

Single Parent Pal-entine's Day

By BreaktheBar

September

After-school pick-up was, somehow, only moderately better after moving out of the city.

To be fair, I'd grown up in the same town that my daughter and I had moved to and I had always rode the school bus, so it was strange in general to me that things had changed so dramatically over time. Still, there was something almost cinematic about being parked in the roundabout on the younger kids' side of the elementary school and seeing a wave of the little munchkins come running out of the doors as a couple of teachers tried to keep some semblance of order.

The volunteer parents, dressed up in reflective vests with their clipboards, weren't faring much better than the professionals.

June came skipping out of school with another little girl who must have been in her class, and they were yammering away until she saw me and she waved to her friend and then sprinted in my direction with a big grin on her face. I went down to one knee and held out my arms and she rushed into them, and I hugged her and her backpack tight as I picked her up and spun her around. "Hello, little bug," I said, giving her a smooch on the cheek and holding her up.

"Hi, Daddy," she said with a goofy grin. She'd lost one of her last baby teeth, an incisor, the previous weekend and it was almost as cute as when she'd lost her front teeth.

"How was school?" I asked.

"Good!"

"Did you learn anything new today?"

June shook her head, still grinning.

"Well what possible use is school, then?" I asked playfully. "Maybe you should never go back."

"No!" she laughed. "I met my best friend today."

"You did?" I asked, raising my eyebrows. Her old best friend, back in San Jose, had been our neighbour's cute little daughter Rosita, and their friendship had been the only thing that had made me hesitate about moving us. At the end of the day, I knew my seven-year-old daughter

would get over the cross-country move and make new friends, but it was still a little heartbreaking at the time.

“Uh-huh,” she nodded, pointing at an SUV a couple of cars back. “That’s her! Her name is May, we’re Month Buddies!”

I chuckled, giving her another little smooch on the cheek that made her giggle. I hadn’t been a major fan of the name Juniper when my ex-wife suggested it, but had figured I could warm up to the shorter ‘June.’ My ex had, of course, hated that I did that, but then she’d been volatile about a lot of shit. Hence why she was my ex and not in June’s life.

“Well, let’s go say hello,” I said, shifting my daughter to holding her on one hip as she hugged my shoulder.

We technically weren’t supposed to ‘dilly-dally,’ as the volunteer parking managers liked to say, but I really didn’t give a crap. I swerved around a minivan that seemed to be picking up half a soccer team worth of little boys, each of them capped with ginger hair so I assumed they were brothers, and headed for the blue SUV my daughter had pointed out. The back passenger door was open, as was the trunk, and as I got closer I saw that May was already strapped into a booster seat in the back while her mother was rummaging for something in the trunk.

“Hey there,” I said as I came alongside the back window. “I-”

“Jesus, Francine, I get it, OK?” the woman said, not looking out of the trunk.

“I’m, ah, not Francine,” I said.

Now the woman pulled herself out of the trunk. She had a tan complexion, was fairly short and maybe topped her height at five-foot-two, and her dark brown hair was softly wavy if a little frazzled in that way that parents of young children who actually parented their kids tended to develop after an hour or two. I could tell she was of mixed ethnicity, but couldn’t immediately pinpoint what, and she was clearly having one of *those* sorts of days that I knew all too well.

She gave me a quick once over. “Look,” she said flatly. “I’m not looking to try and get hit on in the school pickup line, buddy. I’m just here to get my kid.”

“Wow,” I chuckled. “Jesus, you sound like you’ve got a couple of stories to tell. I actually just wanted to introduce ourselves - my daughter June says that May is her best friend.”

“And Month Buddy!” June happily added.

The woman’s face dropped a little of her frustration, and I could see the switch from ‘beleaguered woman reaching her limit’ to ‘mom who is managing to maintain a semblance of

feeling like a normal adult.' "Is that right?" she asked. "May, honey, did you make a new best friend today?"

"The bestest!" May said with enthusiasm from her booster seat, grinning and waving out the open door. She was a cute kid with dark, wavy hair and a complexion close to her mother's. "June is really good at basketball and *I'm* really good at basketball too. We played in gym and we were the best!"

"You guys played basketball today?" I asked, putting on a bit of excitement for the two girls.

"We did, Daddy," June said. "And I scored six shots and May scored seven."

"No, I scored six, too!" May said. "We were the same. And we were better than *all* the boys."

"Wow," I said, offering June a high five that she returned, and then May who gave me it back enthusiastically.

May's mother was smiling now and shot me an apologetic look. "I'm Olivia," she said. "Sorry about that."

"Adrian," I said, shaking the hand she offered me lightly. "And it's no worries. I get it. I just have one question - who is Francine, and why should I be avoiding her?"

Olivia smirked a little and nodded down the roundabout area towards one of the volunteers with the clipboards who currently seemed to be haranguing a couple of other women. "That's her," she said. "Three kids, all of them snotty little shits, and she's trying to get an official PTA installed instead of letting the school manage volunteers and events. Very pushy, very judgy."

"Noted," I said, turning back to her. "We just moved back to town. I grew up here, but June doesn't have any buddies around yet, let alone a *bestest friend*," I leaned toward May in the car and gave it some emphasis and wink, which made her grin. "How about I touch base with you tomorrow, trade details, and we can maybe set up a park playdate or something?"

"Sure," Olivia nodded, sweeping a hand through her hair and shaking her head. "Again, sorry, it's just been a day."

"Like I said, I get it," I assured her. "We should probably get moving though before we risk the ire of Francine."

I shook her hand again, exchanging smiles, and then headed back to our car.

"What do you think, Juney?" I asked my daughter as I got her into her own booster seat. "Did we make some friends?"

"I think so, Daddy," she grinned at me.

I got her strapped in and stood up, glancing back towards Olivia and May since the redheaded minivan had pulled away. Olivia was just opening her driver's side door and saw me looking, and she waved lightly and smiled again. I returned the wave and blew out a breath as I rounded to my own door. When she wasn't thinking I was inappropriately hitting on her, she had a great smile.

"What's for dinner, Daddy?" June asked from behind me as I got in behind the wheel.

"Dinner?" I asked back. "Are you already hungry? I think it's just snack time."

"McDonald's?" she asked hopefully.

"Hah, no McDee's, June. Nice try though. I made your favourite popsicles at home though."

My daughter cheered, and I knew that in a few years I would miss the fact that popsicles seemed like the best thing in the world.

I had learned quickly, during the first week June attended her new school, that I needed to get there twenty minutes early to have a spot in the roundabout. Only a few minutes later and I'd be parked out on the street, or trying to find a space on a neighbouring street and walking over. So I planned accordingly, and I pulled up at exactly 3:10pm, twenty minutes before school let out. The line quickly filled in behind me and the roundabout was full before I even stepped out of my car.

It was another gorgeous, early autumn day with a nice kick of heat and only a slight breeze so I was in a t-shirt and jeans. Moving back to the Midwest from California had been a lot of things, but getting more variety in the seasons was something I was both looking forward to and dreading. June was going to *love* snow, and I was going to hate clearing my driveway.

Still, with time to spare and the crisp, clean air filling my lungs, I decided to follow through on my offer from yesterday and I strode down the line of cars. Olivia was almost a dozen vehicles back this time, right on the curve and only a few spots from being on the street. She must have seen me coming because she was getting out of her vehicle. Her hair was back in a ponytail and she was wearing a plain maroon t-shirt and some basic black leggings, and she smiled as she stepped onto the curb.

"Hey, Adrian," she said. "Look, I was thinking about it last night and I just wanted to apologise again for yesterday."

“No need at all,” I said. “I was a random guy coming up to you, and I’m sure a woman with a smile like yours gets approached all the time.”

She flashed me that smile, a little chagrined by the compliment, and shook her head. “Thank you,” she said humbly. “But really, I’m embarrassed at how I reacted. What’s your schedule like for playdates? I’ll bring the coffee.”

“How does Sunday work for you?” I offered.

“May and I do stuff with my parents most Sundays, does Saturday work? Maybe an hour before lunch?”

“That works for me,” I said. We quickly traded phone numbers so we could organise it more specifically, and she took a note of how I liked my coffee.

“So, I’ve got to ask - you’re one of a very few Dads who are here for pickup,” she said. “Usually I’m avoiding making eye contact with a lot of judgey housewives and some nannies. Are you one of those fabled stay-at-home Dads?”

I smirked a little and chuckled. “Sort of. I’m more of a work-from-home Dad. My ex and I split about four years ago and she’s not in the picture by her choice, and I’d reworked my contracting business to be entirely remote before that happened since I saw the writing on the walls.”

“Oh, shit,” she said. “That sounds complicated. Sorry if I’m poking an old wound.”

“No, no,” I said. “It’s fine. Juney and I make do, and making the move back here only complicated my business a little bit and brought us back to my parents so they get to be a lot more involved and spoil her.”

“Well, if it’s any help, once your story gets around you’re going to be the new hot merchandise on the meat market,” Olivia said. “Single Dad with a steady job is like catnip for the desperate single moms club.”

“I think I’m good,” I chuckled. “I’m not looking for anything, permanent or temporary. June has been through more than enough because of her Mom. What is it you do?”

“I work from home as well,” Olivia said. “I used to do more social media content creation stuff when I lived out in LA, but I transitioned to pure graphic design and video editing for other people when I got pregnant with May. My husband passed before she was born, and my parents had moved here from northern California, so I decided to move out here as well.”

“I’m sorry for your loss,” I said.

"Thanks, but I'm at peace with it all," she said. "We were only together about eight months, and looking back - with the help of some good therapy - we probably wouldn't have lasted. Burn hot, burn bright sort of thing."

"Still, it's good you got to land on your feet with a support network."

"Olivia," a woman said from behind me with the sort of self-important voice that sent a shiver up my spine. "I was wondering when we would be able to connect about the Fall Bake Sale. I noticed you haven't responded to the email I sent out."

I turned and found Francine, the woman Olivia had warned me about the day before, was approaching us. She was in a blouse, slacks and short heels and looked a little ridiculous with her orange reflective volunteer vest. The clipboard and pen in her hands gave me big middle-manager vibes, and she even had a whistle around her neck - I knew if she ever tried to blow that thing at me or my kid I would *not* be happy. The most cringe-inducing part of her whole facade, however, was that vapid, arrogant smile.

"Francine," Olivia said, and I could almost *feel* the repressed ire. "I saw your email, but it didn't give any specifics about what the bake sale was for, just when you wanted things brought in."

"It's for the PTA registration," Francine said. "You would know this if you came to the start-of-year meeting like all the other Grade 2 mothers. Speaking of which, hello," she turned her smile on me. "I don't recognize you, sir. Are you a parent?"

"I am," I said.

"Wonderful. Do you have contact information for your wife? I'll want to get her on the mailing list. The PTA has a lot planned for this year and we need all hands available to make sure our children are getting proper education fueled by academics."

I internally groaned and glanced at Olivia for a moment and caught the flash of a smirk that said, '*Now you're trapped.*'

"I'm actually single," I said. "And my daughter's mother isn't in the picture."

"Oh!" Francine said. "Well, I'm so sorry to hear that. It's good that you're here then. I'll just need an email and phone number contact so that we can organise things with you then...?"

"Adrian," I filled in. "Mancini. I'm Juniper's Dad."

The corner of Francine's mouth quivered. "You don't happen to be related to Rebecca Mancini, do you?"

"That's my older sister," I said. "You know her?"

"I've had the pleasure," Francine smiled, everything about her expression saying that her run-ins with Rebecca were anything *but* pleasurable. Which didn't surprise me, considering how I knew my sister would react to a woman like her. "So, contact details?"

"No thanks," I said.

"I'm sorry?" she asked, cocking her head in confusion.

"Oh, I thought that was pretty clear," I said. "The school has my contact details for any sort of emergencies or contact needed for official reasons. If they haven't provided that to you, then you mustn't be asking me in any sort of official capacity, and I don't give out my contact information unnecessarily."

"But we're organising important changes for the school, and-"

"That doesn't sound like something I'm particularly interested in," I said. "I actually went to this school when I was a kid, and the Principal was a couple of years older than me. She's got a good handle on things from what I could see when I did my registration tour."

Francine's puckered smile reminded me of someone eating a lemon square that had way too much lemon and way too little sugar but they didn't want to tell the person who made it. "I see," she said.

"Great," I said. "Thanks for asking though."

She turned back to look at Olivia. "I'll email you the details," she said with a syrupy edge.

"Thanks, Francine," Olivia said. Then, once the woman had stalked away in the direction of a small group of mothers who were talking, she exhaled and snorted, covering her mouth. "OK, that was the best smackdown I've seen in person in a *long* time."

"If she's on the bad side of my sister, then she's gotten worse," I sighed, shaking my head and turning my back on Francine and the group. No doubt everything we'd just discussed would be passed on, and then passed on again into the rumour mill. "I'll have to ask Rebecca for the backstory."

"Well, good luck," Olivia laughed. "It looks like the Mom Squad is already reeling from this new information."

I just hung my head and sighed, making Olivia laugh again. "Alright," I said. "I better get back to my car before Francine writes me up for leaving it unattended. I'll text you about Saturday?"

"Sounds good," Olivia said with a smile. "And thanks for all of *that*."

“No problem,” I smiled back. “Next time I’ll sell tickets.”

May and June ran off towards the big boat-shaped play area together. The weather had turned a little since earlier in the week - not enough for it to be cold, but I was in a sweatshirt and both the girls were in jackets looking adorable. Olivia had met us just inside the parking lot adjacent to the park and my hands were getting warmed up by the large coffee she’d brought. She was wearing a vest over her long-sleeved shirt but was still rocking the leggings and sneakers.

“This is good,” I said, lifting my cup to my lips and taking another sip.

“I know the owner,” Olivia said, smiling as she watched our daughters start to play. “She’s a coffee snob, so when she opened her shop downtown I knew it would be good. Still can’t make a good donut to save her life though.”

I chuckled and shook my head. “She’ll never make it in this town, then.”

“Probably not, but she’s giving it a good go,” Olivia said. “So, I know we talked quickly and you said you’re fully remote, but I didn’t actually catch what you do other than it was something with contracting.”

“I usually keep it vague on purpose because it’s complicated,” I said. “But we’ve got time, so I’ll give you the whole life story if you want it.”

“Let’s just start with the job and see where it goes,” Olivia chuckled.

“At this point I’m more of an admin person than anything,” I said. “I got into the trades right out of high school with a carpentry apprenticeship, but I was a good people person so I ended up managing clients for my boss and became a site super for some builds before I switched to being a general contractor for custom builds.”

“That’s where you’re like the project manager and hire all the different trades, right?” she asked.

“Exactly. And it was around that time that I met my ex, and she was an aspiring actress, so we moved down to California and ended up in San Jose and I started up my company there, but then we moved to just south of LA after a couple of years because she needed to be closer to the auditions. That ended up being a dud because there *were* no auditions other than open calls coming her way. After June was born we moved back up to San Jose again, and since I had all these contacts of guys I’d worked with, and they had guys that *they* worked with, I got into property preservation. I have a bunch of different contracts, but the main part of the business is that I work with a few different banks and when they have a property they’ve acquired or foreclosed on in the territories I work, I hire and manage all the different contractors needed

from landscapers to carpenters to painters to get the property ready for resale, and keeping it that way until someone else takes over.”

“So you flip houses for someone else, and from a distance?” Olivia asked.

“Sort of. We’re rarely doing full renovations - lots of drywall fixing, painting, recarpeting, that sort of thing for the most part. Industrial and commercial spaces bring in more money though.”

“Damn,” she said. “And you can manage all that out there from here, while raising a kid?”

“Hell, I thought about homeschooling,” I chuckled. “Don’t get me wrong, I was hands-on part-time for a while and it took a lot of luck to get set up with the guys I have and trust. But now I’m mostly emailing or on the phone for work, and I miss working with my hands. Especially now that June is in school again.”

“Careful,” Olivia smirked a little, a teasing in her eyes. “Keep talking about missing working with your hands and I might just find a reno project for you to do on my place.”

I laughed, and our conversation was interrupted by the girls running back to us as they urged for pushes on the swings. That whole process brought a lot of giggles from them, and June taught May how to ‘properly’ jump off a swing - she was my little daredevil, sometimes, and jumping off and getting some hang time was an important lesson for her new best friend.

Then, all of a sudden, swing time was over and they rushed back towards the big jungle gym.

“So I got the backstory from my sister on her history with Francine,” I said to Olivia as we walked around the outside of the play area, keeping the girls in sight.

“Don’t tell me they were high school rivals or something,” Olivia guessed.

“No, it doesn’t go back that far,” I chuckled. “Francine’s oldest is the same age as my youngest niece, so Rebecca has been dealing with her crap for a while now. Apparently, she’s trying to get on to the PTA leadership team at the high school as well, and Rebecca is running just to keep her off of it.”

“Damn, entering politics for spite?” Olivia grinned. “I like your sister more and more.”

“So how is the video editing business?” I asked. “I honestly have no clue what that would entail.”

“It’s good,” Olivia said. “I can be as busy as I want to be, really. I have a few long-term clients that bring me repeat, stable business and then I pick up other freelance work to fill in the gaps. It’s a lot of staring at the computer screen, mostly, so wearing out May with stuff like this so that she’ll have a quiet afternoon is helpful.”

“Well, the girls seem to be having fun,” I said.

“They do,” Olivia smiled. “You know, May came home yesterday and asked if she could have school on Saturdays too, just so she could see June more often?”

I barked a laugh. “I hope they can both keep that outlook on school,” I said. “I’m dreading the terrible teens.”

“We’ve got a few years of sweet and simple left,” Olivia said.

“That we do,” I agreed as we watched the girls chasing each other across the rope bridge. June and I had watched the original *Pirates of the Caribbean* for our Daddy-Daughter Movie Night, and I was pretty sure she was telling May all about how they could sword-fight pirates and find buried treasure in the boat-like play area.

My daughter, I grinned to myself, was a cool little girl.

October

“Ugh, I hate these things,” Olivia mumbled to me under her breath before taking a sip of beer.

We were in the backyard of Annabelle Child's house and were surrounded by screaming children. The birthday party was probably being considered a success by most measures. All twenty-five of the girls from the Second Grade were dressed up as Disney princesses and were screaming and running around like little maniacs as a couple of Princess actresses were facilitating games for them. Where the parents found *two* Princess Party actresses in our town I couldn't start to guess.

June and I had gotten some looks when we arrived - my daughter, still on her pirate kick, had asked to dress as Elizabeth Swann. Considering she was a woman from a Disney movie, I was down for it; the only problem was that Miss Swann didn't exactly have a standard 'look.' It turned out that a little pirate coat with some trimming done up by my Mom on her sewing machine, a tricorn hat, a foam sabre and a boxy compass on a twine necklace was all she needed.

The hat and the occasional flailing of the foam sword over her head definitely made my daughter stand out among the various dresses of the other princesses. May wasn't far behind - as soon as she found out that June wasn't going to be a 'normal princess,' I'd gotten a sarcastic '*Thanks for that*' text from Olivia because May wanted to be Rey from the new Star Wars films. Not as great a pick, in my opinion, but still unique.

At least my daughter wasn't the only one running around with a fake sword, and the lightsaber noises May made were *very* cute.

“Awkward social gatherings where you have to interact with other people, birthday parties, or just other people’s mouth-breathing kids?” I asked Olivia quietly.

Olivia snorted and shook her head, giving me a warning look not to make her laugh with more statements like that. “The first one,” she said. “Though a big helping of the last one, too. It always feels so contrived, making small talk with some of these parents. Like, lady, I get it. You have errands to run and laundry to do and your husband comes home from work late and your therapist has taught you buzzwords like ‘narcissist’ and ‘enabler.’ I *don’t care*.”

I chuckled and looked out across the party. There were about half the number of adults as kids, which boggled my mind a bit - who just dropped their seven-year-old off at someone’s house without any prior vetting? Still, beyond the birthday girl’s parents, I’d already made my rounds with the other Dads who were present. Jack was a ‘Sports Dad’ and wanted to know who I rooted for, Drew was the resident ‘I brew beer in my garage’ guy, and Paul was clearly whipped by his domineering wife and rarely left her side. The other seven adults were mothers who were swapping between trying to be helpful, looking helpful without actually doing anything, or gossiping.

Very few of them were sparing a glance for the kids unless they were taking a photo of them.

“So what did you end up getting for a present?” I asked Olivia. We’d texted some ideas back and forth as I tried to figure out the ‘present giving meta’ for the school year.

“I went with that big 120-colour marker pack,” Olivia said. “May says Annabelle is big on art, and I figure the kid can draw all over her walls in a couple of years as an act of rebellion. You?”

I snorted lightly and smirked. “Nerf gun. I can get away with it since I’m a single dad.”

“Asshole,” Olivia chuckled, keeping her voice low so her swearing wouldn’t be overheard. “You do realise that half of the presents are going to be educational ‘Girls in STEM’ kind of things, and the other half will be girly crap, right? Everyone is going to think you’re a crazy guy trying to teach their kids about the Second Amendment.”

“Good,” I said. “The more unhinged they think I am, the less likely they try to pull some shit.”

“Crap, hold on,” Olivia said, starting towards one of the groups of girls where May was currently pretending to stab the birthday girl with her lightsaber and then cut her head off. “Mayday, that’s not how we treat our friends on their special days, is it?”

I covered my mouth as I laughed, watching Olivia try and wrangle her daughter into letting the birthday girl try out the toy lightsaber. Of course, I made sure June wasn’t pulling the same shit with her foam sword - thankfully, she was busy pretending to be stabbed by her own deadly

weapon, the foam blade caught between her torso and her arm as she staggered around like a goofball making some of the other girls laugh.

“So, you and Olivia, huh?” Drew said as he sidled up to me.

“Hmm?” I asked, then shook my head. “No, not like that. Our kids are just friends.”

“Really?” he asked, raising his bushy eyebrows in surprise. He was a stout guy and worked some sort of mindless office job he didn’t want to talk about. Our conversation earlier had revolved around how he was trying to fix the hoppiness of his latest batch of beer. I was more of a whiskey man so I hadn’t had a whole lot to offer, but had played along. “A couple of the moms were saying you two were becoming a thing.”

“Why would- What?” I asked.

“Just the rumour mill, I guess,” Drew shrugged. “You two talking all the time and stuff. So you’re really not... Y’know? Because, I mean, if I found myself single after a tragic accident...”

“No, man,” I said with a sigh. “May and June are friends. We organise playdates and stuff, and we’re friendly. We’re not seeing each other.” I ignored the lightly veiled suggestion; it wasn’t anywhere *near* the dirtiest thing I’d heard in regards to a woman, and him saying it seemed more like a ‘male bonding’ thing than a comment meant to degrade Olivia. And, to be fair, Olivia *was* an attractive woman. I still couldn’t get over that smile when she was about to laugh, and physically she was- well, she was attractive. I’d never deny that.

“Well, if that’s the case, Sharon is definitely going to farm some social points off of that. Mind not mentioning that to anyone today? My wife could use a win, that Francine lady has been on her ass about some crap with the PTA and I never hear the end of it,” Drew said.

“Sure,” I said. “As long as you promise that it gets out there. I don’t like people talking behind my back, and we aren’t in high school. Suggesting Olivia and I are hooking up is childish.”

“Oh, yeah. I can promise that,” he chuckled.

“Alright, no more decapitations,” Olivia said, cracking her knuckles a little unladylike as she came back over to us from the girls.

“I think the line is ‘No disintegrations,’” I said.

“OK, nerd,” she chuckled. “Drew, how are you? Have you guys signed Wendy up for gymnastics this year?”

“Sharon mentioned she was going to do that,” Drew said.

“How about you, Adrian?” Olivia asked. “Is June going to hit the mats? Classes start in a couple of weeks.”

“I hadn’t really thought about extracurriculars for this winter,” I said. “June hasn’t shown interest, but I’m sure if May is going she’ll start to.”

“The girls who run the club are pretty good,” Olivia said. “Not, like, Olympic level or anything but the main woman was on the State college team and she gets athletes out from their program to help. All you need to do is sacrifice your Saturday mornings at Ass O’Clock.”

Drew chuckled. “And that’s why I let Sharon take care of it.”

“I’ll see if June is up for it,” I said.

“It’s cheaper than hockey,” Olivia said. “And less sexualized than dance or cheerleading.”

“Sold,” I said with a rueful smile.

Drew wandered away, likely to go fill in Sharon on the latest gossip developments, and Olivia shuffled a little closer to me. Sometimes, when she was close like that, I felt like I towered over her a bit at over a foot taller, but she had a big personality that filled the gap.

“Just FYI,” I said. “The latest from Drew was that people are saying we’re a thing. I tried to squash it definitively, I know you don’t want shit like that getting spread around.”

Olivia rolled her eyes and took a deep breath before letting it out. “Whatever,” she said. “Those bitches will always have something to talk about. You better be careful, though.”

“All the single ladies?”

“All the single ladies,” Olivia confirmed with a smirk. “I bet Cathleen over there would be down for a quickie in the tool shed if you asked her.”

Cathleen was a divorcee who would have fit into the stereotypical Trophy Wife category back in Cali, but up here in the midwest could just have easily been a well-endowed girl from good farming folk. She was curvy in all the right ways, tall, and from what I understood had dropped a good twenty pounds since her divorce.

“Not exactly my type,” I said.

“Tall, leggy and blonde?” Olivia asked. “Whose type *isn’t* she?”

“Mine,” I said.

“Too much like your ex?” Olivia guessed.

“No, actually,” I chuckled. “Too much like my ex before her. Less crazy, but still not great. That’s how I ended up in my ex’s web to begin with.”

Olivia laughed and took another swig of beer. “So what you’re saying is that you’ve got a broken romance radar. I’ll keep that in mind and try and give you some hints if anyone is coming on to you.”

“That,” I said. “Would be appreciated. But make sure your hints come in the form of big red flags.”

“Noted,” she laughed.

- - - - -

“Morning,” I mumbled as I opened the back door of Olivia’s SUV and lifted June’s booster seat in. It was the second week of gymnastics and we’d decided to carpool. Since Olivia had the bigger vehicle we’d take hers, and I’d pay for coffee.

“Morning,” Olivia said back, turning in her seat to give me a weak, early-morning smile. A 7 AM start in the next town over meant a 6 AM departure time for us to get there in time and for the girls to be ready, which meant we’d both been up by at least 5:30 AM to make sure the kids were ready to go and had their breakfast. The first week I’d been cursing the decision to get June enrolled into the gymnastics program, but after the giant smile and how excited she’d been coming off the mats in the big gymnasium, it was hard to consider pulling her back out.

I got June’s booster seat locked in, then lifted her into the seat. She immediately reached over and hugged May, who hugged her back, which was cute as hell.

It was already starting to get cold and it felt like all at once the trees had turned from green to orange - after years down in California I’d forgotten how *fast* autumn really happened. I climbed into the passenger seat of the SUV and Olivia got us moving. We were quiet for the first bit other than a couple more mumbled pleasantries until we hit the Dunkin’ just outside of town. Then, with large coffees for both of us and donuts for the girls for a nice little extra kick of sugar and carbs before they had class, we started to perk up.

Everything went smoothly on the ride in and Olivia and I got the girls inside and ready with time to spare. The class was almost thirty strong, mostly girls but a few boys, but the program had way better ratios than a school classroom with five college-aged assistant coaches helping out the head coach. They started getting the kids warmed up with a couple of little games before they went into stretches, which left Olivia and I free to sit in the stands and focus on our coffees.

“Ugh, that’s just not fair,” Olivia murmured. I glanced at her and followed her gaze off to one side where a couple of the assistant coaches who weren’t running the warmup game were talking. One of them, a girl with the calves and shoulders of a gymnast who could flip themselves around in the insane tumbling routines that I’d seen when watching the Olympics, had her foot up on the wall as she stretched out - well, something. I wasn’t exactly sure what lifting your foot over your head and pulling it towards your body was supposed to stretch.

“Not fair?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“OK, maybe that’s not exactly right,” Olivia said. “More like... ‘fuck the inevitable passage of time.’ I used to be able to do stuff like that.”

“You were a gymnast?” I asked, surprised she hadn’t mentioned it.

“No, cheerleader,” she said. “I was a short, skinny twig of a thing until I hit seventeen so I was the girl getting thrown around at the top of the lifts and stuff. Then I finally got a bit of boobs and butt, but I was still light enough that I could fly so I didn’t lose my spot my senior year. I could put my leg behind my ear, standing on one foot while balancing on a guy’s hand, then do a flip and he’d catch me for a soft landing.”

“Jesus,” I said. “That sounds wild.”

“Yeah, well, things change,” Olivia said. “I can’t even remember the last time I could go to a yoga class, let alone pull a move like that. I’d probably pull every muscle I have if I tried it now.”

The class was an hour and a half, and by the end, both May and June were panting and sweaty but grinning from ear to ear. They got high-fives from all of the coaches and one of them came over and chatted with me briefly, encouraging me that June had some real potential for a newbie. When she left, and I’d helped June into her jacket and she was busy putting on her outdoor shoes alongside May, Olivia shook her head as she smirked at me.

“Naughty, naughty,” she said.

“What?” I asked.

“Flirting with the co-eds?” she raised her eyebrows.

“I wasn’t flirting,” I said. “She was talking to me about June.”

“Jesus, you weren’t joking about you and your exes,” Olivia said. “Adrian, she was *definitely* flirting with you even if you weren’t flirting back.”

“No,” I said, looking back towards the coed. She was talking with some of the other assistant coaches and saw me look and smiled. I turned back to Olivia. “Shit, she was.”

Olivia snorted hard and grinned as she rolled her eyes. "You asked for red flags? There's one right there."

"Note to self," I said. "Never wander around the facility by myself. I might get cornered."

"Good boy," Olivia laughed, patting my arm.

"As a thank you for clueing me into a possible disastrous misunderstanding, how about you guys come over for lunch?" I offered.

"Sure," Olivia said. "We'll head home first, get the sweaty little gremlin cleaned up, and come over for noon?"

"I'm *not* a sweaty little gremlin," May said, standing up and looking crossly at us.

"Neither am I," June said. "We're sweaty *athletes*."

"Oh, you are?" I asked, glancing at Olivia as we both grinned. "Well, I dunno. Because to me you *both* look like sweaty little gremlins!" I growled the last part as I lunged forward and scooped both girls up around their waists, lifting them high and then heaving them a little so they were both thrashing and giggling as they hung off of my shoulders.

"Come on, little athletes," Olivia said as she chuckled and led the way out of the big gymnasium. "Gremlin or not, you two are sweaty and *stinky*."

I set the girls down so they could scoop up their indoor gym shoes and chase after her, both of them arguing that they were sweaty but *not* stinky.

- - - - -

"Call me Livvy," Olivia said.

"Hmm?" I asked.

We were all out in the backyard and we'd eaten lunch at the picnic table I'd built shortly after June and I had moved into the house. The yard still needed some work and I had a laundry list of stuff to do next spring, but it was relatively flat and uncluttered which meant there was plenty of space for the girls to practise their gymnastics moves. The fact that they were taking turns being the 'coach' and giving each other notes was fucking cute.

"You can call me Livvy, Adrian," Olivia said.

"OK," I said, frowning for a moment and then shrugging.

After a long moment, Olivia let out a breath. "You aren't going to ask why?"

I looked back at her and cocked an eyebrow. "Do you want to *tell* me why?"

"Well, yes," she said. "I guess."

"O- Livvy," I started and then corrected myself. "We've already established that I'm bad at picking up on romantic hints unless they are right in my face. Well, here's something you should know about men - we're simple creatures at the end of the day. I'll call you whatever you want - I like Olivia, but Livvy is obviously more familiar and I appreciate that we're becoming friends and not just the parents of our kids' friends. But, dear God, if you want to tell me something, or ask me, or whatever it is, you can just say it or ask it, OK? Me not asking a follow-up question to something you think I should doesn't mean I'm not interested, it means it either sounds like something I'm taking at face value, or I'm assuming you don't *want* to share with me at that moment because you're not offering it."

Olivia pursed her lips and then breathed in through her nose and let it out. "That explains... a lot," she said.

"Did I just blow your mind with how simple communicating with a man needs to be?"

"Maybe," she said, then smiled. "Asshole."

"See, I get nuance," I said. "By 'Asshole' you meant, 'buddy who is saying something smart that I should have known already.'"

She grinned wider and rolled her eyes.

"I'll promise to try and be your gal pal sometimes too when I clue in, by the way," I said. "So, Livvy, what's the story behind your nickname?"

"It's not a nickname really," she said, taking a sip of the beer I'd served her for lunch as she looked back out at the girls playing and practising. "It's more like - OK, maybe it's technically a nickname. Only my parents, my ex and closest friends call me it though. Most of my high school friends I'm not in contact with anymore even on social media now, so it's just a few girls I was close with back in LA while I lived there. I just- It's good to have a friend, y'know? Like, I trust you, Adrian. With my kid. And that feels *weird* to me, to feel close to you like that and you not be in my circle of friends. So, call me Livvy."

"So what you're saying is you want to be Facebook Friends Official," I grinned at her.

"Shut up," she laughed, slapping my arm.

"I have entered the Inner Livvy Circle."

"You're making me regret this decision already," she smirked.

"How many times did you go through that little speech in your mind?" I asked. "Or did you practise it in front of the mirror?"

"Shut up, you asshole," she laughed. "I did *not* practise in front of the mirror. *Maybe* I over-thought it a lot."

"I like being your friend too, Livvy," I said, looking over at her and winking.

"Thanks," she said.

- - - - -

The pirate phase was unfortunately short-lived, which meant that as Olivia and I followed May and June from house to house we were trailing behind a couple of Ghostbusters. The good news was that the jumpsuits fit over the girls' coats because it was getting *cold* already.

"I still can't believe you had them watch that movie," Olivia said as we stopped at the next house on the block and the girls scrambled up the driveway towards the lit jack-o'-lanterns and goofy cobwebs at the front door.

"What's wrong with Ghostbusters?" I asked. "It's a classic, and they loved it." The girls had had a half-day at school, something I never remembered having from my own time in elementary school, and I'd offered to take May for the afternoon since Olivia had mentioned she'd been working on a big project for one of her clients. We'd watched Ghostbusters after making a blanket fort, and then the girls had spent the rest of the afternoon trying to write their own story about being Girl Ghostbusters until Olivia had brought over dinner.

"Other than the Keymaster-Gatekeeper stuff?" Olivia smirked at me. "Or the fact that my daughter, on multiple occasions, has busted out the 'It's true, this man has no dick,' line?"

I snorted and couldn't stop from coughing as I tried to suppress my laugh. "OK, maybe I should have waited another year," I admitted.

The man who had opened the door and was doling out candy seemed thrilled by the girls' costumes - something he recognized for once! - and Olivia and I both waved to him as the girls called their thank-you's and rushed back down the driveway and rounded the corner onto the sidewalk, headed for the next house.

"God, they're cute though," Olivia sighed, watching them go.

"You can pick the next movie," I offered.

Olivia thought about it for a moment, thinking it over. "Are they too young for George of the Jungle?"

"The old Brendan Frasier one?" I asked.

"Yeah, that one."

"They're probably the perfect age," I chuckled. "But do you really want them doing the 'Awawwwaaa' yell all the time?"

"Daddy," June asked while giggling, turning before heading up the next driveway. "What was that?"

"That was my Jungle Call, baby," I said. "Wanna hear it again?"

"Yes," June giggled, and May was right beside her smiling and nodding.

"Oh, God," Olivia said.

I sucked in a breath, held it as I gave the girls a silly look, then let it out in a bellow that echoed down the street while I beat my chest. "AaaaaAAaaaaAAaaAAaaAAaaAAAAaaaaah!"

The girls broke into giggles and Olivia was facepalming as she laughed as well. And then, from somewhere far down the street that was dotted with other sets of kids scurrying from house to house, someone returned the call. *That* got me laughing as well.

"Careful," Olivia said after urging the girls up the driveway for their next trick-or-treat. "Someone might think that's your mating call, and I don't know if you want to meet the guy who responds to it."

I grinned and shook my head. I would need to see if I could find a copy of that movie. "So I got a new update from Rebecca about Francine," I changed the topic.

"Uh oh," Olivia said. "Don't tell me - let me guess. She... threw a fit because she wasn't allowed to be a chaperone for the high school dance?"

"Worse," I smirked.

"She killed a guy?"

"Little less than that," I chuckled.

“Alright, I’m stumped,” she said. “Somewhere between a public fit and a murder.”

“She tried to stage a protest in the middle of the high school PTA meeting because the Senior Trip out to New York in the spring got tickets to see the Book of Mormon on Broadway,” I kept chuckling. “She thinks it’s, quote, ‘Sacriligious to expose our kids to a weird cult.’”

“Wait, isn’t her oldest kid a sophomore?” Olivia asked.

“Exactly,” I said. “She got so mad when Rebecca started laughing at her from the PTA board seating that she turned red and started screaming obscenities. Apparently, she can swear like a sailor when she wants to. She got kicked out and isn’t allowed back until the new year.”

“Jesus,” Olivia laughed. “I would have paid good money to see that. Please tell me there’s a video.”

“A couple of people tried, but no good shots,” I said. “And if there was, I would feel bad for her kids. Can you imagine *that* going around the school?”

“Good point,” Olivia grinned and shook her head. “You know that means she’s going to double down on the whole PTA thing at the girls’ school.”

“Rebecca already called Principal Jackie to give her the heads up.”

“Fuck,” Olivia muttered, lowering her voice to drop the F-bomb as we waved to the little old lady who was handing candy to the girls at the next house. “Your sister might actually be my hero.”

“I think she’ll appreciate that,” I said. “And you can tell her yourself. They live two doors down from here.” Olivia’s smile always brightened my day, but her joy at hearing she’d meet my sister was that little extra heart-warming.

November

AaaaaAAAaaaAAaAaAAaaaAaaaaa!

I snorted and chuckled as my phone rang, playing the George of the Jungle yell. Over in the playroom, June *immediately* called out, “Look out for that tree!”

Picking up my cell, I thumbed it open. “Hey Livvy,” I said. “What’s up? Need help installing a new TV?”

“Adrian, can you do me a huge favour and take May for me today?” Olivia asked, and I could immediately tell that something was wrong.

“Absolutely,” I said, standing up from my desk. We hadn’t seen each other since the previous weekend - Thanksgiving had been the day before, and family stuff had dominated the week for both of us. I’d assumed she’d bought something in a Black Friday deal or wanted to set up a time for the girls to play on the weekend. Now I felt bad for making a joke. “What else do you need?”

“I- She might need to sleep over,” Olivia said, her voice cracking with emotion just a little. “My Mom just called, something is going on with my Dad and they are rushing to the hospital in an ambulance. I need to drive out to the city but I don’t want to freak May out.”

“OK,” I said. “I’ll be over to your place in ten minutes to pick up May. Just have a bag with her PJs and stuff, I’ve got everything else.”

“Thank you,” she said. “I just-”

“It’s OK,” I assured her. “Take a breath or two, then go get her ready.”

“Thanks,” she said.

I tried not to let my own mild anxiety for her show as I scooped up June from the playroom, got her bundled up in her coat and winter gear, and trudged out to the car. Winter wasn’t *quite* in full effect yet - when I was a kid it was maybe a fifty per cent chance of a snowy Thanksgiving, but these days it was more like thirty from what I heard - but it was still cold and we’d seen a few dustings of snow. Thankfully the car didn’t need scraping, and I got June buckled into her booster seat and headed a neighbourhood over to Olivia’s.

June, much to her dismay, stayed in the car with the window down once we were in the driveway while I headed up to the door and knocked.

I could hear activity behind the door and then it opened, Olivia grimace-smiling as May yammered away while getting her own winter gear on.

“Keys,” I said. “I’ll get her booster seat.”

Olivia grabbed her keys from a bowl near the door and unlocked her SUV, and I went and got the booster out of Olivia’s car and started putting it into mine. We’d traded off driving to the girls’ gymnastics enough now that I knew how to get it secured quickly, and I was just getting it finished when May scampered down the driveway with a stuffed backpack on her back.

“Well hello there, little traveller,” I said. “Are you ready to come on an adventure?”

“We’re not going on an adventure, we’re going to your house,” May said, giving me a silly ‘stern’ face.

“That’s what you think,” I said. “I was pretty sure we were going on safari, though. Deep into the wilds to hunt for lions, and tigers, and bears!”

“Daddy, that’s from the Wizard of Oz,” June laughed from her seat.

“Yeah, with the flying monkeys and the red slippers,” May said.

I tutted and shook my head. “You two are getting too cultured. We need to stop watching good movies.”

“Nooo,” both girls disagreed, and I snorted and moved aside to let May climb into the car and start buckling herself in.

Olivia came out of the house, still with that same expression of trying to hide her worry. I moved further aside and let her lean in, saying hello to June and then kissing her daughter on the cheek and telling her to be good before standing back up and shutting the door.

“Thank you for this,” she said. “I know it’s last minute, I just-”

“Hey,” I said, taking one of her hands to interrupt her. “Anything you need, OK? I’m here for you and May. Emergencies are emergencies, and I’d take May whenever you need even if it wasn’t one.”

She took a deep breath and then nodded, and then she let me pull her into a bear hug and she hugged me back tightly.

“Everything will be OK, Livvy,” I tried to soothe her. “Don’t panic. Drive carefully. If it’s bad enough that you need me to bring May out to you, don’t hesitate to ask. I’ve got you.”

“Thanks, Adrian,” she said into my chest, squeezing me a little tighter.

I rubbed her back softly for a moment and then we let go and she stepped back. She took a breath and wiped under her eyes with a couple of fingers and then nodded with her lips pressed together. I nodded back, hoping she believed me that I’d do anything I could to help her out with this, and she went to grab her stuff from the house and lock up while I got into the car and tried to turn on my ‘Fun Dad’ persona again instead of worrying for her or thinking about how it could have been my own father that was having a medical emergency.

“Here, come on,” I said as I opened the front door. It was dark out - I hadn’t looked at the clock when she texted, but it was definitely after midnight. Olivia looked exhausted, physically and

emotionally. She let me usher her into my house and I shut the door softly then pulled her into a hug.

“He’s OK,” she said quietly as she hugged me. “It was a heart attack, but he never went unconscious or anything. He’s going to go into surgery tomorrow.”

“I’m so sorry, Livvy,” I said softly as I rubbed her back.

“It just doesn’t feel like it makes sense,” she murmured. “He’s relatively fit, no major health problems before...”

“Sometimes it sneaks up,” I sighed.

“How is May? Was she worried?”

“May was as perfect as usual,” I said. “Come on, come see.” I led her deeper into the house to the living room, where the largest blanket and pillow fort we’d ever built was erected. I’d set up an air mattress as its base and the girls were snuggled up in their PJs as they slept peacefully. There was still some popcorn in the bowl next to my daughter, and May had one arm wrapped around her. “We had burgers for dinner and they helped me smash the patties, and we had a movie night. Tonight was Muppet Night, so we watched Treasure Island and Muppets in Space. I figured we should save Christmas Carol for December.”

Olivia sighed looking at the girls where they were passed out and leaned into me. “Thank you again,” she whispered.

“Anytime you need,” I said. “Come on. Did you eat dinner?”

“I ate with my Mom,” she said. “I just need to get us home and get some sleep, I’ll need to head back tomorrow.”

“Not a chance,” I said. “You’re not driving even a few more blocks when you look like this. Come on, come here.” I pulled her over to the couch and got her sitting down, moving the footrest around so she could lay back, and grabbed one of the few blankets that hadn’t made it into the fort structure.

“Tucking me in?” Olivia asked with a tired smirk.

“Are you kidding?” I chuckled, sitting down next to her and putting my feet up as well before spreading the blanket over the two of us. “You think I’m going to miss out on a classic sleepover event like this?”

Olivia snorted softly but let her eyes close. “Just get the light, Adrian,” she said. I reached and flicked it off, the room delving into darkness, and when I settled back down she looped her arm

through mine and leaned into me until her cheek was pressed to my shoulder. “You know, that first time we met I was worried about you trying to sleep with me. I wasn’t exactly expecting the attempt to be so wholesome.”

“Well, I wasn’t expecting your elbows to be so nobby when I finally got you under the covers,” I whispered with a little grin.

She scoffed and then chuckled, then elbowed me gently. “Like that?”

“I’ll make breakfast tomorrow morning,” I changed the subject. “And I’ll keep the girls entertained until you can head home and get cleaned up and bring a change of clothes back for May. I’m sure your Dad would like to see her once he’s out of surgery.”

“Thanks,” Olivia sighed. “You’re a good man, Adrian.”

“You say that now, but you haven’t seen the big fake tattoo sleeve both of the girls have on,” I said. “June got mermaids and May got a dragon.”

Olivia groaned and chuckled at the same time, causing her to wiggle against me lightly and reminding me that I really was under the covers with a woman I cared for and found attractive. I quickly squashed that, knowing we were just friends.

“How bad is it?” she asked.

“I mean, she looks pretty badass,” I grinned. “And they wear off in about a week, but you can take them off earlier with a little olive oil. That would be denying the girls the chance to show their classmates and get all the parents annoyed at us though.”

“Fuck, Adrian,” Olivia sighed. “You say the sweetest things.”

I leaned my head over and kissed her on top of her head, and in response she hugged my arm a little tighter, and we just enjoyed being next to each other.

December

“Jingle Bells, Batman Smells, Robin laid an egg,” June and I sang. “The Batmobile lost a wheel and the Joker ran away, hey!”

“OK, jokers,” Olivia said, shaking her head as she opened the front door wider. “Come on in. Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas,” I said, and June echoed me joyfully as she stepped inside, hugged May and immediately started shucking her coat and boots. “June, we’re not- Aaand they’re gone.”

Olivia was laughing as the kids disappeared into the next room.

“Sorry for the impromptu drop-by,” I said. “June really wanted to do her gift exchange *on Christmas*.”

“Oh, it’s fine,” Olivia said. “Thanks for coming over to my parents’ place to do it, we stayed the night last night.”

“No problem at all,” I said. Then I grinned and shook my head. “Merry Christmas, by the way.”

“Merry Christmas,” she replied, and we hugged. Ever since the emergency on Black Friday, we’d become huggers - not constantly, or all the time, but when appropriate. It was like, knowing there was safety between us, the touch barrier had lessened and it just felt good to have that sort of contact sometimes. I was still trying not to dwell on the feeling of her more womanly features when we hugged - that soft pressure of certain *assets* was a temptation I didn’t need.

“Daddy, I need the present!” June called from the next room, and I gave Olivia a chagrined smile as I kicked off my own snow boots and followed her into the living room.

The house was warmly decorated, maybe almost a little too much, for Christmas and immediately felt homey and familiar with the *feel* of it even if I’d never been there before. The girls were on the floor in between the couches surrounded by what I presumed were the various presents May had received earlier that morning. I handed June the present I was carrying, and she took it with a big, toothy grin and then sat back down with May and handed it over. “Merry Christmas!”

“Thank you,” May accepted the gift, then set it down beside her and scurried on her knees to the tree, pulling out a similar-sized gift that was still wrapped and going back to June. “Merry Christmas!”

The girls started unwrapping their gifts and I glanced over at Olivia, who glanced back and we smiled at each other. The moment was disrupted, however, as a woman came into the room from what looked like the kitchen. She was brunette with thick, wavy hair and a dusky complexion that I immediately realised must have been where Olivia and May got their complexion, but beyond their colouration and shared thick hair, they didn’t look very similar. I also couldn’t *not* notice that Olivia’s mom was also fit for a woman who must have been in her late fifties at least with the fairly tight sweater and jeans she was wearing - she looked better than a lot of the mothers of June’s classmates.

“This must be the infamous Adrian,” she said as she came in with a warm smile, holding her arms out as she approached me. She spoke with a slight accent, something European, but I

couldn't quite place it and it was faint enough that I knew she must have naturalised well before she'd had Olivia when she was younger. "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," I replied, accepting her offer of a light hug. "I don't know about infamous though."

"Don't be so modest," she said, patting my arm. "Olivia and May both talk about you all the time. And thank you so much for your help watching my granddaughter when Sota needed his operation. I'm Carmen, by the way."

"Always happy to help out," I said.

Carmen turned to the girls and started talking with them excitedly as they were both unfolding their gifts. Olivia caught my eye and mouthed, 'Sorry,' over to me, obviously a little embarrassed by her mother overdoing it just a little. I mouthed back, 'It's OK,' and gave her a wink.

"Look Mom, I can be a dinosaur!" May exclaimed, holding up her gift with big, excited eyes.

"Daddy, May got me a dragon one!" June was saying at almost the same time.

I broke into a grin and we spent a few minutes exclaiming in 'surprise' at the almost-matching gifts. Olivia and I had worked together to figure out how to get the girls something comparable, and that they'd both love. We'd ended up going for kid-sized onesies with hoods and add-ons that made them look like animals. Olivia assured me that the 'Kigurumi' were super popular now, and I couldn't fight the fact that the girls would look cute as hell in them, so we'd both introduced the idea to the girls separately and let them pick out which one to buy for their friend.

"We need pictures," Carmen said and went looking for her phone. I also heard her calling up to the second floor, but my hands were full with helping June into hers as Olivia helped May. Soon we had two little terrors making roaring sounds as they ran around the couches chasing each other with their hands in fierce little claws in between their giggles.

I snatched June on her way by me, lifting her up and spinning her around before tucking her under one arm like I was carrying her like a football, her feet dangling behind as she laughed and squirmed. She was just about too big for me to do that anymore, which was a bittersweet thing.

"Alright, you two," I said. "I think you two fearsome beasts should have some ground rules about your gifts."

"Awwww," June immediately said.

“Oh, it’s not bad,” I said. “I just think these should be *special* clothes, right? Sleepovers and movie nights only, that way they stay nice and they don’t get dirty when we’re doing arts and crafts or going outside.”

“I think that’s an excellent idea,” Olivia backed me up, and the girls quickly agreed. I had another sneaky smile exchange with Olivia; neither of the girls knew that we’d bought our own Kigurumi as well, and at our movie night that was planned for tomorrow we would bust them out to surprise the girls as a lion and a tiger.

Carmen came back and got pictures of the girls together, then insisted on a few of the four of us together to memorialise the moment for the girls. She was gushing over the fact that the girls would be friends for life - something I hoped was true, but I also knew could fall apart considering middle school and then high school both did things to girls and their friendships - when a short, thin man of clearly Japanese descent came down the stairs from the second floor and made the turn into the living room.

“Dad, this is Adrian,” Olivia said, gesturing to me. “Adrian, this is my Dad, Sota.”

“Nice to meet you, sir,” I said, going to him and offering him my hand.

“Please, son, call me Sota,” he said, his English strong and unaccented. “It’s good to finally meet the man who my daughter and granddaughter can’t stop talking about.”

“Dad!” Olivia groaned. “Jesus, both of you make it sound like- ugh.”

Sota grinned in a way that first told me that he was where Olivia got her attractive smile, and second that he’d said it on purpose just to tease his daughter. The girls, still in their onesies, went back to May’s other presents and were talking excitedly as I quickly fell into small talk with Sota and Olivia while Carmen went to get some Christmas cookies for everyone. I got the update on how Olivia’s father was doing after his surgery, though I already knew most of it from her. Single-bypass, and they installed a pacemaker as well. Something about a long-dormant minor genetic defect that exacerbated with age. He’d been a runner all his life so it had come out of nowhere when he’d gotten worked up over a Japanese drama show he liked - something he blushed to admit, but also laughed over.

Carmen came back with the cookies, and we shifted a bit as the girls insisted that if they were wearing their onesies then, by the rules, they *had* to watch a movie. A look from Carmen and Sota assured me we were welcome for the length of a kid’s movie at least, and we still had time before June and I needed to head to my own parents’ place for family dinner and gifts that evening, so soon Elf was playing on the TV as we adults chatted in the background.

More cookies came out part way through, and I had to tell Carmen that she made the *second*-best cookies I’d ever tasted - second only to my own Mother. That got a laugh out of her, and I could tell she had the same sense of humour as her daughter. About two-thirds of the

way through the movie, while Olivia had been answering a question from the girls and her parents had both gone back into the kitchen, I was busy looking at the books on the bookshelf tucked into the back wall of the room when Sota came back in and gasped dramatically. I looked over and he was looking at me with big eyes.

“Uh-oh,” he said.

“Hmm?” I hummed, immediately feeling like I’d done something wrong.

“Dad,” Olivia groaned.

Sota pointed up above my head, and I followed the line of his finger up to where, hanging just above the bookshelf, was a sprig of mistletoe. That made me groan and chuckle as well.

“You know the rule,” Sota said, wagging his finger at me as he smirked.

“Dad, come on,” Olivia said. “He didn’t know it was there.”

“Ah-ah,” Sota said, and I got the immediate sense that this was one of those family traditions that went back decades and had been long fought over. “Stand under the mistletoe and you gotta be kissed.” He turned to me. “So, who’s it going to be? You gonna kiss my wife, my daughter, or pucker up for me?”

I couldn’t help but laugh at his teasing, trying not to snort as I also tried to shove my embarrassment down deep.

Olivia sighed, rolling her eyes as she stepped between me and her father. “Not appropriate, Dad,” she said.

“Fine,” Sota said with a grin and a shrug. “You don’t want me kissing him, then you kiss him. Otherwise, the *whole* holiday will be ruined from bad karma.”

Olivia turned back to me, her cheeks probably feeling about as hot as my own. “I’m so sorry about this,” she said.

“It’s OK,” I chuckled, shaking my head. “If it’s tradition, it’s tradition. Call your Mom in here.”

Olivia dropped her jaw in shock and after a moment slapped my arm as Sota started laughing behind her.

“Come here so I can shut him up,” Olivia said, doing the opposite and stepping up to me. She reached up to wrap a hand around the back of my neck while I lightly took her by the waist and bent to meet her.

Our lips touched, pressing together smoothly, and my nose filled with the smell of her. It wasn't that I hadn't smelled her shampoo or mild perfume before - being in cars together, sitting in the stands at the girls' gymnastics side-by-side, I'd caught whiffs here and there. This was different though, and I was filled with the mixed smells of her. She made it clear very early that this wasn't a peck - obviously that wouldn't 'shut him up' like she intended. The kiss also didn't get sexual though. No tongue. Our lips worked gently, soft suction in a give and take, and the nails on her hand gently pulled across the back of my neck until they slipped from my skin, just the heel of her hand against the side of my neck.

"Eeeeeewww!" Both girls chorused from over on the couch and started giggling.

The moment ended and we both pulled back from the kiss, laughing. Her hand came down from my neck to my arm. My one hand stayed on her waist for a long moment.

"What?" I asked the girls. "You think getting a kiss from me is that gross? Come here, you little dragon!" I stalked over to the girls, followed by Olivia as she went for her own daughter. I caught my giggling girl and leaned over the couch, planting kisses across her forehead and cheeks with loud kissy sounds, and Olivia did the same with May as they squirmed around until they fell out of reach as they rolled to the floor, still laughing hard.

"Good," Sota grinned as he came over, slapping me on the back. "Karma is restored, Christmas is saved."

"That's not a real thing, Dad," Olivia sighed with another roll of her eyes for the old man.

"Says you," Sota chuckled.

"I still can't believe you got this back here without me even knowing," Olivia said as she handed me the steaming mug of cocoa and sat down next to me.

I'd built the new swinging chair over the last month in my garage - once I'd found the design online it hadn't been that difficult since I already had the basic knowhow and tools. It wasn't a masterpiece that would become a family heirloom, but I'd built it strong and sleek and it fit the spot on her back porch perfectly.

"Well, June helped," I said with a grin.

"Oh, yeah, I'm sure she did," Olivia chuckled, looking out at the girls as they were building miniature snowmen across her backyard. Each one was maybe only a foot and a half tall and there were already a half dozen of them. "But seriously, you spent your Christmas morning doing this? I didn't even notice it until late this morning."

Again I couldn't help but smirk a little. "Just accept your Christmas gift, Livvy."

She rolled her eyes and then took a sip of her cocoa. "Thank you, Adrian," she said.

"You're welcome."

We just sat quietly for a moment, watching the girls, and then Livvy sighed. "We should talk about the elephant in the room."

"The kiss?" I asked.

"I'm sorry that my Dad made it a whole thing," she said. "And I'm sorry I might have made it weird. We could have gotten away with a peck, but I wanted to shut him up. My parents worry and nag me about being single and I just wanted to shut him up and show him we were friends and it wouldn't be a big deal."

"I get it," I said. "Rebecca has tried to set me up with a couple of people she knows in town and I've... resisted. I'm not looking to add someone into my life right now. I've got family, I've got good friends like you. Dating just feels like..."

"A waste of time?" Olivia suggested.

"Exactly," I said. "My life is already full. Trying to cram in dating would just take away from other important things, I think."

"God, you and me both," Olivia said, leaning into me just a little as she moved the swinging chair into motion. "I'd never want to take time away from May."

"So we're good on the kiss thing?" I asked. "No lingering awkwardness?"

"Not from my end," she said. "It was just a kiss."

"Alright," I said, bringing my arm back, wrapping it around her shoulders and pulling her into a side hug. She patted my shoulder and leaned her head against me more in response. We separated after a long moment, and I chuckled.

"What?" she asked.

"For 'just a kiss,' it was a pretty good one," I teased her.

She laughed and gave me a shove on the arm.

“The girls are all tucked in?” Rebecca asked as I walked into the kitchen. My parents had kept up their tradition of hosting New Year’s parties for all their friends and family and the house was full between the living room, dining room and basement lounge areas.

“Olivia is doing last good nights,” I said, opening the fridge and pulling out a beer.

“I like her,” my sister said. “Good mom, good person, doesn’t take any shit from the Mom groups.”

I smirked and shook my head. Ever since they’d met on Halloween briefly, Olivia and Rebecca had been trading stories about being moms. My sister was a few years older than me, and I was a few years older than Olivia, so I felt like Olivia was getting some much-needed mom-support that wasn’t from her own Mother. The fact that I also got the benefit of Rebecca’s Mom-based suggestions had been a big help in relating to June over the years.

“Yeah, I’m glad we met,” I said. “And June and May…”

“So cute together,” Rebecca agreed with a grin. “I wish my Nat or Parker had friends like those two have in each other.”

“Oh, come on,” I said. “Natalie has her whole school band, I saw the way she was a leader with them at the winter concert. And Parker has her soccer team.”

“Not the same,” Rebecca smiled at me in that *‘you know nothing, John Snow’* kind of way. “So when are you going to nut up and ask Olivia out?”

I coughed on the sip of beer I was taking and glared at Rebecca as I tried to clear my throat, knowing she’d asked me while I was drinking on purpose. “We aren’t like that,” I managed to croak out before clearing my throat fully. “We’re just good friends.”

“Sure, sure,” Rebecca said. “And I’m the Queen of England. Jesus, Adrian, your last two relationships *sucked* and you jumped into them with both feet. Now you have a woman like Olivia right in front of you and you can’t pull the trigger?”

“We’re just friends, Rebecca,” I said sternly.

“You can’t tell me you haven’t thought about it,” she challenged me. “She’s *that* pretty, and *that* sexy, and *that* good with your kid?”

I flushed and glanced away. “Idle thoughts aside, we’re good how we are.”

Rebecca sighed and let me change the subject, and soon enough Olivia came looking for me to let me know that the girls were down. They’d made it all the way to 11 PM before they crashed and we’d carried them up to my old room - now a guest room - to tuck them in.

We filtered out of the kitchen and back into the party. Only about half the crowd were our parent's age; my Mother went big for New Year and had for years, so neighbours and the now-grown-up kids of her friends were invited as well. I ended up in a conversation with a couple of guys who I'd grown up with and one of their wives, while Olivia was chatting with a few of my cousins.

When my mother came by, hooking my arm and tugging me away from the guys, I figured she just needed some help with a new batch of appetisers or something. I followed her to the kitchen.

"What's up?" I asked.

"We need to talk about Olivia," she said.

I frowned. "Did something happen?"

"No," my Mother said, though I could tell she was frustrated with me for some reason. "Not yet, at least."

"What does that mean, Mom?"

She sighed and shook her head at me, and I recognized my own mannerisms in her. It was the same look I sometimes had to give June when she was doing something that was obviously the harder method of accomplishing something just because she was being a little stubborn. "Are you planning to kiss her for New Year?" My Mom asked.

"I- We're not together," I said. "Why does everyone keep trying to push us towards that?"

She gave me a look. "I'm not pushing you two together," she said. "Not that I think you two wouldn't work out - between what you and Rebecca have told me about her, and meeting her tonight, she's absolutely lovely and you'd be lucky to have her. But," she held up a finger to stop my interruption. "Teddy has been flirting with her all night, and I would bet dollars to donuts he'll make a move on her for the ball drop in ten minutes."

I drew in a breath and let it out slowly. "Teddy is a drunk and an ass, and Olivia wouldn't ever put up with either of those things."

"He's a charming drunk like tonight when he isn't completely shitfaced, and it takes time for people to realise he's an ass," my Mom pointed out. "You've known him as your cousin since you were a kid so you just *know* that stuff, but Olivia doesn't."

"Fuck, Mom," I sighed.

"I just wanted you to know in case you might want to head it off," she said. "For whatever reason you want to put on it."

"You know I'm happy with my life now, right?" I asked. "Being back here, close to you and Dad and Rebecca and her girls. Having a good friend like Olivia."

"I know, sweetie," my Mom said, rubbing my arm. "I promise I'm not trying to be pushy. Yet."

"Great," I deadpanned. "Can't wait for when you try."

She laughed and winked at me before heading back out into the party, and I followed her. There were about five minutes left; the TVs in the house were all tuned to the Times Square broadcast but on mute, and the timer in the corner suddenly felt like a countdown on a timebomb for me. The last fucking thing I needed was Teddy trying to get involved with Olivia - Mom was right, he was a charming drunk. He had a string of short-term relationships to prove it dating all the way back to high school.

Not that I'd be jealous or anything, I told myself. I just knew Olivia wouldn't want the full-court press that Teddy would lay out if he was shot down lightly. And if she *did* entertain him even for a hot minute, well, I didn't need Teddy asking me how she was every time I saw him at a family function.

I found Olivia in the basement lounge talking with Teddy, a couple of the younger neighbours on my parents' block, and Rebecca's husband Carl. As I approached Olivia noticed me coming and smiled with her lips, but I could tell from her eyes that she was looking for an out. Teddy was standing close to her - not quite invading her personal space, but the body language was obvious that he was interested in her.

"Hey," I said, stepping right up and wrapping my arm around Olivia's shoulders, pulling her into a side hug. "What are we talking about?"

Olivia slid her arm back and put her hand on my lower back, catching me up on the conversation and laughing with Carl and the neighbours as they recounted a story Carl had told about Rebecca facing down Francine earlier in the year. Teddy pivoted the topic to something about him standing up to his boss at work, most of his focus on Olivia as he told it clearly trying to impress everyone with how he'd 'saved the business.'

It was entirely possible that he had, to be fair. Teddy wasn't a dumb guy.

The end of his story got cut off as folks realised that the final countdown was happening on the TVs and everyone got excited. A couple of older folks started counting down from thirty, which was a *bit* much, and Rebecca came down the stairs looking for her husband and joined our circle.

We all started counting down at 10, and it was one of those moments where it should have felt corny but with everyone in on it, it just felt like a special tradition.

“Happy New Year!” We all called loudly as the timer hit 0, the noise all over the house as some folks let loose with noisemakers and I could even hear my Dad popping a couple of streamer-shooters upstairs. Rebecca had pulled Carl into a kiss, and the neighbour couple were doing the same.

I turned to Olivia and she was looking up at me with a grin, this time with it reaching up to her eyes as I leaned in to kiss her. She raised both arms over my shoulders, crossing her wrists behind my neck.

Again, I was struck by the smell of her filling my nostrils. She’d been drinking wine and I could taste that on her lips. I rubbed her hip gently as we kissed and she leaned into me a little. Just before we pulled away I thought I felt a flick of her tongue against my lip.

“Happy New Year,” she said, still holding me close.

“Happy New Year,” I replied.

“Thanks,” she said a little quieter, flicking her eyes to the side in the direction of Teddy.

I winked and then leaned in and kissed the tip of her nose. “Just traditions and stuff.”

“And stuff,” she smirked and chuckled. Then she brought her arms down and put one hand on my chest gently. I hadn’t removed mine from her hip. “We should probably go check on the girls, that probably woke them up.”

“True,” I said. “Let’s go celebrate and tuck them back in.”

I never could remember if Teddy had looked put out or not at me blocking his own New Year Kiss attempt. I never bothered to check.

- - - - -

January

The girls, and I guess we parents, were back into the routine by mid-January. Early morning Saturday gymnastics was still a bit of a bitch, especially now that we were in the middle of winter and it was *fucking* cold. People I’d known who had never left California, or the lower States, never really understood that multiple States other than Alaska were actually further north than the most populated parts of Canada.

The snow was piled high, the temperature was ‘freeze your nipples off’ cold, but there Olivia and I were with our butts planted on the cold bleachers while the girls got their latest lessons from the college coeds. We’d gotten through our initial coffees from the Dunkin’ on our way out and I’d just gotten back from getting us refills from the dispenser in the lobby when the Head Coach came around having just finished speaking to a couple of other people.

“Hey folks,” she said with a broad smile. “I just wanted to let everyone know that we’re going to start prepping for the end-of-season celebration. Every level we teach will do a performance, and the coaches will do a demonstration of their college routines as well - just something to inspire the kids and show where they can go if they stick with the program. I know it’s a little early, but we like to stay ahead of things.”

“Sounds great,” I said. “Do we need to do anything?”

The coach smiled. “We ask every household to help a little with some fundraising so we can upgrade a piece of equipment here at the centre every year and show it off at the celebration. Can I put y’all down to sell some chocolate almonds? We’re asking each family to try and sell at least twenty boxes, but the more the better for the program obviously. I’m sure between the two of you that shouldn’t be too hard, would it?”

“Oh, we’re-” I started.

“Put us down for forty,” Olivia said, taking my hand and squeezing it in plain view.

“Great!” the Coach said. “Just let me know if you need a restock, we always have a couple of families that have a hard time helping out. Thanks!”

“No problem,” I said.

“And, by the way, your girls are fantastic to have around,” the Coach said. “Very motivated, and they are such good sisters to each other. You two should be proud.”

“Oh, we are,” Olivia said, looking at me and grinning.

“Very,” I agreed.

The coach thanked us again and moved on to the next small collection of parents that were milling around.

“So, what was that?” I asked.

Olivia chuckled and gave my hand another squeeze before letting go. “I thought it was funny that she thinks we’re married, and the girls are sisters. But mostly if we both do our part it looks

like we're overachieving as a family, and being 'those parents' might help the girls get a little extra attention."

"Working the system," I snorted and chuckled. "Alright, 'wife.' Now we have forty boxes of chocolate almonds to sell and we both work from home and I don't think we can pawn off all of them on our families. Which of us is bringing the girls around to sell them door-to-door?"

"Are you kidding?" Olivia asked. "I'm not schlepping my butt around in this cold. I can probably sell *at least* my twenty to some of my old friends in Cali and a few other regular clients."

"You're going to start a mail-order chocolate almond charity?" I laughed.

"Hey, if it works then it works," she said. "I'll ship them in one package to a central friend and she'll hand them out for me."

"Now I need to come up with an equally smart plan," I sighed. "As the 'husband' I *should* be bringing home the bacon, after all."

"You misogynist," Olivia said, but scrunched up her nose and grinned at me as she said it.

"Maybe I'll start an OnlyFans and sell feet pics and chocolate almonds," I mused.

That, for some reason, cracked her up.

"Hey, I'm sorry and it's not an emergency, but you should come back," Olivia said.

I walked further from the bowling area, getting to a quieter spot. My old high school buddies who were still in town had organised a get-together; not a bowling league, which was a bit more of a commitment than I could agree to, but they wanted to get together and do something every few weeks. Livvy had taken June for the evening happily.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

Olivia sighed on her end of the call. "I brought the girls their dessert out in the living room because we were going to watch a classic Godzilla movie and May said 'Thanks Mom' and then June said it too. Freudian slip I guess. But then she realised what she said a second later and got really upset. May and I tried to reassure her but she just needs her Dad right now."

I sucked in a breath and let it out slowly. "OK, I'm on my way."

"Sorry, Adrian," Olivia said.

"It's not your fault, nothing to be sorry for," I said. "Back in a few."

I hung up and had to say goodbye to my buddies, leaving a couple of twenties to cover my share of the food and the round I still needed to buy. They razed me a little, some of them not being parents and at least a couple not sounding like they were particularly involved parents. The drive to Olivia's wasn't very far and I was there in about ten minutes, and Olivia answered the door when I knocked.

"She's upstairs in May's room," Olivia said. "Sorry again."

"It's fine," I said, shrugging off my coat so she could take it. I pulled her into a one-armed hug and rubbed her arm. "I'm sure you did what you could. Thanks for calling."

Olivia followed me upstairs, but we stopped when we heard the girls talking in May's bedroom.

"But she's *not* my Mom, she's *your* Mom," June was saying, her voice torn and emotional.

"It's OK. Maybe my Mom can be your Mom sometimes too. I can share her with you," May said. "I know I would be really sad if I didn't have my Mom. And you're my bestest friend."

June sniffed. "I don't know," she said.

"I know my Mom likes you a whole lot," May offered. "And she says we're *like* sisters, anyways. Maybe we should just *be* sisters."

"If we're sisters and share your Mom, that means we need to share my Daddy too," June said. "Do you want to share him? I know you never met your Daddy, but I promise mine is really good."

"OK," May said, suddenly just as emotional as my daughter. "I'd like that. I like your Daddy a lot."

"OK," June sobbed.

I looked back at Olivia, tears welling in my eyes and feeling a deep ache in my heart for the two little girls. Olivia was covering her mouth with one hand, tears in her eyes as well. I pulled her into a crushing hug and she hugged me back just as hard. We held each other for a long moment, and then I pulled back and wiped my eyes, blinking rapidly to clear them.

Knocking softly, I opened May's door a little wider and poked my head in. "Hey, girlies," I said gently. "I heard that someone was having a hard time?"

"Daddy!" June said, pulling back from the hug she'd been holding May in as they sat on the edge of the bed. She hopped down and ran into my arms, and I picked her up as I hugged her

and carried her back over to the bed and sat down next to May, wrapping my arm around her as well.

“It seems like you two are working everything out,” I said. “Do you know that I’m so, so proud of how both of you help each other, and love each other?”

May hugged me back, and June wriggled out from my arms to sit on my lap. “Daddy, is it OK if you be May’s Daddy too sometimes?”

I glanced up at the doorway where Olivia was hovering, watching me and the girls. She nodded slightly.

“Of course I can, Juney,” I said and shifted so that I pulled May up to sit on my other leg, hugging them both. “I promise I’ll be there whenever you need me, May.”

“Thank you,” May said, leaning against me more. “I promise I’ll always be good.”

“Oh, babe,” I sighed. “I know you mean it, but me loving either of you will never stop even if you aren’t good, OK? I’ll be there for you no matter what, even if you act completely rotten for a little bit, because that’s what being a Daddy, or a Sometimes-Daddy, is all about.”

June looked up at me, her lower lip pouting and trembling a little. “Daddy, is it OK if maybe May’s Mom is my sometimes-Mommy? Just sometimes? I know my Mommy isn’t around anymore and I think maybe I would like that...”

“Oh, Juney,” I sighed, trying not to sob. “Of course it would be OK.”

“I would love to be that for you, June,” Olivia said, coming fully into the room and dropping to her knees next to us, reaching out and taking June from my lap into a big hug. “Just like your Daddy, I promise I’ll always be there for you for anything you need, OK? And I promise not to be jealous if sometimes you want to talk with your Auntie Rebecca, or your cousins, but I’ll always be here for you.”

We both held the kids, trying not to cry as we looked at each other, tears in our eyes.

Family was what we made it, and even if both our houses were broken we were finding ways to fix them.

February

“I need the girls on the 14th,” my Mom said.

I was driving over to the school to pick up June and May at the end of the day. Olivia had a big project she said she was working on so I'd offered to grab the girls and then Olivia would join us for dinner later.

"Both of them?" I asked over the handsfree mic.

"Yes, both of them," my mother said. "We're going to have a Gal-entine's Day here. Nat is single and isn't expecting to be dating anyone before then, and Parker just broke up with her boyfriend and wants some girl-time."

"I didn't even know Parker was dating anyone," I sighed. Teenagers.

"Well, you know how it is with high school kids," my mother said. "Anyways, Carl is taking Rebecca out of town for the weekend and their girls are going to be staying here anyways, so your father is taking me out for dinner a couple of nights beforehand and he'll be our butler for Gal-entine's."

"That sounds really nice, Mom," I said. "Should I extend the invitation to Olivia as well? I know she had a lot of fun meeting you at the New Year's party."

"I liked meeting her too, but no," she said. "If I'm giving you and her a night off, then you better damn well put it to use. Take her out for dinner, Adrian. Have some adult time."

"Mom," I groaned.

"I didn't mean it like that," my mother scoffed. "Though I don't *not* mean it like that, I guess." I groaned again. "Just take the win, sweetie. Spend Valentines with another adult who you like. And if something happens, well, I happen to know her mother through the walking club I'm in during the summer. I have it on good authority that you are as well liked over there as she is over here."

I was silent, letting my brain chug away as it processed the fact that *both* our families were manoeuvring us now.

"Sweetie?"

"Yeah, I'm here," I sighed. "It's a little late to be making a reservation, Valentine's is at the end of the week."

"Oh, look at that," my mother said. "Your father made a reservation a couple of weeks ago for us and now it's up for grabs."

"Jesus, Mom," I sighed again.

"I'll text you the details, sweetie! Love you."

"Yeah," I said. "Love you too."

She hung up, and I had another minute of driving before I reached the school. I kept the Valentine's plans to myself, knowing I needed to run them by Olivia first before I told the girls. We headed back home and the girls got to work on their small amount of homework while I went back to answering emails, but I found myself getting distracted. Valentine's with Olivia would be... good. We got along great, so sharing a meal with her without the kids would be nice. And we could dress up and have fun with it.

I was sure she'd look stunning in a dress.

Unable to focus, I checked in on the girls, and then started dinner. Olivia came over as planned, and we ate dinner together, and when the girls were done they helped with dishes before scurrying off to get in a little more play time before it was time for Olivia and May to head home. That left me and Olivia in the kitchen nursing our beers.

"So, I got a call from my Mom today," I said. "She asked to take the girls on Saturday for a 'Gal-entine's' evening. It'll be her, Rebecca's girls and ours. She also heavily suggested that, since she's giving us the night off, we should use the reservation my Dad made. Together."

"Gee, don't sound so excited, Adrian," Olivia smirked at me.

"Sorry, I don't- I just don't want to make things awkward," I said. "This is all really, really good."

"I know," Olivia said. "And I... I agree that I don't want anything to get awkward. But we got over *two* kisses, I think we could get over dinner out."

"Right, it's just dinner out," I said.

"Definitely not a date," Olivia nodded. "It'll be... Pal-entine's Day for us. Just me and my best friend enjoying a nice dinner and music."

"Pal-entine's," I agreed. "Perfect. I'll let my Mom know."

"Great," Olivia said with a smile. It wasn't quite as bright as usual, and I could tell she was as nervously unsure about this as I was.

After a long moment, and both of us taking a couple of sips from our beers, I let out a sigh. "You're my best friend too, by the way," I said.

"Thanks," she said, her next smile warmer than the last. "Now let's see what the girls are up to."

- - - - -

Olivia answered the door for the second time that day, and the change from earlier to this time was staggering. She was always a strikingly good-looking woman, but she'd gone all out.

"Wowza," I said, my eyebrows climbing up towards my hairline and my jaw dropping as my breath made a puff in the cold February air.

She snorted and started giggling. "Wowza?" she asked through her laughter. "Really?"

"Damn straight, really," I said. "You look amazing, Livvy. You're always- well, you always look good but the effort is *very* appreciated."

She smiled broadly. "Thank you, Adrian." She took a breath. "Let me just get my shoes and coat on and I'm ready to go."

Olivia was wearing a midnight blue dress that hung down to her heels and had a plunging neckline that showed off a significant amount of cleavage - much more than I'd ever seen on her before, and revealing she had slightly larger breasts than I would have expected based on her usual build - she must have worn pretty sturdy bras on the regular that did a bit of hiding. The dress shimmered as she moved, some sort of silver thread in the fabric catching the light and turning her into a midnight sky, and as she lifted her leg to slip on a silver heel the move revealed a slit in the side that went midway up her thigh.

It was funny, for how close we were, I couldn't think of a time that I'd actually seen her bare legs. We'd met later in September, already past shorts season, and she'd always worn tights or jeans or sweatpants. Even at the New Year's party her skirt had been flowy and ankle length as well, not needing a slit to be movable. Seeing her bare thigh, knee and calf all of a sudden felt almost scandalous and made me swallow.

She was a well-put-together woman.

I stepped just inside the doorway to take her coat and help her into it, and she flashed me a smile in thanks, and then she followed me out and locked the door. I offered her my arm to get her to the car, which she took with another smile, and I brought her around to the passenger side and opened it for her.

"You're being quite the gentleman tonight," she said with a smirk as she climbed in.

"Best friend or not, I can't let a woman dressed like you are take a tumble on some ice," I chuckled.

She barked a laugh and then gestured me away. "Shut the door, it's fucking cold."

I chuckled and did so, heading around to get into the driver's side. "No kids means the sailor swearing is on the table, huh?" I asked as I got myself buckled and then turned back to check behind me out the driveway, putting my hand on the back of her seat to do so.

"Fucking right," Olivia said, grinning at me again.

The restaurant was across town and was a new place that had only been open for about a month. It was the hot new spot in our moderate-sized town, which meant it was packed for a night like Valentine's Day, and I ended up needing to park a couple of streets over so we walked quickly arm-in-arm. We both had on gloves and scarves, but legwarmers would have ruined Livvy's look and neither of us could wear our usual chooks due to our hair being styled, so by the time we were scurrying in the door we were both stinging with the bitter cold.

I squeezed by the people waiting and let the hostess, who looked a little beleaguered, know that we were there and then we backed off. People seemed to be getting seated as quickly as they could walk back and forth to the tables, but we were still going to need to wait a few minutes even though we were on time.

"Cover me for a second," Olivia said, directing me to stand between her and most of the waiting area. She'd already taken off her gloves and when I moved to the spot she quickly bent over at the waist and slid her hands into the slit of her dress, rubbing her leg quickly to warm it up a bit. When she stood up she chuckled and shook her head. "We should have Ubered, door-to-door service would have been worth it."

"I agree," I laughed. We chatted lightly, talking about how we thought the girls would like the activities that were planned over at my parent's place. Apparently, there would be makeovers involved as June's older cousins, and her Grandma, would teach them some tips and tricks about makeup and they'd all do their nails as part of the fun.

Finally, my father's name got called since the reservation was still under that, and we made our way to the front and followed the hostess into the restaurant proper. It wasn't a massive place, but big enough that we moved from a front room to a back one. Most of the tables were already full and the rest would be soon, and the din of conversation between the many couples, or double-dates, going on wasn't quite loud but definitely lively. We ended up sitting near the back of the second room, not quite in the corner but thankfully not completely centred in the room. The table was for two, set with candles already flickering.

I immediately gestured that I would help Olivia with her coat, and she smiled and let me help her. As it came off and she removed her scarf I blew out a heavy breath. "Jesus, Livvy," I said. "Stunned me again there for a second."

"Oh, shut up," she grinned at me. I pulled out her chair for her and she sat, and I went to the nearby coat rack and hung up hers neatly then my own. If there was one thing that places in the northern MidWest understood, it was the need for heavy coats for almost half the year.

I took my seat and made eye contact with Olivia, both of us smiling as the candles put a glimmer in her eyes. Then our waiter was next to us, and we were swept up by the procedure of ordering - we looked at the wine list but ended up deciding to order cocktails instead, and then we were talking about the menu and what sounded good, and what *smelled* good as food for other tables came out.

At one point I realised I'd let my eyes slip from the menu to Olivia again, and I was being torn between looking at her face and her cleavage. Rather than trying to correct myself, I chuckled.

"What?" she asked, looking up from the menu.

"Sorry, I was just thinking that we were supposed to have a night out without the girls, and here you've gone and brought out another pair with you."

Olivia covered her lips demurely as she tried not to snort as she glared at me playfully. Then she shimmied her shoulders a little as she fixed the hem of her neckline. "I figured if I was going to let anyone in on appreciating the view, you deserved it," she said.

"Well, I'm not going to lie, they look pretty spectacular but so does the rest of you. You are *wearing* that dress."

"Flatterer," she said and rolled her eyes teasingly. "You want to talk about wearing clothes? You look fine as hell in that suit, mister. You should be wearing them more often."

"Right," I said. "I'll see about doing some costume changes in between playing with the girls and answering emails and calls while working from home."

"That's a little forward, isn't it?" Olivia said, raising her hands to her chest like she was in shock.

It was my turn to snort and cover my mouth as I shook my head at her. "You know what I mean," I said.

"I do," she grinned.

We gave our orders to the waiter shortly after and our menus were whisked away, leaving us without any distractions other than our cocktails. Our conversation was as easy as usual, and I had just as much fun teasing her as I did getting teased.

"Oh, God," Olivia suddenly muttered, her mood shifting slightly.

"What is it?" I asked, turning to follow her gaze.

“No, don’t look,” she said, grabbing my hand on the edge of the table. She was watching someone move behind me over my shoulders.

“Clue me in, Livvy,” I said.

“It’s Francine and her husband,” Olivia said. “They got seated across the room. She’s dressed all in reds and pinks and looks like Valentine’s Day threw up all over her, and she’s already being snippy with the waiters.”

I grunted and sighed, shaking my head. “Classy.”

“Let’s just hope she doesn’t notice us,” Olivia said.

“I think everyone in the room noticed you in that dress when you took your coat off,” I said. “I’m pretty sure I saw the old guy over there drop his jaw so far his dentures fell out.”

Olivia chuckled, shaking her head as she smiled. “You make me laugh, Adrian.”

“Really?” I asked. “I hadn’t noticed.” I chuckled once myself. “I like making you laugh. You’ve got a great smile and your little snort is cute.”

“Fuck off,” she said with a grin.

We chatted a bit more and, thankfully for the time being at least, Francine didn’t notice us before our food arrived. I’d ordered a striploin and Livvy had gone for the lamb, and on mutual agreement, we carved off about half and traded so we could each have a bit of both. Once the waiter had come by and we’d sung our praises for the food, we relaxed into eating.

“OK,” Olivia said once we’d gotten into the meal properly and weren’t hungry anymore. We were also onto our second cocktail. “So I have an idea.”

“I’m all ears,” I said.

“We’re best friends now, but we haven’t really known each other *that* long. Like, I have friends who have known me so much longer, they just aren’t around and you are, and I want to know you as well as I know them. And there’s the fact that we’ve basically promised to be godparents for each other’s kids. So I think we should play a game to get deep.”

I nodded along. “I get it, and I think I’m ready,” I said. “I mean, I figured everything would come out eventually. Better to have it all on the table before it’s a surprise, right?”

“Exactly,” Livvy said. Then took a breath and let it out and reached across the table for my hand, taking it lightly. “My idea, so I’ll go first,” she offered.

“OK,” I nodded and gave her hand a reassuring squeeze. The conversations at the nearby tables, and the general din of the place, meant we weren’t likely to be overheard as we leaned towards each other over the table.

Olivia took another breath. “Dirty Secret number one for me is that I’m bisexual,” she said.

“Makes sense,” I said.

“Really?” she asked.

‘You’ve made some comments,” I smirked a little. “Observations.”

Olivia chuckled and sighed. “Guess you’re a little more perceptive than you said you were.”

“I listen to the things the people I care about say,” I said. “It’s processing them into red flags that I have problems with.”

“Fair,” she said. “So it’s not an issue?”

“Why would it be?” I asked.

“I dunno, I mean back in California no one would care, but up here? Some people are still a little... sheltered.”

“Love who you want to love, Livvy,” I said, then took my own breath. “My turn I guess.” She nodded, cocking her head slightly as she continued to give me her full attention. “If we’re starting with fundamental things about us... Well, I guess I should tell you about my ex. We aren’t just divorced. June doesn’t know this, but her mother is also in federal lockup. It happened shortly after the divorce - looking back, she was spiralling for a while after June was born but she was always just very self-centred and expected a baby would be more like an accessory than something she’d need to put work into. That’s why I’d adapted my business and been ready for the separation and divorce, and I paid her off for a no-contest. The six months before it was final were hell for me, but she waived all her parental rights and had moved in with some guy who thought he was going to be a rockstar.”

“How did she end up in federal prison?” Olivia asked, her face looking pained in empathy for me and June.

“The guy’s band was going to go do a tour in Mexico,” I said. “From the court records, it seems like they decided to smuggle cocaine *into* Mexico for some reason and got caught. I guess they didn’t want to bother with buying local while they were down there, so it was a significant amount for their four-week tour. She also got hit with several battery of a police officer charges, so I’m assuming she probably tried to fight them when she felt like she wasn’t getting her way. She’s doing 15 years before a chance at probation. She tried calling me once during her trial,

asking for me to be a character witness, and I just reminded her that she'd abandoned our daughter and that was the only thing I really remembered about her now."

"Fuck, Adrian," Olivia said. "I'm so sorry. God. And June?"

"She has some vague memories, as best I can tell," I said. "Thankfully I never really trusted my ex to take care of her properly so she didn't have a chance to do any damage."

"Fuck," Olivia sighed again.

"It's OK," I said. "It's in the past, but it's something that may end up coming up again in the future. At some point I would bet that she'll want to try reaching out to June, whether that's in twelve years if she gets parole on the first go, or via letter or something. All I can do is prepare June for it in age-appropriate ways and trust she'll be ready."

"God, you're a good Dad," Olivia said, pressing her lips together after and shaking her head. "I'm so glad June has you, and that May has you in her life now too."

"I'm glad that June has you," I said. "Seriously."

"I-" Olivia hesitated. "Your thoughts might change slightly when I tell you the next thing. Or things, I guess, since they are all so intertwined."

"Livvy, unless you murdered someone in cold blood, I don't know if I could be shocked by whatever you think is such a big deal," I said.

"You say that now," Olivia said, then took a breath and steadied her nerves with a sip of her drink. "OK. You remember the first time we met, and I snapped at you thinking you were hitting on me?"

I smirked a little and nodded. "I still promise I wasn't hitting on you," I said.

"I know," she said with a smile. "But there's a reason I have my back up when people randomly approach me. I- God, I feel so stupid feeling nervous about this- I did porn for about a year and a half before I got pregnant with May. It's why I moved out to California to begin with, and at the time the path into the business was to do girl-girl stuff for as long as you could to build hype so you could cash in on your 'firsts' on screen. So I did a bunch of scenes with other girls about a decade ago and occasionally someone recognizes me out in the wild and puts the pieces together. I was worried that you were one of those people, that's why I snapped at you."

I blinked, absorbing what she'd told me.

"What are you thinking?" she asked nervously.

I pursed my lips slightly and blinked a couple more times. "OK," I said. "I- Yeah, you got me there, I wasn't expecting that. Um, are you OK with it?"

"Yes," she said. "I mean, looking back, I don't know what I would have done differently with my life. Obviously, my parents weren't thrilled about it, but I was swept up in the sexual empowerment stuff and making good money for doing something I wanted to be doing anyway. And I made really good friends with a bunch of the girls I worked with, and I wouldn't trade them for the bitches I used to be friends with in high school."

I nodded slowly. "Wow," I said. "I, um- wow is what I've got. Sorry, I'm trying not to picture anything inappropriate right now and it's a little hard with you in that dress."

Olivia smiled and sighed, her head tilted down as she looked at me with her hair slightly covering her face.

"Alright, processing complete," I said after taking a breath. "Thank you for telling me, and none of that changes anything between us or how much I trust you with June."

She let out a big breath and nodded. "Thanks," she said.

"Nothing to thank me for, Livvy," I said. "My turn?"

Olivia shook her head. "That was part one of three," she said. "Part two is tied to part one because it explains May's father. He was a pornstar that I'd met at a couple of functions, and he was the guy that got cast opposite me in what was supposed to be my first boy-girl scene. He knew it was my first, and wanted to make sure I was totally comfortable, so the week before he offered to take me out to dinner. We had a great time, and I slept with him that night because I liked him a lot and I figured we'd be doing it on camera soon enough anyway. But then the next afternoon he calls and asks to see me, and I invite him over to my apartment and he basically does this big speech about how I was the best thing since sliced bread, and he wanted to ask me to marry him but it was too fast so he was asking me to be his girlfriend instead of doing the scene. He offered to help me get connected to the production side of the business instead of in front of the camera, and then I wouldn't need to do boy-girl content, and to show me how serious he was he even handed me a big stack of cash, offering to buy out what I would make on the scene we were supposed to shoot. I kinda fell head over heels for him, and I moved into his place in two weeks. I told you before that looking back I think we were a burn hot, burn bright couple, and we moved so *fast* on everything. Two months into the relationship I wasn't doing any more scenes and was working on the backend production, which was how I learned video editing and photo touch-ups and stuff, and then I got pregnant with May. We were both thrilled, and we eloped, and I broke my parents' hearts again by doing that."

"They must have been scared for you," I said.

“So scared,” Olivia agreed. “I can’t comprehend how much now, having May. But at the time I was oblivious. Then, when I was six months pregnant, he got into a car accident and died at the scene. Double DUI, both him and the other driver were drunk and had a head-on collision. Life insurance wouldn’t pay out because he was half at fault, but I at least got his savings and that helped me move back to be with my parents as I finished out my pregnancy. I never once considered aborting - not because I saw May as any sort of memory of him. I was just already so in love with my little girl and I needed to hold onto that to figure out my shit.”

“I’m sorry,” I said, taking her hand again and squeezing it. “Life hits hard sometimes. You are so goddamn strong, Livvy.”

She breathed in and let it out slowly. “Thanks, Adrian,” she said softly.

“Do you want to tell me more about him?” I offered.

“No,” she said quickly. “He’s- that was another life. But it does lead me into part three.”

“You sure you don’t want me to take a turn?” I offered.

“Better I just get it all out, and this is a much smaller one,” she said. “All the video editing and social media stuff I do the backend work for? It’s porn. I used to work for companies, but as soon as my friends in the industry started working social media and supplementing their ‘mainstream’ incomes with side hustles I went freelance. I’ve got twenty regular clients, but a half dozen more I pick up work from here and there. So yeah, I’m still sort of connected to the industry.”

“So what you’re telling me is that you’re an impressive entrepreneur making good money working with people you like?” I asked. “Oh, no, that’s so horrible.”

“Jerk,” she smirked at me.

“I once shit my pants as a full-on adult, and I wasn’t even drunk,” I said.

Olivia blinked hard, reeling as she tried to keep up with what I said. “What?”

“I was just getting over a stomach bug and I thought I was good to go, but I got stuck in LA traffic as I was going from one job site to another and I couldn’t get off the highway, let alone find a toilet. Crapped my pants, right there in my truck and had to sit in it for another hour before I got through traffic and home. That’s my next dark secret.”

Olivia snickered lightly, coughing as she absorbed my story.

“The reason I’m telling you that, Livvy, is because I have way more to be ashamed of, sitting in my own crapped pants, than you did or do working a job that you loved at a time it made sense

for you,” I said. “Sure, if when June is older she tells me she wants to do porn, I’ll probably freak out internally, and I won’t lie and say I won’t try and talk her out of it because from what little I know it isn’t exactly a forgiving business. But I’ll love her no matter what. And as for your husband, it sounds like even if it was hot and bright and likely to burn out, you still picked better than me.”

She breathed in through her nose and let it out. “You probably could have made the same point *without* the shit talk,” she smirked at me.

“Probably, but I owed you a story,” I said. “Livvy, I love you. You’re my best friend. Nothing you’ve said changes either of those facts.”

Olivia shook her head gently, looking at me intently with eyes that held a deep well of emotion. “I love you too,” she said. “For so much.”

I winked at her and squeezed her fingers lightly before letting go, intending to get back to our meal and maybe some lighter conversation, but she stood up.

“I’ll be right back,” she said.

“OK,” I nodded and watched her walk off towards the washroom. She was gone for maybe two minutes, and in that time I made unfortunate eye contact with Francine. I saw her see me, and I knew the jig was up on her not finding out Livvy and I were there together. The only thing I could be thankful for was that she didn’t stand up and come over to try and make smalltalk, or complain, or dig for information.

When Olivia reappeared, coming back towards me gracefully in her dress and heels, I stood up to pull her chair out for her again and she accepted with a warm smile and sat.

“Francine knows,” I murmured to her as I helped her tuck in a little.

“Whatever,” Livvy said. “I don’t care.”

When I sat down Livvy reached her hand over to me and I took it with a smile that turned into a curious look as I felt that she was holding something in her hands.

“Adrian, I want to be as clear as possible,” she said, still holding my hands. “I’m following your directions here. This is a message from me to you. Pal-entine’s Day, date or not, I mean this for tonight.”

She pulled her hand away, leaving me holding a bundled-up something, and I drew it back to me and glanced at the gently unravelling bit of fabric in my hand. My eyes went wide and I crushed it tightly in my fist as I looked around to make sure no one had seen it. It was a small pair of lacy

black panties, a little more than a thong but definitely not something that gave a significant amount of coverage.

Olivia had gone and taken off her underwear in the washroom and gave it to me.

“Really?” I asked, lifting my eyebrows as I looked at her.

“We got over two kisses,” she said. “And they were *good* kisses. We can handle that, too, I think. And you being so... yourself, and open and caring, is a big turn-on. I mean, you can tell me no and honestly my nerves will thank you, but I want it if you do.”

I swallowed, glancing down at my tightly clenched fist and feeling that fragile, lacey fabric in it. When I looked back up I could tell she was as nervous as I was, but she'd made the first move.

“I'd... really like that too,” I said.

“OK,” she said, suppressing a big grin. “So we're doing... that. Later. For now, we should finish our meal and our date. Just because I'm being open and honest doesn't mean I don't want to be seduced a bit more.”

“Noted,” I said, and slipped her panties into the front breast pocket of my suit jacket. “No more stories like the last one then?”

“No,” she laughed, shaking her head. “Tell me something sweet.”

“You're a really, really great Mom,” I said.

She hung her head as she smiled, and then looked up and pursed her lips as she shook her head. “I meant a sweet story about you, you asshole,” she said.

“I can do funny a lot easier than sweet,” I said.

“Then make me laugh, Adrian,” Olivia said. “Because I love you, and I love that you like my laugh.”

I grinned and tried to decide what story to tell.

Helping Olivia out of the back seat of the car, we both smiled at each other.

“Thanks,” I called to the Uber driver. There weren't exactly a big number of them in our town, so on the odd occasion I did need to take a ride I always wanted to leave a good impression. The guy waved back and then pulled back out onto the street and away from Olivia's house.

We were tipsy. Not drunk, but definitely feeling the three cocktails we'd each had over dinner and the very sweet ice wine we'd had while sharing a rich slice of chocolate cake. Remembering Olivia's comment about door-to-door service, I'd ordered up the ride despite the heavy price associated with a night like Valentine's Day.

"Come on," Olivia said, taking my hand and pulling me up the driveway towards the front door. She almost slipped, though, and I ended up wrapping my arm around her waist and holding her hand with my other hand to help keep her stable. At the door she fumbled in her little purse for her keys for a moment before getting them out while I chuckled, and once the door was open we rushed in and got it closed, locking out the cold.

Neither of us even got our coats off, we collided so quickly as we kissed. It was like the two times we'd kissed before, under the mistletoe and on New Year's, had been in preparation for that kiss in the dark front hall of her home. Our lips met and I felt an electricity run through me as she sucked my lower lip between hers and grazed it with her teeth. My tongue replaced my lip and hers played out against it and we were making out like horny teenagers as she took a step back, pulling me with her. She ended up leaning back against the wall, and I slid my hands from the cold sides of her coat back to grab her ass.

God, that ass.

Olivia moaned into the kiss, and I responded with a soft grunt, and finally we needed to breathe and separate.

"God, you're a good kisser," she gasped.

"So are you," I said. "And I love the mix of your perfume and shampoo."

"You noticed?" she asked with a smile. We only had the lights leaking in through the window of the front door illuminating us and she looked so fucking pretty.

"I noticed that first time under the mistletoe," I said. "But how do I say, 'You smell so good I want to take a whiff every time I see you' without making it weird?"

She laughed, pulling her gloves off, and brought her hands up to my cheeks to hold me still as she looked into my eyes. "Take me upstairs," she said. "I feel like I've got a fucking icicle hanging off my pussy, I was so wet and it was so cold outside."

"Can I warm it up for you?" I asked, leaning closer so that our breath mingled and our noses rubbed together, teasing another kiss without touching.

"That's exactly what I want," she breathed back.

I kissed her firmly and then fell to my knees, lifting up the sides of her dress and pulling her leg over my shoulder and wrap around my back as the slit rose high enough to allow it. I couldn't actually see anything about her pussy because of the angle of the light and shadows, but I knew my way around a woman by feel and I quickly drove my face between her chilled thighs and nuzzled my way to getting my lips onto her pussy.

"I meant you could upstairs," she laughed, thrusting her hips out helpfully to give me easier access as she ran her fingers through my hair.

Olivia had been right, she *was* wet and cold down there - apparently going without underwear in a dress wasn't really the *smart* move. Thankfully there wasn't actually an icicle or else I would have been a little worried for her health. Instead, I was met with her delicious tang as I slid my tongue between the cleft of her lips, feeling that taste wash over my tongue. I growled approvingly as I lapped through those lips again and drove my nose against the nub of her clit hood. I could feel she wasn't completely bald, a soft roughness of close-cropped pubes rubbing against my forehead.

"Oh, fuck, Adrian," Olivia gasped. "God, yes, be a little rough with it."

I followed her directions, bending my neck a bit to pull one of her labia between my lips and massaging it firmly while sucking, then letting it slip away and driving my tongue at her entrance. She shuddered, her hands holding onto my head and shoulder, as her hips involuntarily rolled. My hands slid from those hips and back to her ass, following the dress down to slip underneath and come up on her bare cheeks. They were smooth and firm and so fucking squeezable as I started massaging them.

It was hard to know how long I was there on my knees eating Olivia out. Time was meaningless to me as I revelled in every shudder, moan and touch of her while I knew I was making her feel good. She didn't speak, instead her soft moans and groans slowly rose in pitch telling me when I was hitting the right spot at the right time.

"I'm getting close," she gasped suddenly. "I- Fuck, Adrian... I'm close, I'm close, I'm close."

I got my lips on her clit hood, sucking it in softly and humming as I wiggled my head like an angry little dog, and Olivia sucked in a massive breath and her stomach pulled in as she came. Halfway through she let out that breath in a long, low, "Ooooooooooh yeeeeeeeeaaaaaaahh," that almost made me start laughing, but I persevered and kept my lips on her as she rolled through a long orgasm that left her panting and gasping.

Finally letting go of her, I slipped her leg from over my shoulder after kissing her bare thigh and then I fell back onto my butt on the floor needing to catch my own breath as well.

“Fuck,” Olivia groaned as she slipped down to the floor as well, her back against the wall and her legs spread outside of mine. We were both still wearing our shoes and coats. “Fuck, Adrian, that was good. I didn’t need you to do that though.”

“You might not have needed it, but I sure did,” I said with a grin, reaching forward and taking her hands in mine. “There was no way in hell I wasn’t making you come first. And I’m going to be honest, Livvy, I haven’t been with anyone since my ex while she was pregnant with June. It’s been a long time, and I might be a little backed up. I’m probably going to pop quick.”

“That’s OK,” she said with a lazy, post-orgasm grin that made me tingle all fucking over. “I wanna suck that load out of you, then we can fuck.”

“You say the sweetest things,” I laughed.

“Just FYI, for honesty sake, I haven’t been with a man since my husband either,” she said. “But I have hooked up with some women. Almost entirely my friends from back in the industry, but not on camera or anything. Just for fun.”

“Sounds like a good time,” I said.

Olivia chuckled. “You could say that.” Then she pulled on my hands a little. “Get up so you can help me up, it’s harder to climb to my feet in these shoes.”

“I can do one better then,” I said, letting go of her hands and reaching for her foot, lifting it and pulling off her silver heel before kissing her ankle, and then doing the other one as well.

“A perfect gentleman,” Livvy hummed. “But a lady can’t let the man do all the work.” She then leaned forward and started undoing the little laces on my dress shoes and slowly pulled them off, followed by my socks, and set them aside neatly. Then she leaned forward, sliding from her butt to her knees, and crawled up my legs to meet me in a kiss. It was sweeter, a little less overly horny like the first one when we’d first gotten inside, but we weren’t shy about things either. Our tongues played against each other, and her hand found my thigh and slid down it to feel at my hard cock in my pants. I took that as a welcome sign and brought my hands up under her coat to cup and massage her tits through her dress, letting my thumbs drive past the neckline and into her bare cleavage. We both moaned at the feelings.

“OK, fuck,” she gasped when we parted. “We need to move, I’m not fucking right here on the front hall floor when there’s a perfectly good bed upstairs. Or the couch in the living room. Or the stairs.”

“Not the kitchen table?” I asked with a teasing little grin.

She shook her head. “That’s for tomorrow after breakfast.”

I growled and kissed her again as she chuckled at my enthusiasm for the idea. Eventually, we managed to get ourselves standing and shed our coats and scarves, and I took that moment to kiss her again and then trail some more kisses down her neck and to her chest, teasing my lips over her visible cleavage as she hummed happily and groped my crotch again.

“OK,” she finally sighed, pulling back. “Go to the kitchen and grab the wine from the counter and a couple of glasses then come upstairs. I want to go change.”

“Livvy, I very much want to unwrap you from this beautiful dress,” I said, holding her hips lightly and tugging on the shimmery midnight blue fabric.

“I know you do,” she said with that smile of hers. “But I’m not wearing anything under it, and I want to see your face do that thing you did when I first opened the door earlier. So I’m going to put on some lingerie.”

“You absolute queen,” I groaned, pulling her into another kiss. I couldn’t get enough of kissing her, not after denying how fucking good the first ones had been.

We finally separated and I watched her climb the stairs openly, which she noticed and then put an extra shimmy into her hips with each step. Once she was gone I went back to the kitchen and found the wine she’d mentioned, and I already knew where the wine glasses were. Armed with what I assumed would be our post-fuck libations, I stopped in the front hall to scoop up her heels for her and brought them upstairs as well. Her bedroom door was open and I walked right in, seeing a light coming from what I assumed was her walk-in closet. I’d been upstairs in her house plenty of times since the girls liked to play in May’s room sometimes, but I’d never had a reason to be in Olivia’s bedroom.

It was nicely decorated, not overly girly or anything. The bed dominated the room, a queen with an upholstered sleigh frame. There were a couple of dressers and a standing mirror, and she had a few pieces of art hung on the walls along with pictures of her and May and her parents, plus several of her and other women her age. I’d set the wine, glasses and her shoes down on one of the wide, short dressers and was looking at the pictures when light flooded the dark room a little more as Olivia came out of her walk-in closet.

I turned and couldn’t have faked my reaction if I tried. She was oozing sexuality. She’d fixed her hair a bit, but some of her thick, wavy dark brown locks were hanging along one side of her face. Her lingerie was a matching set in vibrant violet. The bra was a demi cut, showing off a bunch of cleavage, and had intricate embroidery and a short lace fringe. The straps were thin over her shoulders, but decorative with three straps wrapping around her sides to the back. The bottoms, meanwhile, were a cheeky cut with a solid purple front but transparent sides a little high on her hips. It had the same fringe of lace around the leg and waist, and a little white bow right on the waistline as an accent.

“You like,” Olivia said, grinning widely and not asking. She could tell by the look on my face.

“I want to get my lips on every square inch of you, Livvy,” I said. Her legs were perfectly sized for her height, and nicely thick with working muscle rather than being rail thin. Her arms were the same way, slender and toned. Her torso wasn’t thin either - her ribs weren’t showing and she was a full-figured woman, but with only a soft, naturally smooth tummy. And then there were her tits in that bra.

“Oh yeah?” she asked, her smile turning playful as she came towards me and took me by the front of my suit jacket. “Well, what if I told you that I wanted to taste every part of *you*, Adrian? You’ve been giving me flattering compliments all night and I feel like I need to catch up, so let me tell you - you are a *fucking snack*, you gorgeous man. Great eyes, great smile. Your height doesn’t hurt at all, but in a tailored suit like this I can tell you’re fit without being bulky, and you wear your clothes like a fucking boss. You’re a very, very attractive man, Adrian. But the most attractive things about you are your sense of humour, which is killer, how dutiful you are, which is endearing as hell, and how fucking good of a father you are. You make my nipples get hard and my pussy get wet when I don’t catch myself from staring at you.”

I pulled her to me, lifting her with one hand on her waist and one on her ass, bringing her lips to mine as I spun us around and planted her butt on the edge of the wardrobe as we made out. I’d been overwhelmed by what she said - I’d never gotten compliments like that before. It wasn’t a thing guys really did to each other, and other than offhanded comments from my family that I didn’t really take all that seriously... I realised that my ex-wife, and my ex before her, had complimented me but it had always been superficial. Or backhanded. Or, most often, more about them. Hearing those things from Olivia, knowing she *meant* them, was a little overwhelming.

Olivia pulled away from the kiss, starting to unbutton my dress shirt from the top. “Did you recognize any of my friends in the pictures?” she asked.

I flushed a little. “Um, I wasn’t looking to, but yeah,” I said.

She leaned in, kissing her way from the corner of my lips to my ear. “I’ve played with all of them,” she whispered naughtily. “All of my friends from that time, and I’m still in contact with most of them.”

Olivia knew what she was doing. I hadn’t recognized many, but there were a few that stood out and they were all attractive in their own ways. Girls, now women, who were fairly big names in porn to that day. I wasn’t exactly ‘in the know’ in terms of the porn world of who was active or who wasn’t, but I could recognize a couple of major faces. And Olivia was teasing me about them, not making promises but... I groaned, pulling back so that I could kiss her again as she finished unbuttoning my shirt, pulling it out from my slacks to hang loose.

“God, you’re yummy, Adrian,” she murmured, pushing me back a little and sliding from on top of the wardrobe to her feet, kissing my chest. I wasn’t as fit as I had been when I worked with my

hands every day, but I hadn't exactly gone to pasture either and wasn't ashamed to have my shirt off. Olivia kissed her way across my chest, uncaring that I had a sprinkling of body hair, as her hands slid down my stomach and started to undo the buckle of my belt.

"Want to move to the bed?" I asked.

She shook her head, smiling up at me. "You did me on your knees, I can absolutely do you," she grinned and shot me a sexy look. "Plus, it's easier like this for you to fuck my mouth."

I groaned as she went to her knees, unzipping my slacks and pulling them down to my ankles, leaving me in just my briefs. My cock was hard, pressing against the stretch of my underwear, and Olivia hummed happily and leaned in and kissed it through the fabric, running her lips up and down the length. The touch was soft, but it wasn't just about the touch - it was about the action. The tease. The care. By the time she was done, what had been a small wet spot of precum had grown, and Olivia looked up at me with a naughty gleam in her eye as she placed her lips over it and sucked gently, tasting it.

"Fuuuck," I breathed out.

She took her lips away and grinned up at me. "Happy Valentine's, Adrian," she said.

"Guess we're past *Pal*-entine's," I chuckled.

"Way, way past," Olivia laughed, then hooked her fingers in the waistband of my briefs as she bit her lip and hesitated. "Unless you want to stop?"

"Livvy, I'd stop if you want to, but you'd probably find me fucking your tree out in the front yard after I left," I said.

She barked another laugh and then pulled down my briefs, letting my cock bob out and come to a rest pointing in her direction.

"Mmm," she said, biting her lip again as she eyefucked my cock. Then she touched her tongue to her lip happily and grinned before looking up to meet my gaze. "So, I know you're a confident guy and I'm not saying you'd feel this way, but I need to say something because I've listened to way too many horror stories from my friends from back then," she said.

"OK," I said, breathing in through my nose as she gently took my cock in one hand and gave it a squeeze, her fingers warm and thrilling.

"This might sound weird, but I want you to know right now before there's a chance for you to have even a moment of doubt - you have a perfect-sized cock, Adrian," she said. "I've edited a *lot* of porn over the years and talked with a lot of girls about their experiences on set or with different male performers. It's true that there are a few *actual* size queens out there, and a few

actually massive cocks, but most women aren't designed to take a fucking log and are scared of them, which makes it a not-fun experience to film with or fuck them. You have the kind of cock pornstars drool over working with - good length without being huge, not too skinny so I'll feel you nice and tight, but you're not going to fucking hurt. Dick size is a thing for guys, and I don't want you getting in your head about my porn experiences or anything. You have a perfect cock."

"I, uh, thanks?" I said. "You're right, I hadn't thought about that."

"I figured, but I needed to say it now," Olivia said, starting to stroke my shaft and sending chills up my spine. "All the girls I talk with, it's one of the big problems they run into when dating guys who know they do or did porn. Penis envy. You, handsome, have *absolutely nothing* to worry about."

I took a breath and nodded. "OK," I said. "Noted, stamped and filed away. My dick is drool-worthy."

"Good," she said with a little smile and a twinkle in her eyes. "And yes, yes it is." Then she pressed her lips to the head and slid me into her mouth.

I groaned, long and low, as she teased her tongue around the sensitive, spongy head. She did exactly what I had done with her down in the hall - she explored every nook and cranny with her tongue and lips. I don't think I'd ever experienced a blowjob that was so dedicated to finding every pleasure point on my cock, teasing it, and loving on it. Every touch, every glance of her eyes up to meet mine, every little smile and smirk from around my cock or when she pulled off to pivot around it made me mutter and moan.

It didn't take her long to have me on edge. To be honest, there wasn't exactly so much of her using a technique on me as I just really, really loved what she was doing, and watching her do it.

"Close," I warned her.

She pulled off of me until my cock was resting on her bottom lip. "Fuck my mouth," she said. "Grab my head and fuck my mouth, Adrian. Use my mouth to get off, then I'll suck you hard again."

I grunted as I thrust my hips forward, spearing my cock between her lips, and she sucked and kept her teeth out of the way as I started to thrust more. Weaving my fingers into her hair on one side of her head, I cupped her jaw on the other and she looked up at me and nodded lightly, encouraging me.

"Fuck, you're amazing," I grunted as I continued to thrust, feeling my balls tightening as I used her mouth. "God, you're fucking pretty, Livvy. So fucking good at sucking me off. I loved every fucking minute. Fuck! God, I'm going to come in your mouth, Livvy. I'm going to come."

She hummed happily, encouraging me further, and brought her hand up and massaged my balls lightly. That was the last straw and I groaned loudly as all the air in my lungs tried to escape at once in response to my balls pulling up and ejecting what felt like a gallon of cum into her mouth. Olivia started swallowing immediately, and I skipped six good-sized ropes of cum off of her tongue before another two or three oozed out of me, swamping her mouth. She was chuckling in her chest the entire time, her eyes closing at the sensation of me releasing, and sucked hard to get every last bit out of me as I started to slowly thrust between her lips, urging those last dregs out myself as well.

Finally, I let go of her and she pulled her fingers from my sack, and I stepped back and had to brace myself against the end of the bed, I was so light-headed.

“Mmmm,” Olivia hummed, making a show of swallowing the last of my cum and then licking her lips. “Now *that* was something I didn’t realise I was missing. Fuck, Adrian. That was a great load. I kinda wish I got you to blow on my face and tits just so I could see how much it was.”

I wordlessly gave her a thumbs up, still catching my breath, and then laughed. “I’m open to trading oral favours whenever you want,” I panted. “Fuck, that was amazing, Livvy.”

“Well, you were pretty amazing downstairs,” she said, standing up and grabbing the wine bottle off the dresser behind her. It had been uncorked at some point before and most of the cork was sticking out of the mouth of it, so she yanked the cork out again and tipped the bottle back, taking a swig. Then she swirled it around in her mouth, ran her tongue over her teeth, and swallowed before coming over to where I was leaning against the end of the bed. She stepped between my legs, tilting her chin and lips up, and summoned me down for a kiss. It was searing but playful, passionate but sincere. “There,” she said when she pulled away. “I love kissing you, but unlike some girls, I’m not big on a guy being cool with tasting their own spunk. It just seems weird to me.”

“Thanks,” I said, accepting the bottle from her and taking a quick swig of my own, the alcohol clearing my sinuses and perking me up a little. “What about your taste?” I asked. “If I could bottle you up and carry you with me I would, and I assume you’re into the taste of other women.”

“Still weird to me,” she said, “Like, I’ll suck you even if you’ve been inside me, but I’m not the kind of girl who wants you to stick a finger in me and have me taste it. Other women, sure, I’ll eat them out and enjoy it. It just weirds me out a little when people say they like their own taste.”

“Got it,” I said, offering her the bottle back.

She was still standing between my legs and had dropped her hands to my cock, absently playing with it gently as we talked. Now she took the bottle, had another sip, and then stepped away to set it back on the wardrobe. I followed her, hugging her from behind as I pressed my

semi-hard cock to the small of her back. She leaned back into me, hugging my arms around her torso. "Ready for more?" she asked.

"That depends," I said. "Am I going to get my turn on you at some point again soon? Cause it's not fair that you get to tease me and I don't get to tease you."

"Absolutely," she grinned, turning in my arms and pulling me down into another kiss with her arms back around my neck. Again we lingered, revelling in just the feel of each other. It had been so long since I'd felt, well, *wanted* in that way.

Eventually, she went down from her toes, separating us by a couple of inches as she looked up at me. "Get on the bed," she said with a little grin. "I'm going to seduce you."

"Too late," I chuckle, my hands still on her bare waist and squeezing her gently. "You did that weeks ago. *Months*. It just took me this long to realise it."

She grinned, rolled her eyes, and then pushed me towards the bed. I went willingly, climbing on, and she had me sit up near the head with my back on the pillows and my legs straight out. Then she climbed on as well, up over the padded footboard and slowly crawling up the bed and between my legs as she worked her body like a cat, grinning the entire way as she kept her eyes locked with mine. She was utterly gorgeous and entirely too sexy.

When she was hovering with her neck over my cock, which was still about half-hard but ready to be convinced, she flipped her hair to the side and gave me a look that was pure, unadulterated 'Fuck Me' eyes. Then she leaned low, so slowly, raising her ass in the air behind her, and drew her tongue from my sack and all the way up the underside of my cock. It responded quickly as she swirled her little tongue around the head, then started kissing down the side as she hummed at getting the fast response as it stiffened and rose. And the whole time she never broke eye contact.

It didn't take her very long at all to get me hard as hell again, but I could tell she was enjoying herself. Enjoying playing with me, and teasing me. Enjoying my reactions, just like I'd loved hers downstairs. And she was enjoying the connection. We didn't break eye contact for over five minutes, silently communicating.

Finally, when I couldn't stand not giving something back to her anymore, I groaned and sat up, lifting her lips from my cock so I could kiss her. "Spin that ass around here so I can play with you too," I urged her.

She slowly shook her head, kissing the tip of my nose like I'd done to her in the past, and smiling. "I'm done playing," she said. "I want you inside me. I can't wait anymorrree-" she slowed to a stop, clearly having thought of something. She took a breath and her expression changed from sexy and horny to hesitant. "You, uh, don't happen to have a condom, do you?"

Cause with the whole not fucking guys for this long I stopped taking birth control a long time ago.”

“...Um, yeah,” I said. “Yeah, I should have one in my wallet.” I scooted away from her to the edge of the bed, going to my pants and fishing out my wallet. “I’m gonna be honest though, it’s old as hell. Do condoms have an expiry date?”

“Yes they do,” Olivia sighed and chuckled. “Jesus, didn’t they teach you anything in health class?”

“I think Mr Finstein was even more embarrassed by the subject matter than we were,” I said, thinking back to high school. “We kind of ran through the content as fast as humanly possible so he could get us back in the gymnasium.”

“Well, how old are we talking here?” Olivia asked as I pulled out the gold wrapper from an inside pocket of my wallet.

“Um... seven years,” I said.

“Fuck,” she said. “That’s definitely expired. And you had it in your wallet this whole time?”

“I don’t know, it was a thing guys told me to do when I was a teenager and I never took it out,” I said.

She snorted and grinned, shaking her head, then sighed as she looked at me. “I know this might be a bit much, but while I’m fucking horny as hell for you and I know exactly what kind of Dad you are, I’m not at ‘risky sex’ with you yet. Could you maybe run out and get a box?”

I flicked the condom at her, making her chuckle again as she caught it. “A whole box?” I asked as I walked back to her, standing next to the bed as she knelt on it and looked up at me. “That’s a lot of condoms for one Valentine’s Day.”

Olivia smirked a little, sitting higher and hugging around my waist as she pressed her bra-clad tits to my chest. “I promise that I’ll make sure we use up the entire box,” she said, then kissed my chin. “Tonight. Tomorrow. The future.”

“The future, huh?” I asked, wrapping my arms around her as well and sliding both hands onto her ass, squeezing it playfully. “We’re already talking about the future.”

“Adrian,” she said. “Go get the condoms. My keys are in my purse downstairs.”

I kissed her firmly and went to put on my pants.

- - - - -

I re-entered Olivia's house, kicking off my shoes and dropping her keys in the bowl near the door. "Honey," I called loudly in a silly voice. "I'm home."

"Get up here and fuck me," Olivia called back.

I laughed, shucking off my coat and taking the stairs two at a time. My ankles were cold - I hadn't bothered with putting my socks back on - and I had my shirt unbuttoned by the time I reached Olivia's bedroom. She'd spread some candles around and lit them, and she was kneeling on the bed, grinning like a fiend, wearing my suit jacket and no bra.

"God," I groaned, seeing her like that. "That's hot as hell."

"I would have worn your shirt instead, but you took it with you," Olivia said, motioning me in. "That'll have to be my outfit for breakfast."

"The breakfast that ends with me bending you over the kitchen table, I think you mentioned," I said as I dropped my pants and pulled off my shirt on my way to her. She stopped me at the edge of the bed, catching my hard cock with one hand and using it to pull me a little closer so she could kiss me.

"Exactly," she mumbled against my lips.

I pressed forward and she let me back her down to the bed as we made out, and then I stood back up and looked down at her as she grinned up at me. Lifting the bag from the only pharmacy in town that was open until midnight, I pulled the box out and dropped it on her stomach as she snorted and laughed.

"You got the biggest box they had, didn't you," she chuckled.

"Hey, with the promise you made? Can you blame me?"

"No," she giggled and lifted the box to look at it. "Jesus, thirty-two? I guess that'll last us a couple of weeks." She looked up at me, her eyes alight with playfulness, and I groaned and leaned back down to kiss her again.

It didn't take long at all for me to be back in position on the bed, and Olivia stroked me one-handed as she kissed me before sitting up on her knees and tearing open the box of condoms. They went flying like confetti and she swept most of them away to fall on the floor off the side of the bed. She lifted one up and opened the package carefully, pulling out the rubber and quickly sliding it onto my cock. The tight feeling of it was odd, after so long of just not having sex, but watching her carefully roll it down over my cock and then drop down to give me a suck through it as she watched me out of the corner of her eyes was a tease.

“OK,” she said. “Just one more thing.” She leaned over towards one side, reaching to the bedside table, and flashing me about half a warm, chocolate brown areola capping her breast. Coming back, she had a small bottle of lube and she quickly dripped some into her hand and stroked it up and down my condom-wrapped cock. Once it was well and truly covered she set the bottle of lube aside and sat back, biting her lip. “Sorry I made you run out by yourself,” she said. “I should have gone with you.”

“And make us both suffer the cold?” I asked. “No point. And you made your room a little more Valentine’s-y.”

“Yeah, but if I went with you I could have given you road head,” she smirked. “Thank you, though. For going, and not trying to convince me you’d pull out or something.”

I sat up, pulling her towards me and kissing her as she placed a warm hand on my chest. When we parted I leaned back and she followed me, her hair hanging like a curtain to one side as she stared into my eyes. “We’re both reasonable adults, Livvy,” I said. “And responsible. And it’s not like we were planning on doing this.”

“No, we weren’t,” she smirked a little and shook her head. “But I’m really fucking glad we are.”

“Me too,” I said and kissed her again.

“Good,” she whispered, reaching down and double-checking that I was still hard. “Then let’s get down to business, Adrian. I want this perfect cock in me.” She sat higher on her knees, grasping her panties by the waist and quickly pulling them down her thighs and then off one leg and then the other. With the candles in the room, I got a better look at her pussy now. Her warm, golden-kissed skin tone gave way to a wide, neat triangle of closely cropped pubes dusting her mound and leaving her bare below. Her lips were flushed and she wiped the last of the lube on them quickly, making them even more slick than they had already looked. She was turned on, the little bump of her clit hood standing out at the apex of her pussy, and she quickly swung a leg over to straddle my waist on her knees and leaned forward while looking down, gliding her pussy across the underside of my cock.

I groaned in approval, and she glanced back up at me with a grin before she looked down again, working her hips to drag her pussy across my cock a third time and then tilting my cock with a couple of fingers and getting me into position so she could slide on. I felt the pressure and the warmth and I was inside her quickly.

“Fuck,” I exhaled.

“Yess, Adrian,” she groaned, sitting back further. “Mmmm, that’s good.”

I ran my hands up her thighs, feeling her smooth skin, and she slowly shifted forward and up, starting to ride my cock.

“Oh, fuck,” she sighed, tossing her hair to one side and then playing with it, bringing it to the other. She was still wearing my suit jacket, her tits wiggling beneath it and teasing me like crazy, but I left them alone and focused on where we were joined, running my hands further up her thighs to grab her hips. Her toned, natural body had a delightful squish and jiggle to it without being flabby, the undercurrent of her fitness firm beneath the thin layer of softness she’d gained over the time of being a busy, single mother. She was smiling with her eyes closed, absorbed in the feeling of being filled by my cock, and I groaned as I let myself just be in the moment. She was warm and tight and so fucking gorgeous, and the gentle rocking motion was moving me inside her as well as in and out.

“You feel so fucking good,” she sighed, leaning forward and putting her hands on my chest as she opened her eyes and gazed down at me. This pushed her tits together into a mass of cleavage, but I managed to only glance at it and then meet her eyes again.

“I’m in Wonderland,” I said. “This doesn’t even feel real. God, I feel like I’m high.” I laughed.

“Uuuh,” she moaned, her mouth dropping open as she sat down a little firmer, taking me deeper into herself. I let go of her waist and brought up a hand, cupping her cheek and pressing my thumb to her lips. She smirked just a little and then sucked it in, tonguing it playfully, before I pulled it away and dropped it back down to rub the slickened digit just above her clit hood. Her eyes opened a little wider and she moaned wordlessly again, starting that riding motion once more only a little faster. She started using her hips more, stirring me inside her, and we both just watched each other as she rode me for a few minutes. We both started laughing, feeling a joy between us, and she crashed down with her chest to mine and kissed me fiercely before sitting up and leaning back, spreading her legs a little more and giving me a view of where I was entering her.

“How’s it look?” she asked. “I see so much porn for work, I know it’s hot to see the action. It *feels* fucking amazing.”

“God, it’s sexy as hell,” I said. “Your pussy is so pretty, Liv. I can’t wait to get my lips on that clit of yours again. And I love that you’re a *woman* with a woman’s pubes.”

“You like my tidy little bush?” she asked with a grin, rolling her hips while leaning back to really stroke herself on my cock.

“Abso-fucking-lutely,” I groaned. I still had my thumb next to her pussy as I held her by the crook between her leg and hip and I pressed a little, pulling her pussy a little upwards. “Fuck, it’s so hot watching your pussy grip onto my cock.”

“It’s my cunt,” she gasped. “When we’re like this, just call it a cunt. I like the dirtiness of the word when I give it to someone I want to be a slut for, and God do I want to be a bit of a slut for you, Adrian. It’s been so long since I’ve felt so...”

“Wanted,” I filled in for her, sitting up and losing my view but pulling her close and hugging her to me as she continued to roll her hips. “You make me feel *wanted* in a way I didn’t even realise I was missing.”

“That’s it exactly,” she gasped and then kissed me as she kept riding. Eventually, she pushed me back down and took the hand that I wasn’t using to tease her clit and slid it higher from her hip and up her waist under my suit coat. Using that as a bit of a stabilizer, she started working her hips faster and we really started fucking for a couple of minutes as we gasped and moaned. Then she slowed, sitting down heavily and taking me deep again, and let out a long breath. “Time to switch it up,” she said with a satisfied grin. “Just stay where you are.”

She leaned backwards, getting up off her knees and onto her feet, opening her legs even wider and giving an even more lewd and beautiful view of where we were joined. Her labia were split by my cock, the juicier pink centre between where I was entering her and her clit flashing and the cleavage of her ass slapping down onto my thighs as she started riding me again, gliding my cock against the front of her inner pussy.

“God, fuck,” she grunted. “I can’t keep this up for long but it’s so fucking good at this angle. You’re the perfect fucking size to hit my g-spot.”

I cupped my hands under her thighs and down to her ass, helping her as I could to keep bouncing on my cock. “You feel so fucking good, Livvy,” I groaned. “Fuck! And you look fucking stunning. God I wish I had six extra hands, I want to feel you all fucking over.”

The strain of the position was already getting to her and she sat down, taking me deep again and rocking with her hips as she ground her ass down against my hands. “That feels so good,” she whispered. “Your cock feels amazing, Adrian. Stretching me perfectly.”

She opened her eyes, biting her lip. “Want me to turn around?”

“I’d love it,” I said. “Though maybe it should be my turn on top.”

“Oh, you’ll get your turn,” she said as she leaned forward, pulling off of me at the same time as kissing me gently. “But that’s how I want you to finish, fucking into me hard and fast. You’re so fucking good to me, Adrian, I want to make sure you know how much I fucking appreciate everything you do.”

She kissed me again, stopping me from replying, then pivoted around while still straddling me, showing me her bare ass as she pulled the end of the suit jacket up.

I’d taken my fair share of glances at Olivia’s ass over the months. It was hard not to at least take a peek when she was wearing tight leggings, and she had a great butt. This, however, was a very different kind of look. Her cheeks were the same warm, golden hue that she got from her

mother, perfectly smooth with only a couple of soft freckles on one cheek for a blemish. It wasn't huge, but it had the juicy plumpness that spoke of a healthy, mature woman. Olivia was leaning forward though, which spread her cheeks naturally, and I knew that she knew exactly what she was doing giving me a show because she wiggled her ass enticingly. Her pussy was a gorgeous wedge, fully visible, and her asshole a pretty little dimple a couple of shades darker than the rest of her skin tone, just like the edges of her inner labial lips.

"Fuck, I want to dive in and eat you just like that," I said, reaching out and caressing her ass before giving it a little slap.

"Tomorrow morning," she said. "Or later tonight. Right now I'm not done with this cock."

She shifted some more, pulling her legs inside of mine and backing up, pressing her ass cheeks back to my thighs and cock and wiggling each cheek playfully. "Stick it in for me," she moaned softly. I tilted my cock up as she sat a little higher, and I got it into position and watched as it entered her, her lips spreading deliciously around it as she bounced gently before settling down. She grabbed both her ass cheeks, pulling them apart and giving me what might have been the lewdest view yet, then let go and leaned forward to put her hands on the bed and started working her hips and ass.

"Holy fuck," I groaned, entirely entranced by the vision and the feeling.

"God, yes," she replied, tossing her hair to the side and looking back at me. "Fuck, Adrian. Can I tell you something?"

"Anything," I grunted.

"I love getting fucked from behind. Doggy, bent over, laying down, like this - I don't know what it is but it fucking *does* it for me. Let me just bounce on this perfect cock, let me just bounce and I'll get there."

"Do it, Livvy," I groaned, grabbing her cheeks with both hands and massaging them as she bounced up and down on my cock. "Fucking get there." I gave her a gentle spank.

"Little harder than that," she grunted.

I spanked her other cheek, upping the strength just a touch, and the clap filled the room for a moment only to be replaced with her long, loud moan. "Just like that," she gasped. "Just like that."

I spanked her other cheek the same way and she sped up her riding. Occasionally she would lean back, sitting down and taking me deep again and ground her hips back and forth, and the second time she did that she unbuttoned my suit jacket and pulled it off of her, tossing it to the side.

“God, you’re a fucking tease,” I laughed. I could see the outer curves of her tits but nothing substantial.

She looked back over her shoulder at me, sticking her tongue out from between her teeth, and leaned forward again to keep riding me hard.

I spanked her every once in a while, and my eyes were constantly sliding over her body from where we were joined and up her back, to the jiggling hints of her breasts as she faced away from me, to her arms and hair.

“I’m close,” she moaned, then let out another one that was wordless and primal.

I clapped her ass cheek again and then grabbed the other one hard, pulling it aside. “Fuck, Livvy. Your ass is so fucking nice. What’ll get you there? More spanking? Reach around to your clit?”

“Finger my ass,” she moaned. “Just up to the first knuckle. Just tease it.”

I raised my eyebrows but wasn’t going to argue with that - I quickly sucked the tip of my middle finger into my mouth, got it a little spitty, and she sat down heavily and let me wedge my finger into her butt hole. I could feel her anal ring clenching down on my invading finger, and she grunted and then started riding me again.

“So close,” she gasped. “So fucking close. I’m so fucking close. You’re going to make me come, Adrian. I’m going to come on your cock, baby. *Gawd* it hits every part of me so good. Fucking- Oh, fucking- Yeeeeaaaah.” She dropped down, taking me deep as her cunt rippled over my cock and her ass cheeks clenched over and over. I did what I could, flexing my cock back at her and wiggling the tip of my finger in her ass, to extend the orgasm as much as possible for her and it seemed to work as she eventually let out a long breath and then sucked in a new one and holding it for several beats before exhaling again, her body relaxing. She reached back, patting my hand, and I took the message and removed my finger from her butt so she could lean back until her naked back was pressed to my chest and she was off of her knees, her feet braced on the bed.

“That was fucking good,” she panted.

“And hot like nothing I’ve ever experienced, Livvy,” I said, a little in awe. I felt like I hadn’t done that much, but then maybe that was exactly what I should have been doing since she knew how to get herself off.

“Are you close?” she asked.

“Won’t take me long to get there,” I said.

She pulled my hands around, directing me to grab her tits. They were big and soft, almost seeming too big for her body but I didn't feel a hint of them being fake. I quickly started massaging them, wanting to touch them all over, running my hands from their base to their tips and teasing her milk chocolate-coloured areolas and stubby, engorged nipples.

"They used to be smaller," she said, like she was reading my mind. She was flexing her ass, milking my cock with her cunt almost like I was massaging her tits. "They were perky and cute, and my areolas were a little lighter when I was younger and when I did porn. They changed through my pregnancy, and my Mom said that's just what would happen to women in our family."

"I think they look, and feel, amazing," I said, craning my neck to kiss on her neck and shoulder.

"My friends all say the same thing," she sighed. "They are obsessed with my tits when we get together, and talk about how jealous they are that I got an all-natural boob job."

I chuckled, squeezing them a little harder and making her moan. "I can't wait to see them bouncing," I whispered into her ear.

"Good," she whispered back, "Because I know what I want to happen next."

"What's that?" I asked, then nibbled on her earlobe and made her giggle from the feeling.

"I want you to get me on my back and fuck me like an absolute animal in missionary," she said. "Make my tits bounce for you, and my cunt surrender everything, and then I want you to come all over my tits and face, Adrian."

I turned her face with a finger on her chin and kissed her in the awkward position, then gave her ass one last slap for the side. "Better get off me then," I said. "Because I'm more than ready."

Olivia disengaged from me, my cock slowly pulling out of her and I got a brief look at her cunt slowly closing back up before I rolled to the side of the bed and stood, my cock a horizontal flag pole in front of me. I grabbed Livvy's foot and spun her on the bed as she laughed, and she scooted down to lounge back in front of me with her arms braced behind her. It wasn't a sexy move, there was no real grace of sensuousness to it, but for some reason I made my cock ache between her tits shifting and just how gorgeous and real I found her naked body.

I urged her a little closer, bringing her ass near the edge of the bed, and I ground the head of my cock through her labia and against her clit with one hand as I lightly slapped the side of her one breast and then gently pinched the nipple and gave it a wiggle. "My turn for some specific compliments," I said. "Livvy, your body is utterly amazing. I don't know what you looked like 'back then,' but right now you are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen naked, in real life or porn. You're such a *woman*. Your breasts, the curve of your waist and hips, your thighs, your arms - you are an absolute goddess. Your cunt, this one right here that I'm about to fuck into

oblivion, is beautiful and tasty and so fucking *good*. But the thing I'm most attracted to, the thing I first noticed about you - and probably the thing I first loved about you is your smile. Every time you smile, or grin, or smirk I am stunned for a moment because of how in utter awe I am of how pretty it is, no matter what emotion is behind it. So maybe I have a drool-worthy dick like you said, but whenever you flash me that smile I melt into a puddle on the inside."

Livvy sat up, reaching for me, and I leaned down to her and we kissed again, close and intimate and passionate. And when she pulled away a little I could tell just from her eyes that she was smiling that smile. "I'll try not to abuse my superpower," she chuckled. "But fuck you for making my heart feel so fucking full when I want my *cunt* to get filled up, Adrian."

"I can do both," I laughed and scooped my hips a little lower and pressed into her.

"Ooooh, fuck, I love that feeling," she gasped, falling back flat onto the bed. "You feel so *good* fucking into me."

"Oh yeah?" I asked. "Like this?" I pulled out of her all the way and re-entered her, getting met with a long, pleasurable groan and a nod. I did it one more time and she reached out, grabbing my hands before I could pull away again. We both pulled against each other then, using it as leverage to fuck at each other. I had most of the power and I built into a fast rhythm, thrusting into her like a machine with long, deep thrusts as she worked her hips to smash back towards me. Every thrust became a clap of the bottom of her spread thighs against my hips as we came together again and again.

The force of our fucking had Olivia's tits bouncing deliciously, but with both my hands occupied I couldn't reach out and play with them so instead I settled for focusing on my thrusting, picking up the pace even more. My orgasm was already growing close and I let out a low growl and grunt.

"That's it," Olivia panted. "Fuck! That's it, Adrian. Fucking plow me. Right there. God, right there! Fuck me, fuck me, fuck me. Uuuungh, yes. You're so fucking good. Fuck, you're such a good fuck! Why did we wait? Why the hell did we not do this sooner? God damn mother fucker shit balls fuck!"

I laughed and shook my head, breathing heavily. "Mother fucker is right. God, you are the sexiest MILF in the world, Livvy."

"Then you're the sexiest DILF," she laughed back, our joy disrupting the rhythm of our fucking. "Fuck me with that big DILF Dick, Adrian. Make me your Valentine's MILF. Hummmm, fuck, I might come again."

That sounded like a challenge to me, and I grit my teeth as I found the rhythm again and leaned in changing my angle a little and getting a bit deeper on each thrust. Olivia started letting out

little heaving moans with each thrust, her tits bouncing heavily, and I let go of her hands and planted mine on her hips. "Pull on your nipples," I ordered her.

She grabbed her tits and found her nipples, tugging on them harder than I ever would have as she moaned from deep in her throat. Then Olivia squeezed both of her breasts, her eyes scrunching closed as she tensed up and she came a third time that night, her face twisting with torturous pleasure as I pounded her relentlessly.

I managed to hold out just long enough for her to be coming down, blinking rapidly and panting to catch her breath, before my last walls of resistance failed. I pulled my cock out of her, climbing up onto the bed and over her so chaotically that I was straddling one of her legs and the other was pressed back, her knee hooking around my waist. I ripped the condom off my cock and it went flying, and I began stroking my cock fast.

"Hummm!" Olivia moaned, seeing what was happening and still twitching slightly with aftershocks of her own orgasm. "Come on my tits. Come on my face and tits, Adrian. God, fucking do it. I want it so bad." She opened her mouth, sticking out her tongue lewdly, and I released.

I hadn't been able to see how much I unloaded the first time since she'd swallowed it all down. This time I sort of blacked out, my brain feeling like it was overwhelmed by the extreme overload of pleasure as I erupted in orgasm. I had to blink my vision clear, feeling an ache in my balls and a burning in my chest, as I came down the other side, still stroking my cock as the last dribbles fell down in the centre of Livvy's chest. She was splattered with cum, like I'd let off a shotgun blast instead of ropes. Big globs of it streaked her tits, chest and up to her neck, and a couple of ropes had reached high enough to catch her chin and tongue. She looked like a Pollock painting if he'd painted on her like a canvas.

And, grinning as she saw me watching, Olivia brought her tongue back into her mouth and swallowed, and then craned her neck down and brought her left breast up and licked the cum off of her own nipple. Her tits weren't *quite* big enough to let her suck on it, but it was still fucking kinky and hot.

My brain felt fried, and I was lightheaded as hell, and I backed away from Olivia and staggered to my feet on the floor. She sat up, panting herself, and started chuckling. "What do you think?" she asked. "Good first try, or should we go again for better coverage?"

I snorted, shaking my head. "I don't think I'll ever come like that again," I panted. "Not unless you make me wait another seven years."

"More water," she said with a smile. "That's all you really need for bigger loads. Some vitamins can help too, but mostly just more water. Now get your phone, a good facial needs to be memorialised."

“Really?” I asked.

“Adrian, baby, I did porn,” Olivia said. “And there’s too much of it for me to ever get it taken down. If anyone else can stumble across my pre-pregnancy nudes, I’m damn well not letting you go without nudes of me now.”

I staggered to my pants, fishing out my phone and she posed for me on the edge of the bed. One shot with her smiling, my cum on her chin and chest, tits on display. And then another one laying back, legs spread, shot to show her slightly ruddy and well-used pussy as she spread it with two fingers, her tits and the cumshot. And a last one, with her on her knees and looking up as she gently suckled on the head of my cock.

“There,” she said, standing and moving to the candles she’d lit, blowing them out. “You’ve got more than any other man can find, just like you deserve. Now get in bed and under the covers, I’m going to wipe off and come-”

I interrupted her by scooping her up in my arms, my strength having returned during the picture-taking. “Shush,” I said. “We aren’t teenagers. I’m sweaty as hell, and you’re sweaty *and* covered in cum, and you need to take your makeup off before bed.”

She blushed, which was kind of hilarious considering everything we’d just done. “OK,” she said simply. “Take me into the shower. But I’m not going to be held responsible if I end up on my knees sucking you off again.”

“Well, I’m not going to be held responsible if I end up on *my* knees eating you out,” I countered. “I sure hope you have a good hot water tank.”

She snorted and shook her head. “We have about fifteen minutes.”

“Well,” I said. “I guess we better rush then.”

We tried, and failed. We got clean, but there wasn’t enough time after the fact for me to do anything other than get her started before the water started to turn cool and we hopped out. By the time we’d dried each other off and scampered back across the room into bed, we were both warmly horny but not in desperate need of attention. We slipped under the covers and I soon found myself cuddled up with Livvy, her bare tits pressed to my chest and her chin resting on my shoulder. Her one leg was thrown over mine, her thigh pressed to my cock, and my arm was curled under her and resting on her ass.

We lay like that in the dark for a bit, just breathing and holding each other, until I sighed.

“Your clock says it’s past midnight,” I whispered. “Valentine’s Day is over.”

“Good,” she replied. “That means anything we do going forward can’t be blamed on Cupid or a stupid corporate holiday. When I wake you up with a blowjob in a few hours, that’ll all be me.”

“That sounds amazing, but how about we *actually* get some sleep and then have some great morning sex instead? We do need to pick the girls up before noon.”

“That’s fair,” she sighed. “You know, being a responsible adult is going to make this whole thing a lot harder to feel spontaneous.”

“We can work it out,” I said, rubbing her buttcheek gently. “What are we telling people?”

“I think we keep it... I don’t know,” Olivia said. “Obviously we need to take it slow with the girls.”

“Agreed,” I said. “But you know our parents have all been conspiring, right?”

“Your sister, too,” Olivia smirked. “Honestly? I thought we’d just have dinner tonight and be laughing at them. I didn’t realise...” She took a breath. “I knew I was attracted to you since whatever-her-face’s birthday party at the start of October. Before that, I was like... aware you *were* attractive, but I wasn’t *attracted*.”

“I get it,” I said. “That first time we talked outside the school I remember thinking how stunning your smile was, but I tried to shut down any ‘feelings.’ But that kiss...”

“That kiss,” she agreed, and I could feel her smiling in the dark. “And the next one.”

I nodded. “So do we tell the truth, or torture them a little?”

“I think we torture them,” she grinned. “We had a nice dinner, you drove me home, we’re best friends and that’s all.”

“And in reality?” I asked, knowing what I was asking.

She was quiet for a moment. “I don’t want this to be the same as my first marriage,” she whispered. “I don’t want to rush things. For me, or us, or the girls. But I also don’t want to swing in the other direction and try to say we can just be casual. Will you be my boyfriend, Adrian?”

I turned slightly, getting to my side and wrapping my other arm around her while bringing my face next to hers. “I’ll be your boyfriend if you’ll be my girlfriend, and my valentine,” I said with a little grin.

“Done,” she said and kissed me.