



Twisted
PERFECTION

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ABBI GLINES

Twisted Perfection
by Abbi Glines

Twisted Perfection
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Dedication

To Autumn

Hull. ~~Listening to me while I'm~~

lost in my creative process isn't easy. It can be annoying. Having someone you know you can call and complain to is priceless. Thank you, Autumn.

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Most importantly God. He gave me the ability and creativity to write. The fact I get to do what I love everyday is a gift that only He can give.

Three years ago...

Della

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You never know dear how much I love you. Please don't take... please don't take my sunshine away.

Don't stop singing now, Momma. Not now. I'm sorry I left. I just wanted to live a little. I'm not scared like you are. I need you to sing. Please sing for me. Don't do this. Don't go to him. He wasn't real. Don't you see? He was never real. He died sixteen years ago.

I should have told someone about you. This is all my fault. You needed help and I didn't get you any. Maybe I was scared after all... scared that they would take you away.

“Della, sweetie, give me your hands. I need to clean them off. Look at me, Della. Come back to me. She's gone but you're gonna be okay. We need to clean you up. They've taken her body and it's time to leave this house, for good. No coming back. Please, Della, look at me. Say something.”

I blinked away the memories and stared up at Braden, my best friend. She was cleaning the blood from my hands with a wet washcloth and tears were streaming down her face. I should get up and go clean this all off myself but I couldn't. I needed her to do it for me.

I always knew that one day this would happen. Maybe not the exact way it was happening. I hadn't ever imagined my mom dead. Most days when I let my daydreams turn to this moment, I'd feel guilty. It wouldn't stop me from thinking about it, though. The guilt wasn't enough to keep me from imagining my freedom.

I had always thought someone would realize my mother wasn't all there. They would figure out that I wasn't some strange child who wanted to stay inside all day and refused to come out into the real world. I wanted them to... but then I didn't. Because getting my freedom would mean losing my mom. As crazy as I knew she was, she needed me. I couldn't let them take her away. She had just been so scared... of everything.

Four months ago

Della

When Braden had given me her old car and told me to get out and see the world, neither of us had thought about the fact that I didn't know how to fill it up with gas. I had only had my driver's license for three months. And I'd only actually had a car to drive for five hours. Pumping gas had not been something I needed to know until now.

I reached into my purse and pulled out my phone. I'd call Braden and see if she could talk me through this. She was on her honeymoon and I hated to interrupt her though. When she'd shoved her keys into my hand earlier today and told me that she wanted me to "Go explore. Find your life, Della. I'd been so caught up in the awesomeness of her gesture that I didn't think to ask anything else. I'd simply hugged her and watched as she ran off with her new husband, Kent Fredrick, and crawled into the back of a limo.

The fact I couldn't pump gas had never crossed my mind. Until now. My tank was so empty I'd coasted into this small service station in some beach town in the middle of nowhere. Laughing at myself I listened as Braden's voice said, "I'm not available. If you want to reach me I suggest you hang up and text me." Her voicemail. She was probably on a plane. I was going to have to figure this one out all on my own.

I stepped out of the small faded red Honda Civic. Luckily I'd pulled up to the gas tank on the correct side. There was the little door I knew the nozzle went in. I had seen Braden do this before. I could do this. Maybe.

My first problem was that I couldn't figure out how to open this little magical door. It was there. I could see it but it had no handle. I stared at it a moment then glanced around to see if there was anyone near me who didn't look scary. I needed some help. It had taken two solid years of counseling to get me to speak to strangers. Now I did it often. Braden really had more to do with that than the psychologist I'd been forced to see weekly. She'd pushed me out into the world and taught me how to live.

I had the quote, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," by Franklin D. Roosevelt, taped to my bathroom mirror. I read it daily or at least I had been, for the past three years. I silently quoted that in my head and my body relaxed. I wasn't scared. I wasn't my mother. I was Della Sloane and I was on a road trip to find myself.

"You okay? Need some help?" A deep smooth drawl startled me and I jerked my head around to see a guy smiling at me from the other side of the gas pump. His dark brown eyes appeared to twinkle with laughter as he stared back at me. I didn't have much experience with guys but I did have some. Enough to know that even when they were gorgeous, like this one, it didn't make them a good person. I had lost my virginity to a smooth talking southern boy with a smile that made panties drop all over the place. It had been the worst experience of my life. But this one might be helpful. He wasn't offering sex. He was offering to help me. At least I thought he was.

"I can't... I, um... See, I've never..." God, I couldn't even say it. How did a nineteen-year-old girl explain that she didn't know how to pump gas? Laughter slowly bubbled up in my chest and I covered my mouth. He was going to think I was insane. I swallowed my laughter the best I could and smiled up at him. "I don't know how to pump gas."

The guy's elegant dark eyebrows shot up and he studied me a moment. I guess he was trying to

decide if this was true or not. If he only knew. There was so much I didn't have a clue about. Braden had been trying to educate me in the ways of the world but she was married now and it was time I figured things out without her as my crutch.

"How old are you?" he asked and I noticed his eyes slowly scan my body. I didn't look like a teenager. My body had been fully developed by the time I was sixteen. I could tell he was trying to figure this one out. Youth would be the only explanation he could come up with for the fact I couldn't pump gas.

"I'm nineteen but I've not been driving that long and this is the first time I've had to pump gas." I sighed and then chuckled. This sounded ridiculous, even to me. "I know it sounds hard to believe but honestly I need some help. If you could just get me started, I can do this." I looked back at his big fancy truck. It was all shiny and black. It fit him and his tall, muscular body, olive complexion and dark hair. He was one of those sexy, beautiful, dangerous ones. I could tell that by the smirk on his face.

When he stepped around the corner, I realized that he was much taller than I had originally thought. But then I was only five-foot-five. The snug fit of his jeans and dark brown leather work boots did really good things to his legs. I realized a little too late that I was staring and jerked my gaze up to meet his amused one. He had a really nice smile. All white perfect teeth framed by a face that looked like it hadn't seen a razor in a few days. His scruffy appearance didn't fit with his expensive truck.

"You need to pop this little door open first," he said, tapping his knuckle on it. The way his lips curled seductively around his words fascinated me to the point that I worried I'd missed further instructions. I was just about to ask when he walked around me and opened the driver's door to the car. He bent over, giving me an unobstructed view of his very delicious jeans tightening over an equally firm backside. I really liked this view.

The magical door that had baffled me sprang open and startled me. I squealed and spun around to see it now standing open. "OH!" I exclaimed in excitement. "How did you do that?"

His large warm body came up behind me and I could smell grass and something richer...maybe leather. The alluring scents engulfed me. Seeing as I wasn't one to miss an opportunity (I'd missed too many of those in my life), I moved back slightly, just enough so my back was touching his chest.

"I pressed the gas door button. It's in your car just under your dash." He didn't move away from me invading his personal space. Instead, he'd lowered his head to talk into my ear. His voice was low and rumbled deliciously.

"Oh," was all I could think of to say as a response.

A low chuckle in his chest vibrated against my shoulders. "You want me to show you how to actually put the gas in the car now?"

Yes, that would be nice but I really enjoyed standing like this, too. I managed a nod thankful that his body didn't move. Maybe he liked it just as much as I did. This was really a bad idea. I should move. Guys like him didn't treat women well. Why did they have to smell and look so wonderful?

"You're gonna have to let me get around you, sweetheart." His warm breath heated up the hair covering my sensitive ear. I tried not to shiver as I managed a nod and hurriedly moved away to press my back against the car so he could get past.

Our chests brushed lightly as he maneuvered around me, holding my eyes with his penetrating gaze. The warm chocolate brown with golden flecks in them didn't seem so amused anymore.

I swallowed hard and glanced down. Once he was safely away from my body, I decided it was time to watch him pump my gas. I needed to remember this was a lesson. One I'd desperately needed.

"You have to pay first. You got a card or are you paying cash?" His voice was back to normal. No more sexy low whispers in my ear.

Money. I'd forgotten about the money. I nodded and leaned into the car to dig in my purse and pulled

out my wallet. I grabbed my debit card and stood back up to hand it to him. His eyes were on *my* bottom this time. ~~The thought of him checking out my backside made me smile. A little too brightly.~~

“Here,” I said, handing it to him as his eyes ran back up my body. He took the card and winked at me. He knew I’d caught him looking and he was enjoying it. This one was a player, the kind a smart girl ran from. I wasn’t that smart though. I’d given my virginity to a guy just like him. It had been in the guy’s best friend’s apartment. Little did I know his “best friend” was actually a girl who was madly in love with him. That had not ended well.

He was scrutinizing my debit card. “Della. I like that name. It fits you. It’s sexy and mysterious.”

At that moment, I realized I didn’t know his name. “Thank you, but now you’re one up on me. I don’t know your name.”

He smirked. “Woods.”

Woods. That was unique. I’d never heard the name Woods before.

“I like it. Fits you,” I replied.

He looked like he was going to say something else but his smile turned serious and he held up the card. “Lesson number one is how to pay for it.”

I watched and listened carefully as he explained each step of working a gas pump. It was hard not to get sidetracked by the commanding way he carried himself. Sadness swept over me when he placed the pump back on the machine and tore off my little slip of a receipt. I didn’t want this moment to be over, but I had a road trip to get back to. After all this time, I needed to concentrate on finding myself. I couldn’t stop now, just because a guy caught my attention at a service station. That would be silly.

“Thank you so much. Next stop won’t be so hard,” I said, taking my card and receipt clumsily trying to shove them into the pocket of my shorts.

“Anytime. You vacationing here?” he asked.

“No. Just driving through. I’m on a road trip to nowhere and everywhere.”

Woods’ eyebrows narrowed and he studied me a moment. “Really? That’s interesting. Do you know your final destination?”

I didn’t have a clue. I shrugged. “Nope. I guess when I find it I’ll know it.”

We stood there a moment in silence. I started to move when Woods’ hand reached over and touched my arm. “Have dinner with me before you get back on the road? It’ll be dark in an hour. Won’t you be stopping in a town soon to get a place to spend the night?”

He had a point. This was a nice little town- very classy and coastal. It seemed to be a safe option. I really wasn’t worrying about safe though. I was finally living. I was throwing caution to the wind. I stared up at the dark stranger in front of me. He wasn’t safe. Not in the least.

“Dinner sounds nice. Then maybe you can point me to the best place to get a room for tonight.”

I kept the little red car in my rearview mirror. I was having Della follow me just out of town to a Mexican restaurant that had really good food. And there was a better chance I wouldn't run into anyone I knew.

Tonight was about taking a break from the stress that my life had become. My dad was pushing me more and more to prove myself. I wasn't sure what the hell else he wanted from me. No, that wasn't true. I knew his plans for me. He expected me to get married. Not to someone of my choosing though. He had already chosen who he wanted me to marry- Angelina Greystone. All my life, Dad had planned on having a Kerrington name linked with the Greystone name. He'd had his eye on the prize. Every year we'd spend a week in Hawaii with the Greystones and Dad always encouraged me to get to know Angelina. For us to spend time together. Hell, they'd pushed us together so much at such a young age that we'd ended up having sex at fifteen. I'd thought I was her first until I'd actually slept with a virgin and I realized Angelina had been lying. I might have been a virgin that year but she sure hadn't been. It had jaded my view of the pretty blonde. The older and more glamorous she became the more I ran like hell to stay away from her. She had claws and she wanted them deep in me. I knew the day would come when I'd cave just to make my dad happy but I was putting it off as long as I could. Or I had been until Angelina had moved south. She was now taking up residence in her parents' beach house and my dad was forcing her on me constantly.

I needed to step back from all the shit that came with being a Kerrington and hopefully enjoy this hot little number who had the body of a sex goddess and the face of an angel.

She seemed skittish at first but then some wild carefree girl emerged and I wasn't one to turn away from sexy invitations. That body and those big blue eyes had been all the hinting I needed. Better yet, this one wasn't sticking around. I'd get a naughty distraction who wouldn't come with the high maintenance syndrome later. She'd just drive away.

The memory of that ass of hers stuck up in the air in those tiny shorts that barely covered it up had me shifting in my seat to adjust my excitement. Della Sloane was just what I needed tonight.

I pulled into the gravel parking lot of El Mexicano and parked on the far side of the building so that someone driving by wouldn't notice my truck. No interruptions tonight. I was getting laid. The hot new strings attached kind of laid.

I stepped out of the truck and watched as Della got out of her car. She wasn't wearing a bra under that black halter-top. Those tits of hers held the fabric up like one big tease. Damn, this was gonna be a good night. I was more than positive she wanted this too. She'd all but pressed her ass against my dick after I'd opened her gas tank. This one knew what she was doing and she did it well.

"Good choice. I love Mexican," she said, smiling at me. I watched her hips sway invitingly as she walked my way. I was about ready to forgo the meal and just head straight to the hotel room. Her dark hair fell just below her shoulders in soft natural curls. I was also more than positive those long dark eyelashes were the courtesy of good genes and not out of a package. I'd seen my share of false eyelashes on females and these looked real.

"I'm glad," I replied, stepping forward and placing my hand on the small of her back to lead her inside.

Once the food was ordered Della took a sip of her margarita and smiled at me. "So, Woods, what do you do for a living?"

I wasn't answering that truthfully. I didn't like to give women too much info into my life unless I

planned on keeping one around. "I work in management."

~~Della didn't frown or look perturbed that I'd blown off her question. She kept smiling and sipping the sweet yellow drink.~~

"Obviously you aren't ready for the hard questions. I'm good with that. How about you tell me what you love to do."

"Golf, when I get time, and taking really hot females out to eat Mexican food," I replied with a smirk.

Della threw her head back and laughed. She was so free of inhibitions. She wasn't trying to impress me. It was refreshing. Her eyes twinkled when she looked back at me. "What's your biggest fear?"

Whoa. Weird turn of questioning. "I don't think I have any fears," I replied.

"Sure you do. Everyone does," she said before licking at the salt around her glass.

Did she have fears? It sure didn't look like it. "Becoming my dad," I said before I could stop myself. That was too much for her to know. More than I admitted to anyone.

A far away expression came over her face as she stared over my shoulder. "That's odd. My fear is that I'll become my mom."

Her big blue eyes blinked rapidly and a smile came back on her face. Where ever she'd gone mentally she was back. Thinking about her mom wasn't something she wanted to do and I understood that.

"What do you love to do?" I asked her wanting to change the subject back to something light.

"Dance in the rain, meet new people, laugh, watch old eighties movies, and I like to sing," she replied then smiled at me before taking another sip. At this rate she was going to get hammered if I didn't watch her closely.

Two margaritas later and she was pressing her chest against my arms while laughing at all my jokes. I was cutting her off now because she was just the right kind of tipsy. I didn't want her completely drunk.

"You ready to go find that hotel room of yours and let me get the bed nice and warm for you?" I asked, grinning down at her and slipping my hand between her legs. She froze at first then slowly eased them open so that I could move my hand up high enough to feel the dampness against her panties. She wanted me just as much as I wanted her. That was confirmation enough. I ran the tip of my finger up the wet crotch of her panties and she trembled against me.

She moved against my hand and closed her eyes while her mouth fell slightly open with a blissful look. *Damn*, she was responsive.

"Is this what you want?" I whispered in her ear as I slipped a finger inside her panties and felt the hot moist temptation with no barrier.

"Yes," she breathed. "But only if you promise you'll make me come."

Fuck. I snatched my hand out of her panties and grabbed my wallet. I slapped a hundred dollar bill on the table. We didn't have time to wait on a ticket.

I wanted exactly what she was promising. As for making her come, I'd make sure she passed out from the number of orgasms I intended to give her. Never throw a Kerrington a challenge like that one. We would go above and beyond.

She wasn't going to be able to drive her car like this. I'd figure out how to get it back to her later. I didn't have time to think about that right now. I opened my truck door and put her inside with more force than I'd intended. Her big blue eyes went round with surprise and I stopped to catch my breath and think this through. Maybe I shouldn't do this. Was that nervous flash in her eyes really innocent? Her body was telling me one thing but those eyes were saying something else.

She pulled her bottom lip into her mouth and bit down. I wanted to taste that mouth.

I didn't walk around to my side. I'd get to that later. I crawled up in the truck and closed the door behind me before ~~grabbing each side of her head and tilting it just right. My mouth covered hers and~~ let her taste slowly sink into me. Each small moan from her lips pounded through my veins. The fullness of her bottom lip as it moved against my mouth with inexperienced hunger was driving me mad.

I forced myself to pull back and look down at her hooded eyes. "Are you sure you want this? Because if you're not, we need to stop now." We'd never see each other again. I needed to know she wasn't the innocent that I kept sensing in her touch. I wasn't against one-night stands if the girl knew what she was in for. I needed her to be clear on this.

"I," she said then paused and swallowed hard. That wasn't the answer I was looking for. I started to move back away from her but she reached out and grabbed my shirt. "No, wait. I want this. I need it. Please, don't stop."

I still wasn't sure. She didn't sound positive. "Is this your first one-night-stand?" I asked thinking that may be the reason behind the way she was acting.

She shook her head no and a small sad smile touched her lips. "No. The last one I had was bad. Really bad. I want you to make me forget it. I want to know what it feels like to just do it for pleasure. Nothing else. Just make me feel good."

She wasn't a virgin. That was good. A bad one-nighter would make anyone unsure about doing it again. I could make her forget it. "I'll make it feel real good, sweetheart," I assured her. Then I reached down and took the bottom of her little excuse for a shirt and pulled it over her head. She wasn't wearing a bra. I'd known that but seeing her bared to me was still breathtaking.

"Oh," she squealed and fell back on her elbows which only pushed her breasts out further toward me. I was a tit man. There was no doubt about it and I was pretty damn sure I'd died and gone to heaven.

"These babies are fucking incredible," I swore before lowering my mouth to pull one of her round candy red nipples into my mouth.

"Oh yes," she cried. I smiled to myself. Normally I didn't like the vocal ones but this one wasn't practiced. She was real. Every cry out of her mouth sounded like she meant it. I filled my hands with both of her breasts and spent equal time teasing and sucking. I was pretty damn sure I could do this all night and not get bored.

"AH! Please I need you inside me. I wanna come," Della begged. I wanted her to come too but if she didn't stop making those naughty demands I was going to come first in my damn jeans.

I reached for the waist of her shorts and jerked them and her panties down at the same time. I threw them to the floor before spreading open her legs with both my hands. She was waxed. *Fuck yes.* The sexy scent of her arousal met my nose and I growled in appreciation. I needed to taste this. I wanted that orgasm she was begging for to happen in my mouth first.

I touched the smooth skin and ran a finger down the center. Della bucked wildly against the leather seat.

"I'm gonna kiss this," I warned before pressing my lips to the swollen clit sticking out in need of attention.

"Ohmygod," she moaned and both her hands grabbed the back of my head. I couldn't keep from smiling.

I licked gently at first and then began tasting with more earnest. She really was delicious. I'd tasted many women but this one was sweet. I pressed the tip of my nose against her clit as I slid my tongue inside her. Both her hands fisted in my hair as she cried out my name. I loved hearing her say it. Probably more than I should for a one-night stand I'd never see again.

The reminder that I wouldn't see her again made me a little frantic. I needed more. I began licking her with more intensity. Until that first orgasm erupted on my tongue and she screamed my name over and over. It was the first time I'd ever come close to losing it in my jeans since high school.

I pressed one more kiss to her tender flesh before sitting back and unbuttoning my jeans. I should wait until I got her to a hotel room but I needed to get the edge off first. If I was only getting one night with this girl then I was going to enjoy her over and over again. This first fuck would get me stable enough so that I could drive to the nearest hotel I could find.

I jerked open my glove compartment and pulled out one of the condoms I kept in there. I tore the wrapper off and slid it down over my dick before looking at her. She was watching me closely. Her pink tongue came out and wet her lips. I groaned and pulled one of her legs up over my shoulder so I could move in between her legs comfortably.

"What if someone sees us?" she asked, still breathless from her very vocal reaction to her orgasm.

I laughed. She was just now thinking about that. "These windows are tinted, it's dark, and there is no light around us, we're also pretty damn high up in this thing. No one's going to see us."

She gave me a sexy smile and let her hands fall back over her head causing those tits to jiggle. That wasn't gonna last long. I was too damn close.

I pressed the head of my cock to her opening and slowly began pressing in. She was tight. Too fucking tight. God, no, please don't let her be a virgin. Girls that looked like her were not virgins at her age. She was meant to be fucked. "You're tight," I bit out.

She nodded and moaned opening her legs wider. "I'm not a virgin," she reminded me.

Right. Why was it I kept wanting to slow down and ease her into this? She was hot and ready. The worry that she was innocent was screwing with my head. I slammed into her and we both cried out. She was incredibly fucking tight but she hadn't been lying; there was no barrier. She wasn't a virgin; she just had a pussy from heaven. Damn, this was incredible.

I slid back out of her and she reached up and grabbed the handle on the door bracing herself for me to pound back into her. "Hard... please... again," she panted.

I didn't have to be told twice.

I managed to hit it even harder this time and those tits of hers bounced beautifully. I was pretty sure I'd never get over them. I was gonna come. This was too much.

I slipped my hand down between us and ran my finger over her clit several times until she was panting and pleading. "You like that? Such a naughty girl. Asking me to fuck you harder," I whispered against her ear as I used the wetness pouring out of her to lubricate her swollen clit.

"Ohgod, Woods. Ohgod, I'm gonna come again," she cried and I pulled her nipple into my mouth and sucked while playing with her clit.

She exploded beneath my touch and I grabbed the back of the seat and the dashboard for support as I slammed into her only two times before I followed her into release.

Della

I slowly peeled my eyes open and stared up at the ceiling. The hotel room was silent. I was alone. I was also relieved. I wasn't sure how I could face Woods after last night. I was a lot of things but whore wasn't one of them. Thinking back to last night's events I felt very much like a whore. I wasn't sure what had possessed me... unless it was the tequila. Maybe my courage to take what I wanted had come from a little too much to drink but I hadn't been drunk. I'd known exactly what I was doing. Woods was hot, dripping with charisma, and did I mention hot? And I didn't even know his last name.

I covered my face with both my hands and started to laugh. I'd had wild monkey sex with a man I just met. How crazy was that? At least he'd used a condom each time we'd done it: in the truck, in the shower, against the table, and then finally in the bed. After which I'd promptly passed out. I'd wanted to know what good sex was. Now, I knew what earth shattering sex was. Mission accomplished. One thing was for sure. I'd never forget Woods. This was a trip to experience life and with Woods I had managed to experience one of the finer things in life.

Stretching, I stood up and glanced around the room for my clothes. Wait... my car. I needed my car. My luggage was in my... Uh, my luggage was sitting at the foot of the bed. What? I had left it in my car. I pulled the sheet from the bed and wrapped it around me. Then I walked over to the window and pushed back the curtain. It didn't take me but a minute to find Braden's red car parked out front. Woods had gone and gotten it for me and brought my luggage inside.

My heart warmed at his thoughtfulness. If I was going to have sex with a random stranger at least I'd chosen one who didn't leave a girl completely stranded.

Present Day

I sat in Jeffery Odom, my current boss', office waiting on him. He'd texted me this morning and asked me to come into work early and meet him here. I wasn't sure what was wrong. A couple of weeks ago, he had started flirting with me and then we'd moved it to something more. I had worried this would be a problem. I was a waitress in his bar. I was also only here for a short time.

On this trip to find myself I was having to stop and get jobs until I had enough for another couple of weeks of traveling the road. I liked Dallas. It was fun. Jeffery was sexy and older. He made me feel special. At least when he was in town.

In the beginning he'd only been around once a week but after a few flirty moments between us he started showing up more and more. Mostly at closing time. He would wait in his car and text me to meet him outside. This secret romance was starting to get annoying though. It wasn't as if I was taking it seriously. I needed another five hundred in tips and I was back on the road. Next stop, Las Vegas.

The door to his office finally opened and the frown on his face alerted me that this wasn't a fun visit. I might be heading for Vegas sooner than I thought.

"I'm sorry I called you in here so early, Della," he said, walking to the other side of his desk and sitting down. This was all very proper and cold considering I'd been taking a shower with him only three nights ago before finally giving in and having sex with him.

I didn't respond to him. I wasn't sure what to say.

Jeffery ran a hand through his hair. "I think it's best if you moved on earlier rather than later. This thing with us has gotten too serious and we both know it isn't going to last."

Okay. So, he got what he wanted and now he wasn't even going to let me make my last five hundred before I headed out. He knew I was close to leaving. *Bastard.*

"Fine," I replied and stood up. I didn't need this. I could stop short of Vegas and get another job.

"Della," he said standing up with me. "I'm sorry."

I just laughed. He was sorry. Not nearly as sorry as I was. I thought we'd become friends.

I headed for the door and realized this was another one of those experiences I was on the road to find. I'd been used. I was living life. It wasn't such a hit to my ego if I thought of it like that.

The door swung open before I could reach it and a tall elegant redhead stepped inside with an angry snarl... directed at me.

"Is this her? Is this your whore? Figures, she looks like a fucking slut. Did you find this one at one of those disgusting strip joints you go to? She looks like a stripper. God, Jeff, how low could you stoop?"

I listened to her words but I wasn't sure I understood what she was saying. I was confused. The only thing I was positive of was that this woman hated me. Something fierce. I wasn't sure why but she did.

"That's enough Frances. I've fired her like you requested. Let her leave. This is between you and me," Jeffery said to the angry redhead. He glanced my way and I could see the apology in his eyes.

I looked back at her and the temper that was boiling out of control as she glared at him. "You fired her and that makes it okay?" She swung her hateful gaze back to me. "Do you even care that you were fucking the father of my unborn child? Does it bother you at all that he's not only married but going to be a daddy soon?"

Wait... *what?* Did she just say married?

I stared at her and realized that this wasn't a sick joke. Then I turned my head and looked at Jeffery. The truth was there on his face. He was married. He had made me an adulterer. Oh. Shit.

"You're married?" My question came out as more of a roar than a question.

He nodded and his shoulders sagged as if he was defeated.

I took a step toward him and stopped. If I got any closer I was going to kill him with my bare hands.

"You sorry sonuvabitch! Why would you... how could you... you have a WIFE and she is *pregnant!* I can't believe you did this. I'm *so stupid.* So incredibly stupid! All the sneaking around wasn't because you didn't want the other employees to know. It was because of her." I pointed at his wife. "I hope you burn in hell," I swore then spun around and headed for the door. Before I could open it and get the hell out of here, I stopped. There was someone else I needed to say something to. I looked back at the redhead. Her anger had faded. Her face was now streaked with tears.

"I'm sorry. If I'd known he was married I wouldn't have gone near him. I swear it." Then I stormed out of the door and slammed it behind me.

When I stepped back into the bar my eyes met Tripp's. He shook his head and sighed, "I was afraid you'd hooked up with him but I wasn't sure. I didn't want to say anything in case I was wrong and ended up offending you. I'm guessing you didn't know he was married."

I felt dirty and wrong. I walked over and sat down on the stool across from him. "I had no idea. And now I feel awful. I wanted this road trip but now I just want to go home."

Tripp was the Thursday through Sunday bartender. He was tall, lanky, and had short brown hair. He also had a little bit of a privileged look about him. It was hard to explain but something about Tripp didn't fit in here. He seemed as out of place as I felt. We had spent many late nights talking while shutting down the bar. I didn't know much about Tripp but he'd become my friend here.

"You said you wanted to see the world. To live," he reminded me of my words.

I shrugged. "Not so much anymore."

Tripp glanced back at the door and then reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. "I tell you what. Don't go home just yet. Give it some time to heal from this and then hit the road again. Spend some time in a small town and take things slow."

The way he explained it sounded nice but I wasn't sure I was up for that either.

"I'm going to call my cousin. He has some pull in the coastal town I grew up in. It's small and it's a really nice place. Nothing like Dallas. My cousin can hook you up with a job and you can decide when you're ready to hit the road again. He has friends in high places." Tripp winked.

Before I could protest or come up with a reason why this was a bad idea Tripp was dialing his cousin's number.

"Hey, Jace."

"Yeah, I know it's been awhile. Life gets crazy."

"No, you need to come to Dallas and tear yourself away from the girl your momma said you're so wrapped up in you can't see straight."

Tripp laughed and I could see the happiness in his eyes. He loved the cousin he was talking to and it looked like he might miss him too.

"Listen. I need a favor. I got a friend. She's had a hard go of things here and she needs somewhere to escape to."

"No, I know you got a girl. I'm not asking you to take her in, idiot. She can stay at my place there. Someone might as well get some use out of it. Just talk to Kerrington. Have him give her a job. She just needs some down time."

"Yeah. She is."

"I'm positive he'll be pleased."

"Awesome. Thanks, man. I'll call you back in a few. I'm gonna get her the info she needs and send her your way."

Tripp grinned as he slipped the phone back in his pocket. "It's all set up. You'll have a good paying job and you can stay in my condo there free of charge. I've been needing to send someone over to check on it. With you there you can take care of things. It will help me out. Then the best bonus, you'll be living near one of the most beautiful beaches in the south. Go find yourself while in the sunshine, Della."

Woods

I paced back and forth in front of my desk. Every now and then I glanced down at the diamond ring sitting in the center of it. I knew what it meant. I also knew I wanted to throw it as far out into the damn ocean as I could. This was my dad's not so subtle hint.

I'd gone to him yesterday to ask him when I would get to move on from management to take my place as a vice president of Kerrington Country Clubs. This was his answer. I had to marry Angelina. Fuck! Fuck! *Fuck!*

I didn't want to marry her. She would make me miserable. I'd finally given in last month and had sex with her again. She'd shown up at my house in nothing but a tiny red nightie, dropped to her knees, and sucked my dick. Between getting my cock sucked and the whiskey I'd been chugging I'd fucked her several times that night. Problem was the only way I'd managed to get off was by picturing the pretty blue eyes of Della Sloane's looking up at me. Angelina's practiced cries of pleasure turned me off. She was practiced in faking it. She didn't like sex. She used it.

I knew her type well. I wasn't interested.

I wasn't my father. I couldn't marry for money and connections and then have a woman on the side. It always made me angry that my parents screwed up marriage didn't seem to affect them. It completely messed with my head.

If I was going to tie myself down to one woman and be faithful to her the rest of my life for the sake of my rightful place in the family business, I wasn't sure I wanted in. Fuck all this shit. My dad was always controlling me.

A knock on my door stopped my endless pacing and silent ranting. I grabbed the ring and shoved it into my pocket. I didn't need this getting out. And God help me if that was Angelina.

"Come in," I called out and took a seat behind my desk.

Jace, my best friend since boarding school, opened the door and stepped into the room. "Hey, I thought you'd join us on the course for a round this morning but you never showed."

I needed to talk to someone about this but I wasn't sure I was ready. Jace would tell me to leave town and let them figure this shit out on their own. He'd been rebelling against his father's wishes for years now. "I got busy," was my only response.

Jace nodded. "Yeah, I figured." He walked over and took a seat across from me. "I need to ask you for a favor."

That got my attention. Jace didn't ask me for favors often. I leaned back in my seat and waited. This had better not be about getting his girlfriend, Bethy who was also one of my beer cart girls, off work early. We had a rush in the evenings and I needed her.

"I got a call from Tripp," he started. Tripp was his older cousin. He'd graduated a couple years before us but we'd had one awesome year in boarding school together before he left. I hadn't seen him since he packed up and left town five years ago.

"Really? How is he?" I asked curiously. I'd always liked Tripp. He hadn't wanted to bend to his parents' demands either so he'd just left. Never looked back.

Jace shrugged. "Good, I guess. He sounded happy. He's in Dallas now. I need to make it out there and see him. He didn't come to Boston this Christmas with the rest of the family. I don't expect he'll be coming around anytime soon. Uncle Robert isn't happy with him."

I didn't imagine Robert Newark was happy with his only son. He was supposed to inherit the prestigious Newark and Newark law firm located in the heart of Manhattan one day. His grandfather had built the firm from the ground up. But Tripp hadn't wanted to be a lawyer. He'd wanted to travel

the world.

~~“Anyway, there’s this friend of his. She got mixed up with their boss at the bar and come to find out he was married. She didn’t know and she needs to get out of town and heal and shit. He asked if he could send her here. He said she was an excellent waitress. She was a hard worker and she was never late. He also said she was gorgeous and the men here would tip her well. He’s letting her stay at his place since it sits empty all the time but she needs a job.”~~

I could always use good waitresses. “Of course. Just send her to me when she gets in town. We’ll get her a uniform and put her to work.”

Jace looked relieved. “Thanks. I hated to ask but he sounded worried about her. He’s already called me twice today to talk about her and make sure I get everything ready for her arrival. I didn’t want to let him down.”

“I understand. I don’t mind. And tell Tripp I said the next time he wants a favor to call me. I’d love to hear from him.”

Jace hadn’t been gone long when the door to my office opened and in walked Angelina. She tossed her long blonde hair over her shoulder and smiled at me. It was that practiced seductive smile. It bored me. Her tongue darted out and she licked her lips while sauntering over to my desk.

“I’ve missed you. I haven’t seen or heard from you since last week. I thought we’d had fun on the sixteenth hole.”

I had agreed to take the last round of the day last week with Angelina. I knew it would get my daddy off my case and satisfy her. What I hadn’t expected was for her to rub against me and grope my dick the entire time. The last time she’d slid her hands down the front of my shorts and said she wanted to be fucked I’d bent her over and placed both her hands against a tree then screwed her from behind. That way I didn’t have to see her fake expressions of pleasure. She was doing this to get me to marry her. Her daddy wanted this and she was doing what he wanted. Nothing more.

After I’d gotten my release I’d ended the game and dodged her ever since.

“I’ve been busy,” I replied coldly.

She didn’t take a hint. Instead, she stepped between my legs and leaned over me giving me a direct view down her shirt. She didn’t have much in the way of tits. I wasn’t sure what she was flashing me. If I married her I was getting her a boob job.

“Too much work and not enough play,” she cooed, dropping to her knees and rubbing her hand over my uninterested cock.

“I can take the edge off,” she promised and went to unfasten my pants. I had felt bad the last time I’d let this go too far. I was using her. Sure, she was using me too but it didn’t mean I had to stoop that low. It was wrong. I didn’t want her. If I did marry her it would be because I was being forced to. There was no reason for me to keep this up. I needed some time to think about all this.

“Stop, Angelina. I have work to do. Not now.” I resisted the urge to shove her away. That would be too cold.

“You can work and I can make it feel good. Show you what you can have the rest of your life.”

We both knew that the moment I said “I Do” sex between us would become a chore. She’d make up reasons why she couldn’t and office break blowjobs would be a thing of the past.

“Don’t take me for a fool, Angelina. I’m a smart man. I know what you’re doing and I know why. The minute we’re married this facade you’re putting on will disappear.”

Her eyes flashed with resentment. I was just being honest. It was time she was too.

“Just because my daddy wants me to marry you doesn’t mean that is the only reason I want to. I’m attracted to you. What woman isn’t? The difference between other women and me is that I’m good enough for you. We complement each other. You can fight this and try like hell to hold onto your

playboy ways but I won't go anywhere. I want that ring I know your daddy bought on my finger and I want your last name. ~~The sex could be incredible for us both if you'd just let it. I won't always be the~~ whore you fantasize about. You should enjoy that part of it while you can."

She stood up and straightened her skirt. "You know where to find me when you're ready to admit this is perfect. You and me."

I pulled over at the service station where I'd met Woods only four months ago. It had been the station that led me to my journey. How ironic that the directions Tripp had given me led me right back here. I wasn't even sure whether Woods lived in this town. He'd taken me a town over to eat and find a hotel. Maybe he'd just been driving through that day too. Or maybe I might see him again.

What if he's married?

No, I wasn't going to think that. I wasn't going to judge all men by Jeffery. That was unfair. Take Tripp for example. He was nothing like Jeffery. He had given me the keys to his condo to stay in free of charge as long as I kept it clean. He'd also gotten me a job.

I glanced down at the paper in my hand. Tripp had given me Jace's phone number and told me to call him once I was settled in. He'd get me an appointment with Mr. Kerrington.

I pulled back out onto the road and followed the last two turns before pulling up to a condo unit that faced the ocean. I glanced down to check the address Tripp had given me. Surely this wasn't his condo. This town was high end and these condos had to all cost a fortune. How did Tripp own one?

The nagging suspicion that Tripp didn't belong working as a bartender and driving a Harley-Davidson came back to me. He was something more than he was letting people in Dallas know.

I pulled my cell phone out of my purse and dialed Tripp's number. No answer. I then dialed Jace's number. It rang three times and a girl answered.

"Hello," she drawled.

"Um, yes, I'm, uh, Della Sloane. A friend of—"

"Tripp's!" she squealed into the phone. "We've been expecting you. I'm so glad you made it safely. Are you settled into Tripp's apartment yet?"

I was pretty sure he had said Jace was a guy.

"Um, no, not exactly. I just arrived and this place is really nice. I'm afraid I'm at the wrong condo."

The girl laughed into the phone. "No, you're at the right place. I'm assuming you don't know that much about Tripp. Trust me honey, he can afford that place and more. Oh, I'm Bethy by the way. Jace's girlfriend. He's outside."

I liked her. She was super friendly.

"If you're sure I'm at the right place I'll go find his unit and unpack my bags. I need Jace to contact Mr. Kerrington about meeting me."

"Oh there's no reason to call him. He told Jace to send you to him as soon as you're ready. He needs some new servers. Do you have a pen and paper handy? You need to jot down these directions."

This was quite possibly the nicest place I'd ever stayed. Tripp made it sound run down like he needed me to come stay here and fix things up. Someone obviously cleaned this place regularly. It was in pristine condition. I unpacked my bags and then went to stand out on the balcony overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. It was beautiful out here. Tripp had been right. This was an experience I needed. I could work and enjoy staying here in his condo. It would be the beach vacation I'd never gotten growing up. I'd always watched television and wondered if the sand was that white and the water was that blue.

It was.

Smiling, I sank down onto the lounge chair and stretched my legs out in front of me. This was nice. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and dialed Braden's number.

“It’s about time! Where are you? Still in Dallas?” Braden’s chipper voice made me miss home a little. ~~Maybe I just missed her. It wasn’t like I’d left a lot behind there. Except for people who would always whisper about me and wonder.~~

“Nope. Not in Dallas anymore. Turns out Jeffery is married.”

I heard her sharp intake of air as she let that sink in. “Oh, no,” she breathed. “Della that’s awful! I’m so sorry. Where are you now? Do you want me to come get you? You’re doing okay, aren’t you? Not having strange thoughts…” Her voice trailed off at the last bit. I knew she hated to ask me that but honestly, if Braden couldn’t check on me that way then who could? She knew it all or most of it. No one knew all of it. I just couldn’t share everything with the world. Some things were meant to be kept a secret.

“I’m fine. I’m actually back in Florida staying in a condo that belongs to Tripp, he’s the weekend bartender I told you about. Anyway he hooked me up with a job in his hometown and gave me a place to stay. It’s gulf front. I’m sitting on the balcony looking at the pretty white beach now.”

“Ooooooh! That sounds wonderful. Lucky you! I would love to visit the gulf again sometime. And this Tripp guy sounds really nice. Maybe once you’ve gotten the traveling bug again you could head back to Dallas and thank him,” she teased.

“Tripp is just a friend. Not happening. I mean I’ll thank him but I’ll be sending a card and some money or something via the mail.”

“You’re right. I pushed you to start dating and look what happened. This is your chance to live life. No reason to get attached to one guy. You have the world to explore.”

“That’s right. And I intend to do that right after I enjoy the sunshine and sand for a little while.”

“What’s the new job like?”

“I’m not sure yet. I need to go meet the boss. He’s expecting me. It’s at a country club so that should be a fun experience. Much different from the bar,” I told her.

“Very. Go get that job then call me and tell me all about it. I can’t wait.”

We said our goodbyes and ended the call. Braden was always my way of touching base. Remembering things. Everything I had been through and everything I had overcome.

The night I met Braden had changed my life. The only person I’d ever known was my mom. She wouldn’t let me answer the door to receive packages or our groceries. I’d had to hide in my closet and be quiet until the person at the door was gone. Braden had been as fascinated with me as I was with her. She’d asked me questions that I hadn’t been able to answer for a long time. I couldn’t tell anyone about my mom. Even as a kid I understood that.

Shaking away memories I didn’t want to think about right now I stood up and headed for the bedroom I’d claimed as mine. There were two bedrooms but one had a king size canopy bed and a fabulous hot tub. I took that room. I pulled out my newest skirt. A short pink chevron print and a white sleeveless knit top I’d bought to go with it. After brushing my hair and applying some makeup, I slipped into a pair of backless pink heels and headed for the door. I had a job to claim.

I hated management. This was how my father was wearing me down. He knew I hated this part of the job and he also knew I didn't deserve to be doing it. He was using this torture to get me to marry Angelina. And it was working, dammit.

I shoved open the kitchen doors to deal with the latest drama to find my head server, Jimmy, with his hands on his hips glaring down at the newest server, Jackie or Frankie or something I couldn't remember. She was crossing her arms over her chest and glaring right back at Jimmy.

"What the fuck is going on? I need you out there serving guests and I hear you in here fighting as I walk by. Someone want to explain or do I just fire all your sorry asses?" I demanded in a tone I knew couldn't be heard outside the walls.

"I can tell you what's wrong. Her. You hired a lazy one. She takes a smoke break every ten minutes and if I have to serve another one of her tables because she's left the order sitting there for more than five minutes I'm gonna go apeshit on her ass. You hear me? Either she goes or I go."

I wasn't firing Jimmy. He ran the kitchen for me. He was also a favorite of the female members. They had no idea he preferred the male members. It was a secret we kept so that he got the big nice tips.

I turned my attention to the new girl. "I thought I made it very clear when I hired you that there were no smoke breaks. Jimmy says when anyone takes a break. He is the boss in here."

The girl let out a sigh and then jerked her apron off and slung it on the ground. "I can't work with these kind of slave conditions. A girl needs a break and just because I'm not as fast as he is he gets mad. Well screw him. I'm out of here." She spun around and stalked out of the kitchen.

Good. I didn't have to fire her or deal with female tears. Only problem was that I needed another server. Now.

"Glad she's gone but we need to call in backup," Jimmy stated the obvious.

"Try to manage until I can get someone in here to help." I headed out the door and was making my way to the office when the click of high heels alerted me that I was being followed. Please God, not Angelina now. I wasn't in the mood. Unless she wanted to go serve customers, she needed to leave me the hell alone. I turned around to tell her so when the words froze on my tongue.

It wasn't Angelina. It was Della. She was even more mouthwatering than I remembered and I remembered a lot. Almost every damn day I remembered her really well. Normally, while I was in the shower.

Her dark hair looked longer and it was pulled to one side and laid loosely over her shoulder. She was wearing a snug fitting white top that didn't leave a lot to the imagination with that chest of hers. Then a short skirt and a pair of heels that made her tanned slender legs look even sexier. What was she doing here?

"Woods?" she asked and I raised my eyes from taking in every detail of her body to meet her surprised and confused gaze.

"Della," I replied. Did she not come here looking for me? Why did she seem so surprised?

"What are you doing here?" she asked as a pleased smile started to form on her lips. I'd never told her my last name. On purpose. I didn't want the one-night-stand to turn into anything more. Although over the past four months I'd kicked myself for not giving her my number. I'd wondered where she was and if she was going to come back this way anytime soon. Now, here she stood. In my club.

"My father owns the place," I replied and watched her face. Her eyes went wide and she glanced around at her surroundings as if taking them in for the first time.

"Are you Mr. Kerrington?" she asked.

“Depends. My dad is also Mr. Kerrington. I typically go by Woods.”

Della let out a soft laugh. “I can’t believe this. I think I’m supposed to be meeting with you about a job. Tripp sent me.”

Tripp. This was the girl? The one he was helping out? Shit! What had Jace said had happened to her? She had gotten messed up with the boss or something. Hell, I couldn’t remember. I hadn’t paid that much attention.

“Yeah, that would be me.” I replied. There were plenty reasons why this was a really bad idea. I didn’t need this kind of distraction. I had to find a way to deal with my dad and Angelina. Seeing Della everyday was going to fuck with my head.

“I hope this is okay? I mean, he never said ‘Woods.’ He always referred to you as Kerrington.” The nervous tone in her voice snapped me out of my internal battle.

“Uh, yeah, uh, just come on back to my office and you can fill out paperwork and we can discuss where you would fit best.”

Far away from me. Far, far away. I needed to put her sexy ass on another continent. But I was about to give her a job. Here at my club. So I could be tortured with the memory of our night of amazing, mind-blowing sex. *Ah, hell.*

I didn’t wait for her to catch up to me and walk beside me. I was afraid I would be able to smell her and I’d have her pressed up against a wall with my hands all over her in minutes. Instead, I stalked ahead of her and didn’t look back. The only reason I knew she was following me was from the click of her heels.

Once I finally got to my office door I opened it and stood back so she could step inside. I held my breath until I was safely away from her.

“Woods, you seem really unhappy about this. I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I didn’t even know this was the town Tripp was sending me to. He gave me directions and sent me this way. I was desperate to leave so I did. I can get a job somewhere else if this is weird for you.”

The worried little frown scrunching up her nose made me crumble. I couldn’t do this. I couldn’t be hard or cold with her. I was going to give her the damn job, any job she wanted, and I was going to stay the hell away from her. Maybe I should propose to Angelina. That would keep me from making the mistake of hunting Della down every chance I got.

“I’m sorry. This is fine. I’ve just had some issues with employees and drama in the kitchen to deal with. You surprised me. But you have a job here if you want it. Just tell me what you’re good at.” *Other than fucking my brains out.*

Della sat up straight and my eyes drifted down to her tits. The outline of her pebbled up nipples sent my already hardening cock to complete attention. Fuck, she was turned on. She was remembering too.

“I’ve been working at a bar in Dallas as a waitress. That’s normally the kind of jobs I get. They’re easy and the tips are good so I don’t have to stay around too long.”

I nodded. That’s right. She was traveling the world. She wasn’t putting down roots in Rosemary. She didn’t want a relationship. She wanted an adventure.

“You want a server job here? It’s an easier crowd than a bar and I just lost a server right before you walked in.”

I wasn’t putting her far away from me. No, I was putting her right here under my damn nose. I was a fucking idiot.

“Thank you. That would be perfect. Do you need me to start right away since you just lost a server? I’m a quick learner,” she assured me.

No, I needed her to go back to Tripp’s condo and let me calm the fuck down.

A knock on the door interrupted me before I could respond and Jimmy stuck his head in. “It’s

getting out of control.” His eyes found Della and he flashed her a smile. “Well, aren’t you all kinds of sexy. Please tell me you’re here for a job.”

Della smiled at him brightly and nodded.

“Perfect. Can I have her?” Jimmy asked, opening the door wider.

I wanted to tell him no that I wasn’t done with her yet. I was still considering laying her over my desk and pushing that skirt up to see what she had on underneath.

“Sure. Go ahead and take her. She has experience so it shouldn’t be hard to get her going.”

Della stood up and smiled back at me one more time. “Thank you for this.” Then she went to Jimmy who closed the door behind them.

I laid my head back against the leather seat and let out a defeated sigh.

I needed to remember that Della would be leaving soon. She wasn’t one to stick around. I couldn’t lose everything I’d worked for because I wanted to be buried in her tight little pussy again. It was time I focused on Angelina. Maybe having that buffer between us would keep me from making a mistake. Because Della Sloane could cause me to lose it all. Then she’d walk away.

As sweet as she tasted and as perfect as she felt, I couldn’t let my desire for her change my life. Angelina would make my dad happy. I’d be vice president and this management shit would be behind me. It was my only choice. It had to be.

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