

All eyes were on her as she stopped before Room 114, which was at the end of the hallway. *Everyone* here knew it was Hadrian Bancroft's room, but *none* of them knew who she was.

Not a surprise, Gabby thought, doing her best not to fidget, conscious of how everyone was still staring at her. Weren't they going to look away?

The seconds ticked by.

Shit, she thought. She didn't have time for this. She really didn't.

Slowly, Gabby took the key out from her pocket.

There were gasps all around her – no one bothering now to pretend they were not taking in her every move. She almost winced as the people let out another gasp when the key worked and the door opened easily. Well, of course it would work since Hadrian had given her the key himself.

The room was spacious and had its own en-suite bathroom – typical since this was the most luxurious dorm in campus. It was dark, though – and this was not typical since it was already *three* in the afternoon.

She spied his supine form on the bed. After switching the lights on, she jumped on the bed and landed on her knees. "Hadrian!"

Nothing.

"Hadrian," Gabby growled, shaking her best friend by the shoulders – *hard*. "Wake up! I need you to drive me!"

Hadrian grumbled something under his breath, flipping over to lie on his stomach. As if that was not enough, he also firmly buried his face in his pillow. His long muscular form was barely covered by the thin white sheet and because they had been friends for long, she knew he was naked underneath.

The fact didn't bother her, though. Women generally went crazy over Hadrian but not her – never her. He just wasn't her type. He was simply Hadrian, her best friend for years.

"HADRIAN!"

He didn't stir.

She shook him fiercely until he was forced to open his eyes. "What?" he demanded grouchily. His blue eyes had an irritated glint to them, but it was barely visible under the dark brown locks of bed-mussed hair.

If it had been anyone other than Gabby, he would have shouted, scowled, and said a few choice words that would have sent a grown man running away in tears. But he didn't because this was Gabby – the only person who mattered to him.

Making an effort to control his temper, Hadrian pushed himself up on his elbows. A little more awake now, he saw Gabby on her knees next to him in bed, hands on her lap as she stared at him, chewing her lip. She was the tiniest thing, with clouds of ebony black hair falling around her shoulders. She wore a pretty lacy frilly blouse, buttoned up to the neck, paired with a black skirt that had inched up, baring her silky long legs.

He was tempted to let his gaze linger on those legs. In his dreams, he had those lovely legs wrapped around his waist as he sank into her and took her virginity.

Unfortunately, he wasn't sure at all it was possible for those dreams to become reality.

"Well?" he demanded when she still didn't say anything.
"What is it?"

"I..." Gabby released her lip then chewed it again.

"Gabriela," Hadrian growled.

Instead of answering him, she threw herself on the bed next to him, lying on her back. He turned to her, leaning on his elbow as he lay on his side. Seeing the worry on her face, he demanded, "What the hell's wrong?"

"I...have a date."

His heart clenched. "I see," he said evenly.

She squeezed her eyes shut. "It's...one of the hottest guys in school."

He was not an arrogant man, but he also knew he was *the* hottest guy in school. The thousands of girls who came on to him every day couldn't be wrong. But he also knew as far as Gabby was concerned, he was as sexy as an oversized teddy bear.

"Who is it?" He tried not to sound disgruntled.

She looked at him shyly. "Phillip."

He choked. "Phillip Blakely?"

She nodded, shifting to her side so she could look at him directly. "Yes." She searched his face for a clue about what he thought of her dating someone like Phillip Blakely, who was clearly out of her league.

He took his time answering, playing with her hair, which he often did. He had a strange obsession about it.

Hadrian was doing his best to calm himself. He should have been prepared for this. She was a beautiful girl – it was inevitable that some other guy would snap her up. But did it have to be Phillip Blakely, dammit?

Phillip was an ass. There wasn't any other fucking word that could better describe the other man. He was a stuck-up obnoxious trust fund brat who thought he walked on water and that his half-British bloodlines meant everyone should kiss his ass.

He looked down at Gabby. She was chewing on her lip again, a clear sign that she was nervous. It made him think of biting her lip himself – and bite other parts of her body, for that matter.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she asked suspiciously.

Hadrian schooled his expression into something inscrutable. "I'm wondering what he saw in you when you're such an ugly brat."

Gasping, Gabby snatched one of the pillows and hit him square on the face with it. "You always say such mean things!"

When she tried to hit him again, he grabbed the pillow and threw it over his back, out of her reach.

She pouted at him.

He rolled his eyes.

She kept pouting.

Ah, the little brat knew he was a sucker for her pouts. "Fine," he grumbled. "Where do I have to drive you?"

Less than two hours later, someone tapped Hadrian from behind, ruining his concentration. "I'm busy," he said shortly. Girls had been hitting on him, doing their best to capture his attention while he played pool with the other guys. Normally, he would perhaps pick the most interesting of the bunch and give them both what they wanted but not now – not when he was still furious about Gabby dating another man – and he had let her.

But then...how could he not?

He took aim and made his shot. The white ball hit its target, pushing the other ball into the hole. The other guys groaned but he paid them no heed. He should be focused on taking his next

shot, but all he could think about was what Gabby could be doing with Phillip Blakely.

He had known Gabby since they were kids. Their moms had been sorority sisters and when his parents had died in a car crash, her parents had treated him like their own even though he had been fiercely independent.

The loss of his parents had made Hadrian unwilling to open his heart to anyone, but Gabby had completely demolished his defences with her stubbornly sweet ways. She had forced him to care. She would act tough when she used to get into trouble with the other girls in school, but alone with him she would cry and demand that he comfort her.

Without him knowing how or when, she had wormed her way into his heart – and had stayed there.

Someone tapped him from behind again.

“Will you quit it?” He turned around with a scowl but instead of some shameless bimbo, he got Gabby, eyes shiny with unshed tears and a shaky smile on her lips.

Hadrian whitened. “What---”

"I can wait," she cut him off with an overly bright tone, her lips trembling even harder as she spoke.

With a curse, he drew her protectively towards him, tossing his cue stick on the table. "Gotta bail guys, sorry," he muttered to the others.

"Sure, man. Take care of your girl."

There was a note of pity in the other guy's voice, and somehow that made Gabby want to cry more. She was so, so, so stupid! Why did she even think that someone like Phillip would be attracted to someone like him?

In a snap, Hadrian had them out of the bar and inside his SUV. "Baby?"

He used to call her that all the time – when she was a kid and scared out of her mind by thunderstorms.

But then one day – he had just stopped.

And now he was calling her 'baby' again, and it sounded so good to her ears, like a haven she had long been banned from and could now enter again.

The tears fell fast and silent. She didn't want to cry but she couldn't help it.

With a groan, Hadrian pulled on the hand brakes and hauled her into his lap. Curled up against his chest, her arms around him, she sobbed so hard that in seconds her tears had completely soaked his shirt.

“What happened, baby?”

She was all choked up as she spoke, the humiliating memory making her want to hide in his arms forever.

He listened silently, growing more and more livid as he learned how the asshole had made Gabby feel like shit. Gabby was clearly blaming herself, but he was fucking sure it had been Blakely’s fault. The ass had led her on, deliberately and without a doubt had taken pleasure in making her think he liked her. Blakely had surely taken even greater pleasure in then crushing her feelings by telling her that all he wanted was Gabby’s help in hooking him up with her roommate.

“I was so, so stupid,” she sobbed and hiccupped at the same time.

He wrapped his arms more tightly around her, wishing there was a way to take away all her pain – even if it meant he would have to suffer it tenfold. Better yet, he wished there was a way he could dish out the same pain to Blakely with his fists.

That asshole would pay. He would make sure of it. But for now---

"Baby, please stop crying," he whispered.

Gabby nodded against his chest, and he could feel her physically struggling to control her tears.

"This isn't your fault. He was an asshole who took advantage of you."

"I *let* him take advantage of me," she said bitterly even as she wiped away her tears.

He cupped her face and kissed her forehead gently. "It's not your fault, okay? Tell me you believe me."

She just gazed at him stoically.

"Gabby," he growled.

"But I was a fool," she whispered.

"You're the nicest person I know and he took advantage of it like the fucking asshole he is." He wiped a stray tear from her cheek with his thumb, wanting to lick it away but knowing he couldn't...shouldn't.

“Tell me you believe me. Tell me you’ll stop blaming yourself.”

“Hadrian---”

“Tell me,” he commanded.

When he used that tone, there was something about it that made her unable to resist. She said tremulously, “I’ll try.”

He wanted to argue and tell her trying wasn’t enough, that she had to understand the asshole wasn’t worth one drop of her tears. But this was Gabby – a girl who had such a big heart she almost gave herself heart pains for crying so hard when she was young and had visited a retirement home for the first time. It had appalled her when she realized that the majority of its residents had no loved ones visiting them.

That was the kind of girl Phillip Blakely had thrown away.

Fucking asshole.

She watched him drive, the sight of Hadrian so confident and graceful in the way he handled the wheel somewhat soothing. She remembered how furious and hurt he had been when she had gone against his wishes and taken driving lessons. Hadrian

never admitted it, but she knew he was frightened he would lose her the same way he had lost his parents.

She had thought he would eventually get over his fear, but he had not – and he also didn't speak to her for a long time. In the end, they had reached a compromise – for as long as he would be able to drive her, then he would. She could only get behind the wheel if he was unavailable.

And being his usual sneaky self, Hadrian had made sure he would always be available.

"Stop staring at me," Hadrian muttered. He didn't care if the whole world stared at him. He was used to that and he knew half the reason wasn't even because he wasn't so terrible looking. Virtually everyone knew he was the sole heir to the billion-dollar fortune his parents left him with, and *that* was the primary reason everyone gave a shit about him.

Well – almost everyone.

Gabby was different, had always been so, and he wished to God there was a way he could make her realize he was *the* one for her. Every time she looked at him for longer than a second, Hadrian would feel unnerved – he did not want her to accidentally realize how much he wanted her.

Gabby blinked, realizing belatedly that she *was* staring at him. "I'm sorry. I was just thinking about...well, driving," she confessed.

"I won't let you back out of our deal."

The growl made her smile a little. "I'm not, don't get mad," she said soothingly.

"Then what exactly were you thinking about?"

"Just that...you drive well," she said lamely. She just couldn't make herself say the truth, and that was how she had absent-mindedly admired the way the muscles in his arms became well-defined as he turned the wheel or how beautiful his profile was when she was looking at him from the side.

He frowned at her.

She hurriedly changed the subject. "Where are we going?"

"I figured you'd want to go home."

She thought about it then shook her head. "No. I want to go to your dorm." She couldn't bear it if her parents saw her now. One look at her face and they'd know. One look at their faces and she'd break down again.

When they reached his dorm room, he locked the door without a word, swept her up in his arms, and dumped her on the bed.

"Hey!" Gabby protested.

He followed her on the bed and still without saying anything, he hauled her close then pulled the covers over them. "Don't think."

Oh.

Slowly, she relaxed against him. This was how he had comforted her all those nights when she had been alone at home, her parents away on a business trip and the storm raging outside her bedroom. She snuggled close to Hadrian. "Thank you," she whispered. Again, the tears started to fall. "What's wrong with me? Why couldn't he like me?"

"Because he was an ass."

He tipped her chin up. "Any guy in his right mind would want you, Gabby."

"He didn't."

"He was an ass."

She suddenly pulled away from him. Lifting herself up somewhat and staring down at him, she said, "You don't."

He blinked.

She blinked too, as if only realizing what she had just said.

He could not believe she had said that. She had *never* said anything like that to him – never anything that could lead to anything outside their friendship.

When she opened her mouth to speak, he knew she would take it back, would do something – anything – to prevent it from getting awkward.

Hadrian heard himself saying, “How do you know I don’t?”

Her lips parted in shock at Hadrian’s words, and the dark driven tone of his voice made her shiver involuntarily. The way he was looking at her now was...disturbing, making her body extra aware of how close they were, how hard he was, and how hot she was feeling.

Oh God, what was happening?

His eyes were partially hooded, but they were gleaming in a way that made her swallow. What was happening? The question played in her mind over and over. But even as it did, she could feel herself bending towards him, reaching out to touch his cheek with one shaky hand.

She didn't know why she was touching him.

She just...wanted to. She just suddenly felt that she had to touch him and so...she did.

He captured her hand, his body shaking as well but only because he was doing his best to hold himself back and not frighten her away. His cock ached. His balls ached. His entire body fucking ached at the way she was staring so entrancedly at him – like she was really seeing him for the first time.

Her hand moved again and then she was tracing his lips. It was her first time to touch this part of his face, and it was softer and firmer than she imagined. It was...perfect.

Hadrian nipped her fingers.

"Oh." She almost drew back in surprise, but the challenge in his gaze made her change her mind.

Locking his gaze with hers, he sucked on her fingers.

This time her 'oh' was longer and filled with so much more longing.

And when her eyes closed, Hadrian became bolder. He wanted – needed – to kiss her. He pulled her down to him.

She landed on him with a soft gasp, every inch of their bodies touching each other. "Hadrian." It came out as a breathless whisper.

He sank his fingers into her hair and pulled her down.

For a second, she could not believe it was really Hadrian's lips covering hers. But the surprise faded, the pleasure devoured her, and she melted, literally, her body molding to his. He twisted them around and suddenly she was on her back, Hadrian on top of her. Her eyes opened in shock.

Their gazes met, and then he was kissing her more deeply.

Oh. Oh, oh, oh God, oh.

Her lips fluttered closed again, her arms went around his neck, and there was nothing to do but kiss him back. Her lips parted. His tongue dove in. And the kiss became even hotter, so much so that she just forgot to think, to breathe – she just wanted more of this.

He kissed her hungrily even as his hands roamed around her body. He wanted to groan at how utterly soft and perfect she felt under him. He made short work of her clothes and his, and she was whimpering so sexily against his mouth that he wondered if she realized they were both down to their underwear.

He lifted his head, knowing she needed to breathe.

Her eyes fluttered open and a second later, reality kicked in.

She gasped.

He didn't say anything, just looked at her challengingly.

Gabby swallowed and bit her lip.

Dammit – it was time she learned what that little act of hers did to him.

With a low growl, he bent his head down again and sucked her lower lip – hard.

She gasped again, her body bucking against him.

Releasing her lower lip, he ravaged her mouth with another devouring kiss, swallowing her whimpers of surprised pleasure. He exerted force on her legs until they fell open and he settled on top of her, groaning against her lips as her mound nestled her cock.

“Hadrian.” It was the sexiest thing he had ever heard.

“Yes, baby,” he gritted out, looking down as he cupped her perfect little breasts. He slowly pulled the cups down, exposing her breasts inch by inch.

“Hadrian!”

“It’s as perfect as I’ve always imagined.”

“Hadrian!”

Ignoring her shocked cry, he bent down and nuzzled his face against her breasts.

She trembled hard, unable to believe how aroused she was. This was Hadrian. What was happening? But there was no time to follow that line of thought, not when Hadrian was cupping her breast, making her swallow, and then his head was moving towards her nipple---

She let out a shriek, body arching as a lightning bolt of pleasure struck her body at the feel of his mouth around her nipple. He laved it with his tongue, played with the tip, and nipped it gently between his teeth before sucking on it hard.

Oh...my.

She dug her nails into his shoulders, unable to stop herself from lifting herself towards him, wanting more of his kiss.

He obeyed the silent command, suckling on her nipple, loving the taste of it, before moving on to worship her other breast.

His fingers were moving down, tracing her belly, and making her squirm. She tried to pull away when she realized where his fingers were heading but it was no use, not with her legs spread eagled and Hadrian's powerfully muscular body between them.

His fingers dipped inside her lacy underwear. Before she could draw another breath, he was tracing her folds sweetly and gently.

Her breath caught in a strangled choking sound.

Never...never had she imagined it would feel this heavenly. Hadrian was moving his fingers rhythmically now, stroking her like a pet. And then he was dipping one finger in.

"HADRIAN!" She could not stop herself from screaming. She didn't care if everyone on the same floor heard her. It was unbelievable, the way just that one finger filled her to satisfaction. And then he started to move his finger, thrusting it in and out slowly. She moaned, gripping his shoulders tightly.

"Let go, baby," he urged her as he moved his finger more rapidly inside her. When he felt her inner muscles contracting, her walls stretching to accommodate him, he slipped another finger inside her.

"Oh God!"

"Yes," he hissed in satisfaction, staring down at her enraptured face and loving every moment. He moved his fingers even faster.

She began to move, matching his thrusts, lifting herself up as he drove his fingers in.

"Please..."

He slipped his third finger in.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah."

He did not give her time to adjust. He thrust his fingers hard in and out of her, fucking her like it was his cock. Her cries became wilder, almost incoherent, telling him she was close.

"Hadrian."

"Yes, baby, let go."

"Please, Hadrian!"

"Now, baby, now."

And because it was *that* tone, she could not help responding and submitting, could not stop herself from doing what she could to please him. And like always, what pleased him pleased her even more and she cried out as her orgasm took her over the

cliff, her body shaking and pouring out her release, drenching his fingers.

All the while he held her, gazed at her, and God he wanted her even more now.

When she opened her eyes, they were confused, with just the hint of fear.

No. Fuck no! He would not let her retreat to a safe distance and use their friendship as a barrier again. Hadrian withdrew his fingers, the loud popping sound making her blush. He touched her clitoris very gently.

She gasped, her eyes widening, her breath hitching.

"We are not fucking over yet." He started rubbing her clit.

Ooooooh...

She tried to keep herself from getting lost in his touch.

But then he started rubbing her clit faster and harder.

Ooooooh...

She closed her eyes and let it take her away again.

Three days had passed since *that* happened and each day was emptier than the other.

And now this...

He couldn't stop staring at her. Three fucking days she had ignored him and he had done his best to ignore her back. If she thought he was just a rebound guy and now regretted making out with him, then that was fucking fine with him. Countless girls wanted him. She was just one of the many.

But deep down inside, Hadrian knew it wasn't true.

Waking up that night alone in his bed, Gabby not answering her phone, had pissed him off. But more than that, it hurt him. Was she ashamed now that she had made out with him? She had always been the goody-two-shoes type, the kind that believed she had to walk down the aisle a virgin. Did she now think he had corrupted her and blamed him for it?

When she actually tried to move around him, her eyes not meeting his, Hadrian snapped. He grabbed her elbow and ignoring her loud protests, he dragged her with him all the way out of school and into the parking lot.

"Let go of me!"

He opened his car door. "Get in."

"No!"

"I said, *get in.*"

She didn't want to do what he said but it was *that* tone and even now, it was still effective. She got in. He slammed the door shut, hard enough to make her flinch. And then he was getting in from the other door, pressing a button to lock themselves in.

His nearness drove her crazy. It made her remember all those things they did and...oh God!

"What the hell's eating you?"

"YOU!"

"What the fuck does that mean?" he roared.

Tears struck her eyes. How dare he sound so furious with her? "And you call yourself my friend," she spat.

He gritted out between clenched teeth, "You're not making any fucking sense."

"If you can't handle the fact that you kissed me, then I'm sorry!" she shouted. "I didn't ask for your pity! It's not my fault

that you were so filled with pity you kissed me! And then you ignore me, acting like it's my fault---

He kissed her, hard, thoroughly, and so beautifully that she could only succumb to it, the familiar taste of his lips addictive.

When Hadrian lifted his head, she asked shakily, "What do you think you're doing?"

"Taking pity on you," he answered flatly before kissing her again.

The kiss went on for an eternity. And when he finally allowed her to breathe, she had completely lost the will to fight. "Hadrian," she whispered.

He looked at her.

She admitted brokenly, "I don't want you gone from my life again."

With a groan, he pulled her to his lap and she went to him eagerly, her arms weaving around his neck tightly.

"What happens now?" she whispered against his neck.

"I'm not boyfriend material," he told her harshly.

She became paralyzed. Oh God, did that mean he would leave her again?

"But...the days you were gone were the fucking worst days of my life."

She started breathing again.

He tipped her chin up. "So...what do you say we take it day by day?"

She said unevenly, "I'd...like that."

He watched her gnaw on her lip and knew she was worried again. "What?" He was doing his best to control himself, knowing they still had stuff to sort out.

"I don't think..." She took a deep breath. "I'm sorry, but I don't think I can handle it if you have other girls while we figure out---"

He kissed her. "You don't have to worry about me wanting anyone else. I've been having wet dreams about you for *years*, baby."

Her eyes widened. "But---"

Hadrian brought her hand to his cock. "Let me fuck you tonight and you'll understand how much I want you."

The rawness of his tone made her gulp and turn red. "Hadrian," she protested.

"I've always been your slave, baby. You just didn't know it till now."

The words stunned her, aroused her, but most of all it humbled her that someone like Hadrian would say something like it – for her. She struggled to speak, couldn't, and so even as her face flushed a deeper shade of red, she did her best to make herself understood by squeezing his cock.

His eyes widened.

She squeezed it harder.

And then he was kissing her, and she sighed in surrender, satisfied that he understood what she could not say.