



PARALLEL LIVES

---

*Edward & Jax*

AVA MARCÉ

# **E-Book**

Dedicated to writers like me.



# Parallel Lives - Book 1

## Prologue

UNTITLED

JAX

AFTER WAKING up to the annoyingly familiar beep, I smile, because today is the day I begin a new chapter in my life. After six years of late night studying and working at Benny's, I am finally graduating. I will eventually reap the rewards of working my butt off and at times feeling as if it was for naught.

I open my eyes to the bright glaring sun and the

familiar noise of the city; I love this city. I love the sounds of the vendors on the street, even when the taxi drivers sometimes illegally blow their horns. I've truly bitten the apple because for me, New York City is the greatest city on earth. I couldn't imagine living anywhere else.

As much as I love this city, I need a break from it though. That's another reason for the smile on my face this morning. By the end of the today, I will be on my way to London, England. Initially, I planned to start work at Hamilton Interactive, one of the city's most prestigious marketing firms right away. Hamilton barely hires new recruits, and when they do, they are among the top one percent when it comes to talent.

I decided five months ago to submit an application, just to see what would happen. I wasn't expecting a response. I was convinced my CV would be the one put to the bottom of the pile, imagine my surprise when

they called. Being the pessimist I am, I accepted an interview and expected the worse. The worse didn't happen, they were impressed enough to call me back for two additional interviews, and to hire me as their Junior Marketing Director. Even when I told them I couldn't start until the end of summer, they still wanted me. Of course, if they told me I needed to start right away, I would have.

Now I have the job of my dreams and a chance to recover from my crazy school and work schedule. Thanks to Jeffrey and one of his ideas, after graduating today, we are headed to what my father calls the city of dreams.

Jeffrey is my best friend. We've been friends since we met junior year of High School. For a while during our senior year, we thought we were into each other, even went on a date. The kiss at the end of the date convinced us our love is not the passionate type.

Jeffrey was born in England but raised in America. His mom had breast cancer, and she asked her mother, who was living in the states, to take care of him before she died. When I met Jeff in high school, he was quiet and withdrawn. We still were able to manage to become friends, in spite of his anti-social attitude and his unfortunate circumstances.

My best friend is a pain in the ass. He is nosy, intrusive, and thinks up crazy ideas that certainly make life interesting. One such idea is our trip to Europe. At first, I told him no, then I thought about it and decided this trip was exactly what I needed. It will help me recuperate before I start my new job.

It doesn't take long to dress and take an Uber to Yankee Stadium, one of the landmarks of New York City, and where the graduation ceremony is being held. The Stadium is filled with lots of memories for me. I think of

them as I retrieve my cap and gown and head towards my mom and dad waiting at the entrance.

My dad used to bring me here a lot between the ages of ten and thirteen. It wasn't so much that he thought I would love the game as much as he does, I think he hoped that I would continue the career he wasn't able to, because of his knee injury. It didn't take long for him to realize I wasn't going to follow the path he wanted, but my own.

I am lucky because my parents are so supportive and caring. They taught me to believe I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. If I ever fall short of a goal, they are there to tell me I will reach it the next time. They always accepted me and love me unconditionally, even when I told them I am gay.

"Are you ready?" My mom asks as soon as I was within hearing distance. "As ready as I will ever be," I say.



She smiles, as my dad pats me on the back and says the words I've heard a thousand times. "I am so proud of you, I know just as I've always known, that whatever you set your mind to accomplish, you do." I try not to tear up and give him and my mom a big hug. I know that as much as today is my special day, it's theirs as well. Their only son is having his next milestone.

The hug doesn't last long before we are bombarded by Jeffrey. "Hey, Mr. & Mrs. Kens!" Jeffrey, for some reason known only to him, has an aversion to saying my family's full surname. "Are you ready to watch your son and I become men?" He asks. My mom smiles and asks, "I thought you said you were already a man?" We all laugh as we walk towards the front of the stadium.

Three hours later, and after listening to a shit load of names, I've officially graduated. Jeffrey and I have a celebratory meal at Benny's with my mom, dad, and Jeffrey's

grandmother. They give us a lot of advice about staying safe in England, the advice continues as they help us pack our suitcases into their car and head towards the airport.

After we say our goodbyes and we check in, Jeff and I look at each other and begin to laugh. "We did it," He says. "Yes, we did, and you know what? We are not done yet," I say. We smiled at each other and wait to board the plane headed to the first adventure of our lives. Little do I know what is waiting for me.

## Chapter 1

### EDWARD

I'M OUT of breath, winded, and frustrated. I'm angry that my typical morning run is not accomplishing what it usually does. I run not just for my body, but my mind. Running in the morning clears my head, which allows me to think with clarity and purpose. Clarity and purpose was the last thing I thought about two days ago when I drank myself into a stupor and made the biggest mistake of my life.

Then to have my parents, and her parents stare at me, waiting for a confirmation of our engagement was like standing in front a firing squad waiting for the guns to discharge. I pursed my lips and just shook my head. That ladies and gentlemen is how I went from thinking I should

break up with Lillian Fensworth, to officially becoming her fiancé. I am so screwed.

As I'm walking back to my apartment my cell buzzes, it's Olivia, my best friend. I've known her all my life and truth be told, she is the one person I need to talk with right now. I need to figure out the mess that is my life.

"Hey, Liv," I say in a very monotone voice

"Did I hear right, that you are going to stay engaged?"

I don't answer; instead, I ask, "Can we meet for coffee? I'm just coming back from my run."

"I'll do one better, I'll bring you coffee because we need to talk. I can't believe you are not going to call off this farce, that you are willing to marry that snobby you-know-what. I'll be there in twenty." Just like that, she hangs up.

I'm standing in the shower, my predicament on the forefront of my mind. Suddenly, there is a bang on the bathroom door. "Get out here you coward, I want to know how she

managed to snag you.” There are times I regret giving that woman a key to my apartment, her intrusiveness is exasperating. “I’ll be right out, just relax,” I shout.

“Don’t tell me to relax, stop wanking off and get out here.” I turn off the shower, grab a towel, and walk into my closet to at least begin to dress for work. With my pants and shirt on, I walk towards the living room. I find Olivia sitting at the kitchen island sipping her coffee. As soon as she sees me, she pounces. “Are you crazy? What is wrong with you? Don’t you see this was her plan all along?”

“Can you please let me get a word into this conversation?” I fire back.

“Fine, defend yourself,” she says in a huff with her hands on her waist.

“I know I proposed while I was drunk, but us getting married isn’t a bad idea.” Olivia looks at me wide-eyed.

“Edward, you don’t love her, doesn’t that matter?” I don’t

answer her question; instead, I reach for my coffee. “Eddie, are you really willing to marry her?” I turn and face her because I know she won’t let this rest. “Yes, why not? My mother loves her, my father loves her, they are happy about this.” Olivia continues to look at me with shock on her face. “So, you are going to go through with it?”

When I don’t answer her question right away, she asks again. “Edward, are you really going to go through with this? You know what, don’t answer, I already know. You are going to marry her.”

“I am going to marry her and get it over with. It was bound to happen anyway.”

“Eddie, can you hear yourself? You just said you are going to marry her, you didn’t even mention love. What happened to marrying someone because you love them, not because you just want to get it over and done with?” She walks up to me and holds my shoulders with both her hands. “Do you love

her?" I turned away from her, I just can't face her; otherwise, she would know marriage to Lillian is the last thing I wanted.

"Eddie, turn around and look at me. Do you love her?"

"Why are you asking questions you already know the answer to, just drop it okay!" For a moment I think she's was about to leave. Instead, she sits down at the kitchen table in silence. I take my coffee and join her at the table as we continue not to speak.

"Hey, I'm going to say something to you, and I don't want you to get angry. Just know, I am saying it because I love you." I shake my head to acknowledge her as she continues.

"Edward, you are one of the best people I know, and I just want you to be happy." She says. When she doesn't continue, I prod.

"You can always say anything to me, you know that."

“Maybe not this,” she says as she looks at me sadly.

“Just say what you need to say, Liv.” There’s was another drawn-out silence before she begins to speak in almost a whisper.

“You can’t keep running from who you truly are, Eddie. Not with Lillian, not by marrying her, not by trying to live up to your parents' expectations. It’s really okay to be you.”

“I know it's okay to be me,” I say defensively.

“You said you would let me speak.” Another silence, then she continues.

“Do you remember our first year at University? I dragged you to every club I could think of, do you remember?” I nod my head to agree. “I saw you.”

“You saw me, what?” I ask curiously. “I saw you with the guy at the bathroom door.” My eyes fly open from her words. “Liv, I was drunk, I barely remember what happened that night. I do remember being drunk and some guy kissing me, I don’t even remember kissing him back, you know I’m



not gay.” She doesn’t say anything more for a while.

When she spoke, it’s with a resigning tone. “Okay, I have to go, Eddie, I hope you know that I will always be here if you need me.” She walks over to me, kisses me on the cheek, before heading for the door. “Call me if you want, I love you,” she says, as she walks out the door.

## **JAX**

The plane ride was long, when we weren’t catching up on sleep, we talked about our plans after our vacation is over. The plane landed an hour ago, and because of an incident in the airport, we are still on it. The pilot has tried twice to calm the irritated passengers to no avail. Suddenly, Even Jeff seems distracted; usually, he takes things in stride. I put my hand on his jerking knee to stop his movements. “What’s up?” I finally asked. “Why are you so shaky?”

“I don’t know. I’m just nervous about getting to know this side of my family. I was so young when I left, now here I am, returning to the fold, as some would say.” I looked at him as if he’s lost his mind, “Are you afraid they won’t accept you? Because if that’s it, you are crazy. First, you just said it, you were really young when your mother sent you to live with your grandmother. Second, look at you! You’re practically a doctor, what’s not to be proud of?” Jeffrey doesn’t respond to my comment right away. Instead, he stares out the window of the plane as if he see’s something familiar. “You don’t understand.” He finally says.

“What’s not to understand,” I ask, he shakes his head and just as he’s about to open his mouth to say more, the pilot announces we would be disembarking the plane. I get the impression Jeff is glad for the distraction. I wish I could understand why he is so apprehensive. I guess sooner or later I’ll find out.

Walking through LaGuardia or JFK airport in New York is not as tranquil as Heathrow airport. When I traveled within the United States, everyone is always in such a hurry to catch their flights. As I'm walking through this airport, I feel as if everyone realizes the plane is going to be there when they get there. It's just a more sedated atmosphere.

Jeff seems to be less stressed after we deplaned. Although, he is deep in thought and not saying much. I, on the other hand can't stop looking at everything, my eyes roam the airport and as we walk to customs. "So Mr. Trip Planner, what's next after we leave the airport? I just realized I didn't get full details from you about where we are staying, or even if we are renting a car, what's our plan?"

"Well," Jeff says, "Yes, we are renting a car. Let's get through the airport, pick up the car, and get to the hotel, then we can talk about everything."

“Sounds like a plan to me,” I say while noticing the long line for going through customs. “Hey! Check out the difference in the line for English citizen and non-citizens. Seriously, I have to be born here to get speedy service at customs?” Jeff laughs as he turns to head for the line with barely no one in it.

“Yeah, sorry pal,” he says. “See you in an hour, I’ll be waiting for you.”

“What!” I yell. “You don’t even have an accent. This is just wrong.”

After what seems like hours, I finally catch up with Jeffrey who is relaxing in a lounge near customs. He couldn’t help but to laugh at the exhausted look on my face as we head towards the car rental company. Honestly, I guess I am spoiled by American standards because the car they offered is small enough to fit two in a single parking space back home. Still, it was roomy enough to accommodate my six-

foot frame as well as Jeff's who is about an inch shorter than I am. It's almost dark by the time we leave the airport.

As Jeff drive along the M25, I'm fascinated by the falling sun and its reflection against the backdrop of London. Even for the short time I've been here, it's so evident that this country is centuries older than the one I was born in. Unfortunately, because I'm so tired and jet-lagged, I don't notice much more. All I wanted is to find a bed and sleep for a long time.

We arrive at the hotel, and it's way more beautiful than I expected. As we walked through the lobby doors, I couldn't help but notice the luxurious feel of the hotel. The floor was a combination of cream carpet and dark marble. Flowers were placed strategically throughout the lobby. I turn to Jeff and ask, "Can we afford this?" He smiles and simply says, "Yes."

"I'm sleeping for as long as my body will allow, and then it's

time we discuss in detail how an about to be doctor, and an about to be Marketing Director, can afford what looks like a way too expensive hotel.” Jeff gives me a slightly distressed look, “When we wake up, I will explain everything.”

The next day, I open my eyes, and for a moment I forget where I am. I reach for a pillow and ram it against my face to block the annoying sound. When that doesn’t work, I sit up, managing to get out of bed slowly, intent on closing the balcony door to block out the sound of falling rain hitting the iron around the balcony. I crawl back under the sheets and immediately fell back asleep.

When I wake up again, it is dark outside, and Jeff is shaking my shoulders, telling me to get up. Yawning, I mumble, “It’s probably not a good idea to get up in the middle of the night if we are trying to get over jet lag.”

“Get up, I ordered food, let's eat, talk, then go back to bed.”

While my eyes do feel somewhat better, my body still feels as if I ran the Boston Marathon. I slowly get up, walk to the bathroom, take care of business, before heading to Jeff's adjoining room. I find him standing on his balcony overlooking the skyline of London.

"Are you okay?" I ask as I walk onto the balcony. Jeff turns to me with a hesitant smile. "I'm good," he says, "At least until I tell you what I'm about to tell you."

"What are you about to tell me?" I ask curiously.

"More about my family here in London," he says. I look around the opulent hotel room and the scenic view.

"Either you robbed a bank before we hopped on the plane, or your grandmother gave you a lot more money than my parents for this trip."

"Well, where do I begin?" Jeff muses. "Grans didn't give me money for this trip because I already have it." Jeff says as he

turned and lean his back against the balcony. Still confused, I ask what he meant by already have it. “When I turned eighteen, I found out a lot about my father and his side of the family. It seems my father had a whole lot of money, and when he died, he left a lot of it to me.”

Shocked, my haziness disappears, replaced with complete surprise as his words penetrate. I manage to comprehend that my best friend choose not to share something so important with me. “Look, Jax—” He started to say, but I stop him by holding up my hand.

“You didn’t tell me about this for what—seven years? I think it can wait until we eat. What do you think?” We stare at each other before I turn and walk away, using the excuse that I needed a shower.

I stand under the running water and trying to wrap my head around why Jeff would keep something like this from me. Did he think I would ask him for money? Did he not trust



me? I decide as I am putting on sweats and a tee that I will just bluntly ask him. I am obviously hurt and maybe even over-reacting. I walk back into Jeff's suite, and the food is there waiting.

Jeff is standing on the balcony where I left him. "Are you going to eat?" I ask, harsher than I intended.

"Yes, I was waiting for you." We sit, survey the food and begin to devour it, neither of us saying a word. We eat through half our meal, before Jeff apologizes. I finish chewing and ask him, "For what?"

"For not telling you about my father and the money." I don't say anything for a minute, then I finally speak. "Let's just be honest with each other and answer one question, do you trust me?"

"Of course, I trust you. Not telling you has nothing to do with trust and everything to do with my mom. She died

without a penny, Jax. She was alone, and sick in this city with no one to take care of her. She was treated in a public hospital for her breast cancer. Yet years later, I found out I had a father who had money to burn, I didn't want it, Jax. I told Grans to tell them, but she wouldn't because she said there is much more I need to learn about my mom and dad."

Jeff and I talk into the morning. I learn that his father loved his mom, but his grandfather kept them apart. His father didn't know his mom had cancer until near the end. He took her out of the hospital and made sure she received the best treatment possible. Unfortunately, it was too late, cancer had already spread to other major parts of her body. Jeff's father learned he had a son in her final days and of his father's deception.

Even though we were still somewhat jet-lagged, we decide to leave our hotel room and have breakfast in the hotel's

restaurant. It was barely dawn, and at five-thirty in the morning, the restaurant was relatively empty and peaceful. We chose a table overlooking the empty streets, then ordered a hearty breakfast before continuing our conversation. Although he spent the whole night sharing his family history, I still had more questions.

“I understand your hesitation about using the money your father left you. What I don’t understand is why you didn’t tell me. If it wasn’t about me, then what was it about?” Jeff finishes chewing before answering.

“I really wasn’t sure about accepting his money. The only reason I still have it is because of Grans. She didn’t listen to me when I said I didn’t want it. It sat in the bank from the time she told me until now.”

“What made you finally decide to use it? College?”

“No, Grans paid for the first two years of school with the money from her art studio. Do you remember when she told

me I had to come home, that it was important?”

“I remember, It turned out all your grandmother wanted to do was move her artwork around in her studio.”

“Yeah, she wanted to do that, it was during that process that she handed me the letter.”

“A letter?” I ask curiously.

“Yes, my mom wrote me a letter.” He said nervously.

“What? What did it say?” I ask, not expecting Jeff to reach into his pocket and pull out the letter his mom left him. At first, I hesitated when he hands it to me. In an instant, all I can think about is the heartbreak he must have felt when he read her words. I unfold the pages as my heart skips a beat and I begin to read.

**JAX**

*Hi Jeffrey,*

*If you are reading these words two things have happened, I've passed, and you are eighteen years old. First, I want to say happy birthday. I am sure your grandmother made the day very special for you. I'm sorry I didn't live to see you become the spectacular man I'm sure you are.*

*Jeff baby, there is so much I want to say. You were so young and so not deserving of the things that happened to you. I want you to know, I've loved you from the time you were conceived, until the moment of my death and beyond. I hope you will never forget that.*

*The second most defining moment of my life was meeting and falling in love with your father. When I told him about you, I asked him to let your grandmother raise you, and when the time was right, she would arrange for the two of you to meet. Hopefully, Bradley honored my wishes. Please don't be angry with your father or me. If he knew about*

*you, I know in my heart and soul, that he would have loved you as strongly and as profoundly as I do. I didn't tell him about you when I learned I was pregnant, and I am sure you are wondering why.*

*I suppose I should probably go back a little, and tell you why things turn out the way they did. When I met Brad, we were volunteering for the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic. Your grandmother, to my surprise, told me after my sophomore year in college that I could go for three months. She thought it would be a good experience, and it would help to ground me. I was there for two weeks before I met your father. He came to build houses, and I was there as an ESL Teacher.*

*From the moment I met him, I was mesmerized by him. He was sincere, kind and shy. He was shier than me, it's a wonder we managed to actually talk to each other. We overcame our shyness to discover we had so much in*

*common. Needless to say, we fell in love. It's amazing how things change when you meet your soul mate. I truly believed your father was my soul mate. Our volunteer stint ended at the same time, and I was supposed to return home to go back to school. Your father persuaded me to come with him to London and finish college there. I know, it was a crazy decision and your grandmother told me so, but I loved him, and I decided why not?*

*Brad had his own apartment, so I stayed with him until I found a place of my own and met the criteria needed to start school abroad. We spent every possible moment together for two years. Eventually, he asked me to marry him, and we planned to tell your grandmother and his father. We planned to visit his father and tell him first, then head to the states to tell your grandmother. Our plans never came to fruition.*

*I'll never forget the day. I was studying in your father's*

*apartment while he was in class. There was a knock at the door, I opened it to find his father and another gentleman, I later learned was his lawyer. His demand was simple, leave his son now, and he would pay me any amount I want.*

*After recovering from my shock, I asked him why. I tried to profess my love for his son, but nothing I said mattered. His intentions were undeterred. He wanted me to leave his son voluntarily, or he will force it to happen. I told him I wouldn't, and I didn't want his money nor Brad's. I told him I loved Brad and would never hurt him like that.*

*Jeff, your grandfather looked at me with a smug look filled with contempt. Even though he didn't say the words, I could tell he saw me as an opportunist or a gold digger. Either way, he proceeded to share with me what he would do if I didn't leave Brad. He said he would disown him, he would make sure there wasn't a law school, in this country or any that would accept him. He threatened your grandmother. He said he would buy the building that housed her gallery and*



*put her out of business. If she finds another location, he will buy that one as well. He was threatening the security of the people I love, I couldn't let him do that.*

*I left Brad's apartment that afternoon and returned to America. I avoided all his calls and refused to see him. I loved him too much to let him lose so much because of me. I wanted to continue with school in America, but your grandmother wouldn't let me. She didn't know the real reason why I left Brad, I didn't want her to know. As a result, she told me I was childish, she insisted that I finish what I started with my education and return to school.*

*I did go back, but I didn't contact your father, and three months later I found out I was having you. Carrying you was my savior. Even though I couldn't have your father, I had a piece of him. A year later, after you were born, I learned about my breast cancer. When I first found out I had cancer, I tried to keep up with my work and school. I had friends*

*who helped me take care of you while I was in school, at work, or getting chemo, I was doing pretty well. The chemo worked, and I was convinced everything would be okay, and for a long time, it was.*

*Six years later I started to get really tired for no reason. I found out the cancer had returned and I had to get more aggressive treatments. That was when I brought you to my mother. It was only supposed to be for six months, I planned to pick you up after the treatments when I had my strength back. I realized you staying with mom permanently was a better idea, because I couldn't take care of you and me. Jeff, I missed you so much, it broke my heart to not be there for you; I thank god though for your grandmother. I was truly fortunate to have a mother like her. I have no doubt you will someday see how special she is.*

*About six months before I wrote you this letter, your father showed up at my door. I asked him how he knew, all he*

*would say was it didn't matter. I suspect your grandmother had something to do with that. Anyway, he never left my side after that. Bradley Corbin is a good man, Jeff. He would have done right by you and me if I had let him. He won't talk with me about the decision I made years ago, but I can see the pain, hurt and regret in his eyes. I know you will be practically a man when you meet him. I am asking you to please embrace him, give him the love I denied him. Please forgive me for the choices I made that affected you in more ways than one. Please remember again that I love you with my heart and soul.*

*Forever yours,*

*Your Mom*

I finish reading, unable to speak. I don't know what to say. The sadness of this whole situation expands beyond Jeff's mom. Jeff told me his father and wife died in a car crash shortly after his mom died. I looked at him and ask the

question I already know the answer to. “He never met you did he?” It feels like forever before he whispers “No, I never met him. He honored my mother’s wish. Before he died, he spoke to Grans a few times. He died before...” Jeff couldn’t finish his sentence, I watch him as he stares at something behind me. I knew he was looking at nothing in particular, that he is filled with regret.

When he finally speaks again, he continues to tell me the rest of his story. “A year ago, Maximillian Corbin, my uncle, came to see me. He told me my grandfather had died, and my father told him about me years ago. He spoke with Grans and thought it was time I knew everything. It seems I was dad’s only child, he left all this money and shares in the family company to me.” Suddenly it's clear how Jeff could afford this expensive hotel, he continues to tell his story.

“Max asked me to come to England, but I told him I can't. I really couldn't, I just didn't know how to face this part of my

family, the part my mom and I were denied. I still don't to be honest, that's why I need you here with me. I'm sorry if it seems as if I deceived you..." I didn't let him finish.

"Stop! You have nothing to apologize for. I'm glad I am here, I want to help you any way I can. I am here for you, Jeff, as long as you need me, okay." He was silent for a long time before he answers with a simple, "Okay."

Sightseeing is the focus for today. After having the really heavy conversation last night and this morning at breakfast, we decide to go and be tourists. The plan is to become familiar with the city we'll be living in for at least a few weeks. Our first stop is Trafalgar Square. Jeff and I are standing in the middle of the square, surrounded by museums, galleries, and historic buildings. There are so many options we don't know where to begin. It helps that the day is sunny and bright. I hear another tourist say it was surprising the day was so sunny. I guess that is why there are people everywhere. I know England is known for wet

weather, but so far so good!

“What do you want to see first?” Jeff asks while looking at a map I didn’t see him get.

“I have no idea, there is so much, and the crowd is daunting.”

“We should head to the south side, to see the National Gallery of Art,” he says still staring at the map.

“What kind of art are they showing?” I ask curiously.

“According to this, it has a lot of European paintings, some dating back to the mid-1200.”

“I would love to see what paintings that old look like. What direction is the gallery?”

When we walk into the crowded gallery, we’re were mesmerized by the space. Personally, I was captivated by the sheer enormity of the all white space It’s not that the space was vast, I think it’s the vaulted ceiling that make the room feel more prominent than it was. I notice its

spaciousness before seeing the paintings. We start to walk in opposite directions, each trying to see what's displayed.

As I survey the displayed arts I am drawn to the vivid red of a painting by Moroni's titled The Tailor. I don't know why I start to walk backward while looking at it, but I bump into someone and immediately began to apologize without looking at the person. When I turn, I am peering into the bluest eyes I've ever seen. I don't know why I start to ramble, or why my heart goes from its regular beat to a thousand beats per minutes. "I'm really sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going, I'm sorry."

"It's okay! I understand these paintings have a hypnotizing effect on its viewers." We look at each other for what seems like forever until Jeff clears his throat and asks if everything's okay. "Its fine," I start to ramble again, still looking at my blue-eyed victim. He is beautiful. Strong jaw line, and a smile that shine as bright as his eyes.

We finally break eye contact, he starts to say something then stops when he sees Jeff. He looks intently at Jeff, then asks a question I was not expecting. "Mr. Corbin?" Jeff and I looked at each other then at the handsome stranger, not quite knowing what to say.

Jeff finally asks, "How do you know my name?"

He extends his hands while apologizing, "I'm sorry, Mr. Corbin, I am one of the attorneys at the firm that represents your uncle, Maximillian Corbin. The two of you strongly resembles each other." Jeff doesn't take his hand, instead asking, "Did my uncle send you to check up on me?" He slowly lowers his hand, "Of course not, I'm here for personal reasons. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything."

"No, I'm sorry for being rude, what is your name by the way?"

He extends his hand again and introduces himself,



“Edward Kendrick. It’s a pleasure to meet you.” This time Jeff shakes his hand.

“The same. This is my best friend, Jackson Brent. I had every intention of contacting my uncle. We arrived yesterday, we wanted to go sightseeing before letting my uncle know that I decided to take him up on his offer to visit.”

He looked at both of us while shaking his head and asks, “How do you like London so far?” At first, neither of us answered, then I just blurt out that we’ve only seen Trafalgar Square so far while raising my hand to signal our surroundings and the gallery.

“Shall I tell your uncle you are in town?”

Jeff made a rumbling sound with his throat, looking up at the ceiling then finally answers.

“Sure, let him know I’m here and staying at the Rosewood.”

“How long shall I let him know you are here for?”

“I don’t know, that’s between him and me I guess. Anyway,

if you'll excuse us, we have sightseeing to do, nice to meet you,"

"Welcome to London to both of you," Edward says as Jeff and I started to walk away. I can't help but look back, Edward is still looking at us fiercely as he join a woman standing not far from where we were standing.

## Chapter 2

### EDWARD

I MEET Lillian at the Gallery because she wants to show me the space. She hopes the venue we rent for our wedding will have the same feel and look. I was already not interested in her antics with planning our wedding, I agreed to meet her to appease her, not to give in to renting the most expensive place to host a wedding.

As I'm looking up trying to think of an appropriate excuse to get the hell out of there, I bump right into this stranger who smelled like sunshine and honey. The moment our eyes met, I felt a connection to him. My heart is beating out of my chest, and I'm staring. He kept saying he was sorry, while I had the unbelievable urge to cover his lips with mine. I was so caught up in him, I didn't notice that someone was

standing behind me. He cleared his throat, and that pulled me out of my reverie.

I turn around, and I am standing face to face with a younger version of Maximillian Corbin. The same color hair, eyes, strong jaw line. In one instance I 'm having the most insane reaction to a stranger, lost in eyes that are combination of green and copper. Then I turn, and I'm facing the man expected to be the heir to one of the wealthiest corporations in Europe. Dazed and confused, I said more than I should have of my employers' most prominent client. It's clear Jeffrey didn't appreciate my mentioning his uncle.

After they left to continue sightseeing, I turn to find Lillian still taking pictures, entirely oblivious to what just happened. "Lillian, I have to cut this excursion short," I say as I walk up behind her. "I need to get back to the office, there is something important I need to do."

“Does this have anything to do with the two yanks you were just talking to?” She asks.

As I am dialing my cell, I gave her a flip response. “No, I really have to go.”

“This is the third time you’ve made excuses, Ed, Lillians says, sounding somewhat irritated. “I’m beginning to think you are really not interested in helping to plan our wedding,” She continued. I ignore her comments and simply repeat my initial request. “Can we reschedule? I really need to go.”

Looking miffed, she uttered, “Then go.”

“I’ll speak with you later,” I say while kissing her on the cheek, before I then turn and walk away.

As the elevator opens to Allan International, LLP, I smile. I’ve been with the firm for over three years. To this day I am overjoyed that I was given the opportunity to work with the third largest firm in London. This firm represents clients

whose net worth are in the millions. In fact, Allan International's biggest and richest client is Corbin Industries.

Allan International not only represents Corbin Industries professionally, but the firm represents Maximilian Corbin personally as well. Within Allan International, is a fleet of lawyers specifically at the discretion of Max Corbin and Corbin Industries. It makes sense to inform Arthur Moby that Jeffrey Corbin is in town. Arthur Moby is one of the senior partners at the firm, and he leads the team of attorneys that represents Mr. Corbin.

I knock on his door, waiting for his signal to enter. "What can I do for you young chap?" He asks while signaling for me to come in. I cannot remember a time when he didn't call me young chap. Sometimes I resent the nickname because I feel as if he's telling me I am not just young, but incapable. I would like to believe he has no malicious intent with the nickname. I have to breathe and remember

he is my superior.

“I thought you would like to know that I ran into Jeffrey Corbin at the National Gallery this afternoon.” His head snaps up from what he was reading. I now had his undivided attention.

“What? When did he arrive? Who made the arrangements?” He asked looking somewhat shocked.

“No one made arrangements, sir, he is here on vacation with a friend. I spoke to him briefly, and he asked me to inform his uncle he was in town.” Moby has a confused look on his face, then he looks at me and thank me for the information.

“Is there anything you would like for me to do?” I ask, even though I know what his answer will be. I currently don’t work with the Corbin Team, but you can’t blame a guy for trying.

As one of the senior partners in the firm, Moby has ten other attorneys working under him. Sometimes I feel as if I am in competition with them to get a chance to represent one of our top echelons. The Corbin family certainly qualifies.

When it comes to getting things done precisely to the specifications of the partners here at Allan International, time doesn't matter, progress does. My legal specialty at the firm is International Business Law. One of my responsibilities is to ensure our clients business dealings are legally viable in whichever country they are dealing. After another hour of looking over an important contract, I finally tell myself it's time to go home. As I am getting ready, it occurs to me that I told Lillian I would take her to dinner tonight and I forgot, again. *I'm surprised she didn't call me ten times*, I say to myself as I reach for my cell phone. I almost laugh when I see that it's dead. Which means she did call me ten times, if not more.



I don't know why I'm so neglectful of her. She is a kind woman, a beautiful woman, and lord knows she does love me. The question is, do I love her? If I do love her, do I love her enough? If I were truly honest, I would admit I'm not in love with her. For a short while, I thought I was, but I'm not. Lillian has become a convenience in my life. We are just comfortable with each other, at least I am. I don't know how she really feels because I cannot remember the last time she and I honestly talked.

Then there is the incident that happened with the friend of Jeffrey Corbin. What the hell was that? I don't understand what came over me, that I would have the reaction I had. Except for the kiss when I was drunk that Liv witnessed, I've never had any interest in men, I've always been a strait-laced heterosexual, yet you never would have thought so. Regardless of what's going on between Lillian and me, I am not gay.

I finally finish packing up my office and head towards the elevator. I'm walking down the hall when I hear my name being called. I thought I was the only insane person still working, I turned to see Thomas Waterhouse, the CEO of Allan International walking towards me. "Good evening, sir," I proclaim.

"Hendricks, you are just the man I want to see." He always calls me by my last name, *what is it with these people and names?*

"I just had a long conversation with Max. He is meeting his nephew tomorrow for the first time since he arrived in London. We've decided it would be ideal for you to help young Corbin acclimate to London."

"Max asks that after his sit down with his nephew tomorrow, that you reintroduce yourself to the pair, and offer to show them the city. Max is going to tell young Corbin about the arrangement tomorrow, so you won't have to worry too

much about convincing him. Do you have any questions?”

“Yes, sir,” I answer amazed. “Why me?” I blurt out without thinking.

“Well, for one, they already met you, if I was informed correctly. Second, Max doesn’t have the time to show his nephew and his friend around. Third, they are around your age, you young people are not interested in what the older generation do for entertainment.” Mr. Waterhouse looks at me with a perplexed look before continuing “I know you may think this is above and beyond your responsibilities, but recall your job interview when we informed you of the relationship we have with Corbin Industries. When it comes to Max Corbin, nothing he asks of us is unusual, or unwarranted. You are a part of this team, so I expect you to step up and not only do what’s expected but to go above and beyond.”

“Mr. Waterhouse, I wasn’t objecting to your request,” I say

hastily. "I would be honored to show Jeffrey Corbin and his friend the city. I just wanted to know if there was a specific reason you thought of me?"

"Nothing specific, other than the fact that you are a young man who was raised well. You are respectful, hardworking, and your performance is noted." I smile and acknowledge his compliment, "Thank you, sir, also I need to understand the level of entertainment that's expected of me, or should I play it by ear?"

"Do whatever the two boys want. Make friends with them, help them to enjoy their stay. If you are unsure of any of their requests, just give me a call. I've arranged for your pertinent cases to be handled by Charles so don't worry about any deadlines. Just update Charles tomorrow on where you are with each and keep me updated," He mumbles, "Have a great night," As he walks back towards his office. I must have stood there staring down the empty

hall wondering what just happened. I'm trying really hard to not believe I've just become a babysitter.

It seems my night had no intention of ending peacefully. No sooner I sit in the car and connect my dead phone to the charger, it buzzes with a call from no one else but Lillian. Without saying hello she starts to give me a piece of her mind. "I'm wondering why I agree to marry you. Since we got engaged, you've chosen to neglect our relationship. Tell me what I have to do to get you to give me a small percentage of the time you have for Allan International." I took a deep breath before answering. I realize nothing I say to her would matter.

"I'm sorry I forgot dinner," I said, in a monotonous voice.

"It's not just that you forgot dinner, Edward. You know, we really need to talk, can you come over now?" When Lillian wants to talk it involves me listening to her ramble on and on about her not getting any attention. I agree with her that

I've been neglectful, I don't think my job has anything to do with it. I just don't know how to convey my feelings to her without hurting her. That is why I decide to delay sitting down and having any conversation with her about our relationship. I'm not prepared to be honest with her yet.

"Lillian, it's late, I am exhausted physically and mentally. Can we please talk perhaps on Saturday? We are scheduled to dine with your parents, we can talk after or better yet before, okay?"

"It's really not okay, Ed, but I clearly have no choice. I think we should cancel dinner with my parents and you and I meet at your apartment, or mine and really talk about us and where we are headed."

"It's up to you, Lil. Just let me know what you decide to do, and it will be fine with me. Let me go, I need to get home and get to bed. I'll speak with you in the morning." I hang

up the phone knowing the conversation most likely will not go well on Saturday.

## **EDWARD**

I toss and turn all night. Wish I could say Lillian was on my mind, and the “Talk” we are going to have, nothing could be further from the truth. Every time I close my eyes all I see are the hazel eyes of Jackson Brent.

I try to convince myself it’s just a dream and it means nothing, yet here I am thinking of a man. I’ve never thought about the attractiveness of a man my entire young life. Yet here I am seeing his face over and over again in my dreams.

I do my best to ignore my confused emotions and go back to sleep, but sleep is futile, I can’t stop thinking about him. This time I was in bed with him, his warmth surrounding

me. My dick is against his ass, and my arms are wrapped around him as we slept. I wake up from this feeling of safety and intimacy in a frenzy. Now, not only once but twice in one night, I am imagining being intimate with him. Am I losing my mind? When have I ever exhibited homosexual tendencies?

After my second dream, it's clear sleep isn't going to happen. I get up and tried to work remotely without success, my mind was just too erratic. I decide the best solution is the gym. I dress and head for the elevator to the lower level. This amenity was one of the reasons I chose this building when I searched for the right apartment. It was a good decision based on this moment alone.

I run on the treadmill until my legs burn. I try to keep my mind clear of distracting thoughts, especially those having to do with Jeffrey Corbin's best friend. By the time I finish working my body to its limit, it is four-thirty in the morning,



sleep is still a futile attempt so why bother. I decide to take a shower and head into the office early. Standing under the hot stream, guess where my mind decides to go? Here I am naked, in my shower and my dick is getting hard for someone I barely know, forget know, getting an erection thinking about a man. I'm angry with myself for my weakness, but at the same time all I want to do is grab my dick and massage it until I come, which is precisely what I do.

On my way to work, I decide to re-introduce myself to Jackson and Jeffrey is over drinks. I don't want to give them the option of declining. Which I have a feeling Jeffrey would, based on his response to me at the Gallery. After arriving at work at a god-forsaken hour, I confirm their hotel, deciding after work I will head over to the hotel instead of going straight home. It would be early enough that when I called from their lobby and invite them for drinks, it's hopefully less likely they will say no.

I'm sitting in the hotel bar for almost an hour trying to develop the courage to call Jeffrey's room. I was on my second drink before finally finding the resolve to make the call. As I'm reaching for my phone, I look up and who is standing at the entrance of the bar? None other than the man I've thought about non-stop since the moment I laid eyes on him.

He doesn't see me as he walks to the bar and sits, waiting for the bartender. He's was ordering his drink when he finally looks to his left and sees me staring at him. Caught, I merely smile and wave the bartender towards me, telling him his drink was on me. When the bartender relays the message, he looks at me with a confused look on his face. He accepts the drink, and for a moment I think he was going to join me, but he doesn't, so I take the initiative and head towards him. When he notices I'm coming, for a brief moment, I think I see shyness registered on his face.

“Jackson, right?” I say as I walk up to him.

“That’s right,” he says, again with a bewildered look.

“Ed, if I remember correctly,” he says.

“I actually prefer Edward. I’m kind of not crazy about the shortened version.”

“Sorry, well, Edward, thanks for the drink, but you really didn’t have to.”

“I know I didn’t have to, I wanted to.” We both look at each other intently, then look away simultaneously. An awkward silence developing between us, so I decide to be direct and say why I was there. “I actually came to the hotel in hopes of inviting you and Jeffrey for a drink or maybe a late dinner.”

“Yeah,” Jax said, “I heard about the directive from Jeff’s uncle. You don’t have to worry about that. Just tell him you showed us around, and we had a good time, we will back

you up.”

“You mean to tell a lie? Why would I want to do that? I would love to show the two of you the city.”

He looks at me searchingly, “Do you want to show us around because the man who signs your paycheck directed you to, or because you know us and want to show us a good time?”

I thought about the best way to respond to him. I decided to just be blunt. “First, I don’t know you, at least not yet, we both know that. Second, Jeffrey’s uncle doesn’t sign my paycheck. Furthermore, I should mention that if I didn’t want to do this, I would have said no when asked. I just thought it would be a good opportunity to get to know you... and Jeffrey.”

For a long time, Jax doesn’t say anything. “Thanks for the offer, really, but we can wing it, you don’t need to spend your valuable time chauffeuring us around and pointing out

landmarks. Besides, Jeff already told his uncle no to the offer. Us Americans tend to be a little independent, no offense, okay?"

"None taken, can I ask you a favor?"

"Sure, what is it?"

"Let me take you and Jeff somewhere tomorrow, afterward, we can go our separate ways if that is what the two of you want."

"You don't give up easily, do you?" I pursed my lips before answering, "No, I never do, it's not in my nature."

## Chapter 3

### JAX

“I THINK today has been the most beautiful day we’ve had so far. What do you think?”

“I think I’m starting to forgive you for dragging me along because you didn’t want to be alone with blue eyes.” I laugh at Jeff’s inability to accept the fact that the invitation was for the two of us. While he was busy complaining, I couldn’t help but wonder who Edward was on the phone having an intense conversation with.

“What are you looking at?” Jeff asks while turning to look in the direction I am staring. “The view is in this direction,” he says while pointing behind him.

“I know, I’m just wondering who our guide is talking to, he

seems to be having a really intense conversation with someone.”

“He’s probably reporting to my uncle, and he is yelling at him for putting my life in danger by bringing us on this Ferris wheel.” Just as I was about to respond to Jeff’s exaggerated claim, Edward’s eyes connect with mine. He turns, ending his call then starts to walk towards us.

“Is everything okay?” I ask as he approaches.

“Everything is fine, sorry I was so rude.”

“You weren’t rude, thanks for bringing us to see The London Eye,” I said while turning to look at the dozen or so tourists staring out at the scenic city. It’s understandable why Edward would bring us here, the view of London is formidable, everywhere you look, you can see the skyline of the city as the capsule slowly moves. “If you need to go, we will understand.” I turned to Edward and say.

Edward looks at us closely, while leaning against the glass of

the capsule, "I don't need to go. I'm glad the two of you accepted my invitation."

"Actually, I didn't accept your invitation, Jax did, then dragged me along," Jeff says suddenly. Edward and I looked at each other, then at Jeff and begin to speaking in unison. Edward says, "I asked him to invite you." While I say, "He invited both of us." Jeff mutters, "Whatever," as he walks to the other side of the capsule.

We both stand there staring at Jeff, who seems to be in a foul mood, which I suppose is understandable. Yesterday we had lunch with his uncle, and it didn't go as well as I'm sure his uncle expected. He is having a hard time accepting what his grandfather did to his mom while trying to have a relationship with his uncle.

"Is everything okay with Jeffrey?" Edward asked as he turns to look out at the view of the city.



“He will be, he is just going through a hard time right now.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. If there is anything I can do, please let me know.”

“There is nothing you or I can do.” I turn to look indirectly at Edward. I can’t look him the eyes, because he might see how attracted I am to him. “Tell me about the London Eye,” I say, trying to change the subject. “I think the British stole this idea of the Ferris wheel from America. We have something similar in Chicago, have you ever been to Chicago?”

Edward laughs as we begin to slowly circle the capsule.

“Yes, I’ve been to Chicago, and you may be right about us stealing your idea.”

“My idea! Sorry, I was just born in America, I don’t own it.”

We both begin to laugh at my comment.

“It’s been called a few names through the decades, The

London Eye, The Millennium Wheel, The British Airways

London Eye, it seems the owners can't make up their minds."

"Whatever it's called it has quite a view of London," I say, as I turned to look at Edward who look somewhat pacific in spite of the intense conversation he was having a moment ago. "I'm glad you brought us here."

We continued to look at the view of the city silently, then he says, "I'm sorry about back there with the phone call, I shouldn't have taken it. It was my mother who seems to have a lot to say about my personal life."

"I know the feeling; my mom is the same way. Starting from when I told her I was gay at seventeen. They are constantly telling me about a neighbor's son, or the Grocery Clerk's son, she is relentless."

"You're gay?" I finally find the courage to look Edward in the eye, "I hope that's not an issue for you?"

“No, of course not, why would you think that? I don’t, I just wanted to make sure... I’m very okay with you being gay, Jax.” Again, we find ourselves just staring at each other. “Are you gay?” I finally ask. His response takes a long time. When he finally answers it’s confusing. “I’m honestly not sure,” he says, as he turns and continues to stare out at the city.

It was at that moment that Jeff finally decided to join us.

“So, Tour Guide, what are you going to show us next, or is this it?”

“So, Mr. Rudeness, what gives?” I ask as I turn to look at Jeff.

“I’m just ready to get off this wheel. Listen you two, I’m really not good company today. Jax is right, I’m being an ass to you, Edward, for something that really has nothing to do with you. When we get to the bottom, I’m going to head back to the hotel. I’ll see you later,” he says turning to look towards me.

“Why don’t I come with you, we can sightsee another time? Excuse us a minute, Edward.” Jeff says as he pulls me away from Edward.

“I’m okay with going back to the hotel with you,” I say before Jeff has a chance to speak.

“I know you are, but, here’s the thing, you like him, the two of you seem to be spending more time staring at each other than talking to each other. Keep going with the tour, maybe eventually both of you will graduate from staring to speaking.” Jeff says facetiously.

“I don’t think he is gay. In fact, I just asked him, and his answer was confusing.”

“What did he say?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know what his response was?”

“No, idiot, that was his response. I don’t know.”

“Oh! Oh shit, sorry, well at least he didn’t say no.”

“I don’t know what my issue is,” I always want the

unattainable guys,” I said frowning.

“You don’t know if he is unattainable, his response is the perfect example of that. Get back over there, talk more, stare less, keep the tour going. This wheel is about to stop, and I could use some alone time, okay?”

“Ok to the alone time,” I say while forcing him to turn and look at me. “Are you sure everything is good?”

“Jax, stop worrying about me and my family issues, and go have a good time with blue eyes.”

“His name is Edward.”

“I want to call him Eddie, but I bet he would hate it?”

“Something is wrong with you,” I said to Jeff as he laughed at his own words.

## **EDWARD**

I just told Jax I may be gay. I truly, truly don't know why I said that. Jax is still talking with Jeff, and I feel as if my world is crashing down on me. I can't help but remember the conversation I had with Olivia weeks ago in my apartment. I've gone out of my way to avoid her these past weeks because of that conversation, I owe her an apology.

I have the unbelievable urge to run, to get as far away from Jax as possible. Clearly, he can get from me what I can't even admit to myself. The funny thing is, I don't want to run, I want to talk more with him, I want to answer his questions, and for him to answer mine. It isn't long before I feel him behind me, I don't have to turn around to feel the heat of his body. I turn my head, "Is everything okay?" "Everything is fine, Jeff is headed back to the hotel. I will too if you have somewhere you need to be."

"I don't have anywhere I need to be, let's continue, there is

a lot I would like to show you." The truth is I don't want an out, I want to spend more time with him.

"Okay, so where are we headed then?"

"You have a thing for heights, don't you?" Jax asked as we head to the top of The Shards.

I smile mischievously, "I thought you would like to see where you were an hour ago from a different perspective. I guess I do like heights, what about you?"

"It doesn't bother me," Jax says. "I actually think it's cool to be up so high looking down as we are right now." I smiled before saying, "You almost feel as if you're in the clouds," I said, as I nervously pushed both my hands in my pocket.

"I love coming to places like this because it helps me realize how small I am compared to everything, it's kind of my way of finding perspective. It's like when I run, it helps

to clear my mind.”

“You run?” Jax asks surprised. “So do I.” We’re silent for a few minutes before he asks. “How often?” I turn to look at him, at first puzzled by his question. “Oh! How often do I run? I run almost every day, what about you?”

“Until recently, I would say every day too. I used to go for runs when I couldn’t study anymore because the words in my textbook jumbled in my head. It helped to rejuvenate me, and usually gave me a few more hours of study time.”

“It’s funny, I use to do the same thing in law school, that’s how I discovered I loved it so much. Since then, I just never stopped.”

“How long ago did you finish school?” I asked, to stop my suddenly hyper active imagination, as I wonder what he look like hot and sweaty after a long run.

“I finished my masters five years ago, and my law degree



just three years ago.”

“Whoa! What were you, a double major?”

“Yes, at first, I couldn’t make up my mind, then I just decided to go for both. If nothing it made my dad happy, because I followed in his footsteps to study law, just a different kind of law than his specialty. I specialize in international business, and he is criminal law.”

“Tell me about you, what did you study?”

“Nothing as astonishing as you, I studied marketing. You are looking at the Junior Marketing Director for one of New York’s most prestigious marketing firms. Although I haven’t started the job yet.”

“They just hired you?” I asked, shocked by his admission.

“Yes, can you believe it? They hired me straight out of college. I’m scheduled to start in about two months.”

“Congratulation on getting the job!”

“Thanks!”

I don't know how long we stood in the same spot just talking. Each of us asking and answering questions. Suddenly I realize we're alone, and all of a sudden, I'm nervous, so much so I start to look around hastily. "Are you okay?" Jax asks. I didn't know how to answer or even if I should, so I shake my head and continue to stare out onto the River Thames. Not knowing what to say doesn't prevent me from babbling, "You know, I think the views are best here at night when its dark. You can really see the outline of the bridge, the palace, even the river. Maybe we should come back before you go back to America." I almost didn't hear him whisper, "I would love to."

We continue to walk the observation deck of The Shards in silence. Suddenly Jax whispers, as he looks in the distance, "If something is wrong you should tell me."

"Nothing is wrong, Jax," I start to say before he interrupts me.

"Then what was that back there? And please don't say it was

nothing." I look away from him and begin to stare into the distance, "It's not you, it me."

"Just tell me," he says softly.

I looked down holding my breath before saying what I don't want to say. "I was alone with you."

"What?"

I turn and look into his eyes and repeat, "I was alone with you." We look at each other closely before he asked, "Is that bad?" I almost smile before saying, "No, just scary." He finally smiles a smile that reaches his eyes before he looks away and continued to stare at the views of London.

"I'm hungry, are you planning on eventually feeding me, or is this a tortured tour of the city?"

Now I'm smiling before saying, "I would never dream of torturing you. Do you want to eat here or somewhere else?"

"Take me somewhere else."

"Do you like Chinese? I know a perfect place to eat near

here.”

“Good. Then let’s go, I’m starving.”

Hutong is a Chinese restaurant whose only downfall is its location. Its situated in a very tourist focused part of London. As we wait to be seated, Jax is looking around the restaurant, “What do you love about this restaurant?”

“Don’t judge it by how it looks, the food here is delicious. Its only downfall is where it’s located. Every time I come here, it’s crowded with tourist.”

“Do they deliver? Or can we take out?”

“I don’t know, I never asked.”

“Why don’t we find out, maybe we can order to go then find somewhere with less traffic to eat?”

“Where?”

“We can eat at my hotel. We can order enough for Jeff.”

“Ok, let’s find out.” We move through the waiting crowd to ask the hostess. She directs us to the bar, where we manage

to order to go. While the food's being prepared, Jax called Jeff to let him know about our plan.

An hour later we are headed back to the hotel. "Are you sure it's okay with Jeff that I join you? I get the impression he doesn't care for me very much." Jax groan's, "Don't take his attitude personally, he just has a lot going on right now, he really is a nice guy."

"We were five minutes into the cab ride heading towards the hotel and sitting really close to each other in the back of the cab. I wish I could say I feel uncomfortable being so close to him, but it felt right, even if he took my hands right now I wouldn't resist. Can I ask you something personal?" I don't know why it's so important to know, but I needed to know.

"Ask me anything," Jax responds. I paused for a noticeably long time before finding the courage to ask a question I shouldn't need an answer to. "Are the two of you together?" Jax smiles that smile that reaches his eyes again, then he

turns away from me, then back again before answering, still with that smile. “Does it matter to you?”

I don't answer, not right away. I just stare out the cab as it drives us to the hotel. It does matter to me. Did I want him to know that? What am I really saying to him if I tell him that it does matter to me? What am I saying to myself by admitting that it does matter?

## Chapter 4

### JAX

WE'RE SITTING at the bar in Hutong, the restaurant Edward swears makes the best Chinese food in the city. The stretch of silence between us is almost awkward, but not quite. I can tell he wanted to say more than he is saying, he just didn't know how. I have no problem initiating the conversation between us though, the more time I spend with him, the more I want to know him.

One hour, that's how long we waited for the food. We spend the time nervously accessing each other. I could feel his eyes on me when he thought I wasn't looking at him, and my eyes were certainly on him when he wasn't looking at me. It occurs to me that Jeff is right, we do seem to stare at

each other instead of talking to each other. I decided at that moment to change the dynamics, so I turned to him and asked, "So why were you and your mom arguing earlier?"

He turned to look at me almost shocked by my question. I could tell he was taken aback by the question and at first I thought he wasn't going to answer, that's how long the pause was between my question and his attempt to answer, finally he utter, "We weren't arguing, she was telling me how to live my life. She fails to realize I'm a grown man capable of making my own decisions." I didn't get a chance to respond to his answer because the Maitre d choose that moment to tell us our food was ready. With the food in hand, we finally head away from the crowd. A part of me is sorry I invited Jeff to join us because I want more alone time with Edward. Does that make me a bad friend? I hope not.

We're in the cab headed to the hotel when he asks a question I was not expecting. I was speechless and happy all



at once. The fact that he wanted to know if I'm with Jeff means he is interested. So, I answered his question with a question of my own. My heart races waiting for his answer. When minutes past and still no response, I'm about to retract the question and apologize when he finally speaks.

"Would it surprise you to know I do care?" I smile before answering, because truthfully, I didn't know what else to do, or even how to react.

"I'm glad you care, but why do you care? You barely know me... You know what? Don't answer that. I have a better question I would love to have an answer to, can I ask it?" he turns to look at me without saying a word waiting for me to ask.

His eyes were on me waiting for the question and suddenly I froze. My heart suddenly felt as if it was beating out of my chest. I don't know why I was suddenly nervous, maybe it was the answer I was afraid to hear. I took a deep breath,

turn and look at him then ask. “Are you with someone? I know you said you didn’t know if you were gay, so I’m not expecting you to say you’re with a man, but are you with a woman?” He keeps looking at me without saying a word, almost as if he doesn’t know where to start. He finally does start, and I wish he hadn’t, or that he would have lied. Either one would hurt less than to hear him say he has a fiancée.

It was my turn to stare outside the cab. Suddenly this cab ride is longer than it should be. I want out, and I want out now. I just can’t find the words to say it. I could have sworn Edward moved closer to me when I hear him whisper, “It’s complicated.” I couldn’t stop staring out the window. All I know is that he belongs to someone else, which means he can’t be mine.

The cab finally stops at the hotel. I prevent him from getting out.

“I’m sorry about the food, but it’s late, I’m tired, and I don’t

think it's a good idea to come up." I don't know why I feel like a fool, after all I asked and he answered my question, so what if his answer isn't what I want to hear. My head is spinning and I realize I need to get out of the cab and get away from him pronto. I reach for the door handle, but I felt his hand touch for my elbow. I wanted to pull away, in fact I was about to, when he called my name, but I shake my head with a non-verbal no. Then I say what I honestly feel. "You belong to someone else." With those words, I exit the cab while apologizing for the food again and thanking him for the day.

I make my way through the lobby in a stupor. Once in my room, I head straight to bed. It doesn't matter that I hear Jeff calling my name, or that he had issues that surely surpasses my own. Who cares that I like some straight guy who can't—for two solid reasons—like me back. Reason one, he is engaged—to a woman. Reason two, he is not gay. I feel like such a fool.

After telling Jeff I'm tired and need sleep, he leaves me alone, and lord knows I try to sleep. My body and my mind are on two separate plains, tossing and turning for what feels like hours. I think about getting up but decide to stay in bed; I don't want to risk facing Jeff. Around two in the morning my phone beeps with a text. I thought it was Jeff checking on me, but it was Edward.

**Edward: I'm sorry, please let me explain.**

**Jax: There is nothing to explain. You are engaged.**

**Edward: Please let me explain.**

**Jax: Ok, tell me I didn't hear you say you are engaged.**

**Edward: Can I call you?**

**Edward: Please, Jax, just to explain.**

**Jax: An explanation isn't necessary, I don't steal other people's fiancés, that's just not me.**

**Edward: You can't steal from Lillian what she never had in the first place, doesn't that matter?**

My phone rings. He calls anyway, even though I certainly didn't say he could. I ask myself, what can he possibly have to say? I'm about to find out because I don't ignore the call. When I hit the answer button, he starts to speak immediately. As he spoke, his trembling voice sound sad, I could tell he didn't want to have this conversation, but that it was important to him to tell me his side of the story. He spoke hurriedly as if he is afraid I would hang up on him before he have a chance to explain.

"We started dating my last year of grad school. Before I met you, I tried to remember the moment I supposedly fell in love with her. You know what? There wasn't one. It occurred to me that I never truly loved her. What I had with her was convenience. She was there when I needed to bring someone home, to keep my parents from trying to find a girlfriend for me. If I had a party to go to and I needed a plus one, she was it. She was there through some of the

major events in my life, but I never loved her, but my parents did. By the time I realized what I was doing, things got really complicated.” I heard him take a deep breath before continuing “I decided to tell her how I felt, that she deserves someone who could truly love her, but that didn’t happen. Late Last year, we were having a holiday dinner with friends, and I had one drink too many. Somewhere between my fifth and tenth drink I apparently proposed. I woke up the next morning, and she is on the phone with our parents telling them we are engaged. I know how stupid it sounds, but that’s exactly what happened. I decided to just go along with it, that’s why we are still engaged.”

“I still don’t get it, Edward. The fact is, you are engaged to be married to someone name Lillian. I don’t want to be responsible for coming between the two of you. Can you understand that?”

“Yes, I can, but you have to know that I don’t love her. You can’t come between us if there isn’t an us. One of the

reasons why I never made an effort to end this farce is because I didn't want to hurt her, and I know I will."

"What are the others?"

"What do you mean?" Edward asked.

"You said it's one of the reasons why you don't want to hurt her, what are the others?" I hear Edward take another deep breath through the phone, his answer didn't surprise me.

"I'm afraid. Afraid my family won't understand, afraid of apologizing to my best friend and not being forgiven by her, afraid of what my work colleagues will think."

I stop him when I realize what he was truly saying. "Are you afraid of ending it with Lillian or that these people will find out you are gay?"

His answer is succinct, "Both."

I lay back on the bed and again for the umpteenth time today we are silent with each other. I don't know how long

we don't say anything, but I need to break the silence. "Tell me about your best friend." I heard him guffaw. "Why do you always ask the hard questions?"

"Is that a hard question?"

"It is for me."

"Tell me about her."

"I haven't spoken to her in months. When I told her about the engagement, and that I intended to go through with it, she didn't understand."

"You ended your friendship because she didn't get why you were going to go through with the marriage?"

"I didn't end the friendship, I just haven't spoken to her and to be honest, the real reason for not speaking with her has nothing to do with Lillian, and everything to do with getting drunk in college, letting a guy kiss me and her reminding me of it. She assumed I was gay because of it."

"So, you still don't think you are gay?"



"I think I choose to avoid thinking I am gay when I was talking to Olivia." I closed my eyes and let the despair in his voice engulf me. As I continue to listen to his explanation, I'm not sure what to feel. In one instance, I am angry with myself for wanting him. In another instance, I felt sorry for him, he sound so foreboding and sad.

"I'm sorry," I said, not able to stop myself.

"For what?" He asks.

"That I've done this to you. It's because of me, isn't it? If you didn't meet me, your life would be less stressed, you wouldn't be dealing with these issues."

"Can I be honest with you, Jax?"

"Please." I said, not wanting him to be anything less, even if what he have to say will hurt, I know I want nothing but honesty from him.

"In the short time I've known you, I've come to realize I have been living this less than ordinary life. I did my best to detach, I've been emotionless and distant from those around me. Meeting you and the few occasions I've spent with you,

I find myself waking up. It's almost as if I've been asleep until now. I don't know if that makes sense to you, but please don't be sorry for coming into my life. Just know that as much as it may seem so, I'm not taken, okay?" Silence again. "Ok," I say."

## **EDWARD**

After Jax walked away from me, I felt desolate and lost. For the first time in my life, I'm forced to come to grips with my life, and not pretend or hide. The cabby pulls me out of my misery by repeatedly asking where next, I finally give him my home address. All I can think about is Jax, and the disappointment I saw in his eyes when I told him I was engaged. I need to fix this with him, to somehow get him to understand.

There is someone else who needs to hear an apology from

me. I can't continue to ignore her or pretend that I haven't been a horrible friend. As much as thoughts of Jax fill my mind, I can't help but think of Olivia, and what she must think of me. I decid on the spot to text her.

**Ed: Are we still friends?**

**Liv: Do you need a friend?**

**Ed: I need you as a friend**

**Liv: It's been weeks**

**Ed: I've been an idiot**

**Liv: You are an idiot!**

**Ed: I met someone**

**Liv: I thought Lillian has your balls in chains**

**Ed: I need to end it with Lillian, I'm going to hurt her**

**Liv: Who did you meet**

**Ed: His name is Jax**

**Liv: Omg!**

**Liv: Call me now you idiot**

She picks up the phone on the first ring, and I start to talk before she even says hello. “Hey! I’m so sorry for everything. I just couldn’t face you, didn’t know what to say to you after the things you said to me.”

“Cut it with the apologies. I told you then that I would be here for you. I meant it then, and I mean it now. I knew sooner or later you would come around, so stop and tell me about Jax.”

I exhale slowly then tell Olivia all about Jax. “I need to end things with her.”

“Yeah, you do. Jax is right, it’s not fair to him, it’s not even fair to Lillian. I’m so happy for you though. This guy sounds great, even if he is only here temporarily. I’m still happy that you finally reached this crossroad in your life. You deserve to be really happy, Edward, and you can’t be if you deny being your true self.”

“Thank you for being such a good friend to me. I don’t deserve you.”

“No, you don’t, but you have me. Now go and call him and tell him everything.”

“I will. Hopefully, he’ll still want to see me after. Let’s have lunch tomorrow. I’ll come to the café.”

“If you can that would be great. I know you have a lot on your plate right now. You have to go and talk to Lillian.”

“I know. Trust me, I will be talking to her sooner rather than later.”

After hanging up with Liv, it’s was nearly two in the morning. I debate waiting to contact him, but I don't want to wait hours to speak with Jax. I finally find the courage to text him, then call.

He isn’t forgiving, but he isn’t indifferent either. It amazes me how easily I open up to him. I don’t think I can lie to him, or even hold back a part of myself. After my

longwinded explanation, I thought it best that I end the call, but I didn't want to end our conversation without making plans to see each other again.

"Can we meet up on Saturday?" I ask, even though I know there's a chance he will say no. There's a moment of silence on the line. I'm convinced seeing him again will never happen, but he surprises me by saying yes. It's was a hesitant yes, but I will take that over a no. I sense he wants to say more, but I don't push. I want to say more too.

"It's late, and we both need sleep," I finally say.

"Yeah we do, good night," he whispers.

"Don't change your mind about Saturday."

"I won't." He replies.

I hang the phone up, gazing at it for a long time. Then I swipe it open again to call Lillian. "I know it's really early, did I wake you?" I ask as soon as she answers. "Is everything okay?" She asks.

“No, Lillian I think it’s time I stop avoiding you, and talk, don’t you? I know we had plans to meet on Saturday, but I think we should talk sooner.”

“Yes, of course, it’s early, and I am still tired, can we talk later in the morning?”

“Yes, I’ll stop by around ten .”

“I’ll make coffee, see you then.”

To say I don’t sleep the rest of the early morning would be accurate. My mind kept going around in circles, drifting between thoughts of Jax, and what I’m going to say to Lillian. I think of my mom and dad, and what they will think of me when I end this engagement. How they will react when they learn I’m gay. I’ve decided not to tell Lillian that I met someone else. After all, I knew this farce needed to end long before Jax came into my life, she doesn’t

I go for my usual morning run earlier than usual. Afterward, I shower, get ready for work, and head out the door. On my

way to Lillian's apartment, I stop and pick up her favorite pastry. When I arrive, she's dressed for work and already had her first cup.

"Morning," I say, as she opens the door. She doesn't respond as she walks back to her kitchen. She took three sips of coffee before she finally speak. When she does, it isn't what I expected. "Did you know I have a friend who works as a guide at the Shards?"

"No, I didn't know, are you trying to make a point?" She looks at me quizzically, turning towards the coffee maker, puts the cup down, then places both her palms on the counter.

"You think I don't know?"

At this point, I am getting irritated when I ask,

"Know what?"

She turns and glares, "Look, Edward," she starts, but I stop her before she continues.



“Lillian, I can’t marry you.” There’s a lull in the kitchen before I continued. “This engagement should never have happened. I allowed our parents to dictate what should happen and when, and that was wrong of me because the person who will be hurt the most by this is you.” She still doesn’t say anything, she just continues to gawk at me.

“Say something please,” I implore.

“Who were you with at the Shards?”

I look at her suspiciously, before saying, “That’s not relevant to this conversation, Lillian, let’s just stay on topic. I can’t marry you, I want to talk about telling our parents and letting those who already said they would come know that the wedding is off.”

She turns away from me yet again, but this time she has something to say. “So, your plan is to humiliate me. Did you ever love me?”

“I’ve always cared about you and I always will.”

“That’s not what I asked you, Edward. Did you ever love

me?" I walk towards her and stand opposite her, I try to avoid saying the words. "I don't want to hurt you," I whisper. "What do you think you are doing now?"

"I'm sorry, I should have said something sooner." She takes both hands rubbing them up and down her face then mutters, "Don't do this, Edward. You can learn to love me." I pull her hands away from her face. "No, I won't, Lillian," I murmur. "This is all you and I will ever be. I care about you, but love ... I'm sorry."

She pulls her hands out of my grasp, slapping me across the face. A move I was not expecting. I step back covered the sting from the slap with my hand, looking intently at her. "I'm sorry."

"Stop saying you're sorry." She yells.

We're both reserved for what seems like minutes. Again, I initiate the conversation. "I think you should tell your

parents and I will tell mine. Do you want me to have my secretary send out a short letter explaining our decision not to get married?"

"Our decision! This is all yours and neither your parents nor mine is going to be happy about this. I suggest waiting until you tell them because this engagement may not be off if they have their way."

I walk around to the other side of the island to stand in front of her, looking her in the eye. "Lillian, regardless of my parents' response, you will not walk down the aisle to me, do you understand?" She tries to slap me again, this time I catch her arm and gently put it to her side.

"I'm sorry I hurt you, I understand how painful this may be for you. I take full responsibility for it, and I will never forgive myself for letting this happen. I know you don't want to hear an apology, but it's all I have to offer."

“I will never forgive you for this.” She utters.

“I know.” I manage to say.

Four day's, that's how long it's been since I spoke with Jax. These past few days have been anything but calm. My parents are not happy with me right now. Needless to say, they didn't take the news well. In fact, they were infuriated.

My father all but threatened to disown me if I called off the engagement. I told him to go ahead, I don't spend his money anyway. I'm not sure what he was more angry about, when those words left my lips or calling off the engagement. My mother's response was similar to Lillian's. She was more concern about what others would think than the well-being of her son. Essentially, my parents and I are at odds. I wish I could say this was all there would be. I didn't approach the subject of my sexuality with them, but I have a feeling it's a conversation that's coming shortly.

I'm having another long night at the office when the urge to speak with Jax overwhelms me. These past few days I've tried to put him out of my thoughts as I deal with my issues.

I don't know why, but It was important to me that I kept the two separate. Now, I just want to talk to him. I pick up the phone and dial his number, the phone rings four times. I'm sure it's about to go to voicemail when he finally answers. I didn't know what to say, so I say nothing after his hello.

"Are you really going to just not say anything?" He asks.

"Maybe I just wanted to hear your voice," I say in a whisper.

"How are you?"

"I've been better. Is it okay that I called?"

"It's too late now, you're calling."

"I want to see you before Saturday. Can you have dinner with me?"

"When?"

"I was thinking right now if you're not busy." There's a faint sound on his end, I assume he's talking to Jeff. "You can bring Jeff if you like?"

"Is that what you want?" He asks. "No, I'm just ..."

"Jeff has plans with his uncle. I'll be in the lobby in an hour, see you then." Then he hung up.

## Chapter 5

### JAX

A PART of me, a tiny part of me, hoped I wouldn't hear from Edward after our conversation a few days ago. Before we talked, I was angry and hurt. It took Jeff's unique brand of snap-out-of-it to get me to the point where I could think clearly enough to find some perspective. Jeff and I continued our tour of London while talking about his family and Edward. It was during our visit to Madame Tussauds that we had the most eye-opening conversation. We were talking about Edward and my attraction to him.

"You know what I don't get?" Jeff suddenly asked.

I turn from looking at the wax figure of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. "What don't you get?" I ask curiously.

“Why him? I’ve known you for a long time. You were never interested in closeted gay guys, yet you meet this one and... What happened?”

I didn’t answer right away, because I wasn’t sure how to answer. More notably, I needed, no wanted, to stress to Jeff that Edward wasn’t just some guy to me. Why was persuading him so important to me? I decided I couldn’t honestly answer Jeff’s question. While I certainly don’t see Edward as just another guy, the truth was I didn’t know why I’m so drawn to him. “I just really like him,” was the answer I gave. “I know he is in the closet, but I really like him.” Jeff glared at me then starts to rant.

“Even though he is engaged to be married? Even though his one and only intimate moment with a man was a drunk kiss? Even though we are here temporarily, and you have a life and a job to go home to?”

“Yes, in spite of all those things, I really feel this strong



connection to him. Why don't you tell me why you don't like him?" I blurted out.

"I told you, I don't dislike him. It's just easier to resent a messenger of my uncle than my uncle if that makes any sense."

"Can you do me a favor?"

"I already know what the favor is, I promise I will try and be nicer to him."

"Yes, please try and separate your uncle and him, they are not one and the same."

Jeff and I had just returned from shopping at Harrods when my cell rang. The caller ID read Allan, Inc. It took a minute to register in my mind that the caller was Edward. My eyes were fixed on the phone in my hands when Jeff looked over my shoulder. "You're not going to talk to him?" I gave him a puzzled look. He looked at me then smiled before reminding me of his plans for dinner with his uncle. I finally answer the call, and I thought the line was dead, but

I heard him. His breathing was faint, but I heard it. “Are you really going to just not say anything?” I asked hesitantly.

After we talk and make plans for dinner, I become restless, deciding a shower was needed before I meet Edward in the lobby. One of the perks of staying at an excellent hotel is the shower. The feel of the water pressure is unreal, standing under it quickly relieves the tension in my back and neck. Regardless of how good the shower feels, nothing feels as good as my body reacting to thoughts of Edward. Over the past four days, I’ve thought of him incessantly. Right now, my prick is hard as I imagine what it would feel like when he enters me from behind. The way his lips and breath will feel at the nape of my neck as he moves in and out of me.

Instead of paying attention to the aching throb between my legs, I turned off the shower, dry off, and quickly dress in black jeans, my favorite button down, and black sneakers I bought today at Harrods. I had a half hour before meeting

him, but I'm restless, so I head to the lobby to wait. My expectation for tonight is probably more than either of us will be able to deliver.

I'm barely in the lobby five minutes before I see him walk through the entrance. It looks as if he came straight from work because he's dressed impeccably in a suit. Edward immediately spot me from across the lobby. He stops and stares at me before finally walking towards me.

"Hey!" He says as he reaches me.

"Hey!" I reply right back. Then he does something I'm not expecting, he puts his hand around my neck, kissing me softly on the lips.

At first, I resist the kiss, mostly because I'm shocked. I quickly acquiesce to the feel of his soft lips and the sweet taste of his mouth. We slowly pull away from the kiss and look into each other's eyes. "Ready for dinner?" He finally asks. I nod my head, unable to utter a word. He puts his

hand on the small of my back, leading me out of the lobby and into London's famous weather of fog and drizzle.

"Have you and Jeff visited Notting Hill yet?" He asks as we walk to his car.

"No, it's on our list."

"Good, then I get to show it to you from my perspective." As we drive through the city headed towards Notting Hill, he is telling me about that part of town and why he loves it. "This is one of my favorite places in London. I've tried numerous times to find an apartment here, but they are hard to come by."

"Tell me, what's so beautiful about it, other than the fact that a lot of movies are filmed here?" I said, curious for his answer. He ponders my question before answering.

"It's not just that they film movies here, although the movies did help make the area famous. What I love about it is the

ambiance. Unlike the other upscale neighborhoods, the residence in this area are unpretentious and less showy. It's an affluent community, but it's a community of people who choose not to flaunt their wealth. I love the restaurants, the shops. I just love the feeling I get when I come here."

We park and walk a few blocks to a restaurant called The Ledbury. You can tell it's an upscale restaurant, but all the patrons seemed relax and enjoying the evening. As relaxed as they are, I'm certainly not—I'm nervous. I'm not sure why I'm so nervous about being here with him, but I am. When we're finally seated by the hostess, It doesn't go unnoticed that Edward sits right next to me. When our thighs touched, I expected him to quickly pull away, but he doesn't. After the waiter does his usual and leaves, Edward turns to me. "I'm glad you said yes to dinner."

I look at him and can't resist saying, "I'm glad you called."

It's at least five minutes before we're disturbed again. A

comforting silence settled between us, and I sensed Edward wanted to say something. The waiter returned, and we were offered menus and the opportunity to get drinks. Edward asked me if I wanted a drink, I did, but I told him no. I didn't want anything to come between what may or may not happen on this date. "What have you and Jeff done this past week?" He asks.

"We visited a lot of landmarks. Yesterday we went to Madame Tussaud's, it was freaky how life-like the wax figures are."

"I know. It's been a long time since I've gone, but you're right, it's crazy how true to life the figures are. Tell me more about your week, what else did you do?"

"We visited the Tower of London on Monday, Jeff saw his uncle on Tuesday, so I was on my own. We spent the day at the British Museum on Wednesday, Madam Tussaud's and Harrods today."

"You didn't go with Jeff when he visits with his uncle?"

“No, I did the first few times, but I declined after that. Jeff needs to reconnect with this side of his family and it’s kind of personal, I didn’t want to intrude. He didn’t understand at first why I wouldn’t go, but I think he understands now.”

“I think you are a good friend.”

“He is a good friend too. I know you think he doesn’t like you...,”

“It doesn’t matter Jax, you are the only one I’m concerned about, do you like me?” He says while smiling.

“You sound like you are still in grade school when you ask me like that. What should I say, ‘yes, Edward, I like you, do you like me too?’” We both laugh.

The waiter returns, and we ordered our meal and continued our playful banter, then suddenly there’s was a lull between us. When he finally speak again, it is with a more serious tone. “You know, I was actually serious when I asked that question earlier.”

I turned and look straight into his eyes. “I know.”

“So, do you?”

I don't know if it's appropriate, or how he will react, but I hesitantly kiss him on the lips and whisper, “Yes.”

## JAX

The rest of the meal is enjoyable, I thought the food was great but not enough to fill my stomach. I guess Edward must have felt the same because he mentions that we probably should go and get a burger. We laugh as he asks for the bill. We end up going to a burger joint called Boom Burger. I can't help mentioning that this is where we should have come to begin with. He, of course, is apologetic. It isn't long before the playful banter disappears again.

“What would you like to do next?” He asks. I wanted to say, “Take me back to your place and fuck me,” instead, I tell him it's up to him what we do next. I guess we are having



similar thoughts because his next words do surprise me.

“Let’s go back to my place, we can talk in private and get to know more about each other.” Not wanting to respond with words because I don’t want to seem eager, so I nod as we continue walking towards his car.

His apartment is not what I expected. Edward to me seems so refined. Everything about him is perfect, from the way he styles his hair to the clothes he wears. I thought where he lived would have the same feel. While his apartment is stylishly comfortable, it also feels as if he is barely ever here. I wouldn’t be surprise if he told me it was furnished by an Interior Designer. Another things I notice as I roam the living room is the American football memorabilia’s. I turn to him to ask, “You like American football?” He nod his head to answer my question but I could tell he was nervous. He couldn’t possibly be more nervous than me.

“Do you want something to drink? I know you didn’t drink at dinner, do you want something now, wine, beer, or would you prefer water?”

“A beer sounds good, what are you having?”

“The same, you don’t have to have a beer, you know. If you don’t drink...”

“I drink, I just didn’t want to become inhibited tonight and alcohol has that tendency where I’m concerned.”

“You’re okay with being a little inhibited now?” He asks with a smile. Through the whole conversation, I continue walk around his living room looking at the memorabilia and the other features of his apartment. I turn and smile, “I guess I am.”

Edward lived on the seventh floor of a semi-modern building, with a balcony overlooking a park. I open his balcony door and step out. It’s still drizzling, but it wasn’t

intolerable. I'm standing on the balcony taking in the view when I feel the heat of his body behind me. I turn towards the heat, he was so close our chests almost touched. He hands me the beer as he takes a sip of his own, never taking his eyes from mine. "I'm glad you trust me enough to become a little more relaxed with me." I don't answer as we continue to enjoy his balcony view. Suddenly, he takes my hand leading me back to his living room. We're standing behind his couch, his hands still holding mine when he murmurs in a low whisper "Jax, I really want to kiss you."

Instead of answering, I turn and walk straight into him, practically slamming my body against his. I don't kiss him right away, looking into his eyes as he looks into mine. Our eyes speak volumes because our lips meet for an intense, bracingly deep kiss. Edward let's go of my hand, bringing his hand up to the nape of my neck, then he put his right to my waist as he pulls me closer and deeper into the kiss, and into the feel of his arousal.

I groan into his mouth and slightly pull away to catch my breath. We're both breathless yet wanting to continue. "Is this what you wanted?" I ask. "Yes, and more, much more," he growls.

"Then take what you want, I'm not stopping you." Edward closes his eyes as we brace our foreheads together and whispers in a much calmer voice. "I don't know what to do." I take his hand and hold it to my cheek as I tell him to do what makes him comfortable.

He begins to walk us backward towards the sofa, still holding me close. When we reach the edge of the couch, he moves even closer towards me, forcing me to fall back onto it. He follows me as I fall, kneeling between my open legs. His knees were so close to my groin I could feel him shudder from the feel and heat of my arousal. I expect him to flounder, he doesn't.

He elevated his leg further into my groin as his lips meet mine again. While our tongues tangle, our hands are touching every inch of skin we can reach. Still, I expect him to pull away, to realize the degree of his action, but he doesn't stop. He raised my shirt and graze his palm against the side of my stomach and abs while rubbing his forehead on my chest. He releases a groan that can easily be mistaken for frustration. He looking up again, and our eyes connect.

He covers my lips and whispering, "You said I can take what I want?" I repeated my earlier words, "Take what you want." His lips seek mine again, sucking my lower lip into his mouth as he began to unzip my pants. He takes my cock in his hand and began to slowly stroke it. I drop my head back against the arm of the sofa and close my eyes, lost in the feel of him, and what he is doing to my body. I didn't notice when he unzipped his pants, but the moment our cocks connect the room quick fills with groans coming from both

of us. Edward uses our combined cum as a lubricant, he massages, stroking our cocks while kissing me deeper than I've ever been kissed. Even though I'm fully clothed, I wrap my legs around his waist as his massage grows more and more intense.

Just when I think I'm about to come, he stops and begins to kiss my neck, my chest, my abs. At first, I don't realize what is happening until I open my eyes and find Edward on the floor kneeling in front of me, his mouth inches away from my cock.

Before I can utter a word, his mouth engulfs my cock, and I swear I lose my mind as his hot wet mouth travels up and down its length. Trying not to fuck his mouth, I try to find some control, but it's futile. I find myself moving in and out of his hot mouth, lost in the feel of him sucking and dragging his tongue along the crevices of my massively enlarged cock.

It isn't long before I'm coming, I try to push him away, but he wouldn't budge. Finally, I spill into his mouth with the most intense orgasm I've had in a very long time.

He doesn't move away from my flaccid cock right away, feeling his warm lips as he kisses my cock, then slowly moves up my body to my mouth. His kiss is wet and deep as I taste my essence on his mouth.

At first, we don't say a word as we lay on the couch holding each other close. I've never felt more connected to a human being the way I feel at this very moment with Edward.

## Chapter 6

### EDWARD

WHEN I invited Jax to come up to my apartment, I never expected that this would happen. I truly wanted us to get to know each other better. The last thing I thought would happen was us getting horizontal. Yet, that's precisely what happened. After our mind-blowing orgasm, we lay silently together on my sofa. I know he's afraid of what I was feeling and what would happen next. I don't blame him, but he has nothing to fear. For the first time in my life, I feel safe, as if I'm where I belong.

My whole life I've been with women. There wasn't a time I can recall where after sex, I didn't want to just hit the shower. After what Jax and I did, I didn't want to move, I just



wanted to hold him. Instead of the regret he must think I'm feeling, I'm feeling pretty great, and I want him to know that. To let him know, I understand the impact of what we just did.

His head is buried in the crook of my neck, and I can feel his heart beating against my chest. "Are you okay?" I whisper in his ear.

"You just gave me a mind-altering hand and blow job, and you're not locked in your bathroom with regret, so yeah, I'm okay. How about you? What are you feeling right now?"

"Can I be honest?" I say while looking down at him. Jax looks up, and our eyes connecting as he says, "I wouldn't want you to be anything less."

"What we just did? It's the first time I've not felt empty. I know that must sound funny..." He places his finger on my lips, then raising up onto his arm, hovering over me.

"It doesn't since I know you've never been with a man like

this. I think you're saying being with a woman wasn't satisfying, is that what you're saying?"

I looked up and hold his face with my palms, "Yes."

We eventually clean ourselves up and watch a re-run of an American football game. Somewhere between touchdowns, we share more about each other's lives. I tell Jax about my mother and father, he tells me about his. We are both the only children our parents could have. We both have best friends that have been prevalent in our lives. Eventually, we fall asleep holding each other.

I'm startled awake by someone shaking my shoulder. I open my groggy eyes to see Lillian looking down on Jax and me. We're stunned, we almost fall off the sofa. We both look at Lillian, then Jax turns and look at me. We don't say a word. Jax turns to Lillian, holding out his hand, "You must be Lillian?"

“Who the hell are you?” She asks, with a folded arm stance.

“Lillian, what the hell are you doing here?” I say before Jax can answer, I continue “And why or how did you get in here?” I continued.

“I called your cell, you didn’t answer, and your parents gave me their set of keys ages ago. Should I ask again? Who is this?”

“Lillian, this is Jax. Jax this is Lillian. Lillian, why are you here and please give me the keys,” I say as I hold out my hands. She doesn’t move or respond to my question or my request. She’s too busy staring at Jax, who couldn’t stop looking at her. “Lillian,” I yell. She turns, still not moving to give over the keys, but says something I’m not expecting. “You better get up and clean up, your parents are on the way. They want to talk to both of us.”

“What? Are you kidding me? Whose idea was this?”

“Mine,” she arrogantly says. “Did you think I was just going to roll over and let you ruin our lives?”

“I’ve already spoken to my parents, they know I have no intention of marrying you, regardless of their threats. So, I don’t know why you would set this up.”

“They thought one last effort was needed to convince you that you’re making a huge mistake. Clearly from the look of things they are right. You think you are gay, Edward? You’ve been with women all your life, and suddenly this Yank comes to town and said what to you, to convince you that you’re gay?”

With that Jax detaches himself fully from my arms. “I think I better go,” he says while zipping up his pants. I hold his arm and turn him as he reaches for his shoes. We speak to each other without words, when he shakes his head and says, “I understand, I do. Call me later. I’ll catch a cab back to the hotel.”

Ignoring Lillian, I walk Jax to the door. “I’m sorry, this is not how I envisioned our morning.”

He looks over at Lillian, then back to me, walking towards me until our chests connect. He leans over and whispers in my ear, "I loved our date," then kisses me lingeringly on the lips. It doesn't escape either of us when we hear Lillian murmur, "Disgusting."

After Jax leaves, I turn to find Lillian still staring. She starts to talk, but I stop her with my much louder voice. "It doesn't matter if my parents walk into this apartment and threaten to send me to hell, Lillian. I will not marry you, not now, and not ever. Do you understand?"

She looks at me with what could easily be construed as disgust.

"Did you tell your parents you think you are gay? This should be an interesting morning."

"You're right, it will be an interesting morning. Do you know why?" She doesn't answer so I continue. "Because before this morning is out, you will know with finality, that I will

not marry you.” Persisting in her silence, I add, “For some reason, you are clearly too dense to get it, and since you can’t let us end in a respectful way,” I wave my hand between us, “this is done.” I walk away to prepare myself for my parents arrival.

My parents show up as expected. They were less threatening but did their best to attempt to coerce me into marrying Lillian. I thought perhaps she decided not to tell my parents about Jax, I was wrong. Just as my parents seem to decide to give up, Lillian chooses that moment to interject her news. “Mr. Kendrick, did you know Edward thinks he is gay?” The silence that envelopes the room is deafening.

## **EDWARD**

My father turns and looks at Lillian. “What are you talking about, young lady?” He asks. “Well, I walked in on Edward

and a Yank wrapped in each other's arms right here on this sofa." My father turns to look at me asking, "Is this true?" Without answering I turn to Lillian, telling her, "It's time for you to leave."

"Excuse me?" She demands. My mother begins to rebuff my request, but I hold up my hands to stop her. I turn to Lillian and continued, "Lillian, I told you respectfully that we will not be getting married. I need to talk to my parents, and this conversation has nothing to do with you, so I'm asking you to please leave."

Lillian turns to my mother for her objection. I walked in front of her, looking straight into her eyes, and imploring her to look at me. "Lillian, this has nothing to do with my mother, she can't stop me from asking you to leave my apartment." She looks at me with what can only be construed as venom before turning to leave. "By the way, may I please have the keys my mother gave you?" She removes the keys from her key ring, throws it on the floor

then walks out.

I turn to face my parents, knowing that this conversation will affect any relationship we may have moving forward.

“Mom, dad, would you like coffee? I can make some.”

“No,” my father huffs, “but I want you to tell me what Lillian said wasn’t true.”

“I wasn’t ready to have this conversation with you,” I begin.

“I’m just getting to the point in my life where I’m learning to be truthful to myself. I needed time to discover more about myself.”

“What are you talking about?” My father yells. I realize I can’t delay saying the words any longer, so I say, “I’m gay, dad.” A stoic look appears on my father’s face as he stared at me. He doesn’t say a word. He turns to my mother asking, “What is he talking about, did you know about this?” My mother whom at this point is speechless, shakes her head to



respond no.

My father turns and walks towards me, putting his hands on my shoulders then says, "You don't know what you are saying, Edward. You are not gay, you're my son. If you were interested in men, I would know."

I put my hands on my father's arms, "I am your son, and I love you, but you wouldn't know, especially since I've had a hard time admitting it to myself. Dad, I've always been attracted to men, I've just ignored the attraction."

Dad pulls his arms away, looking at me dispassionately then says the words no son wants to hear his father say. "If you are gay, then you are not my son. No son of mine can be gay."

"Dad..."

"Enough!" He exclaims, as he walks over to my mother, ushering her towards the door. "Your mother and I are leaving. Let us know when you've come to your senses."

I don't know how long I stand still after my father and

mother walk out the door. I realize for the first time in my life, I'm living truthfully. Suddenly thoughts of Jax flood my mind. The urge to speak to him is implausible, to know what he was feeling after the confrontation with Lillian, I search for my phone slide it open to call his cell.

I feel as if my heart is beating out of my chest as Jax's phone rings and rings. Finally, on the fourth ring, he answers,

"Hey."

"Hey yourself, is everything okay?"

"It seems that's a question I should be asking you."

"I know you want to know what happened with Lillian and my parents, but right now I only care about you and what you must be thinking or feeling after last night and then this morning." There's silence on the phone as I hold my breath waiting for his response.

"I think Lillian loves you, but I also think she seems psychotic. Honestly, I was more concerned about your parents. I suspect you had to tell them you're gay. I want to believe that when you told them, they were at least understanding. I've been sitting here worrying like shit about you, feeling guilty that I should have left last night, that I may have bought this down on you because you needed more time to come to terms with your sexuality."

“So, you don’t regret being with me?” I ask sounding very unsure of myself.

“I would be lying if I said I didn’t have doubts, that maybe we shouldn’t have started. It was fleeting though, I don’t regret you, Edward, I can’t.”

“I’m glad to hear that because I don’t regret you either.”

“Can you please tell me about your parents,” he bellows.

“I told them I’m gay. My father didn’t take it well. My mother for the first time in her life had nothing to say. Needless to say, my father walked out, instructing me to come to my senses or else.”

“At least he didn’t disown you.”

“No, that was when I called off the marriage. This time, I think my father thinks I’m losing my mind.” I said laughingly.

“I’m sorry Edward.”

“Why are you sorry? You’ve done nothing, please don’t be

sorry. Because of you, I'm feeling pretty good right now, not to mention, I don't feel like I'm hiding a part of myself. Let's not talk about my problems anymore. I've decided to take the day off from work since it's too late to go in, and tomorrow starts the weekend. Do you want to do something?"

"What do you have in mind?"

"We could take the Eurostar to Paris. Since it's the weekend, we could stay over and do a little sightseeing. What do you think?"

"I would love to go, it just so happens Jeff is going to the country with his uncle. He asked me to come with him, but I can get out of it. Call me back in fifteen minutes, and I'll let you know."

By noon we're on our way to Paris. By late afternoon we we are standing at the base of the Eiffel Tower looking up. Jax was extremely excited to be in Paris. It's was enough to

watch him as he takes in his surroundings. We spend the afternoon at the very top of the Eiffel Tower enjoying the landscape of the falling sun as it cast a shadow over the city known for love.

From the moment I picked up Jax at his hotel, until this very moment standing here with him, this has been one of the best days I've had in a very, very long time. My chin is resting on his shoulder, and I need to find the words to tell him how I'm feeling. It's not that the right words escape me, it's just that I don't want to sound like a sap. I know I need to say the words anyway, and so I do.

"I loved today," I say in a quiet voice. Jax leans his head onto my shoulders, "I just love being with you."

He turns in my arms, looking up into my eyes. "So, what can we do next since it's so late in the day?"

I smirk, "We can find a place to eat and then find a place to sleep. Aren't you tired of carrying around the backpack?" I

ask as I pull on its straps. Jax titters while pulling me towards the elevator.

“Let's go, old man, let's get some food and find a bed for your old and weary bones.” We laugh as we make the trip down onto the streets and away from the Eiffel Tower.

It doesn't take long to find a hotel with a restaurant in its lobby. After we eat our fill, the subject of our sleeping arrangement comes up. Jax asks if we're getting one room or two. “What do you want? We can get two rooms if that will make you feel more comfortable.”

“I don't think my comfort is an issue. How do you feel about us sharing a room and a bed?” He asks while looking tentatively at me. I pretend as if I'm contemplating his question. In truth, there is nothing I want more than to spend the night again with Jax.

“I think we will be okay with one room. In fact, I'm ready to check in, what about you?” Jax smiles then utters, “Let's go.”

## Chapter 7

### JAX

WE'VE SPENT what can only be defined as the best afternoon ever! Sitting in the hotel café after we ate, I know I should be relaxed, but I am a little apprehensive. I know the subject of our sleeping arrangement is coming. I want so badly to share a room with him, but I don't know how affected he was from this morning with his parents and ex-fiancée. Is it selfish to want a repeat of last night? To have a morning where we won't be interrupted? I need to find the courage to bring it up before we check in. Still, if two room is what he needs to feel comfortable then so be it. I'm prepared to not be greedy but thank god he and I are of the same mind because he wants to share a room.



Our hotel is nothing like the hotel in London, but the room is pretty clean and spacious. The moment we walk in, we fall on the sofa out of weariness. “Do you want to use the shower first?” Edward asks.

“Yes, I could use a shower, are you taking one?”

“Yes, but you can go first.”

“If it’s big enough maybe we can take one together,” I say falteringly. Edward raises off the sofa, crawling towards me. He stops between my legs, kissing me chastely then says, “I would love to shower with you, even if it’s narrow as hell. Let’s go check it out.”

The shower is definitely big enough to accommodate both of us, suddenly we aren’t so tired anymore. Edward turns on the spray as we start to undress slowly, each glancing at the other. This will be the first time we will see each other fully naked, and I suddenly feel self-conscious. Edward must have sensed my trepidation because he walks towards me,

grabs me by the nape, and feverishly kisses me with an intensity unlike any I've felt before. With his forehead connected to mine he speaks softly, "I want this, do you?"

"Yes, more than anything," I whisper. He starts to unbutton my shirt and slowly push it off my shoulder while raising his head to look into my eyes. I know if things continue as they are, there will be no turning back. I will be emotionally, as well as sexually, connected to this man.

It's not long before he removes every piece of clothes on my body. His penetrating eyes ravishing every inch of me as I stand there allowing him to take it all in. Finally, I ask him for the same privilege.

"Am I going to be the only one naked?" I say to him smiling shyly.

"You are beautiful," he says, not taking his eyes off me as he begins to remove his clothes.

This is not the first time I've seen a man naked, but this is the first time I feel every hair on my body stand up as each piece of clothing is peeled off his body. I suddenly ache for him, I want our bodies to connect, to feel his arms and legs wrap around me. I'm speechless as I stare at him.

Once naked, he walks towards me, slowly walking me backward until my back touches the tile. He starts to kiss me again deeply while pulling our bodies together, fulfilling my every wish. Breathlessly, Edward pulls away, bringing the palm of my left hand to his mouth and kisses it. I suppose I know what he's thinking because the next words out of my mouth were that he should do what's comfortable to him.

"I want you to tell me what to do, tell me what feels good for you," he says. I take his hand and move it towards my swollen cock, rubbing the back of his hand against it. "This is what feels good, you touching and controlling every part of my body." I hear Edwards hiss before he begin to do just

that.

As the hot water sprays against our aching bodies, Edward slowly moves down the tiled wall bringing me with him. Soon we are laying on the shower floor as he grabs my legs pulling me towards him to bring our bodies even closer together.

He rubs his hands against my buttocks and upper thighs moving intently towards my hole. "I want in here," pulling his mouth away from mine to whisper. "Then get in there, I respond with a groan." Edward lifts my leg and begins to massage the entrance to my anus.

When he pushes his fingers in, I feel the enticing burn as he penetrates me. He starts to move two of his fingers in and out of my hole, with each in and out I'm lost in complete ecstasy. "Edward, please. I want you, don't make me wait," I

manage to murmur.

“I don’t want to hurt you, and I just realized I don’t have a condom.” My eyes, turn to meet his, “I’m clean, but I have a packet of lube and condom in my wallet that I walk with.” We both look to the floor where our clothes lay splattered.

“I’m clean too,” he says, “but I want you to feel safe with me.” He covers my lips with his fingers before I can respond, “Trust me,” he whispers, while pulling away from my body, I immediately miss his heat. He quickly reaches for my pants to get the hidden condom. After retrieving it, he returns to my side. We stare at each other before our lips met again in a fiery kiss.

His fingers pick up exactly where they left off, massaging my most private interior, moving in and out until I feel senseless. I needed more, and I don’t hesitate to voice my need. “Edward, please, I want you inside me.” He repeats that he doesn’t want to hurt me. I breathe deeply to calm my

racing dick and heart. "I promise you, you won't hurt me, give me more."

Edward eases up on his knees and begins to manipulate the condom onto his massive dick. He coated it with lube before moving to my hole and slowly starts to penetrate me. We both moan from the feeling of his first slow thrust. When he figures I'm ready, he picks up the pace. As he moves in and out of me, my head feels dizzy, I feel as if I am floating.

Feeling him in my body as he holds me open, making me feel so vulnerable. I hold onto him as he pistons into me, hitting every nerve in my hole. I try not to come, not wanting the feeling to end, but I can't stop my body and the intense orgasm that rocked it. He continues to thrust into me as my head continues to spin. Eventually, I feel his body shake as he calls my name, spilling into the condom. He falls on top of me, spent from the attention he just lavished onto my body.

We both lie on the floor of the shower, breathless from our lovemaking. Eventually, he raises up off my body and holds out his hand to help me get up. Edward and I wash each other's bodies from head to toe, drying off before falling into bed. We fall asleep naked, wrapped in each other arms.

When I open my eyes again, it's to the feel of Edwards cock rubbing against my ass, and his unshaven face rubbing against my jaw. In an instant, he was inside me without lube or a condom. He penetrated me deep and slow as I lose my mind from the intensity of his ministrations. He continues to move unhurriedly until I scream his name.

**JAX**

After our intense morning workout, he bites my ear then says good morning with a sigh. I roll to face him and mutter,

“Morning breath.” He laughs at my plight, grabbing my hands away from my mouth, replacing it with his lips.

“Mmm, I love morning breath.” Edward pulls me closer to the point where I’m practically laying on top of him. We stay that way until the grumble of our stomachs force us to move.

“Do you want me to go and see what I can find for us to eat?” I ask Edward.

“I’ll find us something to eat, you stay right here.” He says as he begin to move off the bed.

“We can go together,” I offered.

“No stay. Let’s spend half the day in bed and the rest sightseeing, what do you think?”

“It sounds like a plan,” I say while laying down to watch his naked ass as he heads to the bathroom to retrieve his clothes.

When Edward returns, he has a baguette for us to share and



coffee. We stay in bed the whole morning, holding each other and talking. Eventually, we shower, dress, and head out to take a boat ride down the Seine River on the Bateau Mouché. It was the most romantic afternoon and evening I've ever had, not because of the location, but because of the man I was with. The next morning we take the Eurostar back to London. By mid-afternoon, Edward has to prepare for an important meeting at work, so I take a cab back to my hotel.

When I walk into my room, I expected Jeff would still be with his uncle. I'm surprised to see him lying on the couch, watching a movie. He turns when he hears the door open.

"Hey! You're back early," he exclaims.

"So are you, I thought you were going to be with your uncle all weekend." He smiles sheepishly before saying, "I only said that so that you wouldn't feel guilty about going with Edward to Paris."

"What? You could have come with us, why did you do

that?”

“How was Paris?” He changes the subject with a smile.

I don’t answer right away. Instead, I drop down on the sofa next to him and dig into his bowl of popcorn. “How was your visit with your uncle?”

“Don’t equate my visit with relatives to you going away with your boyfriend for the weekend.”

“I suppose you’re right, it is kind of weird” I sigh, then continue to watch the movie still without answering. The truth is, I didn’t know how to answer his question. I don’t want to say too much or to betray Edward’s confidence. Still, Jeff is my best friend and we’ve shared a lot with each other—I trust him. I wouldn’t have a problem telling him verbatim what happened in Paris, the question is how Edward would feel about that. I decide to depend on the trust I’ve developed with Jeff and proceed to tell him all about my two days in Paris.

The next day, Jeff and I decide to spend the day together. We visit Borough Market, one of the many markets known to the area. When we arrive, it's crowded with pedestrians as well as vendors everywhere. We walk for what seems like hours, going from one vendor to the next, taking in the atmosphere and activities surrounding us.

It occurs to me as we proceed with our day that Jeff and I haven't really talked about his circumstances in a while.

"How are things going with your uncle?" I ask.

"Good. He regrets what my grandfather did to my mom and me. He says he wants me in his life; he would like it if I moved to London, but I told him no. I told him my life is in America. He is proud I'm about to start med school. He is a really good guy."

"Are you planning on seeing him again when we return home?" I ask.

"Probably. I don't think he is going to give me a choice now

that we've met." Even though Jeff was talking to me, but he seems so far away.

"What's wrong then? It sounds as if you and your uncle are going to have a pretty great relationship."

"I suppose so, I'm just still caught up with what happened to my mom. I feel as if I'm betraying her memory having this relationship with Uncle Max. A relationship my mother wasn't able to have with my father or anyone on this side of the family." We are silent for a while after Jeff voiced his concern.

"I think your mom would be happy, Jeff. She loved your father, and your father loved her. She would want you to have a relationship with your father's brother."

"I know what you are saying makes sense. I also know what I'm feeling is a little irrational. I just can't help it, you know?" I put my hand on his shoulder and turn him to face me.

"Jeff, nothing you are feeling is irrational. You were cheated out of the opportunity to grow up with your mom and to

know your father. What you're feeling make sense. Just don't blame your uncle for what his father did. It's clear he wants you in his life, so let him in. It's also a way to get to know more about your father. With your mom, you had her mother to tell you about her and share how much you meant to her. Now you have your uncle to tell you about your dad." Jeff nods his head in agreement as we continue to visit the shops around the market.

As we are walking into our fifth clothing store, my cell rings, it's Edward. "I'm going to take this, I'll meet you inside." Jeff turns and smiles. "Just don't make any plans, remember the whole day." I smile and told him not to worry as I take the call.

"Hey!" I say into the phone. "Hey yourself!" Edward repeats back. "What are you up to?"

"I'm at Borough Market with Jeff being tourists. What about you?" I hear him talking to someone just before he answers.

"I just got out of my meeting. It was a long one; I miss you."

"I miss you too, but before you ask, Jeff and I sort of promised each other that we would spend the whole day together." Edward laughs into the phone.

"I suppose you knew I wanted to see you," he says.

"Yes, because that's what I want too, but I can't neglect the reason I'm here to begin with."

"I don't want you to do that either. Jeff already has issues with me, I don't want to compound on them." I turn and look at Jeff as he browses the shop.

"Jeff doesn't have any issues with you, I promise." He laughs again.

"You don't have to promise that. Can I see you tomorrow?"

"Yes, when?" I ask.

"I can leave work around three. We can have an early dinner, maybe the three of us if you would like." I smile because I know Edward is trying with Jeff, even though Jeff has been nothing but rude to him.

"I'll ask him and text you. Call me late tonight if you like."

"I like, I will call around ten, is that late enough?"

“Yes, it's perfect. I'll talk to you tonight,” I say as we both disconnect the call.

I walk into the shop to meet Jeff, and the first thing he asks is when am I going to see him again, I snicker before answering. “Tomorrow, he asked if you wanted to join us for an early dinner around three.” Jeff doesn't respond right away.

Finally, he says, “Are you sure he wants me to come?” We turn away from the shirts we were looking at and look at each other.

“Yes, I'm sure. Jeff, why are you having such a hard time with Edward?”

Jeff shrugs his shoulders, “I told you already, I don't dislike the guy. I'm a little concerned for you though.” I look at Jeff keenly.

“You don't need to be concern about me. Edward is a really great guy, he would never hurt me.” Now Jeff is looking at

me closely.

He bumps his shoulders against mine while saying, "Ok."

We continue to look around the shop, not talking much to each other. Finally, he turns to me to accept the invitation.

"Tell him yes, I would love to join you two for dinner tomorrow." I shake my head taking out my phone and text Edward to let him know our plans were on.



## Chapter 8

### EDWARD

IN MY life, were few times I've wanted something that I couldn't have, one of those times was yesterday. I wanted so much to spend another night with Jax. Unfortunately, I had obligations at work preventing me from getting what I wanted. The meeting is going longer than it should, and all I want is for it to end. I've thought of nothing but Jax since I woke up this morning. I didn't even have time to call him because of the meeting. Now, I just want it to end so I can hear his voice.

Suddenly it occurs to me that Jax and everything about him has become extremely important to me. I love the way he makes me feel, not to mention missing him and thinking

about him incessantly. I wonder if he feels the same? Either way, it's clear that Jax could easily hurt me, especially when it's time to return to America. I can't think about that though, I'm going to take every moment I can get with him. I pull myself out of my musings to make the call.

After speaking with Jax, I try to get my mind back on the project I'm tasked with completing. Lately, the last place my mind has been is on work. I wonder if Mr. Moby or Mr. Waterhouse notices. Mr. Moby seems to direct a lot of his criticism in the meeting towards me. What's important is that I'm getting the work done, and I'm doing it accurately. If I thought my performance was lacking, I would be the first to admit it. Not staying at the office every night should not be indicative of whether I'm a good employee or not.

It's after six, and I start to pack my desk to leave when there is a knock on my office door. I thought it was my secretary, so I call her to come in without looking up from what I was

doing. “Edward, may I have a word?” Startled, I stand up quickly and extend my hand inviting Mr. Waterhouse to join me at my desk. I walk around to the guest chairs, sitting next to him.

“Mr. Waterhouse what can I do for you?” I asked.

“Edward, as you know your father and I are friends.” I am shocked that he mentions my father. In the years I’ve been with the firm, he has never made reference to his friendship with my father, even though I knew it existed.

“Yes, I know you and my father are friends,” I say with a smile. Mr. Waterhouse just looks at me intently, as if he is trying to figure out how to say something. After a brief silence, I guess he finds the words he wants to say. “Edward, your father called me the other night and asked me to speak with you.”

Stunned by his revelation, I ask why my father would want him to speak to me. “He is concerned about you, he

thought perhaps I can offer some guidance." I purse my lips, searching for the words to respond. "Exactly what did my father tell you, sir, was wrong with me?"

"He didn't say anything was wrong with you. He did, however, ask me to approach you and offer my confidence if you wanted to speak freely." I shake my head surprised that my father would go to such extent.

"Thank you, sir, but I don't need anyone to talk with about anything in particular unless my father specified exactly what he thought you and I should be discussing."

Again another brief silence, then he continues, "I heard you are no longer engaged to Lillian Fensworth."

Mr. Waterhouse leans towards me to voice his next thought and to ask a question. "Are you certain all is well, Edward? You can speak with me about anything, I promise not to judge, only to offer advice from a place of experience." Again, I purse my lips before responding.

“Sir, I truly appreciate you taking your valuable time to see to my best interest. I can assure you, I am not indecisive about anything that’s happening in my life right now. If I was, or if I ever am, I will seek your confidence.”

With those words, Mr. Waterhouse stands and offers his hand, “Your father is a good friend of mine. If you change your mind, you know where to find me.” Those are the words he utters as he heads towards the door.

I stare at the closed door for a long time. I can’t believe my father thought that speaking with Mr. Waterhouse was a better solution. He would rather I talk with a stranger than make attempts to resolve any issues he and I may have.

I want to pick up the phone and call him to find out exactly what his intentions are, and precisely what he told my boss. I don’t call because I’m angry, not wanting to say something cruel. Instead of a confrontation, I pack up my office and

head to the elevator. What I need right now is a long run and Jax. The phone call later will have to do.

I think my run tonight was the longest I've run in a long while, I guess aggravation is an excellent fuel. I take a long shower, catch up on chores, and pay some bills while waiting to call Jax. Even though I spoke with him this afternoon, I long to hear his voice. Better yet, I want to see him. I cannot believe there was a time when I thought I loved Lillian. Compared to what I feel for Jax, it's clear my feelings for her was lacking. It's too early to say I love him, but I clearly feel more for him in the short time I've known him than I ever felt for Lillian.

I'm standing on my balcony, so caught up in my thoughts, I almost don't hear my cell ring on the charger in my bedroom. I run to it and answer it without giving a thought as to who it might be. "Hello."

"Hey."

“Jax?”

“Who else? Were you expecting someone else to call this late?”

“No, but I wasn’t expecting you to call me, I planned to call you in an hour.”

“Well, Jeff is tired and went to bed, so I decided to call you, is that okay?”

“Why would you ask me that? Of course, it’s okay, I’m glad to hear your voice.”

“What are you doing?” Jax asks almost seductively.

“Right now, I’m in the bedroom, I was on the balcony thinking about you.”

“What were you thinking?”

“That I miss you, and wanted to hear your voice, and how much I care about you. Enough about me, how was your day?”

“Walking through the market was tiring, I’m tired.”

“Then I should let you go so you can sleep.”

“No, what you should do is buzz me into the building so

that I can see you and touch you.”

“Wait, what? Are you downstairs?”

“Open the door, Edward.”

## **EDWARD**

With more excitement than I can contain, I open the door to a sight I was not expecting tonight. After what seems like an eternity of staring at each other, we simultaneously walk into each other arms as our lips met in an intense hungry kiss. Eventually, we have to stop to breathe. “Are you surprised?” Jax asks. I cannot find the words to answer. All I could say is three words, “I need you.”

Those were the only words needed as the heat from Jax’s mouth engulfs mine. With our bodies press close together, we practically tumble to my bedroom. We begin to slowly remove each other clothes, our lips barely parting. Our



hands are everywhere, reaching and grasping, eager to feel the bare of our skins. Finally, I pull away slightly; that's when the intensity of the moment goes nuclear.

Jax falls to his knees as he finishes removing my pants and underwear, rubbing his hands up and down my inner and outer thighs and legs while staring up into my eyes. Raising himself on his knees, he palms my cock, massaging it over and over again, smiling when he sees the intense pleasure on my face. "Don't stop," I implore.

"I won't," he whispers lowering his head and taking my cock deep into his throat.

The power and warmth of his mouth make my knees buckle. Jax used his hands to grab my buttocks to prevent me from falling. The feel of his warm mouth as it circles my cock is insane. Never has any blow jobs I've received felt this good. I run my hands through his hair, trying not to thrust too hard into his mouth. He squeezes my ass, clearly

giving me permission to push further.

I gave him what we both want, pushing deeper, harder into his throat, and he takes all of it, all of me. Through my heavy breathing and moaning, I manage to say, "I'm going to come," he looks up into my eyes again, giving me permission to take charge. I hold his head tighter as I thrust deeper and faster. My balls tighten as I close my eyes so tight I see stars. It's at that moment that I spill my cum into his mouth. He swallows all of it, holding me because I'm too weak from the spasm that takes hold of my body. I'm so absorbed by the eruption of my body, I don't notice that Jax also climaxes.

Jax slowly starts to stand up, while rubbing his palms against the sides of my body, and his nose against my groin. He kisses my body all the way to my mouth, allowing me to taste the essence I released in his mouth. "I really missed you," he says softly. We both groan with need.

“Are you staying?” I ask as I lay kisses on any part of his body I can reach.

“For a little while, then I should head back to the hotel,” he responds.

“Spend the night, I’ll wake you in the morning and drop you at the hotel.”

Jax groans, “That’s probably a bad idea, since the last time I stayed the whole night, your ex and your parents descended on your place.”

“I promise, when we wake up tomorrow it will be just you and me.” Jax raises his head from the crevice of my neck, looking into my eyes.

“Are you sure?”

I looked deep into his eyes and respond sarcastically, “Am I sure that I want to fall asleep with you, and wake up with you? Yes, I’m sure, please say yes.” Still looking into my eyes, Jax finishes unzipping his now wet pants and steps out of them along with his underwear. He turns and heads towards the bed, removing the comforter and climbing right

in. I quickly join him and pull him close.

Jax lays practically on top of me as I wrap my arms and legs around him. For a while, we just lay still in the darkness of the bedroom. Finally, one of us speaks. "How was work today?" He asks in a whisper. I make an innocuous sound then sleepily mumble, "Honestly, the day wouldn't have been so bad if it wasn't for what happened as I was getting ready to leave."

Jax looks up from my chest with concern and asks, "What happened?"

"My father seemed to think that talking to my boss about my personal life is the solution for the problems he and I have. Mr. Waterhouse approached me, offering his ear if I ever need to speak with someone. It seems my father told him something, I don't know what."

Jax's arms came up to cup my face, asking, "Did you call your father and ask him what he said?"

I kiss his lips softly, “No, I didn’t want another confrontation with him. I was too angry, so I came home and went for a long run.”

“I’m sorry your parents are not supportive. I know you love them and would prefer they understood what you are going through.”

“You’re right, it would be nice to have their support, but you have nothing to be sorry about, I hope you know that.”

Jax doesn’t respond right away. Eventually, I hear him say, “I’m trying not to blame myself.”

I rolled him on his back, pinning his head with both of my arms. “Jax, you are the best thing that ever happened to me. I need you to not blame yourself because It took me so long to admit my true feelings for Lillian and to face the truth about my sexuality. Promise me you won’t blame yourself.”

Jax raises his head to meet my lips as he pulls me towards him. No more words are spoken the rest of the night as we make love into the night. Eventually falling asleep, our

bodies tangled together.

It's morning. I know it's morning because I forgot to pull the blinds last night, so the morning sun is streaming through the curtains. There is something different about this morning. I didn't wake up as I usually do, with dread of facing Lillian and her issues, or because of work. No, this morning I wake up loving the skin to skin contact of the man lying in my arms. I want more of it. I want it with him.

I'm wondering if it's the right time to tell Jax about my growing feelings for him. I hesitate because it's only been weeks since we met. How could I possibly tell him I'm falling in love with him? That question ruminates in my mind as I feel him coming awake. "Good morning," I whisper. Jax looks up, and around, for a second, he seems unsure of his surroundings. The realization of the night before dawns and he smiles.

"Good morning yourself," he says. I grab hold of his lips and

plant a lingering kiss. He hesitates, and I smile because I know it's his issue with morning breath.

"I was thinking about going to make coffee, but I didn't want to move and wake you."

"What time is it?"

"It's early," I slowly began to unravel my body from his, "I'm going to make coffee and toast, come and help me."

Jax sits up in bed, "I will after I use the bathroom and get rid of my morning breath. Do you have a spare toothbrush?"

"Yes, look in the left drawer," I say, walking towards the bedroom door.

In the kitchen, I am so caught up with thoughts of what to say to Jax, I forget to start the coffee. "I thought you were making toast and coffee?" He says while wrapping his arms around me. At that moment, I know exactly what needs to happen. I'm not prepared to tell Jax how I feel, but I am ready to know what will happen between him and me when he returns to the states.

I start the coffee maker reaching into the bread box for the bread. "Jax, when are you returning to the states?" At this point, he had moved to sit on the other side of the island. He looked over at me puzzled, I suppose because of my tone, or maybe the suddenness of the question.

"I don't know, in a few weeks. We were going to stay longer, but Jeff wants to return a little sooner than originally planned. He needs time before starting med school."

I nod with understanding and ask what feels like the next logical question, "Are you going to go back early with him?" I think Jax finally realizes where the conversation is headed because he walks around the island to stand opposite me to continue.

"I wasn't planning on staying if that's what you're asking." I can feel his eyes on me, but I couldn't turn to look him in the eyes. Instead, I ask the next question.

"What about us?"



## Chapter 9

### JAX

I WOKE up to the feel of Edward's hard body wrapped around mine. I could feel his even breath against the nape of my neck, his lips caressing my hair, his hands holding tight to my arm. It occurred to me I've never slept sounder. I didn't want to pull away from the feel of him, but we couldn't stay in bed. I turn as his lips met mine for the perfect morning kiss, then I pulled away slightly because my breath stank. I could see his mocking smile because I do have issues with not brushing my teeth first thing in the morning. We untwined ourselves, and I head to the bathroom.

Funny how they say you have the most important thoughts at the most impromptu times. I'm staring at myself in the

mirror, and it occurs to me that I am falling deeply for a guy who lives thousands of miles apart from me. I put the thought out of my head and brush my teeth and empty my bladder, then head to the kitchen.

I stand in the hall watching him. I can tell he is lost in thought. I wonder if he is having the same thoughts I am. I walk up behind him and embrace him with every inch of my body. His question that follows prove we were thinking about the same things, but I'm not ready to deal with the reality of us living so far apart. I want to tell him that I'm not prepared to talk about the future, but he's determined.

Do you think there isn't an us?" Edward continues to stare at the coffee maker, still not turning to face me even though I'm standing inches from him.

"This morning I woke up wondering what's going to happen when it's time for you to leave, I think we need to talk about it." We don't get to say another word, because at that

moment the phone rings. I step away from Edward as he reaches for it.

“It’s Olivia,” he says after checking the caller ID. “Morning, sunshine,” he says while smiling into the phone. I walk into the living room to give them privacy as they talk. When Edward comes to the living room a few minutes later, the first thing he asks is, “How do you feel about Olivia joining us for dinner?” I smile because I’ve wanted to meet her.

“I think that’s a great idea.”

He walks up to me wrapping his arms around me, “Good, because I’ve invited her. Let’s go make breakfast I’m hungry, and I’m sure you are too.” We don’t continue the earlier conversation.

When I arrive back at the hotel, I decide to see if Jeff is awake, as expected he’s fast asleep. I plop down opposite him, riling him awake. “I thought you slept at Edwards,” he mumbles sleepily.

“I did, I just got back, get up and talk to me, I need a friend right now.”

He doesn't move for a minute, then he swung his feet to the floor, heading to the bathroom. After hearing him splash water on his face and urinate, he returns with a toothbrush in his mouth while trying to begin our conversation.

“What happened?” He slinks back onto the bed waiting for my answer.

“I don't want to say goodbye to Edward, I think I'm in love with him, and his friend Olivia is joining us for dinner.”

He kept brushing his teeth, mumbling, “Whoa, that was a mouth full, are you okay?”

“I'm fine, I just woke up this morning really happy. I've never felt this way for someone before, Jeff, it's scaring me.”

Jeff walks back to the bathroom to rinse his mouth. When he returns, he sit gingerly in front of me, mirroring my position.

“Have you thought about what's going to happen when we

leave?”

I rub my hands over my face. “I’m thinking about it now. I know you have something to say so go ahead and say it.”

“I don’t think you’re going to like what I have to say, Jax. Let me ask you this, are you thinking about staying?”

“It’s an option, isn’t it? I could find a job here in marketing.”

“You’re right, you could, the question is, should you?”

“Just say what you are trying to say, Jeff.” He doesn’t say anything for a few minutes, then he finally opens up. “Okay, I think you’re making a mistake. I think you just met Edward, you haven’t known him a full month yet, yet you are talking about staying here for him.”

He stops talking before turning away, but I can tell he isn’t done. “What’s more, and this is the part you are not going to like, Jax, he is a virgin, he just admitted to himself that he is gay. Are you really expecting him to settle down with you? It won’t happen, he needs to find himself. You already know who you are. Can you honestly look at me and tell me you

are convinced this guy can say the same?"

**JAX**

I don't answer his question, walking to the window and staring out onto the city, really not looking at anything.

"What else?" I ask, knowing Jeff still isn't finished.

"I think you should end this thing you have with him. I know you think you love him, but you need to let him find himself and maybe down the road if you meet again, and he still considers himself 'Gay,' then maybe. Right now, I personally think you are influencing him. I think if you left tomorrow he would go right back to Lillian. Do you really want a man like that?"

I turn and look at him, but I don't answer. I walk towards my bedroom while reminding him of our plans for an early dinner.

“Jax, you’re really not going to say anything?” He says as I’m walking away. I turned to face him, “What do you want me to say? That you are right? You are right, and I am tired, and need a nap before we do anything today.”

I start to walk away again when he says, “Don’t be angry with me.”

“I’m not angry,” I say, as I walk to my bedroom door, closing it behind me. I’m really not angry with Jeff. If anything, he revealed truths that I wasn’t willing to admit. I am a fool for thinking Edward, and I are at the beginning of a relationship. I have this habit of making rash decisions where men are concerned; clearly, this is one of those times.

Still, as much as I am not mad at Jeff, I also can’t face him right now, possibly because of his crudeness. I did ask for his thoughts, but it was just a little too straightforward. I can’t help but wonder if he truly doesn’t like Edward. If that is the case, I don’t know why. Either way, he is probably

right, and I am making a fool of myself. Now the question is what I should do?

Around two o'clock there is a knock on my bedroom door. I know it's Jeff. "Why are you knocking?" I call out. The door opens, and Jeff walks in ready for dinner.

"Are we still going?"

"Yes, of course, just give me a few minutes to text Edward and confirm where we are meeting." Jeff walks into the bedroom and takes a seat next to me on the bed.

"I'm sorry if I hurt you earlier, I really didn't mean to I—" I stop him before he can continue. "I don't want to talk about this anymore, okay? And, I'm sorry we didn't get to do anything today, I just wasn't in the mood."

"Don't worry about today, we've done a lot since we've been here. I don't think there is too much left that we can do."

"Edward just answered, he says to take a cab and tell the



driver we want to go to Rules.”

“I ate there with Uncle Max, it’s pretty fancy, we’re going to need jackets.”

“Ok, I’ll be ready in fifteen minutes. Let’s go and have a good time, I’m looking forward to meeting Olivia.”

Jeff turns and looks at me, “Who is Olivia?”

“She is Edwards best friend. They’ve known each other as long as you and I have known each other.”

We arrived at Rules before Edward and Olivia. Deciding to wait for them at the bar, we sit and order drinks. I can tell Jeff wants to continue the conversation started this morning. I stop him again before he can say a word. “Jeff, let’s not go there right now. Any minute now they will be here, and I don’t want Edward to feel funny having dinner with us.” Jeff has a puzzled look on his face when he asks, “Why would he feel funny?”

I turned and look at him with a smirk, “I don’t know, maybe

because a certain friend of mine has been nothing but rude to him the few times he was in his presence?"

Jeff smiles coyly, "I promise I will be nice." Just as he makes the promise, I spot Edward walking through the restaurant door. "Hey," he says, as he approaches. He walks up to me, and kissing me on the lips.

"Where is Olivia?" I ask, looking around him. "She is coming, she is always late." As soon as he says the words, I noticed a short redhead walking over to us.

"Is that her?"

Edward and Jeff turn in the direction I was looking. "That's her, late as usual," he says loud enough so that she can hear.

"Excuse me? You are not talking about me, are you?"

"Yes, I am as a matter of fact," Edward says as he walks up to her and lifts her off her feet with a massive hug. "Hey, Liv!"

Olivia looks behind Edward, "Which one of you is Jax?" She

asks with a grin.

“That would be me,” I say while raising a hand.

“It’s really nice to meet you, Jax, I’ve heard a lot about you,” she says walking over to me, refusing my extended hand, and giving me a hug instead.

“It’s terrific to meet you, Olivia, he told me all about you too.” Edward introduces Olivia to Jeff then disappeared into the crowd to confirm our reservation.

The dinner would have been a disaster if Olivia wasn’t there. Jeff and Edward barely speak to each other. Olivia, on the other hand, cannot stop talking, for that matter neither could Edward. The two of them caught up on their daily lives trying to incorporate us into the conversation. For the most part, I was responsive to what they were talking about, while Jeff barely had anything to say.

After dinner, Edward invites us back to his place to watch a game. Olivia doesn’t hesitate to say, “Hell no, if we are

watching anything it's a movie. I refuse to watch one of your violent American football games." The three of us look at her with dismay on our faces and start to laugh. Edward relents to the movie idea as we all head to Edward's apartment. Something must have happened between the restaurant and the apartment because Jeff begins to relax, he seems to enjoy the banter he was having with Olivia over who copied what between American and the English culture. In the end, the movie is ignored, and the four of us continue our discussion on America and English culture.

It is late by the time Jeff is ready to go back to the hotel. Edward offers to drive him, but Jeff turns him down and calls a cab. We're standing outside waiting for the taxi when Edward offers to drive him again. "No thanks, I have places to go and people to see." He points to me as he continues, "I'll see you later." With those words, he kisses Olivia on the cheek then turns and walks towards the cab.

"I would understand if you want to go with him," Edward

says, as Jeff enters the cab.

“No, I’m good, let’s take Olivia home.”

“You know I don’t live that far from here, I can walk, the two of you don’t have to worry about me.”

Edward and I look at each other, “We will walk you home,” we both say in unison. It takes us a half hour to walk Olivia to her door, walking back to Edward’s apartment hand in hand.

“Where did you go sightseeing today?”

“We didn’t, I wasn’t in the mood, and I fell asleep for most of the morning and afternoon.” Edward smiles then asks, “Did I tire you out last night?”

“I guess you did,” I say with a laugh.

“How was your day?”

“Okay, I spent most of it in my office reading lengthy contracts, other than that it was typical.”

“No more inquiry from Mr. Waterhouse?”

“No, as a matter of fact, he wasn’t in the office today. If I had to guess, he was probably at the county club with my father.”

We are silent for a few minutes as we walked. “Dinner seemed to turn out okay, what do you think?” I ask to break the silence.

“I think it did too. I also think your best friend still has issues with me.” I pulled at his hand to stop him.

“He doesn’t have issues with you, Edward, I’ve told you that. He has a lot going on in his life, please don’t take anything he does personally.”

We barely say anything more as we approach his apartment. Once inside we start to straighten up the mess made during our get-together. We sit and start to watch the movie Olivia had chosen earlier, but my mind isn’t in the film. I want the man sitting next to me. I want to not think about leaving. I just want to feel him inside me. It doesn’t matter that I know

what I need to do. Only this moment matters.

## Chapter 10

### EDWARD

I GET up from the couch reaching for Jax's hands. He doesn't hesitate, taking my hand as we walk to the bedroom without saying a word. Jax turns to kiss me hard the moment I close the bedroom door, walking backward, pulling me with him, the intensity in the air is strong and wanting. The moment his calves hit the bed, Jax sits and pulls me closer to him, forcing me to straddle him. He unzips my pants while I run my hands through his thick hair and down his jaw, bending to cover his lips with mine, sucking on them as if my life depends on it. My action stops his undressing of me.

I move forward with him, forcing him to lie back while my body moved on top of him. I cup his face as I continue to



devour his mouth. The kiss lasting until we are both breathless. "I need you so bad. I lied to you earlier when I said my day was typical. I spent most of it thinking about you, about us." Our foreheads meet while Jax's hands travel to my buttocks, finding their way into my pants; he grabs my ass and pulls me further into him.

"I spent the day thinking about you too," He mutters, "let's not talk, just fuck me, please," he says. I stand on my knees, pulling Jax up with me. I pulled his shirt and tee shirt over his head in one quick move. I stand and reach for his pant waist and quickly unbutton and unzip it and pulled it off, leaving only his boxers. I finish removing my shirt and pants while Jax reaches down and pulls off his boxers. We both still, staring at each other.

"You are so beautiful; do you know that?"

Jax doesn't answer; instead he gestures to me, "Come here."

I kneel back on the bed, and crawl towards him and again

grab hold of his mouth with mine, he expelled a deep moan. I move down his body kissing every inch of his skin. My mouth quickly finds its way to his cock, and I engulf it deep into my warm mouth. Jax's hips begin to thrust up off the bed into my mouth, I stop him by pressing his hips further into the bed.

I open his legs wide, while still sucking him, my index finger moving to his quivering hole. The moment I touch it, Jax practically screams. I massage the entrance with my index finger then thrust in deep. Jax tries to move again to the rhythm of my thrust. His body shivers as my finger fucks his hole while his dick tries to fuck my mouth. "I want more, please, Edward." I insert another finger and continue the assault on his hole. He begins to groan more as his cock continues to violate my mouth, groaning a deep guttural groan when my fingers find his prostate.

"That feels good?" I asked, removing my mouth from his cock.

“Yes, it feels so good, please don’t stop.”

I insert a third finger, then scissor them to prepare him for my entrance. At this point Jax seems lost, he is murmuring unintelligible words while I kneed his ass and suck on his cock. I move away from him to his dismay and reach in the drawer to get the lube. “Please don’t stop.”

“Shhhh, I will be right back, then I will give you exactly what you want.” I return to Jax’s open legs and sheath his ass and my rock-hard cock with lube. This time I raise both his legs while pulling his lower body towards me, I enter him in one immense thrust. We both exhale with deep moans that could be heard through the apartment.

Folding Jax practically in half, I ride him hard, fast, and deep. “Ehh god you’re so deep, please don’t stop.” Jax grabs hold of my ass every time I thrust deeper inside of him. Our eyes meet again and the intensity looking back at me is

overwhelming. It isn't long before we both reach a summit so high our bodies spasm, him onto his face and chest and me, deep inside him. I feel weightless as my body continues to erupt with cum filling his ass.

As my senses return, I realize my entire weight is on Jax. I push up ready to move, but he wraps his arms and legs around my back, "No, don't move, I love the feel of your weight on me." I bury my head in the crook of his neck, and we lay there without saying a word.

After a while, I get up, walking to the bathroom to get a wet towel to clean him up. When I return, he's was exactly where I left him. I lift his leg to clean him when he opens his eyes, and our eyes meet. He doesn't say a word, he just stares at me as I continue to remove the cum and lube from his butt, chest, and face. "Are you okay?" I finally asked.

"Yes," is the only word to part his lips.

"Are you sure?" He smiles at me then holds out his hand for

me to join him.

“Come and lay next to me, I want to feel your body next to mine.”

I throw the wet towel on the nightstand and wrap my legs and arms around his body. We lay there in the dark both of us not sleeping, recovering from the most intense lovemaking we’ve had to date.

While recovering, I know I need to bring up the conversation we started before Olivia called. “I’m sorry about this morning, I didn’t mean to put you on the spot like that.”

“You didn’t put me on the spot, I just wasn’t ready to talk about going home.”

“I understand, I just couldn’t stop thinking about you and me, and what happens next. I guess I should have tried harder.” Jax doesn’t say anything for a few minutes. When he does speak, his words floor me.

“I don’t think you should be sorry for what you feel, Edward.” He pauses before continuing, “I feel as if you’ve been sorry all your life for the way you truly feel. You really need to stop apologizing for that.”

“Are we talking about this morning, or something else?” I ask.

“Both,” is his only response.

“I’m not sorry for being gay,” are the only words I manage to utter.

Over the next week, Jax and I continue to see each other during the evenings while he and Jeff roam the streets of London during the day. I know the time is coming when Jax and I will have to talk about him leaving. I also know he is avoiding the discussion. Tonight was like all the others we’ve had over the past days. We eat dinner together, then spend the night making love.

Somewhere in the middle of the night, I wake up to an

empty bed. I get up, walking to the living room, I found him staring out the window. He must have sensed my presence because he begins to speak. "Do you remember when you asked me if there was an us?" I walk closer to him and sit on the same windowsill opposite him.

"I do, but I shouldn't have gone there, I was just..."

"You were just asking a normal question any normal couple in our situation would ask. I didn't know how to answer you then." He isn't looking at me as he speak and I knew I needed to see his eyes. I get up to turn on a light and return to where I was sitting. Jax doesn't move, he continues to stare at something outside the window.

"Look at me," I command in a tone that is probably harsher than it should have been. Something tells me I'm not going to like where this conversation is headed. He still doesn't move when I asked him to look at me, so I ask again. "Jax, will you please look at me?" Finally, he turns his face towards me, and our eyes meet.

Although I know deep down where this conversation is headed, I'm still not prepared for what he says next. "I'm leaving to go back to the states in a week."

I don't respond, because I can't. I want to ask him to stay, I want to hear him say next that we will still see each other when we can. What he says next was a far cry from what I wanted, and instead, I feel my heart shatter into a million pieces.

"I don't think we should try to see each other after I leave."

I nod my head as if I agreed with him. My physical reaction does not mirror my mental reaction. "Why?" is all I could muster. He looks away from me again before answering. As he begins to speak, I stop him. "No, don't look away, look at me and tell me why?"

Jax closes his eyes as he turns to face me. "I think you are in a really precarious place right now. I may have been responsible for putting you there. You need time to figure



out who you are, or what you want to be.”

“I know who I am, I know who I want to be. What the hell are you talking about?” I ask angrily. Jax starts to walk past me, but I grabbed his arm, “Tell me where your head is at right now. What are you thinking?” He takes a deep breath, then says what I didn’t want to hear.

“You and I can’t be, Edward, don’t you see that? We live thousands of miles apart, practically a fucking world apart. You have issues happening in your life that you need to deal with, your sexuality is one of them. If you truly believe you are gay—” I cut him off before he continues.

“If I believe I’m gay?” He interrupts me.

“If you truly believe you are gay there is so much living you need to do, that you’ve missed out on. Being in a relationship, much less a long-distance relationship is not what you need right now.”

“Are you actually telling me what I need? You think I don’t know what I need? Are you really ending this? Was this your plan all along? For us to make love one more time before

you dump me?" Jax looks away, his eyes roaming the apartment, then he looks back at me, punching me in the gut without even using his fist.

With trembling words, he says, "Yes, I just wanted something to take with me." I push him, hard, he stumbles back as I say through clenched teeth, "Then get the fuck out, you got what you wanted, so go."

"Edward, please try and understand."

"Fuck you, get your shit and get out of my apartment now."

"Edward, please."

"Please what, Jax? Just go, go," I yell. I turn my back to him, walking to the window and stayed there waiting for him to move. Finally, I hear him in the bedroom getting his things, and shortly after, I hear my front door close. I never thought I could possibly feel the pain I'm feeling this very moment.

**JAX**

It was three in the morning, and I was lost as I walked out of Edwards apartment building; obliterated by my decision and my actions. I put on my jacket and start to wander aimlessly. It didn't matter where I was, only that I was consumed with pain for having to walk away from Edward. I don't remember getting in the cab, I don't even remember walking into the hotel room and finding the bed.

It was noon the next day when I hear my name being repeated over and over again. Thinking it is Edward, I open my eyes to see Jeff looking at me with worry in his eyes.

"What's going on? Its noon and you're still in bed," I don't answer right away, I just stared up at the ceiling remembering the previous night and the pain I saw in Edward's eyes.

"We need to leave," I manage to whisper.

"Tell me what happened." I look over at Jeff trying hard to fight the tears threatening to fall.

“I ended it with Edward last night. You were right, he needs to learn more about himself, and that can’t happen if he is having an inter-continental relationship with me. Last night I told him, and he didn’t take it well.” I blink my tears back.

“Jeff, you should have seen him, he was so hurt.” I pull myself up to the headboard and hold onto my legs. Jeff joins me at the headboard obviously stunned by what I’ve just shared with him.

After a while, he speaks in a low voice. “For what it’s worth, I think you made the right decision, in time he will see that too.”

“Can we please leave? I’ve had enough of London. If you can’t go, I will understand, but I’m going to change my ticket as soon as I get off this bed.”

“I had breakfast with my uncle. He knows I was planning on leaving. I told him I had to talk with you to decide when. I’ll call him and let him know we are going today or tomorrow. Are you okay, Jax?”

“No, I’m not, but I will be. I just need an ocean between Edward and me, sooner rather than later.” Jeff jumps off the bed and starts to walk towards his room. “Let’s get our tickets and see when our flight will be, I’ll be right back.”

By three that afternoon, our flight is changed from a week from now to tomorrow morning. I start to pack my things, doing my best not to think of Edward and what he is doing or feeling. I’m fighting the urge to call him or catch a cab to his place. Jeff’s uncle is coming to join us for dinner to say goodbye. I try to back out of the dinner, but Jeff wouldn’t let me.

It’s eight at night, I should be sleeping because I have an early flight tomorrow, but sleep eludes me. Every time I close my eyes I see Edward and the look on his face when he realized I was ending it with him. I knew I wouldn’t sleep tonight, it will be a long time before I will ever forget his face when I close my eyes.

Six in the morning, we are at the airport. We finish the security check, and Jeff wants breakfast. I want to go back the way I came and find Edward. I know that will never happen. I will probably never see him again.

When I agreed to go on this trip with Jeff, the last thing I expected was to fall in love. Yes, I'm in love with Edward Kendrick. I came to that conclusion last night after trying relentlessly to sleep. In the short time since I met him, Edward has impacted my life. Moving forward, I will compare every man to him. And probably when I am old and grey, it will be his memory that will sustain me.

We leave London a few hours later, Jeff eager to prepare for his residency while I can't stop thinking of him.

## **Part Two**

***Five Years Later***

**UNTITLED**



## Chapter 11

### JAX

THIS IS the fifth brainstorming meeting we've had because one client is unhappy with how the company is handling their marketing. For the life of me, I don't understand why we are kissing the ass of one client. They clearly don't have the budget to properly market their brand. I'm sitting in the meeting, but my mind is elsewhere. It's far away on the coast of Hawaii, remembering the lush vacation I had three weeks ago. You would think that fact alone would be the reason why I would be focused and eager to find a way to appease this client. The truth is, my head isn't in the game, it hasn't been for a long time. I feel as if my abilities at Hamilton Interactive are being stifled, I should have quit a long time ago. I don't know why I'm holding on, it's not as if

I haven't had other offers, but I've turned them down left and right. I suppose I'm just comfortable, and the idea of starting again makes me a little uneasy.

The brainstorming session finally ends, and I'm heading back to my office when my phone beeps, letting me know there is a text. I quickly check and it's Mecca, the man I've been spending a lot of time with lately. I suppose you could say we are exclusive but saying it out loud makes it seem so permanent. I know he wants that from me; you would be deaf and blind not to notice the clues he gives every chance he gets. He wants us to move in together, but I'm not ready for that. I reach my office and decide to text him back before I forget.

**Jax: Hey, baby! What's going on?**

**Mecca: Change of plans, dinner with Eli and Efram at The Palace.**

**Jax: Why the change of plans?**

**Mecca: Efram can't go clubbing tonight, big day tomorrow.**

**Jax: Okay, what time are we meeting at The Palace**

**Mecca: 6:30, please don't be too late.**

I send him a smiley face because he knows me well. It does seem that I'm always late, it's not intentional, I just always have a lot going on. I put the phone away and force myself to go back to work. My primary focus is this hard to please client. I need to find an ingenious way to market them online without blowing their budget.

It's almost seven, and I'm headed out of the office finally. I'm waiting for the elevator when my co-worker, Maribel, joins the wait. "Hello, Jax." I turn and look at her with a smile.

"Hello, Maribel." She turns to look at me, and we begin to assess each other.

"It seems you and I are always the last to leave this place," she says.

“That’s because you and I are the hardest working and probably the least paid.”

She laughs then says, “You’re probably right. By the way, were you invited to go to the MarCom award ceremony?”

“I read an e-mail about it, not sure if I’m going though,” I say, as we enter the open elevator.

“Are you kidding? You have to go, I need someone to laugh with while watching everyone act stupid.” The elevator finally stops and deposits us on the street level when I turn to answer.

“I’ll see what I can do,” I say as I wave goodbye and begin to walk in the opposite direction.

“Please come,” she yells, “It’s at a swanky hotel, and afterward we are all going to have drinks, it will be fun,” she begs.

“I’ll see what I can do,” I yell back.

I walk down to the corner and hop into a cab, heading to

The Palace. I'll probably have to go to the award ceremony because Hamilton is one of the nominees and I'm the Marketing Director. The part I'm not crazy about is the socializing. I'm not in the closet at work, but I still value my privacy. When a bunch of employees gets together, they always want to know about your private life, and I am not so willing to share. I do like Maribel though, I would have a good time with her.

The Palace is a restaurant slash bar my friends and I love to hang out in. It's a great place to go to sit, talk, eat and watch a live game, or play a game of pool. I suppose we love coming here for the relaxed atmosphere and the food. I walk in, and my friends are already there having a good time. "Look who finally showed up," Eli yells.

"Hey," I yell back, "I showed up, isn't that what matters?"

They all begin to boo at me, which I don't care about because guess what? I don't sleep with them. The one I do sleep with though was not booing, in fact, he's smiling. I

guess he is glad to see me. “Hey, baby,” I say as I walk up to him and plant a kiss on his lips.

Mecca and I have been together for about a year. We met at a marketing conference eighteen months ago. He is a Blogger for a marketing firm, and I’m a Marketing Director. Right away we discovered we had a lot in common. I am two years older, but the age difference doesn’t seem to matter; we share not only common interests but the friendship of Eli and Efram.

“What big day do you have planned for tomorrow that we had to change our plans?” I turn to Efram and ask.

“I’m flying to Chicago tomorrow to meet with a potential new client.” Efram is a partner in an up and coming Architect firm.

“Are you guys moving?” I ask.

Eli laughs before answering, “No, we love this city too much.” Efram explains further, “The client I’m meeting is in

Chicago for a month or more, and he wants to remodel his kitchen.”

Mecca clears his throat before Efram finishes explaining, “Guys, no business tonight, let's just enjoy the night. It's been a long time since we all hung out, surely we can find something to talk about other than work?”

That was our last conversation of the night about work. For the remainder of the night, we catch up on each other's lives and play a few games of pool until it is time for Efram and Eli to leave, Mecca and I stay behind for another hour. By the time we leave The Palace, it's well past midnight, and I'm tired. We hop into a cab to our loft, or to my loft. “Are you staying?” I ask as the taxi veers in and out of traffic.

“I wouldn't be in this cab if I weren't. Of course, I'm staying,” he says as he leans over and covers my mouth with his. “I love the way you taste right now,” he says as he grabs hold of my lower lip and his hand wraps around the nape of

my neck. I grunt in his mouth because that is all I have the energy or inclination to do.

## JAX

We make it up to my loft, and the door doesn't even close before I begin to strip while walking to the bedroom.

Mecca, who clearly isn't as tired as I am, seems to have other plans for the night. I don't think I can give him what he wants, and I'm just about to tell him that. Before I could say a word, his lips are on mine, his kiss deep and probing. "Mecca, I am so tired," I manage to say before he places his fingers on my mouth.

"I know you are, baby, I'll do all the work."

He falls to his knees, pulling my briefs down and swallowed my cock deep into his mouth. With his warm lips wrapped around my cock, moving back and forth, I totally forget



about sleep. I hold his head in place as I fuck his mouth ferociously. He pulls his mouth off my cock with a pop, “I thought you said you were tired.” I smile down at him as I cup his face, bringing his mouth back to my cock. I continue to fuck his mouth until every nerve-ending in my body shakes, and my cum spills down his throat.

We finally make it to bed, thinking we were going to sleep until I heard the three dreaded words, “Can we talk?”

I turn to face him without saying a word, waiting for him to continue. “Jax, I want to move in, I think we are wasting money with both of us paying for an apartment. What do you think?” It was too late, and I was too tired, to have this conversation with him.

I don’t have a choice but to tell him that. “I think it’s late, and we should talk about this when it’s not the middle of the night and when I’m not so tired.”

He doesn’t like my response. The clue is him turning his

back to me without saying another word. When I wake the next morning, it is to the memory of our conversation last night and an empty bed. I'm sure our discussion last night contributed to his leaving without waking me. If I'm to be totally honest, I truly care for Mecca, but our relationship works for me the way it is.

Since Hawaii, he continually talks about us moving in together. Those conversations contribute to my lack of interest in us having sex, which leads to the tension that exists between us sometimes. I'm not sure what to say to him that won't hurt his feelings, I only know that I'm not ready for us to become a live-in couple.

I put Mecca out of my mind, threw on some sweats and head for my morning run. Sooner or later I am going to have to tell him I don't want him to move in. I'm not sure what his reaction will be, he may decide to end us. If he does, I wouldn't blame him. He is a great guy, he deserves

someone who can really love him, not just care about him. I know where my heart lies. It's thousands of miles away with a man who is probably married or in a relationship.

Deep down I've never forgotten Edward. To this day I remember the night I saw hurt and pain in his eyes. I will never forget that I did that to him. After returning from London so many years ago, I did nothing but work. I did my best not to think of England and what I left behind. Instead, I focused on being the best employee Hamilton Interactive ever hired.

Jeff finished his residency and accepted a job in California, occasionally I travel there to see him. Whenever he is in New York he usually stays with me, the only hiccup to that situation is Mecca, Jeff and Mecca do not like each other. Jeff feels I can do better, and Mecca thinks Jeff is in love with me.

I finish my run, shower, change for work, and head out the door. My goal for today is merely to have a good day, at least that was my goal on the train ride to the office.

Walking off the elevator into the office was like walking into a scene from Saving Private Ryan. I tried to ignore what's going on around me, but that doesn't work. The moment I step into my office, I'm pulled into the fray.

It seems there was an error on an event invitation printed and the client is threatening to pull their contract. Not my issue, I listen to my secretary re-hash the morning, then I call my team to join me. I close my door and focus on the clients that truly are my issue.

It's mid-afternoon when my team takes a break, and I have a chance to touch base with Mecca. Deciding text isn't the best way to communicate, so I pick up the phone and dial his number. The phone rings three times before he answered. "This is a surprise, I didn't expect to hear from

you until later," he says almost sarcastically. I smirk as if he is standing in front of me.

"Am I that predictable?" I ask.

There's was a brief silence before he answers, "No, not predictable, you just usually don't call in the middle of the day."

I smile into the phone, "I was thinking of you, so I thought I would call. You left this morning without waking me, I wanted to hear your voice."

"I didn't wake you because last night you said you were exhausted. I thought I would let you get as much sleep as possible." I know Mecca, at least I am very familiar with the man, and he is mad. He's trying not to show it, but I can hear it in his voice. Instead of playing games with him, I get straight to the point.

"Why are you mad?"

A longer than usual silence ensues, and I know he is about to release his frustration over the phone. "I'm just

wondering if you are still into me,” he says quietly. I’m not sure what the best way to respond to him is. In one instance if I am honest, I would tell him he is moving too fast. In another instance, if I choose not to honest, he would get the wrong impression and would continue with his relentless pursuits of us living together. I decide to choose the latter.

“Mecca, you know I really like you—”

He doesn’t let me finish my thought. “Are you ending it with me?”

“No, of course not,” I hurriedly say. “I just think we need to slow down a bit. I really like you and—” Again Mecca didn’t let me finish.

“What do you mean we need to slow down?”

“Mecca will you let me finish my thought before interrupting?” I can hear his silent fury over the phone.

“I’m just not ready for us to share a place, I think we should move a little slower. It’s not as if we’ve been dating a long time, it’s only been a year.”

“Are you finished?” He asks. I shake my head as if he was standing in front of me. Realizing what I’ve done, I acknowledge out loud that he can say what he needs to. “First,” he continues, “doing this over the phone is shitty. Second, if we were to move any slower, we would actually be snails. Jax, for a year I’ve let you lead. I let you choose where we go, what we do, even who is sleeping over whose place. I’m not willing to go any slower. I want a commitment from you, I want you to show me that you are as vested in this relationship as I am. If you are not willing to do that, then I guess we are done.”

There’s was a sullen silence after he finishes. I suppose you could say I was a little enraged.

“Mecca, when I picked up the phone to call you, the last

thing I wanted to talk about was this. I'm not ending anything with you, I'm simply saying let's back away from talking about sharing a place, I'm just not ready for that."

Another stretch of silence, "I don't know what to say to you, Jax, I really don't. I just told you what I wanted, and all you can say to me is the very thing that started this conversation. I should go, we are both at work, and this talk was a bad idea, planned or not."

He hangs the phone up before I can respond, I stared at it after the line went dead. It seems our relationship may be over because I can't give him what he needs. Suddenly this feels very familiar.



## Chapter 12

### EDWARD

FUCK, THAT'S it, it feels so good, don't stop, "Aaah, Zane, what are you doing to me, aaah! Please don't stop." Zane's tongue burrows through my ass, devouring it like a popsicle, giving me the best rim job, I've had to date. Sex these days may lack the emotional component, but it doesn't lack much else. I don't crave what I've lost anymore. Now I just live in the moment and enjoy what I have right in front of me.

Right now, it's the mouth of the man I've seen more than any in the past few years, I guess I'm finally moving on. Shit, it only took me five years, but who is counting.

I lay on my back spent from my morning workout in bed. I prefer the quiet, but I know what's coming, Zane constantly insisting that we go out. I can count up to the moment he asks. "1,2,3,"

"Can we go to a club tonight?" Zane is my constant bed partner, and someone most would consider a boyfriend. I try not to use labels because I've learned my lesson; the same lesson I learned after allowing my emotions to guide me years ago. I turn over and try to let him down easily.

"I wish I could, but I'm headed to Spain for the weekend for work." My wannabe boyfriend glares over at me, aghast from my news.

"Since when? You didn't tell me you were going out of town, can I come with you?" I groan partially in frustration and part because I am weary.

"No, you can't come, it's for work, and It was a last-minute addition to my schedule. I'll be back on Sunday night."

Zane jumps off the bed in a huff, marching to the bathroom, and if I'm not mistaken, slams the door. Sometimes I feel like I'm sleeping with a child. My sexual bliss gone, I get up and head to the bathroom because I need to get ready for the office.

Walking into the bathroom, I'm met with a stare that if stares could kill that one surely would. Looking at Zane in the mirror I ask, "Why are you angry? I told you I'm traveling for work, you're acting as if I'm going on holiday and you're not invited."

Zane spit out the toothpaste in his mouth, "The last time you had an impromptu trip, you told me I could come with you the next time you go away, do you remember?" I start the shower as I search for the right words to end this conversation. The truth is, I could bring him if I wanted to, but I don't. He already thinks we are more serious than we

are, at least from my perspective. I didn't want to contribute to him considering us a done deal, because we are not.

What he is to me is a good lay, I no longer do relationships, I just don't want to hurt his feelings by being insensitive.

"Zane, I'm sorry, but I can't bring you with me. This is a business trip, I have meetings I must attend, other co-workers from my office will be there, and you can bet they are not bringing their wives or husbands."

"What if I promise... "

"Zane, please."

I'm saved by my cell phone ringing in the bedroom. "I need to get that, why don't you take a shower first," I say as I walk out of the bathroom relieved to have the convenient excuse of a ringing phone to end the conversation.

Two hours later, after dropping Zane at his flat, I head to the office to begin my day. My cell rings as I'm driving, and I curse under my breath because I expected it to be Zane and

his tenacious torments. I almost ignore the call until I see that it's the one person I don't mind talking to.

"Hey, Liv."

All I hear is laughter on the phone before she responds.

"You are in so much trouble," she says jokingly.

"What else is new, what is it that I am in trouble for this time?" I ask.

"Well," she proclaims. "Your boyfriend asked me to talk some sense into you, what else would you call that?" I growl in frustration. "Are you friggin kidding me? What is his issue?"

Liv continues to laugh at me as she says, "You promised him you would take him the next time, this is the next time."

"Liv, I'm not taking Zane on one of my business trips, he can call and complain to you all he wants. I don't know where he got the idea that complaining to my best friend gets him what he wants, that will never happen."

Laughing still she says, "I just thought I would let you

know.”

“Thanks for letting me know, and for having such a laugh over my love life.”

I hang the phone up before she has a chance to respond, it seems my best friend is continually enjoying issues surrounding my love life. I suppose I should be grateful that she is laughing and not fraught with worries because of me. That’s what happened almost five years ago. In fact, in a month it will be exactly five years that Jax walked into my life, turned me inside out, then walked away.

For a long time after he left, I was angry and lost. I took weeks off from work, traveled for a few of them, and tried to gain control of my emotions. To say he broke my heart would be an understatement. I did survive Jax though, and I learned a valuable lesson. That lesson is why I keep men such as Zane, at arm's length. I will never allow another

man the opportunity to hurt me the way I was hurt by Jackson Brent.

I arrive at my office early. As usual, I'm one of the first to arrive. That's another change that happened over the years, because of my dedication and focus I'm now a Junior partner. Regardless of how much my relationship with my father has lessened over the years, the one thing he cannot fault me for is my dedication and advancement in a firm he is notably associated with.

With an almost empty office, I'm able to get a lot done and prepare for my morning meeting. As much as I love my job, it's a challenge sometimes to meet the expectations of the senior partners. One of those challenges is coming up this weekend. I am expected to convince a client that his decision to take over one of his competitors is not a smart one financially.

It's not something I haven't had to do before, it's just the part of my job I hate. I would much rather sit behind my desk and solve problems, instead of dealing with demanding business owners who think their decisions are the only possible option.

## **EDWARD**

I must have lost track of time because my secretary knocks on my door to let me know I'm late. "What time is it?" I ask as she grabs my jacket.

"You're going to be five minutes late, hurry!" I rush to the elevator, hoping one would be there waiting. Of course, that was not the case, I take the stairs two at a time heading one flight up. Sure enough, when I knock, they are all waiting for me.

"Sorry I'm a little late, I lost track of time," I mumble.



“Not a problem, Kendrick, we haven’t begun yet, have a seat,” Mr. Waterhouse directs.

In this meeting, we have the man I report to, Arthur Moby, his boss, the CEO of Allan International himself, Thomas Waterhouse, and another Sr. Partner, George Cosgrove. I picked this meeting to be late.

At the end of what turned out to be a longer than expected meeting, I am left flabbergasted. First, I’m told my weekend trip to Spain is canceled, someone else is going instead. *So, the hours I spent preparing was a waste.* Then I am told that I am headed to New York for a week maybe more. It seems that Corbin Industries is planning an acquisition in New York and I am expected to be a part of the team that will aid in the final phase of this acquirement. Lately, I’ve traveled a lot throughout Europe for Allan International, it’s been a long time since they sent me to America.

I was under the impression they had a team specifically for

dealing with business related to America, yet here I am headed there. My curiosity gets the best of me, so I decide to ask Mr. Moby why I'm a part of this team. I knock on his office door and wait for him to invite me in.

"Enter," Mr. Moby yells.

"Sir, if I may have a word."

"Ah, Edward, I was expecting you, come in and close the door." I walk towards the first available chair facing his desk, I'm not even seated before he begins.

"Thomas and I decided you should be a part of this trip because of your thorough knowledge of Swiss law. That knowledge will be useful since the company in question has a branch in Switzerland. We want you to pay close attention to that aspect of the deal, I know we said this may be a one-week trip, but plan for it to be longer. We have every faith in your ability to make sure the acquisition is up to par. Do you have any questions?"

“Actually yes, doesn’t Mr. Cosgrove’s team have someone on it that’s knowledgeable about such matters as well?” Mr. Moby take off his glasses to respond to my question.

“Yes, they do, the individual in question may be a part of the Cosgrove team, but he is not as knowledgeable as you, you will be going in his stead. Does that answer your question?”

“Yes, of course, sir, it does. I will prepare to leave right away.” I stand to leave, but Mr. Moby stops me.

“Young lad, you are very good at what you do. Don’t think the senior partners haven’t noticed your exemplary work. Keep up the good work.”

“Thank you, sir, I will.”

“Enjoy the rest of your day,” he says as I walk out the door. I walk out of his office with mixed feelings. In one instance I’m happy that they notice my work enough to consider me to be a part of this acquisition team. In another instance the

first thought that came to mind when I heard America is Jax. I know the probability of seeing him is small. Still, no matter how slight a chance, I don't want to cross paths with him. This part of the trip concerns me.

A week later, I am at the airport, ready to board a plane to America, New York to be specific. I am excited and scared. Excited, because I've never been to New York, I've been to America, but not New York. I am afraid for obvious reasons, I genuinely don't want to cross paths with Jax.

Zane didn't take the news well when I told him where I was headed. I had to tell him of my change in itinerary because I will be gone for weeks. I also had to promise him that near the end of my trip he can join me. Not sure that will come to pass, but I didn't want to tell him that. Of course, Liv had a field day laughing at my dilemma. I didn't tell her that I am thinking of ending things with Zane when I return. He is just too much work. Right now, my personal life needs easy,

Zane is anything but easy.

If I told Liv about my plan, she would say to me it's because I'm headed to America, that deep down I want to see Jax and pick up where we left off. I didn't feel like trying to convince her that nothing is farther from the truth. She wasn't there when he hurt me. Yes, she was there after the fact but not during.

After that night nothing was ever the same for me. My mother thought I was just going to pick up where I left off with Lillian, she had to face the reality that was not the case. My father tried to persuade me that it was Jax who convinced me that I was gay, he had to face the reality that was not the case. I have a feeling even Jax thought I would go back to Lillian.

After spending time getting past the painful breakup, I spent a lot of time finding perspective. I also made up for lost

time, by visiting a lot of clubs, and really getting into the gay scene. That went on for almost three years. Finally, two years ago, I realized what I was doing was not me. I needed to be me, and going out every night to clubs was the opposite of who I truly am.

I like my life right now, at least I did before this trip.

Suddenly I'm worried about the probability of seeing him and what would happen if I do. I am literally praying that he moved, and New York is no longer his home. I'm going to go, spend the few weeks doing my job, then leave. If I do see him - if I do see him, what should I do?

## Chapter 13

### JAX

IT'S OVER a week since I've seen or heard from Mecca. I called him after our tumultuous phone conversation several times, but he didn't take my calls. I'm beginning to believe what we had may be over. I don't blame him for wanting more, I'm just sorry I'm not the one to give it to him. He is a great guy, and he deserves so much more. I'm in my office reviewing an agenda for an upcoming meeting when I receive a call from Eli, he invites me to lunch, which I gladly accept. If anyone knew how Mecca was doing it would be him.

As I am getting out of the cab I see Mecca entering the restaurant; it's clear Eli has decided to be the intermediary. I

contemplate telling the taxi to drive on but decide that this lunch needs to happen. One way or the other, by the time we are done, Mecca and I will know exactly where we stand.

With some trepidation, I walk into the restaurant and immediately spot where Mecca and Eli are seated. I walk over to them, greet Eli, smiling at Mecca while sitting opposite him. Eli speaks before either of us has a chance. "You both should know I don't like putting my nose in my friend's business, but I thought someone needed to sit between the two of you, so here I am."

Still not taking my eyes off Mecca I ask, "How are you?" He snickers then mumbles, "That's the only question you seem to know how to ask."

Eli interjects, "Mecca, be nice! You said you could do this." I realize then that this lunch wasn't just planned, it's a strategy to change my mind.



“So, the two of you thought what? You would bring me here to talk some sense into me?”

Eli and Mecca start to speak at the same time, which also happens to be the moment the waitress appears at our table requesting our order. I ask her for more time and a glass of water. Neither Eli nor Mecca say a word. After she walks away, Mecca continues with his thought. “Yes, I asked Eli to bring us together, the last time we spoke, you practically broke up with me.”

“So, you called Eli? What are you a child? I called you four times since that conversation, and you ignored my calls. Now you bring me here with one of our friends, for what, Mecca? Do you think my feelings are going to change because Eli is sitting in front of us?” I watch Mecca’s face turn beet red from my words. I know him well enough to know he is about to get up and walk away, which is precisely what he does.

I turn to Eli, apologized for his involvement, and followed him. “What were you hoping to accomplish back there?” I yell behind his back.

He turns in a rage and yells, “I was hoping he could help us, to save whatever the hell we have, which I’m beginning to see is nothing to you.” I reach for his hands, trying to turn him to fully face me, but he pulls away.

“Mecca, I don’t think what we have is nothing. I do think it’s not what you thought it was.”

We stared at each other for a good minute before Mecca finally ask, “It’s over, isn’t it?”

“Not if you don’t want it to be,” is my only response. Mecca pulls away from me then whispers, “I have to go back to work.” He turns to walk away from me, and I frustratingly turn to walk in the opposite direction.

That was the moment it happened. At first, I thought I

imagined him. After all, I would be lying if I said Edward hasn't been on my mind lately. I'm a half a block down the street when I realized I didn't imagine him, that I did see Edward. I turn back running back to the restaurant, and there he is, right where I saw him. Like a fool I stand on that sidewalk as people pass around me, staring at him. I don't know what I expected, but I couldn't move.

I watched him as he got up and walk out of the restaurant towards me. Face to face again for the first time in five years, and I am speechless. I couldn't find the words to say anything as he's standing in front of me. Finally, words did form, and I knew the moment I opened my mouth to speak that I should have said more. "What are you doing here?" Edward suppresses a laugh, then turns and walks away. I am dumbfounded. I don't know what else to say or do.

**JAX**

It's with reluctance that I finally turn and walk away. I don't return to work, in fact, I don't remember how I make it home. I sit on my sofa, trying very hard to suppress the tears threatening to unfold from within me. I don't answer the phone when my father calls, not even when I see Mecca's face pop up on the screen. I am lost in a daze and filled with memories of my three weeks in London.

The next morning, I force myself out of bed, ignoring my pounding head, and go for a long run. By the time I return from the run I have a plan. I decide to call Jeff, ask him to find out what business his uncle may have in New York. If Edward still works for him, he would be here to represent him, and I should be able to figure out which hotel he is staying. As soon as I'm dressed for work, I pick up the phone to call, he answers on the first ring. "I was wondering when I was going to hear from you," he says before I have a chance to speak.

We exchange pleasantries for a few minutes before I blurt out what I'm sure he isn't expecting me to say. "Edward is here." There's was a lull on the line before he acknowledges my words.

"What do you mean he is here? Is he standing in front of you?"

"No, I saw him yesterday, he was standing in front of me then... I was so surprised to see him, Jeff. The last person I expected to see yesterday was him."

"Where did you see him?"

"At a restaurant downtown, he was eating with some guy that could be his boyfriend. He came out of the restaurant to talk to me, and I couldn't find the words, Jeff, I just stared at him; finally, he walked away. I couldn't talk, I couldn't move, I just stood there in the middle of the sidewalk like a fool."

“Where is he staying, do you know?” I sit like lead on my sofa and almost laugh out loud.

“That’s what I was hoping you could help me with. Can you find out where for me through your uncle? He must be here for him, don’t you think?”

There’s a stillness in our conversation before he says, “I’ll call Uncle Max and find out. Jax, what about Mecca?” I shake my head as if Jeff is in front of me, “Not now, I can’t talk about Mecca now. Please call me back and let me know if you find out where he is staying, okay?”

“I’ll call you back,” is all he says before ending the call.

I take the subway to work, again in a haze. The moment I walk into my office I’m questioned about not returning after lunch yesterday. I ignore my assistant questions, heading straight to my office and close the door. I try my best to put Edward out of my mind, to focus on my job, it is impossible. I decide to get up and walk to Starbucks on the corner for some strong coffee. I’m standing outside drinking the coffee

when Jeff's face appears on my phone.

"Hey," he says. "Are you okay?" I half spin while looking down, not knowing how to answer his question. In the end, I just tell him exactly how I'm feeling.

"I am lost right now, I don't know what to feel, to think. I broke up with him in an awful way Jeff. To this day I remember the hurt in his eyes."

"I thought you moved on from him a long time ago?" Jeff asks.

"I did." I lie.

"No, you haven't, not based on what you are telling me." I'm quiet for a long time, thinking about what Jeff just said. I have to admit he is right. I've never moved on. It's the reason why I keep Mecca at arm's length. It's the reason why seeing Edward again is affecting me so. I loved him then, I love him now, I never stopped.

"Did you find out where he is staying?" I ask, pulling myself

out of the fog my mind has fallen into.

“Yes, he is here for some company my uncle is buying. He is staying at the Ritz-Carlton, downtown.” Jeff says

“What are you going to do? Just show up at his hotel room? Then what?”

“I’m not doing anything right this second, but yes I’ll probably just show up. Thanks for getting the info for me.”

“Jax—” I stop him before he can finish.

“Don’t, Jeff, I need to figure out myself what to do. Thanks for finding out for me. By the way, how long is he going to be here?”

I hear Jeff take in a deep breath before answering, “For a few weeks, maybe more. He’s been there a week already.”

“Thanks again,” I say before I end the call. I walk back to my office and find the wherewithal to focus and get my job



done for the day. At six I head out, I'm tempted to go to The Ritz-Carlton, but I stop myself. I need to do this right. There is so much I need to say to him, I have to do it right.

I go home, taking a long shower, trying to figure out my next move. I'm eating leftover Chinese when there is a knock on my door. I open the door to Mecca. We stare at each other intently, neither of us saying a word. Finally, he asks to come in. "We need to talk."

I don't respond to his request to come in; instead I ask, "I thought we talked practically in the middle of the street yesterday?"

"Are we going to have this conversation in your doorway?"

He asks while moving inside.

I close the door and turn to find Mecca so close to me I feel his breath on my face. We stand in the hallway just staring at each other. Finally, he starts to speak. "Fine, if this is the way you want us then so be it. No more talking about

moving in together, we can continue to move at your pace. I just want you to know right off the bat. I am in love with you, Jax. I've been for a long time, so let's move at your speed, I will take whatever you are willing to give." Twice in one week, I am rendered speechless.

I gawk at Mecca, trying to find the words to respond to him, I cannot think of one word to say. He wraps his hand around the nape of my neck and pulls me in for a deep kiss.

## Chapter 14

### EDWARD

NEW YORK is everything I thought and more. A week ago, when I arrived, I thought I was going to be inundated with meetings. While meetings are happening, only a few of them require my attendance. With the free time, I've been walking the city sightseeing. I try not to venture too far from my hotel, because I'm not familiar with the city, and I wouldn't want to become one of those victims you read about. Still, even with extra caution, I've enjoyed the few excursions I did manage.

Tonight, I'm headed to a club with one of my co-workers. Like me, he is afraid of doing too much in an unfamiliar city. While I don't hide my sexuality, this employee is relatively

new to Allan International, and he apparently doesn't know I'm gay; otherwise he probably wouldn't have asked me to go with him to this particular club. It was something to do, so I said yes. It's not as if I'm planning on picking up anyone.

I'm not in the club ten minutes, and I want to leave. This club is clearly a pickup spot for straight men and women. When we arrive, Dave disappears somewhere in the crowd. I finally spot him flanked between two women, clearly enjoying himself. I edge my way over to him, to let him know I am headed out and suddenly I'm surrounded by women. You would think the city lacks men the way the women are acting. I pry myself away from their advances and try to speak above the music, to let Dave know I am headed back to the hotel. He decides to stay, and I manage to exit the packed club and hop into a cab.

Once back at the hotel, I decide to catch up on some calls

home. Since arriving, I haven't spoken to Zane. I decide enough time has passed, and I need to touch base with him. The phone rings four times before he answers. "Hey, how are you?" I ask as he says hello.

"I'm fine, what about you? How is New York?"

"New York is great. The work isn't what I thought it would be; hopefully I won't be here for long." We're both quiet for a stretch, I decide to just be direct, and not beat around the bush. "Are we okay?" I start, "I know you are angry with me."

"It's not that I'm angry with you, Edward, it's that sometimes I really wonder if you want to have a relationship with me. You think I don't notice how distant you are? I noticed. I also notice that you don't keep your promises to me either—I want more."

"I don't have more to give," I say quietly. I hear him exhale before asking why. Frustratingly I ask, "Can we just go back

to the way it used to be?" Then I whisper, "It's not you, it's me."

I thought he was going to have a lot to say after what I just said. Instead, he just says, "Okay, I should go, it's late in New York, you should be sleeping. Call me tomorrow if you want," hanging the phone up before I had a chance to respond. I lay back on the bed and stare up at the ceiling.

My mind is filled with memories of Jax. He is why I don't have any more to give to Zane. It's been five years, and while a part of me is over him, he is still impacting my life; he is still in my thoughts more than he should be. I fall asleep lying across my bed, fully clothed, still thinking of Jax. When I wake the next morning, it's to a headache and a need to run. I decide to brave the city and put on my running clothes, grabbing the keycard, and head out the door.

By the time I make it into the office, I'm more lucid and I was ready to face the day. I was told yesterday that I would have paperwork to review pertinent to the acquisition. Sure enough, when I make it to the office assigned to me, there is a mountain of paperwork waiting for me, never happier to have this reprieve, to not have to think about my personal life.

Around noon there is a knock on the office door, before Dave pushes his head through the door, "Can I come in?" He asks. I wave my hands inviting him in. "What happened last night? Why did you leave so abruptly?" I consider for a moment making up an excuse and leaving it at that. In the end, I decide the truth is the best option. "Dave, you do know I'm gay, right?"

**EDWARD**

Dave stares at me shocked by my revelation. “Seriously? I didn’t know,” he stammers. “No one told me, I’m sorry if I knew I wouldn’t have...”

“Don’t worry about it. I realized when you asked me to go to the club, you didn’t know. I should have told you then, I just wanted to do something other than stay in my hotel room, so when you asked, I said yes.”

“I was going to ask if you want to go and grab something to eat, but in light of what I did yesterday, I wouldn’t blame you if you said hell no.”

I laugh while standing to grab my jacket, “Come on, let’s go. Have you tried any good places around here?” I ask as we walk towards the elevator.

“Yes, there is a great Chinese food place a few blocks away.”

One of the big differences between New York and London is the weather. At home, I would have thought twice about



walking because of the potential for rain. Here in New York the suns shining, and there isn't a cloud in the sky, it is a warm and beautiful day.

During our walk to the restaurant, we talk about the acquisition and the work we are both expected to do. When we arrive at the restaurant, we're seated near a window facing the street. We order our food and continue our conversation about work. We're deep in conversation when I see two men stop by our window deep in conversation.

Dave and I both look at each other in amusement at what is unfolding in front of us. During their heated discussion, I can only see the face of one of the men. Suddenly they switch places, and I nearly choke from the water I am drinking. It's Jax. I can't believe he is in front of me. In an instant I feel heat rush to every part of my body, I'm suddenly not aware of anything but him. He looks the same, the same chiseled beautiful face, his hair is shorter, his body

is lean, he looks good.

I stare at him as the argument continues, willing him to look at me. Finally, his companion turns to walk away, leaving Jax standing there. Jax stares after him, looking up to the sky, then looks directly at me. He turns to walk in the opposite direction of his companion. Not even a minute later, he backtracked to the window and makes eye contact with me again. This time we both stare at each other for endless minutes.

“Hey! Edward! Edward!” Dave shakes my arm to get my attention. “Do you know that guy?” He asks inquisitively, while Jax continues to stare at me through the window. I didn’t answer; instead I excuse myself and walk out of the restaurant. I walk hesitantly up to Jax with a half-smile. We don’t say anything, as pedestrians pass us by and Dave continues to stare. Finally, he asks what I’m doing here, I can’t help but laugh. I cannot even answer.

I turn to walk away without saying a word. I walk back into the restaurant, taking my seat and begin to eat the food delivered while I was outside. I didn't look out the window again, even though I know Jax was still standing there staring at us. I know the moment he walks away, that is the moment Dave turns his attention back to me.

"He is gone," Dave says to me after a few minutes. Then asks if I want to talk about it.

"Thanks, but there is nothing to talk about, he is just someone I used to know."

The rest of my day is intolerable. I can't focus, my mind kept fluctuating between five years ago when Jax walked away from me and today when I walked away from him. What irritates me more than anything, is that it's been five years. Five years of not seeing him, and still after all this time, his effect on me is the same. Seeing him after all this

time, all I want to do is wrap my arms around him and tell him how much I've missed him. Five years and I am still his.

I leave work early knowing I wouldn't get anything done. I ignore Dave as he calls to me while heading for the elevator. You know what I hate about this city, the damn buildings are too high. The idea of taking the stairs are absolutely daunting, not to mention waiting for the elevator for almost ten minutes. When I finally make it out of the building, I start to walk, I don't know what direction I am walking, or where I am going, I just need the time to clear my head.

After ten minutes of walking, I hail a cab and head back to my hotel. Once there I change into my workout clothes and head to the hotel gym. I must have log fifteen miles on the treadmill by the time I am done. I know I did too much because as I walk out of the gym every part of my body hurts.

After a long shower, I pick up the phone to call Zane. The call goes straight to voicemail. I call again, this time leaving a message. The message is simple, "I'm paying for a ticket for you to come to New York. Call me back if you don't want to come." I hang the phone up and stare into the darkness of my room. I know I'm using Zane, hell, I've been using him since the day we met. This though is blatant, because I realize facing Jax again is not possible, not if I'm standing alone. I need someone to lean on, even if he doesn't know I'm leaning on him.

## Chapter 15

### EDWARD

TWO DAYS later I'm standing in the airport waiting for Zane to deplane. When I left the message for him, he responded back within fifteen minutes, happy to join me in New York. After leaving the message, I felt guilty for calling him, but it was too late to change my mind. Now there is a chance Zane is going to learn things about me that I've never shared with him. I've avoided sharing my true feelings with him for so long, to suddenly need him here to deflect Jax is disheartening. I shouldn't have called, but it's a little too late.

I see him before he sees me. I watch him as he searches for me, knowing he is happy to be here. I have no doubt he

sees my bringing him to New York as a commitment to our relationship. I don't deserve him, he loves me, and I can't love him back. Maybe with him here, I can try. We finally make eye contact, and he walks towards me with a broad smile on his face. I'm smiling too because in a way I am glad to see him and not because of Jax.

"Hi, how was the flight?" I ask as he walks straight into me, kissing me passionately on the lips.

"Thank you for bringing me here," he whispers.

"I'm sorry," I say pulling him closer and deeper into the kiss. We finally realize where we are and pull apart. I take his suitcase as we walk towards the exit hand in hand. "This is all you bought?"

"I wasn't sure how long I was staying, so I packed light. I can always buy clothes if I need it, right?"

"Yeah, we can," I answer as we hail a cab to take us into the city.

We arrive at the hotel and are headed to my room when I'm stopped by the front desk staff. "Mr. Kendrick, sorry to bother you, but a message was left for you at the desk." I knew the moment she said it, that it is a message from Jax. I don't want to read it in front of Zane because he will ask about it. However, I have no choice but to retrieve the message.

"Aren't you going to read it?" Zane asks as I put the message in my jacket.

"It's for work, I don't want to think about work right now, let's just get upstairs, order room service, and relax, okay?"

We arrive at the room, and I barely close the door before Zane's entire body slam against mine. We start to rip each other's clothes off as our tongues fight ferociously. We walk back towards the bed as he whispers, "I missed you so much."

I pulled my face slightly from his speaking softly, "I missed you too."



His leg hits the side of the bed, and I push him backward, slipping to the floor and opening his legs wide. "I missed your cock," I whisper as I grab hold of his erect dick and pull, stroking him from the base to the crown. Zane raises up on his elbows, and our eyes meet as I suck the head of his dick. He hisses from the delight as my mouth envelopes his dripping wet rod. I love the sound he makes when his body is in pleasure mode.

"Do you realize how long it's been since we had each other?" Zane asks between moans and mewls. I pop my mouth away from his cock with a jeer then mumble, "Don't, we are here now." We look intently into each other eyes, then I take his shaft back into my mouth deep swallowing him whole. Zane places his hands on both sides of my head, fucking up into my mouth with deep thrust while I jack myself off trying to find some relief for my throbbing dick.

He's on the verge of spilling his cum into my mouth when he grabs hold of me, pulling me up and over him. "Where's the lube and condom?" He asks breathlessly. I crawl over his body to the drawer to retrieve them, as my hands reach for what we need, Zane grabs my cock and begin to massage it. The feeling is so intense I fumble and almost drop the condoms on the floor.

I returned to his side, then sheathe my throbbing dick with a condom and lube. He pulls my mouth down to his, planting another devouring kiss on my already swollen lips. He breathes into my mouth, "I need you so bad." He raises his legs above his waist to reach his trembling entrance, to prepare himself for my cock. He barely penetrates his hole twice before flipping me on my back while muttering, "I can't wait."

He straddles my legs and brings his hole to meet my cock,

then begins to push down slowly onto my erect cock. We both exhale deeply from the intense pleasure surging through our bodies. Zane rides me until my mind and words are a jumbled mess. Finally, we simultaneously climax, His cum projects onto the headboard and my chest, while I flowed like a river into the condom planted in his ass.

Finally, the haze begins to subside, and the rapture of our lovemaking is replaced with reality. "Are you hungry?" I finally mutter.

He doesn't answer; instead he asks a question I'm not prepared for. "What happened? Why did you change your mind?"

That moment, that question is a crossroad for me. I could lie, or I could tell the truth. I decide I need to admit some semblance of the truth, I can't continue to be evasive with him. I raise up off the bed and sit on its corner, not knowing

how to answer without hurting him.

“There are things about me that I’ve never shared with you,” I begin. At this point, he sits very still next to me waiting for me to continue. “About five years ago, I met someone.” I turn and face him to continue. “He came to London on vacation with a friend and we—I fell strongly for him. For about three weeks we were together, then he returned to the states. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen him.”

Zane is eerily quiet, when I realize he isn’t going to say anything I continue, “I ran into him two days ago, and it made me realize I needed you.”

Zane looks at me for a long time, before easing off the bed. He starts to walk away, then he turns back, and asks, “Are you in love with him still? Did you bring me here to, I don’t know—to say ‘look, I have a boyfriend’?” I guess Zane thought I was too slow to answer his questions because he

yells, "Answer me!"

I stand to walk towards him, but he raises his hand to stop me. "Don't—just answer the fucking question. Are you still in love with him?"

"I loved him then. It's been five years, Zane." Zane laughs then says, "Five years and you've spent at least two of them with me, yet not with me. You've kept me as far from your heart as you could. I really thought it was me, that I was too possessive, but it wasn't me, was it? You couldn't fully give yourself to me because you loved someone else, you belonged to someone else. I need to hear you say it, Edward, tell me that after all this time you still love him, tell me!"

I turn to walk towards the bathroom, but he grabs my arm to stop me. "No. Don't you dare walk away, for the first time in your life you can be totally honest and tell me the truth."

I turn to face him, angry with myself, mad that Jax walked away from me so many years ago, and mad that the truth is I still am in love with him. Zane stares at me while waiting for an answer, and I just want to not have to answer.

I take a deep breath, running my hands through my disheveled hair, then say the words I've avoided for years. "Yes, a part of me still loves Jax. I know I shouldn't, I know he was only in London for a few weeks, but I fell really hard for him. Zane, how can any sane person fall in love in such a short time?" I see the tears begin to fall from Zane's eyes and it breaks me. I bend over as if my stomach is in pain and my tears start to flow.

"Why did you bring me here, Edward?" He finally asks. I can't answer, I cannot tell him I want him here because I need to hide behind him.

I know the words are coming, so I say them first, "Don't

leave, please.” Zane begins to laugh as he walks towards the window turning his back to me. I almost don’t hear the words leave his lips.

“I want to meet him.”

I walk over to him and put my hand around his waist. He pulls away then repeats, “I want to meet him.”

“Zane, I don’t know how to get in touch with him. I saw him again on the street, we barely said hello, we didn’t exchange numbers or addresses, I don’t know where he is, and even if I did your request is absurd. What reason do you have to want to meet him?” Before the words finish leaving my mouth, Zane raises his hand and slaps me across the face. I am stunned by his action, I wasn’t expecting it. We stare at each other, bewildered by what he did.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have done that, I’m sorry,” he repeats.

“You’ve hurt me, Edward. I’ve spent so much time loving

you. Wanting you to realize how much I loved you, and this whole time your heart was already taken. You brought me here, not because you love me, but because you saw the one you truly loved and was afraid.”

He pauses before continuing, “I should have known. I’ve been so stupid. The way you acted when we first met, how you refuse to even consider sharing a place with me even though we’ve been together for so long.” His words fades and he stares out the window before saying what I knew he would say. “I’m going home.”

He turns towards his suitcase, opens it for clean clothes and begins to dress. I try to stop him, but he pulls away as I ask him again not to leave.

When he is dressed and packed, he turns to me and stares intently. “This time it’s really over,” he whispers. “I never thought we would end this way,” he continues. He starts to



walk towards the door, and this time I don't try and stop him. He turns with final words before walking out the door. "This guy is very lucky. You are a great guy, Edward, don't ever forget that and good luck, okay?" I shake my head because I couldn't find the words to respond to him, in truth, I could barely breathe.

## **JAX**

This is my second time coming to Edward's hotel. I've already left a message asking him to call me, and I honestly don't know what I'm doing here again. I'm standing in front of the hotel, I don't know what room he is staying in, or what I'm going to say to him. I'm in love with a man who has every right to hate me. I've hurt him the same way I hurt Mecca. They both deserved better than what I've done to them. Right now, I just want to see Edward and apologize.

I'm standing on the sidewalk debating my next move when I overhear a conversation coming from the very handsome yet angry man standing next to me. He was telling someone that he was being used, and someone brought him here under false pretenses. Something having to do with being in love with someone else.

Usually, I wouldn't give the conversation a second thought and just mind my own business, but his accent piques my interest. I continue to listen as he carries on about being used and how much time he invested in the relationship. I don't know what comes over me, the next thing I know, I'm asking him if he knows Edward. He stares at me for a long time before ending the call, turning entirely to look at me.

I guess my intuition is right because you could cut a knife in the air as we stand on the sidewalk staring at each other. Finally, he speaks, "I asked him to let me meet you," he says. "I wanted to meet the man who single-handedly stole

him from me even after five years.”

I don't respond to him; instead I ask for the one bit of information I need, "What room is he in?"

The stranger laughs, his features turning cold. "Do you think I'm going to help you? Are you fucking crazy?"

"Look, I'm here to talk to him. If he is yours, then you have nothing to worry about. I hurt him five years ago, and I just want to apologize. If it makes you feel more secure, you can come up with me, I just need to talk to him." He looks at me with a blank expression on his face, then walks to the street to hail a cab.

It isn't long before a cab stops and he begins to pack his luggage in it. As he is getting into the cab, he turns to face me. "You are probably as fucked up as he is and the two of you deserve each other—room 1520."

I watch the cab as it drives away, not taking my eyes off of it until it is out of sight.

I walk up the steps, heading straight to the elevators, still not knowing what I'm going to say. Meeting the man he is involved with, makes this even harder, I didn't even get his name. He was so angry.

I don't know what I am walking into at room 1520, but I put one foot in front of the other, and head in that direction. I arrive at the door and hesitate, suddenly doubting my decision. I turn to walk away and make it halfway down the hall before turning back. I walk up to the door and knock before I change my mind, after a minute of no response, I knock again. This time I sense someone looking at me, then the door slowly opens, and I am standing in front of a disheveled Edward.

We stand at the door staring at each other, neither one of us

saying a word, not even when he moves aside for me to enter. He walks to the sofa, takes a seat and reached for a glass I'm guessing is filled with liquor. I walk over to the couch and sit next to him, again, neither of us saying a word.

I can't stand the silence, so I finally say, "I think I met your boyfriend when I was coming up." He shakes his head and continues to drink. "Are you planning on saying anything to me?" I ask.

He turns to me with a smirk on his face, "Yeah! What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to talk, I know it's been a long time since we saw each other, but I never forgot you, or the way things ended between us."

He takes yet another sip of his elixir then asks, "How does your boyfriend or whoever feel about you being here? I'm sure he doesn't appreciate you revisiting your past."

“His name is Mecca, and he has nothing to do with this.”

Edward stands up abruptly, “This, what this? There is nothing here, there never was, so what the hell are you doing here, Jax?”

## Chapter 16

### JAX

I STAND up to be on the same level as him, even though he is taller than me by at least two inches. I reach out to him, but he immediately steps back. I pull my hand away and shove them into my pocket to prevent another rejection. Instead, I try to say something, anything that will make sense.

“That’s not true, there was something between us, and I ruined it, I was a coward, I’m sorry.” Edward laughs then turns to walk away, my hands being in my pocket doesn’t help because I find myself grabbing for his arm.

“Take your fucking hands off me,” he whispers. I hold my hands away from him and step back.

“Please let me say what I came here to say,” I say. “If you want me to leave after, I will. He doesn’t say anything, so I begin to speak.”

“Like I just said, I was a coward years ago. I was afraid, Edward. There was so much happening between us, it was so intense, I thought it wouldn’t last. I thought you would eventually go back to your life, that I was the reason your life was torn apart. I didn’t know what to do, so I spoke to Jeff, and he helped me to see that I was too vested. I wanted to give you the space you needed to find yourself, to figure out who you were. I could have said things differently that night, I just panicked, and I didn’t say what I should have.” I stop speaking, and we stared at each other. Edward turns again walking further away from me.

“I’m not asking you to forgive me,” I continue. “I know it’s too late for that. I just want you to know what I did to you then was wrong.” I realize that very moment Edward is



crying. That realization overwhelms me, I feel my heart beating in my throat. I don't know what to do. I want to walk over to him and take him in my arms, but I'm afraid he'll push me away. So, I walk up close to him, standing there and waiting until he finally speaks.

"His name is Zane, and how fucked up is it that he walks out of my life and walk straight into you?" Edward turns to face me, his eyes red and watery. He wipes his face with his hand then continues. "We ended tonight. For the first time since I've known him. I was honest with him. I told him about you, and suddenly everything clicked for him. Suddenly he understood why I couldn't commit to him, he understood why I couldn't love him the way he deserved to be loved."

I step backward and lean against the sofa behind me as he spoke. As each word escaped his lips, I realize Edward, and I have been living parallel lives. When I realize he isn't

going to say anymore, I know I need to say more.

The man I've been seeing came to me, offering to love me as I am. We've been together for two years. He loves me, he wants me, but I can't love him, or give him what he needs. I couldn't commit to him either. He is such a great guy, we have so much in common, but I couldn't love him the way he deserved to be loved. When he offered himself to me, I told him no. I told him he deserves better than me. I've spent the last five years comparing every man I've met to you. When I met Mecca, I thought I was finally moving on. I tried so hard to forget you, Edward, but I couldn't, no matter how hard I tried."

For the first time since I walked into the hotel room, there isn't coldness between us, but we don't know what to say to each other either. My heart swells with hope, but I don't know what I'm hoping for. Before I could speak again, Edward asks me to leave. "I think you should go. It's late, I

have work in a few hours, and I think we need time to think, I know I need time to think.”

I nod my head and turn to leave. I stop because I need to know if I would be seeing him again. “Can I see you again?” He doesn’t answer for a long time.

As I’m turning to leave, he whispers, “Yes.”

I turn, looking at him closely, before asking, “Are you sure?”

He snickers then says, “No.”

I find myself walking towards him. I stop directly in front of him and whisper, “Give me your number, I’ll call you later, don’t take the call if you don’t want to talk to me.”

I watch him walk into the bedroom to retrieve his phone.

He walks back to me and hands it to me. I enter my number then dial my cell. “Now we have each other number.” He doesn’t respond. We don’t say another word to each other, as I walk to the door and leave him standing

there staring after me.

As I am leaving the hotel, it occurs to me that so much has happened in the last few hours alone that I am overwhelmed; I can't believe Edward is back in my life. I finally find my way home, and it was then that I checked the messages accumulated on my cell phone. I ignore all the messages from friends calling out of concern for Mecca, listening to the ones from Jeff. He called four times, each time sounding more drastic than the next. I decide to call him even though it was late. He answers on the second ring.

Before I could even say hello, he starts, "Where have you been? I've left you four messages, and you are just calling me back? What happened?" I realize as Jeff is rambling on that the last thing I want is to rehash what happened between Edward and I. "I just wanted to let you know I'm okay, sorry I didn't return your calls. It's late here, I'll call you back later and fill you in on what happened."

“Why can’t you tell me now? You’re on the phone, just tell me.”

“Jeff, I can’t right now, I need to wrap my head around everything. I’ll call you later.” I hang up before he has a chance to say another word.

I’m in bed wide awake. All I’m thinking about is the man across town, he is probably as wide awake as I am. I don’t know what will happen next between him and me.

Whatever happens, I have to make sure I don’t hurt him. I also don’t want him to hurt me, I know it’s a possibility. It’s a chance I am willing to take because I want a second chance with him. Suddenly my thoughts switch to Mecca, and I feel guilt and sorrow because I’ve never thought of him the way I am thinking of Edward right now.

## **EDWARD**

It's three in the morning, and I can't sleep. After tossing and turning, I decide it's useless to continue to try. I put on my workout clothes and head for the gym. The goal is to run my thoughts and emotions away. Zane walking out of my life, and Jax walking back in, is too much to handle. Focusing on work seems to be the best remedy. I don't want to deal with Jax and his apologetic words, or the fact that I want him so badly.

I arrive at the office, expecting it to be empty. It seems other employees had the same thought because the office is already busy at six-thirty in the morning. Going straight to my office, I attempt to shift my focus, even though it's near impossible to not think about my personal life and the mess that it is. At ten-thirty my assigned assistant reminds me of an impending meeting, never more happy to be in a meeting as I am this morning.

After the meeting, which was merely an update of what's to

come in the upcoming weeks, I spend the rest of the day engrossed in the project in front of me. Before I arrived at the office, I made a decision to put my phone on mute. I have the urge to check it, to see if he called. He did call twice and left a voice message the second time. My finger lingers over the delete button. Do I want this? To hear what he has to say, to see him?

In the end, I decide not to delete the message, instead I pushed play.

**“Hi, Edward, this is my second call, as you will no doubt see. I told you earlier that I would call, and you didn’t have to answer. I wish I hadn’t said that, because I want so badly right now to talk with you, to hear your voice...I won’t stop by your hotel again without being invited, I’m sure you wouldn’t want that. You have my number now if you want to talk, call me, please. I hope to see you again. —Bye**

I stare at the phone until a noise outside the office pulls me out of my self-induced trance. I grab my jacket and head out of the office, realizing for the first time I haven't eaten all day. As I exit the elevator, I run into Dave on the sidewalk. "I thought I was the only fool working late hours," he says as he catches up to me.

"Hey, Dave, were you up there?" I say, pointing towards the building.

"Yeah, you wouldn't believe the work involved with taking over a company." We begin to walk together when he asks, "Do you want to grab something to eat? Or do you already have plans?"

I laugh as I turn to him, "I am starving, haven't eaten all day. I was just going back to the hotel to order room service. Do you have someplace in mind?" Dave looks around then shrugs his shoulders, "Other than Chinese, your guess is as good as mine."



In the end, we decide to eat at the hotel restaurant. As we are seated, the urge to drink something strong consumes me. The fact that I haven't eaten all day stops me from getting something stronger than soda. Dave orders a drink, then looks at me with a puzzled look, "You don't drink?" He asks after the waitress walks away.

"I drink, I just haven't eaten, and I don't want to get tanked." We sit in silence, me drinking my soda and him his vodka on ice. Then he starts to ask about what happened the last time we ate together. "So, who was that guy you ran into the other day? I thought this was your first time in America."

This is a perfect example of why I don't like to socialize with my co-workers, somehow your personal business manages to become the topic of discussion. I don't want to be rude about his inquiry, so I try to be vague.

“I’ve been to America, just not New York. He is a friend who visited London a few years back.” Dave looks at me wide-eyed.

“A friend? If he was a friend, remind me never to be a friend of yours, you seemed very pissed to see him. In fact, after your brief exchange outside, you barely had anything to say over lunch. He couldn’t possibly be a friend,” he says smugly as he continues to drink his vodka. I decide at that moment to order a drink, to hell with my tolerance.

## Chapter 17

### EDWARD

I DON'T respond for a long time to his comment. In fact, the waitress arrives again with menus, and we busy ourselves with ordering dinner. By the time we place our orders and I've taken a few sips of my rum and coke, I'm ready to answer, hopefully not sharing too much of my private life.

"It's a long story that I'm not going to go into, but he and I were a thing, and he came back to America." Dave nods his head as if agreeing with me, "The two of you didn't part amicably then I'm guessing?" I decide to change the subject instead of answering him.

"Enough about me, what about you? Married? Girlfriend?"

Dave laughs pointing to himself.

“Married? No, that won’t happen anytime soon.” I somehow sense there is more to his comment, using that moment to turn the tables.

“That sounds ominous,” I comment. Just as Dave is about to answer, the first course of our meal arrives.

I figured he decided not to answer the question, that is how much time goes by. “I wouldn’t say ominous,” he says, between bites of food. He continues, “I was with someone and it didn’t work out, she met someone else. She says I didn’t have time for her, I suppose she was right. I’m always traveling for Allan International, and this work is demanding, so she ended it, and now I am a free-wheeling bachelor.”

As he talks, I realize he is more hurt than he is letting on, and suddenly I feel sorry for him. “I’m sorry to hear that, man, I understand how it feels when a relationship doesn’t

work out.”

We don't say much during the rest of the meal. I feel terrible eating and leaving, so I have a few more drinks. It is a bad idea because I begin to say way more than I should. “That guy from the other day? He ended it with me too.” We're both getting smashed, and my mouth keeps moving.

“Now he wants to say he is sorry, and I don't know what to do with that. He hurt me when he walked away, it's been fucking five years, and still, here he is creating havoc in my life. What am I supposed to do with that?” I ask Dave as if he will have all the answers.

Then he says something I'm not expecting. “Do you know what I would give if Vanessa would come back to me? If she would say she was sorry? Hey! At least the guy cared enough after all this time to say the words.”

As drunk as we are, as I am, those words resonate. I'm literally speechless because I realized he's right. After all this time, Jax cared. Suddenly I am desperate to be alone with my thoughts. As I'm reaching in my pocket to pay for my share of dinner, I say to him, "I have to go, Dave—"

He stops me mid-sentence, "Don't worry about the check, I've got it, it's being expensed anyway."

"Thanks again, really. Good night, I'll see you in the morning." He laughs at me then reminding me tomorrow is Saturday

"Enjoy your weekend," he says as I walk away. As I'm walking to my room, my thoughts are on Jax. He said he kept his boyfriend at arm's length too, that he ended it with him. Suddenly my heartbeat increases. The moment I close the door to my room, I reach for my phone and listen to his message again and again. I want to talk to him, hell, I want to see him. I decide to call.

The phone rings three times before he picks up. By the second ring I have a moment of doubt, but when I hear his voice, it dissipates. "Edward, hi!" He says before I even say hello. I don't even greet him; instead I apologize.

"I'm sorry I didn't call back sooner."

"I know, I understand," he interrupts. "I wouldn't blame you if you decided not to call. It's what I deserve." I don't answer even after he stops talking. I know he's was waiting for me to say something, but I don't know what to say. He continues, "I'm glad you called, do you want to meet somewhere?"

"No," I say too hastily. "I mean, not tonight. I'm exhausted, I didn't sleep last night." There's a slight titter on the phone before he says, "Neither did I."

Even though I know the answer, I ask anyway. I just needed to hear him say it. "Why couldn't you sleep?"

He laughs nervously again, saying what I wanted to hear. "I

was awake thinking about you, about us. Edward, I want to see you, please tell me I can come to the hotel.”

I breathe deeply before answering because deep down, I want him to come. “No, not tonight, maybe tomorrow,” I decide to say instead.

“Ok, when tomorrow?” He quickly asks. “We could meet for breakfast.”

“Breakfast is fine, as long as it’s not too early.”

“Ok! Tomorrow when you hail a cab, tell the taxi driver to take you to Sliver Café, he will know where it is, it’s not far from your hotel. I will see you around ten-thirty, is that good?”

“I’ll see you at ten-thirty at Sliver Café.” We’re both hushed on the line.

Finally, he says, “See you tomorrow,” then hangs up.

During the whole conversation, my heart felt as if it was



beating out of my chest. He is no longer on the phone, and it's still beating erratically. I take a shower then head to bed. I do my best not to think about Jax or meeting him tomorrow. It's been five years, so much time has passed. What if we don't have the same chemistry we had so long ago? Finally, somewhere between thoughts of what was and the what ifs, I fall asleep.

## **JAX**

After the confrontation with Edward in his hotel room, I couldn't stop thinking about him. My mind was so consumed with thoughts of him that sleep eluded me. I finally gave up and spent the rest of the early morning catching up on my office work remotely. Around seven I stopped working, went for my morning run, and tried not to wonder if Edward would take my call. On the subway, I decided to call him before getting to the office. As soon as I

was on the street, I dialed his number.

The phone rang five times, and he didn't pick up. As I'm listening to it ring, I felt devastated. I lean against a storefront to think. I told him he didn't have to answer. I have to respect his choice if that choice is to not speak to me again. I made a decision to call once more and leave a message. I left the message and forced myself to go to work.

In my office, I had numerous meetings planned for the day. I've never been more grateful for meetings in my life. The first meeting was to discuss employee attendance for the MarCom award ceremony. Everyone around me is talking excitedly about the ceremony, but I am distracted; I can't stop thinking about Edward. Everything in my life seems minute right now. Even dealing with other issues seems irrelevant. My cell keeps vibrating, I stopped looking at it when I realized all the mutual friends Mecca and I share are still calling out of concern.

Trying to pull myself together, I eventually return to my office to continue working. There is a knock on my office door, and I want to ignore it. Before I could respond the knocker opens the door, it's Maribel.

"Are you busy?" She asks. I motion for her to come in. I already knew what the conversation will be about. "So, you're going?" I ask.

"Of course and so are you, do you want to go together, or are you bringing your significant other?" I walked around my desk and sit next to her before answering.

"No, I'm not bringing anyone, we could go together. We can leave from here," I suggest.

Maribel hears my dismay, looking at me with concern on her face. "Are you okay?"

"What do you mean?" I ask, trying to avoid any conversation about my personal life.

“I don’t know, you don’t seem like yourself.”

“I’m a little tired, I haven’t slept well in the past few nights, so I guess that’s what you’re noticing. After my afternoon meeting, I’m planning on going home early to try and catch up.” Maribel gets up to leave, but not before negating my sleep excuse.

“It’s okay if you don’t want to tell me what’s wrong, I hope there is someone you can talk to, it usually helps.”

Maribel walks out of my office, and I feel so lost. I debate calling Jeff but decide this is something between Edward and me, I don’t need a third opinion. I go back to work until it’s was time for my next meeting. After the meeting, I try to leave as planned, but issues discussed during the meeting prevent me from leaving early.

I don’t leave the office until almost seven. I take a cab home because I do bot feel like dealing with the subway.

On my way, I decide to call my parents. A conversation with them usually gives me perspective, something I desperately needed.

## Chapter 18

### JAX

I AM fortunate to have the parents I have. I tell them Mecca and I broke up, and that I am in love with someone else. My father actually said he knew Mecca wasn't the one for me. I ask him how he knew, and he says he could tell because I wasn't as vested in the relationship as Mecca was.

When he says those words to me, I want to cry. I guess my father senses it because he starts to tell me about his past relationship with mom and how at first, he thought she loved someone else. I talk to my father for almost an hour. By the end of the call, I had his point of view, and I didn't have to go into details about Edward.

I don't usually run at night, but tonight I decide I should go for one. I'm dressed and have my hands on the doorknob when my cell rings. One glimpse at the caller ID and I knew it's Edward. I walk back into the apartment to answer the call. I thought I was emotional when speaking to my father, to hear Edward say he wants to see me again is by far my most impassioned moment of the day. By the time the call ends I have a breakfast date set with him. I go for that run anyway, because I need to burn some of the energy coursing through me.

Afterward, I shower, going straight to bed and sleep like a baby, waking up at six and I've never felt better. I wish I had persuaded Edward to meet earlier because ten-thirty just seems so far away. Since it's so early, I decide work is the only thing I could use to kill time. I try sitting at the computer, but it is futile. I head to the office and hope nothing will prevent me from meeting Edward on time.

Nine-thirty, and I am out of my mind. I walk to Sliver Café which is twenty minutes away. Once inside the café, I pick a seat near the window, so I can see when he arrives.

Ten-forty-five, he is either late or not coming. I do my best to put at bay all feelings of gloom, he could simply just be running late.

Eleven, still no Edward. At this point, I'm considering leaving. It seems he may have changed his mind about meeting me. I order a coffee to go and am outside the door when the cab pulls up to the café. He walks over to me with an apologetic look on his face. "I'm sorry I'm late." I smiled then say, "That's okay, you came."

Together we walk back into the café and sit where I was initially sitting. "I just got this coffee; do you want something?" I asked.

"Yes, I'll go and get something, I'll be right back." As I watch



him walk away, I suddenly feel nervous, I don't want this conversation to end badly. I know what I would like from Edward, I'm not sure if he can give me what I want.

Five minutes later Edward returns with a muffin and his coffee. We sit in silence for what seems like forever before one of us says something.

"I'm really sorry I came late," he explains. "I made the mistake of going to the office first, and I was bombarded with work, I lost track of time."

"I did the same thing," I say with a smile. "I tried to work from home this morning, but I couldn't concentrate, so I went into the office first. Even though it's a Saturday, there tends to be a lot happening, I was afraid the same thing would happen to me."

"Are you still with Hamilton Interactive?" He asks.

"You remember. Yes I'm still with them, though lately, I've

been thinking of leaving.”

“Why do you want to leave? I read somewhere that they were nominated for a coveted award.”

“They were, the MarCom. The ceremony is on Monday, in fact, at your hotel.”

“Will you be going?” He asks curiously.

“I am, it’s required that I be there. If you hadn’t called, I was afraid you would think I was stalking you if you ran into me.”

He didn’t smile back, instead, with a somber look, he says, “I wouldn’t think that, I know you are not that kind of person.”

“How do you know?” I ask. “You haven’t seen me in five years, a lot could’ve happened between then and now.”

“You’re right. So, are you a stalker?” He asks, this time with

a smile on his face. I smiled back, happy that we are casually talking.

“No, I promise you I’m not. You are still working with Allan International,” I comment.

“How do you know that?” He asks.

“I asked Jeff to find out if you still worked for his uncle. I needed to know which hotel you were staying in.”

“So that’s how you found me, I was wondering. How is Jeff?”

“He practices in California, comes to visit every now and then.” “You said you spoke to him.” I look at him quizzically before realizing what he was talking about. I nod my head in acknowledgment then add, “We talked then yes, but the decision was mine, he had nothing to do with what I did.”

“I’m not sure if I agree with you about that. But you are right, in the end, the decision was yours to make.”

We look at each other intently, "I was wrong," I whisper. Edward looks away from me and staring out the window then turns to stare into his coffee mug.

"I know I hurt you badly," I continue. "So many times over the years I've thought about you. Edward I—" He stops me before I can finish.

"Don't. I'm not ready to hear that." He says quietly. We are again silently sipping our coffee, while Edward does his best not to look at me. I decide to go against his wishes and say what I needed to say.

"I made a mistake a long time ago with you because I was scared, I wasn't man enough to handle what was happening between us. The same way I'm scared shitless right now because I'm afraid you are going to reject me. The difference between then and now is that I've grown up a lot. That is why, in spite of my fears I'm just going to say what I need to say. What you choose to do after I say it is up to

you, okay?" He acknowledges my words by bowing his head, so I continue.

"I loved you then, god help me, I love you now. Do you know what I've learned about love that I didn't know then?" I continue, not expecting him to answer.

"I learned that love happens when you least expect it and it is fucking incomparable. You could be with the best person under the sun, if he or she wasn't meant to be with you, then you're fighting an uphill battle. I walked away from you five years ago for all the wrong reasons. I was afraid, and I let my fear dictate my choice. If I had known then what I know now, I wouldn't have walked away. I want you back, Edward. If it's not too late, if you don't love Zane, then come back to me."

I look at him the whole time I am speaking, but the moment I finish, I can't look him in the eye. I can't face the

possibility that he may not want what I want. There's was a deafening silence between us before he finally speaks. I look up at him, but he's staring out the window.

"How?" He whispers. "I live overseas, you live here. You have a life, a job, responsibilities. How do you envision us being together?"

"I'm not thinking about logistics, Edward. I'm thinking about us. What do you feel for me? Do you want to be with me the way I want to be with you? These are the questions that need answers right now before anything else."

## **EDWARD**

My heart is beating so fast I can hardly breathe. He just told me he loved me, I've dreamt of this moment more times than I can remember. Still, I'm afraid he will disappear from my life again. What if I let him in and he walks away again?

I know he is waiting for me to answer his questions, I guess I am silent for too long, we make eye contact, and the pain I see in his eyes is devastating.

He stands as if to leave and I put my hands on his arm to stop him. "Please sit back down," I whisper while looking up at him. He timidly sits back down and is about to say something, but again I stop him, this time I place my fingers on his lips. We sit in silence for a while before I finally find the words I needed to say.

"When you walked away, I tried to forget you. You hurt me, Jax, you hurt me badly. I know you want to hear me say I feel the same as you, and I want to tell you what you want to hear, but the truth is, I can't right now."

I look into his eyes then continue, "I know you said ultimately the decision was yours, but you had influences in your life that helped you reach the decision you made five years ago. Those influences still exist, in fact, even more so.

I can't risk you hurting me again, Jax, I wouldn't survive it."

We are silent again. "Can I say something?" He asks. I nod my head and wait to hear what he has to say. "I was a different man then. I'm not the same insecure man you first met in London. There are no influences in my life that would stop me from wanting and loving you. You are right, I did speak with Jeff then, I should have spoken to you. I do have a support system, Edward. My mother, my father, even Jeff. But, this man, the one sitting across from you, is his own man." I am staring out the window as he speaks. "Edward, please look at me." I turn to face him as he continues.

"I told my mom and dad about you; I also told them Mecca and I broke up. Do you know what my father said to me? He said he knew that Mecca wasn't for me, I asked him how he knew. He says he could tell I wasn't vested in the relationship. How could I be, Edward? When I've compared



every man to you, including Mecca. Finally, I'll say this, walk away from me because I hurt you, and you can't trust that I'll never do it again. Don't walk away because you think I am still so weak, that I would allow anyone or anything to come between us."

Our conversation is so intense, I feel a need to lessen its intensity. "Let's talk about something else," I say softly while reaching across the table and placing my hand in his. He looked at our hands then looks up into my eyes and tries to smile.

"What do you want to talk about?" He asks.

"Tell me about the MarCom award, what did Hamilton Interactive do to be nominated?" Jax runs his other hand through his hair, and I could see the tension leaving his body.

"We did a series of print work for one of our clients that were relatively successful. One of the partners entered the

competition, and we were nominated.”

“Do you think you will win?”

“I think there are a lot of talented agencies out there, and some of them were nominated right along with us. If we win, it would be incredible, and the win would garner more clients for Hamilton.”

“Did you have anything to do with the work entered?”

“No, my team didn’t work with that particular client.”

“What time are you going to be there?” I ask. At first, Jax looks confused by my question, then he realized what I was referring to.

“Why? Do you want to come?”

“Can you do that? Can you just invite anyone?”

“I can bring a guest, do you want to come? The only plans I have for that night is sitting with a co-worker and laughing at people.”

“I’m tempted, but no, it’s your work, I shouldn’t intrude.”

“Edward, you won’t be intruding, please come.” I try again

to change the subject because I'm not sure I wanted to go.

"What are you going to do after you leave here? Are you going back to your office to work?"

"No, I'm going home."

"Can I come with you?" I can't believe the question came out of my mouth. Jax looks up at me, startled by my request. He opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out, he tries again.

"I would love for you to come home with me," he says, staring deep into my eyes.

We leave the café shortly after, and I ride the New York subway for the first time. Through the whole trip, Jax barely speaks, and I'm nervous because I know what inviting myself to his apartment meant. Just because I wasn't ready to say I love you, doesn't mean I don't.

We arrive at his apartment a half hour later, and as we are about to enter, he apologizes for the mess. One look at the

apartment, and it's understandable why he apologized.

As I walk in, observing the mess, I cannot help but comment. "Am I learning something new about you?" I ask with a smile.

He looks at me mockingly then says, "I've been a little distracted lately."

I laugh at his offhanded comment, "Now I know what to expect when you are distracted." I turn away from him, suddenly realizing what I said. I feel his eyes on me as I continue to peruse his apartment.

"Have a seat," he says as he walks around, picking up scattered clothes. Instead of sitting, I start to help by clearing the sofa table and walking to his kitchen with a hand full of empty Chinese food boxes. "You don't have to do that," he says walking behind me. "I know, I want to help," I say as I throw the boxes in the garbage. I'm headed to the sink with dirty forks when he slowly grabs me by the waist and pulls

me close to him. I am startled by his action, but still, I drape my hands on his hips. He doesn't say a word and neither did I, we just stand in the middle of his kitchen holding each other.

We pull apart when his cell begins to vibrate in his pocket. He pulls it out and looks at the caller ID, I'm close enough to see that Jeff is calling. I step back and walk into the living room to allow him the privacy needed to take the call. The next thing I know his apartment buzzer is repeatedly being pushed, knowing instantly the person pushing the bell is Jeff.

Jax walks into the living room and confirms my suspicion. "Jeff decided to pay me an impromptu visit." I smile and am about to say I would be leaving. Before the words leave my mouth, he asks me to stay. He walks to his front door and opens it. In walks Jeff, looking the same as he did five years ago.

I stand in the middle of Jax's living room and watch as he greets his best friend with a hug. It isn't long before Jeff sees me. He smiles, but the smile doesn't reach his eyes. I know I am the last person he expected to see in Jax's apartment. He walks over to me with his hand extended. "Edward, it's been a long time."

I extend my hand and acknowledging his greeting, "Yes it has, how are you?"

"Can't complain," he says as he looks between Jax and me. He turns to address me. "I have to say, Edward, you are the last person I expected to see."

I don't answer; instead I look at Jax to say what I was about to say earlier. "I think I should go, the two of you have a lot of catching up to do."

I start to walk towards the door, but Jax stops me. "If you're leaving, I'm coming with you," he says. Jeff and I both turn to look at him.

“Jeff, I’m glad to see you, but you should have called to let me know you were coming. I would have asked you to come tomorrow. I have plans with Edward, you’re welcome to stay here but—”

“No, that’s okay,” He interrupts. “I didn’t know you would be busy, the last time we spoke you sounded a little down, hence my visit. I can check into a hotel—”

“Don’t check into a hotel. Stay here, I’ll be back later and we can catch up.”

Jax turns and asks if I was ready to leave. I don’t know what to say, I wasn’t expecting him to leave with me. I turn to Jeff to say goodbye, “It was nice seeing you again, Jeff,” I turn to walk towards the door with Jax close behind me.

Once his door is closed, I turn to him, “Go back inside and talk to your friend.”

“No, right now you are the only one I want to talk to, please don’t push me away.”

“I’m not pushing you away, he came a long way to see you.”

“I’ve waited five years to see you.”

We stare at each other intently. I raise my hand to the nape of his neck, bringing his lips to mine. We both inhaled deeply while deepening the kiss. I pull away slightly. When I was able to catch my breath, I look into his eyes, then say what I honestly feel in my heart. “If you want me, I’ll be right here. Now go inside and talk to your friend and call me later. Let me know the time and place to meet you for the award ceremony.”

Edward smiles widely, “What about tomorrow?” He asks.

“Can I see you tomorrow?”

“What did you have in mind?” I ask with a smile.

“Do you still run?”

“Yes”

“Then meet me tomorrow at the entrance of Governors’ Park. We can run, then have breakfast again.”



“What time and will a taxi know—”

“Yes, they will know, seven-thirty.” I turn and walk back down the hall while saying the time he chooses.

It doesn't take long to return to the hotel. As I walk through the room door, I decide to check my phone. There were two missed calls from Zane and another from Olivia. I decide to call Olivia first.

“Hey,” was the only word I managed to say, after that, I couldn't get a word in.

“Did you and Zane really break up?”

“Is it true you are back together with Jax?”

“How the hell did that happen?”

“Are you okay? Will you please say something?”

“I would say something if you weren't asking a thousand questions. Do you want me to answer them in the order you ask them?”

“Don't be a smart ass, just tell me.”

Suddenly we both become serious, “Yes, Zane and I are

over. You know I didn't love him the way he deserved, Olivia. I'm pretty sure I hurt him badly."

"Don't be so hard on yourself, Edward. Zane is a big boy, I truly believe he knew you weren't as into him as he was with you. It would have been worse if you had committed to him and then walk away. What about Jax?"

"I've seen him, in fact, I just left him."

"He hurt you, Eddie."

"I know, I still love him, Liv."

"I know, just please be careful this time. Just make sure, promise me."

"I promise."

## Chapter 19

### JAX

As I watch him walk down the hall, I can feel the shudder of my heart. Darn Jeff for showing up the way he did. I needed a minute alone, so instead of walking back into my apartment, I head towards the exit. I sit on the entrance stairs of my building, thinking about Edward and the magnitude of my feelings for him. I've never in my whole life felt fear the way I'm feeling it right now, because I realize I could lose him, and there wouldn't be a thing I could do about it.

As I'm headed back into the building, I cross paths with Jeff exiting the elevator. "I thought you left," he says, surprised to see me.

“I didn’t leave, he wouldn’t let me, where are you going?”

“I thought I wouldn’t see you for the rest of the day, so I was headed to the bar down the street for food and a few drinks.

Do you want to join me?”

“Why not, let me run upstairs and get my jacket, wallet, and phone.”

“I’ll be waiting,” he says as he walks towards the street. It isn’t long before I join Jeff on the sidewalk. As we are walking towards the bar, I can’t help but ask about his spontaneous visit.

“What are you doing here, Jeff? I thought you said New York is the last place you want to be right now.”

“I came because I thought you needed me. Like I said, the last time we talked you were not yourself, I was worried.”

“You should have told me you were coming.”

“I’m sorry I interrupted you and what’s his face.”

I turn to Jeff, suddenly angry at his reference to Edward.

“Ok, first, his name is Edward. Second, I don’t give a shit what you think about him, just do me a favor and keep it to yourself,” I practically yell angrily.

“I wasn’t going to say anything against him,” Jeff says in his defense.

“His fucking name is Edward, Jeff,” I say sharply. We walk in silence for a few minutes, before Jeff finally speaks.

“I don’t understand why you’re going backward.”

I stop in my tracks because I know what his next words would be. To be certain I ask, “What do you mean?”

“Can we keep walking? I’m starving, I didn’t eat on the plane.” Jeff doesn’t answer my question, in fact, we don’t speak again until we’ve reached the bar and ordered our food.

“Are you going to answer my question?”

Jeff continues his silence, looking everywhere in the bar but at me. At this point, I am getting angry and doing my best not to let it overpower me.

Finally, after a few minutes, he speaks. “You walked away from him five years ago because you knew it wouldn’t work between the two of you, nothing has changed since then, Jax. The two of you still live thousands of miles apart, he has a boyfriend, you had a boyfriend, which according to your phone, things between the two of you are not done. What are you doing?”

Our food arrives, and I barely look at it. I wanted to answer his questions, but I don’t want to respond in such a way that our friendship would be in jeopardy. “Jeff, you and I have been friends for a long time. I want you to know I value your friendship, but when it comes to Edward and me,

no one's opinion will sway me, do you understand?"

"I'm just asking you a question, Jax, I don't understand—"

"You don't have to understand," I say, cutting him off.

There's was a heavy silence between us before I continue.

"I'm in love with him, I was in love with him five years ago when I ran from him, I won't run from him again. Whatever he and I decide to do, I'm asking you to respect it."

"You also asked me to do the same with you and Mecca do you remember? Look what happened!"

"Since you mentioned Mecca, let me ask you a question, what is your issue with the men I see and me? As far back as I can remember you've criticized every man I've dated.

Why?"

"Maybe because I think you are making the wrong choices."

"What's the right choice, Jeff?"

Nothing is said for a considerable amount of time after my question. For the first time since Mecca said it months ago, I'm beginning to agree that Jeff wants more from our friendship. I try to find the words to ask him, but I don't need to, his next words said it all.

## JAX

"Maybe for once you should look at what's in front of you." I look away from him, filled with emotions because I realize this is a crucial moment in our friendship.

"How long have you felt this way?" I finally ask.

"Longer than you realize," he growls.

"I'm sorry," Was all I could think to say.

"I guess I should go," Jeff finally says while standing. I stand and hold his arm, asking him to stay so that we could talk further.



"There is nothing to talk about," he says sharply as he removes my hand and starts to leave. I try to reason with him, "I disagree, your friendship is important to me." He laughs, then turns to face me. "Our friendship is not in jeopardy, my delusions are." He stares at me for what seems like a long time before he turns again to walk away. As he is walking away, he says softly, "Give me some time."

I sit down dejectedly, realizing that I may have lost my best and oldest friend. I stay at the bar because I know Jeff would walk back to my place to get his things and another confrontation would be a bad idea. I suddenly have the urge to see Edward. I walk out into the crisp air, taking a cab to his hotel, hoping that going there unannounced won't be a bad idea.

I stand in front of his door for a long time before knocking. Edward doesn't answer. I knock again and still no response. I lean against the door, frustrated and angry that I needed

him so badly. I turn to walk away to find Edward standing a yard away from me, staring at me intently. He finally continues to walk towards me, our eyes locked onto each other. He is soaking wet in his shorts and a thin layered tee shirt. I can't help but stare at the outline of his beautiful body. It's been so long since I've seen him like this. I want nothing more than to feel his body against mine.

"Hey," he says, pulling me out of my thoughts.

"I should have called, but I really wanted to see you." He walks straight up to me, grabs my waist and pulls me towards him, his lips meet mine in an almost painful kiss. By the time he pulls away, we are both breathless, we just stare at each other, words not necessary, our feelings clearly showing on our faces. His hands find my neck as we begin to kiss again. This time slower, but more profound. We're pulled from the intensity by a sound at the other end of the corridor.

With my back still leaning on his door, Edward reaches into his pocket, removes his keycard, and opens the door. We both move backward into his room, our foreheads touching, our hands reaching and pulling at the clothes standing in the way of our need to be physically close. By the time we reach the bed, we are standing in front of each other naked as the day we were born. I reach up, bracing my hands against his chest, then slowly moving down to his abdomen. At that moment, words cannot describe what I am feeling.

Finally, Edward moves even closer to me, so close I have no choice but to fall back onto the bed. He follows me as I fall, never losing contact with my body. He captures my arms and moves them above my head as his mouth finds mine again. Our tongues duel while our bodies gyrate against each other. He raises himself enough to grab my cock, rubbing his finger over the head, while using my seed to lubricate and massage it. Between his mouth plundering, and his hand stroking my prick, I am lost in ecstasy. "Please

let me touch you," I murmur, as he eases from my mouth and sucks on my neck. "I need to touch you, please."

Edward raises his head and looks into my eyes while releasing my hands. Immediately I bring them to his face and lips as he returns to ravaging my mouth.

"I want you so badly," he whispers as he begins to suck on my nipple.

"I'm right here," I say quietly as I grab hold of his head and pull him towards me.

He pulls himself away from me, and right away I miss his warmth. He returns with lube and condoms to the bed, crawling on his knees between my legs. "Forgive me," he whispers, as he rolls the condom on his throbbing prick, slathering it with lube. "I want to be inside of you so badly that this is going to be intense."

"It's okay, just take me," I say softly.

He lifts my legs, almost folding me in half. He slowly inserts

his index finger into my tightened hole. I slowly begin to fuck his finger, reeling in the intense feelings his finger is delivering to my body. He inserts a second finger and my gyration increases as loud moans begin to escape my throat. By the time he inserts a third finger, I am incoherent.

“Are you ready for me?” He asks, as he raises further up onto his knees, pushing my legs even further towards my shoulders. He then uses his rock-hard dick to circle my sensitive hole. I don’t get a chance to answer him before he slowly begins to push inside me. The profound sensation of Edward inside my body causes my body to tremble. “You feel so good,” he groans as he eases further and further inside. After he’s filled me to the hilt, he stops and waits for my body to adjust to his girth. Then he started to move, thrusting deeper and deeper inside me. His powerful ministrations cause my body to quiver over and over again as my ability to think dissipates. When we finally come, it is the most intense orgasm I’ve had in five years. My cum shot

straight into my face, as my body shudders below him. He was screaming my name as he fills the condom wrapped around his phallus.

Edward slowly pulls out, removes the condom, throwing it on the floor as he falls beside me, spent from our fierce lovemaking. He turns his body to mine and does precisely what I've wanted since the moment I saw him at the door. He wraps his arms and legs around me while whispering the words I've longed to hear. "I love you."

When I wake the next morning, it's to the heat of Edward's body and as his snores in my ear. I smile as my mind and body reminds me of the night before. I also realize as I listen to him sleep, that I would move heaven and earth to never lose this man snuggled around my body. I close my eyes and listen to the sweetest sound a man in love can hear.

## Chapter 20

### EDWARD

I WOKE up three times in the night to confirm he was still lying next to me. I was afraid what happened last night was just one of my dreams. The last time I awoke, I wrapped my body around his sleeping frame, afraid to let go. He must have sensed my trepidation because he turned and sheltered his body even closer to mine.

When I wake next, it's morning, and it's to find him watching me. "How long have you been watching me sleep?" I ask hazily while burrowing my face into the pillow, not hearing his answer because I fall right back to sleep.

The next time I open my eyes I know Jax is as wide awake

as I am. He holds me close while running his lips through my hair. “Do you want to talk about what happened yesterday?” I ask as I inch closer.

“Yes,” he whispers while still holding me.

“Are you okay?” I ask.

He leans down and places his lips on mine while whispering, “Yes, I’m fine, I’m just glad you’re here.”

“Tell me what happened,” I implore, now fully concerned.

“I think I lost my best friend yesterday,” he finally says.

“What happened?” I ask again.

“Jeff was—is—in love with me.” There’s a long silence before he continues. “I’ve known him most of my life, he is like a brother to me. I never knew he thought of me that way. We argued.”

I don’t know what to say to him. I sensed a long time ago that Jeff’s interest in Jax was more than friendship. However,



Jax didn't need to hear that right now.

I turn to face him while offering comfort, "I'm sorry, I know how close you are."

"That was five years ago after we returned home, I think I blamed him a little for what happened between us. I shouldn't have, but I did. We didn't spend as much time together as we normally did, then he was busy with his residency, and I buried myself with work at Hamilton, trying to put you out of my mind."

I don't interrupt as I listen to his recap of the past. "That's when we started to grow apart, then the opportunity came for him to complete his residency in California and he took it. We always kept in touch. Thinking about it now, it seems the few arguments we had was about me dating someone he didn't think was good enough for me."

Jax pulls away from me, sitting up on the bed. "I guess

Mecca was right, he wanted more from me, and I was too caught up in myself to see it.”

I crawled behind him and wrap my arms and legs around him, asking a crucial question. “Would it matter if you did notice?”

Jax turns in my arms to face me. “No, my feelings for him are the same as it ever was. I love him like a brother.”

“Did you argue because of me?”

“It doesn’t matter, he doesn’t understand, Edward. I told him I loved you. It’s not what he wanted to hear, but it’s the truth.”

After talking about Jeff, Jax and I stay in bed all day. To be so close to him, touching him, talking with him, after so long, makes the day the best I’ve had in a very long time.

We decide to spend another night in my hotel, and early the next morning he left to prepare for work with plans to meet at the award ceremony.

The workday flies by in a blur because I can't stop thinking about Jax and the weekend we had. When I walk into the hotel lobby at the end of the day, there are people everywhere. As expected, he is standing right where he said he would, waiting for me. He introduces me to his work colleagues effortlessly. I thought there would be some degree of awkwardness, but there is none.

Hamilton won the coveted award. After the ceremony, there's a celebratory party at the hotel bar. Jax refusing to go unless I also attend. It's well after midnight before we finally leave his co-workers still celebrating. We walk out of the bar hand in hand, both of us tired and ready for bed. "I don't want to stay at the hotel tonight. Let me go upstairs and pack a bag, and we can stay at your place."

"I'll come with you."

"No, if you do that we won't leave. I'll be right back."

It doesn't take long to gather my clothes for work and return

to the lobby. I find Jax half asleep waiting for me in the lounge. I walk up to him, running my hand through his hair, "Let's go, sleepy."

By the time we arrive at Jax's place, we are both so tired, we fall asleep the moment our heads hit the pillows. When I wake the next morning, it's to slow, lingering kisses on my mouth, to my neck, chest, moving slowly down my body. By the time I'm fully awake, it's to the delirious feeling of Jax's tongue swirling and licking the tip of my cock. I grab the sheet as his warm mouth covers my quickly hardening dick. His mouth moving up and down my cock until my cum shoots down his throat.

I close my eyes, spent from the spasm that shakes my body. Jax climbs up my body, taking my mouth with his. It's so erotic to taste my cum in his mouth as we devour each other.

"Good morning," I whisper as he pulls me close.

“Morning.”

I turn in his arms to face him. We sharing a pillow as we look into each other's eyes. “I should get up and brush my teeth,” He finally says, while trying to cover his mouth. I laugh, remembering the first time we slept together and him saying the same thing.

“Are you saying my breath stinks?” I say while laughing.

“Are you laughing at me?” He asks with a smile.

“Yes,” I whisper covering his cheek with my hand.

“I love your breath in the morning. I can’t believe you still have issues with morning breath.”

Jax suddenly looks very serious when he asks, “When do you have to go back home?”

“I don’t know it could be a week or more. It depends on how fast the acquisition goes and I’m not directly involved with the negotiations.”

“What are we going to do when you have to go home?”

I pull myself out of Jax's arms and sit up on my elbow. “We

should get up and have some coffee if we are going to talk about this. Do you have coffee?"

Jax doesn't have coffee, so we put clothes on and walk to Starbucks on the corner. It's early enough that the coffee shop is almost empty. We sit in a corner and begin to plan our future. Jax starts by asking, "Are you willing to have a long-distance relationship with me?"

I look at him intently when answering, "I'm going to have a long-distance relationship with you, because I love you, and it's the only option we have right now."

We sit close to each other while our free hands grip our coffee mugs. We're quiet for a few minutes before I ask the question I've wanted to ask since we were in bed. "Jax, would you consider coming to England to live? Before you answer, know that I am also considering moving here. I just think we should talk frankly about whether one of us can relocate."

Jax doesn't answer right away. We drink our coffee in silence for additional minutes before he finally responds with a question. "What did you decide about relocating?"

"I would do it for you," I say while looking into his eyes.

"So, would I," he says, never losing eye contact.

"I think we should compare our options, such as which one of us would benefit more from the move."

"I think for me it doesn't matter," Jax says. He continues by saying, "I've been thinking of leaving Hamilton for a while. I just didn't think it would be to another country. "Do you think I could find work in marketing in London?"

"I can't answer you because I don't know."

"Then that's where we start," Jax says. "Let's find out what my options are if I move there. I know your job at Allan International is a good one. Unless you were thinking of leaving as well, I think I should be the one to relocate."

"Are you sure?" I start to ask, but Jax stops me.

“Edward, I love you, I’ve loved you for five years now. I’m willing to relocate to be with you, and you just told me you are willing to do the same. It just makes sense that the one of us to relocate is the one with less to lose.” I kiss him then, deeply, because I know he loves me as much as I love him.

## JAX

Hamilton closed the office after the win, so I had another day off. I persuade Edward to take a day off as well, and we spend the day making love and plans. We have a few weeks before he needs to return to England and I want our plans to be cemented before he leaves. I decide I want to be upfront with Hamilton, so I need to speak to Jeff Bloom, the CEO of Hamilton, and let him know of my plans to leave the company.

It’s Wednesday, and as the elevator door opens, I am greeted with elation. Everyone is still reeling from the win and what



it means moving forward. I find my way to my office with plans to get my secretary to contact Mr. Bloom's secretary, to see if I could meet with him today. My secretary walks in before I have the chance to call her. "Good Morning, Jax," she says heartily.

"How are you this morning, Jess?" I ask, motioning her to come in and close the door.

Before I could speak, she starts reviewing my schedule for the day. "The partners want to have a staff meeting at ten-thirty," she begins. "I heard new clients are already chomping at the bit, so I imagine you are going to be getting a few new contracts before the month is out."

"Jess, I need to meet with Mr. Bloom at some point today, can you please call his secretary and see if he is available? If he isn't available today, can you please make sure I'm on his calendar sooner rather than later? I really need to speak with him."

She looks at me with a puzzled look on her face, “Is everything okay?” She asks, concerned.

“Everything is fine, just make this a priority and let me know as soon as you can.” I don’t finish my thought before my desk phone rings. She walks away as I’m answering, and my day begins.

I am in an in-depth discussion with a client two hours later, when Jess walks into my office to inform me that Mr. Bloom would meet with me now if I’m available. I end the conversation and head toward his office. I wasn’t expecting to meet with him so quickly, but I know it’s a meeting that needs to happen if I am going to move forward with my plans to move to England.

I walk up to his secretary to let her know I am there to meet with Mr. Bloom. Before I could say anything, she says to go in, he is expecting me. I tap on his door and wait for him to

tell me to come in.

I walk into his office with a smile on my face, after all, we just won a coveted award, and there certainly is a reason to celebrate. He stands and extends his hand, "Jax, come in and have a seat. I've invited Tom to join us as we have a lot to discuss."

Tom is the VP of Hamilton, and I certainly wasn't expecting him to join the discussion. Tom walks in before I have a chance to respond. "Good morning," he says very cheerily. We both acknowledge his greeting, then we all sit. Mr. Bloom starts to talk, but I have to stop him because clearly, our agenda for this meeting isn't the same.

"Mr. Bloom, before you continue I need to let you know something," I quickly say. Both men turn to look at me. I decide to just say what I needed to say. "I'm leaving Hamilton." The silence which ensues is so thick you could

cut it with a knife.

Finally, Tom responds, “Why would you do that?” He asks, with a puzzled look on his face. He continues, “Hamilton is in a good spot right now, we just won the MarCom, and prospective clients are eager to work with us.” Before I can answer, Mr. Bloom also asks a question.

“Are you unhappy, Jax?”

I take a moment to consider the answer to their questions because I know my answer could lead this conversation in different directions. “I’m not leaving Hamilton because I’m unhappy,” I start. “While it’s true I’ve been feeling somewhat underutilized lately, my decision to leave is more of a personal one than a professional one. I’ve decided to relocate to London for personal reasons.”

Mr. Bloom smiles then asking a question I wasn’t expecting.

“Why do you feel you haven’t been fully utilized?”

I decide to answer his question honestly. “Well, I just feel as

if my creative abilities aren't being fully utilized. It seems as if I'm holding the hands of our clients more than being creative. None of that is relevant anymore, sir, because I really do need to relocate."

"Could I ask what the personal reason is?" He asks. Again, I decide to just be honest.

"Well," I say, "Five years ago before I started with Hamilton, I met someone while vacationing in London. I fell in love, but we ended abruptly. Recently we reconnected, and we've decided we love each other still and enough that we want to be together. We don't want an ocean between us, so I hope you will understand my decision."

Tom starts to speak but stops when Mr. Bloom holds up his hand. "Were you planning on leaving before?" he asks.

"No, and yes," was how I start to answer. "I think if Edward and I didn't reconnect, we would probably still have this conversation but at a later date," I say while looking into his

eyes. I expect the conversation to become intense because Mr. Bloom suddenly begins to stare at me introspectively.

Finally, he says, “Thank you for being honest with me, Jax. I realize being honest couldn’t have been easy.” I nod my head, starting to stand up when he stops me, asking me to please sit back down. I sit, surprised by his request.

“Hamilton Interactive has been growing. Although we didn’t make it public, we recently acquired Fantasy Digital. You wouldn’t have heard of them because they were a subdivision of a company you would have heard of, Graphix Studios. Graphix Studios decided to sell off the digital portion of their company, and we decided to acquire them because of the success we’ve had with our digital marketing. I truly believe the next major award we win will be because of the outstanding work you and your team have been doing with the digital marketing aspect of Hamilton.”

I listen intently, still not sure where this conversation is leading. He continues, “Fantasy is not a small company, though it may seem so when placed up against Graphix. Fantasy’s main operation has been in London, but they have two other locations, one here in New York and another in California. We officially owned Fantasy six months ago, and I have been grappling with the decision as to whether we should continue with the location in London, or if I should close it and focus on the two locations here in America. Are you with me so far, Jax?” He asks.

I nod my head as he continues. “You are probably aware of the fact that I’ve been traveling a lot lately. I have been spending time in London, evaluating the performance of Fantasy and I see true potential. I am thinking right now, and only if you are in agreement, that I would keep the London location, make it a true extension of Hamilton, with you at its helm. The problem with this, however, is that you want to be more hands-on with the creative aspect of your

job. I think you are being utilized very efficiently by Hamilton. Under your helm, our media portion of Hamilton has seen extraordinary profits. I think this is a good time for you to tell me what you are thinking.” I am truly speechless. I honestly don’t know what to say, and I tell him precisely that. “I truly don’t know what to say.”

“I think you working from that end to get Fantasy in line with Hamilton’s processes is an excellent idea. You understand our functions extremely well. If you accept this promotion, you can pick and choose projects to get involved with, to address your creative needs.” He continues, “Otherwise, I am expecting that your role will be exactly what it is here, but with more responsibilities and more people under you. You will be answerable to no one but Tom and me here.”

He reaches into a drawer to his left and pulls out a thick binder. “Here, this is everything you’ll need to know about



Fantasy, look it over, study it, think about my offer and let me know. If you decide not to accept, I will understand, just know that I wouldn't want to see you leave us, you are truly valued, and I hope this offer proves that."

I reach for the binder, still astounded by the offer. "How long do I have to let you know?" I ask while standing.

"Well, that's up to you. I would like for you to start as soon as possible if you accept. Really think about it and let me know." I nod my head, looking at Tom, who himself looks shocked, then turn and walk out the door. I was in a haze, but I know the only person I want to speak with right now is Edward.

## Chapter 21

### EDWARD

THE DECISION to take a day off was a good one at the time, but when I return to my makeshift office, I'm inundated with work. I busy myself, putting all thoughts of Jax aside. While finding him again and being with him has been a beautiful benefit of this assignment, I need to make sure my superiors back in London aren't dissatisfied with my job performance.

Hours later, there is a knock at my door, and Dave walks in.

"Good afternoon, Edward," he says with a smile on his face.

"I didn't want to bother you earlier because I knew you would be busy catching up, how was your day off?"

"How did you know I had a day off?" I ask.

"Your assistant told me. I came to see if you wanted to have

lunch and she said you took a day off." I stand up and walk to the chair next to the one Dave is sitting in.

"My day off was great; unfortunately, I'm paying the price for it," I say, pointing to my desk. "Was it worth it?" He asks. I look at him and smile, "Yes, it was."

Just as I am about to elaborate, my cell phone beeps to let me know I have a message. "I should go and let you get back to it," Dave says as he stands up, walking towards the door.

"Dave," I call as he is about to close the door. "I just wanted to say thank you. Your advice the other night was exactly what I needed." He nods his head, closing the door behind him. I immediately walk to my phone to listen to the message.

***"Hey, call me, I have news regarding my job prospects in London. I know you're busy, call me when you can. I love you."***

I hang the phone up with a smile on my face. I want to call him right back, but I look at the work on my desk and know it would be wise to wait. It's late afternoon by the time I realize I needed to take a break. Instead of food, I called Jax.

The phone rings twice before he answers "Hey!"

"Hey yourself," I say beaming from hearing his voice. "Sorry I couldn't call sooner, I was really behind, and I needed to catch up."

"Don't apologize, I understand. Are you taking a break now?"

"Yes, but I still have so much to do, I'm not sure what time I will be leaving."

"Have you eaten?"

"No, not yet."

"Then meet me for dinner, we can meet at that Chinese restaurant where I saw you. I have so much to tell you."

“That sounds like a good idea, I’ll give you twenty minutes to get there, then I’ll leave here to join you.”

“Ok, I’ll see you in a half hour then.”

A half hour later I walk up to the restaurant and Jax is sitting at the same table I was sitting at weeks ago. I walk into the restaurant, bypass the hostess and walk straight into his arms as he stands to greet me. I don’t know how long we stand by the table holding each other, it’s definitely longer than was necessary. Finally, we sit next to each other, and our lips finding each other in a tentative kiss.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper on his lips.

“For what,” he asks,

“For not calling you earlier.”

He pulls away slightly, “I told you not to worry about that, I knew you would be busy.”

“So how did it go, did you talk to Mr. Bloom.”

Jax smiles before he begins to answer. "About that, guess what?" He asks sheepishly.

"Don't keep me in suspense, tell me, what did he say?"

"He offered me a promotion." My heart drops because I know a promotion would mean staying in New York.

"Ok, so then I will talk to Allan International when I get back about leaving."

Jax starts to laugh, "You didn't let me finish, they offered me a promotion and an opportunity in London."

"What, I don't understand," I say surprisingly. "Start from the beginning," I implore.

"It seemed six months ago, Hamilton bought a company in London called Fantasy Digital, which is a subsidiary for Graphix Studios. Fantasy has three branches, and the home office is in London."

"But I thought you were thinking of leaving Hamilton?"

"I was, and I told Mr. Bloom that. He asked me to

reconsider, he thinks I can run the London office. That I can bring it in-line with the New York office.”

“That’s amazing, Jax, I’m just still concerned that you may be unhappy for the same reasons you were unhappy here.”

“He had a solution for that too. He said I can pick projects to be more hands-on with when needed, but he did want me to focus on what I’m doing here, just on a bigger scale.”

“Are you sure?” I ask, “Because I don’t want you to be unhappy.” He takes my hand, bringing it to his lips.

“I want us to be together, and Hamilton is offering me an opportunity to be more creative, a promotion, and a chance to be with you. It’s the best of both worlds.”

“This is amazing, I’m so happy for you. Did you tell him yes?”

“No, not yet, he wants me to think about it. He gave me all this information to look over before giving him an answer.

I'm going to say yes, Edward, are you sure you want me? Because this is the moment to say otherwise."

We're interrupted before I have a chance to answer because the waitress want to take our order. After we ordered our food and the waitress disappears, I turn and cup his face with both my hands. "I don't want you to ever ask me that again. Do you have any idea how much I love you? How much I've wanted you? Don't doubt me like that, Jax, don't doubt us." Jax nods his head as our lips meet and tears begin to fall from his eyes.

"I love you." He whispers.

Jax doesn't give Hamilton an answer for one week. In that week he reviewed all the information in the binder and was more convinced than ever that he could do an excellent job for Hamilton in London. When he finally said yes, he negotiated that he didn't have to start for four weeks. We hoped that it was enough time for me to finish my



assignment with Allan International. If I finished before the four weeks, then I would take a holiday and help Jax pack for his new life in London.

There is so much that needs to be done. Jax has an apartment and a lease he needed to get out of, and packing is a feat unto itself. We are in the middle of sorting his apartment when out of the blue he mentions his parents. “I haven’t told them yet that I’m leaving.”

“When are you planning on telling them?” I ask, concerned, not knowing what else to say.

“I called them today and told them that I’m coming for the day on Saturday. I want you to come with me.”

“Is that a good idea?” I ask, suddenly astonished. Jax stops what he was doing and walks over to the sofa where I am sitting.

“First, my parents are nothing like yours. I’ve been out since I was sixteen years old and they are the most supportive

parents a son could ask for. Second, they know about you, they haven't met you, but they know I'm in love with you. It would be wrong of me to not introduce you to them, so yes, I'm sure."

Jax hovers over me, his words melting into my soul. "I can't wait to meet them," I finally say as I wrap my arms around his waist pulling him close, my face was practically touching his groin. I turn my head and kissing his penis through his jeans. I feel him shiver above me as he runs his hands through my hair.

At that moment words are not needed, he takes my hand as I rise from the couch. We walk to the bedroom without saying a word. As soon as we reach the bed, Jax turns to face me. I start to slowly remove Jax's clothes, starting with his shirt, then moving to his pants. I kneel on the floor to remove his sneakers. As I rise, I rub my cheek along the front of his body, he trembles as I reach his chest, my lips

seek his. Standing naked in front of me, all I want to do is turn him onto the bed and bury my cock deep inside of his tight hole, but I don't want to hurt him, so I kiss him deeply as I lower him onto the bed.

"Take me," he whispers as I release the kiss.

"I will," is all I manage to say as I rise above him and begin peeling off my clothes. When I am naked, I pull him up and turn our bodies adjacent the headboard, I lower my body below his waist and grab hold of his hardened penis. I massage it with my hand as his hips respond to my touch. I swallow him whole, sucking on his member. He screams my name as I hold his hips with my hands to prevent him from moving. I hear him say please over and over, I could tell he was close, but I want him to come when I am buried deep inside him.

I climb up his body and raise his legs, folding him in half as I pulled his hips practically onto my legs. He reaches up to put his hands on my shoulders as two of my fingers sought

his hole. I bury them deep inside as he moans and mewls. "I'm ready," he whispers as we stare into each other's eyes. I don't want to hurt him, "Not yet," I softly mutter, "Soon." He bent his head back as I insert a third finger and begin to scissor and stretch him to accommodate me. I know he's ready when he begins to whisper incoherent words. I reach for the condom and lube, putting them on in haste, before I line my stiff cock to his hole and thrust in all at once. We both moan aloud from the feel of our bodies connecting, my penis rubbing against the wall of his anus. I pull him up off the bed until he's suspended by me as I reach for his lips. I slowly lower his head as I begin a slow deep thrust.

He leans his skull against the bed as I hold his legs and waist, moving deeper and deeper inside him. I can tell it was almost unbearable for him because he begins to moan from deep in his throat. I love that sound, so I continued to attack his hole, meeting his prostate over and over, until we

are sweating profusely. Finally, he comes, spewing his cum all over his neck, and I am with him as I spill deep within him. We both tremble as our bodies return to normal and our heads are no longer spinning.

We lay in silence, holding each other, Jax's head buried in the nape of my neck. "I want you to promise me something." He says.

"Anything," I whisper.

"Promise me that if things change, if your feelings for me ever change from what it is right now, that you will tell me, right away." I raise up off the bed and push him down so that he is looking up at me.

"My feelings for you will never change, Jax, but if you want me to promise, then I promise." He looks up at me for a long time before raising up and bringing his lips to mine.

I touch his lips then ask, "Can you promise me the same?"

"I promise if I ever stop loving you the way I love you right

now, that you will be the first to know.”

## JAX

We stay in bed for most of the afternoon. Eventually, we start to pack the apartment when it occurs to me that I don't know what to do with the apartment. In a panic, I ask,

“What should I do about this apartment?”

“Just break the lease, and we will pay the fee.”

“No way, I can sublease until the lease is up.”

“Who are you thinking of subleasing to? Do you know someone?” I don't really know how to answer. How do I tell him that my ex would probably want the apartment? Edward walks over to me as I stare at a picture of Mecca and I. He looks over my shoulder and at first doesn't say a word. “If I didn't know how much you love me, I would be jealous,” he says while putting his arms around my waist and his chin

on my shoulder.

“I’m glad you know,” I say while turning into his arms.

“What I was thinking about is that he loved this apartment, maybe he would sublease it and take most of the furniture.”

“Then call him and see if you are right,” he says while kissing the nape of my neck.

I pick up the phone and dial Mecca’s number. He’s surprised to hear from me, especially since I haven’t returned one of his calls since our breakup. After briefly telling him about my plans and asking if he wants to sublease the apartment we are finally able to have a comfortable conversation. He is interested in the apartment and would be stopping by before the day is out.

We just finished having dinner when the bell rings. I looked over at Edward who merely smiles as I walk to the door to let Mecca in. “Hi, Mecca,” I say as he stands in the doorway.

“Are you sure this is a good time?” He asks.

“Of course, come in.” As he walks in, I sensed Edward behind me.

“Mecca, this is Edward, Edward, this is Mecca.” Neither one of them move, they just staring at each other. When I realize they have no intention of greeting each other, I take the initiative. “I will be leaving in about two weeks, are you sure you want the apartment?” I ask.

“Yes, I’m sure. You know my place has never been ideal, what are you doing with the furniture?”

“That depends on you,” I say, as I turn and walk toward Edward.

“I wouldn’t mind some of the pieces,” he says while looking around.

“Let’s do it like this,” I suggest. I hand him a roll of stickers.

“Put stickers on the pieces you are interested in and the rest I’ll take care of.”

“Ok, that sounds good,” Mecca says. “Do you know the exact date you will be out?” I turn to look at Edward, who



up to this point hasn't said a word.

"I don't know yet, but we can set a date, and I'll make sure the apartment is available then. Does that sound good?"

"Yes, of course, what date do you have in mind?"

"Why don't you go ahead and walk around and pick the pieces you want, then we will give you a date when you are done." Mecca purses his lips, then turns to walk the apartment. I turn to Edward, "Let's go out on the balcony."

We stand on the balcony in silence before I finally speak. "If you didn't want this, you should have said so." He looks down at me, then turn to look out onto the streets.

"It's not that I don't want this, I do. It's just that seeing him reminds me how close I came to not having you at all."

I circle my hands around his back, "You've always had me," I whisper in his ear. "That's the reason why he is in there, and I am out here with you." I continue while looking up into his eyes.

Our foreheads meet, and we stand there for a few minutes in silence before he finally speak. “You can move into the hotel with me, so you can give him the apartment as soon as we organize and move everything.” I don’t look up at him when I respond. “I know, I just wanted to hear you say it,” I say while smiling.

A half-hour later Mecca was finished tagging the furniture he wanted, and we plan to meet in a week. Before leaving he turns and stares at Edward and I. I sense he wants to say more, but instead, he turns and walks out the door.

We spend the rest of the week packing the apartment when not at work. Edward brought some of his clothes temporarily to the apartment so that he could leave for work from my place. By the time Friday came, he’s on pins and needles about meeting my parents the next day. I try to assure him that they will love him, but nothing I say eases his apprehension. I sense his relationship with his parents has a

lot to do with the trepidation he's feeling.

My parents live just outside of NY in Westchester, so we have to drive. I decide to use Uber to get us there. My father offered to come and get us, but Edward needed the time to calm his nerves. We've been in the car for ten minutes, and he hasn't stopped staring out the window. "I can tell the driver to go back," I say while sliding closer to him.

He turns to face me then smiles, "No we can't." I smile back at him taking the hand he has between his legs.

"I promise they will love you."

By the time the driver pulls up to my parents' home, I can tell that Edward has calmed down a little. As we are exiting the car, my mother comes outside with a big smile on her face, "Jackson Brent, it's been months since I've seen you." I release Edward's hand and walk towards her. "Mom, it's been two months since I was here," I say while throwing my arms around her and hugging her tight.

While my mom and I are in our tight embrace, my father comes out and walks up to Edward. Edward holds out his hand to my father, but my father brushes it aside and embraces him. “Mom and dad, this is Edward Kendrick, Edward; this is my mom and dad.” As I’m finishing the introduction, my mom releases me and walks up to Edward and embraces him as well.

“Let’s move this inside, shall we,” my mother says while wrapping her arms around Edward’s arm. “The two of you must be hungry, did you not eat breakfast as I suggested?” She asks while looking back at me.

“No, we didn’t eat, we are starving, I hope you cooked a lot.”

My parents both say in unison, “Don’t we always?”

We find our way to the kitchen, and helping my mother put all the food on the table. While walking back and forth, my

father starts to get to know Edward. “Edward, is this your first time in the states?”

“No, sir, I’ve been to Chicago a few times on business.”

“Ah, but this is your first time in New York?”

“Yes.”

“How do you like it?”

“I actually like it a lot. I did a lot of sightseeing during the first two weeks, and I even went jogging a few times on the streets. I love the hustle and bustle, it’s really true when they say New York never sleeps.”

My father chuckles. “You are right about that. I also love the city, but I love coming home to peace and quiet more.”

Our breakfast continues with mom and dad asking Edward question after question. Luckily, they aren’t asking in an intrusive way. I notice Edward start to feel more comfortable as the conversation progresses.

After breakfast, my mother disappears into her garden and

dad asks if we wanted to come with him to the hardware store. A few times I see my father look my way as if he wanted to share something. I know before the day is over I will have to give them the good news, and news that they may perceive as bad. I know no matter what, they will support me, and that knowledge makes the day even more beautiful.

By the time we return from shopping with my father, mom has already started dinner. Dad and Edward, who seem to have formed a simpatico relationship, disappeared into the shed, and I decide to go and help mom. I'm not even in the kitchen five minutes before she has a lot to say. "He is very different from Mecca," she says as she is standing over the stove. I don't say anything about her observation because honestly, I didn't know what to say.

"Your father likes him a lot, can you tell?"

I stop chopping the carrots, and look up at her to whisper, "I can tell." We don't say anything for another five minutes

then she asks a question I wasn't expecting.

"You're going back with him, aren't you?"

This time I turned to face her. "I planned to tell you and dad at dinner."

"Your father already guessed." She stops what she is doing reaching in the fridge for a bottle of water. "Open this and let's talk," she says while walking to the chairs circling the island. I grab another bottle of water and join her.

"I love him, mom."

She laughs then says, "That's obvious. But are you going to just pack up and move to England, what about a job?"

"That's the rest of what I wanted to tell you and dad. I was also promoted at work, and they offered me a position in London." She looks at me, amazed by what I just said.

"Are you serious? How is that possible? You need to start from the beginning."

“I would love to start from the beginning, mom, but can I tell this story just once? I promise everything is going to be okay. I’ll just be living a little further away.”

“A little further away! Try thousands of miles away.”

“I know, mom, but—” she stops me before I finish.

“I know you love him, and he loves you. That doesn’t stop your father and me from being worried.” I don’t respond to her last comment; instead I get up from the chair, lean down and hug her because that’s the only consolation I can give her.

By the time Edward and my father comes inside, it is time to eat. I take him to my room to wash up and to find out what he and my father have been up to. “This is your room?” He asks as we enter the room I spent most of my pubescent years in.

“Yeah, this is where it all happened, everything that could happen to a gay kid.”



“You mean you jacked off a lot in here?” He asks laughing. I turn to him with a straight face then say, “That too.”

When we finally make it back downstairs, dinner is on the table and my parents are waiting. We’re only seated a minute before dad turns to me and asks, “Are you really moving to London?” I look at mom who shrugs her shoulders. I turn to my dad and answer honestly.

“Yes, dad, I’m moving to London for personal, as well as business reasons.”

“Well, you better start talking. I want to hear all about it.”

## Chapter 22

### EDWARD

JAX'S MOM and dad are precisely how I wish my parents were. From the moment I met them, they've gone out of their way to make me feel welcome. Spending time with Jax's father brought back memories of better times with my dad. I was so caught up in my memories, I almost forgot the reason why I was here.

When we arrived back at the house, Mr. Brent asked me to come and help him in the shed. I knew the moment he asked, that he had things he wanted to say to me. Jax looked at me, ready to come to my rescue. I knew this was one time I shouldn't be rescued. We exchange a wordless glance as I told his father I would love to help him out in the

shed.

The land attached to the Brents house is massive. It reminds me of the homes in the countryside in England. We arrive at the shed, expecting to see garden equipment; instead, it's more like a workshop with many tools lining the walls. In the middle of the shed is a small sofa on a work table. As I'm looking at the chair, Mr. Brent starts to explain in a laughing tone. "My wife loves this chair. She had one of her friends over, and the damn thing gave out as she sat on it." I try not to imagine the sofa crashing to the ground with someone on it.

"That's horrible, is she okay?" Mr. Brent continues to chuckle while trying to answer me.

"Yes, her ego is a little bruised, but other than that." We both look at each other and start to laugh.

We spend an hour working on the sofa, attempting to replace the broken leg. "I can tell you like using your hands,

Edward, did you use to work with your father doing similar things?" I smile before answering.

"Yes, when I was a teenager, he used to do odds and end jobs for my mother. As time went by though, he didn't do as much, he hired someone to do it."

"Do you have a good relationship with your father?"

"I actually don't. My father doesn't accept the fact that I'm gay."

"I'm sorry to hear that, you are not the first young man I've known who had similar issues with their parents. How do they feel about my son?"

"I'm going to be honest with you, Mr. Brent. My father and I no longer have a relationship. When I came out to him, he didn't understand, he thought I was going through a phase. Now he just sees me as an embarrassment to the family. I'm going to say this, and I hope it won't sound too harsh, but I don't know what my father thinks of Jax, and I don't care."

Mr. Brent is quiet as we continue to fix the chair, thinking

perhaps he had nothing more to say, but I was wrong. “I love my son,” he starts. “I think you love my son too.” “I do, sir, so very much.” He holds his hands up to stop me from continuing.

“When he returned from England five years ago, I could tell that something happened. The son that left for that trip was not the same son who came home. I thought in time he would tell me what happened, but he never did. Do you know when I learned about you?” He asks, but I could tell he isn’t expecting me to answer. “A few weeks ago, when he broke up with Mecca. That night, that conversation was the first time I heard your name and when he told me he loved you.”

I don’t know what to do with myself as he talks. My knees feel weak from his words, knowing he isn’t done, I lean back against the table as he continues. “I suspect that my son is going to tell his mother and I that he is following you

back to England, am I right?"

I don't know how to answer him, this is not what Jax and I envisioned. I start to talk, to say we should speak with Jax, but at the last minute I stop myself, I deciding to be frank with him, knowing he deserves that from me. "I love your son, sir, so much. You have to know that I would never, ever hurt him, that my love for him and his for me is strong." He doesn't say anything, so I continue. "We were planning on talking to you about it at dinner, but yes, Jax is coming back to England, we want to be together."

There's was complete silence in the shed after I finish speaking. Then he finally voices his thoughts. "What about your family?"

"I wish they were relevant to this conversation, sir, but they are not. My father and I barely exchange a sentence. If we see each other, it's hello and goodbye. They are ashamed of

me, but I am gay and I'm proud of it. What's more, I love your son, and I wouldn't trade the relationship I have with him for anything."

Mr. Brent nods his head as he walks towards me. Not expecting that he would reach for me and hug me the way he does. I'm shocked, I don't know what to do, so I stand there until he speaks. "Thank you for talking to me, Edward, just promise me you will take care of Jax and you won't hurt him."

"I promise I will never, ever hurt him."

We stay in the shed for another hour fixing the leg of the chair Mrs. Brent cherished. By the time we return to the house, it is time for dinner. At the dinner table, the conversation quickly switches to the move to London. I listen as Jax tells his parents about his promotion and our plans for England. By the time the evening is over, there are plans made for taking us to the airport when it's time to

leave and planned visits to London.

It's was almost midnight when we arrived back at Jax's apartment. Exhausted from the day, we go straight to bed.

"Are you as tired as I feel?" Jax asks in the darkened room. I roll onto my side and grab hold of his softened penis.

"I'm tired, but not too tired for this," I say as I begin to massage it. Jax turns on his back, gyrating his hips to the rhythm of my hand job. Then Jax yawns. We both start to laugh, realizing once again that we are actually exhausted. I pull up his briefs turning to spoon him. It's not long before we are both fast asleep.

When I wake the next morning the bed next to me is empty. I reach over and the pillow feels cold. I mumble Jax's name, but there was is no answer. I stumble out of bed, searching the apartment, but there is no Jax in sight. I immediately return to the bedroom and am in the middle of putting on my clothes when I hear the apartment door open. I walk



back to the living room to find Jax's hands filled with groceries and coffee.

"I woke up, and you were gone," is all I say as I walk over to him to help him with the falling bags. I take the coffee out of his hands and place them on the table, while he puts the bags on the floor. "Why didn't you wake me? I could have gone with you." Jax looks at me with concern in his eyes.

"Babe, I'm sorry, you were fast asleep, and I didn't want to wake you. I realized there wasn't coffee or anything to eat. I just made a quick trip to the corner grocer to get us a few things. Edward, I didn't—I don't let him finish, I walk straight into his arms and wrap myself around him, taking his mouth in a passionate kiss.

"I'm sorry, I overreacted. I woke up alone, and my mind just went to a dark place. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry, I didn't think. I should have left you a note, I'm the one that's sorry." After getting past my knee-jerk

reaction, we spend the day packing more of the apartment. By the end of the following day, the apartment is empty except for the furniture Mecca choose. Jax donate everything else to the Salvation Army.

That following Wednesday, I learn that the acquisition had fallen through, Corbin Industries decided not to acquire. I'm told to return home on the next available flight. I call Arthur Moby to let him know I would be taking a week's vacation. While he is concerned with the last-minute decision, he doesn't object to the time off. Jax and I now have a week to start our life together.

Four days later and our flight is scheduled to leave the next day. We're standing in his empty apartment making sure we have everything and waiting for Mecca to arrive. Jax walks the apartment as I watch him, he looks lost in thought, and I question whether I should interrupt him. Suddenly he turns to face me, and we just stare at each other across the room.

I walk over to him and stand as close to him as our bodies will allow.

“What have you been thinking about?” I ask, with my lips against his cheek.

He wraps his arms around my waist, “I’ve been thinking of us. Do you realize what we are about to do? Are you ready to have me in your life all the time?”

I raised my hands to his face cupping it with both hands.

“Are you ready to have me in your life all the time?” I ask as well.

“I asked first.” He says while pushing his head against my neck.

“I’m ready,” I whisper, “Please tell me you’re ready too.”

He looks up into my eyes holding my gaze, then repeats the same words I uttered. “I’m ready.”

**JAX**

The past two months have been bittersweet. On the one hand, I am here with the love of my life, and we are happy. On the other hand, I feel as if I am going through some sort of withdrawal. I miss America, but at the same time I love it here, most importantly, I love being here with Edward.

Since arriving in London, I've been inundated with Fantasy Digital, trying to get it up to par with Hamilton Interactive. I've spent nights when I should be focused on my relationship with Edward, working on Fantasy. Thank god Edward understands, and his patience isn't wearing thin. I promised him that this weekend we would spend quality time together. I am working diligently to make sure it happens.

I'm pulled from my reverie with a knock at my office door. "It's open, come in," I call without moving from my desk. In walks the woman assigned to be my secretary. For two months now, I've had to deal with her belligerence. She

clearly sees me as some sort of threat. Perhaps it's because I took the place of her previous boss who was let go.

Whatever the reason, I need to deal with her, but I've been putting it off.

"What can I do for you, Ms. Pollack?" I ask, again not moving from my desk nor looking up from the file I've started to read.

"The other staff asked me to speak with you regarding their concerns." I look up at this point, my interest piqued.

"What do they want you to speak with me about?" I ask, very interested in hearing what she has to say.

"Usually, on Fridays, we are allowed to leave the office early to start the weekend. For several weeks now in fact, since you arrived, we haven't been given the opportunity. The other staff members and I would like to know when we can start again."

I look at her, speechless, and wondering which part of reorganizing the company do not understand. I decide the best way to handle this is to not allow Ms. Pollack to serve

as the go-between. “I’ll tell you what, Ms. Pollack, go outside and gather all the employees into the conference room and I will answer their questions directly. Including the one you just presented to me.”

A half hour later, all the employee are gathered in the conference room and as I walk in, you could hear a pin drop because it was so quiet. I didn’t waste any time. “I understand that all of you have concerns and one of them is your weekly departure from the office earlier than scheduled. Are there any more questions we should address before I give you my answer regarding the question presented to me by Ms. Pollack?”

No one speaks up with another question, which isn’t a surprise. I proceed with my answer. “The early Friday departure is no longer in effect. I’m not sure if it was made clear when I arrived at Fantasy Digital, but we are undergoing a re-structure. This means that jobs and

responsibilities will be changed shortly, and I am sorry to say, some jobs will be phased out. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to continue with business as usual if we are going to make Fantasy Digital a thriving part of the publishing industry here In London. I know these changes will be hard to accept but I am asking you to stay diligent, and I will finalize the restructuring as soon as feasibly possible. Does anyone have a question?"

A young lady in the back of the room holds up her hand.

"What's your name?" I ask before she asks her question.

"Jenny, sir."

"Ok, Jenny, what is your question?" She hesitates as if she is afraid to ask.

"Are you saying some of us may be losing our jobs?" She finally, quietly asks.

"Yes, Jenny, some of you may lose your job. Most of you will continue to work with Fantasy but most likely under a

different capacity. I know this can be hard news to take, but I thought it best to be honest with all of you, to let you know what is going on. Again, I'm sorry that I cannot allow all of you to walk out of this office at noon as you've done in the past. After things settle, perhaps we can institute something similar, but right now it won't be possible. If no one else has a question, we will end here. Over the coming weeks, I will meet with all of you individually to discuss your new role in the company."

I walk out of the conference room with the same degree of quiet I walked into. I just cannot continue to let them think it is business as usual when nothing could be further from the truth. I walk back into my office to hear my cell phone vibrating. I quickly run to my desk but just missed Edwards call. I walk back to my office door and close it, then call Edward back.

"Hey, baby, I'm sorry I missed your call." I feel his smile on



the other end of the call.

“It’s okay, I was just calling to see how your day is going and to confirm our plans for this weekend.”

“Nothing will stop me from turning off my phone when I leave here today. I am all yours the whole weekend.”

“Good, I’m glad to hear it because I have some serious plans for us.”

I close my eyes and lean back into my chair as I ask, “What plans have you made?”

He laughs into the phone before answering. “Not telling you, it’s a surprise. Just be home as soon as possible, okay?”

I bow my head as if he is standing in front of me.

“I’ll be home soon, I promise.”

Since arriving in London two months ago, Edward and I decided his place was too small for both of us. We were fortunate enough to find a place in Notting Hill, the very location he once told me he loved. While the apartment is

certainly big enough to accommodate the two of us, we haven't taken the time to decorate because we've both been busy with work. The apartment is actually located within walking distance of Fantasy, and I am able to walk to work most days, weather permitting.

It's six-thirty and I am the last one to leave the office. The weather these past few days has been pretty decent, so I walk home expecting Edward would be there waiting for me. To my surprise, he isn't here. Packed and waiting in the hall are two overnight bags. I don't have a chance to react to the bags because in walks Edward with our dinner for the night. "Where are we going?" I ask before I even said hello.

"Hello to you too." He says, with a smile on his face, he walks up to me, grabbing the nape of my neck and kisses me deeply. "I bought us something to eat since there is nothing in our kitchen. Then we have to leave, we have a train to catch." I grab him by the waist as he is about to turn

to walk away.

“Aren’t you going to tell me where we are going?”

“No, not yet, did you turn off your phone?” I pull the phone out of the breast pocket of my suit jacket and hold it up for him to see. “Come and eat,” he exclaims, as he pulls out of my grasp walking towards the kitchen.

Two hours later we’re out the door and headed to destination unknown, at least for me. As we drive through the city, I can’t help but reflect. Edward and I have come so far, but we have so much further to go. Edward’s relationship with his father has gotten considerably worse since he learned of my arrival back into his son’s life. Then there’s is our jobs, and the massive amount of hours we have both been working.

“What are you thinking about over there?” Edward asks, without taking his eyes off the road.

"I'm thinking about us," I say, turning to look at his profile.

"I'm sorry I've been working so hard these past weeks."

Edward quickly glances at me before saying, "I told you, you have nothing to be sorry about. You are not the only one who's been working massive hours. I am just as guilty as you are."

"I just don't want us to grow apart," I say while looking straight ahead.

Edward places his hand over mine before saying, "It would take a lot more than us working hard for us to grow apart. As long as we know when to put each other first, then we will be fine."

We don't say anything more as we park at the train station for the Euro-train. "Are we going to Paris?" I ask. Edward laughs as he exits the car without answering.

He starts to remove our luggage, but I stop him and ask again. "Edward, are we going to Paris?"

He smiled heartily then says. "Yes, now help me, we don't want to miss our train."

I help him with the luggage and quickly walk to the platform. As we wait to check in, I whisper, "I love the surprise."

"I thought you would," he says. "I thought it was a good idea to visit the place where our love truly began. At least it did for me. I fell in love with you on that trip. By the time it was over, I knew that I wanted you in my life for a lifetime." Not for the first time, Edward words leave me speechless. I take his free hand and squeeze. "I knew I loved you then too."

This time when we arrive in Paris, it is completely dark. I thought we would be staying in the same hotel room, but to my surprise, Edward booked us into an even more beautiful hotel, overlooking the Seine River. We order room service before leaving the reservation desk, so shortly after arriving at our room, our food arrives. We sit on a terrace with one of the most breathtaking views I've ever seen, enjoying our dinner.

For a second, I close my eyes to appreciate the enormity of

the moment and of course Edward notices. "What's wrong?"

He asks while reaching over to cover my hand with his.

"Nothing is wrong, I'm just pausing to appreciate how happy I am in this moment."

Edward smiles before saying, "I know the feeling."

I laughed, and he wants to know why I am laughing. "I guess we don't need to talk about sharing a bed this time."

Edward laughs as well before saying, "I guess we don't.

Speaking of bed, are you as ready for one as I am?"

"Yes, it's been a long day."

We make our way to the well-made bed, and I fall back against it fully clothed. Edward stands over me watching intently.

"What are you waiting for?" I look up into his eyes. He doesn't answer; instead he starts to remove my shoes, then my pants. I let him remove every piece of my clothes without saying a word.

He leans over the bed, over my naked body, and stares into my eyes before saying, "I know what I want and what you

need this time.”

I raise both my hands to cup him behind the neck before saying, “Yes you do, now get naked.”

Edward looks for the lube in the luggage, not even a minute later he’s naked and back to leaning over me. He lowers his body onto mine, and I feel every inch of him as he kisses me so deeply I could feel it in the tips of my toes. I spread my legs wide to welcome the feel of his massive dick on mine. We both moan into each other’s mouths from the sensation. Edward raises up onto his knees, pushing mine towards my head. He reaches for the lube, massaging some between his fingers to warm it. Then pushing my leg even further and wider as he runs his fingers along my puckered hole.

Our lovemaking has grown even more intense and passionate over the past weeks. It’s almost as if we are making up for lost time. I moan gutturally as he continues to massage my hole and slowly inserts his index finger. I open

my eyes to find him staring intently at me. “

I was just about to ask you to open your eyes,” he says. He inserts another finger and begin to assault my hole, I can’t help but release an “aah” as his assault goes deeper.

Finally, he removes his finger raising himself even higher to dispense lube onto his swollen cock. He doesn’t hesitate when he rams it into me in one swift move, leaving me breathless. “Edward, shit,” I call out as he drives in again and again.

I know he wants me to look at him, but I can’t, I wrap my hands around the headboard as my head falls back as dizziness overtakes me from the feel and intensity of his ministrations. I see stars as he shoots deep inside me, feeling my balls tighten and my dick release its fluid between us. Edward falls on me and I welcome his weight. He knows I love the feel of his weight on me after our lovemaking, so he doesn’t move. We hold each other, his face in the crevice of my neck and my hand circling his body without saying a word. After a while, Edward slowly pulls out of me,



disappearing into the bathroom. I feel him as he uses a wet towel to wipe away our releases and as he lay next to me, pulling me close. I don't know when I fall asleep.

Somewhere into the night, I awaken to an empty bed.

I notice that the balcony doors are open, so I get up, wrap a sheet around me, and walked onto the balcony. Edward is standing naked, staring out into the distance. I walk up to him, wrapping my hands around him, his body tenses for a second before relaxing into my hold. "It's my turn to ask what's wrong," I say into the back of his neck.

"Nothing is wrong, I'm just couldn't sleep."

"Why didn't you wake me?" Edward turns into my arms, circling me with his own. "Jax, if something were wrong, you would be the first person I would want to talk about it with. I want you to stop worrying about us, that something is going to happen to end us. Nothing could be further from the truth. I love you so much, and plan on spending the rest of my life with you."

I pull away from Jax, and that is when I realized what is

happening. “You are the best thing that has ever happened to me. You are what I think about before I go to bed at night and when I wake up in the morning. I couldn’t imagine a life without you, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. In case you haven’t figured it out, Jackson Brent, I am asking you to please spend the rest of your life with me.” I’m speechless, I know what I needed to say, but I am so shocked, I don’t know how to find the words. I must have been silent too long because I hear Edward say but. I didn’t hear what he says beyond but, because I cover his lips with mine. When I look up into his eyes, I know I don’t need to say more, that he understood. I say the words anyway. “Yes, Edward, I will marry you, and I will spend the rest of my life with you.”

## Epilogue

### JAX

A LOT has happened in the six months since Edward proposed. I thought our first trip to Paris was memorable, but that second weekend was unforgettable. When I tell my parent I'm engaged, they insist on coming to London sooner rather than later. They also insist on meeting Edward's parents which turns into a feat to arrange.

Edward and I decide the best way to introduce our parents is to have dinner at the apartment. Edward decides the best way to persuade his parents to come to dinner is to solicit the help of Thomas Waterhouse. We don't know what Mr. Waterhouse said to Edward's father, but he agrees to meet for dinner. A week after my parent arrive we have the

dinner, and my parents are unbelievable. By the end of the meal, my father and Edward's father have a date to play golf. My mother and Edward's mother are going to meet for lunch.

The most awkward part of the dinner is when we tell Edward's parents that we are getting married. Having my parents there for support helps to alleviate what could be a contentious moment.

Edward and I didn't go into the dinner expecting much, but we walked away with a lot. We also tell our parents that we don't want to wait to get married. The plan is to have a small ceremony at our home, inviting our parents and friends.

The biggest surprise on my wedding day is Jeff. I sent him an invitation, but I didn't think he would come. Not only does he come, but he and I have a long talk. For me, one of the best gifts I receive is knowing my friendship with Jeff is

still intact.

## **EDWARD**

I never thought my parents would accept my lifestyle. Sitting at the dinner table watching them converse with Jax's parents convince me that there's was a chance they will not only recognize the fact that I'm gay but embrace it. I will forever be grateful for the role Jax's parents play in helping to alleviate any animosity my parents have against me.

It's the end of dinner, and they are still here. They are in the living room talking about golf, and my mother and Jax's mother are talking about the best place to shop during her visit. I'm so busy looking at them socializing, I don't notice Jax watching me. Our eyes connect as he walks towards me. "What are you thinking about?" He ask as he approaches.

“I think that your parents are wonderful.”

“I know they’re great, aren’t they.”

“Jax, do you realize this night wouldn’t have happened or turned out like this if it wasn’t for them?”

Jax is about to put his arms around me, but he stops. Before the dinner, we agreed that while my parent are here, we would lessen the PDA so that they won’t feel uncomfortable. Jax reaches behind me and puts his hand on my back and says, “Your parents just needed a little push, they would have eventually come around.”

I laugh before saying, “ I’m glad you think so because I surely thought otherwise.”

It’s been one month since the day of that dinner. I’m waiting for him so that we can stand in front of our family and friends and profess our love for each other. When we decided to get married, we knew there was a chance my parents wouldn’t come, but they are here. If someone had asked me if they would come, I would bet anything they

wouldn't, but here they are, watching and waiting for Jax and me to make our entrance. To say I am the luckiest man alive would be an understatement. These past months, I've watched as the man I love, and his family, turn my life into something meaningful. I know it's because of them that my mom and dad are here today. I know it's because of Jax why I am so deliriously happy.

"Are you ready?" I say to Jax as he walks up to me. "As ready as I'll ever be, how about you?" I smile, repeating his words. Jax turns readying himself to walk towards the door Olivia is about to open for us, but I stop him.

"I want to say something to you," I say while holding his hands. He turns to face me, puzzled by my request.

"What do you need to say?" Jax asks.

I take a deep breath, close my eyes, opening them and start to say what I need him to hear.

"I want you to know that the words I'm about to say to you

in there are words you will hear every day of our lives together. I will always say I love you, I will always put you first, and I will always cherish every moment we share together. This day isn't it. Our life together is what I will cherish forever. Does what I'm saying make sense to you?" I ask as I wipe away the tears from his eyes.

Jax wraps his hands around my arm and brings his fingers to mine, nestling them on his cheek before saying, "I never thought that this moment was it for us," he says. "I always, always knew that what you feel for me and what I feel for you surpasses this moment. This is just for our family and friends; my heart already knows the strength of our love."

We stand there staring at each other. Finally, Olivia snaps us out of our bubble. "Now that you've said the vows privately, are you ready to do it publicly?" She asks, with a smile on her face. We smile at each other before turning to Olivia and saying in unison, "We're ready."