced over at Rachel, who caught his eyes for a moment before giving him an excited smile. She bit her lip nervously. Noah took it as a sign that she was just as nervous as he was.

It was going to be alright, everything was going to be fine. Noah took a deep breath, glancing over at Jack who stood directly next to him. Jack caught his gaze, and gave Noah a playful nudge.

"You ready for this?" He asked. Noah nodded slowly. Uncertain if Jack's question was coming from a place of genuine sincerity.

"Yeah, I think so," Noah said.

"You two ever done something like this before?" Jack asked. Noah shook his head.

"No, I mean... besides the spin the bottle game, no."

"I see..." Jack looked at Rachel, his eyes filling with lustful hunger. "you think she can win?"

"Does it really matter?" Noah asked, unsure how to answer the question. Jack raised his eyebrows in amusement.

"I guess in the greater scheme of things, no it doesn't." He let out a playful laugh and shook his head. "All the same, it is a competition. Rachel seems pretty determined."

"She's always like that," Noah admitted, pleased to feel the tension in his shoulders easing.

"I guess we'll see what she's made of then. Those other two are firecrackers. They know how to make a balloon pop if you catch my meaning."

Noah laughed nervously, only now observing just how attractive the other two women were.

"You're pretty lucky to have a girl who's ok with this kind of stuff," Jack added.

"What do you mean?" Noah asked. Jack glanced over at him.

"Not many women are ok with sharing their man, you know?"

"Oh... yeah."

"...You two did talk about that, right? Rachel's cool with those two touching you?" Jack asked.

Noah's heart began to race. It hadn't occurred to him that if they went through with the entire game, two other women would be touching him. He wondered if Rachel had put it together, and even tried to catch her eyes to see if there was any hesitation. But so far as he could tell, Rachel seemed fine. She laughed with the other two, showing the same levels of excitement she had the last time they played games with the four.

"I mean, she's going to grind up on you guys so…"

"Seems only fair, right?" Jack interjected.

"I think so?" Noah said with a nervous laugh.

"Well, if she breaks up with you in a few days, then I guess we'll have our answer." Jack gave Noah a playful nudge. Noah cleared his throat as he felt his stomach churn.

"Y-yeah, I guess we'll see," Noah answered.

"Well, enough talking, it's showtime," Jack said, stepping towards the three girls. "Alright! Let's go over the rules one more time! You three will be competing against one another to see who can pop the balloons on us the quickest, and you can only use your asses to do it. Remember, it is up to you and you alone to seal the deal and finish us off. However, depending on how exciting your... performance is, we may help you out by thrusting back."

The crowd erupted in laughter. Noah's palms began to sweat as his heart raced in his chest. This was really about to happen, he was about to witness Rachel grind up on the four hottest guys at their college campus. Noah stared at the three women standing opposite to him, each of them the definition of drop-dead gorgeous. But above all three, Rachel stood out like a sore thumb. Her white halter dress caught the elegant curves of her body as she swayed back and forth excitedly. She twirled a strand of her blonde hair around her finger as her gaze passed between the four before finally stopping on Noah. The noise of the crowd faded away as Noah became lost in her gaze. She smiled before blowing him a kiss.

God, he loved that woman.

"Are there any questions?" Jack asked. The girls shook their heads. "Good, so, have you decided who will go first?"

"I will!" Rachel said, stepping forward eagerly. As soon as she volunteered, Noah didn't need to look at the four to feel their excitement. They were finally getting another chance at Rachel, and the onlooking crowd seemed just as excited for the show. Without missing a beat, several guys from the crowd pulled out their phones to begin recording. But before Noah had a chance to protest, Jack spoke up.

"Hey! There will be absolutely NO recording tonight. What happens at this party stays at this party! Mike, grab their phones." Jack said. Mike walked over to the crowd with his beefy arm outstretched, the balloon attached to his crotch comically bouncing back and forth as he snatched up phones quickly.

"That's right you fucks! Give 'em up!" Mike walked between the crowd, snatching every exposed phone before throwing them in a bag. Once he was satisfied, he gave Jack a thumbs up. "We're good my dude!"

"Good, and we'll keep it that way. Any phones pulled out during the game will be taken, and you'll be asked to leave. Got it?!"

The crowd nodded obediently as Mike made his way back into the line.

"Good. Alright Rachel, you ready to begin?" Jack asked.

"Oh my god, yes? I think? Which end do I start on?!" Rachel asked, walking towards the lineup of men cautiously. Her mixture of innocence and excitement was intoxicating. Noah watched as the four looked at her with primal hunger he had seen one too many times.

They wanted her, and they would take any form of her they could get.

"You can start with me if you want," Luke said cooly, running a hand through his long, dirty blonde hair.

"Fuck, that means Noah's going to be fucking last though!" Mike said with a snicker. Noah felt his hands begin to tremble.

"You good with that?" Jack asked him. Noah cleared his throat and nodded slowly.

"Y-yeah, that's totally fine," He said unconvincingly. Hearing his answer, Rachel walked over to him before placing a hand gently on his shoulder.

"Hey," She said softly.

"Hey," Noah answered.

"Are you sure you're ok with this?" She asked. Noah didn't make eye contact with her, he kept his face slumped to the ground as the weight of what he had to endure pressed in around him.

"Yeah, I'm sure." He answered. Rachel stood silently, her fingers trailing down his arm.

"Hey... look at me," Rachel said. Noah glanced up. "We don't have to do this if you don't want to."

Noah felt his anxiety melt away at those words. It felt like a weight lifted from his chest and he could breathe again.

"Really, Rachel, I'm ok. I want to explore this with you," he said. The two smiled at one another for a moment as they shared a nervous laugh.

"Then... let's get crazy," She said with a gleeful bounce.

"Is he good?" Jack asked.

"Yes, he's good! Just a little nervous," Rachel answered.

Noah grimaced. He felt like they were parents discussing what was best for their child. But despite that, he remained silent and awaited whatever might happen next.

"Then we're ready!" Jack said loudly. "Luke, you're up!"

Rachel let out a gleeful giggle as she half-skipped to the opposite end of the line, fixing her hair as she stood in front of Luke. For his part, Luke appeared indifferent to the situation, his eyes trailing over Rachel once before he gave her a polite smile.

"I hope you win," Luke said cooly.

"T-thanks," Rachel replied, biting her lip nervously as she looked at Jack.

"When do I start?" She asked.

"Hang on, let me get the timer ready," Jack said, pulling up his smart watch and setting a clock before pointing at Rachel.

"Ok... we're all set. The games start… now!"

"Oh my god no countdown?!" Rachel shouted.

"You better get going!" Jack shouted back.

Rachel immediately jumped into action, turning around and arching her back as she lined her ass up with Luke's balloon. The seductive flow of her movements made several men in the crowd holler. Rachel rammed her ass firmly against Luke, and it didn't take long for them to find a steady pace. At first, Rachel's thrusts were more playful than anything else, but once she heard Luke's soft moans the temperature quickly turned up. Rachel's hips began to sway, she tossed her hair to the side and looked back to see how Luke was doing.

Luke, in turn, took a passive approach as he watched Rachel's ass plow into him, the balloon flattening enough that her cheeks made contact with his crotch several times.

His eyes trailed up and down her body. His calm demeanor never changed, even as he grabbed Rachel's arms and widened his stance. With expert precision, he pulled Rachel into him, arching her back as he thrust forward, popping his balloon with one clean motion. The latex spattered from between them and Luke's groin slammed into Rachel. She let out a soft moan as Luke held her there for a moment, grinding himself against her as he released her arms and let his fingers trail down her back. Noah felt his heart sink and his cock throb as he watched Rachel let out another moan while she fixed her hair and allowed Luke to do with her as he pleased.

Luke looked over at Noah, giving him a nod before stepping out of line.

"That's one down!" Jack shouted, "Not bad timing either."

"Oh my god, I can't believe I'm doing this!" Rachel squealed as she rushed over to Mike. As soon as she turned and arched her ass toward him, Mike grabbed onto her hips and thrust into her aggressively. He was like an animal, completely focused on getting his dick as close to Rachel as humanly possible. His balloon flattened with every thrust he made, and Rachel began moaning as Mike's hands dug into her sides.

"Jesus Mike!" Rachel said, her breasts bouncing wildly as Mike's pace quickened.

"That's fucking right, fucking take it!" Mike shouted. Rachel's dress began to ride up her ass, eventually exposing her fat ass cheeks and black laced underwear. As soon as Mike saw Rachel's skin, he pushed her dress over her hips, digging his fingers into Rachel's sides.

"Fuck you feel fucking amazing," Mike said, moving Rachel over to the back of one of the couches and pushing her over it. Rachel moaned as Mike mounted her and squeezed one of her ass cheeks tightly.

"Jesus... Mike! Relax!" Rachel's voice wavered between Mike's hard thrusts.

"I want to fucking eat your ass so fucking bad," Mike said. He had devolved into pure id, completely disregarding the crowd and formal niceties.

And Rachel didn't try to stop him.

She closed her eyes, ass cheeks jiggling with every thrust Mike made. He pushed Rachel into the couch with this weight, the onlooking crowd stepping closer towards the two as they watched Rachel be dominated by Mike.

"I'm going to raw dog the fuck out of you I swear to fucking god!" Mike slapped Rachel's ass, causing her head to pop up in shock.

"Oh my god Mike!"

Before another word could be spoken, the balloon popped between them. At once, Rachel pushed herself off the couch and stepped away from Mike.

"Got it!" She said with a laugh.

"W-wait! We were just getting started!" Mike stepped toward Rachel but stopped as she raised her hand playfully.

"Ah ah! The balloon is popped Mike! Let me race!" Rachel said, rushing over to Ethan.

"Yeah Mike, let her race!" Ethan said, stepping forward happily as Rachel turned around and lined herself up with his balloon.

"Fuck man…" Mike mumbled several frustrated remarks as he walked over to the couch and sat defeated.

Rachel looked back at Ethan, "You ready?" She asked in a seductive tone. Noah knew it was meant to be playful, but it still made his skin crawl.

Ethan promptly lifted up Rachel's dress in response, exposing her round ass immediately.

"Ethan!!" Rachel shouted with embarrassment. Ethan grabbed a handful of Rachel's hair in response.

"Time for the ride of your life." At once, Ethan began to thrust into Rachel, pulling her head back as his grip tightened around her hair. Without much effort, the two began to enter into a perfect rhythm, Rachel matching Ethan's thrusts with her own counterthrusts. Her moans became loud, particularly when Ethan's balloon slipped upwards, making way for the giant swelling cock in his loose linen slacks. The balloon wasn't making contact with Rachel anymore. Instead, Ethan's dick now slid between Rachel's ass cheeks.

Rachel seemed aware of what was happening but didn't fight it. She pressed into him, pushing the balloon entirely out of the way as the two began to grind shamelessly against each other.

"Holy fucking shit!" Ethan said as his hands slipped down to Rachel's hips. He changed up his rhythm, grinding his cock against Rachel with upward thrusts. Noah watched helplessly as her playful moans began to sound increasingly more

genuine. The room had gone silent, Noah didn't dare look at the crowd watching them at this point – it was humiliating enough seeing Ethan slide his bulge over Rachel's bare ass.

Ethan's hands slid up her waist, pushing Rachel's dress upwards, nearly exposing her breasts as his fingers stopped just below them. He slammed himself hard against Rachel, making her gasp as his hands continued to trail upwards.

"I think you are probably the hottest girl I'll ever get to fuck," Ethan's fingers grazed against her breasts as he pushed Rachel's dress higher.

"Don't forget... we need to pop the balloon," Rachel said breathlessly. Ethan laughed softly as his cock throbbed against her.

"We're going to be popping something tonight, that's for sure." Ethan's hands nearly cupped Rachel's breasts completely.

But before Ethan could continue, Luke walked up behind him and popped Ethan's balloon with his knife. The loud bang brought Rachel back to her senses. At once, she stepped away from Ethan and began fixing her dress.

"What the fuck bro?! We were still going!" Ethan shouted, standing awkwardly with a dick at full mast.

"This isn't fucking lapdance, you're supposed to be popping the balloon. You're done," Luke replied, expertly folding his butterfly knife as he calmly made his way over to the couches.

"I am nowhere close to done!" Ethan shouted, grabbing onto Rachel's curvy waist and pulling her close to him again. Rachel countered by placing a hand on his broad chest and pushing him away.

"No, Luke's right. You're done," Rachel said calmly.

"I… I'm done?"

"You moved your balloon out of the way! You're disqualified!" Rachel said with a playful laugh as she walked over to Jack.

"Fuck… fine!" Ethan said, sitting next to Mike on the couch, equally defeated as his friend.

"Not fucking fun, is it?" Mike asked.

"Shut up," Ethan grumbled.

Everyone's attention now turned to Rachel and Jack. They stared at one another for a moment before Jack smiled at her.

"You ready?" He asked her softly.

"I am," She replied as her cheeks blushed.

"Better hurry, Ethan burned up a lot of time," Jack said. Rachel slowly turned around, arching her back once more. This time, however, she pulled up her dress herself. Gently swaying her ass back and forth while Jack grabbed onto her hips.

"You better get going then," She said gently.

The two began to thrust into each other, only inches away from Noah. He felt himself trembling at the sight of Jack's veiny arms grabbing onto his girlfriend.

"Holy fuck dude! Right next to her boyfriend!" Someone shouted from the crowd.

Noah grit his teeth. He knew it wasn't like that. Rachel and Noah were doing this together. This was both their decision.

"Jesus look at them, they're like the perfect couple." Someone else said.

Rachel had chosen him, Noah knew this. Rachel wanted to be with him.

"What a loser…"

Rachel tossed her hair back, moaning softly as Jack's hand gently squeezed her ass before pausing. Rachel looked back at him, confused.

"Is everything alright?" She asked.

"Here," he said, "Let me help you out a little bit." Jack raised one of Rachel's legs, then readjusted himself so that the balloon rested between them better. Jack began thrusting into Rachel with powerful precision. The two locked eyes as Rachel wrapped her hand around Jack's neck. Her lips parted in ecstasy as his free hand trailed up her neck, gripping it firmly.

This was going beyond balloon-popping. These two had chemistry, real genuine chemistry. Noah had seen this once before.

Noah had felt this kind of pain already.

The room began to dim. Noah no longer saw Jack and Rachel, but Allison and Brian. The two locked eyes as passion poured moved between them. Noah watched Brian's giant cock thrust deep inside Allison as she became lost in his eyes. Allison moaned, throwing her head back as she took in all of Brian's massive length.

Allison had always wanted Brian, always. Noah was her second choice, and once Allison was able to get what she always wanted, Noah was simply in the way. He watched helplessly as Brian took her, as his cock stretched her pussy to limits she had never felt before.

"Oh Jack," Rachel said softly. Noah was snapped back to reality, his gaze returning to the man who was taking his girlfriend only inches away from him.

Noah couldn't breathe.

Noah sunk into himself.

"That's enough," He said weakly. But Rachel and Jack didn't hear him.

Jack's hand slid over Rachel's breast and squeezed it. Rachel threw her head back and moaned.

"Fuck, Jack!"

The balloon popped between the two. Rachel's dampened underwear slammed against Jack's bulge.

"That's enough!" Noah shouted. Storming off as the two quickly pulled away from each other.

"Wait, Noah!" Rachel chased after him while the rest of the party began to clamor with excitement.

"Guess the cuck couldn't take it," Someone said as a wave of laughter spread through the crowd.

"Party is over folks! Let's call it a night," Jack said loudly.

Noah could barely see straight, his body shook uncontrollably. He didn't hear anything beyond the moans of Allison and Rachel. The two voices began to bleed together in his mind. Before long, Noah found himself stumbling into a bedroom, dropping to the floor as his vision began to tunnel.

The image of Rachel staring deeply into Jack's eyes became the only thing he could see.

Chapter 8 - Best of Friends 8 - Do you Want Me To

Rachel froze in place as she watched Noah rush down the hallway. It didn't feel like she was awake. She hoped that it was all a dream, one Rachel desperately wanted to wake up from. She looked back at the party guests, relieved to see they were beginning to exit the apartment. That took care of one problem at least, she could only handle so much embarrassment in one night.

God, the embarrassment. Why did she think it was a good idea to explore this in front of a crowd? Rachel wondered if she'd taken things too far and ruined the evening for everyone. They just wanted to have a good time. She didn't have to participate in the balloon game. No, in fact, she shouldn't have. She should have stayed by Noah's side and spent the evening laughing with him. Rachel shook her head in frustration, quickly following after Noah while the four began putting the apartment back in order.

Stupid. It was all so stupid. She should've been more attentive to Noah, she should have done a better job reading the room.

And she shouldn't have gotten so lost in Jack's eyes.

Rachel's heart fluttered as she recalled that moment, but it was a thought she stuffed down quickly. Jack meant nothing to Rachel. That moment meant nothing, it was just a game.

Rachel tried to focus, opening several bedroom doors until she finally found Noah in a barren guest room. He was huddled in a corner, arms wrapped around his legs with his head buried between them. It broke Rachel's heart to see him like that.

"Hey," Rachel said, walking over to Noah's side and sitting next to him. Noah didn't respond, and that didn't surprise her. She allowed silence to hang in the room for a while. After all, it wasn't like Rachel even had the words to say. This was all new territory for her. It was confusing, messy, and exciting. But at the end of the day, what Rachel wanted more than anything, was Noah.

She slowly wrapped her arm around his and to her relief, felt him interlock his fingers with hers. He raised his head and looked at her, but still didn't say anything. Rachel smiled before taking a deep breath.

"I'm sorry if it went too far," Rachel said.

"You… you don't need to be sorry. We both said it was ok. I…" Noah was struggling to put his words together. Rachel could feel his body trembling as he spoke.

"We don't need to talk about it right now. It's ok," She said, gently squeezing his hand tightly. "We don't even have to stay here, everyone is leaving. Do you want to get going?"

"I don't think I can right now… I… I think I need a little bit more time before…" Noah's words trailed off. His lip began to tremble. A few tears trickled down his cheeks as he turned his head away from her. Rachel felt absolutely gutted.

"I'm so sorry. We don't ever have to do this again, I promise." Rachel meant every word she said. Seeing Noah this way made her determined to ensure it never happened again. She would not be the reason for his sadness, that much she was absolutely sure of.

"That's not what I want…" Noah answered. Rachel's brow furrowed in confusion.

"But... look at how upset it made you. This isn't healthy if it makes you this miserable Noah," Rachel said. Noah's eyes closed in concentration.

"I know it's a lot… I know I'm being a lot right now, and I'm sorry. But I don't want to mess things up. I don't want to ruin things for us," Noah said.

"Noah, you're not ruining anything," Rachel replied. Noah instinctively turned and wrapped his arms around her. Their angling on the floor made it awkward, but Rachel happily returned his embrace. She buried her face into his neck, holding him as tightly as she could.

"I'm sorry…" Noah said.

"You have nothing to be sorry for," Rachel replied. They held each other for a long time, only breaking when they heard clattering dishes from the main room. Relieved to find that some of Noah's composure was coming back to him, Rachel rubbed his arm and smiled.

"You ready to go?" Rachel asked.

"I think I'm still going to need some time…" Noah replied.

"Of course, we can sit here for as long as you need."

"No, I think I need some time alone," Noah said. The answer made Rachel's heart race, but she did her best not to show it. With a leveled smile, Rachel stood.

"Of course, take all the time you need. I'll be in the living room when you're ready, ok?"

"Ok…" Noah said softly. He didn't look at her when he said it, and Rachel didn't push him any further. It was going to be alright, she knew that. The best thing she could do for Noah was to give him the space he needed.

At least. That's what she wanted to be true. But as she walked to the kitchen, she wondered if any of this was alright. Rachel turned the corner, surprised to find Jack alone, putting dishes away in his modern, white kitchen. He slung a towel over his shoulder and looked at her.

"How's he doing?" Jack asked.

"He's... alright," Rachel said. She peered out into the living room, surprised to find it completely empty. "Where is everyone?" She asked.

"The guys cleared them out, and then I let them know it was probably best if they cleared out too. Considering how everything went down, I figured you and Noah would appreciate it," Jack said. Rachel nodded, walking into the kitchen slowly. As she did, the shock of what happened began to hit her.

"T-that's good," Rachel struggled to keep her composure.

"You alright?" Jack asked. Rachel couldn't hold back the tears, as much as she wanted to. They streamed down her face as she let out a frustrated laugh.

"Fuck, I'm sorry… I'm fine it's just… I feel like I ruined everything."

"Hey, it's alright," Jack said softly. He stepped towards Rachel, opening his arms as he did. Rachel stepped into them, happy to feel his warm and caring embrace. She always knew Jack was a good man, despite what others had said, and this one moment of comfort was exactly what she needed.

"This is so embarrassing," Rachel said with a weak laugh, Jack squeezed her tightly. Rachel's face buried into his chest. She could smell the mixture of alcohol and cologne on this dress shirt.

"There's no need to be embarrassed. Shit happens."

"I'm just… I'm just afraid I'm going to lose him over something stupid," Rachel said. She felt Jack's hand trail up her back.

It felt… good. Her heart began to race, and instinctively, Rachel slowly pulled away from him. As she did, Jack's arms dropped to her hips.

They stared at one another. It felt strange to Rachel that, just moments ago, this man had been dry-humping her in front of her boyfriend. It was almost comedic, actually, how much those two versions of Jack contrasted each other.

"You're not going to lose him over something like this, I promise," Jack assured her. His hand began to slowly trail up the side of her waist. Despite Rachel knowing it was wrong, she let Jack explore her.

Jack's hand continued upward, coming dangerously close to her chest.

"What are you doing?' Rachel asked. Jack didn't answer. Instead, his hand slid over her breast and squeezed it tightly, causing Rachel to moan.

"Never thought they'd feel this good," Jack said. He began to lean in for a kiss. Rachel immediately turned her head.

"Stop!" Rachel whispered. She stepped away from Jack, leaning against the kitchen countertop. Rachel took a deep breath and tried to get her bearings. What the hell had just happened? She stared at the floor, not daring to look back at Jack. An uncomfortable silence hung in the air.

"Sorry, that was shitty of me," Jack said.

"It was," Rachel confirmed, fixing her hair and shaking her head. "I'm with Noah."

"I know."

"I love him."

"I know," Jack ran his fingers through his hair as he let out a long sigh. "I know you do."

The two fell silent once more, Rachel took the opportunity to try and calm her nerves. Before long, she heard footsteps coming from the hall. She glanced up, spotting Noah as he entered the kitchen. His hair was a disheveled mess, a look complimented by the oversized suit he still wore. Despite knowing how much Noah hated the suit, Rachel couldn't help but find it adorable on him.

"Hey," She said softly. Noah didn't respond. Instead, his eyes shifted to Jack, suspicion pouring over him as he assessed the situation for what seemed like ages.

"Did you kiss her?" He asked. Jack shook his head.

"No," He replied shortly. Rachel felt a wave of guilt in her chest. She wondered if she should speak up and clarify that he had touched her without him there. Did that matter? Would it make any difference one way or the other? Noah was already so upset, and it didn't mean anything. Noah spoke before Rachel could make a decision.

"Are you sure you didn't kiss her?" He asked again. Jack looked at Noah curiously.

"... Did you want me to?" he asked Noah. Rachel froze, terrified that one wrong word might send Noah spiraling once again. She stared at him, wondering what he wanted out of this moment.

It didn't have to be this way, Rachel knew that. Noah didn't have to put up with any of this, and neither did she.

"It's ok, Noah. I would never kiss him without you knowing," She said softly. Noah looked at her, eyes glossed over and expressionless. She smiled at him, hoping it might brighten his spirits, but he didn't smile back.

"Do… do you want to kiss him?" Noah asked her. Rachel felt her cheeks flush. She adjusted her hair as a weak laugh escaped her. Rachel glanced at Jack, who remained remarkably calm despite the situation.

"I don't know… I thought we were just having fun. I don't want to do anything that you aren't comfortable with." Rachel felt her heart racing. She didn't know what to say, she didn't know what the right answer was.

"It's ok, you can tell me the truth," Noah said weakly.

"That is the truth, this isn't about what I want, it's about what we want. We don't have to stay here, you know, we can leave right now if that would make you feel better." Rachel said.

"But you'd kiss him if I was cool with it," Noah said. Rachel frowned.

"That... doesn't seem like a fair question."

Noah's eyes slanted at those words. He shot a death stare at Jack.

"She isn't your girlfriend," He said coldly.

"Believe me, I know," Jack replied.

"She would never cheat on me, ever." Noah was doing his best to sound strong, and Rachel commended him for that. Still, his delivery was wavery, and far from believable. As much as Rachel hated to admit it, she found Noah's grandstanding as embarrassing as it was charming.

As confusing as it was direct.

As disrespectful as it was honoring.

"I know that, trust me, I'm not trying to get between you two. Believe it or not, I actually do like you guys," Jack said with a smile. It sounded authentic to Rachel, and she was relieved when she saw Noah's shoulders relax.

"Good, because moving forward, if you're going to kiss her, it has to be in front of me and only me." Noah's words dropped like a bomb. Rachel stared, dumbfounded. It was the last thing she had expected him to say. She looked over at Jack, who appeared just as surprised.

"W-wait, I just want to make sure I'm understanding you right. Are you… asking me to kiss her right now?" He asked.

Rachel watched Noah carefully, this was a side of him she had never seen before. A passion welled in his eyes, a mixture of excitement and anger that she couldn't quite understand. He had to know she wouldn't do it without his permission, that she was interested in him and only him. Despite the butterflies she felt in her stomach when she looked at Jack, she would never dream of–

"We're all here, you might as well do what you want," Noah said. His voice was trembling, Rachel couldn't understand why he wanted something that clearly bothered him so much.

"Noah, it's not just about what we want, it's about what you want too," Rachel said with as much temperance as she could muster. "What do you want?"

Noah paused, that was good, at least it meant he was thinking things through.

"I want this," He said. It was a soft response, but Rachel could tell it was an authentic answer. So that was it, Noah had confirmed it, he wanted to see Jack kiss her. She wasn't sure what she expected to hear, or even how Noah's answer would make her feel.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Jack turn to her and step forward.

"Are you sure?" Rachel asked. Noah nodded.

"I am," He answered. Rachel took a deep breath, then turned to face Jack. As soon as they locked eyes, she felt her heartbeat in her ears.

"You ok with this?" Jack asked her. She already knew the answer before Jack even asked it. She looked over at Noah, who finally smiled at her warmly. That was all she needed to know it would be alright.

"Yes," She said softly. Jack didn't hesitate to take his chance, his hand gently wrapped around her neck and pulled her in close. He kissed her deeply, Rachel felt her full lips press against his as Jack's free arm wrapped around her waist tightly. She let out a gasp as her breasts pushed against his chest. She shivered as Jack's hands trailed along her sides.

They slipped low, squeezing her plump ass as his tongue pushed into her mouth. Rachel had to admit, Jack kissed well. Very well. He smelled amazing also, he felt amazing. Her mind flooded with desire as she felt his bulge press against her.

Jack lifted her onto the countertop, continuing to kiss her with eager passion. Rachel spread her legs, wrapping them around Jack's waist as his hands cradled the back of her head, and his lips trailed down her neck.

Rachel had a clear view of Noah, the two staring at one another as Jack explored her body. Noah appeared to be as transfixed as Jack was, and the large bulge in his pants seemed to indicate he was enjoying the show. Rachel smiled at him, trying her best to show Noah that they were in this together. That they were both participants in this experiment. Noah seemed to understand, smiling back as he watched Jack's hands slide up to Rachel's breasts and squeeze them tightly.

Rachel let out a soft moan, a moan cut off as Jack pressed his lips against hers once more. He played with her nipples through her thin dress, sending waves of pleasure through her as their pace began to quicken.

Rachel was beginning to lose herself in it. She wondered how far this was going to go.

She wondered if Jack was going to explore her further.

If Noah wanted Jack to–

Jack's hands trailed down to her thighs, slowly sliding underneath her dress as his tongue thrust into her mouth.

Rachel shivered in anticipation. Excitement and anxiety mixed with the carnal desire overtaking her mind. She wanted Jack, she wanted to feel him inside her. She wanted to know what it would be like to have sex with another man.

His fingers were only inches away from her pussy, they pulled at her lacy underwear. Rachel broke her kiss with Jack and leaned her head against his, digging her nails into his back as his fingers slid over her wet entrance, before finally plunging deep inside her.

Rachel instinctively thrust forward, moaning as she felt Jack's fingers begin to thrust in and out of her. Euphoria flooded her mind, she felt as though she was living in a dream. Her eyes opened as Jack's free hand gripped onto her hip. As he finger fucked her with increasing roughness.

And her gaze fell on Noah.

He watched them silently, seemingly lost in his own world as Jack began to pull Rachel's dress straps from her shoulders.

Rachel's dress fell, exposing her perky breasts. Jack leaned down and latched his lips around her nipple, licking it softly as his fingers continued their smooth tempo. Rachel's nails trailed up and down Jack's back, and as he began to find her G-spot, Rachel began to eagerly counterthrust against him.

Jack's fingers plunged deeper. Rachel's back arched as her legs began to quiver. Jack bit her nipple softly, and Rachel felt herself tip over the edge. She wrapped her legs around his waist as she threw her head back in ecstasy.

"Oh Jack!" Rachel shouted, feeling herself coming close to climaxing.

"That's enough!" Noah shouted in the background. Rachel and Jack didn't stop immediately, his fingers lingered while her legs slowly unwrapped from his waist. With a tremendous amount of effort, Rachel leaned away from Jack, her finger trailing down his chest as Jack reluctantly stepped away from her.

Without a doubt, that was one of the hottest things Rachel had ever done. She took a deep breath, looking at Noah while she did her best to collect herself. She wanted to say something, or at least, felt like she should. But Rachel had no idea what to say. Her eyes bounced between Jack and Noah. Both of them seemed just as lost as she was.

Jack slowly began fixing his shirt while he cleared his throat.

"That uh… that was pretty fun," He said calmly. He didn't look at either of them, and neither of them replied immediately.

"Yeah…" Noah said.

"We're… we're all good though, right? All three of us?" Jack asked.

"Yeah, we're good. I-I'm sorry about… well about before…" Noah shook his head. "This is all new for me. It's… weird."

"It's new for me, too." Rachel chimed in.

"Believe it or not, it's new for me also. I've never really done anything like this…" Jack laughed nervously, which Rachel found oddly comforting seeing a person under all that wealth and status.

"I… I think it's best if we head home," Noah said.

"I agree," Rachel said, sliding off the kitchen countertop and adjusting her dress. She walked over to Noah and grabbed his arm before glancing down at his giant bulge, surprised by how much it turned her on.

"So like… what happens next?" Jack asked.

"Let's leave that for another time," Noah replied shortly. Jack quickly nodded as he adjusted his shirt sleeves.

"Right, of course. Be sure to talk to the front desk when you head down. They will arrange a ride for you to get home," Jack said.

"Thanks," Noah led Rachel to the elevator door, and she happily followed behind him. Her senses were returning to her as they stepped through the metal doors.

As her mind replayed the ways Jack had touched her while Noah watched.

Chapter 9 - Best of Friends 9 - Talking Points

Noah opened the door to his dorm room and ushered Rachel inside, both sleepily walked towards his bed before collapsing in exhaustion. Noah glanced at his dorm mate's empty mattress, grateful they would have the place to themselves for tonight. The sounds of sporadic parties bled through the fifty-year-old window panes as Noah let out a long, exhausted sigh. As always, the room was far too hot. The ancient, always-running radiator was to thank for that. He felt Rachel curl up beside him as she too let out a sigh of relief.

No words were spoken; the two simply enjoyed each other's presence as Rachel gently rubbed Noah's chest.

In the silence, it didn't take long for Noah's memories to appear.

He heard Jack and Rachel's moans looping endlessly in his mind. Noah closed his eyes in an attempt to silence them, only to find Jack and Rachel there as well. He could see vivid images of Jack standing between Rachel's legs, fingering her aggressively as he slowly began to undo his pants.

He knew if he hadn't stopped them, Jack would have taken Rachel. He remembered Rachel's look of ecstasy, he remembered how she called out Jack's name.

She wanted him just as much as Jack wanted her.

If he hadn't stopped them… if he hadn't been there…

Noah felt the bulge in his pants swell. His mind flooded with a primal desire he had never felt before. He reached for Rachel, catching her smile as he pulled in her close for a kiss. She happily reciprocated, kissing him back deeply as she rolled on top of him.

Noah closed his eyes, he saw Jack on his bed with Rachel. Kissing her passionately as he watched from afar.

Rachel pushed her tongue gently into his mouth, and Noah sucked on it. He reached for her dress straps and slid them over her shoulders, exposing her perky breasts. Rachel shivered as she slowly undid Noah's pants. He eagerly assisted, pulling them down enough for his throbbing cock to spring out from under them.

Rachel slid her underwear to the side and placed the tip of his cock against her entrance. She was wet, Noah could feel her warmth as she easily sat down on him and, with a loud moan, began to ride him.

No, not riding him. She was riding Jack. Right in Noah's dorm bed, Jack was taking Rachel for himself.

He watched as Rachel arched her head backward and grinded on his cock with an even tempo.

Sweat glistened along her smooth skin. Noah felt her walls tighten around him, gripping his cock with overwhelming suction. Noah gasped at the sensation. No matter how many times they fucked, he was always blown away by how good Rachel felt. She placed both hands on his chest, then while looking him in the eyes, promptly began bouncing her ass on his cock. Steady, wet slaps filled the room as Rachel let out soft moans of pleasure. Noah felt the world shrink around him, it was absolute bliss. He closed his eyes in a desperate attempt to not cum early.

And in the darkness of his mind, Jack took his place. Gripping onto Rachel's hips, he pounded into her with all his might. Noah found himself in the corner of the room, watching helplessly as Rachel fucked the wealthiest, most attractive man in their school.

He couldn't get rid of him, he couldn't stop the images from flooding his mind. Jack was going to have Rachel whether or not Noah wanted it.

Rachel moaned, Noah felt her nails dig into his chest.

"Oh god, I'm getting close… oh my god!" She screamed.

Noah's body tightened as he felt himself nearing his climax. He grabbed onto Rachel's waist, and as his hands touched her, Jack once again took his place.

"I want to cum inside you," He said.

"Cum in me baby!" Rachel replied.

Noah watched Jack thrust upward, letting out a raspy moan as his seed poured inside Rachel. She, in turn, began to shake on top of him. Falling forward and resting on his chest while he continued to slowly thrust into her.

Heavy breaths followed. Noah felt himself coming back to his senses. Once again he was under Rachel.

Finally, they were alone.

He wrapped his arms around her and squeezed tightly.

"I love you," Noah said softly.

"I love you too," Rachel replied. She stayed in his embrace for a while, keeping Noah inside her as he went soft. "That felt amazing by the way."

"Yeah," Noah replied breathlessly. Flashes of Jack still swarmed his mind, though now, they were far less welcoming than before. Rachel gently kissed Noah's lips, then slowly stood to grab a tissue box from his small writing desk. Cum poured out of her, dripping over Noah's stomach as she covered her entrance with dainty fingers.

"Sorry," She said shly.

"It's fine," Noah replied, still lost in a haze of shame and endorphins.

Rachel promptly cleaned herself before handing the box to Noah.

"Thanks," He said. Wiping his cum lazily from his stomach.

Except, in his mind, it wasn't his. It was Jack who had Rachel, not him. It was Jack who had flirted with her, who had taken her to a fine dinner, who had primed her.

It was always Jack.

"What are you thinking about?" Rachel asked. Noah didn't feel the need to lie, it was likely Rachel was thinking about the same thing.

"What happened tonight," Noah replied.

"Me too," Rachel answered. Noah felt his heart rate increase.

"What did you think of it?" He asked. Rachel let out a sigh.

"It was… intense. I don't know, I'm not sure what to think of it if I'm being honest."

"But you liked it?" Noah asked. Rachel snuggled up beside him and laid her hand on his chest.

"I liked it when you liked it. If that makes any sense. At the beginning, when we were both getting excited about it, and when I was with Jack…"

Those words stung, but Noah took a deep breath.

"I think I get what you're saying," He answered.

"I hope I'm making sense, I really do. I was only enjoying myself when it seemed like you enjoyed yourself. But when you stormed off into that room… that terrified me. Absolutely terrified me. If I'm being honest, it makes me wonder if we shouldn't explore this further." Rachel's fingers trailed up and down Noah's chest. Her words were gentle and sincere, and Noah knew she wasn't wrong.

A normal couple would have every reason to end things here and now, Noah knew that. Rachel glanced up at him.

"You don't seem too eager to end it though…" She spoke affectionately. Noah could tell she was trying to understand him as much as he was trying to understand himself.

"I'm honestly not, and I don't know why. Yes, things were difficult around the balloon popping session. I lost it for a minute."

"Was it something I did?" Rachel asked.

"Well, you didn't really do anything wrong. It's more something you said that… well… it triggered some things for me. I tried to get over it, but it brought back memories…"

"What was it?"

"You said his name," As Noah spoke the words, Jack once again flooded his mind. He could hear Rachel's voice echoing, saying Jack's name with ecstasy.

What would have happened if Jack had found Rachel alone in her apartment? Would he have still invited her to dinner?

Would he have invited her back to his apartment?

Would Rachel have ended up moaning his name without Noah there?

Noah's stomach churned as his cock swelled.

"I'm sorry," Rachel said gently.

"You don't need to be sorry, it's more my issue. I know that."

"I know, but I just feel bad. I get worried for you. I only want to explore these kinds of things if it makes us both happy. I never want it to hurt you."

Noah paused for a moment.

"Is… is it bad that a part of me likes the hurt? The embarrassment?"

Rachel didn't answer right away. Her finger stopped on the center of Noah's chest.

"I mean, I'm not a therapist or anything, but maybe?"

"I was afraid you'd say that," Noah said. The two laughed together as Noah wrapped his arms around Rachel tightly.

"So you're telling me you like it when you get hurt like that?" She asked.

"Kind of."

"Kind of?"

"Yeah, kind of."

"That is so strange to me." Rachel shook her head and sighed. "Well, you need to know I love you very much, and I will NOT participate in actively hurting you. I guess that's my boundary to this thing, if I catch something is hurting you we need to talk about it, and I'm going to try to avoid that thing."

"That's… fair. Does that mean you don't want to continue exploring this?" Noah asked.

"For now, I'm open to continuing. It is fun, BUT if you have another outburst like that we will talk about it, and we will work on making sure those don't happen. I don't care if you 'kind of like it,' I love you too much to do that to you. Ok?"

"Alright." Noah's heart warmed. Rachel truly was one of a kind. He had never met someone as compassionate and as loving as her. "Thank you," He said.

"Of course. We are in this together, ok?"

"Ok."

The two kissed one another deeply, before lulling off into sleep.

Strange dreams followed Noah into his slumber, a deep echoing haunt of visions bored into his mind. He was back in the blue locker room, slumped on the ground with camera in hand, watching Rachel being pinned against the cold tile wall. Jack raised her in the air, fucking her hard as she screamed his name.

Noah kept his camera steady as they moved to the floor, then into the showers, then onto his bed which rested in the middle of the bathroom. Rachel was a sweaty mess, she shivered under Jack with every powerful thrust of his cock. Noah made sure to zoom in every time she came.

Then he appeared. Brian came in through a dark entrance, smiling wickedly as he made his way over to the bedside. Jack flipped Rachel's head over the bed's edge, and Brian immediately shoved his fat cock down her mouth. He grabbed her breasts and squeezed them firmly as he began to slam his massive girth down her throat.

Noah could hear Rachel gagging, he tried to speak, but no words came out of his mouth. Instead, he held up his phone and made sure to keep all three in frame.

Rachel moaned as they double-penetrated her. As Jack slammed into her pussy so hard her ass and tits jiggled. As Brian let out a gasp and shoved his full length down her throat.

As they came inside her.

But this was a dream, and there was no end. The two continued to fuck Rachel mercilessly.

All the while, Noah never stopped recording.

Chapter 10 - Best of Friends 10 – Rumors

The morning sunrise slowly lulled Noah awake. He drifted in and out of sleep, smiling when he felt Rachel slowly cuddle against him. Her arms wrapped around his waist as she buried her face in his chest, gripping him tightly. He brushed his hand gently through her hair, his heartwarming at the sound of her soft snores.

The room was uncomfortably hot, and the heat caused their skin to stick together. But Noah didn't mind. It brought them closer together, it made him feel safe.

He felt as though he could stay in this moment forever.

Then the door to his room burst open with a loud thud. Noah looked over to find his roommate, Frederick, standing in its frame.

"Sorry, hope I wasn't interrupting anything," Frederick said in an overly soft tone. The voice fit his soft body and disheveled appearance. He pushed up his thick-framed glasses as he watched Rachel slowly begin to wake up.

Noah instinctively sat up and covered Rachel's bare skin with his blanket, she took the blanket and pressed it around her chest as she also slowly came to.

"Hey Rachel," Frederick said with a smile.

"Hey Fred," Rachel said back, still half asleep as she began to search for her dress.

"Looks like you two had a fun night together," Frederick said.

"Don't make it weird," Noah grumbled. He knew Fred was harmless when it was just them. Fred was a shy, kind, and funny guy who loved computer science nearly as much as competitive gaming. It was easy to talk to him, and Noah genuinely saw him as a friend.

But when Rachel was around, it only took him seconds to devolve into a horny degenerate.

"Could you give us a minute?" Noah asked. Frederick's eyes slowly shifted over to him.

"Hmmm? Oh, yeah of course. Don't worry about me, do your thing." Frederick remained where he was and smiled. Noah frowned.

"Fred, can you leave the room so we can get dressed?"

Frederick let out a long and agitated sigh.

"Fine…" Frederick mumbled something under his breath that Noah couldn't hear, but he disregarded it as the door closed behind him. He looked over at Rachel who had just finished putting her dress on.

"What time is it?" She asked sleepily. Noah grabbed his phone from the nightstand.

"A little past nine," He said.

"Oh god, I'm late for class." Rachel fumbled out of bed, Noah couldn't help but smile as she wandered around the room aimlessly to collect her things.

"I don't know if showing up to class in that dress is the best idea," Noah said. Rachel looked down at herself before letting out a warm laugh.

"Good point. Do you think I could borrow a hoodie and some joggers?"

"Of course," Noah said with a smile. He slid out of bed and walked over to the small closet next to his desk, pulling out a hoodie along with a pair of grey joggers. "Here, these are my smallest pair."

"Thank you," Rachel leaned forward and kissed him gently on the cheek. "How's my hair?"

"Uh…" It looked like Rachel had been electrocuted. Noah failed miserably at containing his smile.

"Oh god, is it that bad?" She asked with a laugh.

"It could be worse," Noah said, laughing along with her. She quickly hopped out of her dress and into Noah's clothes, walking over to the small mirror he had hanging on the wall.

"Oh my god, it's a rat's nest. A ponytail will have to do I have absolutely no time. Do you think you could grab my books for me and drop them off when you get a chance? I'm already ten minutes late." Rachel tied her hair up as she spoke, Noah watched in complete awe as she did so.

The gentle motion of her wrists, the way her hips swayed playfully as she tried to hurry herself along. Every one of Rachel's actions made Noah fall in love with her even more.

"Of course," He replied gently. "Your class is in the science building, right?"

"Yes, modern anthropology in room 223. I'll be in the back like always." She walked over to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. "Thank you," She said softly before kissing him on the cheek once again. As she pulled away, Noah grabbed her and pulled her back in for another kiss. His heart fluttered as her soft lips pressed against his, and as they parted, Rachel placed her head on his chest.

"Wish I could stay with you all day," She said.

"You're too much of a rule follower to ditch class."

"Ugh, you're right. The guilt would crush me. Ok, I really should get going!" Rachel opened the entry door, finding Fredrick waiting patiently on the other side. She gave him a polite nod before turning back to Noah. "Thanks again, love you!"

"Love you too," Noah said.

"Love you three," Frederick added awkwardly. Rachel ignored him, giving Noah a final wave before heading down the hallway. Frederick laughed at his own joke as he shamelessly stared at Rachel's ass.

"Man oh man, she really is something…" Frederick said more to himself than to Noah. Fredrick sauntered into the room and sat on his bed. Noah didn't acknowledge him as he continued to get dressed and gather his things.

"Not even going to wash the sex off you, huh?"

"Jesus Fred, we talked about this," Noah said.

"What? I'm not saying it's a bad thing! I'd be doing the same if I had a sweet treat like that… I wouldn't leave her alone for a minute, and she'd be begging me to stay with her every night."

Noah looked at Fred, dumbfounded, and watched as his roommate placed both his hands over his head with a triumphant smirk.

"Why do you have to be so fucking weird around Rachel? You know that kind of stuff makes her uncomfortable."

"I didn't say it in front of her this time! I was good. I was good right?"

Noah didn't answer. Fred leaned forward.

"Wait, do you think she's mad at me?"

Noah shook his head and sighed. "I got to go, are we still on for that gaming session later with Cody?"

"Nah, Cody dropped out."

"He dropped out? Like of college?" Noah asked. Frederick pushed up his glasses and nodded slowly.

"Not everyone can handle the big leagues, champ. Cody headed back to his small town where things were more his speed."

"Right, well, I hope it's a better fit for him." Noah had to admit, he envied Cody somewhat. He had a love-hate relationship with his hometown. But there were definitely days he missed the slower life. Especially given all the events involving Jack and his friends.

"Yeah, I guess so. That does mean we're going to be down a player for a while. One less wolf in our pack," Frederick gave an all too serious salute. Noah cringed.

"We'll figure that out later. I got to go." Noah made for the door.

"Before you go, you might want to know that some rumors have been spreading," Frederick said, Noah froze at the door.

"What?" He asked.

Frederick closed his eyes and leaned his head back against the wall with a guilty smile.

"There's rumors spreading about you and Rachel. Big rumors," Frederick said. Noah felt his heart sink in his chest. There was no way people had heard about Jack and Rachel already. How could they?

He had to know the extent of the damage.

"What are the rumors?" He asked. Frederick smirked.

"You know… spicy stuff."

"Like?" Noah pressed.

"Didn't you just tell me to not get weird about Rachel? Let's just say that I might need to start attending more parties..."

Noah's mind flashed back to the previous night. Tracing over images of Rachel being manhandled by Jack and his friends. Remembering the moans she made as Jack fingerbanged her.

"I've got to go." Noah left the room quickly. He heard Fredrick start to speak but was down the hall before he could catch what Fredrick said.

This wasn't good. If word had gotten to Fredrick's group of friends, then that meant a good part of the campus was talking about it as well.

Noah's mind raced, his pace quickening without him realizing it. He mindlessly walked to Rachel's dorm, gathering her belongings before delivering them a fog. Her smile was a welcome respite, but the rest of Noah's journey was filled with sweltering worry as he made his way into his class and sat down.

He glanced around the room. Were people looking at him more? No, it was just in his head. He needed to calm down. Surely things weren't as bad as Fred had made them out to be.

"This seat taken?"

Noah looked over, immediately frowning when he saw Mike staring back at him. His clothes were too tight, but Noah couldn't decide if that was because of his muscles or because Mike bought clothes two sizes down. Mike did look good though. Most of the women in the classroom also seemed to agree, glancing at him regularly.

"You're in this class?" Noah asked.

"Uh, yeah. Wait," Mike opened his phone and checked it. "Yeah, this is the basic math one right?"

"Yeah, basic mathematics."

"Cool cool, yeah this is me then." Mike smiled stupidly.

"It's just... well I've never seen you in class."

"Oh yeah, that's because I don't usually go. It's like... why bother you know?"

"Right..."

"So, can I sit here?" Mike asked again.

"Oh, yeah. Go for it." Noah said.

"Cool." Mike threw down his bag and slumped into the chair, his aftershave bleeding into Noah's nostrils. "No Rachel today?"

"She's never been in this class," Noah said.

"Huh… wait really? I thought for sure she was."

"Nope," Noah said flatly.

"Huh, weird." Mike appeared disappointed. Noah wondered if Rachel was the only reason why he had decided to show up to class today.

The lecture started. While Noah tried his best to keep focused, Mike's presence made it impossible to do so. Noah glanced over at him several times, not surprised to find that Make hadn't bothered bringing a laptop or notebook. Boredom won over Mike, and Noah began to see him lean towards him.

"So uh… I guess you guys had a lot of fun last night, huh?" Mike tried to whisper, which really just translated to him speaking with a raspy voice at normal volume. Noah glared at him.

"Keep your voice down," He whispered.

"Sorry man," Mike replied, his voice still at the same volume, albeit raspier. "Just want to make sure things like that can fucking happen again, you know?"

So he knew, fuck, that meant all of Jack's crew knew what had happened. Noah felt his heart begin to race.

"Look, it was a one-time thing, alright? Jack and Rachel had their little session, but that doesn't mean it's going to be a regular occurrence."

"Wait, she did something with Jack?" Mike's voice grew louder. Several other students looked back at them in annoyance.

"Wait, you didn't know?"

"No! I was talking about the balloon-popping game man. Are you fucking telling me Jack got it first?!"

Shit, Mike really didn't know. Noah's face flashed beet red, he wanted to sink into himself.

"Forget I said anything," He said.

"Dude I can't you said it! Does that mean… holy shit… does that mean I can fuck her too? Is that a thing now?" Mike's voice carried across the room like a heavy blanket, Noah sunk into his chair with every passing word.

"Please Mike, let's just drop this alright?" Noah felt shame and excitement swirl in his chest. His mind returned to that evening, when Mike had thrown Rachel over the couch and dry humped her like an animal. He was ravenous, primal.

Noah couldn't help but wonder what he'd do if he got Rachel all to himself.

"I would fucking pay you for a chance with her dude. Wait no… not like that… I'm just saying like I really want to fuck her." Mike's voice boomed.

The professor stopped his lecture and cleared his throat, staring at Noah and Mike with disturbed annoyance. Noah looked back at him, his heart sinking further when he saw countless eyes staring back at him.

"Sorry!" Mike said, raising his hand. The professor let out a tired sigh.

"Just learn to keep it down, Michael. Some people are here to actually learn," The Professor said dully before continuing his lecture.

Noah went back to his writing, sweat forming on his brow as he tried to pretend like his conversation with Mike had never happened.

He just needed to focus. Focus on basic mathematics. It was a level 100 course, it was easy. Noah just needed to keep his pencil moving. He saw Mike shuffling through his bag out the corner of his eye, heard him tear a piece of paper from his notebook, and then saw his beefy hand slide a note across his desk.

Did they smash?

Noah stared at the note, then slowly looked up at Mike with a blank expression. Mike mouthed the question slowly to him. Noah glanced back down at the note and wrote a response.

No.

He slid the note back across the table. Mike scratched his head before frantically scribbling onto the paper.

Well, can I smash?

Noah wanted this to stop. He had drawn enough attention to himself and Rachel.

No.

Mike let out a audible grunt of disappointment.

What did they do??

I'm not entertaining this.

Come on, u can tell me

Work on your work.

Another audible grunt of disappointment. Mike finally relented, returning to tapping on his desk while the class lecture wrapped up. As soon as it did, Noah stood from his desk and made his way out of class. He wasn't surprised to find Mike following closely behind him.

"Hey Noah, wait up!"

Noah let out a long sigh, "Mike, I'm not going to tell you anything, alright?"

"Fine fine I won't push it. It's just… you know.. this is big fucking news."

"It's not that big," Noah corrected.

"Well, not as big as me, that's for sure," Mike laughed at his joke while Noah grimaced. It was like Rachel put a spell on people, no one was immune to turning into wild animals around her.

"I'm getting to my next class now Mike," Noah said flatly.

"For sure, we'll talk more later, cool?" Mikes said.

"Yeah… sure." Noah walked out onto the campus plaza. His sense of worry flooded with every glance he received.

The reality was slowly setting in. Rachel was gaining a reputation, and it was only a matter of time before that came back to bite them. The part Noah didn't want to admit was somewhere deep inside, he knew this was what he wanted.

Chapter 11 - Best of Friends 11 - Dance Floor

Noah enjoyed his light buzz in the corner of the bar while Rachel danced with some of her newly met friends. He wasn't sure how he felt going to another party, especially considering the rumors spreading around campus. It took more than one pep talk in the mirror to remind himself that he couldn't become a recluse. They needed to go out, they needed to experience life. Most importantly, he knew he couldn't keep Rachel in a cage. Love it or hate it, this was their new life, and it was one that Noah would need to learn to embrace.

And that included watching Rachel dance amongst the many leering eyes of men at a bar.

She wore a white crop top with baggy jeans. A trend that seemed to be popping up on campus. It did wonders for her figure, accentuating her hips and complimenting her cleavage. Noah couldn't blame everyone for staring, as always, Rachel looked like she was taken out of a modeling ad. That, coupled with her warm laughter and infectious personality, Rachel was a gravitational force that pulled both men and women alike. It would only be a matter of time before someone made a pass at her, and Noah secretly hoped it would happen.

It wasn't long until they did. As Rachel excused herself from her friend group to head over to the bar, a tall, burly man followed her there. Noah couldn't make out what they were saying, but it was clear by how close he stepped towards her that he was interested in one thing. He caressed her shoulder while leaning into her ear to whisper something. Rachel threw her head back and laughed before shaking her head and pointing towards Noah. The man looked at him, the smile on his face dimming when they made eye contact. Noah raised his empty glass, and without a second word, the man politely smiled at Rachel before walking off.

Noah and Rachel caught each other's eyes. She gave him a playful thumbs up as the bartender handed her two drinks, Noah couldn't help but laugh as she made her way over to him.

"Hey mister! Having a fun time over here?" She asked, placing a drink down in front of Noah before sliding into the booth next to him.

"You know me, I absolutely love a loud bar," Noah said jokingly. Rachel laughed as she rubbed Noah's back.

"Thank you for always being such a trooper with these things. I love having you here with me."

"I wouldn't want it any other way," Noah replied, Rachel looked at him longingly before leaning in for a kiss. Her lips were sweaty and slightly chilled from her drink.

"Did you see that guy at the bar?" Rachel asked.

"I did. What was that about?"

"He was asking if I was here alone and if I wanted to go with him somewhere more private," Rachel replied. "That's when I let him know you were over here."

Noah's heart raced as he pictured Rachel leaving with another man. He did his best to hide the bulge forming in his pants.

"I wonder what he would've wanted to do," Noah said passively, Rachel's eyes lit up as she smiled brightly.

"Noah!" She shouted, pushing on his arm playfully. They both laughed. "You wouldn't have been bothered by me leaving with a complete stranger?"

Noah shrugged.

"What about being left here completely alone while everyone watched another man take your girlfriend from you?"

"I don't hate the idea," He answered. Rachel raised an eyebrow.

"Something about our latest venture tells me otherwise," She said.

Noah raised his hands. "In theory, ok?" Rachel laughed as she adjusted one of Noah's loose hairs.

"Fair enough. I don't know how comfortable I am with it but maybe a future talking point for us," Rachel kissed Noah on the cheek. "I'm going to head back out to the dance floor, are you going to be ok here by yourself for a little while longer?" She asked.

"Oh yeah, I'll be alright, go have fun!"

Rachel gently squeezed his arm. "Kiss me before I go." Noah happily obliged.

"Have fun," He said.

"Don't worry, I will!" Rachel scooted out of the booth and headed to the dancefloor once again. Noah watched as she and her friends enjoyed the DJ's haphazard music set. Overall, the night was turning out to be fun and uneventful.

Until Mike came through the front door.

Being the biggest partier amongst his friend group, Noah wasn't surprised to see him turn up. He also wasn't surprised how quickly Rachel caught his eye. Without any hesitation, he beelined for her.

It didn't seem like Mike had noticed him yet. Noah wondered what Mike would do if he thought Rachel was here alone. The music blared overhead as Mike cut through her friend group and grabbed Rachel by her waist. At first, Rachel was caught off guard. But upon seeing it was Mike, she expertly changed Mike's sexual energy into a friendly greeting with a warm smile and a gentle hug. She placed a hand on Mike's shoulder as the two spoke, and Mike in return kept his hand on Rachel's hip.

Noah's heart raced, but he didn't move from his chair. A part of him wanted to see it, he wanted to know how far Mike would take things. Rachel glanced over at Noah, he knew the look well. She was gauging how he felt about the situation, she wanted to know if he was ok with what was happening.

Uncertain if she would understand, Noah gave her a thumbs up. Upon seeing it, Rachel winked back at him and turned her attention to Mike, placing a hand on his neck. Mike took it as a queue to make a move. His hands immediately wrapped around her waist, Rachel's friends, in somewhat of a shock, looked over at Noah in confusion.

Right, their friends. He hadn't thought through this part. But at this juncture, there wasn't much he could do except smile and let them know he saw it and that he was ok with it.

He was actively letting an entire bar know he was ok with Mike taking Rachel. Upon seeing that Noah was aware, Rachel's friends slowly went back to their own business, having fun and dancing while Mike wrapped his arm around Rachel's waist and guided her to a more open part of the dance floor.

They danced in each other's arms, their bodies touching as Mike's hands became more adventurous with where they explored. The music slowed. Rachel wrapped her arms around his neck, Mike in turn pulled her close and squeezed her ass tightly. Noah felt his stomach lurch, particularly when several confused spectators looked at them, and then back at him.

They pointed. They laughed. They carried on with the night. All the while Noah watched with a racing heart and uncomfortable bulge in his pants. Memories of prom night flashed in his mind. Images of finding out the truth, of walking into a basement and never really leaving it. Only this time, he was in control. This time, he was doing it with someone he really could trust.

It also helped that Mike was relatively harmless in Noah's eyes. There was an innocence to his carnal desire. Mike was existing in the moment, getting as much as Rachel would give, and nothing more. For that, at least, Noah was grateful.

Moments bled together, and as Noah finished his drink, he watched Rachel pull away from Mike's beefy arms, her fingers sliding down to his hands as she spoke a few more words to him and walked over to Noah. It was only then that Mike

spotted Noah, and as soon as he did, he put a hand over his mouth, before promptly pulling out his phone. Noah felt his phone buzz and pulled it out.

Mike: Dude, I'm so sorry. She kinda came onto me and wuz hot so I touched her butt and shit. Not cool I know.

Noah chuckled under his breath and shook his head, at least he was honest.

Noah: It's cool.

Noah pressed send as Rachel approached.

"So… how was the show?" She asked. Noah smiled.

"It was pretty good, what did he say to you?" Noah asked, glancing at Mike who looked up from his phone and gave Noah a sloppy salute before stumbling into the crowd.

"He asked if he could fuck me several times. Then asked if we could at least make out if we asked you first," Rachel slid next to Noah and wrapped herself around his arm.

"Well that was nice of him to consider me," Noah said. The two laughed together as Rachel moved her fingers between his.

"I'm surprised he was so bold though, if I'm being honest it kind of grossed me out. Who comes onto their friend's girlfriend like that?"

Noah cleared his throat. "Well… you can't blame him too much." Rachel looked over at him curiously.

"And why's that?"

"I mean, for starters, we have done some more spicy things with his friends."

"That is no excuse to try and fuck your friend's girlfriend behind their back," Rachel countered.

"Yeah… but I might have let it slip what we did with Jack."

Rachel's eyes widened.

"Oh… he knows what we did?" She asked.

"Well, not all of the details but yeah, we talked about it. He might have asked me if he could do the same with you," Noah said. Rachel raised an eyebrow.

"And did you tell him he could do stuff with me?" Rachel said with a smile, Noah couldn't help but blush.

"Well no, not exactly..."

"But you wanted him to do stuff with me?" Rachel asked. Noah's silence gave Rachel his answer. She nodded slowly. "Well, I guess that makes things a little bit better. Still, he shouldn't have come on to me like that without talking to you first."

"He actually just texted me, and said you came on to him," Noah said. Rachel scoffed and looked out onto the dance floor.

"Did he now?! I don't know why I'm surprised," Rachel let out a warm laugh and shook her head. "No wonder that boy is still single."

"He is a character," Noah replied. He squeezed Rachel's hand as she leaned her head against his shoulder.

"Well, I'm going to go see what the girls are up to. Will you be ok here on your own?"

"Yeah, I'm fine, go have fun. I might grab another drink."

"Ok sweetheart," Rachel leaned over and placed a gentle kiss on Noah's cheek. "I'll circle back with you in a minute ok?"

"Ok."

The night went on. Rachel eventually grabbed Noah and the two followed along with her friends playing darts, chatting about nothing, and laughing as they took part in a few drinking games. It was fun, and despite some curious eyes ogling Rachel, the night continued without a problem. When the crowds began to slow, Rachel and Noah decided it was time to head home.

Like many weary and tired souls, they stumbled along cracked sidewalk paths back to Godfrey's campus, doing their best to support one another with wavering steps.

"I think… I think I might have had a little too much to drink," Rachel said with a snort.

"I don't know, maybe we should take one more shot to be sure," Alex said playfully. Rachel let out a wild laugh, and her laughter was matched by the familiar chuckles of Mike.

"That was a fucking good one bro." There, off in the bushes, Noah spotted the burly man resting on all fours, seemingly trying to stand. "Worlds… fucking spinning, need to wait for it to slow down a little bit." Mike's words were slurred. Rachel, just as drunk, stumbled over to him.

"M-mike?" She asked.

"Yeah… I'm Mike," Mike replied, slowly looking up. "Oh shit, Rachel! Fuck… you're hot. How's uh... how's life?"

"Are you drunk?" Rachel asked.

"Ohhhh yeah," Mike replied. Rachel spun back to Noah, stumbling slightly as she pointed at Mike.

"He's drunk!" She shouted. Noah let out a laugh, doing his best to stand on his own two feet.

"I can see that." He said.

"We should get him home in one piece," Rachel said, stumbling towards Mike and grabbing his arm.

"H-hey… go slow cause like… the world…"

"Is spinning, I know. Noah, grab his other arm, we can't leave him like this," Rachel said.

"Agreed," Noah said, walking over to Mike's side and grabbing onto his arm. Rachel and Noah hoisted him up, surprised at how heavy he was. With slow, deliberate steps, the three made their way back to Rachel's apartment.

"You… you guys are the best. You know that right?" Mike said.

"Uh huh," Noah said softly.

"No! I… I fucking mean it. You're chill as hell, fun as hell, do crazy shit I could never do with my girl." Mike looked over at Noah and smirked. "You know what that means, right?"

Noah braced for it. It wasn't the first time he had been mocked, and it certainly wouldn't be the last.

"What?" Noah asked dryly.

"It means that you two trust the fuck out of each other, which is like… super fucking special. I don't know how you did it… you guys are just lucky I guess," Mike hiccuped as they turned a corner.

"That's very sweet of you to say Mike," Rachel said cheerfully.

"Don't… don't mention it. If me saying nice things is the one thing I can do at this fucking college, I'll take it. Can't wait to… to be out of this dump…"

"I take it college isn't your thing?" Noah asked.

"Fuck no!" Mike said.

"News to me." Noah hoped the joke would land. He smiled as Mike let out a slow dull laugh.

"I get it, it doesn't take a fucking scientist to figure out I'm not like… cut out for this shit. I'm fucking dumb as fuck."

"You are not!" Rachel said quickly, tapping Mike's shoulder.

"You don't have to be fucking nice about it, I know what the fuck I am. It's why I wanted to just focus on being a barber or like, I don't know, only fans or some shit."

"Why didn't you?" Noah asked. The three neared the entry door of Rachel's apartment building. She fumbled for her key as Mike sighed.

"Because if I didn't fucking go here my dad would have made sure to fuck me over. He's a fucking… smart guy you know? Does lawyer shit. Always was embarrassed of me. There was no way in fuck he was going to let me be a dropout. So I gotta get a fucking degree or like… he'll tank my future shit."

"Damn, that's awful," Noah said, doing his best to hold onto Mike's weight as Rachel opened the door.

"Yeah, it is what it is. Can't fucking complain. If I do what he says he'll probably help me out later so like… you do what you got to do I guess. He knows I'm fucking dumb as a fucking brick."

"Mike, you need to stop talking about yourself like that. Just because school isn't your thing doesn't mean you're dumb…" Rachel grabbed ahold of Mike as she spoke. "God you're heavy."

"It's the fucking gains," Mike said with a slow chuckle. Noah and Rachel laughed as they hauled him up the stairs to her apartment. They got him inside and walked over to Rachel's couch. Mike dropped with a loud thud and let out a deep sigh.

"I'm going to grab him some water, do you want anything?" Rachel asked Noah. He shook his head and sat next to Mike.

"No, I'm alright for now, thanks." Noah turned his attention to Mike, who was completely transfixed on Rachel.

"She's… really hot," Mike said softly.

"Yeah, she really is," Noah confirmed.

"You're really lucky man, she's a keeper hands down."

"Trust me, I know." Noah was surprised at how comfortable he felt talking this openly with Mike. It was an experience he had never really encountered before. This exploration, this subtle taboo flirtation, felt… natural.

It felt safe.

Rachel returned with two overly filled glasses of water, spilling them as she wobbled towards the couch.

"One for you and one for me," Rachel said, handing Mike the glass as she sat on the opposite side of him. He took it, spilling some on himself as he attempted to take a drink of it. After taking a large gulp, Mike grimaced.

"Fuck this is disgusting, what is this?"

"Water," Rachel said.

"Oh… gross," Mike continued to drink it. The group fell silent for a moment, the fatigue of the evening seeming to catch up with all three of them.

"So… I got to fucking ask. What did you and Jack really do?" Mike asked. Noah smirked as he looked at Rachel.

"I'll let you share as much as you want," He said to her. Rachel bit her lip excitedly.

"Well, after everyone left, Jack and I did some… exploring," Rachel said bashfully. Noah watched as her eyes glanced down at Mike's immediately swelling bulge.

"Holy fuck, so you two did fuck then?" Mike asked. Rachel cleared her throat.

"Well, no… we didn't go that far. It was our first time doing something like that after all," Rachel replied. Mike looked over at Noah, eyes wide in awe.

"Fucking A, you two are more freaky than me man. No way in a million years I'd let someone fuck around with my girl. Never."

Noah's face went red as he cleared his throat and looked away. Mike immediately grabbed his shoulder, spilling a good amount of water on his pants in the process.

"Bro I'm not like shaming you! It's fucking cool man, next level shit right there. Plus I get how it could be hot, I get it. Does… does that mean you fuck other chicks too?" He asked. Noah and Rachel glanced at each other for a moment. They had never talked about it before. In fact, it had never even occurred to Noah to explore things with other women. Before he could answer, Mike continued.

"But I mean, with that said… could I like… you know… fuck her?" Mike said flatly.

Noah froze at the question, he knew it was only a matter of time before Mike asked, but to hear it out loud was something else. Noah glanced at Rachel.

"What do you think?" He asked her. Part of him hoped she would say yes, the other part hoped she would say no. If they uncorked this bottle again, it would only be a matter of time before others came around looking for their chance with Rachel.

And Noah still didn't know if that was what he wanted.

"Holy shit, I'm about to fuck your brains out!" Mike turned to Rachel excitedly, spilling even more of his water onto his lap. Rachel, to Noah's surprise, took the opportunity into her own hands.

"Oh Mike, you spilled all over your pants. Come on, let's take those off and put them in the dryer." Rachel slid off the couch, dropping to her knees as she began to unstrap Mike's belt. Noah leaned forward, his heart thumping in his chest as he watched Rachel's fingers slowly peel Mike's pants and underwear off his muscular thighs. Mike eagerly adjusted himself and helped her, staring in utter disbelief as he did so.

As Rachel pulled his pants over his groin, Mike's fully erect cock fell onto his stomach with a dull thud and eager twitch. Rachel and Noah both stared at the girthy member in shock.

"Fuck… Mike…" Rachel's hands slid up his veiny shaft as she looked directly at Noah. "I had no idea your cock would be so thick."

Mike let out a laugh as Rachel's fingers wrapped around the base of his dick.

"So are you finally going to let me fuck you?" Mike asked. His slurred words welled with excitement as Rachel slowly began to pump his cock.

"I guess we'll just have to see," Rachel replied playfully. She stared at Noah a moment longer, waiting to ensure that he was ok with her moving forward. Heart racing, Noah simply nodded as he slowly began to massage his own bulge. She smiled and looked back at Mike.

"Should I kiss it?" She asked him.

"Fuck yes you should!" Mike thrust his hips upwards, eagerly awaiting Rachel's soft lips. She leaned down slowly, drawing close and stopping just shy of touching him. She slowly jacked him off, letting out a soft moan as she rested her head on his thigh.

"It really is a nice cock," She said softly, kissing Mike's shaft. He let out a groan, his dick pulsing as Rachel moved upwards and slowly parted her lips as she pressed them against his tip. Then, with a smooth motion, she opened her mouth and let Mike enter her mouth.

Mike threw his head back as Rachel's head began to bob slowly. After several attempts to try and swallow his entire length, Rachel opted to work the base of his cock with her hand instead. She placed her opposite hand on Mike's meaty

thigh, digging her painted nails into his flesh as she began to pick up her tempo. Mike grabbed her hair and eagerly began pumping his length into her mouth.

His forceful thrusts caused Rachel to gag, she opened her mouth wide as her hand left his cock and began to trail underneath his loose-fitting shirt. Noah took in the moment, watching two absolutely gorgeous people pleasure one another. Noah would have to have been a fool to think Rachel hadn't daydreamed about this moment once or twice, and now they were both getting what they wanted.

The energy between the two began to shift, and soon Rachel wasn't giving Mike a blowjob. Instead, Mike was facefucking Rachel. He grabbed the base of her head and pushed her down onto his cock. Causing her to gag with every aggressive thrust.

"Oh my fucking god your mouth feels so fucking good," Mike was beginning to sweat. He grabbed a handful of Rachel's hair and pulled her off his cock. Rachel gasped loudly as Mike stood on wobbly feet and grabbed ahold of her, throwing her onto the couch before removing his shirt.

Noah had never seen Mike undressed, and a part of him wished he never had. The man's bronzed body was perfectly chiseled, with tattoos running down his arms and chest. His meaty fingers went for Rachel's pants, she let out a breathless gasp as he tore them off her.

The button on her jeans flew into the air as fabric ripped away from her soft, thick legs.

"Mike!" She shouted playfully.

"I'll fucking buy you some new ones," Mike said half in a stupor. He was absolutely ravenous. A primal creature who was focused on only one thing. Noah watched, inches away from the action, just as lost in the moment as Mike. He eagerly fondled himself as Mike ripped Rachel's panties off and dropped to his knees, burying his tongue inside her pussy. Rachel grabbed onto Mike's head and squeezed her thighs tightly against him.

"H-holy fuck!" Rachel ran her fingers through Mike's hair as his meaty hands wrapped around her thighs and pulled her closer to his mouth. He ate her pussy like he was starving, enjoying Rachel's taste for as long as he could. The room fell silent, filled only with soft moans and the wet sounds of sex. Mike's hands slid onto Rachel's ass, he squeezed it tightly as he pulled her closer.

"Oh… oh fuck Mike… You're going to make me cum!" Rachel's back arched and her body shivered. Noah watched as another man's tongue made his girlfriend orgasm. Mike pulled away from Rachel, watching her for a moment as she panted. Their bodies glistened as they locked eyes with one another. Everyone already knew what Mike wanted, and he was a force of nature that couldn't be stopped. Mike pulled Rachel's legs upward and slapped his meaty cock against her soaked pussy.

"I want to fuck you," He said bluntly. Rachel, breathless, looked at Noah.

"I don't… I don't know Mike," She waited to see Noah's reaction. He was frozen in place, not sure what to say or think. It was all happening so fast. He hadn't had time to consider the implications of Mike actually making it this far. He opened his mouth, but no words came out.

"Fuck it," Mike said, guiding his fat cock into Rachel before shoving his entire length into her with one smooth motion. She moaned as he began to forcefully fuck her. Without a condom, without a second thought. Noah watched as Mike pounded his full length into Rachel, her legs quivering with every eager thrust.

Then he leaned over and picked her up off the couch, slightly adjusting her in his arms before continuing his onslaught. Noah had never managed to lift Rachel himself.

"Oh wow, wow! This is... oh fuck!" Rachel was losing herself, moaning as she wrapped her arms around Mike's neck. Dull slaps filled the roam. Noah stared, dumbstruck as he watched Rachel's toes curl while Mike fucked her without remorse. But instead of horror, he felt safety.

And what jealously he did feel excited him.

Rachel's pulled her body close to Mike's. Her breasts flattened against his broad chest as Mike slammed her against a wall and continued to fuck her.

"Don't stop!" She said breathlessly, "Don't stop keep going!"

Mike pounded into her forcefully, putting every ounce of power he had into each thrust. Rachel clawed the back of Mike's head as he bit her neck.

It was one of the hottest things Noah had ever seen. He couldn't forget this moment.

Noah whipped out his phone and began to record. As he did, Rachel's legs began to quiver.

"Oh my god!" She threw her head back, shaking uncontrollably in Mike's arms as his pace slowed. He dropped her weight onto his cock, letting her sit on it as she came.

Mike didn't say a word, he didn't bother with clever remarks. All he cared about was fucking. He walked back over to the couch and threw Rachel over its backside. She fell over stomach first, her face dropping right next to Noah's as Mike shoved himself inside her again. Rachel's hair fell over her face, bobbing with Mike's aggressive thrusts. Noah felt the entire couch move as Mike dominated Rachel. She looked at Noah through her hair, their eyes locking as she moaned in ecstasy. She reached out and touched Noah's face, smiling as Mike's pace began to quicken.

Noah adjusted himself and moved the phone upwards, getting a better view of Mike taking Rachel. His veiny arms wrapped around her slim waist. He pulled her close as he let out a deep grunt of satisfaction. The entire sofa feeling like it would give way under his onslaught at any moment. Rachel screamed as her body began to shake again. Mike buried himself inside Rachel, letting out a deep moan of his own.

"Ohhh fuck I'm about to fucking bust in you," Mike's pace began to quicken, his eyes fixated on Rachel's ass as his breath became shallow. Rachel acted quickly, forcefully pushing Mike off her and dropping onto her knees. As his massive cock left her pussy, a spray of cum covered her face. Rachel responded by engulfing Mike's pulsing member, letting him finish inside her mouth. Her hands slid over his rippling abs as he let out a deep groan and shoved himself between Rachel's soft lips.

"Oh my fucking god! FUCK!" Mike grabbed onto Rachel's head and pushed as much of himself as he could into her, eventually slamming her into the back of the sofa as he thrust forward slowly. Noah sat up and adjusted his camera, catching trickles of cum falling off Rachel's chin. She swallowed most of Mike's load, keeping him inside her mouth until he grew soft.

Then, unceremoniously, Mike pulled out of Rachel and slapped his softening cock against her face.

"That was the best fuck of my life… can we go again later?" He asked. Rachel, still breathless laughed as she attempted to wipe cum and saliva off her face.

"Let's see where the night takes us," She said.

"Cool... I'm gonna pass out now," Mike wandered over to Rachel's bed and promptly collapsed.

The room went silent. Noah ended his recording as he caught Rachel's gaze. She was just as hungry as him. Without a word, Noah dropped to his knees and began aggressively making out with his Rachel on the floor. Noah could feel Mike's cum smearing across their faces, but he didn't care. He wanted Rachel now. She matched his energy, her fingers running through his hair as she pushed him onto his back and straddled him.

Noah frantically undid his pants, immediately sticking his throbbing cock into Rachel as soon as it was free. He slid in with ease, causing Rachel to moan softly as she rode him aggresively. Noah grabbed one of her bouncing tits and squeezed it tightly. Rachel in turn leaned in close and kissed him deeply as she twerked on his cock.

"I love you," Noah said between breathless kisses.

"I love you too," Rachel replied. Pressing her body against his.

Noah lost track of time as the two continued making passionate love on the floor.

Mike's loud snores and their soft moans making a gentle melody through the night.

Chapter 12 - Best of Friends 12 - Mike the Bull

Noah woke to the sound of Mike snoring. It made his chest tighten with dread. Rachel shifted in his arms, the two nestled closely on the couch. He didn't remember falling asleep, but he did remember what happened before. Part of him hoped it hadn't happened, that it was all simply a dream. Noah peered through Rachel's bedroom door and saw Mike sprawled out on her bed, fully nude.

There it was, cold reality.

Noah's hatred and arousal intertwined. Mike had gotten to fuck Rachel, and Noah had sat back and watched while it happened.

There was more confusion than hatred at first. It was only when Noah grew aroused by the idea that he began to hate himself. This wasn't how things were supposed to go, things were meant to be different with Rachel.

Thoughts bled into emotion before slowly dissolving away as images of Rachel being fucked overtook Noah's mind. He could hear Rachel's moans, he could see the ecstasy on her face as Mike pounded her mercilessly.

Noah had filmed it. He'd nearly forgotten that part. He could watch it again if he wanted to.

Rachel stirred beneath him, her eyes opening as she gripped Noah's forearm and pulled it closer to her chest.

"Morning," She said softly.

"Morning," Noah said back gently.

"What time is it?" Rachel twirled around, burying her face into Noah's chest.

"Not sure," Noah replied. Rachel nodded her head, her hair tickling Noah's face.

Mike snored once more. Rachel froze before shooting up from the couch.

"Oh god…"

"What? Do you have class?" Noah asked.

"What? No…" She peered into her bedroom and covered her mouth when she saw Mike there.

"Oh my god." She looked back at Noah with terror in her eyes. "Did we?"

"You did," Noah confirmed, doing his best to sound nonchalant about it.

"So that wasn't a dream," Rachel said.

"No, it wasn't."

Rachel stared at Mike as he scratched his bare ass before letting out another deep snore.

"Jesus Christ," Rachel shook her head. She turned to Noah cautiously, her haphazard bedhead doing wonders to cut the tension.

"Are you mad?" Rachel asked.

"Not at all," Noah said, surprised at how quickly he was able to answer the question.

"Are you sure? It's ok if you are." Rachel was timid. Noah knew she was afraid he might have another meltdown. He smiled and placed a hand on Rachel's back.

"Really, it's alright. Mike might be a fuck boy, but he is also a good guy. Everything we did last night was above board." Noah's fingers trailed across Rachel's back as he spoke, and she placed her hand on his thigh in response.

"I can't believe I actually did that," Rachel said. The statement was surprisingly helpful for Noah to hear.

"How are you feeling about it? You two were pretty drunk last night," Noah said. Rachel was silent for a moment.

"I guess we were. That was kind of stupid, wasn't it?"

"I mean, I was there and pretty sober. I don't know… maybe."

"I liked it. Is that bad to say?"

"Not at all. I'd be worried if you didn't."

"Ok."

The room went silent again. Rachel continued to stare at Mike, but it didn't seem to be out of desire.

"What are you thinking about?" Noah asked.

"What Mike said last night, about you getting to sleep with other women," Rachel replied. Noah felt goosebumps rise on his skin.

"What about it?" Noah asked. Rachel shrugged.

"Feels a little unfair that I get to explore myself with other men and you only sit on the sidelines. It doesn't feel right."

"Well, I don't know about all that I…"

"How many women have you slept with before me?" Rachel asked. Noah froze.

"Why are you asking me that?"

"I'm the only one, aren't I?"

Noah opened his mouth to speak but closed it quickly. That was all the response Rachel needed.

"Why do I get to spread my wings at college, but you only get to have me? It seems wrong… what Mike said makes sense."

"Is that something you actually want?" Noah asked. Rachel blew out a long breath and laughed uncomfortably.

"I don't know… I could get used to it." Rachel always smiled awkwardly when she was lying.

"Rachel…" Noah pressed.

"Fine, I don't want that. At all. It sounds like an absolute nightmare. Honestly, I don't know how you stomach it."

"It takes practice," Noah said, making Rachel laugh.

"Stop. That is exactly my point. You should have a chance to explore things just like me. Before we get older before we settle down. That's what college is meant for."

"Before we settle down?" Noah teased, it made Rachel blush.

"Yes, better to get it out of the way before we have kids don't you think?"

Noah's heart fluttered, Rachel had never brought up their future like this before.

"I guess you're right."

"So, now's the time to explore. I don't need you having a midlife crisis down the road." Rachel's tone was playful, but there was a very real edge to it.

"What if I don't want to?" Noah replied. Rachel raised an eyebrow.

"You're telling me you have no desire to be with other women whatsoever?"

Noah shifted uncomfortably.

"I don't know. I never really thought about it," He said quickly. Noah could feel his heart thumping in his chest. Discomfort, uncertainty, fear. All mixed together with one simple reality.

All he wanted was Rachel. It was all he ever wanted, and he didn't know if that was wrong.

"You should think about it," Rachel said.

"But what happens if it goes wrong?"

Rachel grabbed onto Noah's hand.

"For you, I would endure anything," Rachel said with a smile.

Mike shot up from Rachel's bed with a loud grunt. Noah and Rachel turned their attention to him.

"What the fuck?!" He shouted, scanning Rachel's bedroom in confusion. His eyes scanned across the floor towards Noah and Rachel, catching the pair's gaze.

"Hey," Noah said. Mike squinted his eyes.

"Where the fuck am I?" He asked.

"Rachel's place. You came home with us last night," Noah said. Rachel waved at him cautiously.

"Good morning, Mike," She said. Mike stared for a moment, his mouth hung open as his eyes slowly widened.

"Wait… did we fuck last night?" He asked.

"Well, you two did," Noah corrected. Mike smiled wildly as he let out a loud laugh.

"No fucking way!" Mike ran his fingers through his hair. Noah grimaced. Even in his disheveled state, Mike looked like a Greek statue. Noah glanced over at Rachel, her eyes were fixed on Mike as she bit her lip.

"I can't believe I actually did it. We actually fucked. Holy shit." Mike went silent for a moment before looking at Rachel. "Wait, does this mean we're fuck buddies now?"

Rachel and Noah looked at one another.

"We hadn't really thought that far ahead," Rachel said cautiously.

"Ok, but does it mean we can fuck again? Like right now?" Mike began stroking himself, Rachel scoffing and looking at Noah with disbelief, who in turn cleared his throat uncomfortably.

"I don't know, I'd have to think about it..." Noah said, but there was little time to think through the implications of the question.

Mike moved like a predator. Jumping off the bed and approaching Rachel hungrily.

"You guys think too fucking much. Live in the moment, let's fuck." Mike grabbed Rachel from the sofa and pulled her from Noah.

"I don't know Mike I…" Rachel looked down at Noah, as did Mike. He didn't seem vindictive. He simply wanted what he wanted, and right now that was Rachel.

"You cool with it?" Mike asked.

Noah tried to answer but only managed to give a thumbs up.

"I think he's cool with it, come on." Mike lifted Rachel over his shoulder before she could speak.

"Mike!" Rachel shouted with a playful laugh.

Mike carried her over to the kitchen table and laid her on it, spreading her legs wide before lining up his fat cock with her entrance.

"Oh my God, Mike wait, maybe we should…"

Mike thrust himself inside her. Noah watched as he slid in slowly, stretching Rachel with every inch. She moaned and arched her back. Mike grunted in response, thrusting forcefully a few times before burying his entire length inside her.

Then he began to lose himself.

Mike pummeled Rachel's pussy, plowing into her with enough force to make the table rock beneath them. Noah watched silently, his breath shallow as Mike manhandled Rachel right in front of him. It was different in the daylight and sober. It felt more real.

Mike grabbed onto Rachel's thighs and pulled her close to his hips, burying himself into her as he grabbed one of her bouncing breasts firmly. The table began to slide across the floor, each thrust causing Rachel's legs to quiver.

"Jesus fuck you are so fucking tight!" Mike said.

"Keep going, don't stop," Rachel grabbed Mike's forearms as he leaned over her. Mike's thighs slapped against Rachel, her wet pussy drenching his balls as the sounds of sex filled the apartment. Noah's hands dropped to his cock. He stroked it as Rachel's legs clenched and her body shook.

Mike's pace began to quicken, he grabbed Rachel's neck as he slammed into her pussy.

"I want to cum in you," He said, his thrusts becoming forceful and more deliberate. Rachel immediately put her hands on Mike's chest.

"Mike no! On the stomach!" Rachel said. Mike grunted, continuing to thrust into Rachel eagerly. "Mike!" Rachel shouted, pushing against him more forcefully.

"Fuck, fine!" He pulled out his cock, Rachel's pussy gripping onto his shaft tightly as he exited her. Cum was already erupting from his tip, Mike grabbed his cock and aimed it at Rachel's chest. Several large ropes of cum sprayed across her stomach and chest. Some managing to reach Rachel's chin.

"Fuck that was good!" Mike shouted, slapping his cock against Rachel's pussy before walking to the side of the table and grabbing her head.

"Clean it for me," He said dully, shoving his cock into her mouth forcefully. Rachel sucked him off obediently as Mike threw his head back and sighed. He looked over at Noah and smiled.

"She is really good at fucking bro. You're lucky."

Noah stared silently. His body felt empty. For the briefest of moments, Mike reminded him of Brian. The apartment faded away, and Noah saw the blue lockers once more. Rachel continued to suck with soft moans while Mike caressed the back of her head.

"Bro?" Mike asked. Noah snapped back to reality.

"W-what?"

"Sorry, are we not supposed to talk?" Mike asked.

"Huh? Oh uh… no I… I honestly don't know. This is all kind of new."

Mike nodded and pulled his flaccid cock out of Rachel's mouth, locking eyes with her as he slapped his dick across her face.

"Yeah, new for me too. I won't fucking lie, I'm super glad your girl is fair game though." Mike leaned over and kissed Rachel deeply. "Just wait, I am going to fuck your brains out."

"If I let you fuck me again." Rachel corrected, pushing Mike's face away before looking at Noah with a bashful smile. They stared at one another while Mike began gathering his clothes from the previous night.

"So now what?" Noah asked. The question was for Rachel, but it was Mike who answered.

"I'm never up this fucking early, and I'm starving. You guys want to grab breakfast?"

Rachel sat up on the kitchen table. Mike's cum dripped down her chest, pooling near her navel and legs. She bit her lip as Noah stared at her hungrily.

"I could eat." She said.

"Yeah, I'm pretty hungry myself," Noah said, his cock still rock hard. Rachel glanced down at it.

"Noah, you want to help me get cleaned up in the bedroom?" Rachel asked, standing and walking toward the bed. Noah didn't have to think twice.

As soon as they passed through the bedroom door, he grabbed Rachel and threw her onto the bed, climbing on top of her while they kissed passionately. Noah could feel Mike's cum rubbing on his chest as Rachel's nails dug into his back.

Noah barely thought as he removed his underwear and rubbed his cock against Rachel's entrance. She was more wet than Noah had ever felt. He didn't even notice himself slip inside her. Rachel moaned as their bodies intertwined.

"Fuck me Noah, fuck me." She said, wrapping her legs around him and pulling close to his ear. Noah plowed into Rachel, their fingers intertwining as he was overtaken with lust.

"That's right, fuck me. Cum in me Noah. I want you to cum." Rachel pulled Noah in for a deep kiss as he continued to pound into her eagerly.

"Damn, that's fucking hot," Mike said from the entryway. Noah looked up at him for a moment, but Rachel grabbed his chin and directed his attention back to her. That was all the direction Noah needed to continue fucking her.

Mike didn't seem to take offense. He walked into the room, making his way over to the side of the bed. Noah and Rachel slowed their pace, looking up at Mike in confusion.

"Mind if I jump in?" He said, his dick rock hard again. Noah stared in disbelief. He had never been this close to another naked man before.

Rachel looked at Noah and smiled.

"What do you think?" She asked.

"Uh, sure." Noah regretted the answer. He wished he had told Mike to go away, but in an attempt to maintain his indifference, he went back to fucking Rachel.

Mike shoved his cock into Rachel's mouth, pushing his entire length down her throat as Noah fucked with an uneven rhythm.

"Fuck she deep throats too!" Mike shouted, fondling one of Rachel's breasts while she gagged underneath him.

The three fell into a carnal trance. Rachel took gasps of breath when Mike would allow her to, moaning loudly as Noah shoved himself inside her forcefully. Noah felt sweat beginning to form on his and Rachel's skin, he found his cock pulsing as he watched Rachel's saliva drip down Mike's girthy cock. After a deep thrust, Mike pulled out of her mouth and began pushing Noah off Rachel. The move made Noah freeze, and his heart began to sink.

"Oh, you want a turn?" Noah asked.

"What? No man it's your fucking turn, but let's do it doggy style. Spit roasting is hot as fuck." Mike said. Relief swelled into Noah's chest. Rachel sat up and gave Noah a kiss on the cheek.

"You having fun?" She asked him. Noah smiled.

"Yeah, I am."

"Good, now fuck me until you cum." Rachel got on all fours, adjusting to meet Mike who stood at the end of the bed. Mike grabbed onto her head with a meaty hand while Noah pushed himself back into her tight pussy.

He began to thrust eagerly, Rachel's ass jiggled as it pounded into him. He looked up and saw Mike eagerly face fucking Rachel, her moans muffled by the massive cock being shoved down her throat. The three found their rhythm once again, and it didn't take long for Noah to begin losing control of himself. He grabbed onto Rachel's meaty ass and squeezed it tightly.

"Oh shit. I'm going to cum!" Noah shouted. Rachel eagerly thrust into him. Noah clenched his teeth as he buried his cock into Rachel. He felt himself erupt, euphoria drenching his body as he filled Rachel with load after load of his cum. In response, Rachel slowly rubbed her ass against him while Mike still forcefully face fucked her.

"Lucky piece of shit!" Mike pulled himself out of Rachel's mouth and began jerking off his cock, "Open up," He commanded. Rachel stuck her tongue out and opened her mouth wide with a smile. Mike came in close and exploded his load onto her face as he watched Rachel grind against Noah. His cum sprayed upward, falling into her hair and eyes.

"Mike you're getting it in my eyes!" Rachel shouted

"Huh? Oh yeah, sorry." Mike let his fat, pulsing cock slap against Rachel's full lips before dropping onto the bed next to Rachel and Noah with a sigh.

"Jesus," Rachel said, doing her best to wipe away Mike's cum while still grinding her ass against Noah.

Noah stayed in her a while longer, wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her with him as he lay on the bed. His soft cock exited her, and the two embraced one another as he kissed Rachel's neck tenderly.

The three rested for a moment, Rachel turning to Noah and kissing him deeply while Mike stood from the bed and continued to get dressed. Noah could taste the salty cum on Rachel's lips, his mixture of shame and excitement almost as intoxicating as the sex itself.

"Did you have fun?" Rachel asked softly.

"I did, did you?" Noah asked. Rachel nodded as she still tried to wipe Mike's cum from her tearing eyes.

"Save for the cumshot, always." Rachel laughed with Noah, and Mike joined them.

"Yeah yeah, my bad. But can we get breakfast?" Mike asked.

Chapter 13 - Best of Friends 13 - Morning Breakfast

Godfrey’s cafeteria was a space of polished marble and privilege. Newly built, lavishly furnished, and serving gourmet meals to the academy’s elite.

Noah often felt out of place sitting at the quartz countertop tables. This morning especially as he watched Mike work away at several plates of eggs, bacon, and hashbrowns.

Rachel sat closely beside him, taking a bite from her yogurt covered in granola as she watched the incoming crowd of students.

"Kind of slow today," Rachel said. Mike grunted, finishing off his second plate of eggs and letting out a loud burb.

"Yeah, probably because of the fucking game last night. Most people party after," Mike said.

"Oh! That's the one Ethan played in right?" Rachel asked.

"He starts every time," Mike said, digging into a pile of bacon as he spoke.

"Do you guys ever go to watch him?" Noah asked. Mike shrugged.

"I mean sometimes. Godfrey Stadium fills up pretty quick so good fucking luck getting a seat. Plus I'm like… fucking busy with shit so yeah."

"Weird, I thought you'd be big into basketball," Noah said. Mike stared, confused.

"Why?"

Noah shrugged. "I don't know, you seemed like the sports type to me." Mike shook his head.

"Nah. Shits boring. I did do wrestling for a little bit but I didn't want to do it in college."

"So what do you like to do for fun?" Rachel asked. Mike smirked.

"Party and fuck!" Mike said far too loudly. Rachel glared at him while others stared at their table.

"Mike! Volume," Rachel hissed.

"Oh right sorry," Mike looked over at their neighboring students and gave a polite smile. "I do like to fuck, but I'm not fucking her. Because that's his girlfriend so like... we don't... do that." Mike looked over to Rachel, seeking approval. She shook her head and let out a soft laugh.

"We're going to have to work on that." She squeezed Noah's arm as Mike laughed along with her, finishing off his pile of bacon before grabbing another plate of eggs.

"Speaking of fucking though, like… I remember bits of last night… I remember it feeling good and shit but like… I'm foggy," Mike said.

"That will happen when you're drunk," Noah said.

"I guess, I just need a reality check. It really did happen, right? Did we go fucking crazy? Like multiple times?"

"Yes Mike, it really did happen," Noah confirmed.

"That's so fucking sick man, holy shit." Mike stared at Rachel dumbfounded, his eyes wide open as he took her in. "I'm so fucking lucky. This morning was fucking awesome too."

"What was awesome about this morning?" Jack asked, approaching the three with a warm smile. Mike looked at Rachel and Noah bashfully.

"Uh… you know… some stuff." He spoke like an elementary child, Jack slid into the seat next to him and looked at Rachel curiously.

"Some stuff? Like, what?" He asked.

"Jack, maybe it's best we skip the subject? It's kind of sensitive," Rachel said. Noah looked at her with surprise.

"You don't want him to know?" Noah asked. Rachel laughed uncomfortably. Jack's eyebrow raised.

"Don't want me to know what?"

"Ooooh man, this is getting fucking good," Mike said. Jack's face shifted from curiosity to pain as the pieces fell into place.

"Wait… did you two…"

"We fucked!" Mike said, holding out his hand for a high five from Jack. Jack stared into Rachel's eyes as if stricken by a bolt. He raised his hand and weakly hit Mike's.

"You fucked," Jack said dully. Rachel blushed and fixed her hair.

"We did," She confirmed. Noah watched Jack closely, surprised to see him becoming disturbed by the news.

"Dude I fucking plowed the shit out of her, it was mind-blowing. Definitely in the like the top ten fucks I've had for sure." Mike said

"Top ten, you must be so proud Rachel," Jack said dryly as he took a swig of his coffee. Rachel's brow furrowed.

"What's that supposed to mean?" She asked. Jack shook his head.

"It doesn't mean anything," Jack shot back. Mike grabbed Jack's coffee and took a sip from it. Jack looked at him with annoyance.

"Thanks, bro, I'm fucking tired as fuck," Mike said, sliding the mug back over.

"You're welcome…"

"God I wish I could fucking see it again though man… I'm kind of bummed I was drunk for half of it."

Noah cleared his throat.

"I mean, I did record it," he said. Jack and Mike both looked at him with peaked interest.

"You recorded it?" Jack asked with confusion. "Why?"

Noah shrugged. "I don't know, it just seemed right at the time I guess I…"

"He enjoys it," Rachel interjected, "We both enjoy it. No harm in recording something that we both would like to remember."

"Yeah well, I don't know if I'd feel the same way about it," Jack replied.

"Then it's a good thing you're not Noah," Rachel countered. Tension filled the air as Jack slowly sipped his coffee, staring at Rachel with cold eyes.

"I guess so."

"Does it bother you?" Rachel asked.

"Who said anything about it bothering me?"

"You're the one acting strange about it," Rachel said. Jack shook his head and ran his fingers through his hair.

As the two continued to banter, Noah’s gaze drifted beyond the table and landed on a figure he knew all too well. A silhouette from a past he had tried desperately to forget. A man he never wanted to see again.

Brian.

"Look, I'm not trying to start anything," Jack continued.

"Well you're doing a terrible job of it," Rachel said dully.

"I'm just trying to understand… so does this mean Mike is going to be fucking you regularly from now on?" Jack asked.

"I fucking hope so," Mike said, playfully punching Jack's shoulder. Rachel leaned back in her chair and crossed her arms.

"What if he is?" She asked. Jack let out a long sigh and shook his head.

"Look, I get it. You two are into this kind of thing. I just... wasn’t expecting it, that’s all." Jack leaned back in his seat, forcing a smile as his eyes drifted away from Rachel.

"Well, expecting it or not, there's no reason for you to get upset about it," Rachel replied.

"I just don't understand how you two don't get jealous…"

Their voices trailed off. Noah couldn't hear them anymore. His eyes were fixed on Brian. A thousand thoughts raced through his mind in the blink of an eye. Perhaps the greatest of all being how he would get Rachel out of the cafeteria without Brian noticing.

"Look Jack I don't need to explain to you why it works for us. It just does. So can we please drop it?" Rachel asked. Jack sighed as he nodded slowly.

"Yeah, we can drop it. I have to get going anyway. I'll talk to you two later, alright?" Jack stood from the table, Noah snapped back to attention and smiled.

"Oh, y-yeah. See you, Jack."

"Yeah…" Jack said, walking off into the ever-growing crowd of students. Rachel stared after him, letting out a frustrated sigh before turning her attention to Mike.

"What's his deal? Did he get his feelings hurt?" Rachel said. Mike shrugged.

"He's always been emotional. Just his thing I guess," Mike said.

"Noah, what do you think?" Rachel asked.

Noah didn't respond. Rachel gave him a gentle nudge.

"Noah?"

When Noah didn't respond again, Rachel leaned forward and caressed his arm. "Hey, is everything alright?"

"It's him," Noah said flatly. Rachel, perplexed, looked off into the crowd.

"Who?"

"Brian," Noah said. Saying the name out loud felt like taking a plunge in cold water.

"Wait, the Brian?" Rachel hissed.

"Yeah, the Brian," Noah confirmed.

"Who the hell is Brian?" Mike asked, looking over at the other table. "Is it the tall football-looking guy?"

"Mike don't look!" Noah said. Mike slowly chewed his food and shrugged.

"Yeah, alright whatever. So what's the deal with him?"

"It's not important; we just need to get out of here." Noah began frantically gathering his things, Rachel following his lead without question.

"I kinda want to finish my food though…" Mike said.

"For Christ's sake Mike you ate four plates of eggs I think you can skip on the extra hash browns," Rachel countered, throwing her backpack over her shoulder as Noah stood from the table.

"Man… all this for a football guy? If you need me to kick his ass I can."

"Mike, please, let's just go ok?" Rachel said softly. Mike sighed and stood slowly. As the three prepared to leave, Noah looked back over to Brian, his heart sinking when he saw him giving an overly friendly wave as he walked towards them.

"Shit…" Noah said. Rachel glanced up.

"Oh no, looks like he spotted us."

"Looks like it."

"Are you going to be ok?" Rachel asked. Noah breathed slowly and shook his head.

"Yeah, I think so… let's just get it over with," Noah said, waving weakly as Brian approached the table.

"Holy shit, so it is you! I thought I was seeing a ghost there for a second," Brian opened his arms for a hug, just like he used to in high school. Noah grit his teeth and hugged Brian weakly. Looking back at Rachel as he did so.

"Nice seeing you Brian," Noah said shortly. It was hard looking at him. Excluding the undercurrent of rage Noah felt, Brian had somehow managed to put on even more muscle since Noah had last seen him.

"I had no idea you went to this school," Brain said shortly.

"Yeah, well, they have a great IT program," Noah said flatly.

"Suprised you got in. No offense. I know you've always been nerdy, but I never thought you'd make it into Godfrey," Brian laughed to himself, Mike let out an annoyed grunt as he stepped over to Rachel and Noah.

The two monoliths stared at one another for a moment. Brian cleared his throat. " So what's your name?"

"Mike," Mike said flatly.

"You friends with Noah?" Brian asked.

"Yeah," Mike shot back. "You don't seem to be though."

Brian laughed uncomfortably. "We were once upon a time."

"Uh-huh, but not fucking now."

Brian shifted, it made Noah smile, at least until Brian's attention turned to Rachel.

"And what's your name?" Brian asked. His charisma an all too familiar venom for Noah.

"Rachel," Rachel said coldly.

Brian stepped towards her. Rachel stepped back.

"You Mike's girlfriend?" Brian asked.

"No, I'm Noah's," Rachel answered, grabbing onto Noah's arm tightly. Brian's smile dropped as a cold laugh left him.

"Noah's girlfriend, really?"

"Yes, really."

"Wow, happy for you two… really… did you guys meet on campus then?"

"High school, actually. Senior year." Rachel's answers were cold and calculated, a thick shield of armor that couldn't be breached.

"No way, you're from Herferd then?"

"One and the same," Rachel answered. Brian's eyes slowly began to widen.

"Wait, I do know you! You were cheerleading captain right?"

"I was," Rachel said with a polite smile. Brian stared in disbelief, scoffing as he shook his head.

"Wow, that's uh… that's crazy. So I guess Noah has a thing for cheerleaders then." Brian stared at Noah, his contempt piercing like a bullet.

"Or maybe they have a thing for him," Rachel shot back. Brian's eyes locked onto hers, his teeth clenched as he forced a smile.

"Oh? Well, I wouldn't say Allison had a thing for him, more of a phase, right bud?" It was a cold question. Noah squeezed Rachel's hand tightly and took a deep breath.

"How is Allison?" He asked. Rachel squeezed his hand back, giving him an encouraging smile as she stepped closer to him.

"Oh you know, she's fine. She's actually going here too. I'm sure she'd love to hear that you're around. You were such a good friend after all."

"Is she hot?" Mike asked, cutting the tension like a knife. Brian glared at him.

"She's my girlfriend," Brian said pointedly.

"Ok? Is she hot?" Mike asked again. Brian stared in disbelief.

"Yes, she's hot."

Mike chuckled, "Probably not as hot as Rachel though."

Brian scoffed and took a step back from the three.

"Look, I got to get to class. It was nice catching up, we'll see each other around," Brian said, slapping Noah's shoulder with enough force to knock him off balance. Upon seeing this, Mike stepped forward, but Rachel grabbed his forearm, stopping Mike midstep.

"Yes, we will. Nice to finally meet you, Brian," Rachel said with a smile.

Brian made no retort, turning away and skulking into the crowd with deliberate steps.

"Well, that wasn't so bad," Rachel said.

"At least for now…" Noah replied.

There was a rolling tide coming in, Noah knew that much. But at the very least, it was nice to know he had defeated Brian this time. The three left the cafeteria as Noah tried to slow his breathing.

Chapter 14 - Best of Friends 14 - Drive Through

“Ethan’s been blowing up my phone like fucking crazy. He keeps saying it’s not fair.” Mike’s voice cut through the low rumble of the old projector, Noah and Rachel both looked over at him with annoyance.

"You're talking over the movie Mike," Rachel said.

They sat crammed into Mike’s black Jeep Wrangler at a pull-in movie theater. The windows were cracked, and the outside air was warm. The sky smeared with the distant city’s faded glow. The giant outdoor screen flickered ahead, soft pops of static and worn reels leaving light bruises across the characters’ faces.

"Well, he keeps fucking bugging me so like… what should I tell him?" Mike asked.

Rachel sighed, curled into Noah’s side as they both squeezed into the passenger seat, her feet tucked beneath her. “Tell him to stop bugging you. Use your words," she said, not looking at Mike.

“Yeah Mike, grow a backbone,” Noah added, flashing a grin. Mike rolled his eyes as they all burst into laughter.

The projector shuddered as another reel kicked in, washing the windshield in muted blues and yellows. The movie was grainy, an old romance from an era long ago. A perfect mess of art slowly fading away to time. Rachel slid her hand across Noah’s forearm and gave it a firm squeeze.

“You remember when we used to go to that drive-in by Sullivan’s?” She asked, glancing up at him.

“I do,” Noah said. “But we didn't go together. Those were school trips remember? We didn't even talk to each other."

"Yeah, but I wanted to…" Rachel said softly. Noah raised an eyebrow.

"Really?" He asked. Rachel stared deeply into his eyes.

"Really," Rachel said gently.

"And look at us now.”

"The two luckiest people on the planet,” Rachel said, tilting her head slightly as the movie scene changed.

“Couldn't agree more.” Noah slipped his arm around her shoulders, pulling her close until her cheek found his chest. Her warmth, her scent, the way she sighed softly into him, it settled the tension that sat just beneath Noah's skin.

Mike shifted in the driver’s seat, knuckles brushing against the steering wheel. Noah caught the movement in his periphery, then the quiet tug of fabric. When he looked over, Mike had pulled his shorts down past his thighs, exposing his thick half-hard cock. It dropped onto his stomach with a pulse.

Noah’s throat tightened as Rachel turned toward the sound of movement. As soon as she caught a glimpse of Mike's shaft, she immediately averted her eyes and let out a short laugh. “God, Mike…”

"What?! It's not like you haven't seen it before." Mike smirked, already reclining his seat back.

"You are ridiculous!" Rachel's eyes darted to the cars surrounding them.

“Just a quick one. Come on, I’m horny as fuck.”

Rachel scanned the parking lot. A couple of cars dotted the row behind them, but fortunately, none were incredibly close. The screen lit up again — a romantic scene, two lovers slow dancing in the rain.

“What if someone sees?” Rachel asked quietly.

"You don't need to fucking whisper it's not like they can hear you," Mike said dully, his beefy hand stroking his cock to full mast. Rachel bit her lip at the sight, then leaned into Noah's ear.

"What do you think?" She asked him, rubbing her hand across his arm.

Noah didn’t say anything. His heart raced in his chest as he felt Rachel begin to shift her weight off him. This was his moment. He could shake his head. He could lean in and kiss her, pull her back to him, remind her they hadn’t even finished the movie. But instead, he gave her a nod. Just barely.

That was all she needed.

"Close the windows, Mike," Rachel said, swinging a leg over the console and climbing into Mike’s lap. The seat creaked under her weight, and Mike let out a low grunt of satisfaction as her knees pressed into either side of him. She straddled him, her skirt riding up over her thighs as Mike's hands rubbed against them. Her lips found his neck first, then her fingers began to slowly tug away at his shirt, eyes hungry, hips already rocking.

Noah’s pulse roared in his ears. The movie played on. The couple had run into an alleyway and began to kiss passionately under the lamplight.

Mike’s hands ran up Rachel’s legs, digging into her bare ass. “Fuck… you’re not wearing panties?”

Rachel smiled and whispered something that made Mike groan. Noah shifted in his seat, leaning forward to try and hear a bit better.

Rachel's hands wrapped around Mike's cock, guiding it to her entrance. She danced above it for a moment, lowering herself onto it as it pushed her entrance apart. Then, with one smooth motion, she sank down onto him.

The moan she let out was muffled in his neck as she ground her hips against him. Mike’s head dropped back against the seat. “Jesus fucking Christ!”

Noah shifted in his seat, legs tensed. He couldn’t look away. Rachel’s back arched beautifully, her shirt bunching up just above her breasts. Mike’s hands gripped her ass, he began shoving her down onto his length aggressively, guiding her rhythm as she fucked him. Noah’s jeans began to feel impossibly tight.

Rachel moved slowly at first, drawing circles with her hips, grinding herself deeper onto him. Every movement was fluid, confident, and so natural it made Noah’s stomach turn. Their chemistry was unmistakable, and Mike's appetite, as always, was ravenous. The creak of the seat, the quiet wet slap of her thighs slamming against his, Mike’s groans — it all filled the rocking Jeep like a heartbeat.

A set of headlights turned on in the row behind them.

Rachel paused, chest rising and falling as she looked up from Mike and stared directly into the car's headlights.

“Shit,” she whispered. Mike didn't even bother to ask what was happening, he continued to thrust into her eagerly. Taking for as long as he could.

The other car kicked on its engine and slowly pulled up next to Mike's jeep. Noah's blood went cold when he saw it was another group of college guys, hollering and laughing as they took in the scene.

“Fuck yeah! Get it, bro!”

“Damn, ride that shit, girl!”

Rachel froze. Her hands pressed against Mike’s chest, caught somewhere between laughter and alarm. She turned her face away from the Jeep, staring into Noah's eyes with a bashful embarrassment. Mike didn’t stop. He grabbed her waist and kept pumping upward into her, the slap of his hips louder now, almost as if he was doing it on purpose.

“Mike,” Rachel gasped, trying to pull back. “They’re watching.”

He held her waist firmly in place for another thrust. “Let ‘em.”

Rachel didn't fight for a moment, allowing Mike to continue to fuck her while the onlookers watched. It wasn't until one of them whipped out a phone that she finally snapped back to reality.

"Fuck!" She hissed, finally wriggling off Mike's fat cock. Rachel was breathless, her cheeks flushed. She collapsed into the passenger seat, her weight pushing Noah to the side as she tugged down her skirt with a nervous laugh. The car next to them honked once, hooted again, then rolled on down the row.

Mike gave them a thumbs-up.

“Jesus,” Noah said under his breath.

“God,” Rachel muttered, laughing as she pushed her hair out of her face. “You’re absolutely crazy Mike."

Mike tucked himself away with no real urgency, still grinning widely. “Worth it.”

Rachel leaned into Noah, chest rising, eyes still wild with lust. She didn’t say anything for a moment, just stared at the screen like she was trying to remember what the movie had even been about.

Mike turned on the Jeep's ignition and threw it in reverse.

“Let’s find somewhere more private,” he said.

The Jeep rumbled to life, rolling out of the drive-in and back into the night.

Noah looked back at the screen one last time before they turned the corner. The lovers on screen were still dancing in the rain.

“Sorry we didn’t get to finish the movie,” Noah said quietly.

Rachel looked at him, then reached for his hand.

“Next time,” she whispered.

And all Noah could think about was the way Rachel had moaned, the way she’d grinded on Mike like it was instinct, the way she stared at him while they fucked.

He adjusted himself in his seat and tried not to think about how hard he still was.

–

The car eased into the vast sprawl of the mall’s parking lot. The place looked abandoned, hollowed out by time—just a few lampposts flickering overhead and a chain-link fence sagging under its own weight. There wasn't a soul around for blocks. The silence made the air feel heavier.

Mike killed the engine. Nobody said anything for a moment. Then Rachel unclicked her seatbelt and turned toward the backseat, a slow, deliberate pivot.

“Back there,” she said, already climbing over.

Mike didn’t hesitate. Neither did Noah.

Noah pulled the front seats forward, then adjusted the rearview mirror until it caught Rachel’s silhouette in the back. Mike was already pulling his shirt off before he even landed in the back.

Rachel straddled him, her knees pressing into the seat as she shifted her hips forward. Her skirt bunched around her waist as Mike's fingers trailed up her thighs as his cock pushed against her entrance. Her breath caught when Mike's cock pressed into her.

Noah watched from the rearview mirror, his hands trembling as Mike took Rachel once again.

Their kiss was ravenous this time. Louder, wetter, desperate. Rachel clutched Mike’s shoulders, grinding herself down onto him, placing her lips onto his mouth, swallowing his low, guttural moan as he bottomed out inside her.

“Fuck,” Mike hissed, his hands clutching her hips. “You feel… shit… you feel so fucking good tonight.”

Rachel’s back arched. Her hips moved with an aggressive pace. She was panting. The Jeep's windows began to steam. Rachel turned back to the rearview mirror and caught Noah's eyes.

“You like this, don’t you?” she asked, slamming down on Mike's cock. “You like watching?”

Noah nodded, mouth dry.

Mike slammed his hips up to meet Rachel's. “Jesus fuck! You are the best fuck I've ever had holy shit!”

Rachel dug her nails into his shoulders. "I'm honored.” She spoke between short breaths, riding Mike in a lustful stupor.

The whole car rocked. The suspension creaked with the motion of her hips. Mike’s moans were loud and unrestrained. Then, he wrapped his arms around her tightly and shoved himself deep inside her. Letting out a long and relieved sigh as he did so. Rachel's rhythm faltered as she looked down.

Then she stopped moving.

“What the fuck—?”

She pulled off Mike's pulsing cock in one clean motion. Mike’s face twisted with guilty pleasure as his cock erupted between them, thick ropes streaking across her thighs.

“Fuck, shit… Sorry I didn’t mean to its just–”

“Were you going to cum in me?” she asked, voice calm. Far too calm. Noah watched from the mirror, lost in his own trance as Rachel stared at the mess on her thighs.

Her tone sharpened. “Mike.”

“Hey, look, I got lost in it, ok?” he said with a shrug. “I really want to cum in you.”

Her hand came down hard across his cheek. The sound of the slap was loud enough to make Noah jump.

Mike brought a hand to his face. “Ow…”

“You have to ask,” Rachel said, voice cool but firm. She rolled off him and grabbed a loose towel resting in the back, wiping her legs with quick, angry motions. “I’m not a fuck doll.”

Mike raised his hands. “I get it. I’m sorry. I was just horny.”

“You always are.” She tossed the towel at his chest and looked toward the front. Her voice softened as she gave Noah a smile. 'Did you like that, babe?"

"Yeah…" He said bashfully. She leaned forward and whispered into his ear.

“You want a turn?”

Noah swallowed. “Y-yeah.”

Rachel climbed over the console, her bare thighs brushing his as she settled onto his lap. She undid his pants slowly and helped lower them. She grabbed the base of his cock and slid him inside her with one practiced stroke. She pressed her forehead against his as she sank down, moaning low and sweet.

“Fuck,” Noah gasped. She was soaking wet, and her pussy clenched onto his cock tight enough to make him dizzy. Rachel started to move, her hands braced against the sides of Noah's seat. Each bounce sent a ripple through her body. Her tits pressed into his chest. Her breath hitched with every thrust.

Mike watched, dick already swelling again.

“God,” Rachel moaned, “you feel so different from him.”

Noah didn’t answer. He couldn’t.

His hands gripped her waist, holding her tighter, guiding her movements. She rode him harder, faster. Her nails scratched at his shoulders. Her hips slapped down against his lap with wet, dull thuds.

“I’m close,” he whispered. Shame curled at the edges of his voice, but he couldn’t stop it.

“Cum in me,” Rachel whispered back, her eyes locked on his. “I want it.”

He let go. Their hips jerked as his cock pulsed inside her. She held him close, moaning into his neck as he filled her.

Noah let out a long, ragged sigh. His head dropped back against the seat.

A silent connection passed between them as they locked lips. As they pressed their foreheads together. As Noah held her close.

“Yo, can I get a little help?”

Rachel turned her head. Mike’s cock was fully hard again, twitching in his lap.

“Are you being serious?" She asked.

"The fuck does it look like?"

"You just came!” Rachel said in a humorous tone.

“I didn’t get to cum in you,” Mike shot back. “Help me out while he finishes up.”

Rachel rolled her eyes. “You’re a fucking animal.”

"What if I say please?” Mike added, not even trying to hide his grin.

Still straddling Noah, Rachel reached back between the seats. Miked moved forward as her fingers wrapped around his cock. She stroked him with mechanical rhythm, her other hand bracing herself against Noah’s chest.

Noah groaned softly as her pussy clenched around him again.

“I’m still inside you,” he whispered.

“I know,” she said. Then she moaned—deep and low—just for him.

Mike bucked into her hand. “God, you’re perfect.”

Rachel ignored him, staring into Noah’s eyes as he spilled the last of himself inside her.

–

They sat there afterward, tangled and panting. Rachel slowly pulled off Noah and adjusted her skirt over her hips. Mike zipped himself up and wiped himself off with the same towel Rachel had thrown at him earlier.

As Mike fumbled with his shirt in the back, Noah stared deeply into Rachel's eyes.

"How are you feeling?" Noah asked.

“Right here with you? I feel perfect,” she said, laughing a little.

"I do too," Noah said.

"I also think I need a shower," Rachel added with a bashful grin.

"Me fucking too," Mike said. Noah chuckled softly as he felt Rachel's phone buzz.

She checked the screen and bit her lip.

"Oh god…"

"Who is it?" Noah asked.

“Ethan,” Rachel sighed.

Mike groaned. “What does that fuck want now?”

“He’s at a club in the city. Says he got a VIP room. He's asking if we wanted to come,” Rachel said flatly.

Mike sat up. “Yeah, fuck that guy. He just wants to fuck you.”

The words hung in the air. It was the first time Mike sounded remotely possessive.

Rachel raised an eyebrow. “Is that not what you’re doing?”

Mike shrugged. “Yeah. But I’m chill about it.”

Noah smirked, eyes flicking to Rachel. She was still staring at Mike, amused. Then she shook her head.

“I’m not in the mood for a club anyway,” she said, sitting back in the seat with a satisfied sigh. “Let’s just go home.”

The tension in Noah's chest eased.

Mike rolled back into the driver's seat, checking himself in the mirror before starting the car without protest. “Home it is. But can we get some ice cream or something along the way?”

–

Mike pulled up to Rachel's dorm, inhaling the last portion of his ice cream cone as she and Noah exited his Jeep.

"You two be good now! I'll catch ya later," Mike said.

"See you Mike!" Rachel said with a wave.

"Later Mike," Noah said with a smile. With a nod, Mike drove off into the night.

They walked side by side, holding onto each other's hands tightly as they neared her dorm's entrance.

“Thanks for tonight,” she said. Her voice was tender.

“Thanks for… well… everything,” he said.

Rachel laughed and leaned in, kissing him softly. The taste of her was still sweet. When she pulled away, she lingered there, forehead against his.

“You are the best thing that's ever happened to me,” she whispered.

The words wrapped around Noah's heart like a ribbon.

Then she slipped inside.

Noah stood there for a moment, watching the door close as his heart chased the warm evening winds.

Chapter 15 - Best of Friends 15 - Late Night Video

The lock clicked behind Rachel, the faint echo of it swallowed by the rumbling bass down the hall. Sage already knew it was Mel. She had been throwing loud, wall-rattling parties since moving in.

And Mel made sure never to invite Rachel.

Rachel lingered near the door, her fingers grazing the deadbolt as she listened. It was strange that she still felt like an outsider at times. Despite all her efforts to fit in, girls still seemed to keep her an arm's length away. Perhaps her father was right, perhaps she would have been better off staying in her small town. Sheltered and safe, working towards the family business of law.

But Rachel was wild. Wilder than her parents would have liked, at least. While she had not yet found her place in the world, Rachel knew it wasn't back in Herferd.

She sighed slowly, feeling the weight leave her lungs as she walked to her living room.

Rachel kicked off her shoes and plummeted onto the couch. Closing her eyes as the booming bass vibrated through her body. Her phone buzzed.

Ethan: What are you doing?

Rachel stared at the screen, more excited than she'd like to admit. She checked the time.

1:03 a.m.

Her heart picked up. Fluttering, the way it sometimes did when a teacher called her name unexpectedly, or when she caught someone watching her from across the room. She slid her thumb across the screen and typed.

Rachel: Just got home.

She adjusted herself, wrapping her arms around her legs. Her head rested against the back cushion as her eyes fluttered shut. The bass down the hall boomed louder as if Mel knew she was falling asleep. Rachel opened her eyes and sighed.

Another buzz from her phone.

Ethan: Come out.

Rachel stared at it. Surprised she considered it even for a moment.

Rachel: Can't. Just got home for the night.

Rachel was surprised at how fast Ethan replied. She'd assumed he'd be the kind of guy to play it cool. But this felt desperate. Perhaps that was an idea that Rachel liked more than she wanted to admit.

She stared at the thread. The three little dots appeared, vanished, then came back.

Ethan: What were you doing?

Rachel hesitated, biting her thumb.

Rachel: went to see a movie.

She didn’t know why she answered him. Especially after everything he did at the party. The dares. The way he looked at her when she took her top off. The way he called into the crowd after her. It was clear that her well-being wasn't his top priority. Rachel knew that. She wasn't dumb. Ethan would never be someone she could fully trust.

And yet…

There was an allure to him. Rachel hated that she was falling for the classic jock. Tall, athletic, and handsome…

Well hung.

A man every girl wanted, and it gave him the luxury of being an asshole. But there were moments of kindness to him. Plus, he was one of Jack's friends. That had to count for something. He wouldn't be in that group if there weren't some redeeming qualities. At least, that's what Rachel told herself.

Ethan: Who were you with?

Rachel's thumb hovered. Why did he care?

Mike's warnings ran through the back of her mind. Deep down, she knew he was right. Ethan wanted her body and would do anything to get it, like all men it seemed. That stung in a way. To be desired certainly was exciting under the right context, but to constantly be bombarded by it…

She typed slowly this time, her fingers lingering too long between each letter.

Rachel: Mike and Noah.

Ethan's fast replies ceased.

The dots didn't come. Nothing came.

The bass from Mel's party thumped louder, drowning the silence. Rachel yawned, her jaw cracking slightly as she leaned into the couch.

Then came the knock.

Rachel sat up, tense. Her eyes shot to the door. The knocks continued. Not frantic, but steady.

Rachel slowly walked to the entrance and peered through the peephole.

Mel stood on the other side. Eyes glazed in a stupor of alcohol and hedonism. Rachel pressed her head against the door for a moment, steeling herself as she unlocked the deadbolt and cracked the door open.

"Yeah?"

Mel stood there barefoot, wine bottle in hand, eyes rimmed with smudged mascara. Her top was slipping down one shoulder, and the glitter on her cheekbones caught the hall light like frost.

"What are you doing?" she asked, eyes flicking into Rachel's dorm.

"Getting ready for bed," Rachel said, a little too sharply.

Mel raised an eyebrow.

"I hear you 'getting ready for bed' a lot these days."

Rachel blinked. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Mel smiled flatly. "Nothing. You got any liquor? We ran out."

Rachel leaned against the doorframe, arms crossed.

"Sorry. Fresh out."

Mel rolled her eyes and rocked back on her heels.

"How long is the party going to last?" Rachel asked.

"Why does it matter?" Mel snapped.

"Because I have school tomorrow?" Rachel said.

Mel scoffed. "We all have school tomorrow, that doesn't make you special."

"Well some of us actually want to pass our classes, Mel," Rachel said coldly. Mel smirked, rolling her eyes as she shifted her weight.

“You can always sleep with a professor when you fail," Mel shot back.

"That might work for you, but it's not for me. Just keep it down, ok?" Rachel kept her words tempered.

"Yeah, whatever. We’ll try to keep it down. I’d invite you over but there aren’t any guys to fuck, so I think you’ll be bored.”

Rachel stared. “Goodnight, Mel.”

She slammed the door in Mel's face.

The music got louder. Rachel had anticipated that. A chorus of laughter spilled through the walls as Rachel turned and leaned her back against the door, eyes closed, lips pressed into a hard line. Her phone buzzed from the couch.

She didn’t move.

Not yet.

Let him wait.

The phone buzzed again.

Rachel dragged herself back toward the couch, limbs heavy, eyes dull. She was done. Whatever the night had left to offer, she didn’t want it. She just wanted quiet, a cool pillow, and her eyes to close.

But the phone buzzed again. With a defeated sigh she picked it up.

Ethan: what were you guys really doing?

Ethan: Were you fucking?

Ethan: Did Mike get to fuck you again?

Rachel didn't bother with formalities, she was too tired to care at this point.

Rachel: It's not your business.

Ethan: I fucking knew it. You're a slut lol

Rachel scoffed at her phone. Was she? No, she was getting into her head. Rachel just needed to sleep. She picked up her phone, planning to turn it off.

But another message came through from Ethan.

Ethan: You'll fucking love this.

It was a video.

Rachel hesitated. A part of her already knew what it was. Then she pressed play to make sure.

It started instantly, no lead-in. Harsh, artificial light bounced off Ethan's slick, erect cock. He was stroking it slowly. Methodically. Lube glistened over his thick length, catching in the shadows of his fingers wrapped tightly around his shaft. It was giant, veiny, swelling. The sound of his steady strokes, the way his giant balls hung, the lighting against Ethan's glistening abs…

Rachel's breath caught in her throat as her mouth fell open.

She couldn’t look away.

His grip tightened as he slid upward, stopping just under the head. His thumb swirled the lube across the swollen tip, a bead of precum glinting like a jewel. Her thighs clenched.

Her clit throbbed.

She swallowed. Her breath shaking. Her hand hovered near her waistband, like gravity was pulling her towards it.

Then she shook her head and put her phone down. She needed to cool off and collect herself. It was just a video, and it was one she hadn't asked for. Once again, Ethan had crossed a line. Rachel steeled herself and typed.

Rachel: This is disgusting.

And it was.

Rachel thought less of him instantly. She could never respect a man who would so willingly cross boundaries to get into her pants. Ethan was gross. Arrogant. Probably drunk. Definitely a pervert.

...

Rachel replayed the video, turning up the sound.

She rewatched the last few seconds. The slow swirl of his thumb. The flex in his forearm. The deep, low moan he let out—barely audible, but enough to echo in her head.

Buzz.

Ethan: I know you fucking like it though. Because you're a slut. You just don't know it yet lol. Want another? ;)

Rachel stared at the message.

She hesitated. Far longer than she would have liked to admit.

For a moment, she wondered what it would be like to see him cum. From a different angle, with sound. She wanted to hear him moan while Ethan came for her. He would do it for her if she asked.

"No! No… absolutely not," Rachel said softly. She couldn't let him cross boundaries like that. It was disrespectful and wouldn't lead to anything positive.

Rachel: Don't ever send me videos like that without asking again.

Delivered. Read.

Buzz.

Ethan: Lol ok your Highness. You and I both know you want it.

Rachel: I don't.

Ethan: Suuure. Maybe next time I'll just ask you to come out and see it in person ;)

Rachel scoffed and tossed her phone to the side.

Fuck him.

She closed her eyes and sank deeper into the couch. Her pussy was pulsing now. She could feel the moisture between her thighs, her panties damp from carnal desire.

She dragged a hand down her stomach.

Noah.

She thought of his soft hands. The way he kissed her gently, his fingertips barely brushing her hips. He always asked before going further. He was sweet. Loving. Safe. She loved him more than anything.

More images flooded her mind as her fingers explored herself.

Mike.

She thought of his hands gripping her hips tightly while they fucked. The way he turned into an animal when he saw her. The way he pounded into her like she was a doll. Like he didn’t need permission.

Rachel's lips parted, Ethan appeared in her mind.

His smirk. His cock. His arrogance. She couldn't help but wonder what a man like that would do to her.

She pictured him in her room. Shoving her against the wall.

His massive cock sliding between her thighs, slick from her dripping juices. Pushing into her without warning. Stretching her open slowly, painfully, until she gasped from the pressure. She imagined his tip slamming into her cervix.

She wanted to feel it. She wanted Ethan to fuck her till she was sore. The kind of pain that was felt right. Rachel closed her eyes, fingers drifting down to her clit. Ethan was behind her, slamming her into the wall with powerful thrusts. A tower of a man taking her, filling her, using her.

He’d lean down to her level and whisper into her ear.

"I know you fucking want it."

Rachel caved. She plunged her fingers into her pussy as Ethan squeezed her breasts. As he pulled at her nipples. Bit her neck. Rachel was moaning. Pleading.

He fucked her hard, holding her leg up as he drove into her. She imagined the wet slap of their sweating bodies. The smell of sex filling her dorm while they fucked passionately. The way it would feel to be so full, she thought she might split open.

She wanted him to cum inside her. To fill her completely. She wanted Ethan to try and get her pregnant. She could feel it. The rush of hot, thick cum flooding her womb. Spilling out between her thighs. Coating her thoroughly.

Rachel’s hand moved faster. Her fingers worked in tight circles over her clit. Her breath caught in her throat.

The music outside pounded louder.

Rachel's back arched.

Her legs buckled.

She came.

Her body trembled, fingers soaked, thighs clenching.

The room spun for a moment. She gasped softly, then let her head fall back.

Euphoria overtook her. Followed by shame. It was just moments ago she had said goodnight to Noah. Now, she lay ravaged by the thought of another man.

But Noah would have liked it. She knew Noah probably wanted to see it happen as much as she did. Rachel didn’t wipe the slick from her fingers. Didn’t check her phone. She just lay there, flushed and still, the music still thumping through her apartment walls.

Sleep finally found her.

Chapter 16 - Best of Friends 16 - Mother's Approval

The coffee shop sat nestled between two boutique galleries, its windows spotless, its name etched in gold serif above a slate-gray awning...

The coffee shop sat nestled between two boutique galleries, its windows spotless, its name etched in gold serif above a slate-gray awning. Thorne & Vine. The kind of place with mismatched antique chairs that cost more than Rachel’s tuition deposit, where tasteless music floated softly through invisible ceiling speakers and the baristas wore linen aprons like stage costumes.

Mary was already seated by the window when Rachel arrived, and she sat like she owned the place.

Back straight, ankles crossed, a beige coat draped neatly over the back of her velvet chair. Her blonde hair was swept into a soft chignon that accentuated her jawline, and her matte, berry red lipstick stuck perfectly to her full lips. A cashmere sweater hugged her shoulders, and she wore slacks tailored to the ankle with a sharp crease so clean it could cut glass.

Rachel swallowed the urge to smooth her hair as her mother's gaze fell upon her.

“You’re late by five minutes,” Mary said, folding the menu and handing it off to the waitress with a polite, razor-thin smile.

“I took the train,” Rachel replied as she slid into the seat across from her.

Mary lifted one brow. “And wearing a denim jacket for Saturday coffee?”

Rachel didn’t bother answering.

Their coffees arrived before the silence got uncomfortable. A cortado for Mary, no sugar. A flat white for Rachel, which she stirred to keep her hands busy.

“So,” Mary began, plucking the tiny spoon from her saucer and setting it aside. “I hear your studies are going well.”

“They are.”

Rachel didn’t offer more. Her mother’s voice had that familiar tightness to it—the kind that made it clear each word was deliberate, if not practiced. Like much else in her life, Mary's conversation strived towards a particular intent.

“You know,” Mary said, glancing briefly out the window, “While I celebrate your academic achievements. I'm still trying to understand why you didn’t go into law. You have the mind for it. It’s respectable. Secure. It would certainly pay off in dividends later in life.”

“You know I’m not interested in law.”

“But you are interested in humanitarian work. Law isn't much different."

"Law sucks your soul before you have a chance to make any kind of real change," Rachel countered. Mary smiled softly.

"Your desire to make an impact is truly admirable. But humanitarian work is hard darling, and it doesn’t pay.”

“Mom…”

“I’m just saying,” Mary raised her hand like she was absolving herself of sin. “It doesn’t hurt to think about the future. You won't want to be working the streets when you’re fifty, believe me. Especially once the kids start coming.”

Rachel blinked. “Who says I want kids?"

Mary's lips stretched into a humored smile. "Darling, you want kids," she said certainly, "a good career will help you get there."

Rachel rolled her eyes. "You've been a stay-at-home wife your whole life, I'm not sure you understand."

"Excuse me!" Mary slapped Rachel's hand lightly. Playful, but precise. "That is a very hard job, I'll have you know."

"I'm not saying it isn't. But I want something else. A career. Something fulfilling beyond raising a family. It's going to be different from you, Mom."

"Of course it will be. But when the children do come, how will you raise them on a pauper's salary?" Mary tilted her head, the movement delicate but loaded. Like she was speaking to a child who hadn't yet grasped how the world worked. Rachel hated that look. It made her feel like she was sixteen again.

"We'll figure it out." She said softly.

Mary's cup froze in front of her lips. "We?"

"Yes. We." Rachel didn't flinch, but she could feel the edge creeping into her voice.

The waitress arrived with water. Mary took a sip from her tiny glass as if it were vintage wine, then placed it down softly, perfectly centered on its coaster.

"I take it then that things with you and Noah are still going well then?"

"They are."

There was a pause. Just long enough for Rachel to feel her mother's disapproval.

"And how, pray tell, did he manage to get into Godfrey?"

Rachel's throat tightened.

"He got in through a scholarship," she said. "He's one of the brightest students from Herferd."

"I'm sure." Mary sighed through her nose and nodded. "Still, I thought you two might've ended your high school romance by now."

"What does that mean?"

Mary looked at her with practiced pity. "Rachel… my darling. My love. Noah is not good for you long-term. He doesn't come from a respectable family. And he certainly doesn't have the means to provide for a future."

Rachel stiffened. "He's going into tech. He'll make money."

"But will it be enough? A six-figure salary doesn't go far these days, dear. Especially if you decide to stay home…"

"I'm not staying home," Rachel said, firmer now.

Mary arched a brow. "Fine. You don't stay home. Even so, two meager salaries won't be enough to start a family comfortably. You will struggle, you will suffer. You have to think about these things."

"No, I don't. You're making it harder than it needs to be."

Mary leaned forward just slightly. "Yes. You do. Especially since you decided to pursue your passion instead of a lucrative career. Like it or not, your husband will need to provide for you."

Rachel rolled her eyes so hard her skull ached. "Oh my God, Mom, really?"

"Listen to me," Mary said, reaching across the table for Rachel's hand.

Rachel withdrew it.

Mary pulled back, pressing her lips together. There was a flicker of something under the surface. Hurt, maybe, but it disappeared so fast Rachel wasn't sure she'd seen it.

The waitress returned promptly. "Is everything to your liking Mrs. Wicker?"

"Very much so, thank you," Mary said, then turned back with unblinking calm. Rachel raised an eyebrow.

"They know you here?" Rachel asked.

"Of course darling, your father is an investor."

"Why am I not surprised..."

Mary grinned in amusement. "Listen, I'm not saying marry for money. Love matters, certainly. But with Noah, the issue isn't just about money."

Rachel clenched her jaw.

"You live in a different world than Noah does, sweetheart. You always have. And Godfrey has many suitors who would be a better fit for you."

It took everything Rachel had not to leave the table. "Let's drop it." She said coldly.

Mary sighed, sitting back and observing Rachel with calculated eyes.

"You're glowing, you know," Mary said, sipping her cortado. "Something's changed."

Rachel blinked. "What?"

"You're different. Radiant. Sexed, maybe." She tilted her head. "Is that it?"

Rachel nearly choked on her coffee. "What does that even mean?"

"Come now, Rachel. Women know these things. We can sense them. There's a… flush to you. A quiet confidence. I'd say it was love, but," she smiled faintly, "I think it's something else."

Rachel felt her cheeks flush, and that annoyed her more than anything. She wasn't blushing for her mother. She didn't get flustered. Couldn't get flustered. Not anymore.

"Don't be ridiculous," she said dismissively.

But Mary saw it.

She was too clever not to.

Rachel thought of Noah. Of the party. Of the group of men chasing her. Of Mike's hands on her hips and Noah's lingering eyes, helpless and burning. She felt the echo of the many nights she had shared with Mike. The feeling of fullness between her legs. The desire she felt to be taken. The way she'd whispered Noah's name even as she came on someone else's cock.

"You are quite beautiful," Mary said gently. Rachel smiled tightly.

"Thanks…"

Mary crossed her arms. "You do love him though, don't you?"

"I do."

"That's fine. Young love is beautiful. Enjoy it while it lasts. But beauty isn't always sustainable."

Rachel looked down into her coffee. The milk foam had started to collapse.

"He's good to me," she said, almost to herself.

Mary gave a patient nod. “Then keep him, if that’s what you want. But don’t confuse that for compatibility.”

Rachel looked up.

Mary wasn’t being cruel. She was certain. That made it worse.

“I’m not you,” Rachel said finally.

Mary smiled faintly. “No. You’re not.”

Then Mary lifted her cup and finished the last sip.

“I suppose it doesn’t matter what I say, does it?”

“No,” Rachel replied, matching her calm. “It doesn’t.”

“Well then.” Mary adjusted in her chair and crossed her legs. “I hope you prove me wrong.”

“I plan to," Rachel said.

Mary leaned in. “Just don’t mistake rebellion for identity.”

"Noted…" Rachel replied dully

Mary lingered in the silence for a moment too long. She slid her cup out of the way gently.

Rachel watched her mother’s perfectly manicured fingers toy with the handle. The ring on her right hand, a thin platinum band inset with diamonds, caught the light and gleamed with casual opulence.

Her father always had a taste for the overly lavish.

Mary pursed her lips. “Jack’s mother told me you two met.”

Rachel froze.

The name hit like a hot knife. Her breath caught in her chest before she could respond. She managed to keep her face still, but her spine straightened, her fingers curling around the base of her coffee cup like it might anchor her to the moment.

“You know Jack’s mother?” Rachel asked, voice neutral.

“Of course I know Jack’s mother,” Mary replied, her tone breezy but deliberate. “Your father golfs with his father. Every other Sunday at the country club. You know the routine.”

Rachel wished she didn't. She’d stopped attending those Sunday afternoons in high school.

“How did she know we met?” Rachel asked slowly.

Mary didn’t look up from the foam at the bottom of her cortado. “Because Jack was talking about you.”

Rachel’s chest tightened. Her heart punched upward against her ribs. Hard enough that it almost made her dizzy. She looked down at her untouched water, trying not to let it show.

“He did?” She asked softly.

Mary finally looked up. There was something too casual about the way she smiled. Like she already knew the weight her words carried.

“He did. Apparently, he was very excited to see you. Jack is a very intelligent boy, you know. A good head on his shoulders, very business-minded, and handsome as well. You should get to know him better.”

Rachel blinked. The night Jack held her close flashed in her mind. Her mother's words echoed with bitter irony.

“I’m with Noah,” she said.

Mary didn’t miss a beat. She nodded graciously, her voice soft and saccharine.

“Of course, dear. I didn’t mean anything untoward. But who said you can’t make new friends?”

Rachel crossed her arms, leaned back, and took a small breath. The motion felt juvenile, but satisfying. A quiet rebellion reminiscent of her childhood.

Mary smiled again, this one more knowing than kind.

Rachel shook her head, not at her mother, but at the sheer absurdity of the moment. Her mother was pushing Jack without knowing how deeply he had already pressed himself into Rachel’s life. How his lips had pressed against his, how his hands had explored her body…

How his fingers were only moments away from penetrating her.

How Noah had seen it happen.

Rachel tried to imagine it the way her mother clearly had. Jack coming home from work, tie loosened, smiling as their kids tore through a backyard bordered by trimmed hedges and solar-powered lanterns. Dinners with imported wine and monogrammed napkins. Vacations planned six months in advance. A husband who provided.

It wasn’t a nightmare, not really. It was a happy life. A safe one. But it didn’t stir anything inside her. Not the way Noah did. It felt empty next to their connection.

“I’ll think about it,” Rachel said, cautiously.

Mary took it as a victory. “Do. It’ll be good for you to expand your horizons.”

“So you’re giving me permission to explore things?” A mischievous smile tugged at Rachel's lips.

“Exactly! Explore yourself,” Mary gestured lightly, like she was talking about visiting museums. “Your father sheltered you so much. I feel bad about it.”

Rachel tilted her head, her smile sharpening. “Don’t worry, I will. It’s not like he can shelter me now.”

Mary cleared her throat.

Rachel recognized the sound.

“Oh God,” she muttered. “What?”

“Your father was curious how you were getting on.”

Rachel’s blood cooled.

Mary continued, tone featherlight. “He’s decided to visit.”

The world shifted slightly beneath Rachel’s chair.

Her voice dropped. “Here?”

Mary nodded. “He wants to see the campus. Take you to dinner. He’s been terribly busy, but he’s making time.”

“Do you think you could try to make him busier?”

Mary let out a humored laugh. “Don’t be so dramatic, darling.”

Rachel gave her a tight smile. “I’m not. I’m thrilled, actually.”

Mary glanced at her empty cup. “Just be patient with him. You know how he's… set in his ways.”

Rachel stared at the window, her pulse kicking up again.

“He’d very much like to meet your new partner,” Mary added, a distinct note of temperance in her voice.

Rachel turned her gaze sharply. “He wants to meet Noah?”

“Yes. Noah. After all, you two are in love.”

Of course.

Rachel pushed a hand through her hair, suddenly too warm despite the air-conditioned chill. Her father had always been the final word. A man who didn’t speak much, but when he did, his words were carved in stone. He hadn’t said much about her coming to Godfrey. Just signed the checks, and reminded her to “be smart.” Rachel preferred it that way.

Now he wanted to visit. He wanted to meet Noah. She already knew the undertone of what that meant.

“He’s going to hate him,” Rachel muttered.

Mary gave a half-shrug. “He hasn’t met him yet, you never know.”

"Don't patronize me."

"I'm not my dear, I assure you," Mary replied gently.

Rachel didn’t say anything.

“I think he’s more concerned about what direction your life is taking,” Mary continued. “The relationship is part of that. But it’s not everything.”

“I’m not bringing Noah to dinner just so Dad can interrogate him.”

“No one’s asking for an interrogation, darling. It’s a meeting. You know how he is, very old-fashioned. But he loves you. He only wants what’s best.”

Rachel snorted softly. “According to him.”

“According to both of us,” Mary said calmly.

Rachel met her eyes. She wanted to say something. Wanted to tell her mother everything she didn’t understand. About what love actually was. About a life truly filled with meaning. About a life not defined by her father's will.

But the words stuck in her throat.

Mary leaned forward just slightly. “It’ll be fine. He just wants to see that you’re stable. That you’ve made good choices.”

Stable. A word that Rachel wasn't sure she understood fully anymore.

Rachel thought of Noah again. Of the quiet, careful way he looked at her. She thought of his kindness, how nervous he would become, how uncertain he still was about life. For all his brilliance and goodness, she already knew what her father would think.

She could see what her father would see. Rough edges, lack of polish. He’d see Noah’s thrift-store jackets and fidgeting hands and cast him down like he was an obstacle in the way of his daughter's success.

But he wouldn’t see what Rachel saw. Wouldn’t know what it meant to be with someone who let her choose. Who didn’t try to shape her into something convenient or respectable. Who saw her for her, and was willing to walk with her every step of the way. That kind of love was rare, and it was foreign to her parents.

Rachel sat straighter, a clarity coming over her like a slow tide.

“When is he coming?”

“At the end of the month. He’ll stay at the club, and I will ensure he has other tasks at hand so he's not hounding you. Don’t worry.”

“I’m not worried.”

Mary looked surprised. “No?”

Rachel smiled faintly. “No.”

“Well. That’s good.”

Their drinks were finished, their chairs now slightly askew from tension and shifting bodies. The coffee shop had gotten louder around them. Soft laughter, clinking plates, a crescendo of jazz piano from overhead.

Mary glanced at her phone, tapping it delicately with her nail. "Ah, how time flies."

She stood. Rachel did also.

Mary reached for her coat, slipping into it with practiced ease. “You’re strong, Rachel,” she said as she buttoned the top clasp. “I don’t always agree with your choices, but I know you’ll land on your feet. You always do.”

Rachel nodded. “I know. Thanks, mother.”

They stood and faced each other, two versions of the same woman. One carved from steel, the other still shaping her edges.

Mary leaned forward and kissed her daughter's cheek. "Call me when he arrives. And try not to wear denim when you see your father. He's not as relaxed as I am.”

Rachel rolled her eyes. “Noted.”

Mary squeezed Rachel's shoulders gently. "It was good seeing you, dear."

She turned and walked toward the exit, heels clicking in perfect tempo.

Rachel watched her go, then sank back into her seat.

She stared out the cafe window, trying to picture what it would look like to see Noah at that fateful dinner. What it would feel like to stand beside him when her father finally looked him in the eyes.

She smiled.

Whatever he said, whatever came next, they would face it together.

As they always had.

Chapter 17 - Best of Friends 17 – Homework

Rachel's day didn't fare much better after meeting with her mother. Classes dragged, homework never seemed to end, and Rachel's mind endlessly played the words her mother had said.

Noah wasn't for her. She came from a different life. It wouldn't last.

Eternity wrapped into a single breath as sunrise fell to sunset and Rachel made her way back to her apartment. Exhausted, Rachel latched the door behind her lazily and dropped onto her couch with a deep sigh.

The sigh had barely left her lips when a knock echoed through her apartment.

Rachel groaned. "Every time..."

Rachel's day didn't fare much better after meeting with her mother. Classes dragged, homework never seemed to end, and Rachel's mind endlessly played the words her mother had said.

Noah wasn't for her. She came from a different life. It wouldn't last.

Eternity wrapped into a single breath as sunrise fell to sunset and Rachel made her way back to her apartment. Exhausted, Rachel latched the door behind her lazily and dropped onto her couch with a deep sigh.

The sigh had barely left her lips when a knock echoed through her apartment.

Rachel groaned. "Every time..."

The knocking continued with greater persistence.

"Yeah! Coming..." she called out, dragging herself off the couch. She shuffled barefoot to the door and opened it cautiously, peeking through the crack. Surprised to find Mike standing on the other side.

"Mike?" Rachel asked.

"Yo," he said with a nod. "What are you doing?"

He wore a cropped tee, high-cut gym shorts that barely concealed his thighs, and sunglasses perched on his head. A ridiculous outfit that invited Rachel's eyes to wander.

Rachel cleared her throat as she tore her gaze from Mike's exposed abs. "I'm uh… working on homework. Why?"

Mike smirked and stepped in without invitation. "Sounds boring as shit."

Rachel moved back instinctively, heart skipping a beat as Mike entered her space.

"Excuse me!" she said, watching as Mike aimlessly wandered into her living room.

"You really too busy for a little break?" He asked.

Rachel followed him slowly, arms folded across her chest. "What kind of break?"

Mike dropped onto the couch and began undoing his belt. "The kind where I fuck your brains out."

"Are you serious?" Rachel asked, more amused than offended.

Mike stared with a confused expression. "Uh... yeah?"

Rachel laughed softly as she rubbed her face. "Mike... you can't just come over whenever you want for that kind of stuff."

"...Why not?"

"It's not appropriate," Rachel said.

"But… we're fuck buddies?" Mike said as he continued to slowly unzip his pants.

"Yes, but..." Rachel paused, sighing hard as Mike exposed a giant bulge resting beneath red underwear. "Noah has to be here."

Mike scratched his head. "But why?"

Rachel finally broke into laughter. "Oh my god. Look, just sit for a second, ok? And zip your pants back up."

"Fine, whatever," Mike said as he lazily zipped his pants back up and made his way over to the fridge.

"You got any booze?" He asked.

"Why does everyone think I have booze? No, I don't." Rachel pulled out her phone, texting Noah quickly as she spoke.

Rachel: Heeey. So Mike just showed up at my door...

Noah's response was nearly instant.

Noah: What does he want?

Rachel: Well, he's raiding my fridge atm… but he wants you know what. Should I?

Rachel glanced up when she heard the rustling of a plastic bag, only to find Mike eating shredded cheese by the handful, shamelessly dropping clumps onto the floor as he inhaled the bag.

"Oh god, Mike, over the sink!"

Mike stopped mid-chew. "Huh?"

"Eat over the sink!" Rachel shouted

"Oh. Right. Sorry." Mike marched to the sink, making an overexaggerated effort to keep the bag over it.

Rachel's phone buzzed.

Noah: Can you film it?

Her breath hitched. Her fingers tried to keep up with her racing thoughts.

Rachel: I can. Are you sure you're okay with it? I can turn him away.

Rachel watched as Noah typed.

Noah: No, it’s fine. Just film it, please. And thanks for asking :)

Rachel: Of course! Love you.

Noah: Love you too :0

Rachel stared, perhaps in partial disbelief that it had been so easy. She looked up from her phone, watching as Mike grabbed the final handful of cheese from the bag before tossing it onto the floor.

"Mike! Garbage!"

Mike stared like a deer in headlights. "Huh?"

"Put. the bag. In. the GARBAGE." Rachel said pointedly. Mike blinked.

"Oh… yeah sure…" Mike half-heartedly looked around the kitchen, never bothering to move his feet. "Where is it?"

"Oh my god, just let me do it," Rachel said shortly. She walked by Mike and grabbed the bag, bending down to open the cabinet where the garbage bin rested. As she did, Rachel felt Mike's hand clamp firmly around her ass.

"Mike!" Rachel promptly looked back at him, though she didn't make an attempt to step away from his grasp. She felt his thick fingers slide down to her groin as he pushed her into the counter.

"Let's fuck already." He said bluntly.

Rachel didn't answer right away, she pushed her ass into him, moaning softly as Mike's hands trailed up her waist and to her breasts.

Noah said yes, she was in the clear.

But Mike didn’t know that. And something about that fact made it hotter.

"Ok..." Rachel whispered with trembling lips.

She felt Mike's hands descend to her pants, unbuttoning them and pulling them past her ankles with well-practiced motions. Then his hand reached around to her entrance as he pushed her over the counter, sliding into her with ease.

"You're so fucking wet," Mike said as his fingers slid out of her, replaced by the tip of his cock at her entrance. Rachel looked back at him, their gaze locking as he slowly pushed into her with one powerful thrust. Rachel braced herself against the kitchen island as Mike's thick cock slowly filled her.

Rachel moaned as the sounds of slapping flesh echoed through the apartment. Mike bent over her and grabbed both her breasts, squeezing them tightly as his thrusts hit hard against her cervix. The sensation an overwhelming, perfect kind of pain.

Mike was completely carnal, and those primal instincts made Rachel's body quiver.

He pulled out of her without warning and turned her around. Rachel gasped as he lifted her clean off the ground like she weighed nothing. He lined his cock up with her pussy, and slammed Rachel down onto it. He gripped her thighs tightly as he slammed into her with each powerful thrust. Rachel locked eyes with him, mouth open as she became drunk on euphoria. She watched as sweat formed on Mike's brow, and as she wrapped her legs around his waist, Rachel bit his thick neck, tasting the salty musk of his sweat.

Mike responded by thrusting faster. Rachel dug her nails into his back as she threw her head back and moaned.

"You're so fucking strong," she said between breaths.

"I know," Mike grunted, slamming into her one final time before carrying Rachel toward the bedroom.

She wrapped her arms around his neck tightly as she remained impaled on his giant, pulsing cock. Mike had dominated her, and Rachel relished being carried away like a caveman's trophy. He kicked the bedroom door open and tossed Rachel onto the bed.

Then he mounted her chest, slapping his slick cock against her soft breasts. The hunger in his eyes made Rachel's stomach flutter.

“Tit fuck me,” he said with a gravelly voice.

Rachel licked her lips as Mike placed his fat cock between her cleavage, then cupped her breasts and pressed them together. His cock, still slick from her juices and a steady pulse of precum, disappeared between them. She could feel him throbbing against her skin as he thrust lazily through the soft valley of her chest.

Mike groaned, eyes glued to the sight of himself moving between her tits. “Push them tighter,” he said.

She obeyed without thinking, fingers digging into her flesh to close the gap even more. It made his cock look massive. She watched as his swelling, flushed tip appeared from her pale breasts with each thrust.

Instinct overtook her, and Rachel caught the tip with her mouth.

She playfully licked him at first, circling her tongue around Mike's circumcised head. She tasted herself mixing with the salt of his precum and sweat. Then she sealed her lips around his shaft, sucking in rhythm with his thrusts. She pushed her tits together tightly, keeping Mike's cock pressed tightly against her chest as she swallowed what length she could. Soon, her tongue worked every inch that emerged from the grip of her chest.

“Fucking shit…” Mike grunted, planting his hands beside Rachel's shoulders for leverage. He fucked forward into her tits hard, his cockhead punching into her mouth with every push. The bed rocked beneath them. Rachel felt Mike's weight press into her with every eager thrust.

Then he pulled back, giving one of Rachel's breasts a playful squeeze as he scooted his cock closer to her mouth.

“Open up,” he said bluntly.

Rachel's mouth dropped open just in time for him to drive his cock straight between her full lips.

Her throat tightened on instinct, eyes watering as he bottomed out almost instantly. She felt Mike’s slick, swollen cock fill her mouth, the tip jabbing and stretching her throat open. Rachel gagged, but didn’t pull away. Her hands clutched his thighs, nails pressing into his flesh as he fucked her face with slow, hungry thrusts.

“Shit,” Mike muttered, hips rocking with dull precision. “You're a great fuck…”

His hands found her hair, fingers knotting at the roots, tugging lightly as his thrusts grew messier. Rachel relaxed her jaw and let her throat adjust as Mike continued to use her. Becoming fully entranced by the experience.

The sloppiness of it, the way his cock throbbed against her tongue, the taste of his precum, the desperate gasps of air.

How Mike didn't ask, but took what he wanted.

When he finally pulled out, a thick string of spit and precum connected her lips and his cock.

They didn’t speak; they didn't need to.

Time blurred together. Rachel found herself on her back again, legs spread wide as Mike pounded her pussy mercilessly. Then on her side. Then her mouth was full of him again while his tongue swirled around her clit, flicking in long, wet strokes.

Mike devoured her. He growled when she came, clutched her thighs tightly as he groaned into her cunt, licking harder as she writhed. Rachel’s moans were muffled by his cock, her hands gripping his ass as he buried himself deep into her throat. Her thighs trembled, her juices soaked into her bed, and her mind fogged over.

They flipped.

Rachel climbed on top of Mike and rode him with what strength she had. There was no rhythm, just wild, grinding circles of her hips and the sound of skin slapping skin. She bit her lip as she felt Mike's cock massage the inside of her aching, swollen pussy. She leaned forward, riding him harder, her tits bouncing in frantic waves. Mike groaned beneath her, grabbing onto her hips, his fingers digging deep into her sides.

“Fuck, you’re tight,” he muttered.

She moaned in reply, digging her nails into his chest as she rode his cock like a toy. The bed creaked beneath them. She felt the sharpness of his cock hitting her deeply. She was shaking, gasping, grinding. Her legs burned, but she didn’t care.

Rachel rode him until she collapsed onto him breathless. Her slick chest pressed to his, her warm breath ebbing against his neck.

Then Mike grabbed her, rolled her, pushed her face into the mattress, and began to take her again.

She kept her ass high in the air as she bit the comforter beneath her. Her pussy raw and wet. Mike drove in from behind with commendable energy. His thrusts were deep and erratic as he slammed into her like a wild animal.

He spanked her jiggling ass, and the slickness of Rachel's sweat made the sting sharp. She pushed into him eagerly in response.

Mike grabbed a handful of her hair and tugged. Rachel moaned loudly, her head arching back, her throat exposed.

“Holy fuck,” Mike grunted. “You’re so fucking hot.”

Her whole body rocked forward with every thrust. The wet slap of their flesh echoed off the apartment walls. Her arms gave out, but Mike kept going. She collapsed onto her chest, ass still high, letting him take what he wanted. Letting him use her until she couldn't think.

She came again.

And again.

Rachel didn’t know how long they’d been fucking.

Her pussy was swollen, red, and overstimulated. Her skin glistened. Her hair was matted. Her body was exhausted.

Still, she didn’t stop. She didn’t want to stop.

No one had ever fucked her like this. It was an otherworldly experience, it brought her to a primal level she never thought existed.

Her legs were trembling, her core spasming with each shallow breath. She wasn’t even sure she would be able to walk tomorrow.

But that didn't matter.

Because right now, all she wanted was more.

Mike positioned her on her side, one leg raised high as he drove himself into her. Her moans were hoarse, broken from overuse. She trembled under the force of his thrusts.

"Fuck, I want to cum in you," Mike groaned.

Rachel's body tensed. Her breath caught as a brief spasm of hesitation swam through her body.

She said nothing.

Mike's grip tightened on her leg as he slammed into her like an animal.

"FUCK!"

He groaned deep in his chest as he began to fill her.

Rachel felt it. The thick pulse of him erupting inside her. His cum spilling into her in hot, primal bursts. She gasped, overwhelmed by his sudden pulsing fullness.

Mike kept thrusting slowly until he softened. Then he pulled out. Rachel lay still as she felt his warm cum drip from her thighs and pool onto the sheets.

Her heart thundered in her chest. Her body trembled, drenched in sweat and cum.

Her legs were spread, one still slightly raised from where Mike had gripped it moments earlier. The air in the dorm was humid with sweat and sex. Her sheets, tangled beneath her, were damp beneath her lower back.

Across the room, Mike was hopping on one foot, trying to tug his pants back over his ass. His shirt was already half on, bunched around his neck like a noose.

“That was fun,” he said, wiping sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. “Thanks for the fuck.”

Rachel blinked. Her lips were parted, still slightly puffy, her chest rising in slow, uneven breaths. “You’re… leaving?”

Mike glanced at her with a raised eyebrow. “Well, yeah. I mean, we fucked. And you’ve got homework, right?”

“Oh. R-right.”

The breath caught in her throat before she could finish it. She nodded, watching as Mike shoved his feet into his shoes. There was no kiss. No aftercare. No glance backward. Just a casual stretch of his shoulders and a swipe of his phone off the nightstand.

Rachel looked away, pretending to search for something on the floor. She didn’t know what she expected. This was the arrangement, after all.

“Cool,” Mike said, adjusting his waistband as he began walking out of the bedroom. “Anyways, tell Noah I said hey. Also, tell him I need help with some homework if he's cool with that.”

Rachel's stomach dropped.

“Oh my god,” Rachel whispered. She sat up too fast, the soreness in her core flaring as she did. “Fuck… wait!”

Mike turned. “Yeah?”

“You think you can go again?” she asked, her voice tight, her brain suddenly moving through five thoughts at once. “I… I want to record it. For Noah.”

Mike blinked. Then smiled as he nodded his head eagerly.

“Fuck yeah!” He looked down at his dick. “Gotta wait a little while though. I’m kinda tapped.”

“That’s fine,” Rachel said quickly, brushing her hair back from her flushed face.

Mike scratched his stomach and walked back toward the bed, farting as he did so.

"Jesus, Mike!"

"Sorry, got some gas. Probably the cheese," Mike said, falling back onto the bed next to Rachel.

"Please, for the love of god, don't fart on my bed, and maybe next time don't eat a whole bag of cheese?"

"Haha, yeah… anyway, I'm fucking starving. Let’s order some food.”

Rachel let out a short laugh, shaking her head as she grabbed a pillow to cover her chest.

“You’re unbelievable. Fine, but you’re buying.”

Mike gave her a thumbs up. “Deal. But only if you promise to stock some beer in this fucking place.”

Rachel smirked, tossing the pillow at his chest. “You’re such a frat boy.”

Mike caught the pillow and playfully tossed it back as he opened his delivery app. “You know you love it.”

Rachel didn’t answer. She just watched him for a second, lips parted in a small, thoughtful smile.

Chapter 18 - Best of Friends 18 - Morning After

A sliver of sunlight cut through the opening in Rachel’s curtains, spilling across her cheek and waking her. She groaned softly, rolling toward the wall as she tried to cover her face with the bedsheets, only to find that when she pulled them, they remained stuck in place.

Her eyes opened wide in dreadful realization.

She turned quickly and found Mike sprawled on his back next to her. One arm over his head, mouth slack as he snored loudly. Rachel jolted upright.

So it wasn't a dream. He had stayed the night.

She scanned the room. There was a comical array of scattered clothes and takeout boxes. Her abs cramped as she reached for her phone to check the time.

10:43 AM

Rachel grimaced. She then checked her messages and found one from Noah.

Noah: Sleep tight, angel. Hope your day went well :) Talk tomorrow <3

Her heart beat a little faster as guilt slipped into her chest. She turned the screen off quickly and laid the phone on her nightstand. She tried to remind herself that there was no reason to feel guilty. Noah had given her his blessing, after all. But she still looked away from Mike as he let out a loud snort.

Agitated, Rachell kicked his leg under the blanket, causing him to jerk awake.

“Wha... what is it?” he muttered, eyes still closed as he furrowed his brow.

“You were snoring," Rachel said.

“Was not," Mike said.

“You were.”

Mike let out a grunt as he flipped to his back and slowly opened his eyes.

“Fuck… what time is it?"

"Almost eleven," Rachel said.

She watched him longer than she meant to. His hair was a mess, and his jaw was covered in stubble. His tan skin glowed in the morning sun. Her eyes trailed across him. There was a mark on his shoulder she’d left, and another on his neck. Strangely, she liked that it was visible to others. He scratched his ribs lazily, then yawned wide before covering his eyes with his beefy forearm.

Rachel sat back, turning while she tucked behind her ear.

Last night wasn’t supposed to become this morning. Mike was supposed to fuck her and leave.

But instead, she had let Mike in. Let herself be taken, not even remembering to record until later. Rachel had given herself to something that only she and Mike would remember.

And the worst part was, she knew it had gone beyond sex.

Mike's shell had come undone. He wasn't smart. He didn't have clever things to say. But he was kind, warm, and funny. Rachel smirked as she remembered them lying in bed, watching cat videos he had saved from his feed, both of them laughing loudly together while eating takeout. He told her dumb story after dumb story while making fart jokes. All the while laughing playfully.

Mike's laugh was golden.

Then his hand trailed up her thigh.

And Rachel let him take her, again.

And again.

And again.

Then, when they had stopped recording. Mike took her once more, slowly. The room was dark, save for light bleeding in from the living room lamp. He kissed her gently while thrusting like an animal. He lifted her up, dropping her onto his cock with slow control.

He came in her like that and held her close.

Rachel held him back.

She had never experienced something like that with another man. Mike wasn't Noah, and he would never be.

But there was a real chemistry between her and Mike. Rachel hadn't planned for that.

Mike sat up next to her. “Where's your water bottle at?”

Rachel nodded toward the desk. “Somewhere over there.”

Mike reached and grabbed the nearly empty pink bottle, downed it, and stood. He was completely naked and entirely untroubled by it. Rachel watched as he grabbed his pants and pulled them on.

Mike cleared his throat. "That was uh… really special."

He glanced at her quickly before laughing nervously.

"So thanks… I guess,” he said.

Rachel rubbed her arm, but didn’t say anything. Mike's back flexed. She looked away. He glanced at her again awkwardly.

“You uh… you good?” he asked.

Rachel nodded far too eagerly. “Oh, yeah. Are you?”

“Fuck yeah,” he said with a grin. “Yesterday was…” He trailed off and rubbed the back of his head. “It was… fun.”

“Yeah, it was,” Rachel said.

There was a strange amount of caution to their words. Rachel slid out of bed, keeping the sheet wrapped around her as she looked for her tank top.

“Are things… weird?” Rachel kept her eyes focused on the floor, not daring to look in Mike's direction.

Mike scratched his jaw. “Uhhh… I mean, no? Why would they be?” He laughed again.

Rachel nervously laughed with him.

"Exactly! Why would they be weird? We just hung out between fuck sessions…"

“Right! Like fucking bros or something. Or like, not bros who fuck but like… just fucking bros. But I guess we did fuck, but uh…"

Mike turned, stalling as he caught Rachel's eyes.

"We were just hangin’ between fuckin’,” He said weakly.

Rachel rolled her eyes with a smile. It was meant to be nonchalant, but she certainly didn’t feel that way. The two stepped for the bedroom door at the same time, and stopped when they nearly hit one another. Mike was so tall. And wide, too. Rachel liked how he nearly filled the entire frame behind him.

“So uh… I should probably bounce,” Mike muttered, pulling out his phone uncomfortably. “Supposed to meet up with Ethan for lifting.”

"Oh," Rachel said.

"Yeah…"

Rachel bit her lip. "Well, can I walk with you?"

Mike looked up. "You sure?"

"Yeah," Rachel said.

He shrugged. “Yeah, I’m cool with that. Are you sure you’re good with being seen together?”

“We’re just friends, right?” Rachel said. Mike’s lips tensed.

“Yeah... right, no totally. Just friends.”

They gathered their things in silence, trading a set of smiles as they stepped out of Rachel’s apartment.

Then froze in place when they spotted Mel across the hall.

She was just outside her own door, hand still resting on the knob. Staring straight at them.

Mel stared at Rachel before glancing over at Mike.

“No. Fucking. Way,” Mel said, walking towards the pair.

“Mel, it’s not what it looks like,” Rachel spoke before she thought.

“Not what it looks like, huh?” Mel crossed her arms. “So what is it then? She asked.

Rachel stammered. “We... we were just hanging out.”

“All morning?” Mel asked.

“For a little bit, yeah.”

“Doing what?”

“Homework,” Rachel blurted out. Mel stared blankly.

“Homework?”

“Yep. Right, Mike?” Rachel said. Mike perked up immediately.

“Uh, yeah, homework. Totally.”

“Mhmmm, and all that moaning and yelling I heard yesterday... aaalll day. Was that homework too?”

Rachel grasped for some excuse, but only managed a nervous laugh. Mel scoffed and shook her head.

“For the love of fucking god. Do not treat me like a fucking idiot. I know what Mike sounds like when he’s fucking.” There was heat to Mel's words. Rachel hated that it made her jealous.

Mike scratched his neck, doing his best to hide a bashful smile. Then he caught the look on Rachel’s face. His grin faded, and he cleared his throat.

“Look, Mel. Seriously, it's like… super chill. Like, don't worry. It's all fun and games and... like... fuck alright. Lemme explain it more clearly. So like–”

“Mike,” Rachel cut him off sharply, “Just go downstairs. I’ve got this.”

He looked away, embarrassed. He let out a sniff and shrugged his shoulders.

"Yeah, alright, whatever." He stepped past them. Mel's eyes stayed locked on Rachel as he disappeared down the hallway.

“Does Noah know you’re a cheating whore?” she asked flatly.

Rachel’s jaw dropped in shock.

“That’s not what this is," She snapped.

“No? Because from here, it looks like you fucked the dumbest guy on campus behind your boyfriend's back.”

Rachel felt her face flush hot.

“It’s not like that,” she said, lower now. “And he's not fucking dumb."

Mel scoffed. “Wooow! Defending your new boyfriend, Rachel?!”

“I—” Rachel's lips trembled while she stuttered.

“Does Jack know?” Mel asked.

The question slammed into Rachel. She stared in disbelief.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” She asked, crossing her arms.

“I just assumed you were fucking him too. Figured he'd probably want to know Mike's been added to the roster.”

“You don’t know anything.”

“I know enough,” Mel sneered. “You’re not special, Rachel. You just know how to get attention. You flash a smile, act all sweet and dumb, and suddenly every guy on campus forgets how to think. But I see you for EXACTLY what you are.”

Rachel stepped in close. “If you say anything to anyone, I swear—”

“What?! What the fuck are you going to do?!” Mel shot back, stepping so close that their foreheads nearly hit. Rachel’s hands were shaking as she watched Mel smirk.

“Yeah... that’s what I fucking thought,” Mel said. “You can threaten me all you fucking want. But you know god damn well that as soon as I let your little fucking secret out, you are absolutely fucked.”

Rachel’s throat went dry. Her voice dropped. “Please, Mel. Just… don’t say anything. Noah doesn’t deserve this kind of drama. This doesn’t need to turn into something bigger than it is.”

Mel shook her head.

"I cannot fucking believe you. But you're right, Noah doesn't deserve this. He deserves better."

Rachel clenched her fists.

“Please...” Rachel said. She hated how pathetic it sounded. Mel took a step back and examined her for a moment.

“Here’s the deal. You keep doing your little slut thing, bury your claws in fuckboys, become a petri dish, I don't care. I won't say shit as long as you stay the fuck away from Jack. You so much as bat your lashes at him, and I'll fucking ruin you. Got it?”

“I haven’t touched Jack," Rachel said coldly.

“Awwwe, do you want a fucking medal for being a decent person? I see the way you look at him. I know how badly you want to ruin his fucking life for attention, but I won't let you.”

"I'm not–" Rachel exhaled. “Fine, you don't have to worry.”

"I'm sure..." Mel glared at her with disdain, then turned. “Enjoy your slut phase, Rachel. Hope it’s worth it.”

Rachel didn’t move until Mel’s footsteps disappeared down the stairs.

Then the panic set in.

She closed her eyes and tried to steady her breath. She reached for her phone with shaking fingers.

Mel was wrong. She wasn’t that kind of girl. She wasn’t trying to hurt anyone.

She loved Noah, and she knew Noah loved her.

But right now, a reminder wouldn’t hurt.

She scrolled through her camera roll and scanned the videos she and Mike had taken.

Her eyes stopped on the best clip.

She was fully naked, lit from above by the phone’s flashlight. Her body was glistening, her mouth open, head tilted back in absolute ecstasy.

Yes, this was the one. This would make it better.

She fumbled with a flirty text. Then deleted it and hit send.

Rachel leaned against the wall, staring at her phone while she bit her nail nervously.

Waiting for it to tell her everything would be okay again.

Chapter 19 - Best of Friends 19 - The Commons

The Commons at Godfrey were slower than normal, but Noah wasn't complaining. Once a private library built in the late 1800s, the building had been painstakingly restored rather than replaced. Sunlight cast against arching stained-glass windows, scattering soft jewels of color across marble flooring. Vaulted ceilings were gilded with flourishes of craftsmanship.

Mahogany bookshelves lined the walls, untouched for their aesthetic appeal rather than function, while sleek walnut study tables were arranged in the Commons center. The additional furniture acted as the only modern accent. Soft leather reading chairs and ergonomic desks with embedded outlets.

Noah sat beneath a chandelier at one of the far tables, modern jazz leaking from the headphones hanging around his neck. He stared at the code on his screen, still trying to work out the best solution for his app's most recent selection of bugs. It was a process he found himself easily lost in.

A process broken by a pair of heavy hands landing between his shoulder blades, jarring him forward.

“Long time no see, my man.”

The sound of Ethan’s voice was unmistakable.

“Hey, Ethan,” Noah said, glancing up as he rounded the table.

To his surprise, Luke was with him, walking with his usual air of friendly detachment. He wore a loose off-white tee and baggy jeans and tucked his long, dirty-blond hair behind a well-worn baseball hat. The look clashed with Godfrey’s curated polish, but that was Luke. And maybe that’s what Noah liked most about him.

“So...” Ethan dragged a chair out from the bench and dropped into it with legs spread wide. "I've been hearing some rumors.”

"Have you?" Noah pretended to be ignorant, hoping it’d deter Ethan from further questions. It did not.

“I've heard that you and Rachel have been busy,” He said, staring at Noah with tempered words. “Rachel especially.”

Noah kept typing. “Yeah, we’ve had our hands full.”

"Mike’s always a handful," Ethan added.

Noah paused for a moment, then kept typing in silence.

Ethan smirked. “So it's true that they’re fucking?”

Noah’s phone buzzed on the table. He reached for it, ignoring Ethan. After thumbing through a spam email for a few minutes, Noah looked up and found Ethan still patiently waiting for a reply. Noah sighed as he set his phone back down.

“That’s kind of between us,” Noah replied shortly, trying to keep his tone even. Ethan’s jaw dropped.

“No fucking way. Mike?! Mike got the first crack?!”

There was a tension beneath Ethan’s words, an aggressive mix of jealousy and desire. Noah glared with contempt, and Ethan stared right back.

“Leave it, Ethan,” Luke said, doing his best to break the tension.

“Nah, nah,” Ethan said, brushing him off with a wave. “I need to know what the fuck that's about. Why Mike?"

It was obvious Ethan wasn’t going to drop it until he got his answer. Noah debated leaving, but somehow that felt worse than simply answering the question.

Besides, it clearly bothered Ethan that Mike was getting what he couldn’t. Noah didn’t mind twisting the knife a little bit.

"It just happened," Noah said.

"Does this mean your girl's fair game?” Ethan countered.

Noah sighed. “It’s an arrangement, and her name is Rachel.”

Ethan’s grin faltered. “I know what the fuck her name is."

"Good, so use it," Noah said.

Ethan and Noah locked eyes in contempt.

"I'd slap the shit out of you right now if you weren't my friend." Ethan finally said.

"Ethan," Luke said in a low tone. Ethan shook his head.

"So what the fuck? Does this mean Mike gets to fuck her whenever?” Ethan waited. Noah didn’t answer. “How the fuck did he get that deal?"

Noah gave a short laugh before he could stop himself. It was strange seeing Ethan abandon his cool demeanor and throw a tantrum like this.

"I’m waiting for a fucking answer," Ethan said shortly.

Noah shook his head as his phone buzzed once more. It was a message from Rachel. He opened it passively.

The video thumbnail made Noah’s heart stop. Rachel was fully naked, lit from above by a phone’s flashlight. Her body glistened as she tilted her head back with parted lips. Her eyes caught the lens. Her tongue pressed to the roof of her mouth teasingly, and Mike’s thick hand grasped her waist tightly.

Noah quickly turned the phone screen off and looked at Ethan, relieved to see he hadn’t noticed the image.

“What do you want, Ethan?” He finally asked.

“I want to know why you’re letting Mike, the fuckboy, have your girlfriend instead of me,” Ethan asked coolly.

Luke rolled his eyes.

“I'm sorry man, he gets this way sometimes,” Luke said.

Noah took a deep breath and shrugged.

“Let's drop it, alright?” Noah said. He did his best to sound calm, but his shaking voice betrayed him.

Ethan exhaled hard as he rubbed the back of his head.

“I fucking knew it, though!” Ethan looked at Luke in frustration. “Come on, bro. You get it, right? Mike? Mike got a free fucking pass on Rachel?”

Luke and Noah kept their silence in solidarity. Ethan shook his head and laughed coldly.

“Fucking bullshit man…”

Noah returned to his coding, knowing there was no point continuing the conversation. Ethan wanted only one thing, and he wouldn’t stop complaining until he had it. All Noah had to do was wait for the inevitable question to follow.

“So what do I have to do to get a pass?” Ethan asked.

“Drop it, Ethan,” Luke warned, more firmly this time.

Ethan raised his eyebrows and sat back, defeated. “I’m just saying..."

“You’re always just saying,” Luke muttered.

"He could have at least given her the best option!" Ethan snapped.

"And that's you?" Luke countered. He spoke with a leveled confidence that dampened Ethan's fire.

"Well, I mean…"

"I would've given that title to Jack," Luke said, inspecting his nails. Then he smirked. “Shit, even I’d be a better pick than you.”

"Oh fuck off," Ethan said, punching Luke's arm with a laugh. Luke looked up at Noah and winked.

The two continued bickering, and the tone lightened.

It gave Noah time to breathe. He tuned them out and went back to coding. Trying his best to put Rachel’s video out of his mind.

Ethan rose, slung his backpack over his shoulder, and walked around the table to Noah.

“Whatever. I gotta get to practice anyway.” He clapped Noah on the shoulder again. “Tell Rachel I said hi, alright?”

“Sure," Noah said coldly. He didn't look up from his computer until Ethan had left. When he finally did glance up, he was surprised to find Luke still sitting across from him.

Noah gave him a sideways glance. “You’re still here?”

Luke laughed.

“Well, if you don’t want my company.”

“No, no... I just. Is something up?”

Luke leaned back in his chair and folded his arms. “Look, I never like sticking my nose in other people's business. But… you should be careful around Ethan."

“I know," Noah said quickly.

“I mean it,” Luke said, voice steady. “Mike is one thing. But Ethan is something else. He likes to push buttons, always has."

"So why are you friends with him?" Noah asked. Luke smiled.

"He’s not a bad guy. Ethan is probably one of the most loyal people I know. He's just… competitive," Luke said calmly.

"A little more than competitive."

Luke laughed. "A lot more than competitive."

Noah nodded and smiled. Luke was a good man. There was no doubt about it. The only man in Jack’s friend group who didn't seem to be angling for Rachel in some way.

"Luke," Noah said.

"Yeah?"

"There's… something I want to ask you."

Luke studied him for a moment. “What’s up?”

Noah paused.

“Is there… something wrong with me?”

Luke took his time with the question. He leaned back and pushed a few loose strands of hair behind his ears.

“Do you feel like there’s something wrong with you?” he said eventually.

“I’m not sure,” Noah admitted.

Luke nodded. "It's ok to not be sure, you know that, right?"

"I don't know, this feels like something you should be sure about," Noah said.

Luke shrugged. "I don't know about that. People aren't sure about relationships all the time. You might be in something that isn't typical, but it doesn't make it inherently wrong. I also don't think it's wrong if you're not certain this is you yet. That's the whole point of exploring a relationship, right?”

"Right,” Noah said. He thought a moment, then continued. "Ever since this all started, ever since I realized I like… whatever this is. I thought it meant I was broken somehow. Everyone is always shocked that I'd let Rachel do these things. Floored that I haven't left, or that she hasn't left me…"

Luke nodded, but made no effort to interrupt. Noah Continued.

"I guess I keep thinking I need to 'fix' myself at some point.” Noah shook his head and sighed. “I don't know, I guess sometimes I feel a little crazy."

Luke sat with the words for a moment while nodding slowly. "Well, you're definitely not crazy. Explore yourself without shame. I guess the only thing I would say is make sure you're both being safe along the way."

Noah chuckled quietly. “I’m not sure there is a way to explore this safely.”

“I don't know about that,” Luke said, glancing toward the door Ethan had walked out of. “For starters, definitely be picky about who you explore things with."

The warning was real, but its delivery was perfect. Luke cracked a smile, and they both laughed.

“Thanks,” Noah said.

“No problem."

Noah returned to his work while Luke checked his phone.

"So how’d you meet Jack anyway?” Noah finally asked. Luke looked up.

“Childhood friends,” he said. “Grew up in the same neighborhood, went to the same private school, and now we’re here.” He gestured at the surrounding walls.

“And Ethan?”

Luke smirked. “Showed up in high school. Caused a lot of trouble, but he was funny. And he always came through when it mattered.”

“It’s just funny to me,” Noah said.

“What is?”

“Well… you don’t really fit the whole Godfrey image,” Noah replied.

Luke looked around, amused. “No, I guess I don’t.”

Noah nodded, then paused. Luke’s calm demeanor made it hard to know where to go next.

“So… what do your parents do?” Noah asked.

Luke smirked. “My dad’s in earthmoving. Big contracts, construction stuff. My mom stays home.”

He looked at Noah with a playful smile. “For what it's worth, they also don’t fit the Godfrey mold either.”

“As in... they aren’t rich?”

Luke fixed his hat. “They weren’t rich. Once upon a time. My dad came from almost nothing. Then, suddenly, we had everything. So we never really fit. We’ve still got our little boat, go to diners, and fish most weekends.” Luke rubbed his neck, suddenly bashful. Noah caught it.

“Something wrong?” Noah asked.

“Nah, it’s nothing. You're just hitting a sore spot.”

Noah’s eyes widened. “Shit, I didn’t mean to—”

“It’s fine.” Luke waved him off. “I know you mean well. It’s just… funny. In a lot of ways, I probably relate more to you than I do to them. Wealth’s weird. Changes people, even if they don’t want it to.”

He leaned back, looking out across the green sprawl of Godfrey’s campus. “But… it got me here. So who am I to complain?"

“Yeah,” Noah said quietly. “I feel that.”

Then Luke leaned in. “But since we’re asking questions…”

Noah raised an eyebrow. “Yeah?”

"Why do you like it?”

Noah looked, confused. “Like what?”

“Shit, gonna make me say it huh?” Luke laughed. “Why do you like seeing Rachel with other guys?”

"That’s the real question, isn’t it?" Noah said. Luke smiled.

"No pressure to answer, of course."

Noah sat back in his chair.

It wasn't the first time he'd thought about it. About Brian. About the anger and shame. About how weirdly turned on being helpless had made him feel. How his hatred for it perfectly counterbalanced his need to experience it again. How stunning Rachel looked when she let go.

And yet, through all those twisting thoughts, no clear answer ever found him.

“I don’t know,” Noah said.

Luke nodded.

“And Rachel? What does she get out of it?”

“The freedom, more than anything," Noah replied, surprised he could find her answer better than his own. Noah smiled. “It’s honestly nice to see.”

Luke smiled too. “It does seem like you guys really love each other.”

“We really do,” Noah confirmed.

“I hope you guys go the distance.”

Noah’s brows arched in surprise. “Really?”

“Of course," Luke answered. "I mean… assuming you want to go the distance.”

They both laughed.

"You know, of all Jack’s friends… I feel like I’d want you exploring things with Rachel the most.”

Luke looked like a deer in headlights. Noah regretted the words immediately.

“Damn." Luke let out an awkward laugh. "That’s... flattering.”

“Sorry. I didn’t mean for that to be weird.”

“No, no,” Luke shook his head. “It’s fine. Honestly.”

"You sure?"

"Yeah! Again, I know you mean well, it's all good." He stood, putting his phone in his pocket before fixing his shirt. "But on that note, I should probably head out."

"R-right, sorry again," Noah said.

“Seriously, it’s fine. But remember what I said. Be careful, alright?” Luke said.

Noah nodded. “Will do.”

—

Noah worked as the Commons slowly emptied, the sun setting as he lost track of time.

Then he remembered the video still waiting in his messages.

And he had resisted long enough.

Noah put on his headphones and played the video.

Rachel was in her bedroom, lit only by a single table lamp. Her hair was a tangled mess, spread across the pillow like golden rays of light.

Her body rocked as Mike thrust into her.

He was holding the phone. It rocked with every thrust. Noah could barely make out the way Rachel’s breasts bounced. His eyes trailed to her stomach, watching it rise with every breath. Her legs were spread, knees bent toward her chest, calves hooked over Mike’s shoulders. The sound of her moans filled Noah’s headphones.

He swallowed and cautiously looked up from the video. A student sat at a nearby table, hunched over textbooks, half-asleep. A janitor pushed a cart through the far side of the room.

Satisfied, Noah looked back down and continued to watch.

Mike’s thick, glistening cock plunged in and out of Rachel’s tight pussy with steady, punishing control. Each time he bottomed out, a bulge formed in Rachel’s stomach. She trembled beneath him. Noah could see the slick shine of cum on her chest, smeared over the slope of one breast.

They’d been at it for a while.

Mike’s free hand came into view, gripping one of Rachel’s tits hard. His fingers sank into the flesh.

Rachel gasped, arching at the contact.

She looked past the camera at Mike and smiled.

Noah’s breath grew shallow.

She had never looked at him like that.

Not once.

Not even on their wildest nights. It was a look of full surrender.

And it was for Mike alone.

Why do you like it?

Noah’s stomach twisted as the question echoed in his mind.

The camera shook slightly as Mike moved. Then, abruptly, Rachel was on her knees, ass high, face buried in the bedsheets. Mike pulled her hips toward him and slammed into her from behind. The slap of his thighs rang out in loud thuds as Rachel’s moans pierced the speaker.

Loud enough to make Noah fumble for the volume.

Mike fucked her hard. Rachel's body rocked forward with every thrust as she gripped the sheets tightly. Her cries building as Mike’s pace quickened. Mike held nothing back, and Rachel took his punishment with unquestioned obedience.

'Why do you like it?'

Mike was better. Bigger. Hotter. Funnier. All of them were.

That was the real truth, wasn’t it?

As Mike fucked Rachel, Ethan's voice floated back to Noah's ear.

‘Is she fair game?’

Noah gripped his phone tightly as his palms began to sweat.

She could have anyone. Any guy at Godfrey. And yet… for now, she came home to him.

Rachel made Noah feel chosen. No matter how many times she went with another man, Rachel always came back.

And nothing was more addictive than their game of catch-and-release.

The frame shifted. Rachel was now bent over the side of her bed with Mike behind her.

He groaned and slammed deep inside Rachel, holding himself there with a low, satisfied grunt. Then he pulled out, his thick cock pulsing as he came over Rachel’s ass. Hot white streaks painted her curves, dripping onto her thighs.

Rachel looked back at the camera and gave a slow, teasing shake of her hips.

Hair stuck to her cheek. Mascara smudged around the corners of her eyes.

Rachel looked just past the lens,

and smiled.

The video froze on that warm, genuine smile.

A smile meant for the man in that room.

Noah stared at the frame, chest rising and falling.

He didn’t move. Didn’t breathe.

With an ache in his heart, he watched the video again.

Chapter 20 - Best of Friends 20 - One Sided

Noah stepped out of the Commons, the cool air brushing his face as the warm kissed his face. His mind swirling with confusion and arousal as he processed Rachel's video.

His phone buzzed in his pocket, but he didn't bother to check it. He didn't want to.

Not after what he saw.

He could still see her face. The ecstasy on her lips. Her eyes locked on the camera lighting her from above. Sweat glistening off her skin, Mike's hand digging into her hip firmly. The moans she made while he pushed himself into her.

It was different this time. Their energy was raw, her cries of pleasure too real to ignore.

Noah swallowed hard, chest tightening. Nothing about this was simple anymore. He wanted it to stop. To end. To pull the plug before Rachel realized what he was slowly starting to understand — that they were never built to last. But his mind wouldn't let him. No matter how much it twisted his stomach, his mind always returned to it.

Rachel wanted him to see how much she liked it. How good it was with Mike. Like she was warning him.

And Mike… well, he didn't give a shit who saw. Noah wished he had half of his authenticity. And it made complete sense why Rachel would want him. He was gorgeous, rich, funny, and confident. Those were the qualities that mattered, not tech smarts.

Noah stuffed his hands into his jacket and walked faster.

Ethan's voice still rang in his head.

Does this mean your girl's fair game?

Noah clenched his jaw.

Maybe she was fair game. Or maybe it didn't really matter what he thought. Noah moved down the stone steps two at a time and cut across the quad.

There was a small park on the eastern side of the campus, tucked behind the old art museum. Hardly anyone went there, and it was just the kind of place he needed right now. Soon, the concrete path gave way to a gravel one. The rocks crunched underneath Noah's sneakers. Birds trilled from the high elms overhead. Somewhere, a fountain trickled, and Noah walked through all of it like a zombie.

His mind lost until a shoulder clipped hard against his chest. Noah let out a gasp of air as he fumbled back.

"Jesus!" a familiar feminine voice snapped. Noah looked down and saw Mel staring back up at him. She was smaller than he remembered; perhaps that had something to do with her attitude. She looked up from her phone, headphones slipping from her ears.

Her brown hair was tied up messily, a red hoodie hanging oversized on her thin frame. Her mascara was smudged, which Noah suspected was intentional.

Noah blinked. "Oh uh… hey Mel."

"Oh," she said, staring. "It's you." Her voice carried a surprising amount of melancholy.

"Yeah… sorry, I wasn't watching where I was going," Noah said.

Mel adjusted the wire from her headphones, phone still clutched in her hand. "You almost body-checked me into that tree."

"I didn't mean to…"

"I know. Relax." She sighed, looking away like she regretted saying anything.

Noah stood awkwardly as Mel pulled a piece of gum from her purse and gently placed it in her mouth. He buried his hands in his jacket, standing awkwardly as Mel chewed, examining him.

“How have you been?” He asked nervously.

Mel let out a short laugh. “We’re pretending to be friends now?”

Noah flinched.

“I know your little girlfriend hates my guts,” Mel added with a dry smile.

“I wouldn’t say that," Noah said, visibly confused. He knew Rachel; it wasn't in her nature to hate anyone.

Mel rolled her eyes. “Uh-huh. Sure.”

“Well…” Noah scratched the back of his neck. “I don’t hate your guts.”

Mel's face softened slightly. She turned, stepping toward a nearby bench and sitting down without a word.

Noah hesitated, unsure if Mel wanted him to follow. She glanced up at him, eyes widening in annoyance as she leaned forward expectantly. Noah took the hint, sitting a good distance from her on the bench. They both stared out into the park for a moment. Then, Noah glanced sideways.

“You… coming from class?”

Mel shook her head as she gazed out over the park. “Avoiding it, actually."

“That's fair. Cafeteria then?”

"Ugh, no, that crap will take years off your lifespan."

"Right, yeah… Mike had mentioned you like to eat healthy."

Mel nodded with pursed lips. "I'm sure he did…"

The two stared at the trees in silence.

“What are you in school for again?” Noah asked.

Mel glanced at him with a raised eyebrow.

“What? I’m just curious,” He said.

“Business,” she said finally. “Technically. But I have no clue what I want to do with it. I’ll probably just end up working for my dad’s firm.”

“Mike said the same thing,” Noah said softly.

“What?”

“Nothing,” he said, then smiled faintly. “I’m just not convinced you don’t have any clue what you want to do.”

“Oh yeah?” Mel replied, a hint of challenge in her voice. Noah nodded.

“You don’t strike me as the ‘fall into whatever life hands me’ kind of person.”

Mel stared at him for a moment longer. “Promise you won’t make fun of me?”

Noah held up a hand. “Promise.”

She rolled her eyes and exhaled.

“I kind of want to… be a health and wellness influencer,” she muttered.

Noah blinked. “Wait, seriously?”

Mel shook her head. "See? I knew you'd think it was stupid…”

“Hey, I didn't say it was stupid!” he said quickly, holding back a grin. “It’s just… that’s exactly what I expected you to say. It’s a good fit, too. I can definitely see it. Honestly, I was more surprised to hear you say you'd just work for your dad.”

Mel squinted at him, then laughed under her breath. “Sstop...” She pushed his shoulder playfully.

“No, really. It feels like a good fit for you. You’re opinionated, you’re passionate, you already don’t trust half the food in the cafeteria…”

“I have good reasons not to trust that crap,” she said, smirking.

“That could be your first video!” Noah said, laughing with Mel.

“I could make it into a series.”

“You could! Honestly, it’s kind of badass. You’d be fighting big pharma and big food… you’d be great at it.” As Noah spoke, Mel’s face lost the usual guard it wore.

“Are you always this nice?” She asked. Noah squinted in confusion.

“I’m… just talking to you?”

“Hmmmm...”

A soft wind pushed leaves around their shoes as a bike clicked down the far path. Mel leaned in slightly, close enough that Noah could feel her breath. Noah’s eyes flicked down. Her neckline dipped as she drew close, a sliver of skin catching the light. He looked away instantly with flushed cheeks. Mel laughed.

“I mean, you don't even try to flirt with me,” she paused while looking at him intently. “It's weird.”

“Well, I’m with Rachel,” Noah said matter-of-factly.

Mel held his gaze. She nodded slowly and looked down at her phone. Then shook her head once and let out a deep sigh.

“I can't do this. Look… I have to tell you something.” Mel chose her words carefully, shifting on the bench while staring straight ahead.

“Alright?” Noah said.

“You seem really sweet, so it’s only fair that you know.”

"Know what?" Noah turned his head slightly. Her profile was unreadable.

“Rachel… she was fucking Mike in her apartment all day yesterday.”

Noah blinked. “All day?”

Mel nodded, biting her lower lip. “Yeah. God, I'm so sorry. This fucking sucks, and I really didn’t want to tell you, but like… what kind of person would I be, you know?” She rubbed her forearm absently. “Look, I know I can be a bitch, but even I have boundaries. I just thought you should know.”

Noah watched her for a second. He didn’t know what surprised him more. The information, or how earnestly she had shared it.

“Thanks, Mel," Noah said with a genuine measure of gratitude. But his dread outweighed it. And while Mel’s honesty was commendable, it would have been better if Rachel and Mike hadn’t made honesty necessary in the first place.

“Are you sure? I feel like I’m starting up drama,” Mel said.

“No, really.” He said earnestly, doing his best to minimize the situation. “A lot of people wouldn’t have told me. But you did, I genuinely appreciate it.”

Mel stared in disbelief. “You’re… welcome.”

They sat in silence for a moment. The breeze rustled above them, high in the trees.

“You seem awfully calm about this,” Mel said, narrowing her eyes.

Noah cleared his throat. “Do I?”

“Yeah. Most people would be bawling their eyes out right about now.” Her nails tapped against the bench. “Do you not care?"

“No… I care.” Noah’s voice stayed even. “Of course I care.”

“Then why aren't you losing your fucking mind? She's cheating on you, Noah.”

He scoffed. “Well, I wouldn’t call it cheating.”

“How the fuck is it not cheating?” Mel raised her voice, turning toward him fully.

Noah hesitated. This wasn't going as well as he'd hoped.

“Look, I'm just saying it’s ok…”

Mel stared. “It’s ok?”

“Yes, it's okay, really." Noah wasn't sure who he was trying to convince at this point.

Mel blinked. “What the fuck does that mean? She can fuck other guys?”

Noah exhaled through his nose and shrugged lightly. If this was an attempt to calm Mel down, it was failing miserably.

“Some guys. If we agree to it,” he said.

Mel’s eyes widened. Noah glanced at her uncomfortably. She let out one burst of laughter, turning and staring off into the distance with her mouth wide open.

Mel shook her head slowly and scoffed.

"This is so fucking typical," She muttered.

Noah frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Nothing," She said softly before leaning back on the bench and exhaling. "So what, she can fuck whoever she wants?”

“Not exactly. I mean, we talk about it…” Noah trailed off, then rubbed the back of his neck.

“Oh you talk about it, my mistake. That makes it better,” Mel said sarcastically.

Noah laughed uncomfortably. “Saying it out loud makes it sound worse than it is.”

“Does that mean you get to fuck whoever you want to?” she asked, lips curling at the edges. Noah froze.

“We haven’t really talked about that,” he said.

Mel raised a brow. She scooted closer to him.

Noah scooted back.

She laughed in response, then she scooted towards him again. Noah, reaching the bench's end, tensed as Mel's smooth, tanned leg touched his. She drifted close and bit her lip, eyes locked on his.

“So you guys only talk when it's convenient for her, huh?" She said playfully.

Noah swallowed. “We just haven’t gotten around to it yet.”

Mel pulled back, folding her arms.

“God, you're hopeless. Look, you should be allowed to do whatever you want — but doesn’t this feel a little one-sided?”

“I don’t know,” Noah said quietly. “Maybe.”

The silence that followed wasn’t empty. Heavy with judgment, and he felt every ounce of it. He pulled out his phone, more reflex than reason, hoping the motion might anchor him. It didn’t. If anything, it made the space between them feel even more awkward.

Mel noticed.

She sighed, gathered her bag from the bench, and stood. She looked down at him. Noah glanced up, their eyes locking in a strange swell of passion. The breeze lifted her scent again. Noah's eyes marveled at her tan skin, messy hair, high cheekbones, and that wolf-like sharpness to her gaze.

Why were they all so beautiful at Godfrey?

“Listen,” she said. “You’re genuinely a sweet guy. Like… to a fault.”

Noah opened his mouth, but she continued.

“So, if you’re ever interested in making things less one-sided…”

She bent down and tucked her hair behind her ear, angling her cleavage towards him deliberately. Noah instinctively glanced down, his cock twitching as Mel pushed her breasts together playfully. He promptly bounced his eyes back to hers, catching the triumphant smile forming on her face.

She gently took his phone, fingers quick and casual as she tapped in her number.

“Message me," she said. Mel’s face was close enough to make Noah’s heart race.

“T-thanks,” he said, shifting on the bench uncomfortably. He wanted to stand and step away, but the uncomfortable bulge in his pants made that all impossible. He moved a hand to cover it, and Mel noticed.

Of course she did.

She let out a short laugh as she stood upright, amused more than flattered.

“You're fun. I can see why she likes you. I’ll see you around, Noah," She said, giving him a playful wave.

“Y-yeah. See you.”

She turned, walking away down the gravel path, steps light, hips swaying in rhythm. After a few moments, Noah called after her.

“Hey, Mel?" He said.

She stopped and glanced back.

“Yeah?”

“Please… don’t tell anyone. About… what I said.”

Mel looked at him for a moment, her gaze growing somber.

“You’re too fucking loyal to that girl, you know that, right?”

Noah didn’t respond. Mel sighed.

“Don’t worry. Your secret’s safe with me.”

She turned and took a few more steps before pausing again.

“It’s fucked up though, you deserve better,” she called over her shoulder. Mel turned her head just enough for him to see the smile on her face. “You’re also pretty cute. For the record.”

And then she was gone, hair bouncing as she vanished down the path.

Noah sat alone, staring at his phone. Her number was still open in the call field. She hadn't saved it, as if it were a game of temptation.

All Noah had to do to end this drama was delete her number.

His thumb hovered over the delete button.

Rachel had plenty of men's numbers, including Mike's. She even let Mike in for an entire day, and apparently didn’t think that detail was worth mentioning to him.

So why couldn’t he have one number? He wasn’t going to sleep with Mel. It was just part of the college experience. He deserved that too… didn’t he?

Noah tapped Add New Contact and saved it.

Then he stared at the screen.

He didn’t know what he was supposed to feel.

His mind swam with a flurry of images. Of Rachel's full lips wrapped around a pulsing cock, Mike’s grip on her waist, Mel’s scent, her cleavage, her eyes…

Noah imagined her beneath him, moaning softly as he slowly slid into her.

Noah shook his head, closed his phone, and leaned against the bench.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

And for the first time since Rachel sent that video, he didn’t feel good about it.

Chapter 21 - BOF 21 v2 - About Mike

TANLUT

Edit Notes: This chapter has been updated because Patreon's mod/bot system flagged it (it was not in violation, it just happens sometimes). To ensure it doesn't get flagged again, I went ahead and made some edits. The edits are minor, so no reread is necessary unless you simply want to.

Rachel stepped out of the bedroom in her softest pair of athletic shorts and a cropped tank. She tugged at the hem, giving the illusion of adjusting something that didn’t need fixing. She could feel Noah's eyes gravitate towards her as she walked into the living room. At least that meant the outfit was a success.

Sunlight streaked through the cracks of the patio doors' vertical blinds. Cutting across the floor in narrow blades. Noah sat on the couch, hunched forward, elbows on his knees, foot tapping in sharp, uneven bursts. He gave Rachel a polite smile when their gaze met, before looking back down to the floor.

Rachel crossed slowly to the full-length mirror near the window. Its brass edge caught the light, casting a shimmer across her bare thigh. She picked up her makeup brush and gave her reflection a once-over. Her hair was swept up, clean and soft around her cheeks. The gloss on her lips still fresh.

“You look beautiful,” Noah said, not quite meeting her eyes in the mirror. Rachel looked at him in the reflection and smiled.

“Thanks,” she said, watching him from the corner of her vision. The compliment didn’t land right, however. His voice was too quiet, and his body language lacked his usual enthusiasm.

She tilted her head and applied a touch of blush beneath her cheekbones. Accenuating her already golden skin. She glanced back over to Noah, noticing he was still fidgeting nervously.

“Is there something wrong?” she asked carefully.

“Huh? Oh… no. It’s nothing,” Noah said.

Rachel stared at him through the mirror.

“Alright…” she said. She tried to sound relaxed, but her worry was poorly hidden.

Noah cleared his throat behind her.

“So… how did things go with Mike last night?”

Rachel's heart skipped as she set her brush down. The brush slipped from her fingers, rolling off the vanity and onto the floor, clattering quietly.

“It… went well,” Rachel said, going to pick up the brush with a shaking hand.

But that was a lie. It had been more than well.

Mike had been the perfect experience. He had done things Rachel didn’t even know were possible. He knew exactly how to take control. How to pull her hair. How to make her beg. How to press his thumb into her mouth mid-thrust and pound her until she was sore.

And he’d made her laugh in a way she never had before.

Rachel prayed the truth couldn’t be seen on her face. Noah nodded, his gaze returning to the throw rug beneath his feet.

Rachel breathed through her nose, steady and slow. She leaned forward slightly, tracing a soft shimmer across her brow bone, but her mind was already drifting. Instinctively, she glanced into the bedroom and spotted the side of her bed through the doorframe.

In an instant, she was transported back to that night.

She watched as she leaned over, placing her hands on her sheets before looking back at Mike with a playful smile. She shivered as he slapped his cock against her entrance. Then bit her lip as his hands gripped her hips so tightly that his

fingers buried into her skin. She closed her eyes and felt her cheek press into the mattress, her mouth open around a cry as Mike slammed into her with intense thrusts. The bed rocked beneath her elbows, her fingers twisted in the sheets.

She could still feel it.

The pressure. The lust.

A swirl of desire caused her breath to hitch. She shook her head and turned towards the living room, hoping that the memories would fade just as quickly as they came.

She looked at Noah sitting on the couch. The two shared a tense smile.

Then he began to fade away.

And Mike took his place.

She remembered him sprawled across that same couch. Shirtless, grinning, his laugh echoed through the apartment as the credits rolled. As the episode finished, she had climbed into his lap without a word, her knees framing his hips, her fingers drifting down the lines of his abs.

His hands found her waist, pulling her up with a force that left her breathless before guiding her down, slow and steady, onto his cock. Like she was nothing more than a warm, desperate toy.

She rode him hard, the couch creaking beneath them, the TV still playing as her moans bled into the background noise. Her hips slapped against his. Her chest bounced with every thrust he drove upward. She remembered how soaked she was. How tightly she clenched around him.

And when she cried out, Mike dragged her mouth to his and swallowed the sound with a kiss that melted everything else away.

And all of it happened right where Noah sat now.

“That’s good," he said.

Silence fell between them.

Rachel felt her pulse throb behind her ears. She ran a hand through her hair, trying to gather herself.

Rachel's lips parted, but no words came.

The silence this time was heavy.

It pressed between them like smoke, thick and slow and suffocating.

She turned slightly. Enough to see his reflection. His hands were clenched together now. Rachel swallowed.

She tried to find something else to fix on her face, some detail she could pretend to fuss over, but she knew it was pointless. Her heart was thudding too loudly for her to concentrate on anything else.

“So,” Noah said, eyes still low. “How long did he stay over?”

Rachel’s stomach tensed. The question struck her like a dart thrown into her chest, hitting her heart perfectly.

Her hands froze above the vanity.

“Oh, it was just a little while,” she said, trying to sound casual.

Noah’s foot resumed its tapping. “Can you define ‘a little while’?”

The air thinned around her. Rachel swallowed. She turned to face him, leaning against the wall in search of any form of comfort.

“He stayed most of the day,” she said carefully. “And… overnight.”

Noah stared blankly. It couldn't have been more than a few seconds, but it felt like an eternity.

“Oh,” he said.

Rachel’s hands fidgeted with the hem of her shorts. “Is that… okay?”

He gave a shrug while looking back at the floor. “I mean... yeah. We never really talked about that sort of thing.”

Rachel nodded as Noah shifted on the couch.

“Did you like hanging out with him?” He asked.

Rachel’s hesitation spoke louder than any words could.

She remembered laughing with Mike over takeout and Netflix reruns. She watched him stretch on her sheets like he belonged there. What’s more, she remembered how his desire had made her feel. It was unlike anything else she had experienced before. It was primal, playful, and full of passion.

Memories flashed in seconds.

They were half-dressed, eating lunch on the bed, when Mike suddenly grabbed her hips and pulled her down beside him, tickling her until she was breathless with laughter. He'd kissed the corner of her mouth, his palm still sliding under her waistband. She remembered how her giggles had turned into quiet moans as his fingers buried deep into her.

Then he climbed on top of her.

His playful laugh melted into a deep moan of satisfaction as he entered her.

That moan still echoed in her ears.

He drove into her slowly, her legs curled up and open, pinned back as he rocked deep. The mattress groaned beneath them as his chest pressed to hers, one hand groping her breast while his mouth worked her neck.

The way he held her afterward was also unforgettable. His giant arms wrapped around her tightly as heat radiated off his broad chest.

Rachel blinked, and was relieved to be looking at Noah once more.

“He was fun,” she said flatly. “But it was really just about the fucking.”

Noah nodded, but something behind his eyes flickered.

Rachel stepped forward slowly. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine," Noah said.

She bit her lip. “Hey… If this was crossing a line, I’m really sorry. I’ll ask next time, ok?”

“Yeah, that’s fine, we could also just not have a next time too,” he said, his tone gentle but sharp.

"Oh yeah! I know that. I wasn’t saying that I wanted there to be a next time or anything…"

Rachel waited. Noah didn't respond.

She continued to ramble. "I was just saying… that you know in the future… if something like this happens again... I'll be sure to ask about anything new."

Noah looked up at her, smiling gently. “Yeah… That would be great.”

Rachel exhaled. “Okay.”

A few seconds of silence passed.

"I'm really sorry…" Rachel said softly, her lip trembling as she fought to keep her voice steady.

The crack in her voice melted Noah’s tension in an instant. He stood without a word, crossed the room in just a few strides, and pulled her into his arms.

"Hey," he said gently. "You don’t have to apologize. These things happen."

"Are you sure?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Yeah. This is all new… we're both still figuring it out."

Rachel nodded against his chest. "Alright."

Noah held her a moment longer, his arms warm around her, grounding. She closed her eyes and breathed in his scent.

Silence settled between them again. But this time, it didn’t sting quite so much.

Noah exhaled a small laugh, almost to himself.

“What?” Rachel said, a smile forming on her face.

“Nothing it’s just... when you said ‘are you sure’ just now, it reminded me of something.”

Rachel smiled, keeping her head pressed to his chest. “Tell me.”

Noah laughed again. “Alright, you remember that stupid frog puppet from freshman year?”

Rachel laughed. “Oh my god. The one with the googly eyes?”

“Yeah. Do you remember the voice you used to do for it?”

“You remember that?! I've done everything I can to repress it,” she said, already laughing as she stepped back from him.

“You did this weird little British accent–"

“Please, Govnah!” she said in that same awful accent, clasping her hands dramatically. “Are you sure I need to eat the crumpets?!”

Noah burst out laughing. “Jesus! That’s the one.”

Rachel grinned, watching the tension slip off his shoulders.

"And you used to do the nerd voice for the other worm puppet with the glasses, remember?!"

"Oh, come on, no one remembers that."

"Are you kidding? You made the entire class erupt in laughter. I remember," Rachel said. Noah smirked, pretending to push up an invisible pair of glasses.

"You remember me, m'lady?" He said. The two continued to laugh, speaking to one another in their funny voices as Noah's hands trailed down to Rachel's waist.

“I think,” Noah said, pulling Rachel close, “that someone’s in need of a tickle attack.”

Rachel's eyes widened. “Ahhh! Please, Gov'nah!” she shrieked, bolting from the couch while laughing.

Noah followed quickly behind, catching her waist, fingers playfully trailing her sides as her warm laughter filled the apartment.

Noah backed her toward the bed, collapsing with her in a tangle of limbs and laughter.

Rachel rolled on top of him, panting slowly.

For a moment, they just stared at each other.

His hair was a mess. Her cheeks flushed.

She felt the shape of him under her hips. The realness of him. The steadiness.

Then she caught a faint whiff of Mike's cologne still left on the bedsheets.

And suddenly she was staring at him once again.

She heard his laugh. It was deep, confident, and powerfully mischievous. She remembered how he'd tugged her into his chest and playfully buried his face in her hair. Tickling her neck with his nose until she laughed loudly. She remembered his hand sliding down her back as he rolled on top of her, brushing loose hairs out of her eyes.

Their laughter slowed as he slowly entered her, giving way to soft moans. He leaned down by her ear, whispering something that made her shiver. She didn't dare remember the words. Their bodies moved together like waves, rhythmic, hot, and unhurried.

He could be slow and gentle when he wanted to be.

And he wanted to be with her.

His words flowed back.

"I've never felt this before," He had said.

Then Mike kissed her so deeply she forgot what day it was.

The memory cracked Rachel wide open.

Her chest tightened. She looked down and saw Noah again, his soft brown eyes full of warmth. Of history. Of everything real.

And she knew.

Whatever this thing was with Mike, it didn't live here.

Noah did.

She leaned down, wrapped her arms around him, and held him as tightly as she could.

"I love you," she whispered, eyes shut tight.

Without hesitation, Noah wrapped his arms around her in return.

"I love you too," He said.

They stayed there for a beat longer. No sound but the rise and fall of their breathing. Her head tucked beneath his chin, his hand stroking her back.

Whatever came next, whatever questions still haunted her, they could wait.

For now, Rachel lay on Noah's chest while the sun slowly set.

Chapter 22 - Best of Friends 22 - March Madness

14

The bar was chaos. Heat, music, and bodies packed tightly together, creating an unmistakable energy carried by a symphony of voices. It was the kind of college dive bar that smelled like old beer and ancient sweat, where Christmas lights clung to the rafters like a desperate last attempt at charm. The walls were covered in rusted tools, dusty trophies, and battered Godfrey jerseys stapled like war banners.

And while it was a staple for Godfrey students, March Madness had turned the place into a pressure cooker.

Noah held the door for Rachel as they slipped inside. The crowd pressed in immediately.

“Holy shit,” Noah muttered, feeling Rachel push herself against him as they surveyed the room.

Rachel smiled up at him, cheeks already flushed from the walk. “I know! This is so awesome!”

Noah smiled back, happy to see her so excited. Rachel had always loved this kind of energy, and she looked like she belonged here.

Her outfit, a pleated skirt and a soft, cream-colored blouse tucked at her waist, coupled with a sweater knotted neatly around her shoulders, was an almost ironically polished ensemble. It looked as though she'd stepped out of a country club brochure.

She wore the old money aesthetic proudly, knowing each piece had been thrifted. Noah had to commend her for that.

“Where do we even go?” Noah asked, scanning the tide of people. Rachel answered by tugging him deeper into the sea of college students.

Godfrey had just won a huge game, and the whole school was still vibrating from it. Noah could feel it in the floorboards, in the wild pulse of music bleeding through the walls, in the shouts from the far side of the bar.

Rachel's eyes brightened as she pointed while jumping excitedly.

"Noah, look! The basketball team is here!" She said excitedly.

Of course they were, Noah glanced in the general direction Rachel pointed, but didn't need to look long to see him.

Ethan.

Even here in a crowd of people who dressed like they wanted to be seen, he stood out.

He was near the bar, standing tall in a sea of girls. One hand held a drink, the other gestured wide as he laughed with another teammate. His head was thrown back, and that cocky, magazine-smile charm froze all who passed by. His short hair, tousled perfectly, made him look all the more camera-ready.

Noah had to admit, Ethan's gravitational pull went well beyond his height and looks. The room seemed to pivot around him. Everyone paid attention when he spoke. Girls leaned closer, and guys laughed louder.

Noah tried not to care.

Rachel was still pulling him through the crowd. They squeezed past two girls making out, then a knot of frat guys shouting about brackets.

And as they stepped closer to the bar, Ethan looked up. Locking eyes with Rachel.

Noah felt the energy around Ethan shift as he stopped mid-laugh. The other girls noticed too, their smiles faltering slightly as Ethan pushed off the bar and walked through them like they weren’t even there.

Noah's heart began to race as he felt Rachel stiffen beside him.

Ethan towered over them both, not even glancing at Noah.

"Rachel!" He said with a large smile, shouting as the crowd reacted to a highlight reel on the large screens.

"Ethan," Rachel said back with a healthy amount of playful attitude.

"Didn't think you'd make it out!"

"We decided to drop by," Rachel said, stepping closer to Noah. Ethan still didn't bother to acknowledge him. He leaned down to Rachel's level, mouth inches away from her ear.

“I like your outfit!” He said.

She smiled. “Thank you!” Her voice was light but barely audible over the crowd.

Noah watched Ethan’s eyes sweep down Rachel's body as she spoke, then flicked back up with that wolfish grin.

Noah’s jaw tensed.

As he began to step forward, he felt a heavy hand land on his shoulder, halting him in place. Noah turned to find Mike grinning at him stupidly.

“My man! You made it!” Mike yelled as he gave Noah a bear hug. Noah could smell the alcohol on his breath as Mike let him go and slapped his back.

It made Noah flinch, but he smiled all the same. It was always good having Mike around.

“Hey Mike, how's it going?" Noah said.

“It's going pretty good, man! I could use your help, though. Luke is like… doing his fucking loner bullshit in the corner. We need to get him to do some shots. Come on!” Mike grabbed Noah’s sleeve, but Noah looked at Rachel nervously.

“Uh… I don’t know, I–”

“Come on, man! First round’s on me!” Mike bellowed.

Noah turned back, just in time to see Ethan’s hand on Rachel’s back.

"Mike I–"

Mike glanced over, then slapped Noah's shoulder.

“Oh, don't sweat it bro, she'll be fine! There’s like, a billion people, so Ethan will behave. Besides, it’s not like she's gonna leave without you,” Mike said.

Noah's gut twisted as he saw Rachel burst out into laughter at something Ethan said.

“R-right…”

He let himself get pulled away, looking one last time, catching a glimpse of Rachel’s blonde hair lit by the string lights as Ethan playfully rubbed her shoulder.

She looked back, too.

Just once.

Scanning. Searching.

But their eyes never met.

The crowd swallowed them both.

Noah let Mike lead him toward the back.

The smell of cheap whiskey and melted ice floated into Noah's nostrils as they found their way to the edge of the back bar. The buzz of a hundred separate conversations all crashing against each other as TVs played game highlights overhead.

The noise should have grounded him, but all Noah could think about was Ethan’s hand on Rachel’s lower back.

He hated how easily Ethan had moved in. How Rachel just smiled, oblivious to the way the air had shifted. But even more so, Noah hated how normal it felt and how invisible he was in that moment.

In this world, Noah felt completely invisible, even by Rachel's side.

Mike was already at the back bar, flagging the bartender with both hands and shouting something about tequila shots. Noah glanced over and spotted Luke leaning against a wall nearby. He wore a worn baseball cap and t-shirt, his wavy hair pushed back behind his ears as he glanced up from his phone and gave Noah a nod.

Noah waved back as the two shared a knowing smile. He walked over to him.

"Hey Luke!"

"Hey! So you got dragged here too huh?"

Noah sighed as he nodded slowly. "Yeah..."

The two laughed as Luke shook his head.

"At least I'm not the only one who'd rather be somewhere else."

"Right?! Give me a backyard and friends over this..." Noah added.

"Hell yeah, brother," Luke said with a surprisingly good southern accent. He gave Noah a fist bump before returning to his phone. "Ah, sorry. I'm trying to get some details sorted for a hiking trip I'm taking this weekend. Feel free to grab a drink."

"I think it will," Noah said, fixing his jacket. Luke chuckled.

"Watch Mike make you into a fucking party animal. That'd be hilarious."

Noah laughed, finding himself in better spirits. Mike was right, it was a loud bar with eyes everywhere. And Rachel could handle herself.

Noah needed a drink. Something strong. Something to help him cut loose and enjoy himself.

But all he could think about was Rachel's laugh fading into the noise next to Ethan.

Noah threw back the shot without thinking.

The heat hit his throat like fire, and Mike erupted into a howl. "No fucking way! Let's gooo!"

Mike chased his with lime, fist-bumping the air. Luke finally peeled himself off the wall, snatching the last glass. He downed it like it was water, grimacing only slightly.

They laughed together, and to Noah's surprise. It worked.

For a moment, Rachel's laugh stopped ringing in his ears.

The bar was all momentum now. Televisions blaring above the shelves. NCAA highlights in slow motion. Godfrey's final basket, Ethan's dunk that looked straight out of a video game. The crowd roared every time it replayed.

Noah sat between Mike and Luke, beer in hand, echoing their cheers, shouting at the screen even though he barely followed the game. He and Luke threw an arm around Mike's shoulders when he made a bet on the next bracket. He watched with secondhand pride as Mike sauntered over to a group of girls he'd been eyeing the entire night.

"No way he lands that brunette," Luke said, grinning.

Noah squinted. "I don't know, he's kinda on fire tonight."

They both leaned forward. Watching as Mike spoke with his hands. There was a pause, then laughter. Then a number scrawled on a napkin.

Luke whooped. “Holy shit. He’s a monster.”

“Looks that way,” Noah added as Mike returned holding the napkin like a trophy.

“Round of shots!” he declared. The three happily obliged.

Then another came.

And another.

Everything softened. Noah stopped checking the crowd for Rachel. Stopped thinking about what Ethan might do. He let himself blur into the music, into the drinks, into the boys.

The next song dropped. An early 2000s throwback that shook the walls.

Without thinking, Noah jumped, bouncing to the beat. His shoulder clipped someone.

“Hey!” a voice shouted.

He turned.

And Mel looked back. She blinked, caught off-guard for a moment, then smiled.

“We have to stop meeting like this.”

Noah laughed, instinctively rubbing the back of his neck. “Hey, Mel.”

She stepped in closer, avoiding a stray dancer behind her. “How you been?”

He shrugged, trying to look casual. “Honestly… alright. You?”

“Mmm.” She raised an eyebrow, not quite buying it. Her eyes flicked past him toward the bar. “And where’s Rachel?”

“She’s… around.”

Mel looked pointedly back at Mike and Luke. “Not with Mike?”

Noah shook his head.

Mel crossed her arms and tilted her head. “So who is it?”

“Look, it’s—”

“Who?”

He exhaled. “She’s chatting with Ethan. It’s not a big deal.”

Mel instantly scoffed, turning to look into the crowd. “Oh my fucking god.”

Noah followed her gaze. In the far stretch of the room, backlit by neon signs, he spotted them. Ethan, with one hand on the small of Rachel’s back, laughing into her ear like they were sharing a secret. Her head tilted back. Her body leaned in.

“They’re just hanging out,” Noah said quickly.

“Yeah. I’m sure that’s all they’re doing,” Mel muttered.

Then, without warning, her attention flipped. A new song thudded in through the speakers, bass-heavy and slow.

“This is my favorite song,” she said. “Come on. Let’s dance.”

“Oh, I don’t know if—”

Mel turned back and faced him squarely. “Seriously? Noah... I think you can at least dance with another girl. Rachel’s in no place to say otherwise.”

She reached for his hand.

He didn’t take it.

Mel paused. Her voice dropped as she searched his eyes. “What’s up?”

He hesitated. “I… I’m not a good dancer.”

Mel smiled, then laughed gently.

“I know, it’s... not the most attractive thing.”

Mel shook her head, “No! No, it’s not that, it’s just... you’re really sweet.”

They stared at one another for a moment. Then Mel continued.

“You don’t have anything to worry about. I’m not a good dancer either. It’s just for fun. Come on.”

This time, she didn’t wait. She tugged gently, and Noah followed.

The dance floor was already thick with people. Lights blinked low, and the heat of packed bodies pressed in from every side. Mel stepped in front of him, already moving as the music moved through her. Her hips rolled, her shoulders loosened. She smiled without looking at him, like the whole thing was effortless.

Noah stood awkwardly, hands at his sides. Doing his best to try and appear at least somewhat natural.

Then she spun. Just once, and her ass turned with her.

Noah’s brain went blank for half a second.

Mel was exactly the type he’d spent most of high school fantasizing about. Curvy, tanned, athletic. Her movements so confident they felt natural.

And something about that confidence helped Noah loosen up. His feet found the beat. His hips followed. Awkwardly at first, then less so.

“See?” Mel said, turning back toward him with a grin. “Not so bad!”

He laughed. He couldn’t help it. It was fun. Stupid and loud and freeing.

Then the tempo dropped.

The lights dimmed further. The air grew thick again, like something shifting.

Mel stepped closer. Slowly. Like she was giving him time to leave if he wanted.

Her hands reached out and caught his wrists, soft and sure.

“What are you—”

“Grab my hips,” she said gently, guiding him.

Her hands placed his at her sides.

Then she looked up at him.

He froze. Her eyes were so close. His fingers hovered against her waist, unsure how much pressure to use.

Then they began to sway.

The music throbbed quietly around them, and for a moment, it felt like they were floating inside their own rhythm, the party falling away just slightly.

“Thank you,” Noah said.

Mel smiled. “For what?”

“For… not making fun of me.”

Mel stared at him for a moment with gentle eyes.

“I’d never do that,” she said, her voice suddenly quieter.

He swallowed, eyes flicking down and back up. Her lips were glossy. Her nose scrunched when she smiled. She smelled like warm citrus and something floral.

They kept dancing. Not close enough to be inappropriate.

But close enough.

The song ended, and they slowed with it.

Mel’s fingers slipped down his forearms, then rested on his palms.

She held them for a second longer than she had to.

“Thanks for the dance,” she said, looking up at him.

Noah met her eyes. “Of course.”

Mel exhaled slowly and looked to the floor. Then she brushed her hair behind one ear and slid her hand back up his arm to his shoulder.

“Be seeing you,” she said.

“Yeah…”

His voice trailed off as Mel disappeared into the crowd.

He looked up. Past the lights, past the crowd, and found them again.

Rachel and Ethan.

Their bodies close. Too close. Ethan leaned in. Rachel was gazing up at him, her expression soft, lips parted slightly like she was waiting for something.

And as the sea of people parted,

Their eyes met across the room.

And for one sharp, breathless moment, neither of them looked away.

- - -

Rachel was weaving through shoulders and laughter as her heels stuck to the floor, eyes darting through the crowd for Noah.

She stood on her toes, but the crowd swallowed everything.

“You want a drink?” Ethan said. His voice was low, easy.

Rachel turned to him and blinked. “I should probably find Noah…”

Ethan tilted his head, "He'll be fine! Come on, let's have a drink. I promise I won't bite.”

She bit the inside of her cheek. He was probably right. The bar was loud and crowded; it was only natural for them to get split up eventually. Besides, she knew Noah would want her to have fun.

And Ethan… well, Ethan would always be Ethan. She could handle him.

Rachel sighed. "Alright fine, but just one!"

"Deal," Ethan said. He placed a hand at the small of her back to guide her toward the bar. It wasn't aggressive. In fact, Rachel barely felt it. Rachel was surprised Ethan was capable of such subtlety. His touch was warm and steady. And as they pushed through the crowd, it didn't leave.

Rachel was surprised at how many people turned to look as Ethan passed. Guys offering cheers, and girls smiled too widely. Someone shouted his name, someone else called him a god. And as they continued to walk, it became clear that Ethan really was the center of the room. To some degree, it felt like standing next to a celebrity.

And Rachel felt every eye flick to her.

The bar was three deep with sweaty undergrads elbowing each other for dollar shots. But Ethan barely raised his hand, and the bartender promptly moved to him.

"Top shelf," Ethan said, leaning into the noise. "Make her something good. Something expensive."

Rachel raised her brow. "You really don't need to–"

"Let me guess. You're a rum girl?" He said, cutting her off with a sideways smile.

She smirked involuntarily. "Whiskey, actually."

Ethan gave a short, approving nod. "Even better."

The bartender returned with an amber drink in a polished glass, a stark contrast to the plastic cups surrounding them.

Rachel took a sip. Her eyes widened. "Oh my god."

"Good?" Ethan said, sipping his own whiskey.

"Yeah, very good."

"That's what I like to hear," Ethan said, handing the bartender a twenty-dollar tip.

Rachel took another sip. It was smooth, deep…

With just enough heat.

Rachel's eyes trailed back to Ethan. She had to admit, there was an infectious element to him. The way his shoulders moved as he leaned against the bar, the way he glanced over the crowd like he owned it. He wasn't trying hard to be the center of attention. He just was.

Someone touched his arm. A girl. Long lashes, glossy lips, the kind who didn't wear jackets even in winter. One of many at Godfrey.

"Ethan," she cooed. "You were insane tonight."

Ethan gave her a polite half-smile. "Appreciate it."

She glanced at Rachel, giving her a death glare, before leaning closer to Ethan. "We're going to Trinity Werks after this. You should come."

"Maybe." Ethan turned, arm brushing against Rachel's. "Oh, have you met Rachel?"

The girl's smile flattened into a blank expression as she looked her up and down. "Uh, no…"

Ethan smirked, leaning into Rachel's ear. "Rachel, this is... uh...?"

"Stephanie," the girl muttered.

“Right. Maybe you can settle a debate for us, Stephanie. Rachel’s got the best music taste of anyone I know. But we're trying to decide who's better. Eilish or Banks?”

Rachel laughed. “We were not debating–”

Ethan pushed her playfully. "Of course you'd say that, because you know I'm right."

As the two laughed, Stephanie gave a tight smile and wandered off. Ethan let out a relieved sigh.

"Thanks for that, seriously. She would have tried convincing me for the next half hour."

“Jesus,” Rachel murmured, amused. “Is that every night for you?”

Ethan smirked. “Most unfortunately.” Rachel glanced sideways at him.

"Are you trying to convince me that you don't like the attention?" Rachel countered. Ethan shrugged.

"I never said that, but it does have downsides. I don't want attention all the time. It'd be nice to just be treated like a person every once and a while."

Rachel stared, hating the fact that she felt sympathy for him. Ethan’s brow furrowed as he smiled.

"What?" He asked.

Rachel shook her head. "Nothing."

They didn’t move. They didn't need to. The bar hummed around them as bodies pressed in, music shifting tempo, the heat of the crowd, and cheap cologne sticking to the air. But Rachel didn’t feel overwhelmed. She felt… elevated. Like she was inside some glittering orbit. Like she was on stage.

Another group approached, made up of players she didn’t know and girls she half-recognized from campus. Every time, they pulled Ethan into some brief exchange. Every time, Ethan turned to her.

“Oh, this Rachel, by the way,” he’d say.

“She's actually doing something meaningful with her life.”

“She saw my worst game of the season and still talks to me.”

“She’s smarter than all of us combined.”

It was charming. It was smooth. But Rachel could tell in his tone of voice that it was honest, too. There wasn’t a punchline at her expense. No teasing, no trying to get her drunk, no cheesy pickup lines. It was just… fun. Easy. And in response, Rachel happily played interference for him.

And the other girls noticed. Their eyes narrowed. Their voices turned brittle.

“Oh, I didn’t realize you were on a date,” One of them said,

Ethan just smiled. “Neither did I.”

Rachel’s drink disappeared faster than she meant it to. She was giggling now. Real laughter, the kind she usually reserved for Noah, for private moments, not for loud bars with star athletes and jealous onlookers.

But Ethan brought it out of her.

He leaned in close, said something under his breath about the guy’s haircut two seats down. Rachel snorted into her drink.

When she looked back up, his hand was right next to hers on the bar.

She didn’t pull away.

“Dance with me,” he said softly.

Rachel raised an eyebrow. Ethan laughed.

“It’s just a dance," He said. His smile was confident, but not demanding.

Rachel hesitated. Then downed the rest of her drink and set the glass down.

“Fine,” she said, already turning to a clearing in the crowd where a few couples danced.

The floor vibrated under their feet. Lights strobed low across the walls as the pop track shifted. Sharp hi-hats, deep bass, synth chords melting over the crowd. It was loud. Packed. Bodies moved in waves, and for a second, Rachel felt swallowed in the energy.

Then Ethan stepped close, and everything else faded.

It didn't help that he could dance. Hips loose, hands low but never grabby, movement smooth and practiced like he’d done this a thousand times. Rachel matched his pace, slowly letting herself sink into it. The rhythm took her hips. She flipped her hair back and smiled.

She watched his eyes widen, watched as he was captured in her beauty, and blushed as he smiled back.

The song shifted. Slower now. More bodies pressed into the dance floor, and more couples found excuses to lean closer.

Ethan’s hand slid to Rachel's waist. He held it there a moment as he leaned down to her ear.

“This alright?” He asked.

She gave him a look. “Don’t pretend you’re innocent.”

“I said I wouldn’t try anything!” He shot back playfully.

She rolled her eyes. "It's fine."

They danced. Slower now. His hand moved slightly, pressing firmer into her hips. Rachel's arms lifted, barely managing to wrap around his neck. It felt… natural. Too natural. Her body adjusting to his, her frame dwarfed by his height.

As her chest pushed against his, her mind flashed back to the videos he'd sent her.

God, those videos.

He’d stroked himself expertly. The biggest cock she’d ever seen.

And she had watched.

She shifted against him, thighs pressing tighter as her breath caught.

Ethan’s hands slid lower.

Rachel caught them just before they reached her ass. Her fingers wrapped around his thick wrists as the two exchanged a look of passion and heat.

“What are you so afraid of?" He asked her.

"I'm not afraid," She countered.

"It's not like you haven't explored before."

Rachel cocked her head, giving Ethan a stern look. “It’s a respect thing, Ethan.”

He paused, a tinge of hurt on his face. Then, he leaned closer. “You don’t think I respect you?”

"A week ago I might've said no," She said.

"And now?" Ethan asked.

Rachel didn't answer.

He’d been kind all night. Thoughtful. Funny. He’d made her feel… seen. Desired. Important. It was like she was talking to a completely different man, and that rubbed Rachel the wrong way.

“I think you want something,” she said softly. “You’re just good at hiding it.”

Ethan’s hands moved up, tracing the length of her ribs. “What if I promise it’s just a dance?”

“Your promises don’t mean much.”

“Listen…” he sighed, leaning closer, his breath brushing her ear. “I know I fucked up. I get it.”

“Do you?” she asked, arching a brow. “Because it was a pretty big fuck-up.”

Ethan’s mouth curved into a perfect smile.

“Well,” he murmured, eyes dropping to her hips and back up again, “big is kinda my thing.”

Rachel’s stomach clenched. She didn’t respond. She couldn't.

She pressed closer instead. Her arms grew tired, so she moved them around his waist. Her heart racing as she felt his lean muscles beneath his thin shirt. They swayed. Ridiculously mismatched in size, yet they fit perfectly together.

“I’m just saying,” he whispered, “if you’re exploring… I wouldn’t be a bad place to start.”

Her smile was soft. She looked down. “You’re pressuring me.”

“You seem to like it.”

"Are you a mind reader?"

"I'm working on getting my license."

Rachel scoffed and laughed softly.

They kept dancing.

Time moved on. The music dipped, and the lights flickered. Slowly, the sea of bodies on the dance floor began to pull apart. Laughing, panting, spilling out toward the bar in drunk swells.

Rachel blinked, chest rising and falling as Ethan’s hands lingered at her waist. She felt the sweat cooling on her back as they stared at one another.

Then, between two swaying couples, she saw him.

Noah.

With tousled hair and an unreadable expression. His eyes locked on her and Ethan.

Rachel’s stomach sank. Her buzz thinned just enough for guilt to worm in.

She stepped away from Ethan, brushing his hand off lightly. He glanced over at Noah and cleared his throat.

"Thanks for the dance," She said softly, walking past him.

“Wait, Rachel...”

“Hey, babe!” she said to Noah.

Noah nodded.

“Hey," He said flatly.

She tried to read him.

“You having fun?” She asked cautiously. He cleared his throat.

“Did... did you see?”

Rachel was about to ask what Noah meant, but Ethan was already behind her before she could. He stepped in close, grinning like this was a reunion of old friends.

“Sup, man,” Ethan said, giving Noah a casual nod.

Noah grimaced. “Hey.”

“You enjoying the party?” Ethan asked.

Rachel opened her mouth, but Noah answered first.

“Uh, yeah! I was just hanging with Mike and Luke over there.” He nodded vaguely through the room. Rachel followed his line of sight, spotting the two of them hunched over a foosball table near the back, half-laughing, half-fighting.

Ethan waved. “Nice! Glad to see Luke getting out.”

Rachel started to give herself permission to relax. Then Ethan spoke up.

“So, I heard Mike’s been having some extracurricular fun with Rachel lately.”

Her stomach flipped.

“Ethan!” She snapped.

“What?” Ethan said innocently. “It’s true!”

He turned to Noah with a grin. “Noah and I already talked about it, actually.”

Rachel froze. “You did?”

Noah shifted uncomfortably. “Well, we might have brushed on the topic.”

Rachel studied him a moment as Ethan continued.

“In fact,” he said, his voice smoothly confident, “we were starting to talk about a little test drive.”

Rachel turned sharply to him, eyes narrowing.

"Is that so?" She looked back at Noah. "You two talked about it?"

Noah stared at her quietly. There was a flicker in his face, in his posture. Something she hadn’t seen since that night in Mike’s car. The way he’d watched her from the front seat, mouth parted, barely breathing as she climbed into the back with Mike.

It was the same look now.

She wasn’t sure if she hated it or craved it.

“Well, I don’t know, it’s…” Noah started, but the noise swallowed his voice. A cheer broke out near the bar. Someone knocked into them and kept moving. And as Rachel's body moved forward, everything began to blur together.

The music, the lights, the tension.

Rachel felt Ethan’s arm curl around her waist in a smooth motion.

“Come on, man,” he said, voice low. “You’re not gonna let her have a little fun? I promise you’ll have her back in a few minutes. It's just a test drive.”

Rachel’s mouth opened, but no words came.

She should stop this. Should make it clear she wasn't interested. Noah was shrinking into himself the way he did when things moved too fast. She knew how sensitive he could be. She knew how dangerous this was.

And yet...

"Hey…" she started softly, "Noah…"

"Sure," he said quickly.

Her breath caught.

He said it with force, almost like he wanted to prove something.

Ethan beamed, smiling smugly as he pulled Rachel closer to himself.

"Come on," he said, guiding her forward. "Let's have some fun."

He started walking, and Rachel tried to keep up while stumbling on her thoughts.

She glanced over her shoulder. Noah was following.

The bar seemed suddenly smaller, darker, and buzzing with too much sound. They moved through a side hallway, past the kitchen line, past an "Employees Only" door that had long since lost its meaning.

Ethan stopped in front of a private bathroom, barely big enough for two.

He opened the door and looked at Rachel. Then past her, his brow furrowing when he saw Noah trailing them.

"What are you doing?" Ethan asked.

Noah blinked. "Coming with?" Ethan Scoffed.

"No, man. I can't have someone watching, that's fucking weird. Plus, this bathroom's too small for three of us."

Noah looked like he was about to say something, but Ethan stepped forward and pushed him back.

"Sorry, man. Not this time."

Noah raised a hand, preparing to speak. His expression caught between confusion and awe.

"Noah—" Rachel started.

The door swung shut.

The lock clicked.

Rachel turned, heart thudding against her ribs, and her ears began to ring as the noise of the bar muffled.

Ethan stood in front of her, one hand braced on the sink, eyes trailing along her body hungrily.

She swallowed hard.

He looked good. Unfairly good.

A man she didn't have much respect for,

Yet couldn't seem to hate.

Chapter 23 - Best of Friends 23 - Test Drive

The lock clicked shut, sealing them inside the tiny bathroom like it was a confessional booth.

Rachel stared at Ethan, trying her best to slow her breathing.

Ethan leaned casually against the sink, his beautiful smile never fading.

"Finally alone at last," he said, his voice a mix of mischief and triumph.

Rachel folded her arms tightly. "It wasn't cool pushing him out like that."

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Come on, it was a joke."

He stepped forward slowly. Confident. Relaxed. Radiating heat.

Rachel's heart thudded. "Ethan..."

He stopped in front of her, close enough for Rachel to smell his designer cologne. She met his eyes, keeping as stern an expression as she could manage. When Ethan saw she wouldn't budge, he sighed and raised his hands in mock surrender.

"I'm sorry, alright?"

Rachel tilted her head. "Are you?"

"Yes… obviously. Look, he'll be fine. Seriously. He likes this stuff anyway."

"He clearly wanted to join us," Rachel said, keeping her tone firm.

Ethan grunted. "Yeah, well, if he doesn’t like it, I’m sure he’ll text you to come out."

Rachel glared at him. That disregard. That casualness.

It was gross. It was immature.

And it made her want him more.

It seemed no matter what Ethan did, she only wanted him more.

That was the problem.

She could feel the weight of her own hypocrisy pressing in from all sides. Mixing with the heat of whiskey while the energy of the dance floor still clung to her skin.

Needing to ease the increasing anxiety she felt, Rachel reached for her phone.

"I’m texting him to ask," she said, already unlocking the screen.

Ethan scoffed. "What, you need his permission for everything?"

The words hit her like a slap.

Her fingers hovered over her screen.

"What?" Rachel's tone had turned ice cold, which only seemed to encourage Ethan.

He shrugged. "Just seems like you need his permission to do anything."

Rachel's chest tightened as she staggered back.

"No, I don't," She said far more defiantly than needed.

Ethan smirked. A frustrating, impossibly simple response.

She didn't need anyone's permission. Not now, not ever. The days of being sheltered were behind her. She didn't need to follow stupid rules anymore.

Besides, Noah had said okay. She didn’t need to coddle him.

"I DON’T," she said again firmly, jaw tense.

Ethan tilted his head slightly.

"Show me, then," He said.

Rachel blinked at him. The room suddenly felt tighter. Her pulse pounded in her ears.

Then, slowly, she stepped forward.

Her fingers trailed down the sides of Ethan's pants. The heat between them intensified. Her breath caught in her throat as she undid his belt, slowly dropping to her knees as her knuckles grazed the hard ridge of his shaft.

She looked up at him.

Ethan didn’t say a word. He just watched her.

She pulled his pants down slowly, and his cock sprang free with a thick, heavy slap against her cheek.

Rachel jumped slightly.

Ethan laughed.

"A little bigger in person, right?"

She stared silently, dumbstruck by his size.

Jesus, she had forgotten how massive Ethan really was. Not just long, but thick. The kind of thickness that made her wonder if it would even fit.

She slowly reached for it.

His cock pulsed in eager anticipation.

Her fingers hesitated.

She swallowed hard and glanced up at him bashfully, cheeks burning.

"You can touch it," he said, cool as ever.

Rachel bit her lip. Then, slowly, wrapped her fingers around the base of his shaft. His girth made it impossible for her to fully close her grip. She stroked him slowly, feeling his dick swell and throb in her hand.

"Jesus," she muttered.

"You like it?" Ethan asked the question as if he already knew the answer.

Rachel didn’t reply. She just kept stroking, hypnotized by the weight and heat of Ethan's cock.

"I don’t want to feed into your ego," she finally said with a smirk.

Ethan grinned. "Trust me, it literally can't get any bigger."

Rachel looked up, "It can't?"

Ethan smiled. "Well, maybe a little bit bigger." Rachel laughed softly.

"We'll see." She puckered her lips and pressed a soft kiss against the side of his shaft.

Ethan moaned, head tilting back.

The sound made her wetter.

She continued with small, teasing kisses, trailing them along his shaft while both hands worked him. Eventually, her lips found the tip, swollen and glistening, and she kissed it gently.

Then again.

Then slowly, she parted her lips and took the tip into her mouth.

Even getting his head in made her jaw stretch.

She moaned softly around him, sucking the tip while pumping the rest of his cock with both hands. Her strokes slow and deliberate, her tongue swirling under the ridge of his shaft.

Ethan groaned, placing a hand on her head. His fingers threaded through her hair, gripping lightly as his hips began to thrust forward.

"Quit playing around and suck like you mean it," he growled.

Rachel moaned at his tone. Her pussy throbbed. The fabric of her panties soaked against her skin as her skirt rode up high on her thighs.

She adjusted her angle and let him slide deeper into her throat, eyes watering as Ethan's thick shaft pressed at the back of her mouth. She fought her gag reflex, tears slipping down the sides of her face as she began to suck harder. Ethan groaned again.

"That’s more like it," He said, thrusting forward eagerly.

Rachel pulled back with a gasp, strings of spit clinging between her lips and his cock. She stroked him faster now, staring up at him with flushed cheeks and glassy eyes.

"You're such a fucking show-off," she said between breaths.

Ethan smirked, running his thumb along her bottom lip. "Only because I have something to show."

He gently slapped his shaft against Rachel's cheek. She moaned as she felt her pussy swell.

"Fuck…" Rachel stared at his cock, then dove back down.

She swallowed him. sucking harder, faster, letting herself get lost in the sensation.

In the weight of him, the stretch, the filthy sound of her own gasps.

And as he groaned again, hips flexing forward eagerly, Rachel felt her conscience melt further into the background.

She didn’t care anymore. Ethan's attitude. Her distaste for his personality. What Noah might be thinking. None of it mattered.

This was her experience, her desire. And she wasn’t going to ask for anyone's permission. She wanted Ethan to ruin her.

Rachel sucked until her jaw was sore.

Ethan’s cock pushed deeper, taming her mouth with slow, unrelenting thrusts.

She didn’t pull back. She couldn’t. Ethan's hand kept her in place as he forcefully thrust himself between her lips. The fact that she couldn’t even take half of him made it hotter. He was too big, too thick, and she was so wet it was almost embarrassing.

Her mind spun as Ethan groaned above her, holding her head steady while slowly thrusting forward. She let herself go pliant, accepting each deep stroke with muffled moans vibrating from her throat. Her cheeks were flushed, knees sore as they dug into the filthy tile floor, but she barely noticed.

All she could focus on was him.

Ethan.

His heat, his hunger, the way he fucked her mouth like he’d been waiting his whole life for this moment.

The bathroom filled with their sounds of ecstasy.

Gagging. Slurping. Wet suction. Rachel’s eyes blurred, her mascara smudged, and she didn’t care.

“Fuck, you are good at this,” Ethan growled.

His next thrust knocked Rachel off balance.

She let out a soft, breathy mmph as she stumbled back, her mouth slipping off his cock with a wet pop just before her ass hit the tile. Her back pressed hard against the wall, legs splayed, skirt bunched high around her hips. She barely had time to catch her breath before Ethan stepped forward, his shadow cutting the bathroom light in half.

She looked up just in time to see Ethan plant his hands on the wall, caging her in. Her eyes met his as he gently rubbed his cock against her lips. Then, slowly, he pushed himself back into her mouth. Rachel's moan muffled as her mouth stretched to accommodate him again. She took more this time. Her throat opened wider as she got used to his size.

And she loved it.

Ethan's aggressive pumping grew more rapid, more forceful. Rachel took him, thrust after thrust. Letting herself become the object of his fantasy and pleasure.

Glugh. Glugh. Glugh. Glugh.

She came up for air with a gasp, and Ethan promptly shoved her mouth back onto his cock.

Her head bumped gently against the tile with every motion. It was filthy, and she was soaked. Rachel moaned around him, her tongue dragging along the underside of his shaft between strokes. Her hands gripped his muscular thighs, steadying herself as Ethan showed her why he was a D1 athlete.

She was lost in it. Lost in the way Ethan stared down at her, seemingly tireless in his pace, completely consumed by his desire for her.

Ethan pulled back, his cock left Rachel's lips with a gasp and wet pop, her chest heaving as she caught her breath.

“Pull out your tits,” he commanded, his voice heavy.

Rachel hesitated only a second, then she reached up and unbuttoned her blouse, letting it slide down her shoulders before undoing her bra. Her plump breasts spilled free, nipples hard from the rush of cold air and adrenaline.

Ethan groaned as he fondled her, his fingers looping around her nipples as he squeezed firmly. It felt good, Rachel moaned as she arched her back upwards, giving Ethan a better angle.

“Fuck! That is so hot,” he breathed. His expression so authentic that Rachel couldn't help but laugh.

"Thank you," She said. He gave her breasts one last squeeze before stepping back and admiring her.

“Seriously, thought what the fuck?!"

"Stop," Rachel said bashfully.

"I'm serious Rachel, you are insanely hot." Again, his words were authentic. As if the real him was emerging.

Rachel paused a moment. Looking down at Ethan's throbbing cock. "You're not bad yourself, you know."

The two stared, heat and passion elevating between them.

"I need to record this," Ethan said, reaching into his pocket.

“Wait," Rachel said.

“What?” Ethan said impatiently.

Rachel stared at his phone for a moment, and Ethan sighed.

“Noah will fucking love it. Trust me. Come on, let me record it.”

“Not with your phone,” Rachel said firmly, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

Ethan rolled his eyes. “It's not like I’m not going to send it to anyone.”

“We need to build trust, Ethan,” Rachel replied, her tone playful but firm.

He sighed long and hard while staring up at the ceiling.

“So what, I won’t get the video?” He whined.

Rachel couldn't suppress her laughter. "Are you throwing a tantrum right now?"

"You're really not going to let me record it?"

“Not right away. But if you show me you’re safe…” Rachel narrowed her eyes as she grabbed his cock. “You might get your chance in the future…”

Ethan's eyes widened. "The future? As in…"

"As in play nice and there will be a future, Ethan," Rachel said firmly. He stared for a moment, as if his mind was processing what Rachel had just told him.

“Fine,” he grunted.

She handed him her phone, and he pressed record, his free hand gripping the back of her head again as he pressed his cock against Rachel's soft lips.

She looked into his eyes as she parted them, as Ethan slid himself back into her mouth.

Their rhythm resumed. Hard. Deep. Rachel moaned and stroked him with both hands, mouth stretched wide.

She gagged, spit sliding down her chin, dripping onto her breasts, collecting on her nipples in large droplets before falling onto her thighs and stomach. Pooling in small drops on the tile floor.

Their pace quickened, and Rachel couldn't hold back any longer. One of her hands left Ethan's cock and dipped beneath her skirt, fingers trembling as they found her clit.

She rubbed in quick circles, panting through her nose as her throat tightened around him.

“Fuck!” Ethan shouted. “Rachel, this is the best mouth I’ve ever had." He pushed into her; she buried her fingers inside herself in response. Ethan slowed, gently pushing a strand of hair out of Rachel’s eyes. He kept his cock buried in her mouth as she looked up at him, expression far too innocent for what they were doing.

"You… you're the hottest girl I’ve ever touched," He spoke softly now, all of his vibrato gone in an instant. He paused, a true look of vulnerability passing between his eyes. "You don’t know what this means to me…"

Rachel pulled Ethan's cock out of her mouth and pressed it against her cheek, rubbing it slowly with her slick fingers.

"Use me, Ethan," She said.

She saw a fire ignite in Ethan’s eyes as he thrust back into her mouth eagerly.

She moaned louder, lost in her own arousal as her fingers found their way back to her clit. After several more thrusts, Ethan pulled off her again, panting as he propped the phone against the sink's mirror. He turned back to Rachel and grabbed her by the arms, hauling her up off the floor like she weighed nothing.

As Rachel stood, she quickly discovered that her legs had gone numb. She stumbled into him, weak and trembling. His arms grabbed her, exploring her body as he steadied her.

With another squeeze of her breasts, Ethan spun her, pushing her firmly over the bathroom sink. The mirror fogged with their breath. She looked down at her phone, noting that it was still recording as Ethan flipped her skirt up and pulled her soaked underwear halfway down her thighs.

She gasped as he slapped his cock between her round ass cheeks. He slid it back and forth for a moment, both getting lost in pleasure as Rachel rubbed herself against him. Ethan leaned forward, groping her breasts as the two grinded against each other.

Then, with smooth motion, Ethan slid his thick, swollen cock against her entrance.

He looked at her through the mirror.

“You ready?” He asked.

Rachel looked back through the mirror, eyes wide, lips parted.

Noah said it was okay. It would be fine.

She nodded silently.

And then she felt him.

The slow, deliberate push of Ethan’s cock parting her. Stretching her inch by inch.

God, even just the tip of his cock was massive.

She moaned, forehead pressed to the mirror, hands braced against the sink.

"Yes," She said.

Ethan's head had entered her. He continued to slide in slowly.

"Yes!" She'd never felt anything like this.

She needed this.

Her body screamed for release.

BANG. BANG. BANG.

“Security! Open up!” A voice screamed from the other side of the door. Rachel immediately jumped to attention, stepping away from Ethan, feeling the tip of his cock exit her as she quickly pulled her panties back up.

Breathless, Ethan glanced at the door, then back to Rachel. "W-wait, we can still–"

BANG. BANG.

"OPEN UP!" The voice shouted, louder this time.

"Ethan! Come on!" Rachel hissed, snatching up her phone from the sink and stopping the recording. Ethan let out a frustrated sigh as he folded his painful erection back into his pants.

"Fine…"

After a few seconds of clamoring, they stumbled out of the bathroom in a chaotic rush, the door swinging shut behind them with a loud clang that might as well have echoed down the entire hallway.

A burly security guard stood in front of them. Arms crossed, his frame blocking the hallway.

Rachel didn’t look at him. She was too busy adjusting her blouse in embarrassment. Her breath still uneven, the color high in her cheeks. She was flustered, but it wasn't all from embarrassment. Her body was still buzzing, caught between what almost happened and what had been snatched away at the last possible second.

“Alright, what the hell’s going on—” The security guard stopped mid-sentence. Doing a double-take. His face shifted as recognition set in.

“Oh. Ethan?” he blinked. He looked at Rachel, then back at Ethan. “Shit, man, sorry. I didn’t realize it was you.”

Ethan gave him a half-hearted grin. Still breathing heavy. Still pissed. “Yeah… It's me."

Sensing Ethan's anger, the bodyguard cleared his throat.

“Look, we got a strict policy about people hooking up in the bathrooms,” the guard said, his tone softening. “Cameras, liability, complaints… It’s a whole thing.”

“Totally,” Ethan said coldly. “Won’t happen again.”

"R-right… Sorry man," The bouncer said, empathizing with Ethan's frustration.

Ethan turned, seeking Rachel, but Rachel was already gone. He caught a glimpse of her hair as she slid back into the crowd like she hadn’t just had someone halfway down her throat two minutes ago.

Ethan’s eyes locked onto her, and he froze when he saw her go straight to Noah.

Fuck, why did that matter?

Noah stood up from where he’d been waiting awkwardly by the wall, his face lighting up with that wide-eyed, hopeful energy Ethan couldn’t stand.

Partly because Rachel shared that same energy. It was like what they'd just done didn't matter. Ethan walked towards them, doing his best to act indifferent as he came into earshot.

“You okay?” Noah asked, handing her a cup of water. Rachel took it with a perfect, practiced smile.

“Yeah, I’m totally fine. Are you?” She asked, handing the glass back. He smirked and shrugged.

"Yeah…" There was a clear and humorous level of hesitation in his answer. It made them both laugh.

Ethan exhaled sharply through his nose and pushed forward instinctively, planting himself between them both.

Rachel looked at him. Calm. Controlled. But not indifferent.

"Well, hello!” Rachel said playfully, “Can we help you with something?"

She had no idea how deeply her nonchalance cut. Ethan glanced at Noah, who also smiled at him like nothing had just happened.

“So… are we gonna continue?” Ethan asked, voice low, but urgent under the surface.

Rachel looked over at Noah, seemingly humored by the question. Noah looked back and shrugged with a smile on his face.

"You're call, babe," He said.

Ethan choked down a scoff as Rachel reached for Noah's hand in response.

“Not tonight,” she said simply.

Ethan’s jaw tightened.

"Look, I think it could be–"

"Ethan," Rachel said sternly. He stopped instantly, feeling more vulnerable now than he had in years.

"Yeah?" He shot back.

"It's getting late, and I want some time with my boyfriend. It was fun, but no more tonight. Ok?"

Ethan stared, an unfamiliar pain circling the center of his chest as his hands balled into fists.

"Ethan?" Rachel continued, snapping him out of his stupor.

"Y-yeah, fine, whatever."

Noah glanced between them. "Is… everything cool man?" He asked.

"Yeah, everything's fine," Ethan said with a long breath. "You guys have a great night."

Rachel stepped forward and rubbed his shoulder.

"Thank you for playing nicely, Ethan," She said gently.

"Yeah…"

"And congrats on the game man!" Noah added. Ethan bristled.

"Thanks..." He said coldly.

Rachel turned, pulling Noah with her, and disappeared into the mass of bodies and music.

Ethan watched as she walked away. Watched as a fleeting feeling that burned brighter than the sun left with her. Watched as his heart swelled and morphed around someone he never thought could actually exist.

Then, right before she vanished, Rachel looked back.

It was only a second.

But in that second, their eyes locked.

Ethan gave her a slow, confident smile. She smiled gently back.

And then she was gone.

Ethan stared blankly, unsure how to process what had just happened.

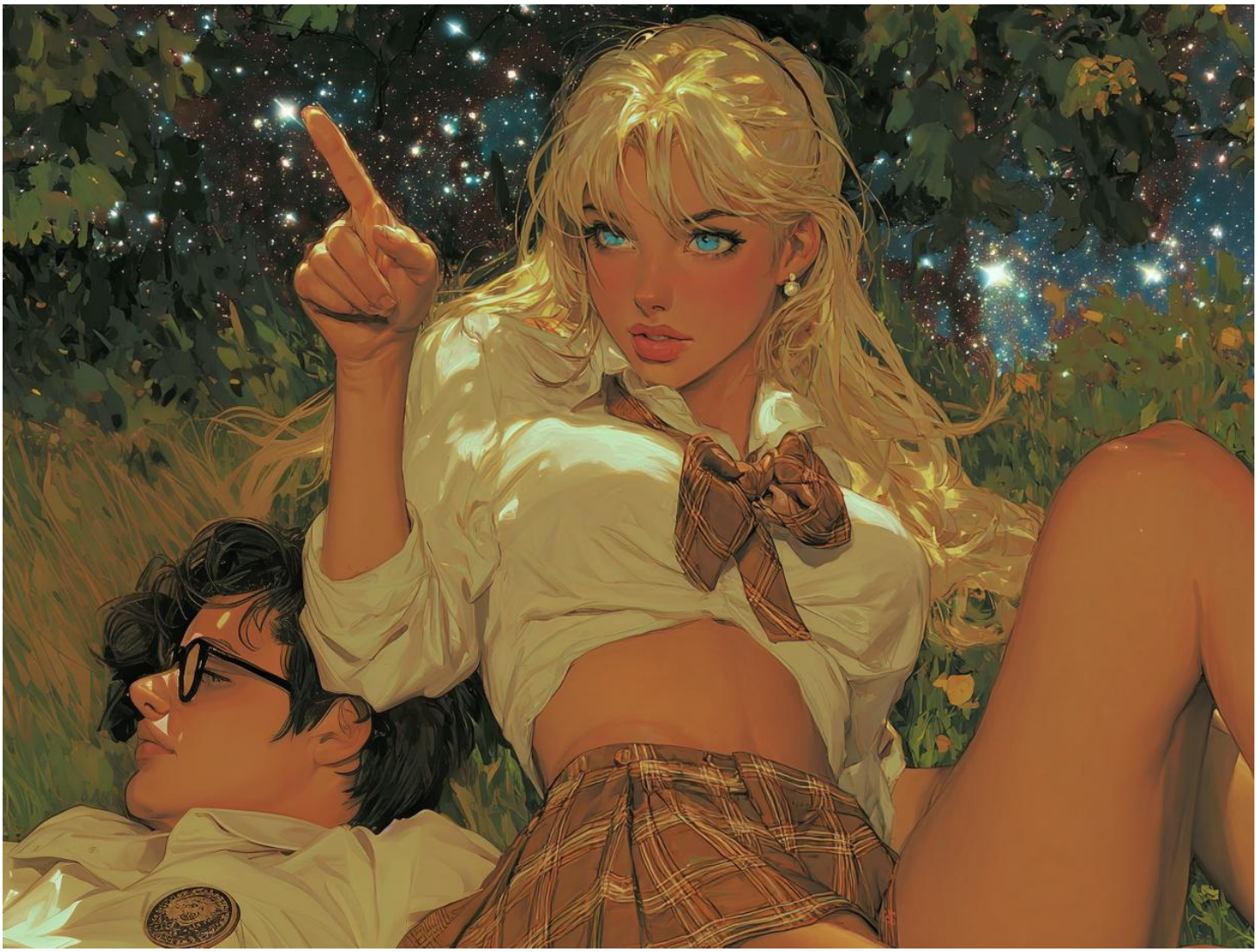
A voice spoke behind him.

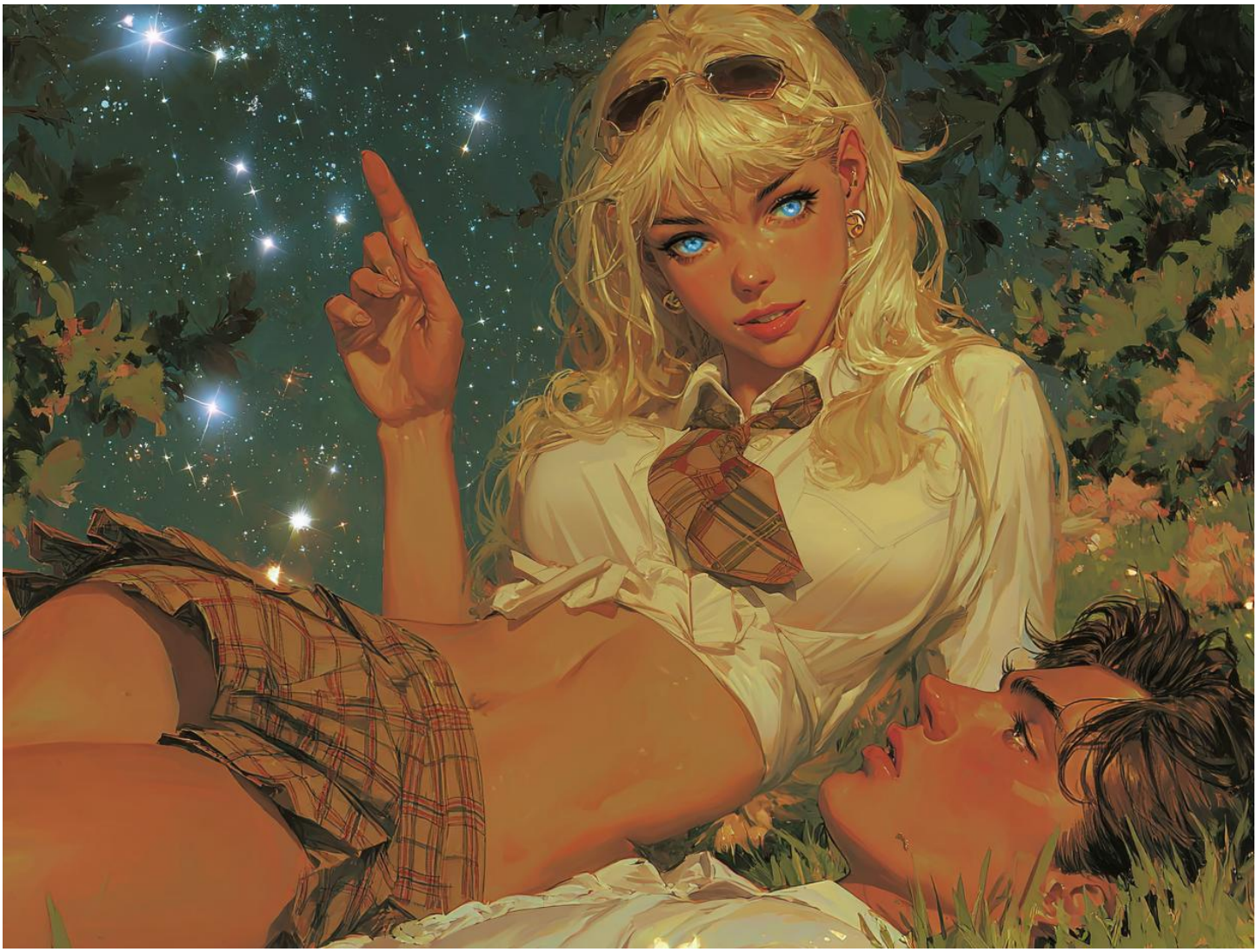
“Yoooo, bro, did you just tap THAT?!” Ethan looked back. It was one of his teammates. He was still looking in the crowd for Rachel, eyes wide, practically vibrating with excitement.

Ethan looked back to where Rachel was.

“Nah,” he said. “But I’m going to. She doesn't know it yet, but that girl's mine.”

Chapter 24 - Best of Friends 24 - I Know





Noah and Rachel stumbled out of the bar into the cool breath of night, shoes tapping unevenly against the cracked sidewalk. Rachel giggled as she clung to Noah's arm, nearly tripping over a crooked slab of concrete. Her perfume still clung to her neck, still sweet, still dizzying.

Noah steadied her. "Careful." He said between laughs.

"I'm fine," she said, grinning widely. "You're the one who can't walk straight."

"Slander." He nudged her gently. "You're the one slurring her words."

"Nuh uh..."

They veered off the path, laughing, until the sound of distant voices caught their ears. Over the rooftops, a thunderous cheer broke from the direction of the stadium. Rachel leaned in to the sound.

"Sounds like they're celebrating," she said, squeezing Noah's arm.

He followed her gaze, lights glowing like embers in the distance. Shouting, clapping, and chants carried over the trees.

"We're the champions, babe," she whispered into his ear.

Noah turned, smirking. "Champions, huh?"

Rachel laughed and, without warning, jumped onto his back. "Gimme a piggyback ride!"

He caught her legs with a startled grunt and hoisted her higher. She wrapped around him easily, her chin resting on his shoulder as he started walking again.

"Jesus, you're heavier than you look."

"Excuse me?!"

"Kidding! You're light as air, lighter even!"

"Good save."

They wandered toward a quiet, grassy park behind the student art center. Trees rustled in the cool wind, the lamplight painting them in gold. Noah fake-stumbled, and Rachel yelped as they tumbled into the grass, soft and cold beneath them.

Rachel rolled onto her back, arms sprawled as she laughed into the night sky.

"Oh my god, look! The moon's out!" she gasped.

Noah lay beside her, eyes following her delicate finger that pointed upward.

"Yeah," he said. "Looks beautiful."

"It really does, doesn't it?" she whispered, her breath visible in the air.

A breeze swept through her golden hair. Noah watched her profile as she stared up, eyes filled with their usual innocent excitement.

"Think you'd ever be an astronaut?" she asked.

Noah shrugged lazily. "Not sure what would be the point. Nothing really out there."

Rachel scoffed. "Everything is out there."

"But we can't reach it," he said softly. He turned to her, fingers brushing the back of her hand. "Plus, I like what I have here."

Her head turned. Their eyes locked.

"But how can you know there isn't some better world somewhere?" she asked.

Noah smiled. “I just know.”

Rachel looked back at the stars, and her hand found his. She squeezed it.

“Noah?”

“Yes?”

“I love you,” she said.

Noah’s breath caught as their fingers interlaced.

“I love you too," he said.

There was no ceremony. No dramatic music or lights. Just grass, wind, and the pounding Noah felt in his chest. He turned to face her fully.

And saw her.

All of her.

Lips parted slightly, cheeks rosy from the night’s chill and alcohol. Blue eyes reflecting gold from the lamplight, illuminating the joy of her soul.

The world went silent as she leaned forward.

A soft kiss landed on Noah’s lips. A tether.

Then another. Deeper. Slower. Her hand slipped to his cheek. His arm wrapped around her waist. Their breath mingled as the weight of the night pressed into the space between them, and they welcomed it.

Noah kissed her like she was the only thing tethering him to the ground.

Rachel’s body pressed into his, her thigh sliding gently over his lap. Her moan was faint, but it pulsed through him like fire. She climbed halfway over him, straddling just enough to push her hips against his jeans.

And as her lips pressed joyfully into his.

Noah knew.

He knew he loved her.

She pulled back for a moment and buried her head into his chest, arms curled in, nails tracing circles in his shirt.

“Wanna get out of here?” she asked. Looking up at him with innocent eyes.

Noah smiled. “Yeah, let's go.”

They walked hand in hand on empty sidewalks. Every dozen steps, one of them pulled the other into a kiss. Soft and stolen. One under a flickering streetlight. Another against a stone column by the student center. One that lingered in front of the library doors.

By the time they reached Rachel’s dorm building, the kisses had turned into heavy makeout sessions. Rachel stopped at the front steps, her fingers curling around the back of his neck as her tongue danced gently with his.

He cupped the side of her face, his thumb brushing her cheek. She stared into his eyes like he was the only man that existed.

“I want you,” she said, barely above a whisper. She pulled him by his hand, leading him into her building's stairwell.

They climbed the stairs slowly. At the landing, Noah tugged her back with a quick flick of his wrist.

Rachel giggled, falling into his embrace as her arms wrapped around his neck.

Her lips met his as his hand slipped to the curve of her waist, squeezing her thigh when Rachel bit his lower lip gently.

With a sudden surge, Noah pressed her back into the wall, mouth hungry, his hand drifting down to her ass. He gave it a slow, deliberate squeeze, and Rachel arched into him, breath catching.

A sharp slam echoed from below.

They broke apart instinctively, startled, breathless as laughter rose from the stairwell. Another couple rounded the corner and caught sight of them, flushed and frozen.

Noah and Rachel said nothing, only looked at each other with that shared, breathless guilt as the couple passed behind them, ascending with smiles and raised brows. The guy nodded as the girl gave Rachel a playful once-over.

“Hey,” the couple said in unison.

“Hey,” Noah and Rachel echoed, laughter rising in their chests as they stepped aside and waited for them to exit.

“Oh my god, we're turning into those people,” Rachel whispered. Noah grinned and pulled her close, kissing her forehead warmly.

“I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Rachel grabbed his hand and led him up the next flight of stairs. The energy of the night carried in her entrancing sway. Noah followed without thinking.

When they entered her apartment, their lips found each other like magnets.

Rachel pressed Noah into the wall, her hands squeezing his biceps greedily as his slid under her blouse. He squeezed her breasts firmly, then slid the straps of her bra off her shoulders.

God, she smelled incredible.

A perfect mix of vanilla, sugar, and sandalwood. A smell that carried with it countless unforgettable memories. As her lips found his neck, Noah was suddenly back along the riverwalk in Herferd.

It was the day of their first kiss.

Rachel was in her cutoff denim shorts, her skin golden and cheeks sun-kissed. The water was barely a stream beside them. They had stopped to view the setting sun, and when he turned to ask her a question, her lips were already against his.

That kiss was nearly as electric as this one.

And when she looked at him afterwards, it was like their entire world had been set on fire.

Rachel and Noah stumbled back into the bedroom, breaking their kiss to pull her blouse off. It caught halfway over her head. Rachel fumbled and laughed, momentarily blinded.

Noah's hands trailed her bare skin as he kissed her exposed lips. She moaned, letting Noah explore her before she slowly pulled her blouse off the rest of the way.

Noah tossed it to the floor, eyes trailing along her bare waist.

She kept his gaze as her bra slid down her arms like silk. The soft skin of her breasts rose in the golden light, full and flushed, her nipples stiff from the evening chill.

Noah couldn’t move.

“What?” she asked softly.

“Rachel…”

“Yeah?”

He found it difficult to find the words between his pounding heart.

“I love you."

He had said the words before. But not with every inch of his soul echoing it.

Rachel’s smile broke gently across her face. Real and vulnerable.

“I love you too.”

Her words were also different this time.

They kissed again, slow and passionate, before falling back onto the bed. Clothes vanished. Her skirt hiked to her hips as Rachel’s fingers fumbled with his belt. She wanted him, needed him.

Noah pulled her panties down her smooth legs before burying his head between her legs. She grabbed onto his hair as she felt his tongue explore her clit, dancing and swirling with perfect pressure. Her back arched as his fingers slid inside her, thrusting with eager, practiced intent.

“You’re so good at that,” Rachel said, breath catching in her throat.

Noah’s free hand traced up her torso and found her breast, squeezing it firmly before his fingers closed around her nipple, pinching just enough to make her shiver. Rachel threw her head back, lips parting in a soundless moan as her legs began to tremble.

In a sudden motion, she grabbed a fistful of his hair and pulled him up, his mouth leaving her pussy with a wet, satisfied pop.

“I need you,” she said, spreading her legs wide. “Please…”

Noah smiled. "Alright."

He leaned forward and kissed her as he placed his throbbing cock against her wet entrance, rubbing his head against her clit with slow, deliberate thrusts.

Rachel looked up at him, cheeks flushed, lips parted.

“Take me,” she whispered.

Noah pushed forward slowly, the head of his cock pressing through her slick folds inch by inch.

Rachel’s breath caught in her throat as his hip met hers. “Oh my god…”

Rachel dug her nails into Noah’s shoulders as she felt his swollen balls pulse against her.

“You feel so good,” she moaned, her voice trembling with pleasure.

Her hands curled into the sheets as Noah began to move slowly, his pelvis rolling into hers with perfect pressure. A rhythm built through instinct and perfect connection.

No one knew her as well as he did. No one made her feel as safe as he did.

Each thrust stroked her clit perfectly, and Rachel quickly began to lose herself.

“Keep going,” she said, voice desperate. Her nails dug into his back as she wrapped her legs around his waist.

“Don’t stop!”

Noah grunted, driving deeper as Rachel's spell overtook him.

The way her back arched. The bounce of her breasts. The pleasureful parting of her mouth. Noah watched every part of her come undone beneath him.

“I’m going to cum!” Rachel cried.

Noah continued with a steady rhythm, watching as the woman he loved seized around his cock, trembling hard as her orgasm ripped through her. Rachel's breath came in hot gasps as Noah kissed her again, slowing his tempo while she shivered in waves of pleasure.

Their foreheads pressed as they moved together, bodies glistening.

Rachel rolled to her side, breath still heavy, cheeks flushed red, and lifted one leg high into the air.

“Noah…” She said.

“Yes?”

“I’m yours.”

Noah stared as his chest swelled with passion.

Rachel reached forward and let her nails trail down his chest.

“Fuck me,” she whispered. “Please.”

Noah smiled, then entered her in one long thrust.

Rachel’s head dropped back with a cry, her fingers gripping onto Noah's forearms as he pounded into her.

Her moans echoed through the room as she gave herself to his relentless tempo.

They were loud, desperate.

Noah watched Rachel's thighs shake as he gripped her hips and pulled her onto his cock.

Rachel screamed his name as he pushed into her with a forceful thrust.

She begged for more.

And Noah gave it to her.

Until everything else disappeared.

Leaving only the sound of her moans, the slap of their skin, and the scent of perfume mixing with their sex.

Rachel pushed Noah onto his back and mounted him, sinking onto his cock with a slow, deliberate roll of her hips. Her walls tightened around his length, drawing a deep groan from his throat. She moved with practiced control, moaning loudly as pleasure built between them.

Noah sat up suddenly, arms wrapping around her waist, pulling her against his chest. They moved together, her arms looping around his shoulders as his lips found her breast.

She held him there, guiding him closer, gasping as his mouth closed around her nipple. His tongue swirled, slow and eager, while his hands gripped her hips. She rocked against him, every thrust perfectly timed, bodies locked in seamless motion.

Her moans melted into his ear as his hands gripped tighter.

Rachel rolled onto her stomach, her golden hair fanning across the sheets as she rested on her forearms. She arched her back instinctively, offering herself as Noah drove into her with a steady, relentless rhythm.

The wet slap of skin echoed through the room, her body meeting each thrust with a breathless, shuddering urgency.

“Keep going!” she screamed. “Don’t stop!"

Rachel came again, her body clenching around him as she shook, her moans raw and desperate. Rachel's arms gave out, and Noah caught her gently. Guiding her down with a hand around her waist, kissing her shoulder as she convulsed beneath him.

When the tremors stopped, she shifted onto her side, hair now matted with sweat. Still panting, she reached behind her, taking Noah’s hand and placing it back on her hip.

“Keep going,” she whispered.

Noah placed his cock at her entrance and slid back in slowly, spooning her close as she arched and pressed her ass into him.

He rocked into her with a rhythm that barely made a sound.

Rachel moaned again, quieter now, a low hum of pleasure as she let herself be moved. Noah's hands slid over her waist, her breasts, her thighs. He was overwhelmed by the feel of her. The shape of her. The sheer beauty of her body glistening in the dim, warm lamplight.

Her ass was impossibly soft, catching the force of his thrusts perfectly. Noah’s cock pulsed with painful arousal.

Rachel was everything.

Noah's mind blurred.

Rachel was a dream come true.

Noah's chest tightened.

"Fuck..." he breathed, barely able to keep his voice steady. “I’m close.”

Rachel turned her head and squeezed his thigh.

“Cum in me, please," She pleaded.

Noah’s last shred of self-control shattered.

He pumped into her wildly, groaning as his orgasm surged. He pushed in fully and filled her with his cum.

"Fuck Rachel!" Noah shouted as Rachel pressed her ass into him.

Grinding slowly.

Moaning softly.

Milking every last drop of him.

Her hand covered his atop her hip as his thrusts slowed, and they stayed like that.

Connected. Panting. Silent except for the soft tick of the heater kicking on across the room.

Noah wrapped his arms around her tightly, still pulsing inside her.

For a long time, they just lay there. Cocooned in warmth. In breath. In afterglow.

Eventually, Rachel rolled over slowly, careful not to break their connection until the last moment. His softening cock slipped from her, and a thin trail of cum followed, smearing down her thigh.

She turned to face him.

Their eyes locked.

And then she kissed him gently.

After, she tucked her head against his chest. Her hair spread across him like silk.

“Noah…” she said quietly.

“Yes?”

Her hand rested on his chest, right above his heart. He felt her breathing shift.

“I want to be with you forever.”

She looked up at him, a slight tremble in her expression. Vulnerable. Unfiltered. Her voice soft, but unwavering.

Noah closed his eyes, and for a moment, it felt like time stopped.

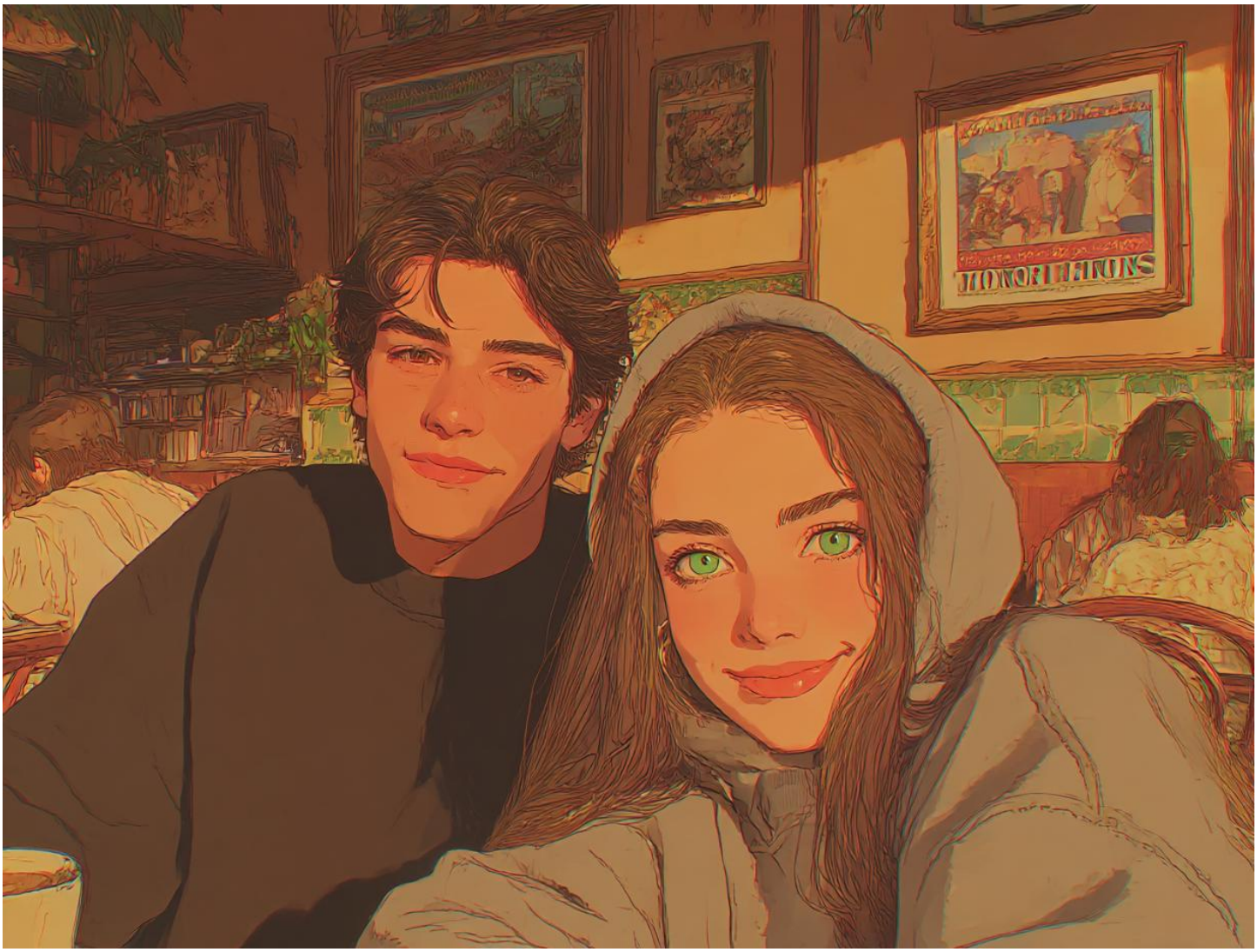
He held her closer than he ever had before.

“And you will always have me,” he replied.

Rachel smiled and buried her head beneath his. Slowly falling asleep in his arms.

Chapter 25 - Best of Friends 25 - Ketchup and Eggs

HOPIENN CAFE



Noah woke slowly, sunlight warming the edges of Rachel's small bedroom. Dust drifted in the slanted light. The campus outside was still.

Rachel was tucked against him, her golden hair a tangle on the pillow, one leg draped across his. She had wrapped herself in the comforter like a burrito, with only her bare shoulder peeking through.

Noah smiled to himself, then leaned forward and kissed her forehead gently.

She stirred, murmuring something soft into the pillow, and curled deeper into the sheets.

He lingered for a moment, just watching her.

There was a beautiful purity in the way she slept. A raw, unguarded stillness. Her lips slightly parted, hair tangled across her cheek. It was as if the entire world dropped away when she dreamed, and so became a dream herself.

Only he got to see her like this.

And yet… the unbidden image of Ethan surfaced in his mind.

He remembered Ethan taking her from him, glaring down with a sinful smirk as he whisked Rachel away to a private bathroom. The look of triumph on his face as he closed the door on Noah's face.

The way Rachel had glanced back at him when they left the bar.

He hadn't asked what happened in there. He wasn't sure he wanted to know.

His stomach twisted as his cock swelled.

Had she looked at Ethan the same way she had looked at him? Or, perhaps, she found someone like Ethan more pleasurable.

Noah stared at Rachel as his mind raced. Watched her tangled in blankets, sun warming her bare shoulder, her breathing steady and soft against the pillow.

"I love you."

She had said it and meant it. Ethan would never have her like this.

Not truly.

Noah exhaled through his nose, willing the knot in his chest to ease.

She chose him.

That is what mattered.

Eventually, Noah slipped out of bed and, wearing only boxers, padded into the kitchen. The apartment was sun-drenched and cluttered, quiet in the way only Sunday mornings could be.

He scanned the counters and sighed.

Rachel had never been the best at cleaning.

Still, he didn't mind. Cleaning grounded him. He liked caring for her in small, invisible ways.

He loaded two empty coffee mugs into the dishwasher. Tossed a crusted pizza box from a few nights ago.

Wiped away dried smears of shredded cheddar from the counter with a damp paper towel.

Then turned and noticed an oversized hoodie over the back of the couch.

Mike's.

Noah's pulse slowed. He stared at it a second longer than he meant to.

Then, trying to stay in motion, he opened the trash can, only to be greeted by a collapsed pyramid of crushed beer cans.

Mike’s brand. At least a dozen.

Noah just stared, the silence of the apartment suddenly louder than before as reality swelled like an incoming tide.

Rachel hadn’t just messed with Ethan. She had also been with Mike. Really been with him.

He’d been here. He’d stayed. Slept over. Maybe more than once.

Maybe he'd watched her fall asleep the same way Noah had just done. Perhaps even held her afterward. Kissed her shoulder in the morning light.

And if Mike had that too… what was special about this?

The sharp, irrational pain of insecurity overwhelmed his nerves.

Noah took a breath in an effort to clear his mind. Last night had been perfect.

He closed his eyes and remembered Rachel’s eyes as she said the words.

“I want to be with you forever.”

Not Mike, not Ethan. Rachel wanted to be with him.

But now, standing in the kitchen with his hands still damp and smelling faintly of cheddar cheese and Lysol, Noah felt that certainty shift under his feet.

He braced his hands on the counter.

This was what they’d agreed to. So why did it sting?

He hated the thought that it wasn’t special anymore. That if Mike had seen her like that, that if Ethan had taken her in a way he’d never had, then the magic was diluted.

He glanced over at the sink, and a sudden memory flickered in his mind.

Mike, last week, crouched under the sink trying to fix Rachel’s busted garbage disposal, half-soaked from a leaking pipe and swearing in theatrical frustration.

“I’m not built for manual labor, man,” Mike had muttered. “But Rachel gives me that look, and suddenly I’m Bob the Builder.

Noah smiled despite himself.

Because Mike was... Mike. An affable, horny Chad. He spoke too loudly, drank too much, chased every girl he could find, and laughed at fart jokes too often.

And truth be told, he probably did love Rachel in his own way. Noah couldn’t blame him. But he also knew something else to be true.

That Mike also respected what she had with Noah.

Ethan was different. Ethan didn’t care who got burned. But Ethan also wasn’t spending the night at Rachel’s apartment.

But Mike?

Mike was safe.

He let out a slow breath. The knot in his chest loosened a bit, replaced by something warmer, quieter.

Mike was Mike.

And he was Noah.

And last night, Rachel had looked at him, eyes glassy with emotion, breath trembling, and expressed her true love.

And Noah believed her.

For now, that was enough.

He tied off the trash bag and slipped into the nearest pair of flip-flops by the door. With a quiet pull, he stepped outside, letting the door click shut behind him.

“Early riser too, huh?”

The voice came from down the hall.

Mel was leaning against the wall outside her apartment, a half-empty coffee cup in one hand. Her long, brown hair draped over one shoulder, hoodie slouched casually off one side.

Noah gulped. Even in her casual attire, Mel always seemed to carry an attractive level of indifference.

"Morning Mel," Noah said.

She stepped toward him, eying the trash bag at his side.

“I think domestic boyfriend is my favorite version of you so far," She said.

Noah gave a sheepish smile. “Thought I’d clean up a little.”

"Come on, I'll walk to the dumpster with you." Mel fell into step beside him as they headed for the stairwell.

“So…” she began, glancing over, “big night?”

Noah exhaled through his nose, a small grin forming. “Yeah.”

Mel's lips pursed as she looked forward.

"Good for you."

At the dumpster, he tossed the bag as she sipped her coffee in silence, eyeing him as he closed the dumpster lid.

"Thanks for the company," Noah said. Mel bit her cup lid.

“Wanna get breakfast?” She asked.

Noah blinked. "What, together?"

Mel laughed. "Yes, together."

Noah nervously looked up toward Rachel's apartment window.

“Uh… I don’t know…”

Mel followed his eyes to the window.

“What, is she up?”

“No, she’s a late sleeper,” Noah admitted.

“Then she’ll be fine,” Mel said with casual indifference.

Noah nodded with tense shoulders.

Mel tilted her head and smiled. “You are insanely loyal, you know that, right?"

Noah laughed uncomfortably. "I just want to be there when she wakes up."

"You will be," Mel said, stepping toward him. "And even if you weren't, you're allowed to have your own life, right? Your world doesn’t stop just because the princess wants to sleep in."

She stared into his eyes long enough for Noah to blush.

"Right…" He finally said.

"So, are we going?"

Noah shrugged, smiling again. “Yeah. Sure. Why not.”

Mel smiled brightly, but only for a moment, like she hadn’t meant to.

"Then let's go."

–

The Commons Cafe sat nestled beside the library, its historic brick exterior covered in ivy. As always, the Cafe was packed. Students and locals bustled between one another, the scent of espresso accenting the sound of countless conversations. Warm lighting pooled across reclaimed wood, and orange-tinted interior windows christened the space with a modern cottage-core feel.

A student with a classical guitar strummed through a smooth series of chords in the corner. A waitress passed carrying a tray full of eggs, waffles, and coffee mugs.

Mel pointed at a corner table near an artful stack of old books and a small arched window pressed close between a bookshelf and a mural of hand-painted leaves.

"That looks open," She said.

"Shouldn't we wait to be seated?" Noah asked. Mel smiled.

“God, you’re such a rule follower,” Mel said, already heading toward the table. “Come on. It'll be hours before they seat us, and I know most of the servers here. We’ll be fine.”

She gave him a look over her shoulder, a crooked smile as she waved him forward.

With a nervous huff, Noah followed and took the seat across from her.

“So,” Mel said, grabbing the menu, her nails clicking lightly against the laminated surface. “What do you typically like to eat?”

Noah looked up from his silverware. “Honestly?”

Mel peeked at him over the top of the menu. “Always honest, Noah.”

“Well…" He scratched his head and let out a nervous laugh. "Scrambled eggs. With, uh…”

She narrowed her eyes, sensing his hesitation.

“Don't worry. This is a safe space,” she said jokingly, lacing her fingers and resting her chin on them with mock solemnity. The gesture made Noah laugh, his shoulders relaxing.

“Scrambled eggs with ketchup," He said.

Mel’s mouth fell open. “Stop.”

“I know. It’s gross.”

“No, you don't understand. That’s my favorite too!”

Noah blinked. “Wait, seriously?”

“Yes! I thought I was the only one who still did that.”

He laughed, leaning forward. “Same! I like Godfrey but...”

“The students can be kinda stuck up?” Mel asked. Noah nodded eagerly.

“God, yes! Okay, wait. Do you also like raisin bagels with peanut butter?”

Mel froze. “Noah.”

“And bacon on top?!" He added excitedly.

She slammed the menu on the table. “That's it, it's decided. We’re obviously soulmates.”

They both laughed. Real, easy laughter that echoed faintly over the café chatter.

It felt strangely effortless.

Noah felt something inside him crawl. He cleared his throat and dampened his smile. Mel stared with empathy.

"I was only joking."

Noah nodded, smiling uncomfortably. "I know… I know…"

"You don't have to feel guilty for a joke, Noah." Mel leaned forward. "After all, it's not like you're sleeping with other girls. Heaven forbid you follow in Rachel’s footsteps.”

Noah paused, then cleared his throat.

"Yeah," His tone was firmer now. Mel leaned back.

"Sorry, too far. I just mean you're safe here, ok? Nothing bad with hanging and chatting," Mel said gently.

"No, it's ok. Besides… you're right." Noah paused for a moment. "I could learn to loosen up a little bit, I think."

"We love a self-improver," Mel encouraged.

Once again, the conversation flowed, and the hours bled together into a single moment. Each lost in the presence of the other.

–

“Okay, that’s too far,” Mel laughed, shaking her head.

“What?” Noah grinned, taking a sip from his coffee mug.

“You put pickle juice on your bacon? You’re deranged.”

“You just said Nutella and nacho Doritos was acceptable.”

“Yeah. But that's not pickle juice on bacon. That's demonic.”

They both laughed, leaning into the small space between them. The morning light had shifted into midday, slanting brightly through the windows. Behind them, the café buzzed with life. Silverware clinking, espresso machines hissing, the guitarist wrapping up his final song to the sound of applause.

The waitress came by, notepad in hand.

“Are you two ready to order?”

“Yes, can we have two large plates of scrambled eggs, a side of bacon, hash browns, and raisin bagels?” Noah said, glancing at Mel.

“And can we get some extra ketchup packets?” Mel added.

The waitress gave a tight smile and nodded, vanishing back into the busy crowd.

Mel leaned back in her chair, crossing her legs beneath the table.

Noah couldn’t help but notice how easily this all flowed. The banter. The laughter.

The food arrived. They dug in.

The conversation wandered from favorite books to least favorite professors to strange interests.

Time blurred.

Neither of them noticed when their plates were scraped clean.

Or when their coffee mugs emptied.

Or when the sun shifted from gold to white.

It was only when Mel looked down at her phone and blinked, surprised, that reality snuck back in.

“I never would’ve guessed this,” she said.

Noah looked up. “Guessed what?”

Mel swirled the last of her coffee, her fingers tracing the rim of the mug. She didn’t look at him at first. But when she did, her glance was charged with passion.

“That I’d like someone like you.”

Her voice was cool. Casual. But something beneath it twisted.

Noah’s face went flush as his phone buzzed on the table.

He glanced down.

Rachel: Hey babe, I’m up. Where’d you go??? 🥺💔

Noah smiled instinctively.

“Looks like Rachel’s up,” he said, eyes still on the message. Then he looked up and met Mel’s eyes across the table.

Her gaze was warm.

His smile faltered.

“I should probably head back," He said softly.

Mel didn’t react right away. Just gave a subtle nod. She sat back in her chair, exhaling softly through her nose as she reached up to tuck a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

“Have to return to the princess, huh?”

Noah cleared his throat.

“Yeah…”

A long silence followed.

Mel picked up her coffee cup, found it empty, and set it back down with a quiet clink. “So what, she sends you a sad emoji and you come running?”

“It wasn’t a sad emoji. It was... the dramatic pouty face," Noah said jokingly.

Mel scoffed, barely smiling. “Tragic.”

“She just worries, that’s all.”

“She doesn’t strike me as the worrying type.”

Noah looked down at his phone again, then locked the screen without replying. Mel pulled her hoodie sleeves down over her wrists.

“I’ve got homework anyway,” she said, not quite looking at him. “I’ll walk back with you.”

“Cool,” Noah said.

Mel stood. “You want to split this?”

Noah hesitated, watching her for a beat too long.

“Yeah. Sure.”

They walked toward the counter together, the distant clatter of plates and the low hum of brunch conversations filling the silence between them.

As they waited for the receipt, Mel leaned one elbow against the counter, turning slightly toward him.

“So…” Noah started, “business classes still going alright?”

Mel let out a small, tired laugh. “They’re going. I’m surviving corporate accounting, so I guess that counts as a win.”

He smiled. “Still thinking about switching to something more in health and wellness?”

Mel hesitated, then gave a vague shrug. “The business major’s useful. You know, practical. But... yeah, sometimes I think about it. Picking up a health minor and focusing on the influencer stuff. It’s just—”

She stopped herself, lips tightening, then looked at him.

“Feels like I might’ve missed the window.”

Noah tilted his head. “For what?”

She didn’t answer right away. Instead, she glanced toward the window, where the light spilled across the café floor in long, golden slants. Her voice was light when it came, but her eyes stayed distant.

“Sometimes you just miss the timing, you know?”

Noah nodded. “Well, I don’t think it’s ever too late to change things. If you really want something, it’s worth fighting for.”

Mel turned, her eyes looking deep into his, and let out a weak smile.

“Thanks Noah,” She said softly.

The receipt printed with a faint whir. Mel took it, scanned the total, and pulled a couple of bills from her wallet. She slid her half across the table, her fingers lingering next to Noah’s a moment longer than they needed to.

They pushed through the crowd towards the exit. Noah opened the door for her.

Mel walked past him without a word, eyes forward, jaw set.

They stepped into the late morning sun. It was warm and breezy, the kind of weather that usually made things feel lighter.

But between them, something had shifted.

Noah didn’t notice.

But Mel did.

Chapter 26 - Best of Friends 26 – Sharing

INCLUDES

Rachel woke to sunlight streaking across her face and the scent of Noah on her sheets. With a yawn, she reached for the dent in the foam mattress beside her, surprised when her fingertips grazed cool linen rather than Noah's shoulder. She felt around for a moment, noting the silence of the apartment. She blinked against the brightness of the golden sun, lips still faintly swollen from how he'd kissed her last night.

Rachel couldn't help but smile as she recalled the memories of their lovemaking.

She rolled over and grabbed her phone. The screen lit up, showing nothing but the time and her wallpaper. A blurry photo of her and Noah on the Ferris wheel from last semester's fall festival. Her cheek pressed to his, his smile wider than her own.

She opened her messaging app and quickly began to type.

Rachel: Hey babe, I'm up. Where'd you go??? 🥺💔

She sent it with a grin as love swam through her veins. She had daydreamed of a relationship like this her whole life, and now, she had it. Last night hadn't just been sex. It was a full connection that no amount of parties, casual sex, or public bathroom escapades could ever compare to.

She pressed her face into the pillow and let out a squeal.

Then she got up, stretching bare toes against the hardwood floor. She wore nothing but a pair of plain black panties, the stretched elastic hugging her hips comfortably. She walked toward her reading desk in the corner of the room and spotted one of Noah's old shirts draped over the chair.

It was the dark green one, soft with age, worn at the collar. She lifted it and brought it to her nose. His scent opened a thousand memories she never wanted to forget.

Rachel slipped it over her head. The cotton draped loosely over her frame, hem brushing the tops of her thighs. The collar stretched wide, showing a hint of her shoulder. She then slipped into a pair of black athletic shorts. The look was casual, but intimate. Something she knew Noah would go crazy for.

Rachel walked softly into the main room, still half-smiling. Her body carried the weightless glow of a night spent experiencing things she had only dreamed of years ago. It felt like she and Noah were finding their rhythm in this new dynamic.

She was halfway to the kitchen when she heard the stairwell door clunk shut. Her head tilted at the sound of footsteps in the hallway. Her smile widened when she heard Noah's warm laugh follow.

She moved to the apartment door and placed her hand on the knob, already picturing how she'd pop her head out and catch him by surprise. Maybe steal a kiss before he even got his key in the door.

As she heard the steps draw near, Rachel opened the door wide.

Stopping cold when she saw Mel standing next to Noah, laughing.

Rachel's whole body stiffened. Her hand stayed frozen on the doorknob, the air thinning around her as her eyes met Mel's. She smiled brightly at Rachel, as if they were nothing more than friends. Her smooth ponytail swung behind her as she tilted her head.

"Hey there, neighbour," Mel said, waving at Rachel with delicate fingers.

Rachel's jaw clenched. "Oh. Hey, Mel."

Noah, oblivious to Rachel's tension, quickly stepped towards her and wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

"Morning, sleepy head!" he said, giving her a gentle squeeze.

Rachel forced a candid smile as she stepped out into the hallway.

"So what were you two up to?" she asked, barely managing to keep her tone light and airy.

“Well, you were still out cold, so I decided to clean the place up, and as I was taking out the trash, I bumped into Mel! We ended up chatting and decided to grab breakfast.

Mel's eyes never left Rachel as Noah spoke. “He was all alone, and I felt bad for him. So I figured, why not?"

She glanced at Noah with a coy smile. "Plus, we have so much in common. The hours just flew by."

Rachel’s fists clenched, but her expression remained the same. A stiffened smile that carried her froward.

"That's great…" Rachel eeked out.

"It really was, thanks for letting me borrow him," Mel added. She placed her weight on her hip and angled her shoulder toward Noah.

“After all, I know you’re all about sharing." Mel's words snagged Rachel like razor wire.

Her stomach fluttered as she struggled to find her words. Mel smiled wider at Rachel's hesitation.

“Us hanging out isn't a problem, is it?”

Rachel’s lips curved around clenched teeth. “Not at all.”

"Are you sure? I definitely don't want to cause any drama," Mel pressed.

Rachel shook her head, using every fibre in her body to bury her growing anger.

"It's totally fine," She said shortly.

"Thank god! The last thing I would want to do is be a problem…" She said, playfully trailing her hand down Noah's arm. A slow, deliberate movement that made Rachel’s blood boil.

"He's such a good friend after all," Mel added.

"Aww, thanks, Mel!" Noah chimed in, his arm still clung around Rachel.

"As I said, totally fine," Rachel said, her agitation finally seeping through into her words.

“Good,” Mel said. “For a second there, I thought you were going to say he wasn’t allowed to have female friends.”

“Of course he can,” Rachel snapped.

Mel laughed.

"I'm only joking!" Mel grinned and bit her bottom lip, eyes flicking triumphantly between Noah and Rachel.

Rachel's fingers began to curl nervously around the fabric of Noah’s shirt.

Noah, for his part, began to glance between the two women and laughed nervously.

“Well, thank God Rachel isn’t like that," He said, slipping his arm around Rachel's waist and gently squeezing her side. His touch was warm, giving Rachel a brief chance to collect herself.

“She really is the best,” Noah said, looking down at her.

Rachel looked up at him and smiled softly. “Thanks, babe.”

Her eyes drifted back to Mel, whose smug expression had given way to something colder. Rachel hated admitting how good it felt seeing her like that.

“You really are one of a kind, Rachel, I'll give you that,” Mel said, voice smooth.

Her eyes darted to Noah again.

And in that brief second, Rachel saw it.

Something quiet and real. A subtle and unmistakable longing in Mel's eyes.

A pulse of emotion struck through Rachel’s chest like a spear.

Mel looked back at Rachel, her smile forming into something sharper.

“You’re lucky to have such a wonderful boyfriend,” she said. “I hope you know that.”

“I do,” Rachel replied, more quickly than she wanted to.

Mel's lashes fluttered once as her lips curled up again. She turned to Noah. “Thank you for breakfast.”

“Of course! Maybe we could all do it together sometime,” he said. Rachel closed her eyes at the suggestion.

“I’d love that,” Mel said all too brightly.

Rachel tightened her grip on Noah’s arm. “Right… well, we should probably get going. Don't want the day to get away from us.”

Noah nodded.

“Yeah, for sure. Thanks again, Mel," He said, his words painfully innocent.

Mel gave a light wave.

“Bye, Noah! I’ll see you around,” she said sweetly.

Then her eyes shifted.

She looked straight at Rachel, and her warmth melted instantly. Leaving only a cold stare of contempt. Then, as quickly as it had appeared, the look was gone. Mel turned and sauntered down the hallway.

“See you, Mel!” Noah called.

Mel glanced over her shoulder, smiled, and blew him a kiss.

Rachel's entire body tensed as a flood of rage poured through her. She turned on her heel and quickly opened the apartment door.

“And here I was thinking she was mean,” Noah said, following behind her into the apartment.

“Yeah…” Rachel said coldly, stepping into the living room.

Noah closed the door gently behind them, the quiet click sounding loud in the silence that followed.

He hesitated. “Is… something wrong?”

Rachel moved toward the kitchen, grabbed her phone off the counter, and opened it aimlessly. “Nope. Everything’s fine.”

What else could she say? That she saw the way Mel looked at him? That she was jealous? That she hated the idea of Mel having breakfast all alone with him?

She couldn’t, she wouldn't.

Noah had done nothing wrong. He was sweet, cute, thoughtful, and honest. The kind of man most girls could only dream of finding. She knew he would never lie to her or try sneaking behind her back. To him, it was nothing more than breakfast with her neighbour.

She was the one pushing their boundaries. She was the one who’d let Mike spend the night. Who had snuck into a bathroom with Ethan. She was the one who crossed the lines, not Noah.

So what right did she have to tell him he couldn't spend time with another woman?

That’s when the thought hit like a wave.

What if Noah decided he wanted to explore, too?

Could she watch him leave in the morning, and then return at night, his shirt half-buttoned, skin flushed from being with someone else?

And what if that someone else was Mel?

Rachel’s heart clenched as her vision blurred. She no longer saw the living room. But instead saw Noah entering Mel's apartment down the hall. Her heart raced as she imagined Mel straddling him, lowering her neck to his ear, and…

“Hey…” Noah's voice cut through the fog with gentle ease. He stepped beside her and took her hand, his thumb tracing small, slow circles across the back of it.

She looked into his soft, concerned eyes.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” He asked.

Rachel’s mouth opened, then closed.

She stared into his eyes and slowly shook her head.

“It’s nothing,” she said. “Just feeling a little off this morning.”

Noah nodded, but didn’t let go of her hand. “You’re sure?”

“I’m sure.”

She gave him a soft smile.

“Alright,” Noah said gently, voice still edged with concern. “Well… if anything is ever wrong, you can tell me. You know that, right?”

“I know,” Rachel replied, leaning up to kiss him softly on the cheek. His skin was warm, a little scratchy from not shaving. He promptly kissed her on the forehead in return. And, for a second, her heart quieted.

Then her phone buzzed.

She picked it up and glanced at the screen. The name alone made her scoff.

“Who is it?” Noah asked, letting her hand go and walking into the kitchen. The fridge door opened with a soft hiss as he pulled out a bottle of iced coffee.

“Guess.”

Noah turned, a smirk tugging at his lip. “I mean, there are so many possibilities now.”

Rachel’s stomach sank.

He meant it as a joke. He really did.

But still, the words stung.

Because they were true. Rachel forced a smile, trying her best to keep her tone playful.

“It's… Ethan,” she said.

Noah turned, coffee in hand, brows lifting with casual interest. “Oh?"

Rachel nodded, then quickly locked her screen and set the phone down.

“Yeah.”

“What does he want?”

She waved it off, eager to talk about anything other than that.

“Eh, it’s not important. So, what did you want to do today?”

“No no, I want to know,” Noah said, smiling and stepping closer. He cracked the lid on his bottle, the sound of pressure releasing loud in the still room.

Rachel rolled her eyes. She wanted to move on, but Mel’s face stuck in the back of her mind.

“He’s uh…” She exhaled. “He’s just being Ethan.”

“Wanting more?” Noah asked, a little teasing in his voice.

She shrugged. “Yeah.”

Noah took a slow sip, then stood in front of her. Flirtatious and charming in that innocent way she loved.

“You never did tell me what you guys got up to last night.”

Rachel stiffened. The question landed harder than he knew. Her shoulders tightened slightly under the loose fabric of his shirt.

“We didn’t… fuck or anything,” she said, voice even. “We just messed around a little.”

Noah raised an eyebrow. “What, you’re not gonna give me details?”

Rachel gave a half-laugh. “I don’t know. It’s… embarrassing.”

“Alright, alright…” He took another sip, leaning casually against the kitchen counter. “So… did you record it?”

Rachel winced. Her gaze dropped to the floor as she traced her foot against the wood.

“…yes.”

When she looked up, Noah was watching her. He had that familiar look that rested somewhere between arousal and nerves.

“Can I see it?” he asked.

“You’re not… bothered?” she asked quietly.

"I mean, not in a bad way, no."

"Not in a bad way?"

Noah paused, looking upward in self-reflection. “It’s a strange feeling.”

“But, not a feeling that bothers you?" Rachel asked. Noah shook his head.

“No, I wouldn’t say it bothers me. Or… it bothers me in the right way.”

Rachel’s brows pulled together slightly. “The right way?”

Noah laughed sheepishly.

"I know, it's weird. But it hits in a way I can't really explain. Yes, I sometimes feel jealous or whatever, but like… I don't know how to describe it. It hits in a way that I enjoy. If that makes sense."

"How?"

Noah blinked. “How what?”

“How does it not bother you?” she asked. Her voice was steadier than she felt.

Noah saw the shift. The seriousness behind the question. His expression softened.

“Because I know you love me.”

The words landed gently.

Rachel stared at him, eyes wide. Her lips parted slightly as her emotions began to bubble to the surface.

“I…” Her voice caught. “I do love you…”

She blinked, and tears started to form, uninvited.

“A-and I’m sorry that… That I’m doing this, I just… I know it’s not right…”

“Hey, hey…” Noah quickly wrapped his arms around her. Her body folded into him, small and trembling.

“I’m sorry, Noah…” she whispered.

“Where’s this coming from?” he asked, rubbing her back gently.

“I just… You deserve a normal girlfriend,” she said into his chest. Her voice cracked, raw with shame. “I’m so sorry…”

“You don’t have to be sorry.”

“I feel gross…”

“You’re not.”

They stood like that for a while, the weight of everything sitting silently between them. His hands moved up and down her spine, slow and comforting.

“I really do love you,” she said again, quieter this time.

“I know.” He kissed her hair. “I love you too.”

Eventually, they pulled apart. Her eyes were glassy, but her breathing had slowed.

“Let’s give all that a break for now, okay?” he said gently. “Wanna go thrifting?”

Rachel let out a soft laugh through the tears. He always knew what to say in moments like this.

“Yeah…”

“And maybe we can get ice cream after?” he added, a hopeful grin on his face.

Rachel wiped a tear from her cheek and laughed again. “Yeah… just let me get ready, though. I’m a mess.”

Noah stopped her hand and wiped a lingering tear himself, thumb gentle against her skin.

“Take all the time you need. I'm not going anywhere."

Chapter 27 - Best of Friends 27 - Fred

Two weeks had passed, and Rachel made every effort to keep her life quiet and her attention on Noah. Two weeks of silencing notifications. Of letting Ethan’s messages sit unread. Of declining Mike’s impromptu visits. Two weeks of pretending things were normal. Of pretending she was normal. Knowing, deep down, that as soon as she dipped so much as a toe back into that world, she would be pulled under and submerged.

So Rachel ran and convinced herself it was because she needed a break. That was at least in part true. And it was also true that, for right now, Noah was more than enough.

They couldn't keep their hands off each other. Most nights ended in tangled sheets and breathless laughter. Sometimes it was fast and rough. Sometimes it was slow enough to feel like blissful eternity. They'd fuck themselves to sleep, only to wake up in the night and find each other again. They would hold each other tightly in the morning as the sun rose overhead. Whispering words found only within dreams.

She liked the version of herself that existed in that space. It felt nice to know that if she wanted, it could only be them, and she would be happy.

This revelation did not live in peace, however. Her apartment, for instance, was becoming an increasingly contentious point in her mind. The very thought of bringing Noah there caused Rachel’s stomach to tighten. More and more, she found herself avoiding home after dates or classes. She kept telling herself it was the commute. That Noah's on-campus dorm was so much more convenient.

That it had nothing to do with her neighbor, Mel.

She told herself she couldn't care less about how Mel had looked at Noah. She told herself that their breakfast meant nothing, and she wouldn’t have a problem if they had done it again.

Her mind snapped back to attention as they neared Noah's dorm room. He gave her hand a gentle squeeze as he searched for his keys in his pocket.

“Ready to face the dragon?” He said with a grin.

“Oh, he’s not that bad,” Rachel said.

“Famous last words, he’s been in one of his moods lately,” Noah said, jingling his keys.

Joking with Noah about Fred was easy; dealing with him was the harder part. He was harmless, really. If you could tolerate the whining, blunt opinions, and that faint, clinging body odor settling into the nostrils. But, in the right mood, with the right people, he could almost be pleasant.

Almost.

They’d managed to avoid him the last few weeks by planning their visits around his schedule. But whenever they inevitably crossed paths, Fred always found a way to make himself… memorable.

Noah unlocked the door and gave a quick knock as he pushed it open.

“Hey, Fred! We’re coming in—”

“No…NO! Are you fucking kidding me?! This game is so broken!”

Fred’s character collapsed on-screen. He slapped the keyboard, furious. The glow of the monitor bathed his already pale face, making him look even thinner than Rachel remembered. His hoodie sleeves swallowed half his hands. He tugged his headset down around his neck and looked at them as if they’d materialized out of the pixels.

“Oh. You guys…” Fred said, snorting down what sounded like a large clump of phlegm.

Rachel smiled easily. “Hey, Fred. Is it cool if we hang?”

His eyes dropped at once, sliding down her body and then back up again with no attempt to hide it.

“Yeah, sure,” he said. “As long as you’re okay with real masculine energy. I don’t filter myself.”

Noah glanced at Rachel, clearly fighting a smile.

“I think I can handle it,” Rachel said, playful and unbothered.

She followed Noah to his bed and sat beside him. They settled naturally, knees together, shoulders relaxed, postures contained as they observed Fred turn back to his game.

Sensing his newfound audience, Fred’s posture straightened. Keys clacked rapidly as he muttered curses under his breath. The first-person view on the screen jerked and spun, snapping from target to target in a way Rachel couldn’t begin to follow. She had no idea how he made sense of it, and had to admit there was something unusually entertaining about the intensity he brought to it.

As quickly as the game started, it was over. Fred leaned back and sighed as the leaderboard appeared on screen.

“You’ve been here a lot lately,” Fred said, restarting the match. “Your place fucked up or something?”

Rachel shrugged. “We just wanted a change of pace. Plus, this place is cozy.”

Fred snorted. “Guess so.”

He leaned forward, spine curving as his nose nearly touched the screen. His teeth clenched with every shot missed. Rachel watched him. He wasn’t ugly, exactly. More unfinished. A personality born from too much time online and too many alpha male threads.

He died again.

“Bro, they are stream-sniping me! What the fuck!” he shouted. Rachel glanced at his second monitor and noted the stream chat. No one was watching.

Noah laughed quietly.

"You keep running out into the open, man," He said with a laugh. After dying again, Fred sighed loudly and shut the game off, turning to Noah.

"I'm sorry, who is platinum, you or me?"

"You," Noah said.

"Exactly," Fred said, his foot tapping wildly. He glanced over at Rachel, eyes trailing down to her cleavage. He snorted again.

“So, not to be weird, but…” He spun his chair halfway toward them, his bare foot dragging on the terribly stained throw rug beneath him. “There’s been talk.”

Rachel felt her heart swell. She looked at Noah, both seeming to know exactly where this conversation was going.

“Such as?" Rachel said, playing dumb.

“I think you know...” Fred said, foot tapping violently.

"I don’t, actually. Please, enlighten me," Rachel said. Fred scratched the patchy beard on his neck with a knuckle.

“People keep saying you… get around. Like with guys in our circle."

"Our circle?" Noah added. Fred rolled his eyes.

"Everyone's a part of my circle. I'm well connected," Fred countered coolly.

"I'll have to let Jack know," Noah said with a smile.

Fred rolled his eyes. "So is it true or what?"

Noah let out a tired sigh.

“Fred,” he said mildly.

Fred lifted his hands. “What? I’m not being a dick. I'm just fucking asking. You know I'm direct, dude. If it’s bullshit, just say it’s bullshit.”

Rachel let a breath slip out. “We're not going to unpack gossip with you.”

Fred grinned crookedly.

“You're not denying it though…”

Her smile sharpened just enough to warn. “Or… I'm not interested in talking gossip with you."

Fred held a deadpan stare, then turned back to his screen. Nodding as if he’d just confirmed a deep suspicion.

“Right. Sure. Totally," Fred said, quickly logging back into his game and starting a new match in a huff. Rachel glanced at Noah, pleased to see he was as amused as she. He moved closer to her side, rubbing her back gently as Fred let out another rage-filled rant.

"You're so good at that," Rachel said, squeezing Noah's thigh playfully.

"Well, I've had some practice," Noah said.

Fred’s eyes flicked back to them mid-round, his gaze lingering on Rachel once more. It was hungrier this time. She watched his eyes linger on her breasts as his jaw clenched. She'd seen the look many times before. It was nothing new to have men gawk at her. Ever since coming to Godfrey, Rachel had grown accustomed to it. But Fred was different. There was an energy to his libido. Like he’d been storing up fantasies for years and was imprinting them onto Rachel in real time.

She was struck, briefly, by the thought that he’d likely never been with anyone. The way he sat, tense, wired, and frustrated, suddenly made complete sense. He’d likely never let that energy go anywhere but into games, doom scrolling, and... other late-night activities.

Then she imagined the idea of being his first. It was… strange. Unlike Jack's friends, Rachel knew without a doubt that Fred was attainable. He was inexperienced, desperate, and hungry. His egotistical rants were a cover for his obvious insecurities. A small fortress built in his small world.

It came with a flash of imagery she didn’t invite. Fred stood awkwardly from his chair, breathing too fast, hands greedy and unsure as Rachel lay back in his bed. He climbed on top of her, his skinny body pressing into hers as he hesitantly began to grope her. She watched as his shock colored into boldness the second his fingers made contact with her skin.

She moaned encouragingly, letting him know it was alright. Letting him know she was his. She imagined Noah watching from the bed, eyes bright as he stroked himself, torn between jealousy and passion.

She imagined him fucking her, and had the sneaking suspicion he would use her like a fuck toy. He would reenact what he had seen in porn videos, and probably expected her to act just like those girls did. For Noah's sake, she would.

She would shout, she would moan, she would ride him as Fred had always imagined.

She might even let him cum in her.

Rachel bit her lip at the idea of letting him do it as much as he wanted. For as long as he wanted.

Noah’s face would be absolutely priceless if she did.

Then, like an abrupt gust of wind, Mel slid into her mind. Pulling Noah away as she rode Fred. Giving her a devilish wave with her fingers as they left the room.

Heat climbed her throat quickly as she blinked the fantasy away.

Rachel shifted, running her finger nervously across scratchy sheets. Noah’s fingers slipped against against hers. A silent question. She threaded them together as a silent answer.

Fred died again. “Jesus fuck!”

He exhaled and pushed away from the desk, swinging the chair around fully this time.

“So, look,” he said, leaning in as if they were at a negotiation table. “Let's just say, hypothetically, that these rumors were true… it would make sense that I would get to be a part of it, right? I'm like your guys' best friend, and I've done a lot to help make sure you both found a place here at Godfrey."

"Oh, I wasn't aware," Rachel said playfully. Noah laughed softly.

"Laugh all you want big man, at the end of the day. I'm a valuable asset, and you know it."

Noah sighed, 'Fred, what are you getting at?"

"Look, all I'm saying is that I’d be respectful. I’d, you know, get in line. I feel like eventually I should probably have first dibs, you know, once we've established things. And I wouldn't be weird about it, either."

"Fred, as much as I love you, this has got to be the strangest proposition I've ever heard," Noah said with a half-smile.

"I think my favorite part was the first dibs," Rachel chimed in. They laughed together as Fred's face went beet red.

"Look, I'm just trying to be respectful. I get you might want the Jock's because they have big dicks, but it's fucked up that only they get a turn."

Rachel looked at Fred with a playfully shocked expression.

"Oh my god, Fred! Really? A turn??"

"What?! Are you telling me it's not true? I bet a thousand dollars that if I were fucking six three, jacked, and a perfect Chad, you would've already been fucking me."

"Are you suggesting I'm just trying to fuck all the hottest guys at Godfrey?"

"Uh, yeah? Isn't that the whole fucking point? He's not giving you what you want, right?" Fred said, pointing to Noah.

"Hey! Don't bring me into this," Noah countered.

“Come on, man. You’re not that different from me. Honestly, it makes sense. There's no way she’d stay with you unless you let her off the leash.”

Fred talked like Rachel wasn’t even in the room. Whatever amusement she’d felt changed into disgust.

“Fred,” Rachel said flatly, “If the rumors were true, talking like that would be the fastest way to make sure you are never considered. By anyone.”

Fred hesitated and glanced at Noah.

"Don't look at me, you got yourself into this mess," Noah said. Fred shrank into his chair, retracting with a sulk.

“Whatever, I was just asking. Don't have to be a dick about it…"

Rachel studied him. For all the bravado, there was an equal measure of selfish insecurity. The mix of arrogance and resignation sat oddly in her chest. With a sigh, she waved him off.

“You’re fine. But in the future, maybe don't lead with requests to fuck your friend's girlfriend,” she said.

He nodded, still sulking in his chair. “Cool. Yeah. Thanks for the lesson."

He twirled in his chair and turned his game back on.

After a stretch of stiffness, the room loosened again.

Fred settled. His voice dropped a notch, losing some of its edge. Noah started telling one of his favorite stories about their unhinged data science professor, who insisted that his gambling addiction was for mathematical research. Fred jumped in to correct him, nitpicking details, reconstructing the story like a cross-examination. Rachel laughed when Noah rolled his eyes. She didn’t mean to, but it came out anyway.

For a few minutes, it was easy.

But the undercurrent never left.

Fred’s eyes kept drifting, catching on the curves of her body before snapping back to his monitor like he’d been scalded. Noah’s thumb moved in slow, absent circles along the inside of her wrist, communicating his unspoken affection.

Rachel rested her head on his shoulder as they sank back against a sloppy wall of pillows. The dorm hummed around them. Fan rattling. Keys clicking. Voices leaking faintly from the hallway.

She tried to calm herself, but Fred’s words came back uninvited.

There's no way she’d stay with you unless you let her off the leash.

The phrase felt like sand between her teeth. She pictured how it must look from the outside, and realized how easily people filled in the blanks. She wondered how many of them had already decided who she was. She wondered how many were like Mel. Thinking she was mistreating Noah, thinking that this was somehow all her idea. A bullet to be dodged, a distusting piece of trash everyone would use, but never stay with.

She wondered if Noah saw her the same way, too.

Her chest tightened. The room felt louder. Fred died again and exploded into another rant, and something in her snapped with it.

“Hey,” Rachel said to Noah, already moving. “I think I'm going to head out.”

"Alright," Noah said, jumping to his feet. “I’ll walk you out.”

Fred lifted a hand without looking back.

"Later…" He said flatly as the two slipped into the hallway.

The door closed behind them, and Rachel let out a deep breath, soaking in the hallway's silence. The fluorescent lights hummed overhead, one tube flickering with a faint, sickly pulse. They entered the stairwell.

“Sorry about that,” Noah said as they descended. His voice bounced against the cinderblock walls. “He can get a little excited.”

“The man needs to get out more,” Rachel answered.

Noah laughed. The sound eased something tight in Rachel’s chest.

“He really does,” he agreed. “He’s been getting into that red-pill crap lately.”

She groaned. “Stop.”

“I’m serious.”

Rachel shook her head, grimacing. “God, he is so icky.”

She stopped at the bottom landing.

"It's not true, by the way."

Noah raised an eyebrow. "What's not true?"

"That I'm fucking other men because you're not enough," Rachel said. Noah gently grabbed her hand.

"If I asked you to stop and only focus on me, would you?"

"Of course I would," Rachel said without hesitating.

Noah smiled. "And that’s how I know it’s not true."

Rachel smiled and looked at the sticky concrete beneath them.

"You're too good to me."

"I could say the same," Noah answered. Then gave her a sideways look. Rachel smirked.

"What?" She asked.

“Speaking of Fred… would you ever… You know. Take him up on the offer?"

Rachel laughed involuntarily.

"Oh my god!" She looked at him for a moment. “Do you want me to?!”

He shrugged.

“Maybe. I don’t know.” He moved closer, smiling playfully. “I mean… we haven’t really done any messing around lately.”

She laughed quietly through her nose. Her teeth caught her lip before she could stop herself. It wasn’t that she wanted Fred, exactly. But she missed it. The desire, the danger, the excitement.

She wanted to be good. She dreamed about being normal.

But when they talked like this, it felt like a drug.

“Is someone getting restless?" Rachel asked.

"Aren't you?"

Rachel fixed her hair. "Maybe."

They stared at one another hungrily.

“Ethan’s been texting me, by the way,” Noah said.

Rachel’s heart skipped. “And?”

“And he wants to meet up with you again.”

“He’s trouble.” The answer jumped out of Rachel before she could temper it.

“Not if we call the shots."

She scoffed, pushing lightly at his shoulder. “God, you are such a pervert!”

Noah tried to contain a bashful smile.

“I’m just saying,” he continued, voice settling lower, slower. “It might be fun to see you… toy with him a little.”

Instinctively, Rachel's eyes wandered down Noah's body. Stopping on the unmistakable bulge forming against the front of his jeans.

“You want to see me put him in his place, babe?” she asked. Noah pressed against her, returning her gaze.

“I mean… kind of. Don't you?”

She exhaled, fixing her hair behind one ear.

“I won’t lie… yes.”

Silence wrapped around them as Noah wrapped his hand around her hips tightly. A distant door slammed on the floor above. The light above them flickered. He leaned in just enough that she could feel the warmth of him.

“Then maybe you should text him back, and make sure to film it,” he said.

Rachel felt her body swell with heat.

“You’re trouble," She said.

“So are you.”

She laughed softer than she meant to.

“I gotta go, I'll text you later," She said. Then Rachel leaned forward, kissed him before slipping away to the exit.

Chapter 28 - Best of Friends 28 - Goodnight Ethan

ENOUGH IC

Rachel sat at the bar, drumming her fingers against its black, glossy surface. She shouldn't have been surprised that Ethan wanted to pick somewhere so upscale, and in the city, no less. It was clear he was trying to pull out all the stops, and when Ethan finally did show up exactly twenty minutes late, he did so with a smile and a wave.

He wore a white suit accented with gold chains and designer sunglasses.

"Rachel!" He shouted, extending his arms for a hug. Rachel glanced him up and down and turned. She wasn't really angry. She expected as much from Ethan, but she certainly wasn't going to let him know that.

His hands promptly lowered. "Ohhhh, you mad at me?"

"A little," Rachel shot back with a smirk. He sat beside her and waved the bartender over.

"I'm sorry, it was traffic, I swear."

"If you're going to invite me off campus, you better be on time," Rachel said. Ethan chuckled.

"Fine, no excuses. Let me make it up to you."

The bartender stopped in front of them and smiled. He wore a vest with a dress shirt, a look as sterile as the hotel lobby around them.

"What can I get you?" he asked.

"I'll take a vodka soda, top shelf and…" He turned to Rachel. "Anything she wants."

Rachel smiled politely. "Just a water, please."

Ethan eyed her in surprise. Rachel waited for his response. She already knew he was rich and could get whatever he wanted. It was important that Ethan understood that meant nothing to her. What she really needed to know was whether he could behave.

"You uh… You sure you don't want anything? I'm paying," Ethan said.

"Oh, I'm aware," Rachel looked back at the bartender. "A water, please."

"Sparkling?" The bartender asked.

“That sounds lovely."

"With a lime, perhaps?"

"Perfect," Rachel said.

The bartender looked at Ethan and smirked. "Coming right up."

Ethan sucked his teeth and nodded slowly as the bartender walked off.

"Alright, I can take a hint. Does this mean we're not… You know."

Rachel rolled her head and laughed. "God, you went right to it!"

"Well, isn't that why we're here?!" Ethan asked defensively.

"Ethan, aren't you at least somewhat curious to get to know me first?" Rachel pressed as the bartender returned with their drinks. She thanked him, took a sip from her water, and glanced back at Ethan. He looked completely dumbfounded.

"I don’t... but we're not… this is casual, right?"

"Yes, but it would be nice to be treated like a person, first."

Ethan sighed and slunk into his chair. "I feel like you're just fucking with me."

"Why is that?"

"Because there is no fucking way you made Mike jump through all these fucking hoops."

"He can actually be quite sweet when you get to know him." Rachel countered. Ethan grumbled and slunk into his chair.

"Yeah yeah… So what? Should we talk first? You want this to be a date?"

"Oh my god, you are terrible at this," Rachel snorted.

"What? What?! I'm trying here! I'm… you know what…" He fixed his suitcoat and huffed. Rachel gently patted him on the arm.

"Relax, you're fine," She kept laughing. Ethan stared cautiously, but relaxed, taking a sip from his vodka.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Just talk to me," Rachel said.

“Just talk?”

“Yes, Ethan, just talk.”

Ethan sat back and sniffed. “Ok, what about?”

“I don’t know, what do you want to talk about?”

“I don’t know, you were the one who wanted to talk.”

“Are you like this on every date?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?” Rachel pressed. Ethan glared as he took another sip of his drink, then rested his head on his fist.

“What does it matter?”

“Well, it would explain why you’re still single.”

“Very funny, but you should know if I wanted a girlfriend, I would’ve fucking had one already.”

Rachel watched as Ethan signaled the bartender for another round. Ethan glanced at her quickly. Then, when he noticed she was staring, he did a double-take.

“What?”

Rachel shook her head. “Nothing. I just find that comment interesting.”

“What, the girlfriend thing?”

Rachel nodded. Ethan raised an eyebrow, leaning into her.

“What about it?”

“Why don’t you have a girlfriend?”

“Maybe I haven’t found my person yet.”

“And who would be your person, Ethan?” Rachel asked, sipping her water. Ethan stared for a moment.

“You want the truth?”

“Sure.”

Ethan bit his lip and smirked. “You.”

Rachel shook her head and laughed loudly.

“How did I know?!”

“You don’t believe me?”

“Ethan, you don’t even know me!”

“But I know I’d marry you,” He said. This time, with a surprising amount of sincerity. The words meant nothing to Rachel. She knew the kind of guy Ethan was. What surprised her, however, was how true the words seemed to be for him.

“You would marry someone you don’t even know?”

“I know you.”

“No Ethan, you don’t.”

“But I do,” Ethan leaned closer. “With some people, you talk to them once, and you just know.”

Rachel squinted as she sipped her drink. “And what’s that, exactly?”

“That you could be happy with them for the rest of your life.”

“And you just knew that, huh?”

“In about an hour, yeah.”

“Just an hour?”

Ethan smiled as the bartender placed the second drink in front of him. “You told your first joke in that hour. You also laughed. I’ve never heard such a beautiful laugh in my entire life. I chimed in with a joke of my own, and you laughed at that, too. I don’t think you remember it, though. You were just excited to be around everyone. I could tell this was your first real taste of the world, and how much you loved it. You were bright, funny, kind, smart... I just knew.”

Rachel paused. That certainly wasn’t the answer she had expected. Had it not been for his litany of past actions, she might have believed him, too.

“Does that line work on all the girls?” She countered. Ethan rolled his eyes and leaned back with a perfect smile.

“Fine, don’t believe me.”

“I won’t.”

“Ok...” Ethan sulked, taking a drink before staring forward in silence. Alright, so maybe there was something more to this jock. Rachel decided to offer him an olive branch.

"So…" She said, finishing her second water. "Our arrangement."

Ethan perked up immediately. "Yes?"

"I’m still interested, if you are.”

“Oh, I am,” Ethan said all too quickly.

“With that said, you're not getting what you think you're getting tonight," Rachel said. Ethan's eyes immediately dimmed as his jaw went slack.

"Ok… what the fuck does that mean?"

"It means we can mess around… but…" Rachel let the word sit for a moment.

"But?" Ethan said, leaning forward.

"You can't enter me," Rachel said. The bartender came by as Ethan stared, dumbfounded.

"Will you guys be wanting anything else?" He asked.

"No, I'm alright," Rachel said. Still staring at Ethan. "You?"

"I'm good," Ethan replied flatly. The bartender nodded and began walking off. “Actually, no, sorry, could I get a shot of vodka?”

The bartender poured it promptly, and Ethan took it without ceremony, slamming the shotglass on the table.

Then he stared long and hard at Rachel. "I can't enter?"

"Nope."

"But Mike can?" Ethan's voice grew louder.

"Mike plays nice, we've been over this."

"Come on…" Ethan whined. He sounded like a spoiled child. "I haven't proven myself yet?"

"Not in the slightest. Every time you get sex on that brain, you stop listening. I need to make sure you do well under pressure," Rachel said. "And… if you do… maybe you will finally get what you want."

The look on Ethan's face was worth more than gold. He sighed and ran his hands through his buzzcut.

"Fuck Rachel, you are not easy."

"I never said I was."

Ethan glanced over. It seemed like he was finally getting the message. At least, Rachel hoped he was. Or this was going to be a very awkward night. But there was something else too, an important secret she needed to keep hidden.

Rachel wanted Ethan. Badly.

She wanted to know how his body felt. How well he kissed. And most importantly, she wanted to know what that giant cock would feel like inside her. But she wanted him on her terms. Rachel just hoped he wouldn’t call her bluff.

"I take it we're not going back to my place then?" Ethan asked.

"Absolutely not, but you are driving me to mine."

Ethan nodded slowly, then shrugged. "I can live with that."

_

Rachel’s apartment was slightly messier than she remembered. But she hadn’t really been home in weeks, either. She liked to pretend it wasn’t because of Mel. But it absolutely was because of Mel.

So much so, in fact, that Rachel peeked her head out and checked the hallway before bringing Ethan out. Casually, of course. But with Ethan, that didn’t seem terribly necessary. He was too focused on trying to grab her ass whenever possible. And when Rachel’s apartment door finally closed behind them, he pushed her against the wall and kissed her passionately.

His hands clung to her ass as he began dry humping slowly. Rachel had to admit, he felt good. Ethan’s tall, lean, athletic figure was to die for. And when she felt his cock rub against her…

"Ethan," She said between kisses. He pressed his lips back onto hers, clearly lost in the heat of the moment. Rachel laughed as she pushed him back with her hand. "Oh my god, Ethan! Let me breathe."

He did so reluctantly. Showing off his perfect smile once more.

"I thought you said we could mess around," Ethan said matter-of-factly.

"You always get this jumpy, Ethan?" Rachel said with a smile.

"Fuck! You just got me so fucking nervous. I'm like… right here. Like, I got here, and I don't want to fuck it up."

“Mmmm, I see.” Rachel's eyes lowered to the massive erection pushing against Ethan’s slacks. She bit her lip and pointed to the couch.

"Go sit and cool off, I'll be over in a minute."

Ethan did as he was told, and Rachel walked into her bedroom. She took a moment and got herself ready, double-checking her outfit in the mirror before taking out her phone and texting Noah.

Rachel: Hey!!! We're back at my place. Just want to check before I do anything. You ok with this?

It took less than a minute for Noah to reply.

Noah: Go for it, just make sure to record! Love you.

Rachel smiled as she typed back.

Rachel: Love you too, and don't worry, I plan on it ;)

With that, she stepped back out into the living room with her phone on a tripod. Ethan did a double-take as she began setting it up in the living room.

"Uh… What the fuck is that?" He asked. Rachel looked back at him.

"Oh, this? We're going to record for Noah."

"That's… fucking weird."

Rachel turned to him. "Do you want him here instead?"

Ethan cleared his throat and shook his head.

"Then the tripod it is." Rachel began to set it up in silence. Ethan watched as he began to massage his cock through his slacks.

"Does he watch when you’re with Mike? Like, in the same room?" Ethan asked.

"Sometimes."

Ethan paused. "Does… does that mean he'll want to watch us eventually?"

Rachel looked back at him as she snapped her phone in place.

"IF we keep seeing eachother, yes. Eventually."

Ethan cleared his throat. "Huh…"

Rachel walked towards the couch and stood in front of him. He stared up at her with hungry eyes.

“So, what do you want to do to me?" She asked. Without a second thought, Ethan promptly undid his pants and slid them halfway down his thighs. Rachel watched, equal parts amused and turned on as his cock sprang out of his pants.

"Suck my dick." He said.

He didn’t need to ask twice.

Rachel lowered to her knees, spread Ethan's legs, and pressed her lips to his cock. God, he was so big. In length, in girth. Even his balls were giant and perfect. Rachel hadn’t experienced much before Godfrey, but frankly, Ethan defied any expectations she had. Honestly, she still couldn't fully wrap her mind around it. Or her fingers, for that matter. She stroked him slowly and looked up at him.

"Can I ask you something?" She said.

"Uh…" Ethan glanced over at the camera, then back at her. "Sure."

"If I were your girlfriend, how often would you fuck me?" The question was meant to be playful, but Rachel was curious, too. A part of her wanted to know what he might be like if they were together.

"Well uh…" Ethan cleared his throat. "A lot."

"How much?" Rachel continued to stroke him as she gently kissed the side of his shaft. It made Ethan's cock pulse.

"Every day at least," He said.

"Only once?"

Ethan was losing himself. Rachel could see it. That all too familiar look when sex kicked everything else out of his mind.

"As many times as I could get it up," he said.

"You're not just saying that?" Rachel kissed the tip of his cock, parting her lips slightly as her tongue circled it.

"I'm being fucking serious. I'd…" Ethan stopped himself. Rachel's eyes flicked back up to his.

"What?"

"It's nothing, shouldn't say it," Ethan said shortly, glancing at the camera. Rachel laughed.

"Come on, you can tell me."

Ethan stared for a moment.

"I'd… I'd fucking marry you." His words were sincere, as was the longing in his eyes. "I'd put babies in you."

Rachel answered by swallowing as much of his cock as her mouth could fit. Ethan's head rolled back as he thrust upwards slowly. Rachel still had trouble widening her jaw to fit him. She used both hands with her mouth, stroking with a methodical rhythm.

"Fuck! You are so fucking good at this shit, holy fuck," He closed his eyes and sank into the couch. His hands eventually found their way to Rachel’s hair. He held it behind her head while she continued to suck. He was surprisingly gentle. Rachel hadn't expected that. He took his time with her, letting her blow him until her saliva covered his cock and her jaw grew sore.

Eventually, he pulled her swollen lips off his shaft and brought her onto his lap. Her dress parted, and she felt him press against her underwear. Then, as her weight settled, Ethan pulled Rachel in for a kiss.

He was a very good kisser. His full lips seemed to interlock with hers perfectly. He knew exactly when to break away, and exactly when to come forward.

Then he began to move her. He pressed her against his cock and thrust steadily against her. His girth covered her clit, and she began to regret telling him they wouldn't be doing any penetration tonight. Rachel moaned softly as Ethan pulled down her dress straps. He buried his face in her cleavage, gripped her tightly, and continued to thrust.

And with each thrust. Rachel’s underwear slowly slipped sideways.

Neither of them stopped it. Rachel’s hands cradled the back of Ethan’s head and pulled him close as he kept thrusting.

She felt him against her entrance. She felt her juices lubricate his cock as their pace quickened. He felt so good, she knew that if he entered her, he'd split her wider than any man ever had.

Ethan pulled down her bra and played with her hard, pink nipples. She, in turn, thrust against him as fast as her hips allowed. The couch rocked as she felt her climax draw close.

"Holy fuck, Rachel…" Ethan gasped, gripping her ass tight. He looked her in the eyes and pulled his cock back, letting it tease her entrance. He wanted to enter her. She could see it in his eyes. He wanted her for himself. He wanted her on his arm after games. He wanted to possess her in every way possible.

And he probably did want to impregnate her, too.

All of that was clear in the way he looked at her. It drove his mind, his thoughts, his desire. It drove her, too. She imagined what it would be like to be filled by him. To feel him unload his seed inside her.

Rachel closed her eyes and kept thrusting. She was getting close. If he wanted to, Ethan could have entered her right then. But instead, he gripped her hips tightly and moaned loudly as cum sprayed between their legs.

"FUCK!" He shouted. Rachel soon followed with a cry of her own. Her body tightened as her orgasm overtook her. Ethan’s cum stuck between them as they continued to rub against each other. She felt his cock play at her entrance as it began to soften, spraying a few stray lines across her pussy.

Their bodies slowed. Rachel collapsed on top of him. She listened to Ethan's beating heart as his chest rose with deep breaths.

"Holy shit, no one's made me bust like that," Ethan said. Rachel laughed and patted his chest.

"Glad to be your first."

"Was it good for you?" He asked. Rachel nodded.

"Oooh yes."

"I also want to point out that I didn't go inside you, like you asked," Ethan said proudly. Rachel lifted her head from his chest and stared with humored annoyance.

"Playing nicely, I see. I’m glad you’re able to follow the most basic rules of consent."

Ethan blushed. "I'm just showing I can behave.”

Rachel stared at him for a moment, felt herself begin to blush, and promptly looked away. Rachel hated to admit it, but Ethan was most certainly her type. A fact she was willing to take to her grave. Ethan didn't need any more reasons to stroke his own ego.

"But…" Ethan continued. "You're going to want me eventually."

"There it is," Rachel said, pushing off Ethan and standing. She pointed at him. "You know, you really know how to kill the mood."

"What?! I'm just saying."

"And you got cum all over my favorite dress?" Rachel said. Ethan smiled and motioned to his very wet slacks.

"Uhhh? You think you're the only one? You can't blame me for this. We both got excited."

"I’m absolutely blaming you for this," Rachel said, grabbing her phone from the tripod and stopping the recording. She promptly sent it to Noah.

Rachel: Just wrapped up, hope you like babeeeh 😘

"So does this mean we get to see eachother again?" Ethan asked. Rachel measured him carefully, her glare resting between playful and speculative.

"We'll see, but now I have to go get changed, and you need to get yourself an Uber home."

"What?! We're not going to go again?"

Rachel shook her head. "Not tonight, no. Because I'm tired, and I don't trust that you have the self-discipline to behave twice."

She did truly believe that Ethan would try to push their boundaries. However, that wasn’t the reason she didn’t want to go again. He proved he could listen, but Rachel knew that if they kept going, she wouldn't be able to say no to that fat cock of his.

"But my pants…"

"There's a hairdryer in the bathroom, use that. Then go home."

Ethan glared at her. "Do you do this to Mike also?"

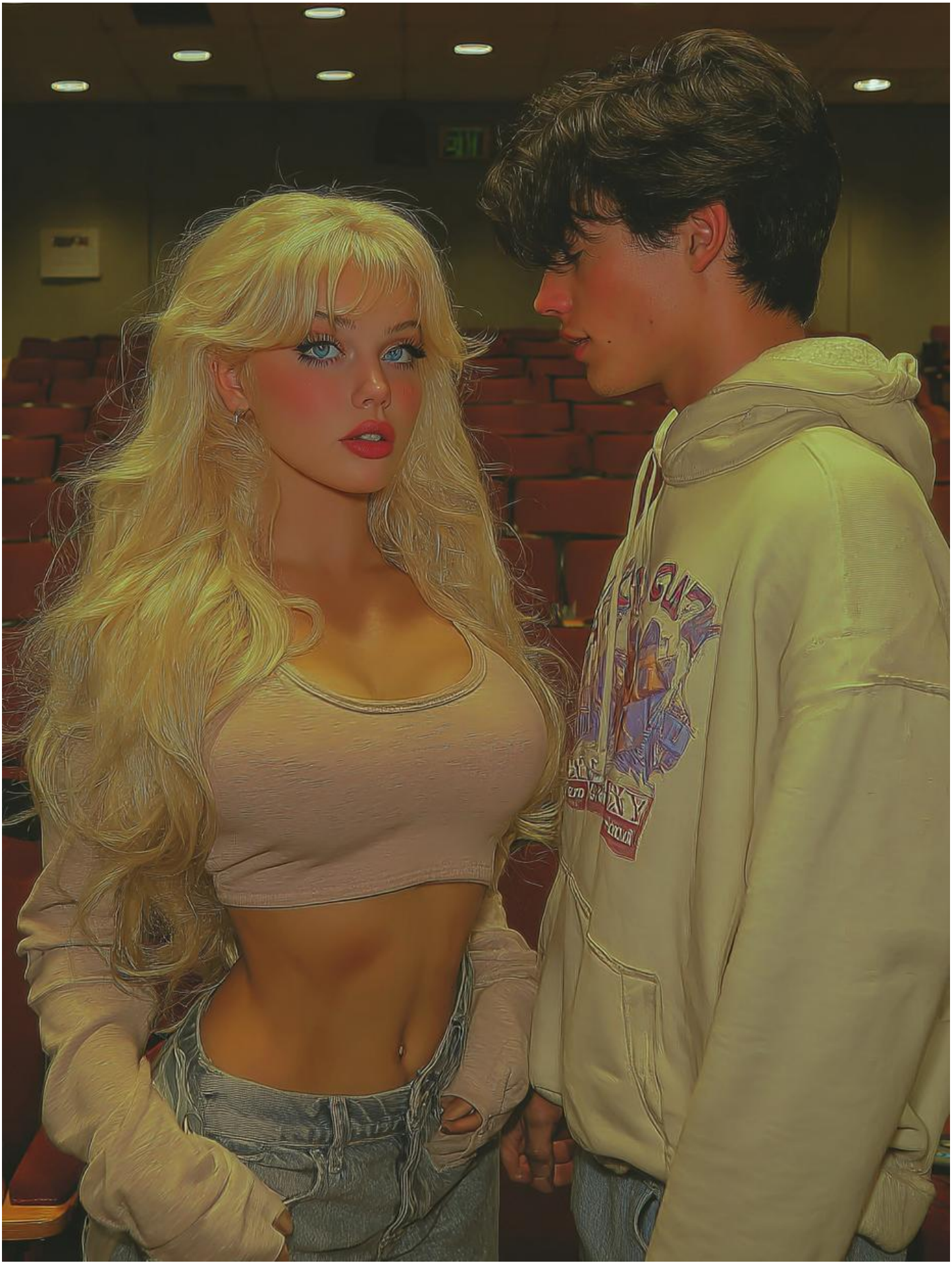
Rachel rolled her eyes.

"Goodnight, Ethan!" She said playfully before disappearing into her bedroom.

As she closed the door, Ethan sat on the couch, staring at his flaccid cock.

"Fuck that woman drives me crazy."

Chapter 29 - Best of Friends 29 - Firsts



HINTVLODED

Noah watched Rachel orgasm on Ethan’s cock as he exploded into a bundle of toilet paper in his hand. He let out a haggard breath and leaned back on the toilet. Exhaling with deep satisfaction. When he heard several people from his dorm floor enter the communal bathroom, he scrambled and tossed the toilet paper between his legs. The odds are low that they would peek through the cracks of his stall, but they were never zero.

He flushed and stepped out, his mind still replaying Rachel's video on repeat. She clearly enjoyed herself with Ethan, and that turned Noah on as much as it churned his stomach.

Noah didn’t like Ethan. That was no secret. But seeing him take Rachel like that was something Noah would never forget. Yes, all of Jack’s friends wanted Rachel, and Noah really couldn't blame them for that. But Ethan clearly wanted more. Perhaps that fact was easier to stomach since he hadn’t been allowed to enter Rachel. Perhaps, part of Noah liked that Rachel had put him in his place. Regardless, what he knew for certain was that he wanted Rachel now. He pulled out his phone and began to type.

Noah: You didn't let him go all the way, huh?

Rachel: Uhhhh no way. That dude needs to learn to behave. Why, u disappointed?

Noah: Kinda ;P

Rachel: LOL, you boys I swear.

Noah exhaled as he dropped onto his bed. He really was the luckiest man alive.

Noah: When are you going to be around? I need to see you… for reasons…

Rachel: Yeah? What kind of reasons ;)

Noah: The important kind

Rachel: Hahahaha, well is your dorm free?

Noah looked over at Fred, who silently stared at his computer.

Noah: Can we go to yours?

Rachel took a little longer to type out her response.

Rachel: Surrrre. When?

Noah: Now???? 0_0

Rachel: Lol give me like an hour? Still wrapping up my last class for the day. :P

Noah: Deal, see you in an hour.

Noah closed and sighed blissfully as Fred screamed at his monitor.

- - -

Rachel packed up her laptop as fellow students cleared out of the lecture hall. She checked her phone when it buzzed, assuming it was from Noah. Her heart sank when she saw it was her father.

Dad: Hey, need you to call me

She closed her phone and threw her head back with a sigh. Rachel had to give him credit; he had stayed away longer than she expected. This was her father, after all. The man who had kept her home for almost every major school event. The one who demanded her room door be open at all times, alone or with friends. And the one time she didn’t, he kicked it in with such force that the hinges ripped out of the frame.

Rachel knew her father loved her. It just so happened he showed his affection through intimidation, screaming, and violence. He only began to settle down when her mother intervened. She was the one who, in the end, got her dad to let her go away to college. And for that, Rachel would always be grateful.

But that didn’t mean he didn’t want to control her life. Every chance he got, he would try to put his thumb back on her. His latest attempt was this ‘friendly’ dinner with her and Noah that he’d been trying to schedule for weeks. Rachel cringed at the idea.

Rachel walked down the lecture room stairs, passing Jack while he packed his things.

"Oh, hey Jack," she said.

"Hey," Jack said flatly, continuing to pack his bag without a glance. Strange, Jack wasn't usually this cold to her. Come to think of it, Jack also usually sat beside her every chance he got. But he had sat in the front today.

"Is something wrong?" She asked.

"Nothing's wrong," Jack said robotically.

"If nothing was wrong, you wouldn't be acting this way. Come on, you can tell me."

Jack zipped his bag aggressively. Rachel smirked.

"Let me guess, girl trouble?"

Jack glared at her.

"Not exactly," he said. Rachel felt her skin begin to prickle. There was no mistaking it. Jack was mad at her, clearly. And she had a pretty good guess why. So, she asked the question.

"Are you mad at me?"

"I heard about Ethan," He said. Rachel felt her cheeks burn.

"Ok, what about it?"

"I just didn't think you'd go for someone like that."

"I mean, it was just for fun, it's not like we're together."

"And Noah is ok with that?" Jack asked.

"Yeah? Why wouldn't he be?"

"I wouldn't be."

Rachel knew that tone. She’d heard it more than once in her life. It was strange how quickly men who used you would turn cold the moment someone else did exactly what they would have done.

"Excuse me?" Rachel spoke sharply. Jack turned with a cold stare.

"I wouldn't be ok with you being with someone like Ethan."

"Didn't we literally do the same thing at your house?" Rachel asked. Jack recoiled like he’d been slapped.

"That was different, and you know it."

"How? How was that different?"

"It just was! And you’re apparently still seeing Mike?”

“You guys talk about that?”

“He won't shut up about it!”

Rachel shook her head in disbelief.

"I'm just trying to understand why you're getting so upset. It has nothing to do with you."

Jack laughed bitterly. "Yeah, I guess you're right. You fucking my friends has nothing to do with me."

Rachel paused for a moment, rubbing her fingers together nervously. She knew it wasn't her job to care about Jack's feelings, but she did. So, like always, Rachel tried to make him feel better.

"Do… do you want a turn?" She asked. Jack froze in place.

"Is that all I am to you? Another turn?" Jack asked.

Rachel looked away.

"Jack… I really don't know what you want me to say right now."

"Nothing, forget it." Jack walked past her. "It was stupid of me to even bring it up. It's your life. Do what you want."

Rachel remained silent, glancing only once as Jack passed her. He stopped and slung his bag over his back. Then, with a deep sigh, he turned.

"Look, I'm sorry… It's not my business. Tell Noah I said hi. Alright?"

"Yeah, sure."

- - -

The walk back to her apartment felt longer than usual. Jack had absolutely no right to act like that. It was cruel and unfair, especially considering he was one of the first to take advantage of her and Noah's arrangement. And yet, she couldn't help but feel like she had done him wrong. Rachel had a particular loyalty to Jack. He had been her first real friend at Godfrey. He had helped get her classes sorted and had made sure to invite her to plenty of social gatherings. She didn't want to lose him over this.

Rachel pushed the thought away. Jack wasn't her boyfriend, and he knew this. At least, she hoped he did.

But... he probably wanted to be. No, not probably. He did. Rachel knew he did. Maybe that's why she felt so guilty.

She thought of her mother, who would be elated at the idea of them being together. It was such a strange thought, being with someone like Jack. What would a relationship like that even look like? She imagined them on a beach somewhere, drinking wine while talking about... whatever it was Jack was into. Sports? Finance? She didn't know. Jack was a handsome, stable man. But he lacked any real depth.

That certainly would've been enough for her mother. But Rachel wanted more. Someone creative, someone odd, someone like Noah.

Fortunately, the thought vanished when she found Noah waiting for her outside her apartment door.

"Hey!" She whispered, glancing at Mel's door down the hallway. "You could have let yourself in!" She said, walking up to Noah and kissing him softly. He squeezed her hips tightly as he kissed back.

"I wanted to go in together," He replied. Kissing her forehead. "How was your morning?"

"Ugh, I don't want to talk about it," Rachel said. She quickly opened her door and, as subtly as possible, ushered Noah inside. "How long have you been out there?"

Noah shrugged. "I don't know, a few minutes?"

Rachel let out a sigh of relief. If he'd run into Mel, he would have said something.

"That's good, I would hate to have made you wait."

She felt Noah walk behind her and wrap his arms around her waist.

"I'd wait years for you."

Rachel closed her eyes and breathed slowly. Noah really was the sweetest, and it felt good to be in his arms. She turned and kissed him deeply. Ethan might have been a good kisser, but it felt nothing like this. It was like she was coming home.

When you love someone like that, it is an electrifying spell that defies all reason. And she knew Noah felt it too. His hands slipped under her hoodie and onto her skin. She, in turn, stood on her tiptoes, wrapping her arms around his neck with a tender kiss.

They made their way to the bed. Noah laid her down. His hands went to their familiar places. They touched eachother in the ways they knew worked. A warm, safe connection that Rachel would always be grateful for. He pulled down her sweatpants. She laughed as he tickled her stomach. When she tried to squirm away, Noah pinned her arms above her head.

He thrust against her slowly. Long enough for Rachel to quiver. She bit his lip as he entered her. Slow and steady. He felt good, Noah always did.

As he moved inside her, Rachel’s mind began to drift to Ethan. At first, she tried to fight it. But with every thrust, her resistance waned. She thought of his size. How it would feel to be stretched around him. To be taken by him.

Noah’s pace quickened. So did her thoughts.

She imagined Ethan slamming her down and forcefully pushing his entire length inside her. She saw the outline of his cock rising in her stomach, and wondered if she’d ever feel normal again afterward. The thought should’ve scared her.

Instead, it thrilled her.

And so, she determined she needed to feel that stretch now.

“Noah,” she said.

He slowed. “Yeah?”

She met his eyes.

“I want you to fuck me in the ass.”

Noah stared, wide-eyed.

"I… ok… like now?"

Rachel nodded. "Yes, now."

"Ok uh… but don't you have to, you know, prep or…"

"I shat this morning," Rachel said.

Noah looked in humored disgust.

"Jesus, why did you have to say it like that?"

Rachel burst out laughing.

"WHAT?! I did! That means no poop will come out."

"Stop talking about the poop, please!" Noah pulled out of her, laughing as hard as she was.

"I'm just saying, there won't be any–"

"Don't say it!" Noah shouted, covering her mouth. "One more poop out of you and you're not getting any."

Noah slowly moved his hand from Rachel's mouth. She looked at him mischievously.

"Fine, I'm just saying. I'm ready for it." Her fingers trailed up his chest. "I want it."

"Don't you also have to like, I don't know, stretch yourself out?" Noah asked.

Rachel shrugs.

"I don't know, let me look it up." Rachel pulled out her phone, heart racing in her chest. "Ok, you don't need to do any special kind of stretches. But it does help to do some anal play first and go slow… oh, and we need a lot of lube."

She looked at Noah, who looked as though he'd been bewitched.

"You really want to?" He asked.

"Uh, yeah! Come on…" She leaned into him, rubbing her nose against his. "Let's lose our anal virginity."

Noah kissed her lightly. "Ok, let's do it."

"Ok!" Rachel spun and promptly sprawled on all fours on the bed. She looked back at him as she wiggled her ass. "Do it, babe, fuck my ass."

She heard Noah laugh as he gave her ass a playful slap. Rachel moaned in response. Then, he leaned over to the dresser next to Rachel's bed and pulled out a bottle of lube, pouring it on his cock as well as Rachel's ass.

"I'm going to finger you first," Noah said. Rachel closed her eyes.

"Ok," She said. She felt his finger tease her entrance before pushing it in. The tight, stretching sensation caused her to jump forward.

"You alright?" Noah asked. Rachel nodded.

"Yeah, it's good. Keep going."

Rachel moaned as Noah's finger entered her again. It felt good, really good. And after a few thrusts, Rachel felt herself begin to relax. She rested her head against the mattress, digging her fingers into the comforter as Noah continued to explore her.

She wondered if this was what it would be like with Ethan. She imagined him using several fingers in her pussy before finally stretching her out. The idea made her wet.

"Please, Noah, fuck me," She said. He promptly replaced his finger with the tip of his cock. He pressed against her tight asshole. She bit her lip as it slowly began to pry her open.

"I'm going to go slow at first, alright?"

Rachel nodded. "Ok."

Then Noah pushed. Stretching her apart, opening her with his girth. This is how it would feel when Ethan fucked her pussy. This stretch, this pleasure, this burn. It would be exactly like fucking a giant cock.

"Oh God, Noah," Rachel said between breaths.

"You doing ok?"

"Yes, keep going," Rachel said. She rubbed her clit vigorously as Noah pushed his cockhead past her entrance. She felt herself clamp around him as his length filled her asshole.

"Holy fuck!" She screamed.

"Keep going?' Noah asked.

"Yes... fuck me..." Rachel said between heavy breaths.

Noah began to pump.

Rachel moaned loudly. Her muscles tightened every time Noah bottomed out. With every eager thrust, Noah stretched her open. His pace began to quicken. He slammed Rachel down into the bed and pounded without abandon.

"Holy shit, you feel so tight!" Noah shouted.

"Don't stop." Rachel continued to rub herself, closing her eyes and imagining it was Ethan who was fucking her. It was Ethan's hands on her hips. It was Ethan's balls slapping against her thighs. And it was Ethan who was about to cum deep inside her.

"Holy shit, I'm about to… holy shit…" Noah gasped.

"Do it, baby, cum in me," Rachel said. "Cum in me!"

Noah groaned, slamming hard enough into Rachel to push her forward. He let out a loud moan of satisfaction as his weight dropped onto her.

He filled her slowly, pump after pump.

And with a final thrust, Noah fell to Rachel's side, pulling her with him so they stayed connected. She turned and found his lips. They kissed as he softened inside her. It was an absolutely blissful moment, until Noah pulled out.

A loud fart followed. They both began laughing uncontrollably.

Rachel's farts followed the tempo of her laughter.

"Oh my god!!!" Rachel shouted, laughing so hard that her eyes began to tear.

"Do you need something?!" Noah asked, covering his eyes as he rolled onto his back.

"I don't know, I don't—" Another fart came out. Rachel curled into a ball, barely able to breathe.

It was those moments, those very special, very safe, very stupid moments, that Rachel loved the most about Noah.

When they finally settled down, Rachel stood and kissed Noah on the cheek.

"I'm going to go use the bathroom," She said. "That was amazing, by the way."

Noah nodded. "Yeah, I agree."

Rachel promptly scurried toward the door.

"Rachel," Noah said. Rachel stopped and turned.

"Yeah?"

"I love you so god damn much," Noah said.

She smiled. "I love you too."

Chapter 30 - Best of Friends 30 - Tickets

B

GEOT

Rachel held her phone in one hand and Noah's in the other. He guided them through the crowd amassing in Godfrey's center plaza. It was the annual country festival, and they were braving it to get a pair of tickets to the semi-final game. But at the moment, Rachel’s attention was focused on Ethan’s endless, snarky texts.

Ethan: So… I’m still waiting for that round two??

Rachel: I told u. I’ll let u know.

Ethan: Yeah suuure. Oh also, Mike wants to know when he’s up to bat.

Rachel: You told him???

Ethan: uhhhh was I not supposed to? We’re in the Rachel fuck club now.

Rachel: Ethan…

Ethan: RaCheL

Rachel: I have to go, don’t tell anyone else ok?

Ethan:

Rachel rolled her eyes. Ethan had become such a cocky goofball since they had been together. The goofball she liked, but the ego she could do without. If nothing else, it was a step in the right direction.

“Ahhh shit,” Noah said. Stopping dead in his tracks.

“What?” Rachel said, looking up from her phone.

“They’re sold out…” Noah tapped the ticket booth's sign.

SEMI-FINAL TICKETS SOLD OUT!!!

The text was in bold red. Rachel re-read it several times, hoping that she was misinterpreting something.

“No…” Rachel said.

“Sorry babe, looks like we’re out of luck.” Noah patted her shoulder. She turned to him with wide eyes.

“Noah! No!!” Rachel turned back to the sign in disbelief.

“It's alright, maybe we’ll get the next one.”

“But I really wanted to see this one! It's our very first playoff game! Shit…” she stamped in a huff.

Noah chuckled.

“It’s not funny,” Rachel said.

“The tantrums are kinda funny,” he replied.

Rachel might have laughed if it hadn’t been for that obnoxious voice sneaking up behind her.

“Aw, what’s got the baby upset today?” Mel asked. Of course, she found them. The woman never seemed to miss the opportunity to nudge her nose into their business. Rachel turned to find Mel waving playfully.

“Oh, hey Mel!” Noah said. He promptly gave her a side hug, and Mel shifted to ensure it was a full one.

“Hey there, Noey! So what’s the deal?” Mel said with a grating, overbearing laugh.

No, cackle was more appropriate. Mel was a fucking cackler. And Noey? It took every ounce of Rachel’s self-control not to roll her eyes.

“Oh, nothing much,” Noah said. “We were just trying to get tickets to the basketball game, but they’re sold out.”

“Oh noooo, is that why you were getting upset, Rachel?” Mel asked. The condescension in her voice made Rachel bristle. But she certainly wasn’t going to let Mel know that.

Rachel let out a dull, vapid laugh.

“Oh no, it’s not that big of a deal, really. Didn’t even really want to see this game, so…”

“It’s ok, Rachel,” Noah interrupted. “She’s just being polite. We really wanted to see this one, and it looks like we just missed it.”

“Aweee,” Mel said with an over-exaggerated frown. “Well, I happen to have two tickets here that I was going to use, but… my date canceled. You two could have them, if you want.”

Mel held the tickets out. Rachel’s jaw clenched. That fucking bitch. Of course, Noah, being as sweet as he was, laughed and smiled wildly.

“What?! Mel, you don’t have to do that,” Noah said.

“Really, it’s not a big deal!” Mel said, offering him the tickets.

Noah looked at Rachel. She simply smiled. It was all she could manage without completely losing her composure.

“What do you think?” He asked her. Rachel shrugged.

“It’s her tickets...” She muttered. Noah looked back at Mel.

“Are you sure?” He asked her.

“Of course! Here, take them seriously.”

“Well, at least let us pay you.”

“Oh no, I couldn’t.”

“Come on Mel, we have to do something for you!”

“Well, I won’t take your money, but you could… oh no, it’s stupid.”

“No, tell us. What could we do?”

“Oh well, there’s this wedding and…”

“Yeah?”

“Well, I need a plus one and… since I’m not really seeing anyone, it’d be nice to just go with a friend.” Mel stared at Noah with the most obnoxious puppy dog eyes Rachel had ever seen. “Do you think you could keep me company, Noah? It’d keep my parents off my back for a weekend.”

“Oh, that’s it? One wedding? Do they have an open bar?”

“Yup!”

“I’m in! This is a no-brainer. Babe, what do you think?”

Rachel’s cold gaze was framed in a perfectly manicured smile. She already knew there was no reasonable reason for her to deny the tickets. If she did, she’d be the one coming off as the insecure girlfriend. Mel had played it perfectly, and that stupid smile on her face made it clear she was aware of that fact.

So, with the most nonchalant laugh Rachel could manage, she stepped to Noah’s side and promptly snatched the tickets from Mel’s hand.

“Of course, Mel! That honestly sounds like SUCH a good idea,” She said.

“Oh, does it?” Mel countered, bobbing her head like a drunken bird.

“It does!! Noah looks so good in a suit, too. Your parents will think you won the lottery.” Rachel turned to Noah and pinched his cheek.

Noah laughed brightly. Rachel could never forget that laugh. Or the way those little wrinkles curled in his eyes. He was a beautiful human being. Inside and out. It made complete sense why Mel would want him as much as she did. And for that, Rachel couldn’t blame her.

But Noah was hers.

She turned back to Mel, this time with a real smile.

“Just let us know the date,” She said.

Mel cleared her throat and fixed her hair.

“Great! I’ll get back to you two. Or actually, Noah. I’ll just text you, ok?” Mel glanced at Rachel.

“Sure!” Noah said.

“Alright, bye you two! Have fun at the game,” Mel waved at them, but never took her eyes off Noah.

If Rachel could have one free punch in her life, she’d use it right now. Mel walked off into the crowd, and Rachel promptly directed Noah in the exact opposite direction.

“She is so nice, isn’t she?” Noah said.

“Ohhh yeah, so nice.” Rachel quickly changed the subject as they neared an ice cream truck.

- - -

While she hated how they had gotten their tickets, Rachel had to admit that she was the most excited she had been since coming to Godfrey. It was her first time going to a basketball game, and the semi-finals no less. She wanted it to be perfect. Her father had never let her go to school games. Not unless she was involved in sports. And even then, he would watch her the entire night like a hawk. She double checked her cheerleader outfit one more time. It was cute, and fit Godfrey’s colors perfectly, she just hoped it wasn't too much.

"Hey Noah, is this too much?" Rachel stepped out into the living room and found Noah placing the last of his black paint under his eyes. He wore a school jersey also. He looked so cute. Rachel would have to find ways to get him to wear that more often. As she entered the room, Noah glanced over at her, and his eyes went wide.

"Wow!" He said. "You look amazing!"

"Haha, thanks, but is it too much?"

Noah looked at her for a moment. "Hmmm, I don't know, pose for me."

Rachel rolled her eyes.

"Noah…"

"I need to see every angle to know for sure."

Rachel sighed and did a quick spin, already knowing exactly what Noah was going to say.

"Yeah, you look amazing."

Rachel laughed. "But is it too much!"

Noah approached her and grabbed her hips in his usual way.

"Not in a million years,” He said.

Rachel smiled. “You know, you look pretty cute in that jersey.”

“Oh, do I?” As Noah spoke, there was a knock at the apartment door.

Rachel turned to it. "I'll get it. Can you double-check that I turned my curler off?"

"You got it," Noah said, making his way to the bathroom.

Rachel opened the front door and found Mike on the other side, holding a bouquet of flowers.

"Oh, Hey Mike!" Rachel said, looking down at the flowers. Something about them made her heart race. It might also have been the puppy dog look Mike was giving her.

"H-hey! I was in the neighborhood and like uh… they were selling these bouquets on the corner for the festival, or whatever and… so anyways I saw them and I was like, hey! Maybe we could hang out and…" Mike began to trail off as he saw Noah come around the corner.

"Yo! It's Mike!" Noah said, walking up behind Rachel. Mike cleared his throat and glanced between the two nervously.

"H-hey man!" He said, promptly handing Rachel the flowers. He then stepped in and gave Noah a bear hug. "Sorry, I was uh… really horny. Was going to see if Rachel wanted to fuck."

"Is that so?" Noah looked over at Rachel with a smirk on his face. She, in turn, shook her head while mouthing a wide-eyed no. "Well… I don't know about that, but... how have classes been?" He asked.

Mike grunted. "Shit, as always. I'm like… failing two classes, so I gotta get it together, or they're not going to let me play. I got a few months, though."

"Shit, I'm sorry to hear that. Do you need some help or…"

Mike shook his head and waved him off.

"Nah man, it's cool, don't worry about it. It's fucking… stupid classes anyway. I’ll be fine.”

"Alright, fair enough." Noah looked back over at Rachel, who kept gesturing to the front door. "Uh… listen, Mike. We're actually about to head out. So, I don't know if that's going to happen today.”

Mike looked over at Rachel and frowned. "Shit, really?"

Rachel nodded. "Yeah, sorry Mike. We can't tonight. We're heading out to the game."

"Oh, Ethan's game?"

"Well, Godfrey's game, but yeah," Rachel said. She could see Mike's eyes dim.

"Fuck, I can be quick though." He spoke like he'd been wounded. Rachel prayed he wouldn't make a scene like Jack. She was beginning to wonder if any man was actually capable of keeping things casual.

"Sorry Mike, I just got all done up. I don't want to ruin my hair or makeup. Rain check?" She said sweetly. That seemed to do the trick. Mike's hurt expression shifted into a confident smirk. He let out an over-exaggerated sigh. Rachel laughed. She had to hand it to him, Mike could be funny when he wanted to be.

"What about like a handjob or something?" Mike said.

"Mike…"

"Right, sorry, is it cool if I, like... take one of your panties at least? I wanna jack off with it," Mike said.

Rachel stared at him for a moment.

"You look fucking hot as fuck by the way,” he added.

Rachel laughed softly as she walked back to her bedroom and returned with a pair of red-laced panties.

"Here." She said. Mike took them promptly and inhaled deeply.

"Ew, Mike!"

"Oh my god, you smell so fucking good," He looked Rachel over hungrily. Eyes fixating on her legs and tits. Rachel knew that look very well. It had been a while since they fucked, but she knew exactly what he would have done to her if they were alone. Mike was an animal in the bedroom, and Rachel wasn’t sure she would’ve said no.

"Will you stop it! We have to go!" Rachel began to usher Mike away.

"Fiiine, I'll go. Thanks for the jack off material," He went in for a kiss. Rachel promptly pushed him back.

"Mike! Makeup!"

"Oh, right, sorry, fucking… I'm just so fucking horny. I gotta go." Mike stuffed the panties into his pocket and promptly turned to the apartment door. "Later, Noah!"

"Later," Noah said. When the door closed, Rachel turned and found Noah staring intently at the bouquet of flowers Mike had brought. He wasn't smiling anymore.

"He is something else," Rachel said, stepping towards him. Noah nodded slowly. She also glanced down at the flowers.

"What? What is it?" She asked.

"He gives you gifts now?" Noah picked up the bouquet and examined them more closely.

"Well, yeah, I mean, we're getting to know each other," Rachel said.

"He got your favorite flowers too…"

"Yeah, he did."

"Did… you tell him what your favorite flowers were?"

Rachel cleared her throat. "I mean, I might have mentioned it. But it wasn't intentional."

Noah paused. "And you gave him your red panties…"

"Yeah?" Rachel said, watching Noah intently. He looked hurt. “Is something wrong?”

“Oh, it’s nothing, I’m being stupid,” Noah said, dropping the bouquet onto the table.

“No, it’s ok, you can talk to me.”

Noah looked away bashfully. “It’s stupid... really stupid. But those panties were actually my favorite.”

Rachel felt a chill swim over her.

"Babe, I'm sorry. I didn't know. I can get them back."

"No, it's fine…" Noah said, forcing a smile. "It's not a big deal."

"Hey," Rachel walked up to him and placed her hands on his shoulders. "If it's a big deal to you, then it's a big deal. I'll get them back, ok?"

Noah smiled. "Ok."

Rachel let out a breath and felt her shoulders relax.

"Are we good?" She asked.

"Yeah, we're good," Noah said softly. "Are you good?"

Rachel wanted to tell him that she wasn't. She wanted to tell him about Mel, about Jack, and about how stressful this was all starting to become. But she couldn't. The fear she felt in that moment was simply too great. She told herself she'd get over it. Told herself that it was a blip in time and would pass. She would figure this out. She didn't need to stress Noah out about it. Everything was fine.

"I'm perfect," She said, kissing him softly. "You ready to go?"

Noah nodded. "Yeah, let's get this night started!"

– - -

Ethan closed the distance to the rim with a slam dunk. Noah watched, dumbfounded, as Ethan dropped off the rim and raised his hand to a screaming audience. The man was an absolute machine on the court, and like everyone else, Noah was in awe.

As was Rachel.

“Yes Ethan!!!!” She screamed, jumping up from the bleachers with the rest of the crowd. The buzzer hit zero. Ethan had won Godfrey their semi-final match. Rachel began dancing, twirling in circles as she swayed her hips. The Jumbotron played her on the screen. Noth watched as Ethan looked up to the screen and blew a kiss before placing a hand over his heart. Rachel hadn't seemed to notice. She was too busy enjoying the moment.

This was her first game away from that sleepy old town and her strict parents. Noah couldn't be happier to be by her side through all of it. She looked at him with the widest smile he had ever seen and jumped into his arms.

"We did it!!" She screamed, kissing his cheek. Noah lifted her and kissed her back.

Those lips never tasted so sweet.

"Oh my god, babe, look! We're on the screen!" Rachel shouted, pointing at the Jumbotron. Noah looked and saw them framed in floating hearts.

That's when Noah remembered that this wasn't just her memory. It was his also. He also had escaped that town. He'd clamored his way into this school through grit, luck, and hard work. And now, he was sharing this moment with the most beautiful woman in the world. He wished he could take that screenshot of them and keep it forever. But even if he did, it would never compare to the feeling of that moment. Of having all of Godfrey witness how genuine their love really was.

Noah glanced down at Ethan on the court. He had promptly looked away from the Jumbotron.

The stadium began to empty. Noah guided Rachel out, who was still dancing behind him.

"There's a party down at the Commons, do you want to go?" Rachel shouted over the crowd. Noah shrugged.

"I feel like there won't be any alcohol at the commons, don't you think?"

"Hmmm, true, might be more civil. Let me text the group chat and see what people are doing."

Ah, yes, the group chat. Jack's group chat. The one that had all of Jack’s entourage in it, including Mike and Ethan. He wondered which of them would try to reach out first. They passed into the halls, down the stairs, and into the cool evening air outside. The rowdy crowds began to thin as the stadium's beating drums vibrated in the background.

"Ok, soooo… Mike is out. Jack isn't answering…" Rachel trailed off. "Two girls answered, but I don't really know them at all. Should we try Low Landing? It usually has a big crowd."

"That might be our best bet. We'd better hurry, though, it's going to get packed," Noah said.

"Oh, wait! Ethan got back to me. He wants us to meet him in the locker room."

Noah's heart froze. He turned to her slowly.

"Where?"

"The locker room?" Rachel said again, looking up from her phone.

She couldn't have known the terror those words would create in Noah, and he certainly wasn't going to open up about it now. They had enough drama going on in their lives. Besides, it was just a locker room.

This wasn't Brian, and Rachel wasn't Allie.

Noah hadn’t been silent for long, but Rachel was too good at reading him.

"Hey, is everything alright?" She asked. Noah nodded.

"Oh yeah, totally I…" He fought to get the words out. "Is he wanting to… You know..."

Rachel tilted her head, and then her eyes widened.

"Oh my god! You think?"

Noah shrugged. "Maybe."

"Jesus, in the locker room though?"

"There are weirder places," Noah joked. Rachel bit her nails for a moment as she thought. She always looked so cute when she did that.

"Hmmmmm. If he did… would you be interested?"

Noah cleared his throat and looked away. That was, in many ways, an impossible question.

"Would I be there?" He asked. Rachel promptly stepped forward and took his hand.

"I will never let him kick you out again, if that's what you’re asking."

He smiled and squeezed her hand. Rachel really had a way of making Noah feel calm.

"Well, let's at least see what he wants first, then go from there, deal?"

Rachel nodded. "Sounds like a plan! Besides, if I'm being honest, I just want to see what the locker rooms are like!"

Noah laughed. Of course she did.

"Then let's go check it out."

Chapter 31 - Best of Friends 31 - Locker Room

PARTY

Noah was lost in memories as they walked down the stairs to the locker room. As they turned the corner and faced two blue push doors, Noah found himself locked in place. It was like the dread in his stomach had sunk to the bottom of his feet and solidified, making it impossible to move. He would try to breathe, but even that didn't feel right. It felt like there was no air moving through him, no matter how hard he tried.

He felt Rachel squeeze his hand.

"Hey," she said, turning to him. "You alright?"

Noah nodded slowly.

"Yeah… yeah…"

Rachel stopped. "Noah, what is going on?"

Noah glanced at the doors, then back to her. She was talking, but it was far away. Like he was hearing the words through several filters. By the time they got to his brain, he didn't fully understand what she was saying.

"I'm ok," he said.

"You don't look ok. At all."

"No, I am."

"Noah," Rachel grew a bit firmer. "Look, this can't work if you don't talk to me."

Noah glanced at her, trying his best to concentrate. How could he tell her? How does one even begin to explain an event so traumatic that you get lost in your own mind remembering it?

"It's… I kind of have this fear of locker rooms," Noah admitted. Rachel's eyes widened as she looked at the doors.

"Ok," she said gently. "Well, should we not go in there?"

Noah stared in silence.

"I feel like if we don't, I'm never going to get over this."

"Ok, but maybe torturing yourself isn't the best way to go about it, you know? Maybe we try a locker room that doesn't have Ethan waiting behind it?"

Two basketball players walked out and passed them, laughing amongst themselves.

"Great game, guys!" Rachel said with a smile.

"Thanks!" They shot back as they continued up the steps.

Rachel turned back to Noah. "What do you say? Maybe we can go somewhere else?"

Noah clenched his teeth. He couldn’t let this thing beat him. He was past it. He needed to be past it. There was no way Rachel would do anything without asking him first. This wasn't Allie. This wasn't Brian. He could do this. He could walk into that room and finally be free of it. Noah took Rachel’s hand and stood.

He hadn't even realized he'd been kneeling.

"I'll be ok, and if it doesn't feel right. We can go?" He said.

"Of course! Always babe. Just say 'we gotta go,' and we'll go!"

Noah nodded. "Alright then, let's check it out."

The two walked hand in hand through the blue doors.

- - -

The locker room was impressive. It was modern, large, well-lit, and also very empty. Ethan sat on a bench, a towel wrapped around his waist and a chain over his bare chest. He looked up, smiling when he saw Rachel. Then he glanced at Noah.

"Oh, it's both of you," He said with a frown.

"Uh, yeah? What did you think it would be, just me?' Rachel asked. Ethan leaned back and dropped his phone into his gym bag.

“Yeah, yeah...” He slowly stood and gave Noah a reluctant nod. "Sup, man, how you been?"

"I'm doing alright... uh, great game by the way," Noah replied. It felt like he was talking through his teeth, but he managed it the best he could.

Ethan smiled in his usual smug way. “Thanks, man, it was nothing really.”

Noah glanced over at Rachel. She rolled her eyes.

And that, right there, was all Noah needed to finally relax. They both laughed softly before turning their attention to Ethan.

His smile quickly evaporated.

"So where's everyone else at?" Noah asked. Ethan glanced between them and turned to his locker.

"They already left. Lots of parties going on, I was waiting up for uh… well, you two, I guess."

"Well…” Rachel said. “Do you want to show us around?"

Ethan closed his locker and sighed. "Yeah, come on. I mean, it's just a locker room but…"

“Yay! This place looks sooo cool!” Rachel said as they both followed behind him.

“So obviously we have the locker area. They just installed these new ones; they’re pretty nice. Then there’s the shower room. They were going to put in stalls, but decided on the open shower concept. Then we have the lounge area, and the sauna...”

“Oh, a Sauna?!” Rachel said.

“Yeah, it’s nice. Then we have the hot tub room...”

"Stop!" Rachel ran ahead of Ethan and peered through the room’s frosted glass wall. "A hot tub room?!"

"Uh-huh. I don't use it much, but yeah, they installed one."

"That is so cool," Rachel said.

"You wanna use it?" Ethan asked. Rachel's eyes brightened as she looked at Noah.

“Babe?’ Rachel said.

"I mean, we didn't bring swimming gear,” Noah said.

"You could borrow my extra shorts. They’re clean, I promise," Ethan said. Then, with a playful smile, he looked over at Rachel. "She could go naked."

Noah could feel his heart racing again. His hands prickled as Ethan glanced back at him.

"If you're cool with it, that is."

Noah took a deep breath. Ethan seemed to be respectful, but Noah still couldn't shake the feeling that there was something slimy about the guy. He looked over at Rachel, who already had her eyebrow raised.

"Why do I have to go naked?" She asked shortly.

"Because I don't have a woman’s swimsuit!" Ethan said.

"I could use a shirt and spare shorts. I don't have to go naked," Rachel countered. Ethan groaned and raised his hands.

"God, you are so fucking difficult! I'm playing nice, aren't I?!"

Rachel laughed and shook her head.

"Babe, what do you think?" She asked Noah. It was clear she was interested, Noah could tell. He hadn't forgotten how hard she had cum on Ethan's cock. But what really calmed him was that Rachel was keeping her word. She wasn’t dismissing him. She wasn’t manipulating him. She was right there with him, every step of the way.

Plus, he wanted to see it for himself.

“I’m down if you are,” Noah said, glancing at Ethan. “You got a spare shirt and shorts?”

Ethan lit up. “Shit, alright! Hang on, I’ll grab something.”

As he darted off, Rachel grinned impishly. “And what if I do want to go naked?”

Both guys looked her way. Noah spoke first.

“I mean... I’m not complaining if you’re not.”

“Yeah, same here,” Ethan added from across the room.

Rachel bit her lip, then glanced at the doors behind them. “What if someone walks in?”

“I’ll lock those,” Noah said, already moving.

“I’ve got these ones,” Ethan called back.

- - -

Noah had to admit, the hot tub room was something special. LED lights traced the base of the walls, shifting colors in a slow pulse to the moody music playing over the Bluetooth speakers. Overhead, dimmable fixtures cast a soft glow. Had it not been for Ethan sitting directly across from him, Noah might have found himself slowly drifting to sleep.

It wasn’t long before Rachel walked in with a towel around her body. Noah and Ethan watched as she closed the frosted glass door behind her.

"Well, here I am," She said with a nervous laugh.

"Here you are," Ethan said, licking his lips. "Let's see it, baby girl."

Rachel laughed and slowly stepped towards them. She looked into Noah’s eyes as she dropped her towel. Noah took her in. He followed the perfect curve of her body until his eyes rested on her round breasts. The room's heat gave her skin a slight pink hue.

She was stunning.

Rachel walked around them and slowly dipped into the water.

"The water is perfect!" Rachel said. The pool's lights illuminated her as she settled into the tub. Noah glanced over at Ethan. He was absolutely transfixed.

"Yeah, I'm feeling kinda stupid that I haven't used this more," He said.

“Why haven’t you?! I would literally be using this every day,” Rachel said, raising her leg out of the water.

“I uh... well... I guess I just get focused on the game,” Ethan said, his eyes never leaving her.

“But what’s the point of playing if you don’t reap the rewards?”

“Winning is the reward,” Ethan answered.

“You take it pretty seriously, huh?”

Ethan smiled. “You don’t get as good as I am if you don’t.”

“You want to join the NBA?” Noah asked. Ethan tore his eyes away from Rachel and shrugged.

“I... I don’t know. I mean, yeah, but I’m not sure if it’s going to happen.”

“But you’re so good!” Rachel said. Ethan chuckled.

“Not as good as the best...” He closed his eyes and leaned back in the water. “I always wanted to be the best.”

“I think you’re selling yourself short,” Rachel said.

“I wish. Do you know how much skill you need to have just to be able to dribble down the NBA court? One wrong move, and that ball is gone. Those guys are at another level. I played against a senior who got drafted last year and... yeah, he smoked me.” Ethan shook his head. “I played my heart out that game and was still light years behind him. When you get to that level of play, when you get that close to the game, you start realizing it boils down to inches and split seconds.”

“Damn, never heard it explained like that,” Noah said. Ethan shrugged.

“It’s like anything, right? You wanna be an actor? So do millions of other people. You wanna play professional basketball? Get in line.”

Rachel nodded. “So if that doesn’t pan out, what would you want to do instead?”

Ethan chuckled. “I don’t want to think about it.”

“Come on, there has to be something.”

Ethan peeked at Rachel. “If I don’t get signed, it’s going to gut me. And that’s probably what’s going to happen, but I can’t think about that. I have to act like there’s still a chance. I have to play my heart out and pour everything I have into this sport for as long as I can. Because I’ll fucking regret it if I don’t.”

Rachel nodded slowly. “I can respect that, and I also think you can do it.”

“I do too,” Noah added.

Ethan laughed loudly. “Man, a pep talk and a fuck session? Shit, we should have done this at the beginning of the season.”

The three of them laughed.

“So I take it you don’t really do much else besides practice and play?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah, that’s pretty much my life. That and well, you know.” Ethan smirked at Rachel. She rolled her eyes.

“Maybe celibacy would give you the edge you’re looking for,” Rachel countered.

“Ooooh, you think?!” Ethan said.

“She might be onto something,” Noah added.

“Man fuck off!” Ethan waved a hand in their direction. With another laugh, the conversation began to die down. Noah could feel their minds drifting to the topic they’d been dancing around all evening.

"So…” Ethan said. “How does this work?"

Rachel glanced at him. "Always going right for it.”

"Come on! Were we not just talking normally?!”

“For like five minutes! Well, I guess that is an improvement for you,” Rachel said.

Ethan shifted in the water. “So... are we still doing it?”

“Oh my god, yes! Of course.” Rachel said.

Ethan cleared his throat.

"Cool...” He glanced at Noah. “So... is he going to watch us?"

"That would be the plan," Rachel said, then looked at Noah. “Assuming you’re still good with it?”

Noah gave a thumbs up.

"That is so fucking weird. Does he have to?" Ethan's question was directed at Rachel, and Rachel answered by promptly scooting over to Noah's side.

"We're a package deal," she said. Ethan groaned and pinched his nose.

"This is SO fucking weird... He's not going to jump in, is he?"

"He might."

"I don't share," Ethan shook his head. "I don't fucking share."

"Then you don't have to do it," Rachel said. Noah felt her hand trail down his chest to his hardening cock. Ethan stared for a while longer before finally nodding.

"Fine, he can watch. But I want to fuck you till I cum. He'll have to wait till I'm done because I can't have other dicks around me, alright?”

“Ethan...”

“Look, I’m being serious. I can’t fucking do it, it’s too fucking weird. I’m just saying we take turns, one after the other, deal?"

Rachel and Noah looked at each other, already knowing their answer.

"Deal," They say in unison. The energy in the room shifted instantly. Ethan locked eyes with Rachel as he lifted himself out of the hot tub and sat on its edge. He pulled his shorts down, revealing his glistening, giant erection. Noah had forgotten just how big he was. He felt Rachel squeeze his shaft underneath the water.

"You ready?" She asked him. Noah nodded.

"Yeah, I'm ready."

Rachel kissed his cheek, then swam between Ethan's legs. She helped him out of his shorts. Noah could only see the back of her head as she lowered her lips around his cock. She bobbed slowly, the sounds of her slurping moans barely audible over the hum of the tub jets. Ethan’s eyes closed as he pushed Rachel's head down on his cock with one hand.

It only took a few minutes before he pulled Rachel out of the pool. She fumbled out of the water as Ethan guided her over to the frosted glass wall.

"I've waited too fucking long for this," He said. Noah watched as Ethan pushed her against the glass and slapped his cock between her ass cheeks. She jumped at the contact. Noah shifted in the tub and watched as Ethan pushed his cock down with a thumb and rubbed against Rachel slowly.

“Fuck Rachel, your ass is fucking perfect,” He said. Rachel looked back, bit her lip, and wiggled her ass.

“Thank you,” She said. Ethan slid his cock down to Rachel's entrance and, slowly, began pushing in.

"You ready?" He asked. Rachel looked over at Noah, smiling with a love-drunk gaze.

"Yes," she said.

Ethan pushed forward. Rachel's eyes immediately widened as her breasts pressed against the glass. Noah watched Ethan's giant cock head slowly push past her entrance. Rachel jumped at the sudden girth of his shaft.

"Fuck! Slowly, Ethan slowly…"

"Don't worry, I know how to stretch a girl out," Ethan said, gripping her ass cheeks tightly. He slowly pushed the first quarter of his cock inside her. "Fuck, you are so tight, holy shit."

He gasped as he pulled out. Rachel's legs quivered. Then he pushed himself back inside. He went further this time, burying half his length in her as Rachel moaned loudly.

"Oh fuck!" She moaned.

"You doing alright?" Ethan asked. Rachel nodded.

"Yes—Ahh! Keep... keep going!"

She cried as Ethan pushed.

As she stretched.

As he took.

Noah watched Rachel's pussy grip Ethan's shaft as he slowly pulled out again. Christ, he was ruining her. Absolutely ruining her.

Ethan pushed in with a final, slow thrust. Noah watched a bulge form in Rachel's pelvis as his cock completely sank inside her.

"Oh god," She whimpered.

"How does that feel?" Ethan asked.

"Really good…" Rachel cooed.

"Good, because now I'm going to fuck you." Ethan grabbed the back of Rachel's neck and slammed himself into her. It was slow at first, but gradually built up in tempo. Rachel braced herself against the glass with both hands. Breathing heavily as Ethan's cock drove her into a stupor.

"It's about fucking time I made this pussy mine," Ethan said, slamming into Rachel as hard as he could manage. It only took a few pumps before Rachel's entire lower body began to quake uncontrollably.

"F-fuck!" Rachel slid off Ethan's swollen cock. She shook wildly and collapsed to her knees.

Noah could feel the pulse behind his ears as he looked at the imprint left by Rachel's breasts. He had never been more turned on.

"Holy fuck…" Rachel said.

"You liked that?" Ethan asked. She nodded slowly as Ethan picked her up. "Come on, we're not finished yet. There's something I've always wanted to do with you."

Ethan guided Rachel out of the hot tub room. Noah promptly followed behind them to the showers. He felt exposed walking in the open locker room naked, especially with a raging hard-on. But he was far too focused on Ethan and Rachel to care for long. Ethan guided Rachel to the large, open shower room. He placed her under a shower head and turned it on.

She jumped.

"It's cold!" She said.

"It'll warm up," Ethan replied.

He gripped her hips and slowly shoved himself back inside her. Noah stood at the shower room threshold, watching.

Ethan pumped into Rachel as the water glistened down her arched back. His dark skin contrasted with her pale complexion. Rachel's rippling ass cheeks reddened under the hot water, and her breasts swayed as Ethan plowed into her from behind.

She came again and shook wildly. Ethan kept her upright until her legs could no longer support her.

Then he pulled out, pushed her back against the white tile wall, lifted her leg, and shoved himself back inside her.

The shower room slowly filled with steam as he took her. He grabbed Rachel's breast firmly and latched his mouth onto the other. Rachel, in turn, squeezed his biceps and let her fingers trail down his abs.

"Oh fuck, Ethan!" Rachel screamed, her body shook once more, but instead of letting her collapse, Ethan promptly picked up her other leg and pressed her against the wall.

"Oh no, I'm not fucking done yet," Ethan said. He slid himself back into her with a deep guttural moan.

“I’m not fucking done with that pussy yet.”

He began to slam into her with every ounce of strength he had. Rachel's dangling legs swayed with his unrelenting rhythm.

Her moans grew softer as she buried her head into the cleft of Ethan's shoulder and neck.

Wrapping her arms around him.

Trailing her nails through his short hair.

She whimpered and began to quiver. Ethan’s lips found hers as his pace slowed. But he didn't remove her from the wall. He kept her pinned in mid-air, fucking slowly until her quakes subsided. Then, he carried her out of the shower room and laid her down on a bench.

She winced as her body touched the wood.

"It's cold…" She said softly.

Noah watched like a specter as Ethan pulled Rachel up, sat on the bench, then pulled her down onto him, reverse cowgirl. She shook as his entire length filled her again. Rachel tried to ride him, but her legs barely worked, so Ethan began to thrust.

Rachel caught Noah's gaze.

She was gone.

In a stupor.

Lost to passion.

"Holy fucking… shit…" Ethan groaned. His thrusting became fast and wild. He squeezed Rachel's waist tightly as he moaned. "Fuck I'm going to cum!"

Rachel promptly slipped off his dick. She tried to turn, but her legs gave out beneath her, causing her to fumble on the tile floor.

"Holy shit!" Ethan jumped up. "You ok?"

"Not inside!" Rachel said, her voice quivering. She began to laugh between deep breaths. "Jesus Christ, you destroyed me."

Ethan laughed with her, and Noah couldn't help but join them. Ethan jumped at the sound of Noah’s voice.

"Oh fuck, I forgot you were watching! Jesus," He shook his head and tried to help Rachel up. "This is so fucking weird."

"Ethan, I can't even stand, oh my god," Rachel said. Still somewhat delirious.

"Can we keep fucking?"

"I don't think so… I'm spent. Can you finish on my tits?" She asked, grabbing a towel from the bench and hapazardly flattening it out. “Help me, please.”

Ethan obeyed, flattening the towel before guiding Rachel onto it. He glanced up at Noah only once, then quickly went back to pretending he wasn't there.

"Shit, I kinda lost it. Can you suck me off?" Ethan asked.

"Yes, straddle me," Rachel said. Ethan stepped over her and lowered his swollen, pulsing cock to her lips.

He grabbed the top of her head and groaned as he pumped mercilessly. Rachel's thighs twisted as she grabbed his shaft with both hands and milked him.

Then, with a gasp, Ethan pulled back and sprayed his load onto Rachel's chest.

He shouted as ropes of cum sprayed on her face. She closed her eyes as Ethan shoved himself back into her mouth and finished.

His balls pulsed as they emptied into her.

"Fuck…" He said breathlessly.

The two slowed. But Noah could barely contain himself. As soon as Ethan stepped away, Noah promptly walked over and took his place. He offered Rachel his hand with a gentle smile.

"Hey," He said.

"Hey," She said softly, taking his hand and falling into his embrace with a kiss. Noah could taste Ethan's cum on her tongue and lips. It was a strange feeling. Ethan grimaced as their kiss grew passionate.

"Fuck come on man, can you guys at least wait till I'm outta here?!"

Rachel looked at him.

"If you open those doors, I will kill you."

"You're going to fucking make me watch?!" Ethan looked horrified.

"No! It's a big locker room, go into the sauna or something!"

"Why can't I just leave, though?!"

"Because I'm fucking naked!" Rachel countered. "Plus, I want to fuck my boyfriend, and the deal was turns, remember? Now go."

Ethan grumbled and sauntered off to the sauna room with a towel. Rachel turned back to Noah and smiled. He watched Ethan’s cum drip off her chin.

"Did you like it?" She asked.

"Maybe a little too much," Noah admitted. He kissed her softly after that.

He felt her body, and she felt his.

Rachel guided him by the hand back to the hot tub room.

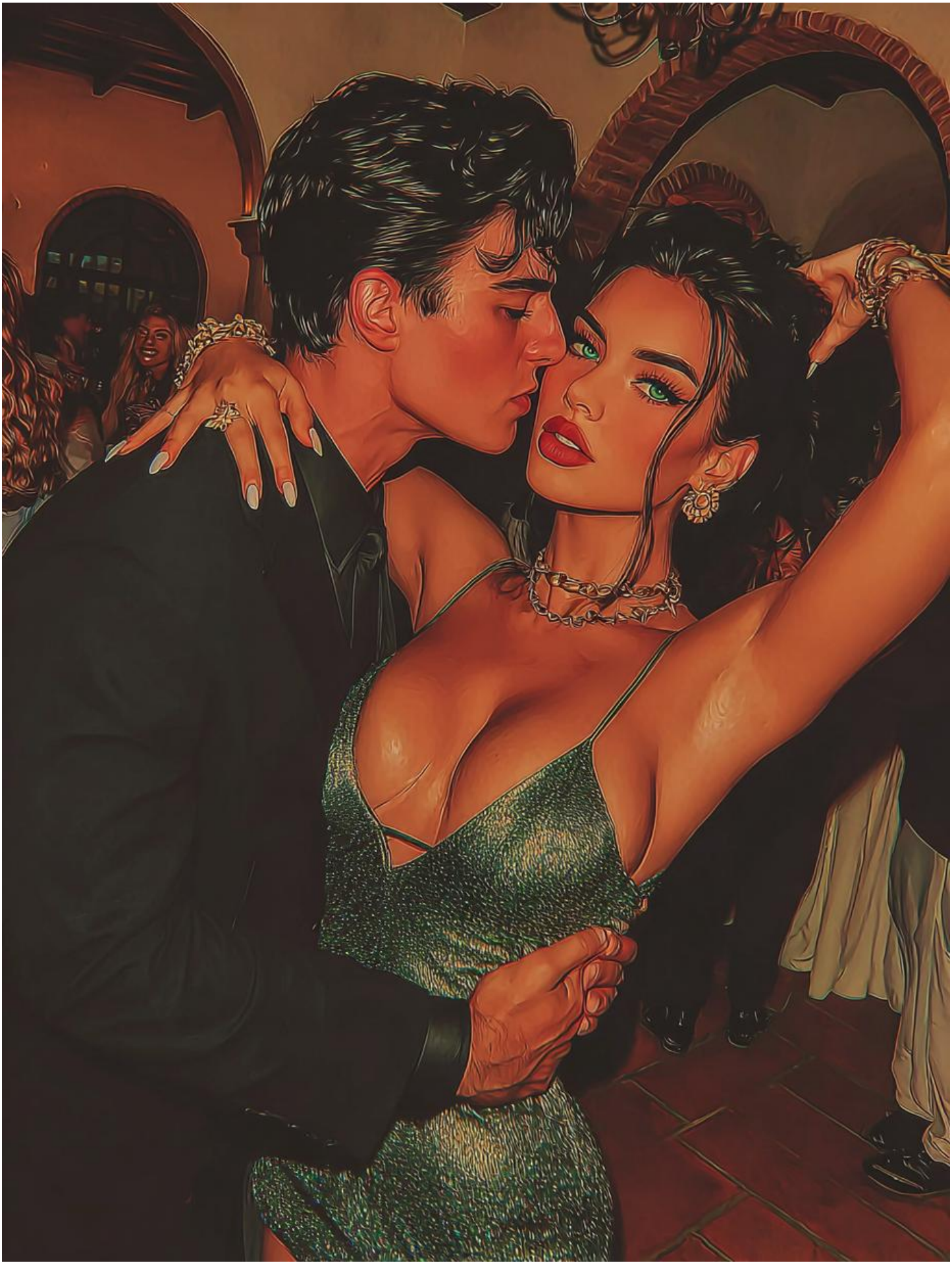
"Come on, let's have some privacy."

Sex in water always felt a little strange. It sapped away a lot of the lubrication.

But Noah barely noticed.

Because he was fucking the love of his life.

Chapter 32 - Best of Friends 32 - The Wedding



Rachel stared at Noah while he slept. He had pushed his face into the pillow so hard it had left a mark. It made her smile to see him like this, and judging by his enthusiasm last night, he'd likely be out for a while longer.

The evening with Ethan had been out of this world, and the night after with Noah was even better. Ethan had stretched her so much that she was still a little sore from it. She hated to admit it, but no man had ever made her cum that hard before. And now, he was already hitting her up for seconds.

Ethan: I wish I could've had a bit more time with you. Let me know when you want that good dick again ;)

It wasn't the only message he had sent, but it was the message that had burned into her mind. There was no denying it. She wanted that good dick. She hated that she wanted it. She also hated that he had said 'good dick'. But Ethan wasn't known for his words. She rolled off the bed silently, walked out to the living room, and opened the blinds to let the early morning sun in. With a sigh of satisfaction, she turned to her calendar on the wall. Any measure of bliss she had quickly drained from her when she saw 'wedding' circled in bold red marker.

Fuck.

She had forgotten Mel's little wedding date was tonight. Rachel had intentionally put the thing out of her mind, and she sure as hell wasn't going to remind Noah either. So, when Noah finally did wake up, she made sure to make him eggs, kiss him, hold him, and fuck him as much as he wanted. Morning turned to afternoon, and not once did Rachel mention the wedding. Because, after all, if Noah forgot, it wouldn't be the end of the world.

But of course, right in the middle of their movie marathon, Noah stood and stretched in front of that god damn calendar. He froze in place as his eyes landed on the big red letters.

Rachel fully and completely regretted ever purchasing that stupid calendar.

"Oh my god, I almost forgot!" He snapped towards her with the goofiest look of surprise on his face. "Babe, I have to get ready for the wedding!"

Why did he have to be so cute all the time?

"Ohhh right, that," Rachel said absently. "I forgot too."

"Shit, it's in a few hours, I think," He walked over to his phone that Rachel had deliberately left on the kitchen counter and checked it. "Ahhhhh yeah, I was right, Mel texted me asking when we're meeting up. I feel bad."

"Oh, I'm sure it's alright," Rachel said, turning to look at him. She tucked her chin into the couch cushion as she watched Noah text. "Did you miss it?"

Noah glanced up from his phone. "Hmm? Oh no, not at all. She just texted me and said it was no big deal. I'll just throw on my stuff real quick and get going."

Rachel forced a smile. "That's just great."

"Yeah! I would have felt awful if I'd missed it."

"Meee tooooo," Rachel lied.

"I'm going to get changed, you keep watching! Thank god I brought my suit over, right? I would have absolutely been late if I needed to run back to my place."

"Oh yeah, that's just great. Wouldn't want you being late," Rachel said as she slunk into the couch. She turned the movie back on. She wasn't watching.

But this was fine. It was totally fine. It was just a wedding, after all. She had nothing to worry about. She told herself that over and over, but any speck of denial she had quickly fled once Noah stepped out in his suit.

"How do I look?" He asked.

“You look so handsome, babe.” It wasn’t a lie. She wished it were, but Noah cleaned up incredibly well. His lean figure was perfectly framed in the sharp black suit.

“You mean it?” He asked innocently. Noah always did have a hard time seeing how beautiful he actually was. Rachel would never let her jealousy get in the way of denying him that.

“I mean it,” She said with a smile.

“Thanks,” Noah said. A knock followed. “Oh! That must be her.”

He turned and went for the door. Rachel stood and promptly walked behind him. When she saw Mel in her perfectly fitting, pale green dress, Rachel felt exposed. She became painfully aware of how ugly she must have looked in her pajamas, makeup-free. It irritated Rachel how good Mel looked. Her gold jewelry made her olive skin pop, and her brilliant green eyes perfectly accented her silk dress.

"Heyyyy!" Mel said loudly as she stepped into the apartment. Her eyes and hands immediately went to Noah. "Oh my god, you look so handsome, Noah!" She said, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"Aw, thanks!" Noah said happily. Mel held the hug only for a second before pulling away. Her eyes snapped to Rachel.

"Hey there, girlfriend, having a lazy day, I see."

Rachel wondered if she would be able to get away with a slap if it was playful enough. Fortunately, Noah spoke up before she could act on the impulse.

"Oh yeah, we were both just chilling. I'm not going to lie, I completely forgot about the wedding! It's been a busy weekend," He glanced over at Rachel and winked. That, at least, made her feel better.

Mel’s lips pursed.

"Well, it's all good! I completely understand, as long as you have some juice left in the tank for me," Mel’s eyes never left Rachel as she spoke in that overly obnoxious, fake tone.

Like seriously, how could any man want this woman? Like, could Noah not tell she was fake? And why was he laughing? He did not need to laugh that much. Rachel took a deep breath. She knew she was overreacting, and she’d be damned if Mel managed to get a rise out of her. It was just a wedding, and Noah was a saint. She had nothing to worry about.

"I have to thank you again for letting me borrow him," Mel said, squeezing Noah's arm.

"Oh, don't mention it. I know it can be tough out there being single. It’s not every day you get a catch like Noah," Rachel said. Noah's smile brightened as he walked over to her.

"You’re too fucking sweet, you know that?” He said, completely oblivious to the psy-op happening around him.

“Oh, stop...” Rachel said. Forgetting about Mel for a moment. Noah kissed her.

“I’m gonna miss you,” he said.

“I’ll miss you too.”

“I'll text you later tonight, ok?"

“Sounds good, babe,” Rachel said. Noah kissed her cheek. She wrapped her arms around his neck and gave him the kind of hug he really liked, looking Mel dead in the eyes as she did.

And if looks could kill.

"Alright, you'd better get going. Have fun.” She pulled him in for one last kiss. "I love you."

"I love you too! Don't party too hard without me!" Noah said with a final wave.

Rachel laughed. “No promises.”

Mel promptly latched onto Noah’s arm like a leech.

"Bye, babe! I'll try not to keep him out too late!" Mel said with a wave.

Rachel had to force herself to stay still until the door closed, in fear she might wring that woman’s neck.

- - -

The wedding venue was way nicer than Noah had anticipated. It was a Church that looked like it belonged in a country decorator magazine. Servers passed through the crowd of guests with glasses of champagne and hors d'oeuvres. A crowd made of ritzy smiles, elegant gowns, and tailored suits. Much like Godfrey, it was a high society Noah knew he would never truly be part of.

But Mel moved gracefully amongst them all. She belonged here. It was clear as day. Noah simply did his best to keep up, smiling and nodding politely as Mel introduced him to countless people. All of them were relatively the same. Polite smiles mixed with subtle judgment. Mel seemed oblivious to it, but it was something Noah had gotten used to residing at Godfrey.

The rich are never truly generous. They simply know how to be polite, so long as you understand your place. After what seemed like an eternity of socializing, Mel and Noah made their way over to their designated table.

“Some wedding, huh?” Noah said, sitting down while still taking it all in.

“Oh, I know! Isn’t it just fantastic? I love big weddings,” Mel said as she sat and scooted her chair close to his.

"Remind me again, how do you know all these people?" Noah asked. Mel leaned in close enough for Noah to smell her peppermint lip balm.

"Oh, right, so the Bride is my sister's best friend. But they are basically like family. My dad, he's over there, you see him?"

"Uh, yeah, the big guy?"

"Uh-huh, he knows the Bride's family. He and her dad were best friends growing up. So then my sister started hanging out with his kids. One thing led to another, and now she's a bridesmaid, so we're here!"

"I see…" He had lost her around the first sentence.

Mel glanced over at him and smirked.

"There's going to be a quiz later," She said. Noah laughed.

"I'd better start taking notes then."

"You better!" Mel said with a snicker. Just then, a woman in the crowd spotted them and raised her arms in excitement, rushing to their side. She wore a bridesmaid dress and, considering that she looked almost identical to Mel, Noah assumed it had to be her sister.

"Ahhh, you made it!" The woman said, embracing Mel before the two did a little dance together.

"Oh my god, I wouldn't miss it for the world!” Mel said. “Angela is getting married, can you believe it? I never would have guessed she’d be the first to tie the knot."

“I know, right?! I swear I thought she was going to be a single crazy cat lady for the rest of her life.”

Mel and her sister laughed loudly at that.

"Was the drive bad?" Mel’s sister asked.

"Not terrible. We made it up here pretty quickly, actually.”

“We?” Mel's sister glanced at Noah. She shared Mel’s devious smirk.

“Oh yes, so this is Noah!” Mel said, stepping aside to introduce him. “Noah, I’d like you to meet my big sister, Jackie.”

Noah promptly stood and offered his hand.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Noah said.

"So this is the boy we've been hearing about…" Jackie said, inspecting Noah closely as she took his hand.

Her grip was surprisingly strong. Noah looked over at Mel, who was staring at him with a strange level of excitement.

"Mel has told me a lot about you,” Jackie said.

“She did?” Noah was surprised. He hadn’t realized he was that important to her.

“So you're doing some computer stuff, right?"

"Yeah, that's right!"

"Ok a nerdy boy," Jackie looked back at Mel. "A nerdy boy, huh?"

"Stop…" Mel said bashfully. She then promptly scooped up Noah's arm. "The dinner is going to start soon, you'd better get back over to mom and dad and sit down!”

"What, you're not sitting with us?!"

"Later!" Mel said. Promptly ushering her sister away.

“Fine, fine, but you better not bail without saying hi to mom and dad!”

“I would never!” Mel said. Jackie rolled her eyes before giving Noah a wave.

“It was great meeting you, Noah!” She said.

“You too!” Noah said, sitting back down. Mel sat beside him, laughing softly to herself.

“God, she is such a character. I love her so much.”

“Yeah, she seemed really great! I’m surprised you told her about me.”

Mel blushed before waving him off.

"She's making it into a bigger deal than it is. Here, let’s look at the drink options!"

- - -

The dinner was amazing, the speeches were amazing, the little old entertainer man they had running between tables was amazing. Noah was quickly realizing that this entire wedding was happening in a tax bracket he never knew existed. He began to wonder if this was how everyone at Godfrey lived.

But those thoughts quickly faded into laughter, drinks, and good company. As always, Mel was a joy to be around. Once their buzz was in full swing, the two of them found a rhythm in their humor and banter. Their bits flowed naturally, and the other guests at the table joined in. Noah couldn’t remember any of their names, but that didn’t matter. Because that night was perfect.

The chocolate cake and coffee came next. Mel continued to point out all the folks in the crowd, giving Noah the rundown on the drama and sharing the memories. She was so quick on her feet. She truly was the light of the room.

It got Noah thinking about himself and how he contrasted with people like Mel and Rachel. They were all in leagues of their own. They were reaching for something. And, truthfully, it made Noah want to be right there with them. Most of his childhood had been about surviving, about making it day to day in a home that didn’t want him. Or enduring a school where he never really felt he belonged. It was nights like these that helped him remember that there was more to life than simply getting by.

“You having fun?” Mel asked. Noah looked over and smiled.

“Tons, thanks for inviting me,” He said.

“Oh my god, of course! I couldn’t have asked for a better date. Should we get another drink?”

“Absolutely.”

The dinner ended, and the dance floor was cleared. Guests slowly began to pool in, happily laughing as the old entertainer moved between them, making light fun wherever possible.

He trotted on a fake horse, pretending to gallop while wearing a ridiculous hat.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Harry Potter and Ron Weisly in the house!” He shouted, pointing to two lanky teenagers at the edge of the dance floor. Funny enough, they did resemble them.

The crowd erupted with applause and laughter. The antics continued.

Noah and Mel found their way to the dance floor and joined the fun.

Then the music began to slow, and the floor cleared save for couples.

“You want to dance?” Mel asked him. Noah shrugged.

“I’m not much of a dancer,” he said. Mel laughed.

“Neither am I, remember?” She took his hand and smiled. “Come on, just for fun.”

Noah felt his skin prickle.

“Alright,” He said. Mel wrapped her arms around his neck while Noah placed his hands on her waist.

They swayed slowly to the music. Mel looked stunning under the dim lights. Her green eyes were brighter than jade.

"You're really handsome," she said.

Noah laughed bashfully.

"Thank you,” he said.

Mel stared for a moment.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"Have you ever talked to Rachel about it?"

"About what?"

Mel stared into his eyes long enough to make his heart swell.

"About you doing things with other people."

Noah's cheeks reddened as his brain scrambled for a response.

"Well… no, I guess we haven't really gotten around to that…" He paused. "Why do you ask?"

Mel smiled dimly. "No reason."

She leaned her head against his chest and continued to dance slowly.

As suddenly as the moment came, it went. The DJ swapped the track, and the entertainer came out in a bright yellow suit, an oversized mic in hand. The crowd, including Mel, erupted in laughter as he hopped in step with the track’s trumpet.

The entertainer began to sing as he strolled through the couples, a spotlight following him.

"Now it's time for… a kiss! A kiss! It's time for a kiss! Who will it be in our crowd toooodaaaaaay?”

The music sounded like something out of a musical. The entertainer spun, and several other spotlights circled the dance floor.

“Oh, a kiss! A kiss! It's time for a kiss! But who could be to saaaave the daaaaaaaaaaaay?!"

The music stopped, and the entertainer slid to a knee, pointing to Mel and Noah.

“Could it be... YOU?!”

The spotlight panned to them, and everyone began to cheer.

It was done with such innocence. Noah wasn’t even thinking about the implications of what was happening.

Mel looked up at him and smiled.

"What do you say?" She asked.

Their eyes caught. Noah cleared his throat.

It was just for fun, after all.

"Why not?! A little kiss wouldn't hurt any–"

Mel pressed her full lips against his so strongly that he stumbled back. The room erupted into a roar.

"They are loooove birrrds! Give 'em a hand, folks!" The entertainer shouted. The room laughed and clapped, and the spotlight left them.

But Mel's lips remained. She pulled him close and continued to kiss.

He could taste her peppermint balm.

Noah kissed her back.

It was only a few seconds. But they were long. A sudden jolt of reality hit him, and Noah pulled away. Mel stared up at him. She had never looked more vulnerable.

"I… I'm sorry." She said.

Noah shook his head. "No, I am. That was a mistake...”

“I’m really sorry, Noah.”

“It’s fine, we've both been drinking."

"Yeah, no, I know. But I shouldn't have—"

"It's fine," Noah said again.

The song ended, and the two of them parted. They stared at one another for a moment. Mel really did have the most beautiful eyes.

The guilt hit him like a wave.

"I should probably go," Noah said. Mel nodded.

"Yeah, no, I completely understand. Go."

“Will you be able to get back ok?”

“I’ll be fine, go.”

Noah nodded and turned from her.

"Noah," Mel said.

Noah stopped and looked back.

"Yeah?"

"I had a really great time tonight.”

Noah smiled. "I did too.”

Chapter 33 - Best of Friends 33 - Confessions

FIELDNOM

ISPAÑEN

HARO AMERICAN

SHININGOO
PHONONG

MEAN GIRL

Noah sat in his car in the parking lot, watching as wedding guests passed. He was waiting for his buzz to wear off. He was waiting for the shock to wear off. Mel had kissed him. Or, he had kissed Mel. His heart pooled with guilt. He rummaged for the words to say to Rachel, all the while asking himself how he could have done this to her. He glanced down at his phone, wondering if he should call her now.

But what words does he say?

I'm sorry, but I kissed a girl behind your back. Please forgive me?

No, that wasn't good enough. Noah was a terrible human being. Allie had been right, Brian had been right. He didn't deserve love. Because someone who deserved love would never do something like this. He was so confused. It was just a game, right? Why had she kept kissing him?

Why the hell did he start kissing her back?

Noah didn't remember starting his car, or driving home, or making his way into his dorm room, or falling down on his bed face-first. All he could think about was how heartbroken Rachel would be. And, the inevitable reality of what was going to follow.

She would break up with him. There was no doubt about it. Tears welled in his eyes as his phone buzzed.

Rachel: hope the wedding is going good baaaabe 😘 miss u.

Another text quickly followed behind it, as if summoned by the first.

Mel: Hey, sorry again. I really did have a good time tho, text me when ur home safe :))

He stared at his inbox for a while. He didn't understand Mel's response. She seemed so casual. Perhaps that meant it wasn't as big a deal as he thought. None of that mattered, however. He already knew what needed to be done.

Noah called Rachel.

"Hey, baby! How was the wedding?" She said.

Noah rolled onto his back and shut his eyes tight.

"It was uh… good," He could barely stomach the words.

"Are you ok?" Rachel asked hesitantly.

"Uhm... no. Not really."

Rachel went silent. It seemed like she already knew what he was about to say.

"What happened?" She sounded terrified. It made Noah sick. He forced the words out anyway.

"I uh, was dancing with Mel, and there was this game happening with an entertainer. He was going around the room doing bits and…"

"Yeah?"

"...He pointed to us... Mel and me... and told us to kiss. And we did."

Rachel's silence was worse than death.

"You kissed her?" The words came out as if Noah had stabbed her in the chest.

"I'm so sorry," Noah said, fighting back the tears. "It was so stupid. I feel so awful."

"How long?" Rachel's voice was quivering now.

"It was just a second, and then after she kept kissing me and I pushed her off," Noah said. "It was so stupid."

Noah heard Rachel sniff. He covered his face in shame. But he wasn't going to run from his mistake. Rachel deserved that much.

"If it's a deal breaker," he finally said. "I understand."

"It's… It's not."

Noah hated that he felt relief. He didn't deserve a second chance. He remembered his mother staring at him in the kitchen, screaming because he had dropped the milk jug. He could feel it seeping into his pants.

"You are useless!" She screamed. "I do everything for you, and then you do this! Clean it up! CLEAN. IT. UP."

He was doing it again. It was so simple. All he had to do was not kiss her. It was just like holding a jug. All he had to do was not drop it.

But he did anyway.

"I'm so sorry, Rachel."

He heard Rachel laugh. He could tell she was beginning to cry. He had heard it so many times before.

"Don't be," Rachel said. "How could I be mad at you after everything I've done?"

"No, this is different, Rachel."

"It isn't," she said. "I mean, yes, you should have asked first. But it happened, and we do things other couples don't normally do and…" she trailed off.

"You still there?" Noah said.

"Yes, yeah."

She paused again.

"Did… did you like it?" She asked.

Noah didn't want to answer that question, and honestly, he didn't know how to. It had been so different from anything that he had done with Rachel. Her lips felt different. Perhaps more full. But he had done it as a joke.

Why did he kiss her back?

"It had happened so fast," he said.

"I know, but did you like it?"

Noah thought again. He hadn't hated it. It was so quick. He was in shock. It wasn't like he'd even anticipated it. Plus, they were drunk. He wanted to say those things, but every word felt like a trap.

He remembered Allison screaming at him when he got the boyfriend test wrong. She had set up her phone and asked him what he thought of her. And he had answered honestly.

"You are the most amazing woman in the world, and I love you!" He was smiling. This was his first relationship. He didn't want to mess it up.

In response, Allison rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Are you fucking serious right now?"

Noah's smile dimmed immediately. "Oh... sorry, I was supposed to..."

She cut him off, turned off the video, and didn't talk to him the rest of the car ride home.

He never did find out how he was supposed to answer, but he so desperately wanted to answer right.

"Noah?"

“I don’t know,” he said.

Silence followed.

“Do… do you want to explore something with her? Like I’m doing?” Rachel asked.

“Absolutely not,” Noah said quickly.

“Noah. I’m serious.”

“And I’m being serious too.”

“No, you feel bad, and you’re saying what you think I want to hear.”

Her words stung. There was truth to them, yes. But he had also said the wrong thing, again. Why did he always say the wrong thing?

“Oh... sorry...” He felt ashamed. He hated himself. He never knew what to say.

“Am I wrong?”

“No, you're right,” Noah said. But he wasn’t sure if that was true. It just felt like it was the thing he was supposed to say. He wasn’t going to make excuses. He wasn’t going to take this away from Rachel. He wasn’t going to argue. And maybe part of him did want it. Why else would he have agreed to kiss her?

“Ok. So is that a yes?” Rachel asked.

Noah felt his lips go numb. He didn’t really understand how to process what she was saying. He thought back to that night. But only felt a wave of distorted emotions.

“I’m not sure. I wouldn’t want to do anything that would jeopardize this,” Noah said.

“That’s not what I’m asking.”

Every word Noah spoke fell out in clumps. It was broken, imperfect, embarrassing, and still wrong. He knew that’s not what she was asking. He knew that. He wasn’t trying to side-step the question. He just wanted her to know how he really felt. That he cared about her, that he only wanted her. But he didn’t want to say the wrong thing. He wouldn’t do that this time. He was going to get it right.

He had to get it right.

He had to.

Noah barely had anything left in him to go on. Before he could answer, Rachel let out a deep, shaking sigh.

“Look, I need to go. I… everything is ok. I just need some time,” Rachel said.

The pit in Noah’s stomach opened further.

“Alright. I am really sorry, Rachel.”

“It’s fine,” Rachel said. Her words came out quickly. It made Noah hesitate.

“I… I love you,” he said.

“… I love you too,” Rachel said quietly before hanging up. Noah rolled back on his bed and closed his eyes tightly.

And the world swallowed him whole.

- - -

Tears streamed down Rachel's cheeks as her lips quivered. Noah had kissed her. He fucking kissed Mel. She rolled in her bed and fought the tears desperately. They won anyway. She promptly flipped through her phone, found Jackline's number, and pressed call.

"Heeeeey seeester!!!" A voice shouted from the other line.

"H-hey," Rachel said between tears.

"Hey," Jackline's voice softened. "Is everything ok?"

"Y-yeah. Everything's Gooood," Rachel said with a sobbing laugh. "How's Virginia?"

"Boring. I miss you."

Rachel nearly fell apart.

"I miss you too," she whispered.

"What's going on, Bitsy?"

"He kissed Mel," Rachel said.

"No, Noah?!"

"Y-yes…" Rachel said.

"As in the bitch, Mel?"

"Yes! I hate her!" Rachel shouted, laughing between her tears. She reached for a tissue box on her desk and pulled it down, carefully dabbing her eyes.

"You have to break up with him, Rachel."

Rachel shook her head. "No."

"Rachel, I know you love him. But that's cheating, babe."

"No, you don't understand it's… complicated."

"Ok, tell me how." Jackeline's voice was so gentle.

She always listened. She always took care to hear what Rachel was actually saying. Whenever Rachel felt lost, she was there. Every time her father yelled, every time her mother steamrolled over her, Jackeline would come into her room afterward and repair the damage. She had always been so strong. And now, even miles away, she was doing the same thing.

But even telling her this truth was hard.

"You promise you won't get mad?" Rachel said.

"Of course!"

Rachel took a deep breath.

"Okay. Noah and I… we… well, I… with his blessing, maybe slept with a few other guys on campus."

There was a brief pause.

"What?" Jackeline sounded as shocked as Rachel expected she would. She cleared her throat.

"I may have, you know, fooled around with a few boys…"

"Rachel…"

“With Noah’s blessing!”

“What the hell does that even mean?!”

“It means we talked about it and then we agreed to do it.”

“What!? With who?! Oh my god, is it someone I know?”

“Well… do you remember Jack and his friends?”

“No! Jack Buller?!”

“Yeah, that’s the one.”

“You fucked Jack Buller?!”

“Well, not yet, but his friend Ethan and Mike…”

“You fucked Ethan AND Mike?!!” Jackeline was shouting at this point. Clearly floored by what she was hearing. She had this way of being shocked that made Rachel feel safe. It wasn’t judgment or anger. But intrigue built on trust. Rachel hated to admit that it kind of made her feel good about herself. She was being wild. She was doing something most would never dare to do.

But the feeling was fleeting, soon giving way to a wave of guilt.

“Yeah…” Rachel said.

Jackeline went silent again.

“And... Noah is ok with this?”

“Yes. He even watches… And we had a threesome with Mike.”

“What the fuck!? How did you get so lucky!? I wanted to fuck Mike, Rachel!!”

Rachel laughed loudly. It felt good to let the tension wash away.

“You’re a little freak,” Jackeline said.

“I knooooow,” Rachel replied with a laugh.

“A threesome?! You had a threesome before me?!”

They both laughed again.

“Yes, seester, a threesome,” Rachel confirmed.

“Oh my god dad would die if he heard.”

“I know!” Rachel said with a snort.

“Wow, well, maybe I need to change my mind? Sounds like Noah is a keeper.”

“Stoooop!” Rachel said.

“No, no, you’re right, I’m sorry. This is serious business,” Jackeline took a deep breath and calmed herself. “So, you two are doing... stuff. And he kissed another girl.”

“Yes,” Rachel confirmed. Mel swam back into her mind, stinging her heart like a hornet.

“Did you know this kiss was coming?”

Rachel’s mind danced through reason and replaced it with pain and panic. How does one answer a question like that honestly? It was like being asked to catch a speeding bullet with her bare hands.

“Well, technically no.”

“Technically?”

“Yes, technically. But I KNEW Mel was going to try something. And I kind of accepted that it was fair. So I’m not surprised.”

“But you didn't talk to Noah?”

“No,” Rachel said.

“So… then he did technically cheat?”

Rachel reeled in discomfort. She didn’t want to get Noah in trouble. How could she explain it? This wasn’t like normal cheating. Jackeline had no idea how many times Rachel had skirted a line and hurt Noah. And, every time, he was right there. Forgiving her. But when she explained it to someone who had only ever been with one person, Rachel felt like she was speaking a foreign language.

“No, that’s not fair to him. We have talked about it before. Just never directly. Plus, the kiss was part of some stupid wedding game.”

“Mhmmm, a wedding game, how convenient,” Jackeline spoke with an overly sarcastic voice. Rachel had laughed at the voice since she was little.

“Ohhh stoooop.”

“Well, something’s telling me you already decided to keep this boy, so I’m not going to push it. Are you just calling cause your sad?”

There was that sweet tone Rachel had grown up with her whole life. It melted her instantly.

“Yeah,” Rachel said in her goofy baby voice. A voice she only ever put on for her sister. The only person who saw her in a way no one else could.

“Well, it’s ok to be sad. Do you still love him?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you want to keep working on things with him?

“Yeah.”

“You think he’s gonna break your heart?” Jackeline asked gently. This was her way of checking her. A gentle question for Rachel to make a decision on.

“No… he never would,” Rachel said.

“Alright, well, you want my advice?”

“Always.”

“Maybe talk out some boundaries before you go and be freaks?”

Rachel laughed.

“Alright…”

“Atta girl. Are classes going good?” Jackeline said.

“Oh yeah, I’m honestly loving it. Godfrey is such a breath of fresh air.”

“Oh, I bet, I’m so glad mom was able to get you out of that house.”

“Yeah, I am too. How’s law going?”

“I hate it. But I make money. Oh, also, did you answer Dad yet? He’s starting to pester me to pester you.”

“Ugh, no…”

“Answer the man before I lose my sanity. Please.”

Rachel sighed while playing with the corner of her pillowcase. “Ok...”

“What does he want anyway?”

“A dinner.”

“Well, that’s not so bad.”

“With Noah and me.”

“Ohhhhh... Ok yeah, I get it. Look, he did the same to me and Bobby back in the day. Dad will be Dad no matter what. So just smile and play nice. Rip the band-aid off, and get on with your life.” Jackeline spoke nonchalantly about everything. It’s like she just knew what to do. As Rachel grew up, she realized that, somewhere along the way, her sister had become her real mother. Today was no different.

“Alright, I will,” Rachel said.

“Okey-dokey, Bitsy. You feeling better?”

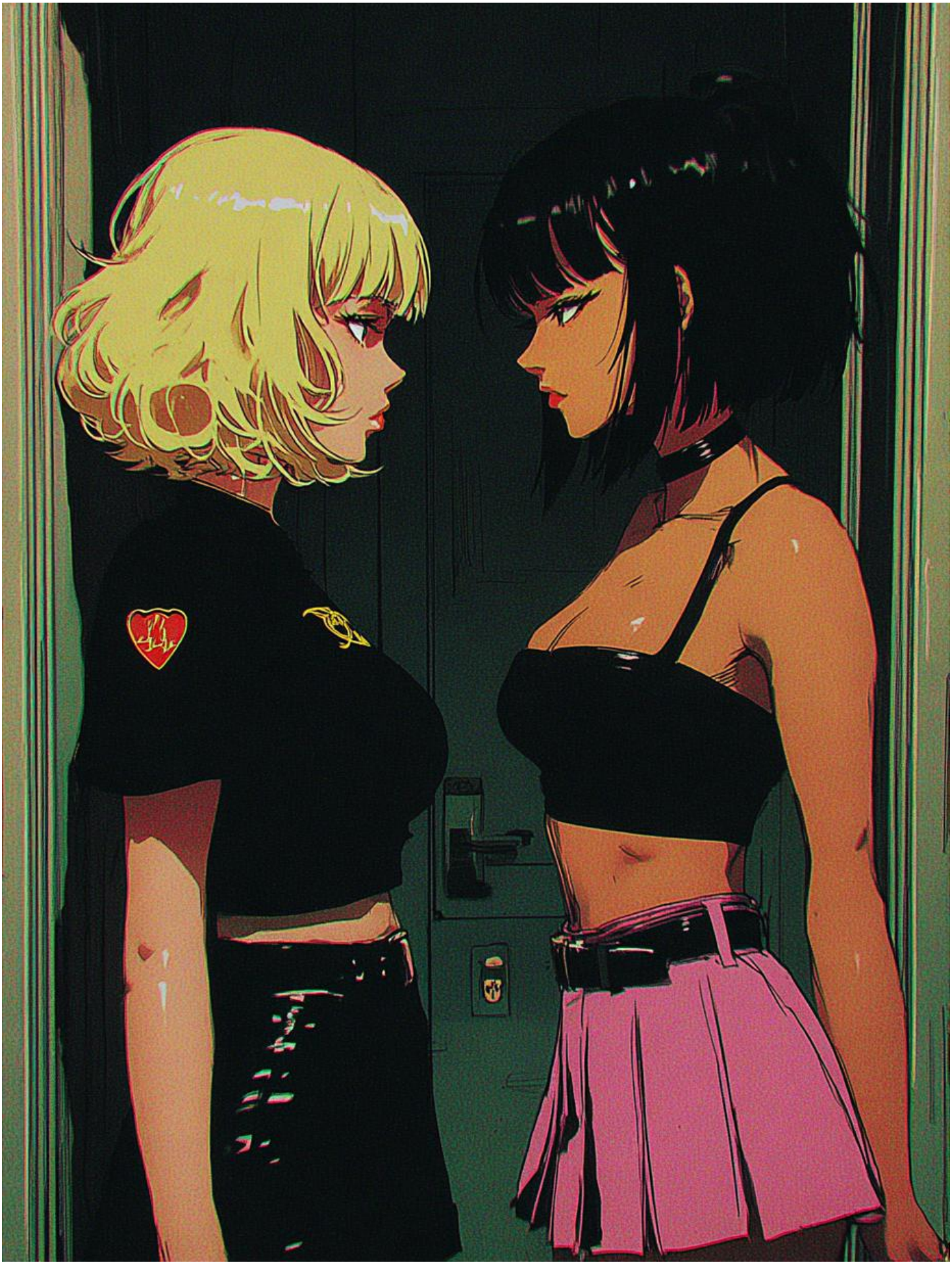
“Yes, thank you, seester.”

“Of course, seeeester. I love you.”

“Love you too.” Rachel hung up and rolled to her side. She felt better. Good enough to put off what she’d been dreading to do for weeks now.

She called her dad.

Chapter 34 - Best of Friends 34 - Figuring It Out



Scoomvity

MONTANA

"This is Daniel speaking."

Rachel's father spoke in his usual rigid tone. It was Dad. He had spoken the same way at dinner, at her birthday, and at her graduation. Sharp, cold, and to the point. Even after his service, the military never really left him.

"Hey dad," Rachel said. She tried to sound friendly, but it was hard, knowing what was coming.

"Oh, Rachel. Glad you finally found the time to get back to me." The comment was blatantly passive-aggressive, but this was nothing new. It was his way of taking control, of reminding her who she was in his world. But Rachel wasn't the same girl who had left for Godfrey. She wasn't going to let him bully her into being nice when he didn't deserve it.

"Things have been busy," she said flatly. Not apologizing felt like pouring boiling oil on her skin. She braced for an explosive response. But, instead, her father sighed and replied sternly.

"You keeping up with classes?" He asked.

"Yes dad."

"And the grades are good? I went to gather your report card, but they wouldn't let me see it."

"Dad…" Rachel pinched the bridge of her nose. "They don't give out report cards."

"Well, they should. I'm paying for you to be there. I expect you to keep yourself focused. Is your GPA above 3.8?"

Rachel shook her head. "Yes."

"Are you lying?"

Rachel felt herself bristle. He still talked as if she weren't capable of navigating through her own life.

"No." She wanted to say more. She wanted to tell him to back off and relax. To let her decide how important a high GPA was. To give her breathing room to grow up and be her own woman. But no was all she could manage.

"Don't give me attitude, alright? We've been over this. You keep your grades up, or you're coming straight home."

"Ok, Daniel," Rachel slumped in her chair, relishing in the silence that followed. He absolutely hated it when she called him by his first name.

"Watch the lip," He said coldly. There it was. The kindling of her father's rage. She didn't know how much more rope she had before he would finally lose it. It was always a bit of a guessing game with him. But Rachel had learned to listen to her nerves. As soon as they began to tighten like wire, she would back off. So far, they were still slack.

"Yes, Dad," She said.

"We need to have dinner soon," her father continued, "I want to meet this young man you're dating."

"You've already met him Dad," Rachel said.

"I know that, and Jack is a very nice young man. I simply want to meet him formally now that you two are officially dating."

Rachel shook her head and sat up. "Dad, I'm not dating Jack, I'm dating Noah."

"That is not what your mother said," her father said sternly. Rachel's head felt like it was going to split. She should have known her mother was still trying to get Jack and her together, but she hadn't expected her to twist Rachel's arm through Dad.

"Well, Mom is wrong. I'm dating Noah." Rachel sounded about as firm as playdough.

"And who is Noah?"

"You met him! He went to school with me? He came over for dinner once."

"I don't remember," Her father said flatly.

"Right, of course," Rachel said just as flatly.

"Watch. The. Tone," her father's voice got lower. And there it was. That was Rachel's cue to lighten up. Even though she didn't want to, Rachel's body moved on its own. Her tone lightened, her anger burrowed, and she put on the mask her father demanded she wear.

Soft, gentle, stupid, and demure.

"Sorry dad," She said sweetly. He sighed over the line.

"You know I love you, right?"

Rachel paused longer than she wanted to.

"Yes."

"Good. Because I do." He said it so coldly. When Rachel was a child, that was enough. He never even said it directly. It was always framed in a question.

You know I love you, right?

Why couldn't he say it to her? And why was it always after violence? After screaming, yelling, intimidation, and slamming? He was getting better now. Jackeline had done a good job of wearing him down. She had taken the brunt of it. But Rachel wasn't as strong as her sister. She couldn't stand up to him like her, and he used that to his advantage.

Controlling.

Prodding.

Manipulating.

And the worst part was that, even to this day, those slivers of affection still melted her heart.

You know I love you. He would say. And Rachel would falter. Even now, knowing it wasn't enough. Even now, knowing what love really could look like, she still melted in his words.

"I need to meet this young man. When are you free for dinner?" He said.

"I'll have to talk to him," Rachel said.

"Rachel…" His words were tempered, but Rachel's nerves weren't tightened anymore. She had some slack, so she used it.

"Dad, I have to talk to him, I don't know his schedule!" She sounded like she was back in high school, and she knew that was exactly what he wanted. For her to stay the same, for her not to grow up. To remain as she was so that he didn't have to change and accept the truth.

That she was an adult woman, and not his to command.

But he wouldn't, it seemed. She hated him for that.

"You are both going to meet me next Wednesday at the Meadow Villa. There is a ball event happening. You will be there at six thirty with him, and both of you will be wearing formal attire. Is that clear?"

"I have to check with him…" Rachel said weakly.

"I'm not asking." Her father didn't yell, but he didn't have to. It was the same energy. The sparring was over. Now, her father was beating Rachel down, and he wouldn't stop until she submitted.

"Fine," Rachel said coldly.

"Fine?" Another tempered bid for control.

"We will be there!" Rachel said, raising her voice only to the level she knew was safe.

"Good. See you then," He hung up the phone. That was his way of punishing her. Rachel slumped in her chair and did her best to fight back the tears. The last thing she wanted was to bring Noah to her father at a time like this. It felt like too much, all of it. It felt like she couldn't breathe. She daydreamed about calling her father back and telling him they would not have dinner until he learned to show her respect. That's what Jackeline would have done. Then, he would scream and threaten to cut her off. She pictured herself doing what she couldn't.

Rachel would call his bluff. She would tell him to do it, and if he did, she'd get a loan like everyone else. She'd move to the public dorms like everyone else.

And she would be free.

Her hands trembled at the idea. Because with her father, it would never be that easy. He would find a way to terrorize her. He'd find a way to make her life miserable before ever admitting defeat. Because they both knew she wasn't her sister. He would push as far as he could and make sure she paid the price for her independence.

Rachel felt her phone vibrate. She checked it. Mel's text could not have come at a worse time.

Mel: Heyy! Thought you might want to see your boyfriend all done up. I thought he was very cute ;)

She had sent a video. The thumbnail showed her and Noah slow-dancing.

Rachel didn't play it. She couldn't. It made her so furious that she thought she might vomit. Here it was, another person pushing her around. Prodding her, taking advantage of her passivity, forcing her to be ok with someone she clearly wasn't.

Everything boiled over at once. Rachel stood up from her chair and stormed out of her apartment, straight to Mel's door. She banged on it hard enough to hurt her fist.

Mel opened it with a casual smile.

"Hey! Did you get my text?" She said wickedly.

"What is wrong with you?!" Rachel tried to sound angry, but instead, the words came out shaky. She was terrified, absolutely terrified. And Mel, in turn, smiled triumphantly.

"What do you mean? I was just sharing something I thought you'd like!"

"You... you kissed him!" Rachel wanted to shout, but couldn't. No matter how angry she got, her voice only ever rose to a moderate octave and shook wildly. It made her feel pathetic.

Everyone walked all over her.

Mel threw her head back and laughed.

"Oh my god, really?! Are you going to get upset over that? It was a stupid fucking game. It wasn't fucking serious."

Rachel sank into herself. She was helpless. Friendless. Hopeless.

"Y-you are a s-such… such a..." Rachel tried to get the words out. But with every syllable, her voice strained and weakened.

"What Rachel? What am I?" Mel stepped into the hallway. Her temper was rising, and it doused whatever courage Rachel had.

Rachel just stood there with tears welling in her eyes.

"Why did you do that?" She sounded so pathetic. It was like she was volunteering for a lashing. She already knew exactly what Mel was going to say before she said it. And perhaps, she wanted her to. Because she certainly wasn't fighting back.

"Why did I do it?! Oh, I don't know, maybe because we were having a good fucking time at a great wedding together. And maybe I fucking did it because I KNOW you would have done more if the roles were reversed. Tell me I'm wrong."

Mel stepped forward. Rachel recoiled.

“Tell me I’m wrong!” Mel shouted.

Rachel did everything in her power not break down in tears.

“That’s what I fucking thought. You know damn well Noah would have sat at home, cheering you on while you cheated on him. Then, you would have come home and pouted just like you are right now. Brainwashing him into thinking it was his fault!” Mel was screaming. Rachel was shriveling. She didn't even feel like she was there.

When she looked to the floor in shame, Mel scoffed.

"You are such a two-faced bitch, you know that, right? You're going to get upset with me over something so fucking innocent and stupid while you’re literally fucking your way through half the men on campus.”

Rachel couldn’t look up. Tears dropped onto the hallway carpet. She waited for her lashing to continue.

“Here's the truth, Rachel," Mel said coldly. "You don't deserve him. You don't deserve sympathy. Because you are a lying, cheating, manipulative piece of shit. And you know I’m right. That is why you can't even look at me right now."

Rachel shook her head and closed her eyes tightly. It didn't stop the tears from coming out.

"T-that's not true,” She said so softly it was barely audible.

"Except it fucking is Rachel. It is. And if you don't want your boyfriend exploring shit with other women, maybe you shouldn't be fucking other dudes."

Rachel could feel Mel’s judgmental gaze, but she didn't dare look up. There was no fight left in her. She had been torn open and was simply waiting for Mel to finish with her.

"I’m so done with this. Go fuck your boyfriends and cry about it. And don't ever slam on my door like that again, or I'll fucking call the cops." Mel turned and slammed the door in Rachel's face.

She flinched. Trembling. Frozen in place.

Then, slowly, she turned and sulked back to her apartment.

- - -

Noah carefully looked over the flower arrangement before straightening his outfit. He wasn't sure if this was the smartest idea, but he couldn't bear the thought of sitting at home after what he did. Rachel hadn't been answering his texts or calls, and that was ok. It was also ok if she didn't answer her door, or if she told him to leave. He was fine with all of it.

But he needed her to know just how sorry he really was, and he was willing to talk if she wanted to. She deserved that much.

He knocked softly. There was no answer, but he could hear her music bleeding through the door, so he knocked again a little louder.

The patter of feet followed. Rachel cracked the door and peered through.

Her eyes were red and wet. He didn't bother saying anything. He knew it wasn't the time. He simply raised the flowers with an apologetic smile. Rachel stared at him a moment. Then opened the door slowly.

"H-hey," She said.

"Hey," Noah said gently, offering her the flowers. "I uh... got this for you."

She stared at them. "You didn't have to do that."

"I wanted to," Noah said. She wiped her tears and took them.

"Thank you." Rachel went in for a hug, and Noah wrapped his arms around her. They held onto eachother as tightly as they could.

"I'm so sorry," he said softly.

Rachel responded by crying in his arms. She dropped her weight onto him, and he held her up.

They stayed that way for a long while.

Noah gently rubbed her back.

Rachel buried her face into his chest.

Then, slowly, Rachel began to calm down. With a final slow breath, she pulled away from him.

"Can I come in?" He asked. Rachel nodded, taking his hand and guiding him inside. They made their way to the couch, and Rachel fell into Noah's arms as he sat. He played with her hair as time rolled past them.

Sometimes, nothing needs to be said. Because no words can fully express the sincere affection of a soft touch and safe presence.

"My dad wants to have dinner with us," Rachel finally said.

"Oh boy," Noah said. He felt Rachel bounce on his chest as she laughed.

"Yeah, tell me about it."

"What did you say?"

"I had to say yes, there was no choice."

"I'm sorry," Noah said. Rachel shook her head.

"Are you free Wednesday evening?"

"Of course."

"We have to dress up."

"I'll get something together." Noah felt Rachel trace her finger along his ribs.

"I'm not mad, you know," she said.

"It’s ok if you are,” Noah said. He felt Rachel shake her head.

"I know. But I’m not, honest. I'm just hurt."

Noah squeezed her tightly.

"I know, sweetheart." He kissed the top of her head. "What can I do to make it right?"

She glanced up at him. Her eyes were still bloodshot. She must have been crying for a while.

"Tell me you love me,” She pleaded.

Noah stared deep into her eyes.

“I love you with all my heart.”

Rachel’s lips trembled.

“I love you too...” She whispered. Noah gave her a playful squeeze. Her laugh filled his soul.

“With that said,” she continued, “I think we need to talk about boundaries.”

"I absolutely agree," Noah said.

Rachel sat up, grabbed a tissue from the coffee table, and took a deep breath.

"Ok... so I've been thinking and... I think… You should be allowed to…" Rachel began gesturing with her hands. "You know… with other people."

Noah could hear the struggle in her words. It seemed like it pained her to utter each syllable.

"We don't have to do that," he said gently. Rachel shook her head.

"No, we do. It's only fair." She looked at him. Defeated. "It's only fair."

Noah grabbed her hand and squeezed it.

"I feel like we keep circling this, and I keep telling you the truth. It doesn't have to be like that. What we have, it works. What we have right now is fair."

Rachel nodded, pursed her lips into a smile, and looked Noah in the eye.

"If you can tell me, right here and now, that no part of you is at least curious to explore things with someone else. Then that is what we'll do."

The question felt unfair. Noah couldn't put his finger on why. Of course a part of him was curious. But that was human. Who hasn't had thoughts about others once in a while? But, for him, they were just thoughts.

"You're making me feel like I have to act on it," Noah said. "What if I don't want to?"

"Then don't, but the door should be open. Just... tell me first, ok? Before you do anything, just let me know."

Noah wanted to protest, but Rachel continued before he could.

"Please, Noah, this is what I need," she said. He let out a long sigh, then nodded.

"Alright, deal. But I don't want to feel forced to do something if I don't want to. That feels, I don't know, fucked up."

Rachel nodded. "That's fair."

"Ok, then we agree. Should we talk, I don't know… specifics?" Noah asked. Rachel shook her head.

"I think it's best we don't, at least not right now. Just tell me if you want to explore something. And we'll go from there."

Noah cleared his throat. "Should I tell you if someone is texting or talking to me?" He asked.

Rachel's eyes narrowed.

"Is someone doing that?"

Noah nodded.

"Mel?"

Noah cleared his throat.

"Yeah, she's been texting me since the wedding. But I haven't responded," Noah could feel the chill coming off of Rachel. He knew it would hurt her to hear it, but he didn't want to keep anything secret after what had happened. "You can read the texts if you want."

Rachel shook her head. "No, that's fucking weird. I'm not… I'm not that person. I'm not going to put you under my thumb." Rachel let out an agitated sigh. She stood from the couch, walked over to the kitchen, and began unloading the dishwasher. Noah watched her in silence as she scrambled with the dishes.

"Should I tell her to leave me alone?" Noah asked.

"Do you want her to leave you alone?"

"If it bothers you, absolutely," Noah said honestly. He always did see Mel as a friend, but he certainly wasn't going to let that get in the way of his relationship. Not in a million years. Rachel's face was unreadable. She threw the silverware into a drawer, then slammed it shut.

"I'm not going to tear something up because I'm jealous," She finally said. Noah didn't know what to make of that statement. But what he did know was that Rachel was more important to him than Mel.

"Well, I want to stop talking to her, at least for now," Noah said. Rachel shrugged.

"If that's what you want to do," she looked up and forced a smile. "Whatever you want to do, ok? I'm sorry I'm getting emotional…"

"You're totally fine," Noah said softly. He stood and walked to the kitchen. He wanted to hold her. He wanted everything to be alright between them. He opened his arms, but Rachel recoiled. Noah stepped back and did his best to hide his pain.

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I did that," Rachel said. Stepping forward to hug him. Noah stepped back.

"It's fine, I… maybe we need to cool off? Maybe I should go?"

Rachel's lip trembled, and she nodded. "Yeah, no… maybe you should... I'll text you later?"

Noah nodded. "Absolutely."

He went for a hug again. This time, Rachel promptly jumped into his arms.

"I love you, Noah," she said with a quivering voice.

"I love you too."

"Are we going to figure this out?"

"Of course we are," Noah said gently. He pulled her close and kissed her. Rachel kissed him back. "I'll talk to you later, alright?"

Rachel nodded.

Noah had never left Rachel's apartment feeling that uncertain.

Chapter 35 - Best of Friends 35 - The Right Thing

Mel opened the hallway door and saw Noah step out of Rachel's apartment. She immediately retreated back into the stairwell with a racing heart. She knew what she should do. Turn around, take a lap, and return once he left.

Noah hadn't been answering any of her texts. It would be mature. Civil. Respectful.

But Rachel had been anything but mature, and Mel knew Noah was ignoring her because of that stupid bitch.

Rachel had probably turned on the tears when she found out what happened. She probably made Noah feel guilty for a stupid fucking kiss, and convinced him that she should keep fucking other men while he watched.

It was disgusting, absolutely disgusting. No, disgusting didn’t begin to cover it. It was narcissistic and evil.

And the last thing Mel was going to do was let Rachel have her cake and eat it too. It wasn't fair to Mel, and certainly wasn't fair to Noah. So, with a deep breath, she waited. And as Noah opened the door, she reached for it.

"Oh my god!" She said with a laugh. "Hey, Noah."

Noah forced a smile as he glanced back at Rachel's apartment.

"H-hey, Mel," he said. Mel could feel the tension emanating from him. She did her best to act friendly and casual.

"You seem kinda stressed." She peeked past him and looked at Rachel's door. "Is everything…"

"Everything is fine," Noah said quickly. Mel already knew that wasn't true. It made her sad to see Noah flustered over something that wasn’t his fault.

"I didn't make anything weird, did I?" Mel asked. Noah shook his head.

"No, it's fine. We talked about it and… well, I do think I owe you an apology."

Mel tilted her head, confused. "What are you talking about? I'm the one who took it too far. I guess I thought, well… considering your situation," she shrugged, "I guess I thought one little kiss wasn't a big deal."

Mel meant every word. Yes, she hated Rachel. But she certainly didn’t want to make Noah’s life a living hell. There was a certain level of guilt, too. He had landed right in the crossfire of her and Rachel’s fighting, and for that, Mel was truly sorry.

Noah glanced nervously back at the door. Mel needed to get him out of this hallway so they could have a real talk.

"I actually forgot something in my car. Do you want to walk and talk?" She asked.

"I don't know, Mel," Noah said.

"Hey, I just want to talk, I promise. You haven't been answering my texts. I mean, I get it. But I just want to clear the air.”

Noah hesitated a moment. "I… I don't think that's a good idea."

"So Rachel is mad?" Mel kept her voice as gentle as possible. She wanted Noah to see just how fucked up and hypocritical the situation was. But she knew he was too sweet to turn on Rachel. If she called out Rachel’s bullshit directly, he would make an excuse. He had to come to the conclusion for himself.

"I mean, she's upset we kissed,” Noah said.

"Yeah, but… and I mean no disrespect, but she… you know," Mel bobbed her head. "She's explored things, right?"

"Yeah, I knew about it though," Noah said.

Mel also knew that wasn’t fully true. She remembered how surprised he was when she said Mike had spent a full day in Rachel’s apartment. And she wouldn’t be surprised if there was more that Rachel was conveniently not telling him.

"Is that really the issue? Are you not allowed to do stuff unless she knows?" Mel was getting agitated, but not at Noah. It felt like Rachel had laid a perfect web of guilt and manipulation for the poor guy.

God, he deserved so much better.

"Well, yeah. I mean, that's kind of how we make this work...” Noah grimaced and let out a huff. “I'm sorry. This is so not your problem. You shouldn’t be caught up in all this. I know it must look so weird from the outside."

"It's fine, really, Noah. I'm just trying to understand," She looked at him longingly. "If we had asked… would it have been ok?"

Mel already knew the answer to that one. Obviously, it wouldn't have been. Rachel wasn't going to let anyone near him with a ten-foot pole. Rachel was moving the goalposts, and she would keep moving them. Mel so desperately wanted Noah to see that.

"Y-yeah, I think so," Noah said.

Mel's heart began to race. She hadn't planned on asking him the question lingering in her mind. Never in a million years did she ever think she'd find herself in a situationship this fucked up. But… when she looked into Noah's dark eyes… when she remembered his lips. His laugh. His kindness. It felt impossible to stop the words from spilling out of her.

"Should we ask her then?" She said. As the words slipped out, Mel wished she could take them right back. Not because she didn't mean them, but because with those few words, she had committed her heart to a truth she had been running from.

She was free-falling, and she wasn’t sure if Noah would be there to catch her.

Noah's eyes widened.

"Like… ask if… You and me?" He pointed between them, shocked.

Mel nodded. "Yep."

"You want that?" He said softly. He seemed so afraid. Mel could tell Rachel still had control over him even when she was nowhere to be seen.

"I do. Do you?" Mel asked. Noah gulped. He glanced back at the apartment door once more.

"Umm…"

"You just said you could ask, right?" Mel wanted to step towards him, to touch him, to hold him. She wanted him to be single. She wished he were single. This man deserved someone to swoop in and show him what love really looked like. This man deserved an actual, happy, normal relationship. But Mel knew better. If she approached him now, he would run right back into Rachel's arms. So, as painful as it was, she stood and waited for him to come to her.

"Well, yeah, but… I mean, I don't know if now is the best time. We're still patching things up," He cleared his throat and shook his head.

"Noah," Mel said. Noah kept his eyes to the floor. "Noah, look at me."

Noah glanced up at her. His eyes were so beautiful. A chocolate brown. Sweet as sugar.

"Do you want to explore something with me?" She asked again. Noah's lip tightened, he shook his head, and looked back down at the floor.

"No," He said.

That one word felt like a thousand daggers in Mel's heart. It took everything she had to stand stoically.

"Are you sure?"

"Now is not a good time," Noah said. "I-I'm sorry, I got to go."

Noah walked past her and down the steps.

"Wait, Noah!"

There was no response.

Mel watched as her heart went with him.

- - -

"So, you won't be getting into the law program?" Rachel's father asked sternly. Noah never did like the man, but somehow in the last year, he seemed to have become more imposing than ever.

He was a gaunt-looking figure. With a greying buzzcut and stern expression that never seemed to shift, even when he laughed. Noah remembered going over to their house a few times in his senior year. Rachel’s father was either absent or paid him little attention. Kind of like what he was doing right now.

"Dad, I told you I'm not getting into law."

"It is a lucrative path. Look at your sister, she's doing fabulously."

"Well, I'm not my sister," Rachel shot back. Rachel's father, or Mr. Wicker, as he insisted Noah call him, bristled.

"Well, maybe if you learned something from her, I wouldn't have to constantly worry about you so much."

"Dad!" Rachel stopped herself as the waitress came by to refill their drinks. Rachel and Noah thanked her while Mr. Wicker stared coldly.

"This is absolutely unacceptable. If you were going to get a throwaway degree, you should have stayed home and taken state classes online," Mr. Wicker was a cold man. It's like he couldn't see how much his words were cutting Rachel down. In one evening, her entire sense of self had evaporated. She had become that quiet, timid girl from Herferd. The one who was too afraid to speak up, only coming alive in the few brief moments she was allowed her freedom. It was torture to watch.

"You know I wanted to go to college… and you know how important this degree is to me," Rachel said on the verge of tears.

"No, what I know is you're living in lala land because I have given everything to you on a silver platter. How do you think you got here? Hm? Do you have any idea how many strings I had to pull to get you into Godfrey? But look at you, all you can see is your little pipe dream helping homeless people get more drugs."

Noah's fists clenched underneath the table.

"She's doing a lot more than that," Noah said, surprised he had managed the words. Mr. Wicker looked over at him with a stone-cold glare.

"With all due respect, Noah, if I wanted advice on how to raise my own daughter, I would have asked for it. So please, enjoy your meal until we're finished."

Noah went to speak again, but Rachel touched his leg and, with a grateful smile, shook her head.

Noah smiled back and kept silent.

Mr. Wicker sighed and sat straight before glancing over at the dance going on behind their table.

"Ah, they've started the slow dancing. How wonderful," He said, smiling for the first time that evening. Noah looked over and watched a group of couples get up and begin a waltz. The women wore gowns, and the men wore a period tuxedo that Noah was unfamiliar with. He glanced at Rachel, who seemed just as uncomfortable as he was.

The Meadow Villa was a box that framed a world Noah barely understood. A nod to the untold rules from years past. A snapshot of a time that never really existed except in the elite’s fantasy. Decadence masqueraded as innocence. Hierarchy playfully dressed among the wealthy youth.

"That is what courtship should be," Mr. Wicker continued. "This stupid woke crap has ruined everything. Absolutely everything." He shook his head and snapped his fingers at the waiter, signaling for more champagne.

"Do you know how to dance, Noel?" Mr. Wicker asked Noah. He had to believe he got his name wrong on purpose. Noah didn't bother to correct him. He wouldn't give the man the satisfaction.

"Uh, no, actually. Well, not like that at least."

Mr. Wicker grunted as he snatched his champagne glass from the waiter's tray and waved them off. "That's a shame. It will be hard to socialize properly if you don't know a waltz."

"Dad, how many people waltz? Seriously?"

"Plenty," Mr. Wicker shot back. "Plenty know, if you actually had been paying attention, I could have introduced you to a few of them."

Rachel rolled her eyes and returned her gaze to her plate. Picking at it sullenly. Noah tried to get her attention, but she had already retreated into herself. He hadn't seen her like this in a long time.

"It's very unfortunate. I was hoping to see you two waltz tonight," Mr. Wicker said.

Neither Noah nor Rachel responded. Mr. Wicker drank his champagne and brightened when he spotted someone in the crowd.

"Ah, well, we won't have to worry, the backup is here." He waved happily. Noah and Rachel both looked back and found Jack approaching them.

"Jesus… dad! Did you really set this up?" Rachel said shortly. Mr. Wicker looked at her like she was an idiot.

"Why the hell would I do that? No, he's here, I know him, I'm waving. Get over yourself. Jackie boy!" He shouted, standing from the table and walking over to him.

"Mr. Wicker! It's been too long," Jack replied, hugging him back.

"Ohhh man, look at you, bud, you've really grown up! Are you here with a date?" Mr. Wicker asked.

"No, just myself tonight, actually. I brought my mother."

"Oh, Laura is here! How wonderful, she always did love these kinds of things. Please, send my regards, won't you?"

"I will," Jack peeked over at Rachel and Noah. "Hey guys!"

His friendliness somehow only made the situation worse. Mr. Wicker looked back over to them.

"Oh, so you know Noel as well?" He said.

"Oh yeah! It's Noah, though," Jack corrected.

"Is it? Oh, how embarrassing. Well, listen, the waltz is going on, and unfortunately, Noah never took the time to learn to waltz. That leaves Rachel without a partner. Would you mind dancing with her?" Mr. Wicker said.

Rachel glared at him.

"I don't want to dance dad," She said coldly. Mr. Wicker stared right back.

"Well, you're going to , because I want to have a man-to-man chat with Noah here." He said flatly.

"Dad…"

"You can either dance or go wait on the other side of the bar!" Mr. Wicker snapped. It was a controlled rage. Not enough to be socially repugnant, but enough to send the message.

Rachel looked at Noah, defeated.

"Will you be ok?" She asked.

Noah couldn't stand seeing her like this.

"We can go," he said. And he meant it. Rachel shook her head.

"It's fine, I'll do one dance and be back." She looked at Jack, who seemed sympathetic to the situation. He gave Noah an apologetic smile.

"It'll just be one dance, my man," he said. Noah gave a nod.

"Fantastic! Go, off you two get." Mr. Wicker laughed for a moment as he watched the couple walk away. Noah watched too. He always watched when Rachel walked away.

"Something beautiful, isn’t she?" Mr. Wicker said. Noah nodded.

"Yes," He said.

"I do love her very much. Too much, maybe, I don't know." He turned to Noah. "Do you love her?"

Noah stared back. The question was so easy.

"Yes."

Mr. Wicker nodded. "I believe you." He looked back at his daughter. "I do."

Noah waited in silence. The silence, it seemed, was part of Mr. Wicker, and Noah knew he wasn't done speaking.

"Do you love her enough to do what's right by her?" He asked.

"What do you mean?" Noah said.

"I mean, doing the hard thing when you need to. Letting go of your own needs to make sure she's always taken care of." Mr. Wicker's volume picked up. He was calm. It wasn't his anger rising, but power. Once Mr. Wicker went silent, Noah waited a moment.

The silence permitted him to speak.

"Yes," he said. Mr. Wicker nodded, examining Noah intensely.

"I believe that too." Mr. Wicker leaned back. "I give credit where credit is due. You don't look the part of a gentleman, but you are. I can tell."

The words stabbed at Noah. The last thing he felt like was a gentleman. He nodded all the same.

"Thank you, sir."

"Uh-huh," Mr. Wicker leaned back in. "Well, that's why this next part is going to be some tough love."

"Tough love, sir?"

"You aren't her husband, kiddo."

Now it felt like Mr. Wicker had split Noah wide open. Noah's breath shallowed, and he began to wonder if Rachel had told her father what he'd done. If that had been the reason for this little visit. It would've made sense. Shame stuck to Noah's lips as he mumbled a response.

"S-sir?"

"You mean well. I can tell." Mr. Wicker looked back over to Jack and Rachel. They danced slowly in the crowd, surrounded by white pillars, gowns, luxury, and candles. "But I want you to look at her. I mean, really look at her, and tell me she doesn't deserve the world."

He was right. Noah knew this. Of course she did. She deserved everything, absolutely everything. And that's why Mr. Wicker’s following question hurt so much.

"Can you give it to her?" Mr. Wicker asked.

Noah looked away from Rachel as Jack turned her in his arms. It was too painful.

"I can try," He said.

"Son, I know you would." He leaned in and softened his voice. "But trying isn’t good enough for my daughter. You have to promise her the world day one. Can you do it?"

He had to have known what Noah did. Or at least, Mr. Wicker must have sensed it. Why else would he be crucifying him now? He was absolutely right. Noah had already failed so many times before. What made him think any of it would change now?

"I can't," Noah said, defeated.

"Good man, you can admit it. It means you're not a child. It means you get it. You would pour your heart and soul into being the right thing for her. You would wear yourself down to bones trying to provide for her. And you wouldn't even begin to scratch the surface of what she needs," Mr. Wicker watched as Jack laughed with his daughter. "And that's why you have to pony up and do the right thing."

It was as if Mr. Wicker had dove into Noah's mind and pulled out the very thoughts that had been haunting him for days now. Noah had seen the men at Godfrey. They lived in a world and culture he would never be part of. It had taken every ounce of his ability just to get a scholarship here. And every day, when he passed students who ignored him, when he was dismissed by professors in class, when people would watch in confusion as he and Rachel walked together, he was reminded of a very simple fact.

Noah was a visitor in this world. He would never be part of it.

His mom had been right. As always. She told him he had gotten lucky, and that was all. That he was not much better than his father, and that he would end up just like him. Drunk, divorced, and a loser. She laughed when he showed her the Godfrey letter.

“What are you showing me this for?” She asked him.

“I got in.”

“And?”

She was right. It didn’t matter. Because in the end, he could never be someone like Jack. He was just Noah, and Mr. Wicker could see it.

Noah looked at Rachel, doing his best not to cry. He would never forgive himself if a single tear dropped in front of her father.

"Son, if you really love her. You know what you have to do."

The music stopped. Rachel and Jack parted. She promptly returned to the table in a hurry.

"How was the dance?" Mr. Wicker said.

"Fine," Rachel barely acknowledged her father as she promptly sat by Noah's side. "How was the talk?" She asked him.

Noah couldn’t look in her eyes. She would see it if he did.

"It was fantastic," Mr. Wicker interjected. "Noah truly is a wonderful young man."

Rachel looked at her father, shocked. "Really?"

"Oh yes, really." Mr. Wicker stood slowly and grabbed his suit jacket. His lean frame sank into it. "I truly believe he will do right by you, Rachel."

Rachel smiled. Her eyes widened and reddened.

"Really, Dad?"

"Yes, really lovely," He said, opening his arms. Rachel hesitated and then hugged him. "I do love you, you know."

"I love you too, Dad," Rachel said.

Noah glanced up.

Rachel had melted into childhood to be held for the first time. And Mr. Wicker held her as if she were the most precious thing in the world.

It was a sight Noah would never forget.

"I won't keep you, I know it's not hip to be with parents for too long," Mr. Wicker said.

Rachel shook her head and smiled.

"Dad…"

"No, I insist. I'll take care of the bill at the front. Is there anything else you need from me?" Mr. Wicker asked.

"No, we're alright," Rachel said.

Her father smiled.

"Alright, sweetie, have a good evening. And pleasure meeting you, Noah," He said, giving Noah a wave.

Noah waved back. Completely empty.

- - -

Jack watched Rachel scramble back to Noah and her father. He watched till the pain seeped into his chest. Then he turned and walked to his mother. She was grinning ear to ear.

"I saw you two dancing!" She said eagerly, standing and doing a little skip. She meant well, but the words hurt.

"It isn't like that," He said.

"Ohhhh hush. I saw that way she looked at you!"

"Mom, she's taken," Jack said. It was pleading. He wasn't sure why. No, that wasn't true. He knew why. He hoped that, somehow, through her endless words of encouragement, she could change reality. That she could make the one woman he had slowly fallen in love with finally see him.

"Oh, sweetheart," She pinched his cheek playfully. "If you really want something, you have to fight for it!"

That was his mom. A former model and CEO turned homemaker. She wore every role with honor, and always took what she wanted.

Jack rolled his eyes. "I'm not like that."

"I'm not saying be evil, we're not evil people! But don't give up. Be her friend! Be there, be present. I know you, I can see how you held her."

"Mom..."

"Hey, just saying! But we can drop it. I think I saw Daniel over there."

"Yeah, he dropped in."

“And he didn’t come say hi?” His mother was shocked when Jack shook his head.

“Ugh, typical. Well, are you heading off?”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, I’m tired.”

She looked at him with sympathy and pursed lips.

“Awe sweetheart. Alright, get home safe. Are you coming by next weekend for your cousin's birthday?”

“I’ll try to make it.”

“No pressure.”

Jack smiled. “I’ll try to make it mom.”

She smiled back. “Alright, darling.”

She hugged him tightly and patted his chest.

“Don’t give up!” She whispered.

He laughed and waved goodbye. He felt a little better, but Jack still took the back doors of Meadow Villa. He didn’t want to see them together. He didn’t want to see Rachel holding Noah’s hand or hear them laugh. But maybe his mom had a point. They were... exploring things after all. Perhaps that meant Rachel wasn’t finding what she was really looking for in Noah.

A glitter of hope found him as he stopped at the cross sign.

"Why were you dancing with her?" A woman asked.

Jack turned to see Mel glaring at him. He froze in place.

"Mel, hey.”

“I asked you a question,” she said bitterly.

He cleared his throat. “It's not… It's not what it looks like."

"You do know she's cheating on Noah, right?" Mel said.

Jack looked away, rubbing his neck. Shocked, Mel stepped towards him, stopping under a streetlamp.

"You knew?" She asked.

"It's not a big deal," Jack said.

"Do you like her?"

Jack was preparing to say no. But Mel read him so easily. In less than a second, she already knew the real answer to that question. She scoffed and narrowed her eyes.

"Jesus fucking Christ! Really?! You won't return my calls, but you like HER?!"

"Mel…"

"I don't fucking get it. She's a cheater, Jack! She's the girl you fuck at a party and forget about. What the fuck is wrong with all of you?!"

Jack stared blankly. "You finished?"

"You're fucking pathetic, you know that?" Mel blew past him. "Fucking. Pathetic!"

She stormed off, and Jack waited till she was gone before he moved. God, Mel could be crazy. But maybe she was right. Maybe he was pathetic. She was wrong about Rachel, though. Yes, her relationship with Noah was weird, but Rachel was a diamond in the rough. He would never forget the first day they stumbled into eachother at Godfrey. It had been years since they'd seen eachother. She had gone to Herferd while he had gone to a private school. She took his breath away, and then his heart. He helped her move into her apartment. They explored her vinyl collection together. She had every one of his favorite albums. He remembered the photography book she had made and all the cute little stuffed animals she collected. He remembered laughing with her as they swapped childhood stories.

And, as the months passed, Rachel answered the question Jack had always wondered.

What does real love actually feel like?

He took the long path home. Twisting through the manicured gardens and crossing the wooden bridge before disappearing into the evening.

- - -

Mel stormed home with blinding rage, brushing past fellow students without acknowledging them. She walked aimlessly for a while, hoping her legs could take her anger away. It didn't. She needed to get home. She needed to calm down. But it felt impossible with HER on her mind.

Rachel. Rachel. Rachel.

Always there, like an infection in her life.

Taking her crush away and manipulating the man she cared about now.

When Mel passed Rachel's door, she grit her teeth and prayed she wouldn't hear something.

A loud moan bled through its cracks.

Mel stopped.

Her breath grew shallow. She should just keep walking. Just leave it alone.

She heard the dull slapping of flesh. Then, another moan from a man.

She knew the voice. It was Mike.

She heard Rachel scream. Followed by an array of muffled words.

"Fuck."

"Oh god."

"Don't stop."

Then another man's grunt, followed by a slap.

She had two in there. She was fucking two of them, and one was Mike. Mel slowly stepped back. It wasn't anger or disgust she felt.

It was envy, though she would never admit it to herself. Deep-seated envy so cold that it made Mel's entire body ache.

She stormed off to her apartment, slammed the door behind her, and pumped her music as loud as it could go before lying on her couch and closing her eyes.

It wasn't fair. It had never been fair. No matter what Rachel fucking did, they flung themselves at her. She had spent months trying to get Jack's attention, and after one stupid party game, he was pining for Rachel like the rest of them.

It had always been like this. Mel was always second pick. When she was younger, no one asked her to the dance or to be her valentine. She remembered one summer playing in a field with her friends. A girl called her a stink bag, and the boys

quickly joined suit. The more she protested, the more they did it. Until, finally, they ran away, leaving her alone in a field of dandelions. She would pluck them, one by one, and pretend it was a bouquet given to her.

“Oh, thank you very much,” She would say. Holding them tightly to her chest. The white seeds broke off and floated in the wind.

Time went on, she developed, and she was beautiful. But not in the right way. Her legs were too thick, her muscles too full. She didn’t wear her hair right, her fashion was always a season late. Her parents were middle-class and simply couldn’t keep up. Neither could she.

And with each year, it remained the same. Mel focused on softball, broke up with her boyfriend, chased Jack around campus, and found herself in Godfrey.

Stumbling right into Rachel. Who only needed to breathe for everyone to worship her. All the while taking for granted the man who actually loved her.

Noah.

All he wanted was to be loved, really loved. And Rachel used him to fill her ego.

Mel snapped. She grabbed her phone and searched through all of Rachel's socials. She dug for hours, trying to find anything to bury her. It wouldn't be enough to spread rumors. She was already doing that. And if she did it too much, she would come off looking like a vindictive bitch.

She needed something else.

That's when she landed on it. A schoolbook picture from the previous year. A picture of Noah.

He was with another woman. She scoured through his profiles next. Smiling when she saw the photos of him in science class. Or dressing up as a robot with his friends for a convention. Of course, he would love something like that.

And then, she found it. A picture of him and that same woman. They were at a basketball game together. She was in a cheer outfit, and he was leaning over the bleachers, giving the peace sign. Noah had tagged her in it.

You really are the best @allison!!!

She clicked on Allison’s profile, curious to see where it led. Partly for information, but mostly because she wanted to see who this woman was before Rachel was, and why Noah had been with her.

"No way…" Mel said softly.

There, near the top of Allison's feed, was a picture of her at Godfrey’s playoff game.

Wearing a Godfrey jersey.

Mel promptly sent Allison a DM.

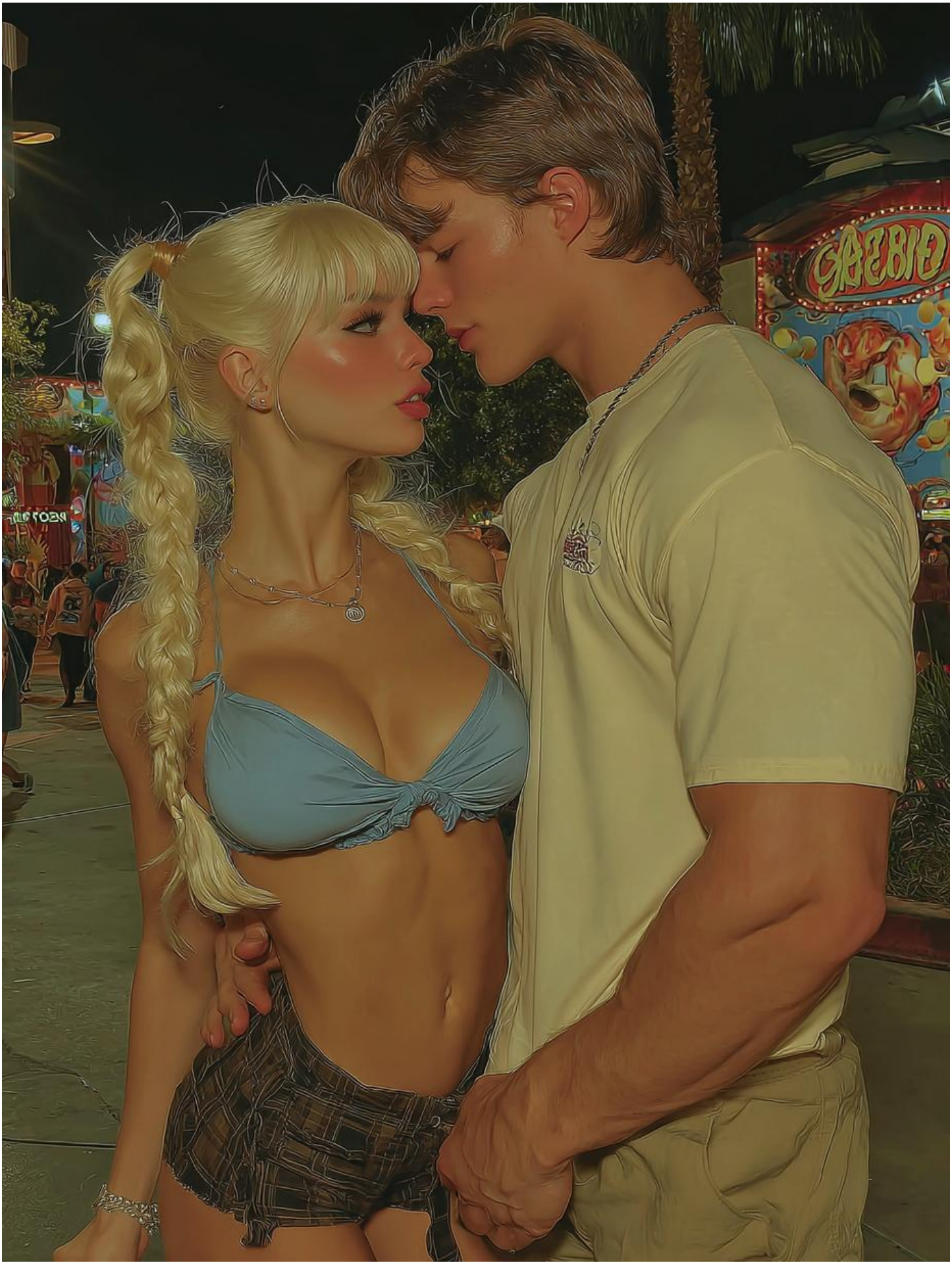
Mel: Heyyyy! Idk if we know each other formally, but I heard about you through the grapevine! Love the pic, so cute girlie. Want to grab coffee sometime?

It was a longshot, but it was something. She had to know. She had to know what caught Noah's eye. Because she wasn’t going to give up yet, she wasn’t going to let Rachel win.

Mel kept the music loud.

She hoped it would keep Rachel up all night.

Chapter 36 - Best of Friends 36 - Walking Back



Rachel danced slowly to a song that sounded like the countless ones before it. While Jack tried to meet her eye, Rachel kept her gaze on Noah. She watched her father's expression as they spoke. Trying to tease out which way the conversation was going.

"Sorry about this," Jack finally said. Rachel was in his arms, but she had forgotten he was there.

"Hm? Oh, it's not your fault. You know my dad," she said.

Jack laughed softly.

"He's… interesting."

"Don't get me started." Rachel looked back over at the table.

"Does it look like it's going well?" Jack asked, giving Rachel a twirl. Rachel shook her head as he pulled her to his chest.

"I don't know, Dad is so hard to read. Unless he loses it, he's nearly expressionless."

"Well, I'm sure Noah will be fine."

"God, I hope so," Rachel said. They danced in silence for a while longer.

"Hey, I uh… I just wanted to say sorry again for how I acted the other day," Jack said.

Rachel smiled politely.

"It's fine," She said shortly. She prayed Jack would drop it. Rachel had zero emotional bandwidth for anything else at the moment.

"No, it's not. Look, I was out of line. I might not get it, you know? But that doesn't matter. Because it's your life. I know you don't need me to say it, but you're not doing anything wrong." Jack looked at her so sincerely.

He had always been this way. Ever since he was young, Jack always had a tender heart. It mixed well with his calm demeanor. A sort of stoicism that felt inhuman.

"Thank you, that means a lot," Rachel said. Jack smiled weakly.

"So, still friends?" He asked.

The song ended, and they parted.

"Yeah, still friends," Rachel said.

Jack stared at her a moment longer.

"Well, you'd better get back over there," he said.

Rachel nodded. "Thanks for the dance."

"My pleasure. I'll see you around, alright?"

Rachel nodded. "Yes, I'll see you."

She turned. Those were the exact words she needed to hear. It had been subtle, but ever since Rachel had started down this path with Noah, she found the world questioning her every decision. And with every question, she began to wonder if they were right. That she was defective, something that was unwanted unless she played along with society's rules.

At every turn, Rachel felt pummeled by a world that wanted her to finally cave in.

It's why Jack's words felt like a breath of fresh air.

With newfound strength, Rachel approached the table. No matter what her father said, she wasn't going to let him have his way. She loved Noah, and they had something that no one could understand. It didn’t matter how much her father yelled or fought back. She was going to make it clear that she was staying with Noah, and he would have to accept it.

As Rachel approached the table, her father gave that look.

It was the same one he gave after talking to her coach behind her back, telling him to bench her for the season. The one he gave when he finally agreed to let her cheer, under the condition that she be chaperoned at every game. The look of a man who had already set a plan in motion, regardless of her feelings.

"How was the dance?" Her father asked.

"Fine," Rachel said cautiously. She promptly sat at Noah's side and gave him a playful nudge. "How was the talk?"

Before she could gauge him, her father interjected.

"It was fantastic," he said. "Noah truly is a wonderful young man."

That was the last statement Rachel had anticipated. She examined him a moment, trying to tease out if it was a joke. But, surprisingly, he seemed sincere. Rachel shook her head.

"Wait, really?" She said.

"Oh yes, really." Mr. Wicker stood slowly and grabbed his suit jacket. "I truly believe he will do right by you, Rachel."

She tried to search for the double meaning. But her father seemed genuine. Rachel smiled as she felt tears begin to well in her eyes. She shouldn't care what he thought, but in the end, she did. And he knew that.

"Really dad?" It was a plea for the truth, for honesty, for him to finally accept her decisions and trust her. Her father smiled and opened his arms.

"Yes, really lovely," he said.

Rachel hesitated, unsure if she could trust his affection. But her longing overwrote any caution. She embraced him tightly.

"I do love you, you know," he said.

"I love you too dad," Rachel said.

It was these few moments that Rachel silently lived for. To have a father she could feel safe with. To feel like she did when he would pick her up and toss her in the air. When things were simpler, before he changed. Before he began to ignore her and enforce rules rather than love her.

Rachel relished in the simple, fleeting moment. Her father pulled away.

"I won't keep you, I know it's not hip to be with parents for too long," He said.

Rachel shook her head, smiling as she rode a deep euphoria.

"Dad…"

Her father chuckled.

"Alright, sweetie, have a good evening. And pleasure meeting you, Noah," He said, giving Noah a wave.

Rachel watched him exit before promptly turning to Noah.

"That wasn't so bad!" She said with a bright smile. Noah smiled back.

"No, not at all," He said gently.

She was too elated to catch the flatness of his voice. Or the dull sadness hidden behind his eyes. She was too excited to see the wound that had been struck, and would slowly begin to fester. All she saw was the hope her father had planted in her.

That everything would be alright. That she could be who she was, and love who she wanted.

"Want to get out of here?" She asked.

"Sure," Noah said.

The two left, Rachel reached for Noah's hand, she didn't notice how weak his grip was as they made their way back to her apartment. She happily kissed his cheek.

"God, I can't believe it! I did not think he would actually give us his blessing!" Rachel said.

Noah mumbled a laugh. "Haha, yeah."

Rachel glanced at him. It was the first time she noticed something was off.

"So everything went ok?" She asked.

Noah nodded. "Yeah. It went well."

Rachel examined him. She was still too excited to believe it. That her father had already poisoned the well, that he had already done what he could to destroy the future she wanted.

"You sure everything is alright?" She asked.

Noah looked at her and smiled.

"Oh, yeah, sorry, just the nerves. I think I'm coming down from it."

That made sense. Rachel knew how much of a force her father could be. And, not wanting to face the reality sitting in front of her, she happily believed Noah's weak excuse.

"Well, you did a great job. He said you were wonderful! He literally doesn't say that about anyone!"

Noah looked down.

"Lucky me."

"Well, let's stop talking about that. We've had enough drama in our lives," Rachel said quickly. Things were good for now, and she wanted to keep it that way.

Noah shook his head and laughed.

"Tell me about it." He gripped her hand more firmly.

Rachel had just enough confidence to broach the subject she had been avoiding for the last several days.

"So… on that note, let's talk about the kiss," She said. She felt Noah tense.

"I thought we said no more drama?" He said jokingly.

"No, this isn't drama!" Rachel said. She stopped and pulled Noah to her. "I wanted to tell you that it's ok."

Noah looked so incredibly vulnerable.

"Really?" He said.

"Yes," Rachel said. "But, we should probably talk ground rules, don't you think?"

He smiled and nodded eagerly.

"Absolutely."

Rachel took a deep breath. Bringing this up was the easy part. Now came the real challenge.

"I… I don't think it's fair that I get this crazy pass to do whatever I want, and you can't explore things yourself.”

"Rachel I–"

"Please, let me finish," Rachel said. Noah nodded. She took a deep breath and continued. "These are our college years. This is the time for us to explore ourselves, and I think we should. I think it’s important. But, we also love eachother. I know I don't want to leave you, and I know you don't want to leave me. I just… I just don't want you to resent me for not being able to explore things also."

She looked at Noah to see his reaction. He stared for a moment, then cleared his throat and nodded.

"A-alright. So if I wanted to do things with someone… I could?"

“Yes,” Rachel said. She sounded more confident than she actually was.

“And you mean I could explore anything... right?”

Rachel breathed slowly. The thought of Noah sleeping with another woman was enough to make her stomach churn. But she knew it was fair.

"Yes, all I ask is that you tell me beforehand. Even if it's just going to be kissing or something. Tell me first, alright?"

"Alright, I can definitely do that. Are there any more boundaries I should know about?”

"Yes, there is one more thing. I know you like to watch me, but frankly, the idea of watching you with another woman makes me kind of sick. So please, no videos, no photos, no talking about it. Just tell me what you're thinking about doing, and tell me when it's over. Ok?"

Noah nodded somberly.

"And what if I don't want to explore anything?"

"Then of course you don't have to," Rachel grabbed his other hand. She swung their arms back and forth for a moment. "I just want you to know the door is open."

She looked up and found Noah smiling at her.

"Do you have any idea how much I love you?" His voice was shaking. His eyes reddened. Rachel felt a clump begin to form in her own throat.

"Of course I know! Did you know I love you just as much?"

Noah laughed, pulled his hand away, and wiped a tear from his eye.

"I would do anything for you, you know that, right?"

"I would too."

It appeared once again. The looming danger, the hidden serpent. But Rachel couldn’t see it. All she saw was the man she loved, and a future before them.

"Look…” Noah said, “There's something that—"

"Yooooo, the looove biirrds," An all too familiar, slurred voice shouted from across the walkway. Rachel looked up to find Mike waving frantically at them, a bottle in one hand, and a woman in the other.

"Hey Mike," Noah and Rachel said in unison. They then glanced at one another as Mike stumbled towards them. The girl he was with began to follow, but he turned to her and promptly waved her off.

“Are you fucking serious right now?” She said, Mike answered by continuing to wave her off. She promptly stomped away in a fury as Mike turned to Noah and Rachel with open arms.

"The looooove buuurrds. HeheheHYUCK,' Mike let out a burp before clearing his throat and taking a swig from his beer. With a final stumble, he lunged forward and placed both arms on their shoulders.

"You alright, Mike?" Noah asked, steadying him as he began to sway.

"Oooh yeaaaah. I'm fine, totally... fine. Just having a blast being single, you know?" He let out a weak laugh as his head rolled slightly.

"Maybe we should sit him down?” Rachel asked Noah. Mike’s head snapped back to attention.

“Uhhhh, maybe we shouldn’t? I’m fine, guys. I’m like... good to go.” Mike leaned in. The alcohol on his breath was so pungent that it made Rachel pull back.

“Listen...” Mike continued, “I gotta ask you guys somethin’...”

Noah and Rachel glanced at each other.

“Alright,” Noah said. Mike let out a devilish grin as his eyes dropped to Rachel’s cleavage.

"When the hell can we fuck again? Cause I like, NEED that pussy."

Rachel bit her lip. Mike was such an animal. She loved it when he got this way, and hated admitting how much it turned her on to be wanted this badly. But she had just started to mend things with Noah, and there was absolutely no way she was about to jeopardize that for an impromptu hookup. She glanced over at Noah and found that he was already smirking.

At least, Rachel interpreted it as a smirk. She couldn’t have known that something deeper was running through that smile. That a secret pain was moving the man she loved like a puppet on strings. So, when Noah asked his question, she couldn’t have known what he was really asking.

"What do you think?" Noah said. Rachel smirked and looked back at Mike.

"Hmmmm, I don’t know. Do you think he’s sober enough?”

Mike immediately pushed himself off them and slapped his face so hard that it left a red mark.

“Jesus Mike!” Noah said with a laugh.

"I am SO sober enough!” Mike answered. “I'm drunk but like… not fucking wasted." He downed the rest of his beer, crushed the can, and chucked it into the grass.

"Mike! Littering!" Rachel said.

"Oh, sorry," He tromped into the grass, snatched the can with a single hand, walked over to a trash can, and tossed it. He missed completely. Mike swore as he picked up the and threw it again. He missed once more.

"Fuck!" He shouted, before picking it back up and forcefully slamming it into the trash.

Rachel's eyes began to water as she laughed. Noah laughed with her. And she took it in stride.

Everything was going great. Everything was absolutely perfect. They had overcome her father and were figuring out this whole dynamic together.

And now, they could finally cut loose and enjoy their college years.

"So," Mike said, slightly out of breath. "Are we doing this, or not?"

Rachel couldn't contain herself. She absolutely loved Mike's personality in moments like this. She skipped into his chest and felt his huge arms wrap around her.

"Let's head back to my place,” she said.

Chapter 37 - Best of Friends 37 - Passion

MAD

Mike pushed into Noah and Rachel, causing all three to fall into the apartment.

"Mike!" Rachel shouted as she rolled over and laughed. Mike quickly crawled over and grabbed her waist, pulling her underneath him.

"Oh shit! Was that me? Fuck, sorry bout that… how embarrassing." He pressed his lips against hers. God, he was such a good kisser when he was drunk.

"I just want you so… fucking… bad…" He said. Rachel felt him squeeze her hips tightly. He was ravenous. She could feel it in his thrusts. In the way his tongue pushed past her lips and danced with hers. In the way he groped her breasts like his life depended on it.

She forgot how good it felt to be under him. To feel his cock against her while running her hands along his toned muscles. Ecstasy slowly took over as Rachel began to moan. Then she heard the front door lock. She looked past Mike and saw Noah putting her things on the table. He smiled when they caught eachother's gaze.

It was innocent, but the guilt Rachel felt wasn't. She glanced at the door, worried Mel might hear them. Mike began to undo his pants, and Rachel promptly pushed him away.

"Mike, let's slow down," she said with an uncomfortable laugh. Mike promptly rolled off her onto his back and let out a loud groan.

"Sorry... you're just... so fucking hot…" He closed his eyes and burped. "So fucking perfect…"

Rachel stood and walked over to Noah.

"Sorry," she said nervously. Noah looked at her, confused.

"What do you mean?"

"I should've… I shouldn't have just started like that." Rachel shook her head as she felt a wellspring of pain form in her chest. She glanced back at the door and began to tremble before she had a chance to register what was happening. The tears came quickly, and she felt terrible when Noah stepped forward and rubbed her shoulder.

She could hear Mel in the back of her mind.

Telling her that she was doing it again. That he was manipulating Noah with her tears. That she didn't really care about his feelings, she was just covering her tracks. She had jumped into Mike's arms without a second thought. She was selfish. Self-centered. Evil. She wanted to close her eyes and disappear.

"Hey, Rachel," Noah's soft voice pulled her back to the present.

"I'm so sorry," Rachel said.

"Yo, is everything good?" Mike asked, sitting up with surprising sobriety.

"It's fine," Rachel said with a wave. She took a deep breath and shook her hands. "God! I'm so sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me! The night was going so well!"

"It's fine, you don't need to apologize," Noah assured her.

"Yeah, for real, don't say sorry. Did like... something happen?" Mike was never great with words, but he was just as sweet as Noah, in his own way.

"I... so much has happened," Rachel said with a heavy voice. She shook her head. "I guess it's catching up with me."

"Yeah, it has been a long week," Noah added. "Honestly, it's kind of my fault."

"Don't say that, Noah, that's not fair," Rachel said.

"Woah woah, slooow down," Mike stepped forward and scratched his butt. "What the fuck happened?"

Noah sighed. "It's… a long story.”

"I mean, we got time," Mike replied.

Noah looked at Rachel.

“Are you cool if I tell him?” He asked her.

Rachel glanced at Mike nervously. Years of conditioning had told her not to speak about these kinds of things with men. Historically, save for Noah, nearly all of them reacted negatively. But she wanted it to be different with Mike. So, with a deep breath, Rachel told the truth.

"Noah… kissed someone," Rachel said.

Mike nodded, as if waiting for her to finish the rest of the story. Then, after a moment of silence, he glanced between them.

"Wait, that's it?" He asked.

Noah nodded shamefully. "Yeah, it was a pretty big fuck up."

Mike let out a loud, barreling laugh. "That's fucking it?! You didn't fuck anyone?"

"Well… no but–"

"Holy shit, I thought it was like something serious! Jesus, you two are fucking funny." Mike continued to laugh as he shook his head. He walked over to the kitchen and opened the fridge.

"Yo! Where are the buds?!" He shouted.

Rachel stared, dumbfounded. She sometimes envied how simple Mike’s view of things was. He was so unapologetically blatant with life that it was contagious.

"You drank it all," she said, looking at Noah and smiling.

"You doing better?" He whispered. Rachel nodded.

"I think so.”

They followed Mike into the kitchen. He had pulled out a Pabst and cracked it open.

"Mike, you sure you’re good to keep drinking?” Noah asked.

"The buzz is wearing off, bro," Mike said, chugging half the beer and burping. "Fuck, this tastes like shit, but it'll do."

"Ew, Mike…" Rachel said, grimacing.

"What?!"

"The burping is gross.”

"Eh," He waved her off and walked towards them, giving Noah a smirk. "So, you kissed someone, huh?"

He said it with cheeky inflection, raising both his eyebrows as he sipped his beer. Noah looked away, fighting back a laugh.

"Why do you have to say it like that, man?" Noah said.

"What?! What the fuck else am I supposed to say?!" He drank his beer and glanced at Rachel. "You get jealous?"

Rachel pursed her lips and glared.

"Maybe," She said. Mike chuckled.

"Yeah, you seem like the jealous type.”

It was then that Rachel realized this nonchalant attitude was intentional. Mike was putting on an act to get them to relax.

It was... clever.

Rachel found herself surprised as she began to realize there was more to Mike.

"What is that supposed to mean?!" Rachel said, feeling lighter with every word.

Mike shrugged. "You just seem like you'd get a little jealous." He looked at Noah and smirked, downing the rest of his beer. He held back a burp, crushed the can, and tossed it into the sink.

"Mike! I swear to God," Rachel said.

"Right, sorry, recycling or whatever," He grabbed the can and tossed it before going back to the fridge. "Noah, you want one man?"

"Nah, I'm good," Noah said calmly. He moved closer to Rachel, their fingers intertwined on the counter.

"Shit, you sure, man?"

"I'm sure."

"What about you, Rach?" Mike asked, pointing at her.

"No, I'm good, thank you, though," Rachel said.

"Man, I'm going to be the only one with a buzz?" He closed the fridge and cracked open a beer.

"Looks that way," she said playfully.

“Uh-huh... so...” Mike turned to the couple. “Can I know who it was?”

Rachel froze. There was no way in hell she was going to utter Mel’s name.

“That’s not important,” She blurted out shortly.

“Oooooh!” Mike’s brows perked up, and a devilish grin formed on his face. “Bruh, who the FUCK did you kiss?! She is REALLY jealous!”

Noah rubbed the back of his neck. It was clear the conversation was weighing heavily on him.

“Mike! This is serious!” Rachel snapped.

“Naaaah,” Mike waved her off. “It’s not.”

“And how do you know that?”

“I’ll prove it.” Mike looked at Noah. “Bro, was the kiss serious?”

“No,” Noah said quickly and firmly.

“See?!” Mike said, pointing back at Rachel. “That’s fucking it right there.”

“It’s not that simple, Mike,” Rachel said, though she was beginning to doubt if that was true.

“It actually fucking is, though,” Mike said with another belch. Rachel grimaced, but said nothing. “Look, I know you wanna make it into a big fucking thing because you’re like. ‘Oh shit, my man! Someone wants my man!’ But for dudes, it’s so much fucking simpler than that.”

“Wow, Mike, I had no idea. Please, tell me more about how I feel,” Rachel said. She wanted to be annoyed, but Mike was too playful for it to stick. He wasn’t speaking to her condescendingly. He was speaking with a kind of leveled indifference.

And it was working for her.

“I’m not telling you to do shit. I’m just saying you don’t have to worry, right, Noah?” Mike said.

“Right,” Noah answered, a bit more encouraged. “It really didn’t mean anything, and it’s not like I want to explore stuff with other women.”

“See! Look...” Mike sideled up to Rachel. “You are both having fun, right? It’s all just for fun...” He glanced down at her body.

“Just for fun...” His voice softened as he grabbed her hips.

His tone was surprisingly tender, and very unlike Mike. Just as quickly as it came, it was gone. He smirked and pulled her close.

“So, we fucking or what?”

“Jesus Mike!” Rachel slapped his chest with a laugh.

“There she is,” Mike said with a smile. “You feeling better?”

Rachel nodded.

“Yes, thank you.” She looked at Noah. “How about you, babe?”

Noah gave a thumbs up.

“I’m doing great. Appreciate you, Mike.”

“Ohhh, you guys, you’re gonna make me fucking blush,” Mike said as his hand trailed up Rachel’s neck. “Now let me taste you.”

Rachel let out a breath as Mike’s lips crashed against hers. She felt his thick cock through his joggers pushing against her.

Jesus, Mike had done it. He had fixed what hours of journaling couldn’t.

It was just a kiss. She got a little jealous. It wasn't a big deal.

And now, she was going to be fucked by Mike.

Casual. Simple. Beautiful. Wonderful Mike.

Rachel felt Mike’s tongue push into her mouth as he squeezed her breasts. She could taste the beer on him. It tasted so good. She let him take her. Let him grope and squeeze and savor every last ounce of her.

He deserved it.

When he pulled away, Rachel grabbed his thumb and put it between her lips. Sucking slowly as she twirled her tongue around it. Then she popped it out of her mouth.

"Maybe I will have a little beer," She said.

Mike stared at her long and hard. It was a gaze of pure desire. Of deep longing.

Of real passion.

Mike smiled brighter than Rachel had ever seen.

“You got it,” he said, promptly walking over to the fridge and getting her a cold can. He stepped close and let their lips graze as he handed it to her. She took it and drank, looking him in the eyes as she did. Mike turned to get another.

"Wait," Rachel said. Mike stopped. She took a big swig of beer, walked over to him, and kissed him.

She let the beer pass between them. She let it mix with their lips and tongues. Mike immediately turned ravenous. He hoisted her onto the kitchen island and squeezed her ass with his meaty hands. She could barely catch a breath as he began to pull at her dress and expose her breasts.

Mike latched onto them. "Fuck you are so fucking hot!"

Rachel arched her neck and looked back at Noah as Mike sucked on her nipples.

Noah had taken a seat in one of the kitchen island chairs and was undoing his pants.

It was perfect, all so perfect.

Rachel smiled at Noah as she gripped the back of Mike’s head. He pulled her dress down her waist and past her legs, leaving only her green underwear. His eyes followed the center line of her stomach.

Mike pulled her close.

Rachel wrapped her legs around him.

"Are you going to fuck me here?" She asked. Mike smirked and glanced over at Noah.

"Whatya think, bro? Should we?"

Rachel looked over and blushed when she saw Noah already stroking himself.

"I'm down,” he said softly. His tone carried a familiar inflection of uncertainty. But Rachel thought better of it. He was an adult. He’d let her know if something was wrong. She could trust him.

Mike grabbed Rachel’s neck and turned her face towards him.

He kissed her while pulling down her panties.

Rachel moaned as his flushed, swollen cock slapped against her. He thrust several times eagerly. Then grabbed Rachel’s hips tightly as he slowly pushed himself into her.

"Oh fuck, Mike!" Rachel shouted. His girth was unreal. It fit her perfectly, just perfectly. It applied just the right pressure, and the way he thrusted hit just the right spot. And he was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous.

There was a reason her sister wanted to fuck him, too.

Everyone wanted to fuck him. Everyone wanted to be under him. It was that perfect, chiselled smile. The way his abs cut away when he flexed. The fact that she couldn’t get her hands around his biceps. The way his tight, round butt looked.

Mike was like a Greek statue.

And apparently, he also had a heart of gold.

And an incredibly thick, hard cock.

A cock that was slowly stretching her.

His body pressed against hers as he fully entered.

Rachel’s nails trailed down his back as he thrust.

And thrust.

And thrust.

A dull, gentle thud. Passionate and carnal.

He lifted her slightly off the counter, pulling her onto his dick like a toy.

And yet, he was tender.

Strong and gentle.

An animal and a man.

As Rachel’s orgasm began to near, her phone went off. It danced on the counter as Mike put her down and buried his face between her breasts.

The phone buzzed as Mike thrust with satisfying, guttural groans.

"FUCKING SHIT!" He slammed into her.

Over and over.

Gripping her hips and pumping with all the force his body could manage. Rachel's head swung wildly as Mike pounded her apart.

Then Mike’s phone went off in his shorts.

The ringtone was a mixture of farts and duck sounds, followed by lyrics sung by a man who sounded like a WWE announcer.

“Ohhhh yeaaah, it's the gay man. Uh huhhhh, the gay boy is calling."

The farts grew louder. Mike pulled out of Rachel as he scrambled to his shorts and silenced the phone.

He slammed himself back into Rachel.

The phone went off again.

“Ohhh yeahh, the gay boy is callllllinnnnnn.”

A huge fart followed, and Rachel burst into laughter.

"What is that ringtone?!" She shouted.

Mike shook his head, snorting as he pulled out of Rachel with a satisfying pop.

"Fucking Ethan, man!" Mike said, storming back to his phone.

"That is your ringtone for Ethan?!" Noah asked.

"It's an inside joke, alright?!" He pulled out his phone and silenced it. "There."

As he returned to Rachel, her phone started buzzing again. She looked over, confused, then reached for it.

"No way, it's fucking Ethan,” she said.

"Ohhhh shit! You think he's onto us?!" Mike asked, comically enthusiastic.

"You should answer it, Rachel," Noah added. Rachel looked between them both.

"What?! No way,” she protested.

"No, you totally should! Put it on speaker!" Mike said. He moved back between her legs. Rachel's lips parted as he slowly lined himself up with her. "Try not to moan too loud."

There it was again. That dangerous passion.

Rachel had never seen someone look so deep into her soul.

She bit her lip.

Then pressed the speaker button as Mike slowly pushed his way back inside her.

"Hello?" She said through waves of pleasure.

Mike pumped slowly. Her insides tightened as his girth stretched her.

"Yo, you with Mike?" Ethan asked shortly.

Rachel looked into Mike's eyes.

God, those eyes could melt any woman.

"What should I say?" She mouthed, smiling. Mike answered by increasing his rhythm. His girth pulsed in and out. Rachel could barely remember where she was.

"Are you there?" Ethan said.

"I-I am…" Rachel tried to keep her voice steady, but it was becoming impossible. Mike plowed into her with increasing force as he began to lose himself in her.

As she lost herself in him.

She would miss this when it was gone.

Rachel let Mike take her.

"Is Mike with you right now?" Ethan’s voice rose in tone. He tried to sound indifferent. A poor attempt at hiding jealousy and betrayal.

And as if he'd been waiting for it, Mike leaned forward close to the phone.

"Bro, I'm fucking her right now!" He shouted.

"Bro, what the fuck?!" Ethan shouted through the phone.

Mike's pace never stopped. He grew bolder, thrusting into Rachel so hard it made her shout in ecstasy.

"Bruh, are you fucking serious? This is fucked up, dog," Ethan sounded like a stranger. He seemed timid and uncertain.

And then, squeezing Rachel's tit firmly, Mike leaned close to the phone once more.

"Well, you'd better get over here before we have all the fun!" He looked at Rachel and winked.

Rachel realized Mike might actually like this more than she and Noah did. She glanced over at Noah, eyes filled with surprise as Mike continued to pound in her relentlessly.

Noah simply shrugged, giving a thumbs-up.

If he was ok with it, Rachel certainly wasn't going to say no.

She would let Mike take her anyway he wanted.

Still being fucked wildly, she spoke into the phone.

"Are... are you coming?" Her words were breathless.

The line went silent.

Mike leaned forward, the sweat on his brow glistening in the kitchen light.

He raised Rachel's legs over his shoulders.

And began to pile drive.

Ethan was silent as Mike and Rachel’s moans bled together.

"I told you, I'm not into the sharing shit!" Ethan finally blurted out.

She looked into Mike’s eyes and took in that gorgeous smile of his.

She knew he wanted this, and Rachel would make sure Mike got what he wanted.

"I'll let you cum in me if you come over."

She looked over at Noah, all too pleased with herself. His aggressive stroking seemed to be his sign of approval.

The slaps between Mike and Rachel carried through the phone.

Then, finally, as Mike bottomed out and let out a loud groan.

As Rachel’s legs shook as she erupted in a sudden, intense orgasm.

Ethan finally answered.

"I'll be over in twenty, but I don't want any dicks touching my dick!"

"Just get over here fuck face!" Mike said. He grabbed Rachel's phone and shut it off.

“You happy?” Rachel asked him as his lips lowered to hers.

“You have no fucking idea,” Mike said, kissing her deeply.