



Chapter 9

You don't get ready for your big date with action movie star Ian Brooks. You just smile while a team of professionals gets you ready—filing your nails, your hair tumbling around your face as you get a blowout and a trim, a dress fitting, sitting still while a girl paints your lips, dusts blush onto your cheeks. It's a whole new you and a whole new life as you step out to the curb, feeling like a Christmas tree, jewelry sparkling as a black, stretch limo pulls up and Ian Brooks gets out and comes around, giving you a hug and an air kiss, and then holds the door open, taking your hand, helping you into the car.

“Gorgeous,” Ian says, looking you over.

“Thanks,” you giggle. It seems so surreal. You can't believe this is happening, that you're riding in a limo, wearing a Jenny Halston Dress, and Ian Brooks is sitting right there calling you gorgeous?

“George tells me this is your first time?”

“Um, yeah, but—”

“You don't talk to the media,” Ian says. “Ever.”

“Yes, of course.” She's confident, powerful, you love it that she's giving you orders.

Her phone rings. She glances at the screen. “I need to take this.”

You nod.

She starts to speak to whoever is on the other side of the call, and you can't help but be impressed. She's speaking Japanese. She pauses and looks at you. "I am counting on your discretion."

You start to admit you don't speak Japanese, but then you realize she does not require an answer. You nod and smile. Cross your heart.

She goes back to her call.

You look out the window and watch the city rolling by, people on the street, hot dog vendors... there's a billboard on the side of a building advertising "Faction 5," Ian towering over the street in a tuxedo, holding a smoking pistol. You glance from the billboard and to her, the real her, right here in the car with you!

The limo pulls up to the red carpet outside the renamed Hive Theater, right in the center of midtown on 42nd street. People everywhere. Cameras flashing. Ian slaps herself on the face, shakes out her arms. "I've done so many of these things," she says. "It's a fucking drag, but it's the job. I'll come around and get the door. You'll smile." She looks you in the eye, frowns. Pats you on the knee. "You'll do fine."

Ian pops out of the car, and she's on, waving to the fans, pretending the cameras aren't there, like it's just her and them and no one else, and you can see how she's so successful

because the crowd roars, and they love her, and she struts around the car, and opens the door, offers you her arm. You smile your brightest, prettiest smile and let her help you up. She puts her hand on the small of your back, you cling to her arm and gaze up lovingly at her while the paparazzi surge, eager to get a picture of the couple, this mysterious new boy no one has seen before, and boys in the audience are crowding together, whispering, and you can tell they are wondering who you are, how do you know Ian?

You feel special, superior, beautiful in a way you've never felt before. You're hanging onto the arm of a woman named The Most Eligible Bachelor in the world, and you know every boy in the audience wishes he was you.

You're blinded by the flashing. Ian pauses a few times on the way into the theater, taking questions from E!, from People, from who even knows, and you just keep smile, adoring, and if anyone even did ask you something you didn't hear because you're just so lost in the moment, so excited and happy to just look at this handsome woman. She is so good looking it makes you weak in the knees.



You don't remember a thing about the movie. You watched the screen intently, smiling and laughing when the people around you laughed, crying when the scene went sad, but it was all an act for the benefit of the people around you in case anyone was watching— and people were watching— the whole thing was performance, and you were playing a boy watching the best movie ever made!

The next morning, you wake to a phone buzzing like crazy. You pull your hair out of your face and squint at the screen, which is flooding with text messages from your friends. You see a link and click on it. It's from the New York Post gossip page, and there is a picture of you with Ian on the red carpet. Under the picture, the caption reads Ian Brooks and her latest blonde.

Well, you think, it's something. You also see a phone message from Unknown, but it's a New York area code. It could be someone in the business. You feel a little excited, and then a lot excited. You check the message.

"This is Becky Engle for Frank Walls. He'd like to see you again for Dark Moon."

You scream and roll onto your back, kicking your legs in the air. You hug your pillow to your chest, giggling. It's happening. It's finally happening! You just know it. You're going to be a star!

Omigod. You have to get ready for the call back. Run your lines. Oh, you better call your agent. You dial the number, and George, herself answers, “You got me. Go,” she says.

“Oh, I was expecting your assistant...?”

“You got me. What’s up?”

“I just got a call from –”

“Frank Walls. Yeah. I know. She’s going to make an offer. You don’t accept. Tell her she needs to talk to me.”

“Um, but–”

“Tell her she needs to talk to me,” George says, her voice stern, a little annoyed. “Congrats, kid. We’ll talk later. I gotta meeting.”

It makes you nervous, the idea of not accepting. What if Frank thinks you’re rude or something? But, well, you trust George. You know you should listen to her.

“Katherine,” Frank Walls says, standing as you enter, giving you a hug. You can feel the change. When you saw him before, you were just some random boy. Now, you’re Ian Brooks’ latest blonde, and George Pearson’s latest client. You’re someone now. Someone special. Finally, the world is seeing that you are someone special.

Frank makes an offer. Despite George’s advice, you almost say yes right there on the spot, but you do as you’ve been told. “You’ll

have to talk to George,” you say. “She makes all my decisions for me.” You hesitate, studying her reaction, but she doesn’t seem angry at all, as you’d feared.

“That’s a good sign,” Frank says. “There’s nothing worse than a boy who tries to think for himself.

As you leave the meeting with Frank, your phone buzzes. It’s George. “Hi?”

“Check your hair and makeup,” George says. “There are photographers downstairs.”

“How did they know I’m here?” You say.

“I told them,” George says, chuckling. “Don’t answer their questions. Right now, we want to keep you a mystery. Just say, “I’m in a bit of a hurry right now. So sorry. Be sweet and nice, but do NOT answer.”

You fix your makeup and fuss with your hair, then head downstairs. There are three photographers there waiting outside the doors to the building. You find it a little disappointing. You’d imagined more. You smile and walk past as they take pictures, and they are asking you about Ian, but you just cheerfully announce “I’m in a bit of a hurry right now, so sorry,” exactly as you’ve been told.

And then you’re back home in your apartment, wearing a nightie, curled up in your big, soft rattan chair, thumbs aching

from answering texts, scrolling through all the articles and pictures you can find from the premiere. You're scheduled to work tonight, and now your real life is the one that seems surreal, fake, impossible. Can you really out on your little uniform and wait tables again after all that happened, is happening?

It seems, quite frankly, beneath you, but then you think of Keira, formerly Kevin. The little bitch. He thinks he's so pretty, and since he and Lisa got engaged, he never misses a chance to wave that ring in your face. You don't know when you'll see any money from the movie, and rent is coming due, but more so you can't wait to rub it in Keira's face.

