

MAHLATSE MOKONE

Huracan



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BY MAHLATSE MOKONE

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I moved to Gauteng with one goal in mind, get a quality education and better my life. That's probably what every young person from my humble background dreams of doing. I had a theory that in order to make it in South Africa today, you had to be either street savvy, or well educated.

Me being well...me, I chose option two. So I studied hard in high school, bagged a great scholarship, and I was on my way to college. I enrolled for a degree in Actuarial Science at the University of Pretoria. Walking on the Hatfield campus of one of the most prestigious varsities in the country, I thought; 'not bad for a girl who grew up in the rural village of Marapong'.

With my dad being a teacher and my mom's blossoming seamstress business we weren't exactly dirt poor. They both worked very hard to make sure that me and my two siblings got what we needed. Living in a decent three-bedroom house, I'd be lying if I said I didn't have an awesome childhood.

Despite everything, my parents believed that we could have brighter futures they never had the chance of having. My 26-year-old big sister Marti is living proof of that vision. Having walked on the same campus I'm walking on to become an Engineer. If she could do it, hell, then so could I. She's been living in a fancy suburb in Midrand with her husband, for a year now.

Unlike her though I'm not as open and bubbly. Others may refer to me as a tad cynical, but I called myself a realist. I couldn't help it if I tried; I think I'm just wired that way. I'm fiercely focused, once I set a path for myself there's no derailing from it. I also don't take kindly to distractions. That's probably why I was studying when most of my peers 'had fun'.

So who am I?

I'm Zoe Tumi Ritsuri, and upon my freshman year in college my life was suddenly hit by a hurricane. A hurricane named Andrew Wright. They say opposites attract, but no one told me it would feel like a natural disaster.

CHAPTER 1

"Come on Kay, we're going to be late!" I called out after checking my watch. There are many things I love about my roommate and best friend, but her obsession with what to wear and how to style her hair weren't one of them. Especially when my classes start an hour earlier than hers.

Kamogelo Malete and I met the day we first moved in here and we instantly hit it off. I never really had a best friend who's a girl before but she's a gem. She's a loud and proud Mamelodi girl, I even think some of her personality has rubbed off on me. She came out of the bathroom with a small frown.

"African hair is just too much damn work." She muttered as she tucked her shoulder length weave behind her ear. I chuckled, "I don't know why you even bother." I said and she stopped gathering her books to shoot me a mock glare. "Well not all of us can sport an edgy pixie cut my friend." She said, "I'm not pretty enough to have short hair. But you totally have the whole Rihanna thing going on there." She added.

I couldn't resist rolling my eyes, "Are you kidding me?" I asked as we walked out of the room and she locked it. "I'm not the one in a sundress right now." I pointed out and she chuckled. We were coming down the hallway when we stopped to greet one of the Res guardians. "This is ridiculous, I don't get why we have to stop and greet them all the time." She muttered in a low voice.

"Well we wanted the full res experience." I said as we reached the bottom of the stairs. "I'm starting to rethink that part." She said and I stifled a smile. We lived in Greenleaf, one of the girls' residence around the main campus. It's considered a privilege to stay at any one of the varsity residences, either boys or girls. As you only get placement on academic merit alone.

But being first year students they go a little hard on us. Greeting the guardians every time we see them is just one of the many rules we are subjected to. They say the rules loosen up once you get into second year. For me though, I was more or less used to those rules now, entering my second semester.

We walked out the revolving doors of the foyer, "Oh did you hear there's a raid coming?" she said in an excited voice. That probably the only part Kay liked, that attending socials was compulsory for us. Socials are functions where we interact with students from other residences, either girls or boys. They normally came in the form of bashes, sêrries or raids.

"Are we hosting or what?" I asked, not really paying attention. "No silly, we're raiding the boys of Steenkamp." She said. "Oh yeah, we'll be going with the girls from Minooka right?" I asked and she smiled. The Minooka res is sort of like a sister to ours and we were facing off against each other in this month's sêrrie.

"The only thing we're hosting is the sêrrie, which is in two weeks and Alexa called. She says she has a routine she wants us to try out." She said, "Preferably tonight." She added. A sêrrie was a competition between two residences in three rounds of singing and dancing. The interesting part is that one res would be chosen to judge the whole competition.

This was one of my favorite socials, but I liked watching sêrries from the sidelines, not actually being in it. I wasn't so lucky this month. "You know I had plans to study tonight..." I trailed off when she shot me a warning look. "Okay fine, tell Alexa I'll be there." I said with a halfhearted chuckle.

"Good, we have to win this one Zoe." Kay said, "The last time Greenleaf competed we got our arses kicked, well not on my watch." She added as we stopped in front of the EMS building. "I like your conviction." I teased and she stuck her tongue out on me.

Just then Isaac walked up to us, "Morning girls." He said with a cheerful smile. Isaac was my classmate and sometimes we studied together, an all round nice guy. He had a t-shirt on with knee length shorts; much like me he didn't care much for appearances. Our course didn't exactly leave us with ample time to engage in trivial things.

"Hey Isaac." Kay greeted him pleasantly before he shifted his blue gaze on me "You coming?" he asked, "Yeah." I said then gave Kay a quick hug. "I'll see you later." I said and she nodded and started walking away. "Don't you dare bail." She called out to me and I waved my hand dismissively. "Bail on what?" Isaac asked as he held the door open for me.

I sighed, "Sêrrie practice." I muttered and he chuckled, "Oh yeah, I heard you are among the performers, you can be damn sure I'll be coming." He said and I playfully bumped my shoulder against his. I enjoyed Isaac's company and his jokes as we entered the lecture hall.

"Zoe could sing lead." Lucia said as I walked into the res studio, "What?" I exclaimed and everyone's head snapped to me. Just then Madeline came in and stopped to observe the scene. "What's going on?" she asked. Alexa sighed, "Lucia suggested Zoe take the lead in the third performance." She said. I stood there unmoving as Maddy frowned, "Why? What happened to Lizah?" she asked.

"She wont be performing in the sêrrie, family stuff." She said, "So now we're without a lead for our final performance." She added. I snapped out of it, looking around the studio filled with fourteen friendly faces. "We could always sing it as a group." I suggested and Alexa's brows furrowed. "You know its no good without a lead vocal." She said.

Maddy nodded her blonde bangs, "I agree, it would ruin the entire piece, and it's our best." She said. Alexa watched me with careful eyes, "Don't you dare suggest someone else, you know that except for Lizah you're the best we have." She said, "Come on." She added more pleadingly.

I looked at Maddy and Alexa, my other two beloved girlfriends. Except for Kay, they know me better than anyone else. They also know that center stage is not my comfort zone. Rethabile stood up from the polished wooden floor, "She's not budging, we need Kamogelo to intervene." She said.

Kay came in right then, "I'm here, sorry I'm late." She said then stopped dead after seeing me. "Let me guess, you asked her and she refused?" she asked Alexa, who ran a hand through her long brunette locks. "Not exactly but she didn't agree either." She said. Kay shot me a look I knew she had when she's about to guilt trip me.

"Alright, alright." I said with my hands up "I'll do it." I said and Maddy who was standing next to me, squeaked and pulled me in for a quick hug. "Okay now were back in business." Alexa said, her relief visible as everyone stood up and took their positions. As the team leader it was her duty to make sure we deliver great performances in 2 weeks time

Kay came to stand beside me on the mirrored wall as I took off my sandals, "What did I just get myself into?" I said and she shot me a sympathetic smile. "You're good, you'll do fine." She said and I snorted, "I can't do Beyoncé." I said in a hushed voice as we walked up to the group. "Yes, you can." She said, "And you will."

CHAPTER 2

"Are you sure about this?" I asked Kay as I frowned at my reflection in the mirror. "Yes, you look great. Ditch the jeans and tee look for a day Zoe." She said and I grimaced, taking another look at my appearance. Kay put me in a short white sundress with a tail, and a thin brown waist belt. A sleeveless denim jacket and brown cowboy style boots.

"Thanks to your awesome sister, you have great clothes, you just don't know how to wear them. That's what I'm here for." She said with a smile. I shook my head as I walked over to my desk and gathered my books. "What's the point of all this again?" I asked and she rolled her eyes.

"The sêrrie is a week and a half from now, and you have a persona to develop." She said, now it was my turn to roll my eyes. "I'm not a famous pop star, I'm an actuarial student." I said. "But now you can be a hot looking nerd, better right?" she said in a mockingly cheerful voice. "The girls are still on for tomorrow right?" I asked and she nodded.

"I envy you, your classes don't start till midday?" I said and she smiled, "Yep, compliments of not being a nerd. Oh, hot nerd as of today." She said and I shot her a mock glare that we both laughed at seconds later. "I'll probably hit the gym now." She said and I nodded. Unlike her and Elexa, Maddy and I both played hockey for the burning out of stress and calories bit.

I grabbed my set of keys off the small counter before giving her a brief hug, "I'm off, luv ya." I said then walked out. I found Isaac leaning against a pillar, his eyes widened when he saw me. "Um...wow." He said, waving a hand at my new look. "Not another word." I said with palpable warning. He chuckled, "They got to you huh?" he asked. "In the worst way." I muttered.

"Well I think you look great." He said and I smiled, "Aw thank you Isaac." I said giving his arm a squeeze as we walked to classes. From the very beginning he always felt like a brother to me. "You know, you're the first guy to say that to me." I said and he chuckled. "Of course I 'am, everyone else is scared shitless." He said and I pouted.

"What are you insinuating?" I asked and he shook his head a bit too quickly, "Oh nothing."

Having only two classes today Isaac and I agreed to meet at the Hatfield library at noon. We would've chosen the varsity one except it can get a bit crowded, especially during the day. I went back to Greenleaf to get my car; I loved my cute little Peugeot white hatchback. It was prize I received from the province for my academic performance.

Most of the time it stayed in the res garage, I didn't travel a lot and campus is a walk away. Although it does have great use whenever I get home sick and decide to travel back home for the weekend. And whenever I crave spicy Buffalo wings from my favorite restaurant up north.

I walked into the place and was immediately hit by the aroma of a very busy kitchen. It was around lunchtime, so people flock to places like this. I rested my hands against the counter after the last customer left. Luckily for me a familiar face helped me. "Welcome back." Dikeledi teased and I chuckled, "Hey, give me the usual, to go" I said and she nodded with a smile.

"Don't be a stranger." She said and I smiled taking the takeaway bag she packed. "I wont." I said then turned around only bump into some guy, hard. Out of shock I dropped the paper bag. I was even more shocked when I noticed that some of the curry from the wings spilled onto his very expensive looking sweatshirt.

"Oh my God, I 'am so sorry." I blurted out, "I didn't think anyone was behind me," I said, I was positive there was no one behind me. "Its alright." He said in a smooth, calm voice. "I just walked in and I wasn't paying attention." He added, crouching down to retrieve my ruined paper bag. I don't know which surprised me most. The fact that he wasn't angry I just ruined his clothes or that he was picking up after my mess.

"Can I get you something for that sir?" Dikeledi asked when he threw the bag into the bin next to the counter. "No thank you, but please do replace her meal. On me." he said and my eyebrows shot up. "That wont be necessary, I mean it was my fault..." "Please, its okay." He said and I nodded, thinking, why stop him from being nice? The world could use more people like him.

Having calmed down a bit I got a good look at my victim, and boy did I get an eyeful. The guy was gorgeous, and really tall. I just about came up to his shoulder and these boots Kay forced me to wear had a bit of heel on them. The guy obviously hits the gym, but he was on the leaner side, which made me think he was younger than I gave him credit for. Twenty-five perhaps.

Like his sweatshirt the rest of him looked expensive too, all the way down to his shiny black loafers. He has medium length brown hair with dark undertones, and his hazel eyes were every bit as striking as the rest of him. Yep he is indeed gorgeous, insanely so. Mostly I was surprised by the fact that I was genuinely attracted to this beautiful stranger.

I've come across a lot of handsome guys but I've never really been attracted to any of them much less the ones outside my own race. I don't think I have conscious preference or type; I haven't really dated enough to establish that. Well... I haven't dated at all to be exact.

Its only after I stopped studying him that I realized he was watching me with the same intensity. Chagrinned, I averted my gaze. I was pretty sure that if I could blush, would've been blood red.

"What's your name?" He asked; the question threw me so I hesitated before telling him my name. Which must've looked rather stupid. "Well my shirt and I are very pleased to meet you Zoe." He said with a blinding smile. I couldn't help letting out an uneasy laugh. Well what do you know? He has a sense of humor too. "I'm really sorry." I said in between giggles and he shook his head.

"There you go." Dikeledi said, handing me a fresh new takeaway. He was still watching me when I turned to him, "Thank you." I said, and he just nodded. I walked out still feeling his gaze on me, or was it my fluster from the entire encounter?

Outside my eye was immediately caught by a charcoal grey BMW sedan...7 Series, if I'm not mistaken. I found myself smiling a little, the tad knowledge I have of automobiles and their models is profoundly because of my car-crazed little brother. Whom—and I would never admit to his face—I missed. I carried on down the sidewalk until I reached my car.

I was starting it when I noticed that guy exit the restaurant from my rearview mirror. Walking to the BMW where a dark suited man, who was definitely older opened the door for him. They said something to each other and I saw that blinding smile of his again. He briefly looked in this direction before getting in the back of the luxury sedan.

I gave my head a slight shake, "Okay, back to the real world." I mused pulling out of the side parking. I was already five minutes late from meeting with Isaac. When I parked in front of the library I found him sitting at the steps. "Hey." I said and he looked up, "Hi, for a second there I thought you stood me up." He teased and I chuckled. "Nah, I got caught up." I said.

I looked back to my car and saw a charcoal grey BMW sedan slowly driving by, I immediately chastised myself for thinking it was the one at the restaurant. *Again Zoe, come back to the real world* I thought as Isaac and I walked into the library.

CHAPTER 3

The following day the girls and I sat together on one of the wooden tables on the campus grounds. We have all been too busy with individual things that we haven't really had time to catch up and have some much needed girl talk. Except immersing myself in my books and hockey practice, which I thought made everything else and any other feelings disappear. But I've missed them still.

We chatted and laughed; I was genuinely having a good time until Maddy stopped, "Whoa, total hottie at 2 o'clock." She said. Like the others I turned my head to my right to see whom she was referring to and I froze where I sat. The beautiful stranger I had an embarrassing encounter with at the restaurant yesterday was just coming around the Engineering building.

He had an entourage with him, or were they his friends? I wasn't sure. Well friends did not surround you like that. One girl even had her hands locked on his arm. Watching them walk over to a table a considerable distance from us, I thought, if we were in high school they probably would be the ruling clique. They looked cool, even a bit too polished in fact.

I turned my attention back to the beautiful stranger, more than anything his clothes caught my eye. They were far more casual and laid back than the business smart ensemble he had when we met. The jeans and tee he had on now made him look even younger and less imposing. I guess he didn't like flashing his obvious wealth in certain environments.

What was he doing here? I wasn't supposed to ever see him again; well I hoped I wouldn't. I looked away from him and swallowed hard. Why was my heart beating like crazy? I caught Kay watching me. She gave me a silent 'are you okay?' look and I just nodded, even offering a smile I hoped was convincing.

I was oblivious to anything the girls were saying, only catching the tail end when Alexa chuckled, "Mm that's Andrew Wright." She said. No doubt referring to my victim yesterday. "You sound like you know his story." Maddy said and Alexa nodded, "A little, his father is one of the wealthiest men in the country and he's hot so I kept up." She said.

"May I remind you that you have a boyfriend?" I said, an intended joke but I sounded a little too defensive. What is wrong with me? Alexa didn't take her relationships seriously. I knew this and it was confirmed when she rolled her green eyes and said, "Just because I have a boyfriend, doesn't mean I can't appreciate a hot looking guy when I see one."

"Ignore Zoe, you know how she gets." Kay said, which made us laugh including myself. "Spill about this guy, I've never seen him here before." She added. "Well I

heard he transferred here from Groenkloof campus, he's in his third year doing Risk and Change Management." She said. My eyebrows lifted slightly, ah hell; I was going to be seeing more of this guy than I thought. Being in the same faculty guarantees bumping into each other from time to time.

Even though a few modules we do in actuary are also done in risk management, we won't be caught dead in the same class. Him being in his second final year ensures that won't be the case with me being a first year. Gorgeous and intelligent; what combination, "How old is he?" I heard myself asking after sneaking a quick glance at him again.

"Well I think he's twenty-two." She said and Maddy was not the only one who was surprised, "Don't let his appearance deceive you." Alexa added. "How do you know this again?" Kay asked. "We went to Grey High School together, he was a senior when I was only in the 10th grade." Alexa said. She looked towards them and smiled, obvious enjoying some private joke.

"He was gracious about random girls crushing on him." She said "Despite his wealth he was never stuck up, so he never brushed me off whenever I tried making conversation." She added and we all looked at Alexa then. "What?" she asked in amused defense, "He was pretty gorgeous back then." She offered. "Still is from the looks of things." Maddy said, echoing my thoughts.

The guy sitting opposite from Andrew looked directly at us then said something to Andrew, whose attention flicked to us as well. Reflexively I looked away, "He's coming over here?" Kay asked, sounding as shocked as I felt. "He's probably coming to say hi, he must've recognized me." Alexa said, *or me* I thought dreadfully, wishing the earth could swallow me up. Or that he recognized Alexa instead.

I couldn't resist looking up when he stopped at our table; he was as impeccable as I remembered him. "Alexa Philander? Hey." he said with a smile. Alexa stood up to hug him, "Andrew Wright, it's been a while." She said then pulled away. "I'd say, how are you?" he asked and she grinned, "I'm very good." She said then looked at us like she just remembered we were there.

"Oh Andrew these are my friends." She said, "This is Maddy." She said, gesturing with a hand, "And that's Kay and..." "Zoe." He finished for her, looking right at me. He held out his hand to me and without hesitation I placed my hand in his. As if it was an unconscious reaction, second nature to me. Undeniable warmth spread all over me, I dropped Andrew's gaze to see my friends gaping at the two of us.

"You two met before?" Maddy asked and I quickly pulled my hand back, I was too tongue tied to respond. Thankfully he did, "Yes, we have." He said, and then let out a chuckle, "It was rather interesting actually." He added. "Huh." I heard Kay utter, scrutinizing my face. Obviously trying to figure out the deal between the two of us,

she was always too perceptive for her own good. And so good at jumping into conclusions. "What are you doing here Andrew?" Alexa asked, as if she didn't already know. Oh Alexa was good. I was thankful she changed the subject though.

"I recently transferred here, with Scoot over there, who says hi." He said and I looked back to see the guy who motioned Andrew towards us wave. "He's throwing a party at the lounge down Hilda Street tomorrow." He said, "We'd love it if you girls could come." He added. "I'm in." Alexa quickly said, "Me too." Maddy echoed and so did Kay. Leaving Andrew to look at me with those piercing hazel eyes again.

"Zoe?" he asked, why did I like how my name sounded coming from him? It's ridiculous. Another thing that I definitely knew was second nature to me is saying no. "Um I think I'll pass..." I trailed off, stifling a flinch when Kay kicked me under the table. I turned to shoot her a death glare but she was smiling at Andrew. "She'll be there." She said, "Excellent." He said, "We'll see you then." He added then walked away.

"I'm not going." I said to Kay decisively, "Yes you are." She said just as forcefully. "Forget that, how come you met him before and didn't even tell us?" Maddy said and Kay nodded. Suddenly I was the one being grilled, I sighed, "Well I didn't think I'd ever see the guy again." I said, "And unlike him I don't consider me spilling curry all over his fancy sweatshirt *interesting*." I added.

Alexa and Maddy both looked at me with wide eyes, Kay on the other hand laughed hysterically. "I love my best friend, she's such an adorable klutz." She said and I shook my head at her but smiled sheepishly. "He must've thought it was adorable too from the moment you two had." Maddy said, and Kay made a suggestive sound. "I wouldn't take him too seriously if I were you." Alexa said, "He's a nice guy but Andrew's a bona fide flirt."

Alexa's tone sounded a bit defensive on her part too, I couldn't be sure if she was looking out for me or if it's because she likes him. Either way she can relax, I was not going down any road with Andrew. Which brought me back to my original argument, "I'm serious Kay. I'm not going to that party." I said and she pouted. "Come on Zoe, you never go out, the only time you do is during res socials and those are mandatory."

I shook my head stubbornly and she paused a bit "I tell you what? I'll play you for it. Tennis." She said and I raised an eyebrow at her. Kay didn't play any sports, not that I know of, should be easy to beat her. "I win, you go no questions asked. And you wear what I pick out." She said, "And if I win, I don't go and you'll have to cook up a pretty good excuse why." I said and she nodded. "Deal." She said and we shook hands on it.

Maddy laughed, "This should be fun."

CHAPTER 4

'Fun' is not the word I would've used when Kay handed me a black mini dress the following night, "I saw it at Identity and I knew it would fit you like a glove." She said, "Put it on." She added sternly and I grumbled and went into the bathroom. Initially I didn't see myself losing that tennis match but Kay shocked the girls and me when she beat me without breaking a sweat.

"How the hell were you able to beat me?" I called out to her and I heard her laugh, "I used to play tennis in high school." She said. I slipped on the one shoulder shiny LBD she gave me, "You never told me you played." I said in an accusing tone. "Exactly." She said, "It always works in your favor to have people underestimate you." She added. "Well, another life lesson learned." I muttered walking out.

She gestured for me to turn around, "Perfect." She said, I tugged at it "I don't know Kay, it's a bit too short and tight for my liking." I said and she gave me an exasperated look. "We had a deal." She reminded me. "I know." I mewled. "You trust me right? I would never make you look trashy." She said. "You look hot, with the right amount of class." She added walking over to the built in cupboards.

"Now for shoes." She said then retrieved studded silver stilettos. I immediately shook my head, "Think of it as a practice run, don't forget the sêrrie in no less than a week's time." She said, "And you'll have to perform in one of these bad boys." She added. I was dreading the sêrrie with each passing day now. I put on the heels, watching her sassy walk towards the small dressing table.

She was ready and looking beautiful in a red high waist mini skirt, black tank top and black pumps. "Come on now lets do your make up, we don't want to be too late, just fashionably late." She said, and I didn't even have the energy to argue myself out of that one. She was just about done doing my eyes when she said, "I love your lite skin tone, it really makes the whole smoky eyes thing work." She said, "On me it just makes me look like a zombie."

One of Kay's few faults is her own inability to recognize how beautiful she really is. At one point I told her as much and she just replied, 'sounds more like you than me.' "Listen." She suddenly said with a bit of seriousness, bringing me out of my reverie. "I think this Andrew guy likes you and Alexa will not be pleased about it." She added.

For a moment I was too baffled to speak so she continued, "I'm afraid that will cause some tension between the two of you, then again I don't want that to stop you. I don't want to take sides but I'm looking out for you so be careful." She said. "Of who?" I managed to ask. "Both." She said and I took a moment to process that.

"I don't care if Alexa likes him or not, we're good friends and that's not going to change." I said, "As for Andrew, I'm pretty sure you're wrong about him liking me

but it doesn't matter anyway. Nothing's going happen between us, ever." I said, sure of it. As magnetic as he is, I knew I could never handle him. There's a specific breed of girls who can manage the likes of him but I wasn't one of them. He seems like a guy who consumes everything in your life. I can't afford that.

"Ever?" she said, "I don't think you or Alexa will have any control over that." She added and I frowned, "You're bullshitting me now." I said; what was she trying to say? That something will happen between Andrew and I, and I won't have a say in it? Not happening. Kay smiled, "Forget I said anything." She said and I shook my head at her. She leaned back to review her handiwork "You look great!" she said, "Now let's go party."

We met up with Maddy and Alexa down at the lobby and they both looked shocked at what Kay did to me. "Don't look at me, I lost a freaking tennis match." I muttered to them. We took Kay's car and when we arrived at the lounge I felt a slight twinge of nervousness. I blamed it on my lack of experience with the nightlife. We had to go through two imposing men in order to enter which I thought was ridiculous. But once inside I saw why.

They were definitely going for the A-list party theme type thing. The place looked more or less like a nightclub but a bit on the old fashioned laid-back mood. There weren't too many people here too, so I figured others weren't coming given that we're fashionably late. The music wasn't too loud which I liked. "There they are." Alexa said, motioning towards Scott, Andrew and the rest of their posse.

"Hey guys." Alexa said when we reached them, "Ey look whose here." Scott said cheerfully "Glad you could make it." He added. "Thanks for inviting us." Maddy chimed in, "Well actually Andrew did." He said motioning towards his friend on the seat adjacent to him. Who sat quietly observing us while slightly circulating a glass with clear white liquid in it, which was clearly not water. I've never really thought of a guy drinking as sexy, until now. His lips curved up at the mention of his name. "But it's no prob." Scott added.

"You girls clean up nice." Andrew drawled, taking a sip of his drink, lifting eyes to gaze at me over the rim of his glass. For one sickening and exciting moment I felt completely naked in front of his eyes. I self-consciously tugged at the hem of my skirt, I guess ensuring it was still in place. I turned to Kay, "Let's get a drink." I said to her while the others thanked Andrew for his compliment.

Kay probably unconsciously knew what I needed then because she just walked away with me without another word. It was probably rude but I didn't care, being around Andrew throws me off my element for some reason. "And by a drink you mean sparkling cider?" she asked and I chuckled, "Of course, you're driving." I said and she

pouted. "But you can drive." She said and I shook my head, "No that's not the plan." I said, "You're being difficult for no reason." She grumbled. I smiled, "And that's why you love me," I teased and she had to stifle her smile.

I was enjoying my night, and then I quickly regretted not accompanying Kay to the bathroom when some guy came to stand right beside me. He started making random conversation, that I didn't really mind until he started hitting on me. I didn't notice Andrew come up to us until he smiled at my suitor kindly, but it had a dangerous edge to it. "Take this back to the bar for me Benny, thanks." He said to him, command clear in his pleasant tone. Benny took Andrew's glass and walked away, looking as baffled as I felt.

Did this guy actually think the world was at his service? Somehow I wouldn't put it passed him, he seems like he has an ego that stretches on for days. Unfortunately that revelation did not dampen the unwelcome attraction and fluster I seem to feel whenever he is close. He leaned against the wall, turned towards me, "Zoe." He said in greeting. "Andrew." I said in the same tone.

He held out his hand towards me, *what the fuck!* I thought to myself when I put my hand in his again like I did at campus. This time he surprised me when he raised it to plant a lite kiss to my knuckles. I was too stunned to pull away, "I never thought I'd see you again." He said letting my hand go. *Me too* I thought irritably, "Well, here I 'am." I said, "How's your shirt?" I asked and he chuckled.

"It's surviving." He said and I stifled a smile. "You look beautiful." He added and I forced myself to meet his gaze. I wasn't going to succumb to these silly feelings and start acting coy, if that's what he's expecting. "Thank you." I said a bit forcefully. Scott walked up to the small stage next to the bar area and engaged the crowd. He then introduced The Arrows and they walked onto the stage, much to the excitement and disbelief of the crowd.

For me it seemed a bit unreal that one of the biggest pop and dance group in SA would come and perform here. Then again I'm at the rich kids' party, instead of playing the records like normal people. They can actually afford to get the artists to perform the songs live.

"Tell me Zoe, what does a guy have to do to get you to dance?" Andrew asked and I shook my head, "I'm not much of a dancer." I said, thinking I have to get away; his delicious woodsy and musky scent was starting to wrap itself around me like a freaking blanket. "I find that hard to believe." He said and I shrugged. "You should ask that girl over there." I gestured towards some blond whose probably been willing Andrew to look her way. "She seems more than willing." I added.

Huracan

Hoping he'd at least turn to look at her so I could make my escape, but he didn't move an inch. "Yet here I 'am with you." He said softly, sounding as if it's a revelation even to him. He held my gaze like a vise and this time I wanted to look away but couldn't. I thanked the heavens when Maddy walked up to us excited and bouncing to the song playing.

"Oh my gosh, I cant believe you guys got The Arrows to perform, they sound amazing." She said to Andrew who smiled and nodded after being forced to release my gaze. For a moment I thought he looked irritated that she interrupted us. I saw an opening then, "Actually Maddy, our friend Andrew here is in need of a dance partner." I said, "Help him out." I added just before I walked away.

CHAPTER 5

I was sitting with Maddy watching people have fun on the dance floor, whom one of them was my best friend Kay. Alexa was sitting with Andrew and his group of friends, I avoided looking in that direction as often as I could. The DJ turned the music down and announced that there's another surprise performer.

This time it was my personal favorite Micasa, "Whoa, they've really gone all out." Maddy said as the crowd went crazy when they started playing their latest hit. "I know." I said incredulously. Kay charged towards me then, "You are so coming to dance with me," she said, grabbing my hand. I shook my head, "Come on, this is our jam." She said, its true we were both obsessed with the song.

Maddy waved us away with an excited look on her face when Kay tugged me towards the dance floor. She started dancing "Just forget everyone else, imagine we're cleaning our room dancing along to this song." She said then did one of our moves. Kay's infectious nature had me laughing and dancing along with her. For a moment I did forget everyone else and it was just my best friend and I having tons of fun.

I noticed a few people had stopped to watch Kay and I towards the end of the song. We high fived each other laughing when we finished our little dance, while the crowd cheered for Micasa, some even cheered for us. I had to ruin my buzz by looking towards Andrew's table and finding him watching me. Alexa was nowhere to be found, which was weird because she was sitting with them.

"Oh my God, you two are amazing." Maddy squealed when we came back to her, "You were amazing." She said to me, "If you do anything remotely similar to that at the sêrrie, we are going to win." She added. Kay nodded. "I told you that with the right nudge, we'd have our superstar." She said and my brows furrowed. "Okay, what? This was all a plan to test if I could do well in the sêrrie?" I asked. "Well, the girls were having doubts if you could let go and perform next Saturday." Kay said, "That cleared things up didn't it?"

"You two are despicable." I said to them and they both laughed. "Where's Alexa?" I asked, "Oh she was sitting with Scott and everyone there, but she stood up suddenly. Probably went to the bathroom." Maddy said, sounding unsure herself. After a short while I found myself on the balcony of the lounge looking down at the party below. I looked down at my friends having a drink at the bar, glad to see Alexa with them.

My gaze shifted to my right to see Andrew walking up to me, he leaned his forearms against the railing and looked at me. "Why do I get the feeling your avoiding me?" he teased. "Well you're being paranoid." I replied in a sure voice but that's exactly what I'm doing. "Prove it, come with me," he said and my brows furrowed, was he kidding? "Come where with you?" I asked and he smiled, "You'll see."

"Why should I trust you enough to go anywhere with you?" I asked, if I was honest, with that devastating smile I'd go anywhere with him. I was normally wary of people, so my eagerness to be around him sent off alarm bells in my head. "I assure you I'm not a serial killer." He teased, "Besides you're proving me wrong, right?" he added. I shook my head at him, "You're good." I said sarcastically, going ahead of him. He chuckled after me, "No, I'm paranoid apparently."

Andrew took me to the rooftop of the building, "Are we even allowed to be up here?" I asked him and he smiled, "I don't think so." He said, "But you don't care, I presume?" I teased, he shook his head and I couldn't help but chuckle at that. "Wow." I said, taking in the lights of Hatfield. I never thought the town could look this amazing, I even saw the legendary Union Buildings, they looked majestic from here.

"Where are you from?" he asked and my gaze snapped to him, I paused before I told him. We spoke for a while and I stopped myself before I could start spilling about personal things I didn't even discuss with the girls. "Why am I telling you this again?" I asked, more to myself than him. He smiled, "Because you want to." He said. "I have to go." I said but he grabbed my arm before I could move away.

I froze, one, because the rush I got from his hand on my skin surprised me. Two, because he's the only guy to ever physically try to hold me back. He let go of my arm, "I like you." He said and I met his gaze, "Go out with me." he added. My heart was beating out of control when I said, "No." my voice sounding more confident than I thought possible. Mainly because I've said no to so many guys so often, that it's the only thing that will never waver.

Andrew chuckled, seeming unfazed "You don't mess around, do you?" he said, not really a question needing an answer. "Good, neither do I." he added. I raised an eyebrow at him, "You challenging me?" I asked. He shrugged, "I'm just saying that I always get what I want." He said. Now it was my turn to chuckle, "Word of advice, don't waste your time chasing me, I cannot be caught." I said.

He cocked his head to his side, watching me intently and I got that feeling of being exposed in front of him again. "Why is that baby girl?" he asked softly and I stifled a flinch at the endearment. "Because I don't want to be." I said and I walked away. "You're not much of a dancer huh?" he called out to me, making me stop right before the roof access door. "You know this relationship isn't going to work if you're not honest with me Zoe." He added. I shook my head at him, "You're crazy." I said and I thought I saw him smile as I turned and walked through the door.

When I caught up with the girls back in the lounge they seemed ready to leave, much to my gratitude. I didn't think I was welcome here anymore after having called one of the hosts crazy. "Where were you? We looked everywhere." Kay said when she pulled out of the parking spaces. I figured it would do no good to tell them about my little rooftop encounter with Andrew. They would blow it out of proportion when I'd

rather just forget it ever happened. "I went to the bathroom, I guess I took my time. Sorry." I said. Alexa sounded skeptical when she said, "Really? I could've sworn I last saw you on the balcony." She said and I just shrugged. Hoping she'd let it go and she did, so did Kay after shooting me a skeptical look of her own.

After saying bye to Alexa and Maddy, Kay and I snuck back to our room before she said, "Okay, be honest, where were you? Really?" As we changed. I sighed; I knew it wasn't over, not with Kay. "I told you I was in..." I stopped when she put her hands on her hips stubbornly. "Alright, I was with Andrew." I said and her eyebrows shot up. "Wow, that I didn't see coming." She said, "Yeah, me too." I muttered.

"What happened?" she asked, "He took me up on the roof, and he said he liked me and that he wanted to take me out." I said, almost not believing my own ears. "Please tell me you said..." "I said no." I cut her off. "What?" she chastised. "I thought you said to be careful of him." I pointed out and she shook her head. "But that doesn't mean you can't enjoy some of that eye candy girl." She said. "Well what did he say then?"

"He practically hinted that he'd change my mind." I said, "The guy is so sure of himself, he said 'our relationship is not going to work if I'm not honest with him'." I said. Kay laughed, "Go Andrew." She said and I glared at her. "Whose side are you freaking on?" I said and she stifled her laugh. "Yours, but its about damn time a guy had the guts to shake you up a bit." She said, "I'm sorry but I'll be rooting for him to win this one." She said.

"Some friend you are." I muttered sarcastically, "I'm awesome I know." She said going into the bathroom.

CHAPTER 6

By Tuesday afternoon I was pretty sure Andrew was going to make good on his promise to chase me. Why he'd even try I had no idea, I was pretty sure some girls would kill just have him spare them a second look let alone 'chase' them. I was sitting on the campus park table, with my earphones on, flipping through my books. My gaze was brought up when he made himself comfortable opposite me.

"Hey" he said with that gorgeous smile of his. I took a measured breath, "Hi." I replied trying to sound disinterested. He obviously wanted to get under my skin and he was succeeding but that doesn't mean he had to know that. "You never really told me what you're studying." He said, I almost rolled my eyes given that I already told him too much by my standards.

"Actuarial science." I said and he smiled, "Beauty and brains. I like." He said and my gaze couldn't help narrowing. "Don't you have something better to do?" I muttered. I figured the only way to defuse Andrew was to treat him with indifference but he constantly proves to be able to counter that plan. He smirked, "Actually I was on my way to class." He said "And I thought I'd properly say hi this time." He added.

Of course yesterday we saw each other in front of the EMS building but he was chatting to one of his friends. He winked at me and I hated the thrill that small flirtatious gesture induced. "I was hoping you would make my day before I go." He said, and I knew exactly what he was referring to. "No." I said again. "Come on Zoe, I'm dying tomorrow." He teased and I couldn't help but smile slightly. His sense of humor was by far more devastating than his other attributes for me.

"Really? Aw you poor thing." I said, stacking up my books and standing up, "But do extend my greetings to everyone in heaven or hell, which ever one." I said and he laughed, which was a sound I could see myself getting used to. "That's cold." He said, "That's just how I 'am," I said. His hazel gaze intensified, "I could warm you up though." He murmured and I paused a little.

As much as I'd like to feel offended by Andrew's suggestive comments sometimes, I didn't. They just made the pit of my stomach clench and my heart beat faster, something I'd never experienced with a guy before and I certainly didn't like. "Enjoy your classes Andrew." I said evenly before walking away.

I spent a majority of Wednesday studying for my test on Friday, I also had two classes during the day and I didn't see Andrew during that time. I wasn't sure if was bordering on being relieved or disappointed. Later that evening the girls and me went to the mall after sêrrie practice. We mainly shopped for our costumes, the

whole group decided on them and that it would be the individual's effort to buy them.

I picked out the last costume, we'd agreed on a white tank top and denim shorts, red stilettos and red lipstick. Alexa looked at the clothes I had and frowned, "What are you doing?" she asked, baffled I said, "Getting my costume." She shook her head, "You're lead, you cant look like the rest of us." She said then disappeared to another section. She came back carrying a white pleated mini skirt. "Wear this instead." She said handing me the garment.

"Are you kidding me? I have to wear a skirt when the rest of you wear pants?" I asked and apparently that struck a sensitive chord in Alexa. "Just wear the damn skirt Zoe, it's just for a few minutes." She snapped. Shocking the rest of the girls and me to silence. She paused, "I'm sorry, I had a bad day." She said and I nodded, "Okay. Want to talk about it?" I asked and she shook her head.

They girls decided to catch a movie afterwards but I decided to go back to my room and catch up on studying. I put the costumes in the cupboards and grimaced at them before closing it. Alexa's attitude is what really has me on edge, was I imagining the rift between my friend and I? One thing I refuse to do is believe that it's because of Andrew, like Kay suggested a week ago.

The following day I had more classes than yesterday and still I didn't see Andrew, I allowed myself to believe he finally gave up. I wasn't sure how I felt about that but it wasn't anything new me. Some guys tried but with time they gave up, that's the norm. I arrived at hockey practice in time to change into gear. I met up with Maddy who was sitting on the locker room bench, tying up her shoes.

I grabbed my dark blue hockey dress; it had the red, white and yellow colors of the varsity; the name Tuks in front and the number 10 at the back. "You know, that dress is just as short as the skirt you bought yesterday." Maddy said when I'd changed into it. "You just had to point that out?" I said and she chuckled. "I'm just trying to make you feel better." She said, "Just letting you know its nothing you haven't worn before." She added.

I rolled my eyes at her and grabbed my hockey stick after tying my shoes, "Come on lets go." I said. Playing hockey was by far my favorite hobby, it made me feel good and it kept my thoughts away from unpleasant things. It didn't give me time to dwell on stress and workload. People would come to the hockey ground to watch some of the practice matches. Others just come to chill but today the crowd was a bit bigger than normal.

They started leaving when the match ended but others remained, we were high fiving each other when Maddy came to me before we could go down to the locker room. "Looks like you have a stalker." She said excitedly, I looked at her confused

until she pointed towards the stadium seats. It took a moment to realize that Andrew was sitting there, alone no less. He waved at me smiling; I looked away cursing inwardly. Had he been here the entire match? He just had to come back when I'd accepted a no Andrew daily life.

Maddy made a suggestive sound, "Is there something brewing between you two?" she asked, "No." I said, way too quickly. "He's just following me for no good reason." I muttered. She raised an eyebrow, "And you're upset about it?" she asked, shifting her brown gaze back to Andrew. "I don't know about you but he can stalk me anytime." She said and I shook my head at her.

"I'll go deal with him." I said handing her my stick, "I'll be right back." I added. "Yeah girl, you go deal with all that hotness." She called out after me and I shot her an admonishing glance over my shoulder. I walked towards him, up the stairs and onto the fifth row of seats. I stopped in front of him, folding my arms. Andrew had to bend his head back in order to meet my gaze.

Somehow towering over him like that for once made me feel powerful. If I was completely honest with myself, seeing him also felt good, not seeing him for the past two days left me feeling oddly restless. I then reminded myself that I had to shoo him away. "What are you doing here?" I said and he smiled, "Well hello to you too Zoe." He said. "You haven't answered my question, are you following me?" I asked and he sat back on the seat but still looked up at me.

"You know I'm starting to think you like seeing me from time to time." He said and I rolled my eyes, "You're clearly delusional." I said and he feigned shock. "What now a guy can't come and watch a good hockey match without being accused of being delusional?" he said. "Besides—" he brought his hazel gaze down the length of my body "—I like these short hockey dresses, they cling in all the right places." He said and I couldn't fake my shock.

"Now I know you're a pervert too." I said, trying to mask my self-consciousness. Why do I sometimes feel like his gaze is undressing me? It didn't make me feel like sexual prey, it just...excited me, which is much worse in my book. He chuckled softly, "Paranoid, crazy, delusional, perverted." He said, "Have anymore names to call me baby girl?" he added. I paused for a minute; suddenly acknowledging that he was a tough one. "Stay away from me Wright." I said and turned to walk away.

He held my wrist, stopping me, "Go out with me first." He said, "Not happening." I replied, pulling my hand back. He leaned his forearms against his knees, the short-sleeved tee allowing me a view of his impressively toned and muscled arms. Yeah, he definitely hits the gym or plays a lot of sport. "I'm not going to stop, just so you know." He said, "Just so *you* know. Most guys would've gotten the hint already, its better that way." I said.

"But I'm not most guys." He said arrogantly, "And better for who? I want you Zoe." He said and a warm shiver ran down my spine but I ignored it. Focusing on my anger instead, "And you always get what you want, right?" I said, letting my sarcasm fly. "Then that makes you exactly like every asshole who thinks he's entitled to everything he sees." I added bitterly. "But I guess you reckon you have more class because you're in Gucci." I spat, "Leave me alone."

I walked away and he didn't stop me this time, he looked too shocked to do so. Hell, I even shocked myself. But I had to get rid of him, if that meant acting like a total bitch then so be it. I could feel my heart sinking as I walked back into the locker rooms; I decided not to dwell on it, ever. Maddy looked up at me with bouncing eyes, "What happened?" she asked.

I sat down, untying my shoes "He won't be bothering me anymore." I said, my voice sounding oddly lifeless. Maddy's brows furrowed, "Geez, what did you do?" she asked. *Of course I 'am, everyone else is scared shitless.* Isaac's words suddenly popped into my head. I didn't get what he meant then but I did now. This revelation induced a humorless laugh out of me, a laugh sounding sad rather than pleased. "I scared him away." I said. Maddy paused, giving me an odd look; I guess she didn't find it funny.

CHAPTER 7

After writing our test Isaac and I walked down the pavement, discussing it. We both only had good things to say in regard to it. I was glad we both did well on it; these tests are crucial towards our year mark. No matter how big or small.

"So now your next focus is the *sêrrie*? Are you ready for it?" he asked and I let out a chuckle, "As ready as I'll ever be." I said. "Me and a few of my mates will be coming to offer some moral support." He said and I laughed, "Aw what a good friend you are." I said sarcastically and he chuckled. His gaze suddenly snapped over my shoulder, that's when I felt someone come up from behind me.

Instinctively I knew it was Andrew, before his now familiar scent hit me. "Howzit." He greeted Isaac, *shit!* I thought. He's angry; I don't know how I could tell because he looked friendly and pleasant. But I could feel the tension radiating from his body somehow. I couldn't blame him for being pissed after I practically threw crap onto his face yesterday, undeservedly no less.

"You don't mind if I borrow Zoe?" He said but it didn't sound like a request. Isaac shook his head, looking at me. "I'll see you tomorrow." He said and I just nodded, my mouth too dry to speak. He walked away and Andrew turned to me, his eyes calm but there was something bubbling beneath. "I don't have classes today, but I drove here to speak to you." He said, "I don't want to talk." I said, my voice sounding surprisingly small. "Tough." He said grabbing my arm and he started walking.

I didn't want a scene so I just went with him, he didn't seem to care either way. My heart was beating like crazy. I knew I was going to get what's coming to me but I wasn't scared of him ever harming me. Andrew has class and it's not because he's rich, I knew it even when I hinted otherwise. He stopped behind the Conference Centre and let me go.

If it's privacy he wanted then it couldn't get more private than back here, "You don't get to drag me around like that, I will report you for manhandling." I grumbled. "Funny, since I should report you for slander." He retorted. "How dare you make such conclusions about me, you don't know me well enough." He added. "But what you see is what you get, right?" I said and he frowned.

"Wrong, because all I see now is a bona fide ice queen who's not worth all my trouble." He said with an icy tone and I couldn't stifle a flinch. I'd heard that one before, but coming from him cut me deep. I tried to move past him but he blocked my way. "But that's not the real you." He said, "How do you know?" I asked, my voice sharp from the hurt caused by his previous words.

He smiled tenderly "That's the thing, I don't." he said, "But I'd like to find out." He added softly. I realized then just how dangerous Andrew Wright is to my sanity, how

dare me? “No, how dare *you* try to force your way in where you’re not welcome.” I mildly shouted at him, hating how my voice broke at the end. He raised his hand to my cheek as if to touch me but he dropped it, “I’ve got you figured out baby girl.” He said, “You’re going to let me through those walls.” He added and I stared at him.

There was something in the way he said it, that it sounded almost prophetic and that scared me. I walked away without another word when he stepped out of my way.

“Ten minutes ladies.” The res guardian said to us and Alexa gave her the thumbs up. That’s the time we have left to do some final rehearsals. Before other people started arriving, and of course Minooka who we were facing off against. Our sizable res theater was going to be the host for this month’s sêrrie. “Perfect.” Alexa praised when we finished, “We look good, I don’t see how we couldn’t do well tonight.” She said.

“Whose ready to win this thingy?” she asked and the girls cheered as we walked out the studio. We went to the theater backstage rooms to get ready for our first performance, the girls from Minooka were also preparing. We could hear the crowd getting thicker and louder outside. It was oddly exciting and nerve-racking. Ironically enough our first outfits were our res’ green and white uniform.

Even though Greenleaf is going second, Kay and I couldn’t resist peeking through the curtains, “People came in their numbers hey.” I said and she nodded, I peeked again, seeing them take their seats. “Well its free entertainment.” Kay said and I chuckled, “So who is judging us? I never got to finding out,” Kay asked. “Oh, some boys res.” I said, “Leeds, I think.” I added and Kay’s jaw dropped.

“What?” I asked alarmed now, “Nothing.” She said quickly, “What? Tell me.” I said and she bit her lip. “Andrew stays at Leeds.” She said and now it was my turn to gape, “What?” I wheezed. “But that doesn’t mean...” “Yeah I know, but with my luck it’s pretty likely.” I said. Just then the crowd went crazy as some guy walked onto the stage. “Good evening everybody!” he said and applause erupted, “My name is Thato Mokwena From Leeds and I’ll be your MC for this sêrrie between Greenleaf and Minooka.” He said and people cheered.

I listened with my heart in my throat as he explained how the competition would commence. “Now as the judging res it was our responsibility to supply three judges for tonight’s performances. Now these guys were chosen by all the boys from Leeds.” Thato said, “Make some noise for our first judge, Jimmy Napo.” He said and paused while the crowd cheered, “Show some love for Ian du Plessis.” He said, “Now let me hear you scream for Andrew Wright.” He added and my heart sank.

“I knew it, the universe is out to get me,” I said, “Okay, just pretend he’s not there.” Kay said and I raised my eyebrows at her. “Pretend he’s not there? He’ll be sitting in

the table right in front of the stage." I said with a panicked voice. "He and I are not exactly on the best of terms." I added. Kay frowned, "I don't think he'd judge us based on his own personal feelings." She said, I knew it too but it didn't make me feel better. Kay eyed me for a while, then her eyebrows shot up, "You like him, a lot, don't you?" she said and I paused.

"Ah don't throw that in my face now Kay." I mewled and she held up her hands, "Okay, just breathe deep." She said and I did. I started calming down a bit when the MC introduced the Minooka girls first. I focused on them and their performance instead. They sounded really good, but I thought we could hold our own.

After their performance the crowd cheered and we got in our positions behind the curtain after they came backstage. "You okay?" Kay whispered to me and I nodded actually telling the truth. The music to 'Girls' by the Sugababes started before the curtain rolled up. I thought the song was great for the first performance.

It showed off our vocal skills as a group as well, we sounded great when our voices echoed through the theater. The routine for this number wasn't as hectic as the last two. I didn't even try to overthink it, even when I glanced at the judging table. Sêrries were supposed to be fun and I wasn't about to rob myself of that. The crowd cheered when we finished our song.

We went backstage with a good vibe; it was also chaotic with everyone changing costumes and make up while Minooka did their second performance. For our second song 'Express' by Christina Aguilera we had to put on a bit of lace. The routine in itself was a little sexy with us using chairs as props. We got in position after Minooka and waited for the curtain to rise.

We drew out some hoots from the crowd when we prolonged our pause; I fixed my black hat lower over my eyes. Thinking I had this last performance to tap into my 'persona' as Kay likes to say. Kimberly killed the opening solo and I wondered if I'd be able to measure up.

"Oh my God, did you hear the crowd?" Maddy said excitedly backstage as she applied her red lipstick. "They went crazy for that number." Alexa chimed in. "Kim was great on it." She added. "Yeah wait 'til they get a load of Zoe." Kim said squeezing my shoulders and I chuckled. As if I could top the bar she set out there. Our last song was 'Grown Woman' by Beyoncé and I felt both excited and nervous when I took my position in front.

CHAPTER 8

The girls backstage were piling me in all kinds of directions, "That was amazing! You were great!" Maddy pulled me into a tight hug. "Wow girl, you were fierce and sexy." She added. I laughed, "I can never show my face in class again thanks to you guys" I teased and they all laughed. "Everyone went ballistic, we got a freaking standing ovation." Kay said and everyone hooted.

"Bringing the other girls from the crowd onto the stage was risky but it was genius." Alexa said with a smile and I chuckled. Towards the end of the song I brought the Greenleaf girls onto the stage to dance along to the song. It was a real crowd pleaser and it was fun because it was raw and unrehearsed individual dancing. "I love how the crowd was singing the chorus even after the curtains closed on us." Kim said, "It was sick."

We waited backstage as the judges finalized their decision and the MC, Thato brought the two residences out on stage afterwards. None of us had changed from our last costume; we stood on each side of him. "The judges have made their decision." He said, as one of the judges handed him an envelope, we were holding hands when he opened it. "And the winner of this month's sêrrie is—" he took a long pause, "Greenleaf!" he shouted.

Pandemonium erupted within the whole theater, "Congratulations to the winners Greenleaf and Minooka for giving us a stellar show" Thato said, The girls from Minooka took one last bow before going off the stage. He brought out Alexa and interviewed her as team captain. He called me out as well, "Yeah go ahead, she was great, right?" he said and the crowd cheered louder. "Damn girl, you want to put Beyoncé out of business or what?" he asked and I chuckled.

"No, that's not happening. Ever." I said and the crowd laughed a little. "Who came up with the choreography?" he asked, "Um Alexa of course but myself and Kim over there chucked in as well." I said. "Awesome stuff, well done." He said and I went to rejoin the girls. "Now as the winners this month, each of you will receive five hundred rand cash voucher and of course take home the coveted Sêrrie Champion trophy." He said and everyone cheered again.

"If I could ask the judges to come award the prizes." He said and all three of them stood up from the table "To you all, you've been amazing, from me Thato Mokwena goodnight!" he said and music erupted in the theater. After handing us the vouchers and trophy we got off stage to celebrate. Alexa took the trophy to one of the guardians. That's when I spotted Isaac.

I went over to him, "Whoa, put it there." He said, holding up his hand and I gave him a high five then he hugged me. "Who was that person up there? I could hardly recognize her," he said and I chuckled. "Oh come on I wasn't that different." I said

and he nodded, "You were fantastic. I'm glad I came." He said. "Where are your friends?" I asked and he looked back. "Oh they took off, apparently there's a special bash your res is throwing in celebration." He said. "I was actually about to follow them but I wanted to see you first." He said.

"Aw thank you." I said, "You should go ahead though." I said, "I'll see you on Monday." I added then we hugged one last time. I turned after he'd gone and I noticed Andrew watching me; I realized how bad I felt about what I said to him at hockey. I felt that it's only fair to apologize. He stared at me when I stopped in front of him, "Hey." I said, still unsure of myself. "Hi." He said then looked passed me.

"Do I have competition?" he asked, cocking his head towards Isaac who was going through the theater doors, "Should I be worried?" he said. I couldn't help but smile, "No, you don't have to worry." I said, deciding to humor him for once. He smiled, "Congratulations." He said, "Thank you." I replied. "You just had to be a judge and not tell me?" I teased and he chuckled, "Now where's the fun in ruining the surprise?" he said and I shook my head at him.

"You surprised me too, I saw you dance but I never thought you sang just as well." He said, I did love the look on Andrew face in certain stages of the song. "Well there's a lot you don't know about me," I said, oh gosh was I flirting with him? He smiled, "I can see that." He said. Just then Kay came up to us. "We're going to the bash, you guys coming?" she asked.

I shook my head, "No, I'll just go back to our room, I'm tired." I said and she nodded then looked at Andrew who declined as well. Kay said goodbye telling me not to wait up, I chuckled watching her bounce off. "Why aren't you going?" I asked; the theater was almost empty now. "Well I have to walk you to your room." He said and I chuckled. "Aw what a gentleman you are." I said sarcastically and he chuckled letting me go ahead of him.

"I'm sorry about what I said at hockey." I said as we walked into my floor, the hallways were empty with almost everyone at the bash. I had taken off my red heels and now carried them in one hand along with my voucher. "Its okay." He said, "I promise I'm not that mean." I said and he chuckled. "I figured." He said. I unlocked my room, "You can come in if you want." I said, not really wanting him to leave just yet.

"I always had a theory that girls res' were better than ours, I know its true now." He said closing the door behind him and I chuckled. "You want something to drink?" I asked, turning to him after dropping my keys on the small table in the sitting area. "No, thank you." He said. "You're really tall." I thought aloud and he chuckled, "Um thanks?" he said and I chuckled. "No, it's a good thing. I'm personally into tall guys." I said without thinking.

Why did I just say that? I thought irritably, he seemed taken aback as well, then nodded slowly “Good to know.” He drawled and we both stared at each other. Next thing I knew he leaned down to kiss me; I was too shocked to pull away. Another reason was that I didn’t really want to, his lips felt amazing against mine.

He pulled away abruptly, “I’m sorry, that was out of line.” He said. Then I guess was out of line too when I pulled his head back down to resume our kiss. His arms came around my waist when I stood on my tiptoes. I don’t think we were both thinking when the kiss grew more urgent. We’ve been driving each other crazy for a week and a half now. From the looks of things we were both releasing some pent up frustration and tension into the kiss.

I didn’t realize I was still holding my heels until they fell down when he picked me up, my legs on each side of his hips. I didn’t notice him moving until I felt the cool stone of the wall against my back. This is a very compromising position for a 19-year-old virgin to be in. But I how could I think through the thick haze Andrew’s deep kisses were creating. Thankfully we broke apart, a result of him pulling away again. He was still carrying me like I weighed nothing when we leaned our foreheads against each other, both of us trying to catch our breath.

“How about that drink?” I whispered, trying to break the tension. He gave me a small smile for effort, “How about I leave.” He rasped. “Yeah, that’s probably a good idea.” I said and he let me down gently. There was a short pause “And how about I take you out before I skip to second base.” He said and I smiled. “Are you asking me out on a date?” I asked and he chuckled. “For the fifth time and you’ve said no four times.” He said.

I let out a small gasp, “You’ve been keeping count?” I asked and he shrugged. “Well then I guess fifth’s a charm.” I said and he grinned. “Great, I’ll call you.” He said and I raised an eyebrow at him. “I don’t remember giving you my number.” I said and he smiled bit sheepishly. “I have my connections.” He said walking towards the door. “Do I even want to know?” I asked and he chuckled and shook his head.

I leaned against my doorframe and he leaned in to lightly kiss my forehead, “Goodnight.” He said. Somehow him kissing my forehead seemed more intimate than anything we’d done five minutes ago. “Bye.” I whispered to his retreating back. I closed my door, locking it before I sunk to the floor. “What the hell are you doing Zoe?” I mused quietly as the ramifications of what just happened sunk in.

CHAPTER 9

Kay and I sat at a table in the res canteen at lunch on Monday, and we talked about Saturday's events. I swore I wouldn't tell her about what happened between Andrew and I but I couldn't help spilling the beans. She stared at me as if I'd grown two heads, "No way." She exclaimed and I nodded sheepishly. "Wow, and how was it?" she asked.

"Hot. Very *Hot*." I said, that's the only way I could describe kissing Andrew, Kay nodded in awe "Imagine what it would be like in between the sheets then." She said and my eyebrows lifted. "Gosh Kay, we haven't even been on a first date yet." I said, feeling heat rush to my face. "You're going on a date with him?" she asked and I nodded. "He called me yesterday, we're going Wednesday afternoon." I said and she laughed, clasping her hands together.

"Well finally, I can't say I didn't see this coming though." She said, "I knew Andrew had what it takes to win against your defenses." She said and I frowned, "I don't have def..." "Ah actually you do." Kay cut me off. Maddy and Alexa joined us then, "Hey, what are you two catting about?" Maddy asked. "Oh our dear friend Zoe here, has a hot date with none other than Andrew Wright." Kay said and both Alexa and Maddy looked stunned.

"Oh my God, you lucky biatch." Maddy said with a smile, "And you thought you scared him away." She added and I chuckled. I couldn't help frowning a little when I looked at Alexa's less than impressed expression. "So where's he taking you?" Maddy brought my attention back to her. I smiled, "He didn't say, which is frustrating because then I don't know what to wear and stuff." I said and she gave me a sympathetic nod.

I checked my watch, "I gotta go, I have classes in an hour." I said standing up; "I'll catch up with you girls later." I added. I was walking around the paved corner when Alexa told me to wait up. She stopped a few feet away from me and paused. "You just couldn't resist, could you?" she asked and my brows furrowed in confusion. "Excuse me?" I asked. "You knew I liked Andrew, now you're going out with him when you've made it clear that you'd never?" she said and I was taken aback for a moment.

"Alexa you never took any guy seriously, and you never told me to stay away from Andrew or that you wanted to be with him." I said and she frowned. "Are you really that blind? And even if I did, would it have made a difference?" she said. "How am I supposed to know? Andrew is the one who pursued me." I said and she nodded, "Of course, and you whined about it like it was the most horrible thing in the world." She snapped and I stifled a flinch.

"What exactly do you want me to do, Alexa?" I asked, hurt now. "You were supposed to stay out of the way, Andrew and I have been friends long before he even knew you

existed.” She said and my eyebrows shot up. “And because of that you think you’re entitled to him?” I asked and she kept quiet. “I’m not going to lie to you Alexa, I’m going to date Andrew, whether you like it or not.” I said and I wasn’t trying to be mean to her. She chuckled coldly, “Wow, listen to you, already so sure of Andrew’s intentions.” She said, “I don’t advice being that naïve with him.” She added and a twinge of unease swept over me.

I didn’t really take Kay seriously when she warned me about the tension that might arise between Alexa and I because of Andrew. I walked up to her, “Alexa, you are my friend and I don’t want this to change that.” I said. She paused, “I care about you Zoe, but I’m not going to lie to you either.” She said, “So don’t expect me to be happy for you, and I can’t promise not to pick up the slack should you drop the ball with him.” She added.

I watched her walk away with a sickening mixture of shock and hurt.

After my Tuesday morning lessons I went to the Tuks soccer stadium. The stadium was always occupied, more so on the weekends. Soccer was one of the varsity’s most successful sporting quotes, with the team playing in ABSA premier league, South Africa’s biggest soccer league. So I was a bit surprised when I heard Andrew played for the team every now and then.

I pulled out my earphones when the team came back for the second half leading 2-1 to a local club. Most of the game I kept my eyes on Andrew; I had to with him playing a key midfield position. And also because he’s surprisingly talented at this, I realized just how guilty I ‘am of putting him in a box sometimes. My conversation with Alexa yesterday was still weighing heavily in my mind.

Forget her, do what makes you happy. Kay said to me when I told her that evening. That’s the thing; I did want to do what makes me happy. But I also didn’t want to do that at the expense of Alexa’s friendship. On the other hand, I was so tired of putting what I want aside because of fear, or someone else. And I want Andrew Wright, he’s an overwhelming hurricane but I still want him.

I don’t advice being that naïve with him. Alexa had said to me, and it hit home for me. I knew he was out of my league, but I had to cut myself some slack. And trust that Andrew sees something in me even if I don’t right?

The referee blew the final whistle at a score of 3-1 favoring Tuks. Some fans got on the pitch to celebrate with the team. I stood up and walked down the steps, I stood just two yards away from the players’ bench. Andrew looked towards my direction and I waved at him, he smiled when his attention zeroed on me. He ran towards me and jumped over the pitch fencing.

"Hey." He said, still a bit breathless from the match, I grinned, "Hi." I replied, "Sorry, I'm all sweaty." He said and I shook my head at him, like I care. I hugged him, he smelled like his delicious self "Congrats." I said pulling away. "The last touch for that third goal was amazing." I added and he chuckled. "You follow soccer?" he asked and I nodded, "Which is why I was surprised when I heard you play." I said.

He feigned disappointment, "So you didn't exactly come here for me." he said and I laughed, "No I came here hoping to see you silly." I said, grabbing the front of his shirt playfully. I let go abruptly, why did I constantly feel the need to touch him? It's freakish and didn't look good at all; it gave me a clingy feeling. "I ran into your friend Scott and he told me you'd be here." I added. 'The girl that rocks Andy's world' is what he playfully referred to me as. Which did me a world of good considering the beating my self-esteem took over Alexa's words.

"As happy as I 'am to see you baby girl, I get the feeling you didn't just come to say hi." He said, then paused a little. "You're not thinking of cancelling on me, are you?" He asked and I shook my head, "No." I replied and he smiled. "Believe it or not, I did come here just to see you." I said and he chuckled. "Returning the favor by stalking me now. I see." He teased and I shrugged, "Its only fair." I said.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked and he shook his head, "I knew there was a catch." He said, "I'm not telling." He added and I pouted. "But then I wont know what to wear." I said and he smiled, "Wear anything, you'll still look beautiful." He said and I stifled a smile of my own. "Flattering me won't get you out of answering the question." I pointed out.

"I realize that, which is why I'm gonna slowly walk away." He said, I grabbed his arm before he could go. "Kiss me." I whispered and he paused a little before he cupped my cheek and kissed me. I had a lot of doubts about us and I guess I just wanted to make sure I didn't imagine the intense connection we had Saturday. This kiss was tender, sweet and a whole lot more tame than the last one.

He pulled away and lightly brushed his nose against mine, "I underestimated your feminine charms baby girl." He whispered, softly tracing my lips with his thumb. "That's going to be a problem." He added more to himself than me. I grinned, liking the fact that I could affect him like that. "Do I rock your world?" I teased, pushing my luck. "Scott and his big mouth, he just couldn't resist, could he?" he said shaking his head and I laughed.

CHAPTER 10

After a while I just decided on a violet jumpsuit and strappy sandals. I never really saw myself as the type to stress about what to wear, well until now. Andrew was adamant about not telling me where he's taking me or else this would've been a much quicker process.

My phone beeped an incoming text, Have fun! Should I wait up? Kay wrote and I chuckled. Yes! And shouldn't u b in class? I wrote. Soon enough another text came in, don't give me that tone, I can multitask okay? She wrote and I smiled. Okay luv ya. I wrote. I was out the door when Andrew called to say he's waiting outside. Normally boys or non-residents were not allowed in the res grounds unless it's visiting hours or if a special social or function is taking place.

I walked out the lobby and I immediately spotted Andrew leaning against a dark blue BMW M3 convertible. I guessed he was a fan of the German car brand considering he was getting into a chauffeured 7 Series not so long ago. I knew that he drove this one himself, since it's practically a sports car. I used my keycard to get through the gate.

Andrew smiled at me when I approached, "Nice ride." I said and he shrugged, "It gets me from A to B." he said, I chuckled stepping into his arms and he hugged me. We were both in no rush to end our embrace. "Shall we milady?" he said opening the passenger door for me. "I didn't know guys still opened the door for a girl." I said settling onto the leather seat. "I told you that I'm not like most guys." He said closing the door.

I stifled a smile; even I had to admit I'd never met a guy like him. Andrew got in the driver seat, pushed the start button and the engine roared to life. I took in the impressive lite grey interior of his M3; I can easily remember a time when I never thought I'd ride in cars like this. I knew I wanted to in future, I just never thought it would be under these circumstances. Or this soon.

I grabbed his iPod off the car's docking station, "What do you listen to?" I asked, scrolling through his songs. "A bit of everything. There's so much music, why listen to just specific genres?" he said. I paused staring at him for a second, amazed because I could see myself saying the very same thing to somebody else. I could though pick up on his favorites as I scrolled through the expansive music library. I shook my head slightly, "You still not telling me where were going?" I asked and he chuckled.

"You'll see when we get there." He said, I was grateful to find him casually clad as well. That meant we weren't going anywhere fancy, I wasn't ready for that part of his world yet. I wondered if he concluded likewise. He ended up taking me to the

Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden, what got me though was the lack of cars in the parking spaces. Andrew took out a picnic basket out of the boot.

I smiled, "A picnic at a botanical garden, clever." I teased and he grinned. "Come on." He said taking my hand, "There's no one else here, are you sure its open?" I asked as we walked towards the entrance. "I'm pretty sure it is." He said. "Afternoon Mr. Wright." One of the security guards at the entrance greeted Andrew, letting us in.

I was in awe when I took in my surroundings; the place was absolutely beautiful, and completely empty. I'd never been here before but I knew that couldn't be normal, "There's no one here." I mused, "I rented the place out." Andrew said and my gaze snapped to him in shock. "Wow." That's all I could say on that regard. "This is breathtaking." I said and he walked us down one of a few paved trails.

"It gets better I promise." He said, and it did. With all the walking we did you'd think I'd get tired but I was too mesmerized by everything I saw. My favorite had to be the waterfall, "I guess we found our spot." Andrew said, setting the basket down. I walked closer to it stopping next to the wooden fence, "I didn't think the city had places like this." I called out to him.

When I turned and walked back to him, he'd already laid the blanket down and everything. I sat facing him but I couldn't help scooting closer though, "This looks delicious, you didn't make any of this, right?" I asked and he nodded, almost sheepishly. "I'm a terrible cook." He said and I chuckled. "Aw, you need someone who can feed you." I said, popping a large grape into my mouth.

Andrew's eyes were intent on my face, "Really? I hope you fit that bill." He said softly and I could've sworn my heart skipped a beat. However sentimental that sounds. "I'm a brilliant cook, I'm just saying." I said and he grinned. "Then this is a win-win match." He said and I smiled.

We chatted while we ate, getting to really know the guy behind all the hotness was definitely not going to be a once off thing. I felt like I could spend an entire lifetime discovering and rediscovering who he is. It was both exciting as it was intriguing, because I'd never met a guy as dynamic as he is. "Is your family in Pretoria as well?" I asked and he shook his head.

"I don't have any siblings, I'm the only child." He said and my eyebrows lifted a little. I couldn't imagine my life without my big sister and little brother. "I do have lots of cousins though." He said with a small smile. "As for my parents, my dad is in Joburg and my mom died when I was twelve." He said and my brows furrowed, "Car accident." He added. Somehow the thought of a twelve-year-old grief-stricken Andrew made my heart clench.

"I'm sorry." I murmured. "It was a long time ago." He said; his eyes still focused on the green clearing. "Why do people always say that?" I asked, "It doesn't make any

easier, and it doesn't make it...okay." I added and he shifted his hazel gaze to me. He smiled gently, "You're really something special Zoe." He said with an awed tone, gently stroking the side of my face. I smiled but held his intense gaze. He leaned in to kiss me and I welcomed him wholeheartedly. "I apologize, I can't seem to behave myself around you." He whispered, his lips just lightly touching my own. "I don't mind." I breathed, "Good." He resumed kissing me again.

In between classes, studying, playing hockey and doing socials, used to be...well more of the previously mentioned activities. But now there is Andrew. I was right about one thing; he is the kind of guy who consumes everything about your life. Trying not to let that happen was a task but apparently worth it because according to Kay, I was glowing.

The only sad part was that my friendship with Alexa was on the rocks. We hardly saw each other and when we did we'd only utter awkward hellos. Choosing not to let it upset me too much was the only way I could deal. I was drafting some notes from my class today, not really listening to Kay comment on the celebrity gossip she was reading.

I did look up at her when she went quiet for a while; her wide eyes went from me to the back page of the magazine. "What is it?" I asked; I was about to take the magazine out of her hands when she held it up for me to see. "Either I'm going mad or this is your Andrew." She said. Indeed it was Andrew on a Guess ad, looking devastatingly gorgeous and like he just came off a Burberry runway. He also looked slightly different, which made me question how old the ad was.

My hand fell from my mouth to reach for my phone; I took the magazine out of Kay's hands as Andrew's cell rang. I was probably overreacting but the notion that he's not telling me something, gave me an unsettling feeling I can't ignore. "Hey baby girl, I can't talk right now..." "There's no way both Kay and I could mistake you for someone else." I cut him off, "So tell me what the hell you are doing on a magazine ad."

The pause on the other end of the line sent ripples of unease through me. "Andrew?" I asked, my voice only just above a whisper. I heard him exhale, "I did some modeling once, after high school I took a gap year and went overseas. It wasn't for me so I quit." He said and it was my turn to pause. I guess none of this would've shocked me if he'd hinted at any of it before. Especially since we've been sharing so much about our lives with each other. "Were you ever planning to tell me about this other life of yours?"

Another pause confirmed what I'd been dreading, "Why don't you come see me when you're ready talk?" I said before I hung up.

CHAPTER 11

After two hours of burying myself in books at the campus library I walked back to res just at dusk. I was making my way towards the gates when I saw Andrew leaning against his M3, his iPhone in hand. He looked up at me when I approached. I could see why he'd model; God blessed him with looks more than adequate for the job. What worried me is why he didn't tell me about any of it.

"That was quick." I said, even though I didn't really expect him to come running to me. "I thought you were busy." I added. "I 'Am." he said and I nodded, "Well, don't let me keep you then." I said and he caught my arm before I could turn. "Don't be like that." He said and I met his hazel gaze, "Secrets are a red flag for me Andy." I murmured and his eyes closed for a second.

"I understand that." He said, "Which is why I'm here to explain." He added glancing at his gold watch before opening the passenger door to his BMW. "Let's go get dinner and I'll talk." He said. "Please." He added when I hesitated for a minute. I got in and he drove us south to a nice Greek restaurant. "Out with it Wright." I said after the waiter left with our order.

Andrew chuckled without humor, "You don't mess around do you?" he said and I just shook my head. He took a sip of wine, "When I finished high school I decided to model for one reason, I knew it would drive my father crazy." He said, "He has very specific plans for me." he added. My brows furrowed, "That's another thing you don't talk about, your dad." I said.

He shrugged, "There's isn't much to tell." He said, "He and I never got around forming a real bond, he runs his successful company and ignores me," he added, "That's been the name of the game since my mother died." He went on. I paused for a second, taking it all in. The more I thought about it the more I empathized with Andrew. He must've felt unloved and forgotten, with no mother or siblings to compensate for his father's rejection. I suddenly felt irrational resentment towards his father.

My brows furrowed, "So the modeling thing, was a way to rebel against him?" I asked. "I guess you can say that." He said, "I was hurt back then and I wanted his attention for once, in whatever form it would come as." He added. We both paused when the waiter brought our food and left. "I decided to quit after two years in the business." He said, "It all got too much for me, the parties, the lifestyle, it all burned me out."

He frowned, his eyes seeming far away "It got to a point where I wasn't doing it to spite my father anymore, it literally took over my life. That's when I knew I had to

get out of it," He said. "Now you're in varsity doing change and risk management?" I said, amazed at the complete one-eighty he did, not many can. He must've caught the tone in my voice because he smiled. "I love what I do and I'm in a better space than I've been in what seems like ages." He said. "I'm also in a better space because I'm with you." He said staring right into my eyes.

I took an uneasy breath, I always run short of it whenever he looks at me like that...like I'm actually precious to him, irreplaceable. "Why didn't you tell me this before?" I asked and he smiled bitterly. "I'm not exactly proud of that time in my life baby girl." He said, "I'd much rather forget it even happened." He added. "You never have to worry about that with me." I said. "I want to know everything about you Andrew, that includes the good and bad." I added. "What do you mean your father has specific plans for you?" I asked.

He took in a deep breath, "If he had his way, I would've already graduated from Harvard Business School and I'd be at his company, working my way up to take over his position." He said, "Oh." I said, realizing just how poor Andrew's father is at distinguishing between being a hardened boss and being a father to his son. It was sad, and there was no one I felt more sorry for than Andrew.

He shot me a sheepish smile, "Don't look at me like that baby girl." He said, "You making me feel like a charity case." He teased and only slightly smiled. "Trust me I'm done expecting anything from my father, he's no more a part of my life than I 'am of his." He said and my brows furrowed. "That's messed up." I said, shaking my head and he nodded. "I agree, but I didn't set the terms of our relationship. He did." He said, "I just finally accepted them." He added.

After hockey practice, Maddy and I walked back to res. Okay, I had to be honest with myself, I missed Andrew more than I thought I would. He wasn't kidding when he said he was busy, I haven't seen him since he took me to that Greek restaurant three days ago. There was no chance of seeing him around campus also because he was doing an assignment on a firm based in Joburg.

What cheered me up though were his frequent calls, when he'd tell me *he* missed me. "Aw you're thinking about him again." Maddy said bringing me out of my reverie; I chuckled without humor. "Sorry." I said and she shook her head. "Trust me girl, you're permitted, if you know what I'm saying." She teased and I playfully pushed at her.

I paused a little, "Have you talked to Alexa lately?" I asked and her smile fell a little. She nodded, "We talk from time to time." She said. I felt horrible for putting Kay and Maddy in a position where they feel like they can't talk to Alexa. She is their friend too and they don't have to stop talking to her just because I'm not welcome. "Maddy,

its okay if you do, you know that right?" I asked and she sighed. "I know, the whole situation just feels weird." She said and I nodded in understanding.

I was no closer to accepting I lost my friend anymore than they feel comfortable hanging out with the two of us separately. A part of me respects Alexa for being honest, and not pretend to be a happy friend for me but the truth is a bitter pill to swallow sometimes. We were making our way to the elevator when the lobby lady called us.

"Zoe?" she asked, "That's me." I said and she handed me a huge plastic bag with two sets of boxes. "These came in for you today." She said. I pretty sure I looked as surprised as I felt. "I was ready to go back to my room but, I'm so following you, I want to see what's in there." Maddy said. "Who's it from?" she asked. "I'm thinking its from Andrew but I told him not to get me stuff." I said. He already does so freaking much, he'd take me on simple dates but he'd do something extravagant like rent out Joburg's biggest botanical garden.

Maddy and I found Kay studying in our room, "Hey girls." She said then her eyebrows lifted at the bag I was carrying. "Whoa, you did a shopping spree without me?" she asked. "If anyone did some shopping, it's definitely not us. We got this in the lobby." Maddy said and Kay jumped off her seat. She loves surprises more than anything, even when they aren't meant for her, "Well open and lets see then." She said to me.

I opened the bag and Kay reached for the bigger box of the two, her jaw dropped then she tilted it to me so I could see the Chanel name on top of it. "I have Christian Louboutin." Maddy said with an incredulous voice, holding up the smaller box. I looked into the bag and saw a small note. *Call me when you get this, Andrew.* I immediately reached for my phone. "You don't mind if we sneak a peak do you?" Kay asked and I shook my head, as his phone rang. I didn't even have to see what's inside; the brand names already gave it away.

"A bit much don't you think?" I said when he answered, "No." He said. "We had a deal." I pointed out. "A deal I never really agreed to, you know." He said, "Andrew!" I bellowed and he chuckled, "Okay, I'm very much justified, I swear." He said, "My aunt is getting married this Saturday, I was hoping you'd come with me," he added. My eyebrows shot up, that I didn't see coming.

"I know its short notice so I saved you a trip to the shops." He went on. I took a moment, "So you picked them out yourself." I asked, finding it hard to believe. He chuckled, "I may not be able to cook, but I know what will look good on my girl." He said and I couldn't help smiling at that. I took a long pause, not really sure what to say. "Zoe?" he said, "Saying 'sure I'll be ready on Saturday' would sound really good right now." He added.

I exhaled, "I'm not sure I'm ready to meet some of your family." I said and he paused. "Trust me my family doesn't ask too many questions, they'll just think you're just my date for the day." He said. My brows furrowed slightly, just a date you take to a family celebration? What did that mean? He took random girls to events like that? *You're overthinking it again.* I thought, giving my head a slight shake. "Okay, I'll see you Saturday." I said, "Great." He said, sounding slightly relieved, "Stay beautiful baby girl." He added before hanging up.

I walked back to the girls, "This is gorgeous." Kay said, holding up a sand beige long sleeved dress, with a plunging back. The sides of the plunged back were impressively embellished and the dress only came up on my lower thigh. The dress came with a black clutch bag with the famous Chanel logo in gold. The pumps in the Louboutin box were also black, and thankfully the heel on them was reasonable.

"I don't know, there's something hot about a guy that can pick out clothes for me." Maddy said, "It means he spends a good deal of time looking at my body, and if he's too busy checking me out he won't have time to look at other girls." She added. "What's the special occasion?" Kay asked, before I could reply to Maddy's statement. "Wedding, his aunt's." I said, Kay smiled, "Bringing you around his family now? He must be really crazy about you." She said and I snorted.

"Apparently it's not that big of a deal." I said and I shook my head at her when her brows furrowed in confusion. "Never mind." I added. "I don't know if I can wear this." I said, "Of course you can, and you will look smashing in it." Maddy said and Kay nodded. "I mean this dress is all kinds of hot." She said, "Are you sure he doesn't have any plans to take it off you later?" she added and I pushed at her playfully.

Maddy lifted her eyebrows at me, "Are you telling me that you and Andrew haven't done it yet?" she asked, and I shook my head sheepishly. "Wow, and you two have been seeing each other for over a month now." She said, "Most guys expect you to give it up on the third date." She added. I frowned, "He doesn't even know I'm a virgin." I said, fiddling with my fingers. "With your lack of dating history, it's not hard to guess." Kay said and I paused.

"Don't worry about it, if he really cares then he'll wait." Maddy said, she must've seen the panicked look in my eyes. I smiled at her and nodded. That's the thing, I didn't know when or if I'll be ready. We've never really talked about it, sure we'd tease each other but it was never anything serious. One thing for sure is that I'm physically attracted to him, how could I not be? But acting on that is a different ball game.

"You so have to try them on." Kay said, "Aw but guys." I mewed, "No but, I agree, I want to see. Come on." Maddy said pushing me towards the bathroom.

CHAPTER 12

I threw myself into Andrew's arms when I reached him; he caught me lifting me off the sidewalk slightly. He chuckled, "I should go away more often." He said, "No." I said and he nodded "Yes, mam." He said putting me down slowly. "You look incredible." He said, his eyes raking my form. I smiled, "So do you." I said, taking in his tailored dark grey suit, which was probably Armani or something like that.

He looks exactly like when we first met, sinfully handsome and sexy. Just back then I wouldn't have dreamed he'd be mine. "I like." I mused, grinning this time. He chuckled, "I'm glad you like what you see baby girl." He said, "You ready?" he asked opening the back door of the charcoal grey sedan. Like the first time, he's riding his 7 Series instead of his M3.

So I wasn't surprised to find his chauffeur on the driver's seat, the same older fella I saw outside the restaurant. Andrew introduced him as Martin when he settled next to me in the back. Martin extended a hand to me, smiling "Its good to finally meet you Zoe." He said, "Sean here can't stop talking about you." He added and Andrew shook his head at him. "Drive Martin." He said to him and he chuckled and pulled out.

Martin is the first person I've heard call Andrew by his second name, which is a testament of how close they are. "How long have you two known each other?" I asked. "I work for Sean's father, but I've been driving him since primary school." He added. "Since then my father has released Martin of his other duties, so he could cater to me exclusively." Andrew added.

What for? Consolation for not being there in Andrew's everyday life? And from the looks of things that's exactly the case. Martin seems to have taken up the father role instead. We ended up going to Fourways in Santon Johannesburg, according to Andrew. I wasn't personally familiar with the wealthy parts of the city. The ceremony was to be held at the Fourways Green Park.

The park was almost just as beautiful as the garden Andy and I had our first date at. Most of the park was dominated by wedding décor and the larger site was covered by an open white gazebo for the altar and seats for the guests. To the right was the music area and to the left was the refreshments section. Everything looked fancy and well thought out.

I spent a great deal of time clinging to Andrew's arm. I'd let go when I reminded myself from time to time that it didn't look good. I tried to seem like I belonged among these affluent people but I never felt like it. Most of them were nice but others would stare at me as though they're trying to figure out which tree I fell from.

So much for letting everyone think I'm just a random date, Andrew introduced me as his girlfriend whenever the chance presented itself. I wasn't sure how to classify the surprise on some of their faces. I know Andrew and I don't make sense together, even to me sometimes. But should we really be living in some alternate universe for us to be considered normal and compatible?

I didn't hold it against them in the essence that they weren't wired like Andrew was about certain views. Andrew himself did ensure that I have a great time regardless and I did. "Andy my man." Andrew turned to a dark haired guy who was grinning at him. "Cole, I was worried you wouldn't show up." Andrew said briefly hugging him. "What's a celebration with me huh?" he said and Andrew nodded smiling.

"Cole, this is my girlfriend Zoe." Andrew said and Cole smiled at me, "Damn boy, you didn't tell me you were dating a younger, hotter version of Halle Berry." He said while we shook hands. I had to stifle a smile when Andrew shook his head at him. "Do you even try to behave yourself?" he asked. "Not in my nature bru." He said then turned to me. "I'm Collin by the way. But you can call me Cole." He said.

"Cole is the craziest of all of my cousins." Andrew said and I smiled, I understood crazy better than stuck up. Cole grinned, "And his personal favorite." He said to me. "Where's Scotty?" he asked, "He couldn't make it, he's got a semester test on Monday." Andrew said. "I knew it wasn't like him to miss a good party." Cole said, "Speaking of, tell him to call me if he's serious about Ana's surprise party." He added and Andrew nodded.

"Speak of the devil." Andrew said, indicating towards a blonde girl walking towards us. She was absolutely beautiful, in that Barbie doll kind of way. She was petite in a way that made curvy girls like myself feel out of shape. Her strut was made to catch the eye of every male in the vicinity. "Ana baby." Cole said when she stopped in front of us. "We were just talking about how awesome you are." He added and Ana rolled her clear blue eyes. "Yeah right Cole." She said then looked at me. "You must be Zoe, oh how pretty you are." She said, she thought I was pretty? Now that was the joke of the year.

"Andy and I go way back, I'm Anabelle." She said shaking my hand. "Nice to meet you." I replied. "Ana and I were in the same modeling agency together." Andrew said and somehow I wasn't surprised she's a model. "Then he disappeared to hit the books." She said. "So, what do you do Zoe?" Cole asked. "I'm studying Actuary." I said and his eyebrows lifted slightly. "She's a genius as well." He said to a smiling Andrew.

"You're making the rest of us look stupid." He went on, then nodded towards Andrew as well, "The both of you." He added. Andrew chuckled, "No hard feelings, right?" he teased and Cole grinned, "Not if you get me a cool Christmas gift." He said

and they did their unique handshake. Making Ana roll her eyes and me smile. "We'll catch up with you two later." Ana said to us before walking away with Cole.

I heard him ask her what she's been up to and she said she was shooting a Sports Illustrated cover. I turned to Andrew, "Are they seeing each other?" I asked, kind of hoping they are. I don't know why I felt a little jealous of her long-term friendship with Andrew. Maybe because she knows Andrew in ways I probably never could.

"No, don't let Ana hear you say that." He said with a chuckle, "They're just good friends as well." He added and I just nodded. "Let's go take our seats, the ceremony is about to start." He said taking my hand.

After a beautiful ceremony, the reception was held at The Palazzo Montecasino, it was by far my favorite part of the entire celebrations. I didn't really want to gather around with the other girls for the bouquet throwing but I did for the sake of being a good sport. I stood next to Ana, not really reaching for it but much to my surprise it landed right into my arms.

I stood there frozen; kind of wishing someone could quickly snatch it away from me. I forced a smile onto my face when everyone cheered. I waved it into the air half-heartedly hoping to appear excited. Andrew shook his head at me when I walked back to him but a ghost of a smile appeared on the corners of his lips. "You are so not marrying anyone soon, not on my watch." He said and I chuckled, "You do know the whole bouquet thing is a myth, right?" I said and he shrugged.

"How am I supposed to know?" He said; I studied the white and lavender flowers. "So what do I do with this?" I asked. "I think you keep it," He said chuckling. "It would look nice on my small counter." I teased and he nodded smiling. Andrew's smile quickly fell when he looked passed me. I turned to see a man walk towards us, I didn't have to guess that was Andrew father, he looked so much like him.

"Andrew." He said, nodding his greeting to his son. "Father, I didn't know you were here." Andrew said, unsmiling. "I wouldn't miss my own little sister's wedding." He said, as if slightly offended Andrew thought he would. Andrew just nodded, "This is my girlfriend Zoe." Andrew said, smiling this time. I was about to extend my hand to him but something in his gaze stopped me.

The very same hazel color he passed onto Andrew, but unlike his son's, his eyes were fierce and calculating. He just simply stared at me then his gaze narrowed to the bouquet in my right hand before he looked at Andrew. "At least this one is sober, that's an improvement I suppose." He said to him. I felt Andrew tense beside me and I had to bite the inside of my lower lip just to make sure my jaw didn't drop.

"I'm flying to Cape Town on Tuesday, come see me before then." He said and Andrew said nothing, "Enjoy the rest of your night." He said to us both before walking away. I kept my mouth shut and my eyes averted from Andrew. "I'm sorry about that." He said to me and I just nodded. "Hey." He said softly, cupping both sides of my face and forcing me to meet his gaze. "I'm serious baby girl." He said and I plastered on a smile. "I know." I said, then chuckled "I don't think he likes me." I teased but Andrew didn't take the bait. "He doesn't have to." He said, "Forget him." He added.

"Come lets dance." He said smiling this time around, inducing a real one out of me too when I took his hand.

I woke up in Andrew's arms, it took a moment for me to register that I was back in his 7 Series, heading back to Hatfield. I blinked a few times, trying to snap myself out of the dream I had. I also tried to shake the empty and lost feeling it left behind. I couldn't remember it but I guess the ups and downs of today conjured up a dream specifically designed to mess with my head.

"Hey." Andrew said, "We're almost there, then you can get some proper sleep." He added. "And do get some sleep baby girl, you work too hard." He said. "And you don't?" I asked, surprised at how blank my voice sounded. He paused a bit, "That's different, I don't need my beauty sleep as much as you do." He said. I shifted out of his hold and he let me go.

It wasn't cold in the car but I wrapped my arms around myself. Even though it was dark, the small lighting didn't take anything away from the car. It's executive size and luxury caramel interior was just as striking as its owner. I stared at Andrew and for a brief sickening moment I was genuinely panicking. I was just a plain 19-year-old rural girl who came to Pretoria in hopes of getting a degree. I didn't belong here; I didn't belong with him.

"What's wrong?" Andrew asked his brows furrowing and I paused a little, "What are you doing with me Andrew, really?" I asked and he frowned, taken aback. "What brought this on Zoe?" he asked, "Is it what my father said?" he asked. I paused, not really knowing what brought this onslaught of fear and second-guessing. Andrew sighed, "Don't let him or anyone else make you doubt us." He said, his tone slightly uneasy.

I nodded, knowing I was being silly and unfair to him. "Sorry, I sometimes get a bit cranky when I wake up from a bad sleep." I said and he chuckled without humor. "I'll do good to remember that." He said then spread his arms open. "Do you want come back in here?" he asked and I smiled, scooting back into his arms. I looked towards Martin and I found that he had earphones on.

I figured he did that in order to give Andrew and me some privacy, which I was grateful for. "If you really want to know," he said after a long pause "I'm just a guy trying to feel his way around a relationship with a girl who rocks his world." He added, "Bear with me."

Andrew helped me out when we parked in front of Greenleaf, "I had fun." I said, all things considered I really did. He smiled, "I'm glad." He said then reached back into the car for the bouquet I forgot I even had with me. I smiled taking it, "It has to go on your counter remember?" he said and I nodded. His head dipped and his lips covered mine, giving me a slow and deep kiss.

I had to lean my back against the car. I thought the whole going weak in the knees and losing your breath thing was just sentimental crap, well until I met Andrew. He didn't usually kiss me with unguarded passion, which confirmed what the girls said about him knowing I'm a virgin and being careful with me. I guess he thought the idea of us being together needed some reinforcements tonight.

Well it was certainly working, because as his skilled tongue sensually caressed my own I forgot everything. The fear, the second-guessing, the vacant stares and his father's snarky comment. Nothing mattered except being in his arms. That's the kind of effect he has on me and when he held me like this, kissed me like this, I wasn't afraid of it. I embraced it, threw myself into it whole-heartedly.

I was a little dazed when he pulled away from me, "Off you go baby girl." He said, kissing my forehead before moving out of the way. I stared at him for a second, in that moment I fully appreciated just how lucky I 'am that he barged into my life. "Bless your heart Andrew, I'm just a girl who's trying to deserve it. Bear with *me*." I whispered, and for a moment he looked like I just knocked the wind out of him. "Goodnight." I added then walked away.

CHAPTER 13

The following week was hectic for me; it was good having Andrew back and seeing him on campus almost everyday. But we didn't have time together because now I was the busy one. I had a project on my major module that I had to submit on Friday. Andrew promised to take me to his home, in his mission to make sure I also rested; he has a theory that I overwork myself.

The drive to Sunninghill was pleasant as we told each other some of our childhood memories. His mostly consisted of the time his mother was still alive. He also loved to come home whenever he felt like getting away from Pretoria. I wondered if he always came home whenever his father was out of town. "I also come to visit Betty and the others." He said and my brows furrowed in question.

"Betty is one of the housekeepers. Like Martin I've known her my whole life" He explained and I nodded, "She still fusses like I'm a little boy." He said with a chuckle. "Asking me if I'm eating right, if my laundry is clean." He added and I laughed. "Aw and here I thought you needed me but you already have someone feeding you." I said and he frowned playfully.

"Let's not jump into conclusions." He said and I stifled a smile, "No?" I asked, "No. I could use an extra pair of hands." He said. "Are you sure?" I asked, pretending to check my nails. "Positive." He said with a chuckle. The suburb we turned into was literally on a hill, none of the houses were small in size. They varied but they were all mansions. So was Andrew's house when we entered the massive yard and parked his M3 up front.

The first one I met was the butler, Timothy, a nice older fella. He went away to get Betty after leaving us in the living area. The house looked like a palace on the inside and outside. A lively black woman I presumed was Betty came down the double staircase with a smile on her face, "Andrew." She exclaimed, giving him a tight hug. "You didn't tell me you were coming." She added and he shrugged.

"I wanted to surprise you." He said, "This is Zoe." He gestured towards me, and we shook hands and exchanged pleasantries. "So this is the young lady I'm competing with." She teased and I feigned shock, staring at Andrew. "Really? I have competition?" I asked and he shifted gaze as if avoiding mine. "What's in the fridge?" he said walking towards the expansive kitchen area. I chuckled, shaking my head at his retreating back.

Betty and I followed him; Andrew poured me some juice. I was just taking a sip when Betty chuckled, "O seke wa tshwenyega; ke yo mogolo thata go yena." *Don't worry; I'm way too old for him.* She teased, in my mother language. I smiled, "Ke a tseba, ke no bapala ka yena." *I know, I'm just messing with him* I replied. "Mara la tseba gore ke kgona go le kwa?" *You two know that I can hear you right?* Andrew said

and I gasped, dropping my glass in the process. I gaped at Andrew who looked at me like nothing out of the ordinary happened and Betty who was smiling at my reaction.

"Did he just...?" I asked Betty and she cut me off by nodding. I turned my shocked gaze to Andrew, "Oh my God." I exclaimed and he chuckled, "You speak Sepedi? How?" I asked. "I wanted at least one vernacular under my belt, so I took Afrikaans and Sepedi in school." He said, "I would've chosen Zulu but it was a bit harder to grasp." He added. I just continued to stare at him like he'd grown two heads. But he was still the same brown haired, hazel eyed, gorgeous guy I was so crazy about.

It wasn't impossible but it was uncommon for white people to understand our other languages, let alone be able to speak them fluently. With the country having nine of them, excluding English and Afrikaans, you couldn't exactly begrudge them for it. I'd only come across two people who could but its very, very rare. Of course my boyfriend had to be one of the rare cases. "Bolela se sengwe." *Say something else to me.* I said and he chuckled.

"Sa go swana le eng?" *Like what?* He replied and I let out an incredulous chuckle. "Why didn't you tell me?" I admonished, "I wanted to surprise you too." He said, "I'm glad I did, the look on your face was priceless." He added and I playfully hit his arm. "Not funny Andrew." I said, "Look at the mess I made." I added. "It's okay, I'll clean it up." Betty said to me before she walked off.

A mortifying realization came to me, "The times I'd speak to Kay about you, you could hear that?" I asked and he nodded. "Yep, you have some pretty interesting thoughts about me. Ones you tell your best friend in front of me." he said, "That takes guts." He added playfully. I hit him again; with a tablecloth this time and he laughed ducking. "You weren't supposed to understand a damn word!" I said then buried my face in my hands, "Oh my God." I moaned.

Andrew took hold of my wrists, gently prying my hands from my face. "If it's any consolation I'm also guilty of doing the very same thing with Scott." He said and I pouted. "But you two would speak Afrikaans and I can't understand it. How is that fair?" I muttered. Andrew stifled a smile by kissing my knuckles, "That's just life." He said and I shot him a death glare.

"I'm so going to get you for this." I said and he shot me a challenging smile. "What are you going to do baby girl?" he asked. "Ke tla e nagana." *I'll think of something* I muttered and he laughed.

Andrew gave me a tour of the mansion he called home, every square inch looked amazing. When he brought me to his room we ended up sprawled on his bed, chatting and laughing with each other. "Since I'd already blown my shallow and embarrassing thoughts about you sky high." I said, "Tell me some of yours." I added. He looked at me skeptically, "Come on, be a good sport." I said, "What are the most

shallow things you like or hate about me?" I asked. He paused, seeming to be thinking about it, "Hate? There are none." He said and I chuckled. "I find that hard to believe but okay. What about the ones you like?" I said.

He chuckled, "There are way too many of them to be considered okay." He said, "But I had to narrow them down." He added. "Definitely your lips, so soft and plump. I'm pretty sure I waste a whole lot of time day dreaming about those lips." He said, and I chuckled self-consciously. "I love your skin, it feels amazing." He said, I felt something in my throat tighten when his gaze raked over the exposed skin on my shoulders and arms. "It reminds me of toffee. I love toffee." He added.

"And God I freaking worship your ass." He said and I gasped, "Andrew!" I exclaimed chuckling. "What? Its pretty sensational, especially whenever you wear those skinny jeans, its just wow." He added and I fell back on the bed, pretending to cover my face with a pillow. Andrew laughed taking the pillow away from me, "See? its better if you cant understand Afrikaans." He said, "Because I just gave you the PG version of those thoughts." He added.

I laughed sitting up again, "You really are perverted." I teased and he chuckled, shrugging. I stared at him for a while until he raised a questioning eyebrow at me, "Do you want me?" I asked quietly. "Yes." He said, his brows furrowed in confusion and I realized he misunderstood. "No I mean...do you want to make love to me?" I murmured and he paused a little, taken aback. "Absolutely." He said, his voice slightly huskier and his gaze intent on me.

I nodded while my heart continued to beat out of control. "I want you too." I said, "But I'm just not ready to act on it yet, I don't know when I'll be ready." I added, "Are you okay with that?" I asked, chewing on my lower lip nervously. "You had to ask baby girl?" he said, as if it was a given. "I don't care how long it takes you. I can wait." He added. He smiled then "I'm a pretty patient guy, or have you forgotten?" he teased and I shook my head smiling back.

He paused staring to the side a little then he grinned, "Give me a sec." he said then got off the bed. I stared after him in confusion as he entered a separate room I figured was his closet. He came back out carrying a sweatshirt that looked oddly familiar. "Remember this?" he asked, turning it over for me to see the curry stain I'd inflicted almost two months ago.

I chuckled incredulously, "You kept the stain? Why?" I asked reaching for it. Like I'd dreaded, it has a Calvin Klein label attached to it. "I kept it as a souvenir." He said sitting back down facing me. I smiled, "That's oddly sweet and romantic." I said, "And it all began with this shirt." I added and he chuckled. "You had me hooked from the word go." He said and I looked up at him. "Martin looked at me like I'm going crazy when I had him follow you." He added and my eyes widened. It wasn't all in my head that day, it was Andrew's BMW that went passed the library.

CHAPTER 14

"I was more than pleased to learn you attended at the same campus I'd transferred to. I saw that as an opportunity and I took it." He said, "I had to have you and boy did you make me work for it." He added playfully and I chuckled. "I'd probably never had to work so hard to get a girl to go out with me," He went on, "That's when I knew you were a special breed, and I liked the thought of chasing you." He added and I continued to stare at him.

Riveted hearing his side of a story that was so much of an emotional rollercoaster for me. "I underestimated your defenses baby girl." He said chuckling, "At some point I thought I'd never get through to you." He added and my eyebrows slightly lifted. "Really? This is coming from Mr. 'We're going to have a relationship no matter what you say'?" I said and he smiled.

"That's how powerful your walls were, they made me doubt myself." He teased and I smiled. "I understood they were there, I just never understood why." He added. I paused, shifting my legs up to wrap my arms around them. "I knew I had to say yes to you at some point, just to get you off my back." I said with a half smile. "I told myself that at some point you had to give up but you never did. You just kept coming at me, harder and stronger." I added.

"That's something I never had to contend with before." I said and he cocked his head to the side. "A guy chasing you?" he asked, "No, I've had guys chase me before but eventually they all gave up. I guess they decided I wasn't worth it," I added and his brows furrowed. "I don't know. Maybe with time I started agreeing with them." I went on.

"Never think like that baby girl, why do you think I was so persistent?" he said and I smiled a little. "Why did you refuse though?" he asked and I rested my chin against my knees. "I think a part of me was scared too, some people are open to such things, I never was." I said with a shrug. "All I ever had was my family, I could always count on them to be there. It's scary to allow myself to care about someone who is not guaranteed to be a permanent figure in my life." I added.

"It eliminated the risk of being hurt," he said and I just kept quiet. "So saying no made you feel good?" he asked and I shook my head. "It made me feel less vulnerable." I whispered, "It didn't make me feel good, it just made me feel strong and in control. When I lose sense of that, I panic." I added, "That's why I was so resistant towards you, because suddenly you were the one with the strength and control, over me. That scared me."

Andrew paused for a moment; "At first you didn't strike me as the type who had fears and insecurities. You were this no nonsense fire cracker, that's what I found attractive at first." He said, "Now that's changed because you know I'm not?" I asked. He shook his head, "Oh you still are, but I like this other side to you." He said caressing my cheek tenderly.

"This softer, modest side to you. This is the side I wanted to uncover." He added. "It makes *me* feel good." He teased and I chuckled. He paused sobering up, "It makes me feel like I'm needed." He said, "You are." I admitted softly. He leaned in to brush his lips against mine, "That's good, because you're not getting rid of me," he said against me.

I was more than surprised Thursday afternoon when my sister called to say she's parked in front of Greenleaf. I immediately left my books in my room and went out to meet her, hugging her tightly. Marti and I talked frequently but we saw each other occasionally. But this time she decided to surprise me, and it was a pleasant one at that. "I see you're still in one peace." She teased.

I chuckled, "Wait 'til final exam season kicks in." I said, which wasn't very far from now. "Hop in, I have a full on spa day planned for us." She said and I smiled. "You do know that I was studying, right?" I said, trying to pull her leg. I knew she would not be pleased if I brushed off her plans for us in order to hit the books. Especially having not spent time together in a while. She shook her head, "I think books can wait for one day, its not everyday I can come to town to see you." She said.

"Okay, let me call Kay then." I said, pulling out my phone. "Hey girl." Kay answered on the second ring. "Hi Kay, my sister is here and she's high jacking me for a spa day." I said, "Don't be surprised when you find my books wide open and I'm not there." I said and she chuckled. "Cool enjoy, oh and say hi to Marti for me," she said, "Will do, bye." I said before hanging up. "All set. Kay says hi by the way." I said then she talked over to the driver side of her silver Mercedes C-Class.

"How is she?" she asked, "She's doing good, she's still crazy." I said, settling into the passenger seat. Marti chuckled, "I bet." She said starting the car. "How come you're here on a Thursday? Knocked off early at work?" I asked and she shook her head. "I had a meeting with a client in Sunnyside so I thought why not pop by and high jack my little sister." She said.

"I would've arranged the whole spa thing over the weekend but Frans and I are going to a wedding in Secunda." She said; her husband Frans was a nice guy. He's kind of like the big brother I've always wanted. "And I also thought today was better, you know, pretty you up for tomorrow. You are attending a party, right?" She asked.

"Yeah, Andrew's friends have planned a surprise birthday party for another one of their friends." I said.

"And you're among that circle of friends?" Marti asked and I shook my head. "They wouldn't even know me if it wasn't for Andrew." I said. Cole and Scott I liked, I'm not so sure about Ana, but even I can admit that's a little bit of my jealousy talking. Andrew had invited me to her surprise party three days ago, it was the last I'd seen him too. One of the perks of being a third year were less classes, sometimes I think he comes to campus just to see me.

"Ah that's another thing you have to spill about, this white fella of yours." Marti said and I shook my head at her. "He's my boyfriend, and I already told you about him." I pointed out. "Yes but tiny little fragments. I want the whole scoop now." She said and I chuckled uneasily. "Should I be scared?" I teased. "Very." She said

Marti ended up taking me to her personal favorite spa up north of Joburg. We got facials, massages and manicures; my sister even forced me to get a full body wax, that part wasn't pleasant. "It lasts longer," she said to me. We also did our hair, Marti got hers braided while I kept my usual short hair, but the hair dresser added some dark brown highlights to the top front part that hangs over my eyes.

Like she promised she made me spill about Andrew. How we met, the whole Alexa thing, meeting some of his family and his father. Marti gaped when I told her about his little comment at the wedding reception. "He actually said that to your face?" she said, "Yep, Andrew's dad is a creep, I'm sorry for saying that but its true." I said and Marti was quiet for a moment.

"So when do I get to meet this Andrew?" she asked and I chuckled, "Soon sis." I said and she frowned. "I don't even know what he looks like." She said and I sighed, reaching for my phone. With a groan I realized that I'd cleaned out my files into my laptop. Instead I just goggled his images, like I'd suspected most of them were of him modeling Guess and some for Marc Jacobs.

I showed her one and her jaw dropped, "Um wow, this is Andrew?" she asked "He's gorgeous." She added and I nodded fervently. "He's a model? But I thought he's in Tuks with you." She said, "He is, he used to model." I said, "Wow, and now he's doing change and risk management? But I thought models weren't exactly...intellectually gifted." She said and I chuckled at that stereotypical comment.

"Well, he's a special one." I said like the proud besotted girlfriend I was. "Oh did I mention he speaks fluent Pedi?" I said and Marti's wide gaze shifted to me. "Get out." She exclaimed and I chuckled shaking my head. "Aw I think he might just be tailor made for you Tumi." She said and I put my phone back in my jacket. "Wouldn't I just love to believe that." I said.

CHAPTER 15

My sister insisted on buying me a cream colored strapless cocktail dress. She also bought me a violet Mac lipstick, which she instructed me to apply so I could match my peep-toe heels. I was putting them on when my phone rang, I smiled when I saw Andrew's name appear on the screen.

"Hey baby girl." He said after I answered, "I'm a bit caught up with arranging the party with Scott." He said, the background noise and music confirming that he's already there. "I would've loved to come pick you up, I would've sent Martin as well but he's running a family errand at the moment." He added. "That's okay, I'll take my car." I said, he hardly lets me drive myself anyway, "It'll be a nice change for once." I teased and he chuckled.

"You know the address right." He asked and I rolled my eyes, "Its in Centurion, I'm pretty sure I wont get lost." I said, "And you thought Betty fussed." I teased "Ha ha, very funny baby girl." He said and I chuckled. "I'll see later." He said, "Okay, l-later." I said and quickly hung up. I stared at my phone before I lifting my gaze to a surprised Kay.

She pointed at me with her pencil, "You were about to say 'love you', weren't you?" she asked knowingly and I nodded slowly, still surprised myself. "Aw you're in love with him." she gushed and I chuckled incredulously. "I 'am. I really am." I said, more to myself than her. She smiled at me, "Don't hold it back next time." She said, "I don't know about that." I said, I don't think I'm ready to say it anymore than he's ready to hear it. "I do. Trust me," she said.

I stood up from my bed, "How do I look?" I asked doing a little twirl. "Like you're going to a movie premier." She said and I grinned at her. "Are you sure you cant come with me? I'll wait for you to change into something fabulous." I said, imitating her voice at the end. She chuckled, "Girl, don't tempt me. These wont read themselves." She said, gesturing towards the books in front of her.

"Whoa, I think we might've switched bodies or something." I said and she nodded, "I know." She chimed in. I grabbed my clutch bag and keys off the counter, said a quick goodbye and I was out the door.

It was easy finding the upscale club that would host Ana's surprise party. I was awed walking into the place; everything from décor to the waiter service looked well placed and thought out. The party seemed to have a futuristic Hollywood theme,

which I think would suit Ana from the quick observation I could make about her. I was glad when I spotted Andrew, Scott and Cole.

All three of them looked rock star chic and ready to party, my boyfriend however was rocking a more James Dean kind of look with the hat. He didn't usually wear them but now I know that they look hot on him. The three of them looked at me when I approached. Cole whistled under his breath, "Halle Berry is in the house ladies and gentlemen." He said, when I stopped next to Andrew who immediately wrapped a possessive arm around my waist.

I chuckled, "Hi Cole." I said, feeling Andrew's lips in my hair and around my earlobe. "I see you've met the crazy one." Scott teased and Cole chuckled, "The special one, my friend." He corrected. It was hard paying attention to the two when Andrew was distracting me with his lips and busy whispering things like 'you look stunning' and 'you smell amazing'. I resisted rolling my eyes at that last one. As if I was wearing some expensive perfume he isn't already familiar with.

"The party looks great you guys." I said to them, "So how is Ana going to get here?" I asked. I dug my freshly manicured nails into Andrew's shirt, silently warning him to stop it. He must've gotten the hint because he chuckled then pulled away. "Ana was actually doing a fashion show in Springs later in the afternoon." Scott said, "So some of her fellow model friends will bring her here just to have a few drinks." He added.

I nodded, "That's a pretty convincing plan." I said with approval. "I like the way you think already." Scott said and I chuckled. "Can I get you anything?" Andrew asked me, bringing my attention fully back to him. I don't know if it's realizing that I was in love with him that has made me so achingly aware of him. Because just meeting his hazel gaze had my heart racing faster.

"Ah you two should get a room." Cole said and Andrew tore his gaze away from me to shoot him a mock glare. "Shut up Cole." He said and Cole only grinned. "Ginger ale would be nice." I said and he nodded then walked off towards the bar. He really did want to get me the drink himself because waiters were all around the place. Both Cole and Scott stared after Andrew.

"Damn girl, what did you do to our Andrew?" Cole said, "I was just about to ask the very same thing." Scott added. Cole's phone beeped an incoming text before either of them could demand an actual answer from me. "That was Jasmine." Cole said after reading the text, "They're here."

Ana looked genuinely surprised and delighted when everyone said 'surprise!' the moment they walked in. "So that's why none of you bothered to come to my show." She said to her friends, hugging Scott first. She gave me a quick peck on both cheeks. Ana and three of her other friends really looked fresh off the runway, ever since they walked in they'd been the life of the party well into the night.

I sat in the lounge area with the lively bunch; Andrew sat next to me on the armrest of the sleek couch. Ana's two other friends I now knew as Britney and Gia rejoined us after an hour on the dance floor. "Looking good ladies." Cole said, "Next time you should invite me to join you." He added and the redhead Gia giggled. "We'll keep that in mind." She said sitting on Ana's right. Scott hooted when the waiter brought another round of shots. Scott offered me a glass and I shook my head, I wasn't risking a second one.

"I'm a lightweight, one more and I'm afraid I'll be dancing up on tables." I said and they chuckled. "That I'd like to see." Andrew murmured with a smirk and I nudged him on the side. "Really? I thought that was our job. Did you once?" Britney asked me and I shook my head. "I also hope not to." I said. "But you could definitely model." She said, "I was just thinking the same thing." Jasmine said, sitting next to Cole adjacent from me.

She held up her hands in a frame-like position in front of me, "Her bone structure is amazing." She said and I shook my head. "Nah, I'll leave the modeling to you guys." I said, as if modeling was even an option for me. Andrew's phone rang and he pulled it out, saying he had to take it. He was standing up when Cole said, "Hurry back man, the next round is on you." And Andrew shook his head at him smiling, before he walked away.

"Enough about modeling, I want to know how you were able to soil Andrew's shirt and still get him to like you." Scott said and I sheepishly rubbed at my forehead. "I laughed my ass off when he told us." Cole chimed in and I chuckled. "Well I'm glad you find it funny, for me? Not so much. Embarrassing is the right word." I said and Jasmine chuckled, "I feel your pain." She said.

"You must be pretty special to him." Ana said, its only after she spoke that I noticed she's been awfully quiet as compared to the others. I couldn't help but think she was implying something by that comment. "I guess so." I said, "Yeah I mean, you've been seeing each other for like two months now. That's not normal." She said and that last one took me aback.

"Not normal?" I repeated and she swung her martini in circles. "Well the Andrew we all know changes girls like he changes shirts." She said and I had to stifle a flinch. "But then again maybe a tiger can change its stripes." She added taking a sip of her drink; her tone clearly hinted that she thought of it unlikely. There was a moment of utter silence around the group; Scott was looking everywhere but at me. Even Cole had nothing to say.

I ensured my smile was still in tact when I said, "Excuse me." and stood up, making a beeline for the girls' bathroom. I slammed my clutch bag onto the tiled bathroom counter. A girl came out of one closed stall and stood next to me washing her hands.

“Bad night?” she asked with a sympathetic smile. I just shook my head. I paused a bit glancing at the exit the bathroom had on the other side.

I turned to her, “What would you do if you were with someone you know will hurt you?” I asked her and she smiled. “Me? I’m a smart girl. And smart girls always save their own skin.” She said, “I’d probably walk away before that can happen.” She added. I nodded, taking it in for a minute, “Thanks.” I said, grabbing my bag and I headed out the exit.

It wasn’t hard finding my way back to the underground parking lot where I’d parked my car. There was this throbbing, open wound-like sensation in my chest but I ignored it. I ignored the fact that I was walking away from the only guy I’d ever loved. I just focused on getting back to Greenleaf; everything else would have to come after. These wretched heels were slowing my pace down.

I’d almost stopped to take them off when I heard Andrew call out to me; his fast approaching steps making a slight echo in the empty lot. He took hold of my arm when I didn’t stop and spun me around to face him. Anger was clear in his hazel gaze but there was something else I couldn’t put my finger on. This wasn’t going to be pretty. Somehow I knew I wouldn’t be able to escape him, I never was able to before.

CHAPTER 16

"You're really going to let what Ana said upset you?" he asked with an exasperated tone. I plastered on a smile, "Who said I was upset?" I said and his eyes narrowed. "Don't bullshit me Zoe, you wouldn't leave without saying goodbye." He said. I sighed, "Look Andrew it's getting late, I just want to go back to my room." I said turning and he stopped me again. This time by scooping me up over his shoulder.

I gasped my surprise, "Andrew! What are you doing?" I squealed, "Put me down." I added but he simply ignored me, walking down a short staircase into an open empty area. He finally put me down, making sure I was stuck between a wall and him. If I had to go, I would have to move passed him so I didn't even try. "You are not going anywhere until we talk about this." He said.

He started pacing in front of me and I leaned my back against the wall, patiently watching him and sadly thinking no one should be that good looking. "See this is why I didn't want to tell you about any of this, the modeling, all of it." He said, "Because I knew it would scare you out of your wits and you'd take off." He added. I swallowed hard, "Not telling me doesn't make it any less true." I said calmly and he stopped. "You're right, it doesn't." he said, "But I told you I walked away from that." He added.

"Well I'm sorry if I'm a little upset to find out that I'm just one among many of your other girlfriends." I said and he ran a hand through his brown hair. "It wasn't like that." He said. "Then how was it like?" I asked, my calm demeanor crumbling down. "Am I even the only one right now?" I asked, my voice shaking a little. Andrew looked at me like I just slapped him in the face, "How could you even ask me that?" he said, "Look at me and tell me you really think I'd two-time you."

I kept quiet dropping my gaze; despite everything I couldn't find it in my heart to believe he'd do that. He sighed, "Like the modeling gig, I knew taking random girls out in quick succession would piss off my father." He said, "A good reputation surrounding the Wright name is everything to him." He added. "None of those girls meant anything, gosh I wouldn't even sleep with any of them." He went on.

"I'm not a womanizer Zoe, nor was I one back then." He said turning away and I closed my eyes for a second. "I never said you were." I murmured. He spun back around to face me, "Yeah but that's what you're implying with all of this." He said, waving a hand at our argument. He stepped closer, clasping his hands together at me. "I 'am trying here Zoe." He said wearily, "What do you want from me?"

"Nothing." I whispered and he flinched, "You don't understand Andrew. Even I can admit I'm a bit much to deal with, but you knew that from the beginning, didn't you?" I added. "But look at you, I don't want to be responsible for this." I said, waving

my hand at all his frustrated hotness. "The last thing I want is to make you feel trapped, or suffocated." I added.

I took in a shaky breath, "So if you feel like you're better off up in the club having fun with your friends, don't let me stand in your way." I said, "If you feel like you can't do this anymore, let me go. Don't fuck with my heart." I said, my voice cracking as I wiped an angry tear away with my left hand. A heart I just recently discovered that I gave to him involuntarily. Andrew took hold of my wrist before I could put it down his other hand on the wall on the side of my head.

His body provided a cage that was oddly soothing; "You think I'm here because I'm doing you a favor?" he said, "I'm not that selfless, I'm doing me the favor here." He added. "Because God help me, I want you Zoe. More than I've ever wanted anything in my entire life." He said, his brows furrowing. "Now you're telling me to let you go? I'm not going to do that." He added forcefully.

He chuckled darkly, "Damn it, look how tightly I'm holding your wrist." He said; it's only when he loosened his hand did I realize just how tight his grip was. "That's how much and how badly I'm trying to hold onto you, hold onto us." He said, "Help me out here, don't pull away from me every chance you get." He added. Some tears fell from my eyes and I couldn't stop them.

The girl in the bathroom was right. Smart girls save their own skin, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're happy. And I wanted to be happy, happy with Andrew. He cupped my face with both hands, "Trust me baby girl," he whispered, "This could be so much easier for both of us." He added, wiping away the wetness with his thumbs. I wrapped my arms around his neck and he hugged me back lifting me off my feet. "I don't want to let you go either you handsome bastard." I said.

I tightened my arms around him, not caring if I was suffocating him literally or otherwise. "Then don't." he said, I didn't cling to him before because I thought I'd only lose him if I did. Andrew let me down after a short while, "You okay?" he asked softly, tilting my head up to meet his gaze. I offered a sincere smile this time, "Yeah." I said. "Good." He said taking my hand "Let's go." He added walking back up the stairs into the parking lot.

"Where? Back to the party?" I asked; I wasn't sure I wanted to go back there. "No, we're ditching." He said, "You're coming with me though." He added, indeed we were walking towards his 7 Series. "What about my car?" I said, "I'll make sure it gets back to Greenleaf." He added and I looked at him baffled for a moment. He opened the back passenger door but I refused to get in.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked and he smiled, "You'll see." He said, "Call whoever you need to call and tell them you're unavailable for the rest of the weekend." He said and my eyes widened. "What?" I exclaimed and he gave me a

playful frown. "Do I have to toss you in there?" he said and I pouted, "Then that's kidnapping." I said and he grinned. "Precisely." He said and I got in before he could make good on his promise.

"Evening Zoe." Martin said, his voice sounding like he's trying hard not to smile. "Hi Martin." I said with a knowing tone. "We're good to go." Andrew said to him after settling next to me. Martin nodded and pulled out of the lot after putting his earphones on. "What gave you the impression that I can just disappear for a whole weekend?" I said to Andrew

"I've been planning this getaway for sometime and I was going to ask you properly but I figured why not now?" He said, "A getaway? Just the two of us?" I asked, unable to hide some of my excitement. He nodded flashing me his gorgeous smile, "I thought we needed some time alone." He said, leaning closer to me. Making sure that my sense of feeling and smell were assaulted by his irresistible virility. "You know, build on that trust I was talking about." He drawled.

My breath hitched for a second, "Why did you just make that sound so sexual?" I murmured, teasing him but I know he wouldn't expect me to sleep with him if I wasn't ready. He teased me as well when he gave a low growl, playfully biting my bare shoulder. I chuckled and pushed at his chest. "I also thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. Firstly, you'd get some time to properly relax far away from books." He said, "And I'll get to have you all to myself for a change." He added and I chuckled.

"Are you implying that I don't make time for you?" I asked. "Oh no that's not what I'm saying at all." He said sarcastically and I smiled, shaking my head at him. "Thanks." I said after a pause, laying my head on his shoulder. He stroked the side of my face, "You're welcome baby girl."

CHAPTER 17

I woke up a little groggy, its only when I realized I was in an unfamiliar bedroom that I snapped completely awake. I sat up realizing that I was alone in the queen-sized bed and that I was still wearing my dress from last night. I took in the bedroom as a whole; it had a very luxurious resort-like look and feel to it. Where was I? I got up from the bed, more importantly where's the knight in shining armor who kidnapped me?

"Andrew?" I called out; he would've had to sleep in here with me, right? Somehow that thought made me shiver a little. "Andrew?" I asked, walking towards the door. I was reaching for it when it opened and he halted when he saw me. I stopped to stare at him too; his sleep-mussed hair told me he just woke up as well. And he was shirtless, only wearing grey pajama pants. "Morning." He said and my gaze was forced away from his spectacular body. "Hi." I said.

"I heard you calling." He said and I placed my hand on my forehead. "Yeah, woke up in an unknown bedroom and you weren't here." I said, "I thought someone might've kidnapped *you*." I teased, trying to mask my embarrassment. He smiled, Jesus, does he always look this sexy in the morning? I know I probably look like hell. "I didn't think you'd be comfortable sharing a bed, so I slept in the other bedroom." He said.

I raised a questioning eyebrow, "It's a two bedroom suite." He said and I nodded, "Must've been expensive." I said; I didn't approve of him wasting his money on trying to make me comfortable. "My father owns the lodge." He said, "Oh." I said. His half naked physique was doing terrible things to my train of thought, "We could change it." He said and I quickly shook my head.

"No, lets keep the separate beds arrangement." I said; sleeping next to him for the weekend would not do my plan to stay a virgin a little while longer any justice. "Not necessarily because I'd be more comfortable." I murmured stepping further back into the room. For a moment I could've sworn I saw him smirk when I turned. "How did I get into bed anyway?" I asked, "You fell asleep in the car so I carried you in here." He said following me in.

That shot I drank must've been stronger than I thought because I'm not normally such a heavy sleeper. "Aw you tucked me in? How sweet of you." I said and he chuckled behind me. He spun me around, "I think I deserve a kiss for being boyfriend of the year." He said and I leaned back a little. "You don't want to do that, I have morning breath." I said and his brows furrowed. "I have morning breath." He pointed out and I chuckled kissing him.

I ran my hands over his bare shoulders, loving how the muscles there flexed when he tightened his hold on my waist. Crushing me to his chest. I thought I knew my body well, but it keeps proving that is not the case whenever Andrew touches me. It

reacts to him in ways that shock even me. When he and I kissed, it would start off sweet and innocent. But it would quickly escalate and before we realize it, we're out of breath kissing each other like we wanted to devour one another.

I pulled away, "I just remembered I don't have anything with me," I whispered, "I don't have anything to change into." I added. He let me go reluctantly, "There should be clothes in here. Check those doors over there." He said, indicating to the three cupboard doors next to the bathroom.

"I told Megan to put them in here." He went on as I walked over to them. "Megan?" I asked, "She's the lodge manager and a good friend." He said and I nodded opening the doors. I froze, taking in all the clothes, "Sure these cant all be for me, right?" I asked. "Um they are actually." He said and I gaped. "I needed clothes for just one weekend Andrew, not an entire wardrobe." I said and he hugged me from behind.

"Look at it this way, now you get to keep it," He said and I shook my head, checking through the clothes, "All of these are from Koms." I said. Koms is a boutique that only sells its own brand of designer clothing and accessories. Because of its exclusivity and fashion, their clothes didn't come cheap. Andrew reached for the label at the back of my dress, "Baby girl this dress is from Koms." He pointed out. "Yeah, because my sister insisted on buying it for me," I muttered.

"I'm not keeping these clothes." I said turning to face him. "But they're non returnable." Andrew said and I shot him a glare. "Don't look at me like that, I didn't pick them out." He said holding up his hands. "Yeah but you were too quick in paying for them." I said and he stifled a chuckle. "Get out of here and go put on some clothes." I said, "You're distracting me." I added. I was going for the bathroom when he caught my waist.

"You know, you cut my boyfriend of the year kiss a little too short." He said and I feigned empathy. "Did I?" I asked and he nodded. "But I think this little stunt—" I motioned towards the clothes "—permits me to strip you off that award." I said pulling out of his grasp and he frowned. "Oh come on." He said following me to the bathroom and I smiled at him before I shut the door on him.

After drying up I wrapped a towel around me as I looked in the closet again, it really was a complete wardrobe. Andrew was never even supposed to know what size I wear because I never told him. I shook my head, looking for some underwear. My eyebrows shot up when I came across nothing but silk and lace. Megan must've thought what? That Andrew and I are on our honeymoon?

"My God." I mused, picking up one scandalously sexy black lingerie piece. I put it down and fished further, thankfully I found some slightly modest boy shorts and a matching bra. I kept it lite with just a blue halter-top floral dress and flip-flops. I

walked out into the expansive living area; this really was a luxury lodge. "Out here." I heard Andrew call and I saw the open sliding glass door to the deck he was sitting in. The first thing that caught my attention was the incredible view of the entire lodge and its safari backdrop.

"Wow." I said, "Where are we?" I asked, "The outer skirts of South Joburg." Andrew said, "Sit, breakfast is served." He added and that's when I saw all the food laid out. I sat and watched him bite into some toast; he changed into a checked shirt and khaki shorts. Unlike me he was bare foot, which I thought was rather sexy. He caught me staring "What?" he asked and I shook my head. "This place is pretty quiet. Are there even people here?" I asked. I remember when all I had back home was exactly this kind of peace and quiet. But since moving to Pretoria I've grown accustomed to the constant buzzing of the city life.

"Yeah, we have a no noise policy." He said, and my eyebrows lifted slightly "Really?" I asked and he laughed, "No, I'm just pulling your leg baby girl." He added and I chuckled. "But we do take in a pretty sophisticated clientele." He said and I nodded, that made more sense. "Eat." He said, "We have tons to do and very little time." He added and I smiled.

CHAPTER 18

Andrew really meant it when he said he wanted me all to himself. So much so that I'd only known he'd confiscated my phone when I couldn't find it. I tried to tell him that I didn't get to call anyone and he said he texted Kay and my sister about my whereabouts for the weekend. And that if I needed to call anyone there was a phone readily available in the suite.

Besides that little disagreement which he had to win, we had fun. Touring the lodge and its game. My favorite had to be the lunch we had by the lake and the helicopter ride around the massive lands. I got back to the suite to freshen up, I was thinking of calling Kay when one of the lodge's servants came in. "Excuse me mam." He said, "Mr. Wright asked if you could join him down at the private pool." He added.

I nodded, "Thank you." I said and he walked out. I walked to my bedroom, hoping to find some bathing suits in the closet and thankfully I wasn't disappointed. That completely changed when I couldn't find even a single one-piece. Are bikinis supposed to be this...revealing? I thought, looking at the green one I decided to try on. Not that I'd know, I'd never even worn a bikini before. I never had to, there are no beaches on the Highveld.

I was suddenly glad my sister made me wax my whole body. With a defeated sigh I grabbed a towel and walked out. Having toured the lodge it wasn't hard finding the private pool. Unlike the public one, this one was only open to tenants on request and probably a hefty price. It was well towards dusk and the lights in the poolroom were already on. I looked at Andrew come above water and run a hand through his wet locks. Which now looked black rather than brown.

He smiled, and then swam towards the steps of the pool, that's when I noticed he wore grey swim shorts. I sat on one of the recliner beds, "Come on in, the water feels amazing." He said. I shook my head, "I'll pass." I said and he frowned, "You're really going leave me hanging?" he asked. I paused a little, "I cant swim." I said, and I had to give him props for not looking surprised by that. "I never got around learning how to. Where I'm from we don't have fancy pools, just scary looking dams and rivers." I said and he smiled chuckling.

"Well then, there's no time to learn like the present." He said and I stared at him. "Are you serious?" I asked and he nodded. I shook my head, "No." I said, "No? What are you afraid of?" he asked and I averted my gaze pausing a little. "That I'll drown and die." I said and I looked at him in time to see him stifle a smile. "You really think I'd let you drown and die baby girl?" he asked.

I shook my head after a short moment. He lifted his hand out to me, "Then come to me," he said. I stared at his hand hesitantly before I stood up and dropped my towel. I at least had the satisfaction of watching Andrew's eyes widen slightly when he took

in my bikini-clad body. For a moment I was glad I was giving him more indecent thoughts about me. Anxiety crept into me when I took hold of the railing and came down the steps. "Easy, I got you." Andrew said and he immediately held me when I got into the water. Half expecting it to be a tad cool but it was soothingly warm. "You're not drowning yet." He said and I chuckled.

My head remained above water when Andrew playfully spun us around, I couldn't help but giggle. "See? You're floating and I'm barely holding onto you." He said. "As long as you take a deep breath and lie back, and I didn't even have to tell you to do that." He pointed out and I smiled. "Okay, I'm going to let you go now." He said, loosening his arms around me and I locked my arms around his neck, "No." I said quickly and he chuckled without humor.

"Its okay Zoe, look." He said, slowly unwrapping himself from me and completely let me go and I was still floating. He then told me what to do in order to actually swim and I got it quite easily. But a tinge of unease swept over me when he decided to put me to the test. "Just remember what I said about the arms and legs and swim towards me," he said from the other end of the pool.

I took a deep breath and did; it wasn't as bad as I'd made it out to be because in no time Andrew caught me by the waist. "Nice one baby girl." He praised and I chuckled, "How was I?" I asked and he chuckled. "Could be better, we'll work on it." He said and I smiled at his tone. "Thank you." I said and he looked to the side and playfully tapped his cheek with a finger, I grinned before kissing it.

I didn't get to pull away when he took my mouth. I ran my hands through his wet locks as he kissed me with more fervor. I let out helpless moan that honestly would've been embarrassing but I didn't care as I kissed him back just as fervently. I don't remember how I got on the recliner bed beneath him but I didn't care either. We were both still wet from our swim and somehow that made everything that much hotter.

He moved his kisses down the length of my neck and shoulder, even slightly nibbling at my skin and earlobe, which made me quiver a little. It's only when I moved my leg up, my hips arching involuntarily did he freeze to a halt; "Damn it to hell." He swore under his breath. "I'm sorry." I apologized quickly, thinking I'd probably done something wrong. He looked at me then, "Why are you apologizing?" he asked, "I'm the one who was a heartbeat away from undressing you." He added sitting up.

I paused a little, staring at his broad bare shoulders, rigid with tension. "Well I didn't exactly discourage you." I said and he eyed me for a while. "The plan wasn't to seduce you." He said, "I didn't bring you here in hopes that you'd sleep with me Zoe." He added. I sat up so that I was face to face with him, "I know that and I love you for it." I said then froze. Realizing that I just carelessly said the three words I promised I'd keep to myself for the time being.

He seemed just as taken aback, I felt like his hazel gaze bored wholes into my brain. "What did you just say?" he murmured, right when thought he'd never speak. I averted my gaze, I had a feeling he didn't mean the first part. "I love you." I said, it's the truth, why deny it? He smiled, "Say it like you mean it," He said, "What?" I asked, surprised. I squealed when he started tickling me, "Say it like you mean it." He repeated.

I writhed, laughing "Andrew! Stop it!" I said in between helpless giggles. "Okay, okay!" I said, "I love you." I added a little bit louder and he stopped. We both sobered up before I whispered, "I love you." Again. I never thought it would feel good to tell him but it did, it felt right. He smiled, "Good." He said, "Because I love you more." He added and my breath caught when he kissed my forehead.

I put the serviette down, "That was delicious." I said and Andrew nodded taking a sip of wine. "Candlelit dinner under the bushveld stars." I said, "You are romancing me Mr. Wright." I added and he chuckled. "Well to be honest I 'am trying to leave my fingerprints all over that big heart of yours." He said and I smiled, "Mission accomplished then." I said.

"Why didn't you tell me? That you loved me before." I asked and he smiled. "I'm not the one with trust issues baby girl." He said, "I wanted you to have the courage to say it first." He added. "If I'd done it, it would've been way sooner, and that wouldn't have done us any justice." He said. "Really, how soon?" I asked and he chuckled. "I didn't know it then but I'm pretty sure I loved you from the moment I saw you." He said.

"I don't believe you." I said and he nodded in understanding "I didn't believe me either. Ask Martin what I said to him when I told him to follow you." He added. I made a mental note to do that when he's not there. "I don't know if it was that whole love at first sight thing," he said, his eyes far away, "But from that first day I was a goner." He added and I smiled at him.

"What about you baby girl?" he asked and I chuckled with my forearms resting up on the table. "For me, I'm definitely sure it was infatuation at first sight. It hit me like a nasty sucker punch." I said and he laughed, "From there I just convinced myself it was nothing." I added. I paused, really thinking about it. "I probably fell in love with you when you said you had me figured out and that I was going to let you through my walls." I said and nodded to myself.

"I didn't even know I had walls until you were determined to break through them." I said with a half smile. We chatted for a while longer well over our dessert, "I have to call Kay." I said, "And probably turn in while I'm at it," I added standing up and he stood with me. "Thanks for the dinner, it was amazing." I said and he shook his head

and hugged me. "Goodnight." He said then planted his trademark kiss on my forehead. I walked back into the living area after glancing back and seeing him settle back into his seat, checking a text he just received.

After a quick hot shower I settled onto my bed and grabbed the suite's phone and dialed Kay's number. "Hello?" she answered; it's only then that I realized she didn't know it was me, "Hey girl, its Zoe." I said, "Zoe? Where's your phone?" she asked. I chuckled, "Andrew confiscated it." I said and she paused. "I'm not even going to ask why." She said, "So, how is it there?" she asked. I smiled, "Its amazing, absolutely beautiful, for once I'm not anxious about coming back to Pretoria." I said and she chuckled.

"How's Andrew?" she asked and I paused, "I told him I loved him." I said and Kay gasped a little. "Wow, and what did he say?" she asked and I chuckled, "After making me repeat it three times he said he loved me more." I said. "Aw, see? I told you not to hold it back." She said. We talked for a short while but I wasn't really in it, my mind kept drifting back to Andrew and our encounter in the poolroom.

I laid my head on the pillows staring at the ceiling, what would've happened had he not stopped. I knew that for a split second I wanted him to take me. Now here I 'am in this beautiful bedroom alone, when what I really wanted was to be held by him right now. I know I'll sleep with Andrew eventually but why couldn't that happen here? Tonight?

He said he didn't bring me here so I'd sleep with him but in my book, if there were ever the perfect time, it would be now. I knew I was ready, a big part of that was because he'd professed that he'd loved me from the very beginning. A part of me wonders if that was the reassurance I was looking for all along. I got off my bed before I could overthink it and lose my nerve.

Now I had another dilemma, how do I then go about this? I have no clue on how you seduce a guy. I looked down at my pajamas; these won't help. I walked to the closet and fished through all the lace and silk, avoiding that scandalous black piece. I smiled when I found a chocolate brown short nightdress. It was just the right mixture of silk and lace, not too sexy but not too modest either.

I put a matching robe over it and walked out before I could freak out and convince myself not to do this. I paused on his door almost thought of knocking then I shook my head at myself and walked in. He wasn't in there and his bed was still made up, I almost called out for him when he came out of the bathroom. He was wiping his damp hair with a towel when he froze seeing me. Like today in the morning, he was half naked.

"Zoe? Is everything okay?" he asked and I smiled, "Yeah, everything is fine. I'm fine." I said then paused. I took a deep breath, looking down the length of his immaculate

body. Just that alone had my body feeling like an aching hot mess. I smiled slightly, "I was in my bedroom getting ready for bed and I thought, here I 'am at this beautiful lodge for the weekend. Alone with a guy I find ridiculously attractive, and whom I love beyond reason." I said, shaking my head slightly. "And I'm still chaste. That doesn't make any sense." I added. I watched Andrew's eyes widen a little then darken with what I hoped was desire.

"So I came in here hoping we could make some sense out of this situation." I murmured, my heart pounding in my chest. Andrew's eyes closed for a second, "Zoe." He said, sounding more like groan than anything. "Don't tempt me baby girl, I'm struggling keeping my hands off you as it is." He added. But I refused to be turned away for my own good; I unwrapped the gown and let it fall to the ground.

His eyebrows lifted and I was sure then that it was desire in his hazel gaze when it slowly swept up and down my body. He made a sound at the back of his throat, it sounded predatory, almost pained. "You trying to bring me to my knees?" he asked and I nodded without hesitation. "I thought you worshiped my ass." I said and a corner of his lips curved up.

"I do." He said, "I worship every inch of you." He added softly and I took in a shaky breath. "Then come show me those thoughts you have about me." I said, "The uncensored version." I added. Andrew muttered an expletive, dropping the towel he was holding before walking towards me. He cupped the back of my neck, staring directly into my eyes, "Are you on the pill?" he asked and I nodded, doctor's orders to control my previously irregular cycles.

"Do you believe me when I say I'm clean?" he asked and I silently nodded again. Andrew leaned down to scoop me into his arms, "If this was a test, God forgive me for failing so miserably." He murmured carrying me to his bed. He was laying me down when I said, "Then I guess we both failed." And he kissed me with passionate abandon.

CHAPTER 19

I woke up alone again but this time in Andrew's bed. The moment I thought of him last night's events came rushing back like a tidal wave. My nakedness under the sheet and the tiny throbbing between my legs confirmed that I didn't dream any of that. A lazy smile crept onto my face; if I had any clue it would've been that incredible, I might've reconsidered waiting this long.

I'd swear I could still feel the warm pleasurable sensation his touch and lips felt behind. I shivered slightly and he put his hands and lips everywhere, and I do mean everywhere. That made me feel a bit self-conscious too, the fact that he now knows my body in ways I never could. I guess I considered myself lucky that my first time was with Andrew.

Someone whom I love and who I know loves me; someone who was gentle; patient and who placed my pleasure ahead of his own. I closed my eyes in contentment, opening them again when I heard the door open. Andrew walked in and smiled at me, "Morning baby girl." He said, sitting on the edge of the bed facing me. "Hi." I said. He eyed me for a minute, "You look enchanting this morning." He said and I snorted.

"Yeah, trust a guy to say that after getting laid." I said and he chuckled, "Are you okay?" he asked softly, and I nodded. "Sore?" and I looked down a bit. Discussing intimacy with Andrew was going to take some getting used to, "Not really." I said. "I didn't plan on taking you more than once," he said then slightly frowned. "I thought I was a master at self control until you came along." He added and I smiled at bit.

He stood up, "I'll run you a hot bath." He said, extending his hand to me, "Come on." He added and I looked at his hand hesitantly. I hugged the sheet closer to my body "Can't I stay in here a while longer?" I asked, "You go ahead though." I added and he shot me a skeptical look. Somehow I knew he wouldn't take the bait, I sighed, "Okay, we might have slept together." I said, "But I'm not comfortable parading naked around you just yet." I added and he sat back down.

"So you're hiding from me?" he asked, before I could reply he grabbed the sheet and pulled it away from me. I gasped in surprise "Andrew!" I squealed, lifting my legs up but he grabbed my ankles stopping me. I slapped his hands away but he didn't let go. "Ugh! Could you give a girl a little privacy?" I muttered. "And give you time to nurse your self-consciousness? Hell no." he said.

I sighed, dropping back on the pillows in defeat. Clearly there was no stopping him from studying my body in the light of day this time. I propped myself on my elbows, as unsettling as it was having him look at me without a scrap of clothing on, there was also a sense of rightness. My breath caught when his hand caressed the side of my body all the way down to cup the back of my calf. "Ethereal." He breathed.

"Never hide yourself from me baby girl." He said, "You are beautiful, haven't I proven that to you?" he added and I smiled a bit chagrined. He did make me feel beautiful and wanted...oh so wanted. He covered me with the sheet before he planted a kiss to my forehead and stood up, "What do you fancy for breakfast?" he asked, "Surprise me." I said and he shot me his gorgeous smile before walking out.

It's been two weeks since Andrew and I returned from our little getaway. Now both he and I got cracking, with final exams being just two more weeks away. What I loved most is that we were happier than we've been since we started seeing each other. Perhaps it's the introduction of sex into the mix; that thought made me smile slightly. And what amazing sex it was. We were also more secure in our relationship and sure of each other's feelings.

I wasn't really paying attention to anything in particular as I made my way to the bookstore Isaac recommended to me. So I nearly missed her when we walked passed each other. "Jasmine?" I asked and she turned to me and smiled in surprise. "Zoe? Hi." She said delightedly which surprised me. I only saw Jasmine as one of Ana's friends but I didn't have anything against them for it. We weren't friends ourselves so the last time I saw her was at Ana's party and we all know how that ended for me.

"Hey, I'm surprised to see you here, I thought you were based in Joburg." I said and she nodded. "I 'am. I actually came here for a go-see." She said and I nodded like I know what that is. "Look I'm really sorry about what happened at Ana's party." She said and I shook my head. "It's not your fault." I said, "I know but I still feel bad." She said and I just nodded.

She paused a little then suggested if we could sit for a little bit; "Listen, Ana only said those things because she feels threatened by your relationship with Andrew." She said. I nodded getting it very clearly, "She wants him for herself." I said knowingly and I couldn't begrudge *her* on that one. Even I'd want him. Jasmine nodded, "She has been for a long time now." She said, "I think she keeps waiting for him to come to his senses and right into her arms." She added.

I kept quiet when Jasmine shook her head, "Now that's not going to happen with you in the picture, she knew that. So she thought she'd scare you off. What she didn't anticipate was Andrew chasing you down and cutting her off." she said and my eyebrows shot up. "You didn't know they stopped talking after the party?" She asked and I just shook my head, a little too shocked to speak.

"According to Ana they just recently reconnected." She went on, "Yeah, he wasn't too happy she shared that piece of information with you." She added. I eyed Jasmine for a minute, wondering why she'd want to share such things about her friend with me,

and we weren't anywhere near being that close. She must've understood the quizzical look on my face because she smiled a bit. "I love Ana, but I know how she's like sometimes." She said, "When she wants something, she can be ruthless in getting it. Disregarding the people she hurts in the process. That's just who she is." She added, then shrugged "I guess you're a few I don't want to fall for her tricks." She went on.

"Not that they'd make any difference." She said when I didn't interrupt her. "She may want Andrew but Andrew only sees her as a friend, a sister. He always has." She added. "If you don't let her get to you, then she's not a threat." She said and I nodded standing up when she did. "Thanks, I'll do good to remember that." I said and she smiled at me.

"Take care." She said and I returned her smile, "You too." I replied before we went our separate directions.

CHAPTER 20

Three months later...

I was ecstatic to go back to Pretoria, I'm pretty sure I pushed my little white Peugeot to the limit when I off-ramped into Hatfield. After my final exams, I went to vac work and then spent the remainder of my holidays at home with my family. Andrew wasn't too fond about the idea of us spending so much time apart. Even though it was just two weeks. I couldn't spend the holidays away from home and I couldn't take him home with me, not yet anyway.

Even if I could, his family had a holiday gathering he had to attend himself. Even though we talked frequently every single day, I missed him terribly. Now I was moving back here, for my second year at Tuks. Maddy decided to stay at Greenleaf while Kay and I decided to move to a flat not too far from campus either. We both wanted the rest experience and it was amazing, but we both decided we wanted more freedom.

Even though we're staying in the same flat, we weren't sharing an apartment. Thankfully my bursar did not dispute me changing accommodations as long as I kept it on the same cost as my room in Greenleaf. That I was able to do, the apartment as a whole was not really big but it had more space than my room in Greenleaf and I was sharing it with Kay.

I looked around after dropping some of my luggage in the living room to the open-plan of the kitchen area. What surprised me most was the good condition it was in, for the price they're charging you'd think it'd be ruins. "Hey baby girl." I pivoted to see Andrew leaning against the open doorway. "Andrew." I exclaimed and I ran to him, locking my arms around him. He caught me, squeezing me to him.

He kissed me fiercely; I was a little out of breath when he pulled away. "Why the hell would you want to spend so much time away from me?" he asked. "I missed you like crazy but I had to go home for the holidays." I pointed out. "I could've came with you." He said and I raised a knowing eyebrow at him. "We walked about that." I said and he shook his head, "Yeah, yeah." He said walking further in and I chuckled after him.

"I nearly followed you to Marapong a few times." He admitted, "I'm glad you decided to be a good boy instead." I teased and he shot me an amused look over his shoulder. He took in the apartment and nodded with satisfaction, "Better than in the photos, I like." He said and I smiled. "I was just thinking the same thing actually." I said. "The security here is pretty good as well." He said and I raised my eyebrows at him.

"You know this how?" I asked and he smiled a bit sheepishly. "I did my homework." He said and I chuckled, shaking my head at him.

"You know, if you weren't my boyfriend and I didn't love you so much, I'd be worried about your stalker tendencies." I said and he chuckled. "So I like to make sure my girlfriend is safe, is that such a crime?" he said and I smiled, "No, its sweet." I said, wrapping my arms around his neck. I was about to kiss him when I suddenly pulled back, "We have a lot of unpacking to do." I said and he shook his head, refusing to let me go. "After this." He said dipping his head and I looked to the side, offering my cheek only.

"Andrew, we wont get any work done if we keep at this." I said, chuckling when he planted kisses all over my face. "Fine." He said pulling away and I pulled him out the door with me. We brought more of my luggage and a few moving boxes in the apartment before we started unpacking them. "This has to go." He said, glancing at the single bed in my bedroom. I paused from unpacking my clothes into the cupboards.

"Why? There's nothing wrong with that bed." I said. "There's not enough space for me when I come to visit." He said and I chuckled. "Will you be coming to visit me or my bed?" I asked and he shot me one of those sexy smiles of his, "Both." He said and I shook my head at him, smiling. "You have to be such a guy?" I said and he laughed. We were just about done unpacking some of my appliances in the kitchen when Kay walked in.

I squealed running to give her a tight hug; she also went back to Mamelodi for the holidays. "When did you get here?" I asked, "A while actually, I just finished unpacking with my dad, and he left so I thought I'd come check on my best friend." She said and I chuckled. "I'm jealous you're done, I would've been as well if I didn't have Andrew distracting me every now and then." I said and in a hushed voice and she chuckled.

"I don't even want to know how he's doing that." She murmured as well, "Hi Andrew." She called out to him; he looked up and acknowledged her with a smile and nod before going back to his task. Kay stayed over to help me with a few that were left but soon she said goodnight and promised we'd meet to catch up. I closed the door behind her and turned to Andrew, who was now sitting on the couch.

I sat beside him smiling when he handed me a glass and poured some white wine into it. He held up his on glass in a toast, "Here's to the new year and your new apartment." He said, "And here's to us." I added and we clicked glasses. "I like that one." He said with a smile. "I have something for you," he said, putting his glass down on the small coffee table. "Uh oh." I said when he stood up.

"Relax." He said reaching into the pocket of his jacket, "This was your Christmas gift and I couldn't give it to you on the day." He said walking back to me holding a small wrapped rectangular box. He sat next to me and chuckled when I shook it. "Open it." He said and I did, slightly excited. Inside I found a clear black jewelry box, I let out a

small gasp when I held up a sliver necklace with the letters AW studded with what looked like small diamonds.

I looked from it to him, "Wow, its lovely." I said and he smiled and took it from me. "Turn around." He said and I did. He hooked the necklace around my neck, "You've got me by the neck baby girl, I only saw it fitting that you wear my initials around yours." He said and I turned to him with a smile. He touched it, "It symbolizes your hold over me and my heart, remember that when you see it." He added.

I threw my arms around him, almost knocking him back, he chuckled, "Thank you." I said, "This is the best present anyone has ever given to me," I added and he kissed my nose. "You're welcome." He said and I frowned a little. "Now I feel bad because I don't have anything to give you." I said and he shook his head at me. "That's already been taken care of." He said. "You've already given me something I want, you gave me you."

* * *

I had kick started my second year and everything was going well, too well in fact. But that all changed when the person who made my world spin disappeared on me. Maybe I was overreacting but it didn't make any sense for Andrew not to answer his phone for three days now. Especially since he makes a habit of calling me everyday if he can't see me. I was starting to worry and it was showing on the messages I left on his voicemail.

With him being in his final year he initially came to campus occasionally. So did his friend Scott, so when I saw him I immediately charged for him. He seemed a little too surprised to see me. "Zoe, hey, how are you?" he asked, I didn't miss the nervous edge in his tone. "Not too good Scotty, I haven't seen your friend in three days. He's not answering my calls either and I..." I trailed off when I saw him frown a little.

"I haven't spoken to Andrew in a week Zoe." He said and my brows furrowed. "You don't seem worried about that," I said and he averted his gaze for a minute. "I'm pretty sure Andrew's fine." He said, "I don't know why he's avoiding you." He added and my eyebrows shot up. "Avoiding me?" I repeated and he sighed. "Andrew changed a bit when you came along." He said.

"I agree that this is bizarre for the Andrew you know and we've come to know as well." He added then paused. "But its very customary for the Andrew prior to you." He said and I had to admit, that one hurt. I rubbed against my forehead, "What are you saying Scott? That he's trying to ditch me?" I asked and he shrugged. "I don't have answers for you Zoe, I wish I had." He said and he genuinely looked sorry.

I nodded and he walked passed me after saying goodbye. I shook my head slightly, still standing there. I stopped caring who Andrew was or what he did prior to me. I unconsciously touched the AW initials on my necklace. The Andrew I know, the one

who gave me this necklace a month ago wouldn't try to 'ditch' me. At least not like this. Something was very wrong. I walked to class after taking a deep breath.

CHAPTER 21

I picked at the fish on my plate; Maddy, Kay and I decided to eat out together tonight. They were talking among themselves maybe even to me but I couldn't really hear them. That's been a problem for me ever since my boyfriend went MIA, I'd constantly drift away from the outside world and into my own world of worry and despair.

I normally busied myself with books and playing sport but even they weren't effective at distracting me like they used to. I was okay when I had tons to do but when I sat like this, with time to think about it, that's when I'd lose it. "Zoe? Zoe!" Maddy said to me a little sharply and I looked up at her. "Sorry, you were saying?" I asked and she shook her head then looked at Kay. "You have to tell her," she said, "No." Kay quickly replied.

I looked in between them, baffled "Tell me what?" I asked and they both paused then. Kay exhaled in a rush, "I talked to Alexa yesterday and she told me some info about Andrew." She said and my breath caught for a second. "Is he okay? Where is he?" I couldn't help blurting out. Kay shook her head, "She doesn't know." She said, "All she heard is that Andrew dropped out of Tuks, and moved out of Leeds." She added, "Moved out of Pretoria as a whole."

I had steeled myself, but that still shook me to my core. I took a deep breath but it ended up sounding like a wheeze. Maddy shook her head, "But it doesn't really mean its true." She said and I swallowed hard. "Yeah, but at this point I don't know what to believe." I said and they both shot me sympathetic looks.

In my last attempt to locate my boyfriend I drove to Sunninghill, if he really moved out of Pretoria, he'd have to have come home, right? Somehow I doubted that, Andrew did not go home unless his father wasn't around. Then again in my position at the moment, what I thought I knew and what I thought was the truth has been terribly disillusioned.

I stopped my car at the tall gates of the Wright mansion, the moment one of the guards walked up to my car I knew they weren't going to let me in. "Can I help you mam?" he asked and I cut the engine. "Yes, I'm looking Andrew, my name is Zoe, I'm his girlfriend." I said, hating how I hesitated saying that last part. The guard frowned, "The family is not expecting anyone today." He said.

"I know that, I didn't call to say I'm coming by." I said, "Is Andrew here?" I asked and he paused a bit. "I'm not at liberty to say." He said and I sighed, "Look I really need to know of his whereabouts please." I said. "I think its best if you leave miss." He said. "No, at least let me talk to Betty, the head housekeeper?" I asked and he paused checking his walky-talky. "Yeah, there's a girl named Zoe out here." He said into it. He listened then his eyebrows shot up a little. "Okay." He said before putting it in his pocket again.

"My apologies mam, Mr. Wright will see you." He said and at that moment I knew he meant the senior. Deep down inside I knew Andrew is not here, but I guess his father is the next best chance I have. I drove up front to the big mansion, not really looking forward to being in the same room as Andrew's father let alone speak to him. Another thing that had me on edge is that *he's* the one who wanted to see me.

The big front door opened the moment I walked up to the porch. The butler I remembered from the last time I was here greeted me and let me in. "Follow me." he said, "Mr. Wright will see you now." He said. I looked around, hoping Betty would appear and save me. I was led into what I presumed was his study and he was still in discussion with some other imposing looking guy. He almost would've been fit to be one of the guards down there but he was suit-clad instead.

"We'll continue tomorrow." Andrew's dad said to the guy and they shook hands before he walked passed me. A cold shiver ran down my spine when he shot me a brief smirk. "Zoe, please sit." Mr. Wright said, indicating to the chair on the other side of his massive dark wooden table. "To what do I owe the surprise?" he asked. "I actually came here looking for Andrew." I said and he eyed me.

"What gave you the impression that he might be here?" he asked. I took in a deep breath "I haven't seen or talked to Andrew in a week and a half now, I was hoping maybe you'd know where he is and if he's okay. I'm worried about him." I said and he paused. "Oh rest assured Andrew is fine." He said and my eyebrows lifted a bit. What did he know? Last time I checked he and Andrew did not speak, period.

"This is normal behavior for him." He said, "You see, Andrew sometimes feels the need to...rearrange his life, that entails him letting go of certain of people." He added and I stifled a flinch at the insinuation. "You strike me as a nice girl and a clever one at that. You have to take into consideration that Andrew finally came to his senses and decided he deserves better. Just bow out." He went on.

I'd only had encounters with Andrew's dad twice prior to today and in both occasions he's made it very clear that he didn't approve of my relationship with his son. The stress of the past week must've gotten to me because I'd just about had it with his jabs at me. I'd like to think of myself as tolerant and respectful but one thing I'm not is someone else's punching bag. No matter how much money and power is attached to their name.

I stood up from the chair, staring directly into his cold hazel gaze, "With all due respect Mr. Wright, your son loves me. Which is more than I can say for you." I said, "I 'am more a part of his life than you've ever been. I know you don't like me and I honestly don't care." I went on. "But I'm not going anywhere, you might want to take *that* into consideration." I added. "Good day." I said, turning to his door. I walked out feeling both proud and mortified at my actions.

I was all bravado when I said all those things but deep down there was a part of me that doubted everything I just said to him. The guy whom I claimed loves me had either forgot he has a girlfriend or something is seriously wrong with him. The possibility of either scenario makes me sick to my stomach. The butler looked prepared to walk me out when I came into view, "I'll show myself out." I muttered and he backed off.

I'd made my way down to the foyer when I heard a familiar voice call my name, "Betty, thank God." I said to her, hugging her tightly. "Zoe, what are you doing here?" she asked in Sepedi. "I was hoping you'd tell me where Andrew is." I replied in the same language. Thinking it was better if no one else understood us. She shook her head, "The last time I saw Andrew he was coming to fetch his things, all of them." She said and my eyebrows shot up.

"He moved out?" I asked incredulously. She nodded frowning, "I think he had a falling out with his father." She continued in Pedi. "How was he? When you saw him?" I asked. "He appeared fine, but I think he acted that way for my benefit. I could see that underneath he seemed stressed, frantic even. I'd never seen him like that before." She said and I ran a hand over the back of my neck. Attempting to relieve some of the pent up tension there.

"I hate this." I said, "I haven't seen or heard from him in what seems like ages. And I keep hearing all these different things, I just don't know what to think anymore." I added. Betty put a hand on my shoulder, "Stay strong girl, he loves you. He will come back for *you*." She said.

CHAPTER 22

Like many of my nights these days I showered and distracted myself with studying. I stood up from my chair when a knock came on my door. I figured it was Kay because she's been visiting me frequently lately. Honestly just to check up on me, I hate that she feels the need to do that. So I was beyond shocked when I unlocked my door and opened it to Andrew. After nearly two weeks of wondering and going out of my mind, there he stood. In one peace no less, that in itself was enough to knock the wind out of me.

His hair was slightly longer and there was some visible stubble, but he was still the same Andrew I love so much. I threw myself into his arms after he locked the door behind him. I cupped his head in my hands, took a huge whiff of his scent. Making sure it really was him in my apartment holding me. For all I know I could be dreaming this, like the past couple of nights.

He cupped my cheek staring right into my eyes, his hazel gaze looked desperate as if trying to take in as much of me as possible. "Zoe." He whispered, his voice sounding a bit tortured. I couldn't reply as he took my mouth with fierce passion, I'm guessing he didn't want to talk and I was okay with that. If his touch were all I was getting for now, I'd take it with open arms. Take *him* with open arms.

A helpless moan escaped me before he leaned down, cupping the back of my thighs and swiftly picked me up. Wrapping my legs around him and I slid his jacket off him. Neither of us broke our scorching kiss when he walked us to my bedroom. He laid me down on the queen-sized bed he had no shame admitting he bought for exactly these moments. There was fervent urgency when we practically ripped each other's clothes off.

Andrew had my pajamas off in a flash, naked beneath him. The only thing I had on is the necklace he gave me, a necklace I never took off since day one. My hands fisted in his hair, unable to control my breathing when he suckled, kissed and nibbled my skin, my neck, my breasts, and my abdomen. He gave a primitive growl of satisfaction when he mouthed my aroused sex. Loud moans spewed out of me as he worked his tongue in ways only he knew drove me insane.

He ate me for what seemed like hours, inducing two toe-curling orgasms from me. Andrew would let me explore my own sexuality as well but tonight it seemed I was dancing to the beat of his drums. He flipped me onto my front and raised my back into the air before he buried his face in my ass. I wasn't sure which was more potent, the shock or the ridiculous pleasure that brought me.

He and I never tried any ass play before, I guess that's in the past now. He spread me wider, working his thumb on my swollen nub while he tongued the seam of my ass. I buried my face in the pillows, screaming a climax that had me trembling all over. I

barely had time to catch my breath when laid me on my back he entered me. He always has to slowly stretch me to accommodate him. This time, my painfully aroused and drenched sex took him in a whole lot more greedily. Which made him groan as he buried himself in me.

I was pretty sure my nails were scaring his back when he drove me with long, hard thrusts. Searching for his release in a feral way that sent me over the edge right along with him. He sat up with me on top of him this time. He suckled on my heavy breasts before he firmly held my hips, bringing me down on his long, rigid length. He controlled my movements, making sure I rode him slowly, oh so deliciously slow. The deepness and intimacy of the penetration literally took my breath away.

"I need this baby girl, I need *you*, all night." He rasped onto my neck, "I hope you have some energy for me," he added. I whimpered, into his hair when he brought me down on him hard. I cried out his name when I waves of relentless pleasure tore through my body.

I didn't expect to wake up alone but I did. I stood up from the bed; wrapping the rumpled sheet around my naked body. I didn't bother looking for Andrew, from the moment I woke up I knew he'd left. There was always this empty feeling whenever he's not around and right now it was all around me just as much as the sheet. I felt emotionally and physically raw from last night, disarmed, so this felt like a steak to my heart.

The picture of us on my nightstand caught my gaze, I picked it up, we were at his aunt's wedding. It felt like such a long time ago, that I really don't remember being as happy as I look in the picture. Now after two weeks of looking for him, of needing him, of missing him he shows up at my door. We make this incredible love together and he just leaves as if it was nothing more than a booty call. Which is exactly what it looks like now.

I threw the picture at my closed bedroom door; a door he certainly went through a few hours ago. A hysteric sob escaped me as I wondered if he even stopped to look back at me. I flinched at the sound shattering glass when the picture frame fell to the floor. I couldn't help comparing it to our relationship, was it broken as well? I sunk to the floor beside my bed, succumbing to tears I've held back for the past weeks. I hated that, but I felt absolutely defeated. Betty said he'd come back and he did, but for what? Breakup sex? To get me out of his system for good? Because it was certainly not for me like she said. Otherwise he'd be here right now.

There were moments when I thought I wouldn't get up off the floor but I did. And I carried on with my days without Andrew in them. *You have to take into consideration that Andrew finally came to his senses and decided he deserves better.* I remembered

Mr. Wright's cruel words. That was a slap in the face I didn't really feel until now. And a big part of me considered that possibility. Yet another part of me—the part that still feels the need to keep wearing Andrew's initials on my chest—refuses to believe that. That part still wants to believe that the hold he claimed I had on him and his heart is still in tact.

I felt blessed to have Kay and Maddy, they both worked hard to make sure I kept smiling and laughing, and to keep my thoughts away from Andrew as much as possible. Even Isaac was an enthusiastic contributor to that cause. Though unlike my girlfriends he only knew what everyone else knew. That Andrew ditched school and me.

"I love Tuks." Maddy said when she settled on the campus table we'd agreed to meet up at after classes later in the afternoon. Kay chuckled, "Why is that?" she asked. "You haven't heard? The varsity is throwing an end of semester function." She said, "No first years allowed, and guess who is in their second year this time around?" she added and I chuckled when she and Kay high fived each other. "Just in time then." I said and they both chuckled. "Tell me about it." Maddy said.

"When is it?" Kay asked, "In two weeks time. This means we have to set a date for our shopping spree." Maddy replied. "Oh absolutely, agreed?" Kay said and Maddy nodded before she shifted her gaze to me. I sighed, "Do I have a choice?" I asked, "No." they both said in unison. I chuckled, "Then I guess its settled then." I said and Kay smiled at me.

"Its Friday, we have to do something together, how about we catch a movie at The Square at six?" Maddy said and Kay nodded, "Yeah, I'm game." She said and I nodded, "Sure, why not." I said as well. It's been a while since I just went out with my two best friends.

CHAPTER 23

The Square mall is only a walk away from Greenleaf and Kay and I's flat, we decided to leave our cars for a change and enjoy the buzz of the Hatfield streets. "I swear if I didn't have to keep my grades up, I'd spend all my time at the Square. The energy here is always sick." Maddy said and I chuckled, "I know right? Like all the freaking time; it's crazy." Kay chimed in.

We were turning a corner when I stopped dead, spotting a familiar charcoal grey 7 Series parked across the street. Even more shocked when I saw Andrew appear with Alexa. I wasn't prepared for how it would feel like seeing them together as a couple. They looked more right for each other than I would've liked to admit. So this is what would've been like if I had stayed out of the way, like Alexa wanted. She was making good on her promise to pick up where I'd left off.

I zeroed my gaze on the gorgeous guy who is supposed to be my boyfriend. His hair was back to its normal length and I wasn't close enough to see if he'd gotten rid of the small stubble he had. He looked unreal in smart casual attire and black coat. There he was across the street with another girl, and here I 'am staring at him like an obsessed stalker.

Like he's not the same guy who made love to me like his life depended on it just a week ago. Like he's not the same guy who gave me the necklace that's currently around my neck. He and Alexa shared a laugh at something she said before he opened the back passenger door for her. So similar to what he used to do for me. Alexa got in the car but Andrew paused then looked in my direction, he must've felt watched.

He visibly tensed when he saw me looking right at him. It wasn't the wintery June breeze that made me shiver. It's the undeniable distance I felt between us, and it wasn't because there was an entire street between us. Was he well and truly lost to me? That notion stroked pain that had me shutting my eyes for a second. "Zoe?" I heard Kay's voice call out to me. I thought I saw Andrew make a move towards me before I shifted my gaze to Kay. "What are you waiting around here for? And what are you looking at?" she asked.

I looked back across the street to see the BMW pull out of the side parking and drive up the street. I couldn't see past its heavily tinted windows. I looked back at Kay to see her eyes widen, "Is that Andrew's car?" she asked and I nodded, not trusting my voice. "Did he...?" she trailed off and I shook my head. "He left with Alexa." I said, my voice surprisingly blank. "And he saw you?" she asked and I just nodded silently again.

Not liking how my voice sounded, yet that's exactly how I felt. That's a way I deal with hurt sometimes; I numb it out. It's not a great feeling either because you just

feel hallow but I'd take it than the wrenching pain in my chest any day. Kay eyed me before she swore under her breath, not really intending for me to hear but I do. She took my hand and pulled me towards Maddy. "Let's go, we're going to have some fun. Andrew and Alexa be damned."

After leaving Maddy back at Greenleaf Kay and I made our way back to our flat, she was on the tenth floor yet she walked me up to my apartment. "I loved that scene, I cracked 'til my insides hurt." Kay said and I smiled at her, placing my phone and bag on the counter. "It was a good movie. Maddy is always good at picking those." I said and she nodded. Kay paused, eyeing me for a minute.

"Are you okay?" she asked soberly, "Yeah, I'm okay." I said as convincingly as I could. Kay shook her head closing the door, "No you're not." She said knowingly. I chuckled, surprised at how pained it sounded, "No I really am not." I admitted and she nodded in understanding then hugged me. "Its okay not to be." She said then pulled away. I went over to the couch and sat heavily, feeling more tired than I've ever been.

"This is crazy." Kay said still standing. "If he's going to continue treating you like this then he doesn't deserve you." She said, anger coloring her tone. I snorted, "His father thinks it's the other way around." I said with my eyes closed and my head leaned back. "I don't give a rat's ass what his father thinks, nor do I care what the son thinks he's doing." She said, "If he doesn't get his shit together you'll have to walk Tumi. I hate seeing you like this." She added.

I opened my eyes to see her grab my phone and walk over taking a seat next to me. She extended my phone to me, "Call him or leave a message if you will. Just tell him how you feel. Let it all out." She said and I paused a little. Not really seeing what good it would do, given that I'd been calling him. I don't think he even listens to the messages I've been leaving on his voicemail. I took the phone out of Kay's hand and called Andrew, I'd expected his voicemail and that's what I got.

"Its me, again." I said, "And hopefully for the last time because I keep leaving messages you don't return and its starting to look stupid and desperate." I added. I chuckled without humor, "Funny enough that's exactly how I feel. You want to know what else I feel?" I said and paused a little. "I keep waking up thinking things will just magically go back to the way they were, but you're not here." I added.

"You've shut me out and now I don't know what to make of our relationship. And its breaking my heart because I love you so much it hurts." I said, my voice breaking at the end. I paused watching Kay drop her gaze. "You told me to hold onto you, but look what's happening, you're the one pulling away from me now." I added. "Unlike you, I don't have the strength to chase you down, and the moment I cant do that I'm afraid that'll be the end of us." I went on.

I paused for a while, "Make up your mind about us." I said, "Make up your mind about me." I added then hung up. I handed the phone back to Kay feeling like there's a lead in my chest. "He has to respond to that." She said and I looked up at her. "And if he doesn't?" I whispered and her brows furrowed. "Then you'll know its time to let go Zoe, for your own sake." She said softly and I shook my head hopelessly. "Did you not hear me?" I said, "I love him," I murmured and she nodded and pulled me in for a hug when some tears escaped me.

I'd just finished showering the next morning when I checked my phone only to find a text from an unknown number. That itself was not the reason why my heart started racing. It was the text itself. It explained nothing, yet it meant everything. It wrote:

Trust me, A.

CHAPTER 24

Monday morning I came across Alexa at campus, she unwillingly stopped when I called out to her. "You mind telling me what you were doing with my boyfriend Friday night?" I asked, calmly. She paused, then raised an eyebrow "Are you sure he's still your boyfriend?" she said, "Because to me he looked more than content to leave you on the street." She added and I flinched.

"What happened Alexa? You used to be my friend." I said and she shook her head. "I guess I got tired of holding your hand. I guess so did Andrew." She said and I looked at her, "Now you're picking up the slack." I said bitterly, using her precise words. "I told you I would should the opportunity present itself. I don't owe you anything." She said. She then made sympathetic sound, "Wake up Zoe, it was nice when Andrew still looked at you like you were the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen." She said, "You need to start accepting that's gone now." She added.

"If you're looking for someone to blame then I'm sorry, but I cant be your scapegoat." She went on. She turned to walk away but suddenly stopped "Don't be too hard on yourself. I'm pretty sure you would've been able to keep any other guy," She said, "But Andrew Wright was always going to be a bit of a stretch, even for you." She added.

"You have to be such a bitch Alexa?" Kay said appearing next to me, coming out of nowhere. Alexa shrugged, "I'm just telling the truth." She said before she turned and walked away. I put my arm in front of Kay when she tried to charge after her in an angry fit. "Let her go." I said and she turned to look at me, giving me her classic 'are you okay?' look. "I'm fine." I said quickly, "I need to find Isaac, I'll see you later." I added then walked away, not giving her a chance to fuss.

Isaac and I walked out of the lecture hall, I was laughing when he told me about his weekend with his family. It made me miss my own crazy bunch back in Marapong. We were walking out of the EMS building when a girl I didn't know stopped in front of us. "You're Zoe, right?" she asked and I nodded. "Professor Jacobs wants to see you in his office immediately." She said then walked away.

Isaac and me turned to look at each other with wide eyes. "What did you do?" he teased and I playfully hit him. "Nothing." I said, "I think." I added and he chuckled. "Well then go find out, good luck." He said, more than happy to be the one leaving. I stuck my tongue out at him before walking off. Prof Jacobs is one of my lectures, favorite lectures to be exact.

He and I never really talked before; there was never any reason to. Unless he's calling me for my grades. I'd slightly dropped from my high average but it wasn't

anything too alarming, was it? I tightened my hold on my book bag and I knocked on his office door. I figured to just come in even when I heard no reply. I walked in closing the door behind me but he wasn't there behind his desk. I walked further in and the sound of someone standing made me pivot only to find that it was Andrew.

Stunned, I stared at him walk towards me. "I'm guessing the Prof Jacobs who called me in here is you." I said, "Guilty." He said. I shook my head, "I'm not even going to get into how you were able to get him to let you use his office." I said, "What I don't get is why you'd go to such lengths, its not like you don't know where I am or where I live for that matter..." I trailed off.

The real reason hit me then. People wouldn't think we're together if they don't see us together. People assumed he ditched me and apparently he didn't want to prove them wrong. "You don't want to be seen with me," I whispered, feeling like I'd been kicked in the stomach. I tightly shut my eyes, unable to stifle the small whimper that escaped me.

I couldn't do this, not so shortly after Alexa. I tried to walk towards the door but Andrew stopped me. "Don't touch me!" I hissed and he let me go. "Zoe please, listen to me," he said, his tone pleading. "Why should I?" I asked, "Why should I listen to a single thing you have to say?" I added and he paused. I turned, unable to look at him, "My God Andrew, I don't know what kind of sick game you're playing at." I said, running a hand through my hair.

I looked at him then "I don't see you for two weeks, you don't answer my calls, even just to let me know you're okay, that you're still breathing." I said, "Then you suddenly appear on my door, and...and we have this earthshattering sex." I said, my voice shaking. "But when I wake up you've disappeared again." I added. I shook my head.

"I can't keep riding this rollercoaster of yours, it's breaking me," I whispered. Sadness and a bit of regret were evident in his hazel gaze. "I never wanted to hurt you." He said and I nodded, "But you are." I said, "Damn you Andrew, you made me need you. Now you're pulling this shit on me?" I added angrily. "You knew the score, I told you what you had to do when you felt like you cant be with me anymore. You let me go, you don't fuck with my heart." I said.

"But I guess it's a little too late for that last part." I murmured, I didn't want to cry in front of him, but I couldn't stop the tears that fell then. I looked at Andrew and the desolate look on his face made my heart clench. "Talk to me." I pleaded, walking up to him. Grabbing hold of his jacket, conveying my desperation in trying to hold onto *him*. "What is going on with you? Because I'm confused; I feel like I don't know you anymore." I whispered and he dropped his hazel gaze.

"I cant tell you." He said and I flinched back like he'd just slapped me. I paused; he'd say that to me? When he knows how I feel about secrets? "Then get out of my way." I said. "No please, you don't understand. It has to be this way, I have no choice." He said quickly, cupping my cheek. I paused taken aback, "You have no choice?" I repeated, slapping his hand away. "You have no choice not seeing me for weeks on end? You have no choice not returning my calls?" I said, and I took in a shaky breath. "You have no choice taking other girls out?" I whispered, letting the fresh tears fall this time.

"Zoe." He murmured, it sounded more like he's begging than anything. I shook my head, "What am I doing here Andrew? Why did you call me in here?" I asked wearily. He paused "I just wanted to see you baby girl." He said and I chuckled without humor. "You wanted to see me?" I said bitterly, "You like seeing this?" I asked, waving my hand at my tear stained face. "You like watching me cry for you? Well I don't." I said, swiftly wiping my cheeks "And I've been doing it for some time now and frankly I 'am sick and tired of it," I added forcefully.

"I'm sorry." He murmured and I nodded in understanding. "So am I." I whispered before walking passed him and he let me. I'd just about ready to turn the doorknob, "Zoe." He said and I reluctantly turned to look at him. He paused, "Don't tell anyone you saw me today." He said, as if he didn't want to. My eyebrows lifted at the confirmation of my earlier conclusion, that he didn't want to be seen with me.

Was he trying to emotionally scar me? I steeled my voice, refusing to show just how much that last part cut me. "Don't lose any sleep, this entire encounter is forgotten." I said, blankly. "Just like you." I added icily before I opened the door, slamming it behind me. I rushed down an empty hallway and I leaned behind a long pillar. My left arm went around my abdomen and I covered my mouth with my hand. Muffling a painful sob I couldn't hold back.

I took deep breaths refusing to cry any further; I shook my head, shutting my eyes. Kay was right; Andrew and I's relationship was on the fast track to nowhere. I have to jump ship, for my own sake. Yes I love him, God only knows how much. Just the mere thought of letting him go has me feeling misery so deep I can't breathe through it.

But I'm more afraid of what will happen to me if I continued to try and save something that is clearly beyond saving. I straightened when I felt myself calm down and I walked off.

CHAPTER 25

Like me and the girls agreed we went shopping for our dresses, with the end of semester function being tomorrow. Because it was a black tie party, we shopped for more formal dresses. Like Andrew asked, I didn't tell anyone he came to see me, not even my best friends. In fact I kind of just wanted to forget it ever happened but I couldn't.

It has to be this way I have no choice. Those words kept popping into my head like an annoying alarm. What was he talking about? The fact that he didn't want to tell me did not leave me with much to hold onto either. I haven't tried to contact him since I left that terrible message on his phone asking him to make up his mind. That's the only way I'll be able to completely let go, if I didn't try to reach out to him.

It didn't necessarily mean I stopped missing him, stopped loving him but it's a start, no matter how small. He's going to be a tough one to get over, if at all. I knew it from the moment I decided to let him go. Even now, trying to stay true to that decision feels like I'm fighting with my very being. I walked out of the dressing rooms wearing a midnight blue long dress I picked out. "Aw beautiful." Maddy said first and I smiled, twirling a little while holding its flowing skirt.

"Its lovely, it almost trumps my black number." Kay teased and I chuckled, "I doubt that." I said and she smiled. On the day of the function the girls and I met up but this time it was to go to a salon. We chatted while doing our hair, nails and make up. "So you're driving yourself but you're going with Isaac?" Kay asked. I shrugged; it's not a big deal really "We'll just meet up at Club hall." I said.

Kay did not even try to pretend she's not happy I'm going to the function with someone else. To her it was better than being cooped up in my apartment, and according to her, seeing other guys was the best remedy for my predicament. I guess that could've worked if Andrew didn't ruin me for other guys. Even so, Isaac was just a friend, but Kay didn't see it that way and trying to convince her otherwise is a lost cause.

Later that evening I looked at myself in the mirror and smiled slightly. I looked good, and I owed it to myself to forget everything and have a good time. I walked out of my apartment with that mindset. In no time I parked on the campus grounds right next to Isaac's Polo. I smiled when I spotted him "Well don't you look dapper." I teased and he grinned. He playfully fixed his tie, "Yeah well, you know me. I always look this good." He said and I chuckled.

True, but Isaac's normal ensemble was jeans, a tee and sneakers. Not black suits. "You look phenomenal by the way." He said as we made our way into the Club Hall. "Why thank you." I said, with a playful accent. Tuks has never been known to do

anything on a small scale and the function was no less. There must've been hundreds of people in here.

Luckily I was able to find Maddy and Kay, my two best friends looked incredible and their party spirit rubbed off on me easily enough. We along with most people got seated when the announcer walked up on the stage. He told the crowd about the varsity's campaign to stop Rhino poaching. He went on to explain that in order to raise funds they'd be holding auctions throughout the night.

"This is how it will work; every hour, five ladies will volunteer to be auctioned off for a date." He explained and the crowd cheered. "And all the proceeds will go towards the campaign." He added. "Now can we have the first five ladies up on stage please." He said. "I'm doing it." Maddy said, "Zoe should do it as well." Kay said and I immediately shook my head.

"As a matter of fact you are." Maddy said grabbing my hand. "Do it Zoe." Isaac said and I shook my head at him to shut up. "See, even Isaac wants you to do it." Kay said, very pleased and I sighed. "Fine. But if I do it you're going up on the next round." I said. "Deal." She said quickly. "I'll buy you out." Isaac teased and I rolled my eyes at him as I walked off with Maddy.

There were three girls on stage already by the time Maddy and I got on. "Alright, give it up for our first five ladies." The announcer said and the crowd cheered. "Names ladies, and tell the guys why they'd want to take you out." He said, handing the first girl the mic. Being last is terrible, I had to listen to the other girls tell everyone all these great things about themselves. Me on the other hand was blank on what to say.

Maddy handed the mic to me "My name is Zoe, and...I'm simply awesome." I said with a smile and the crowd laughed, some even applauded. I handed the mic back to the announcer. "Alright, lets start the bidding with Jackie." He said moving to the first girl. I was a ball of nerves when it was my turn. I didn't exactly like the idea of being sold to the highest bidder but it was for a good cause.

"Zoe, gentlemen." The announcer said, "Lets start the bidding at a hundred rand." He added. A guy on my right called a hundred, "Do I hear two?" The announcer said. Someone I couldn't see called for it. Then Isaac called five hundred; I stifled a smile, thinking he's probably wasting all his savings on me. "Do I hear more?" the announcer asked and just then some guy called nine hundred. That made the crowd murmur a bit because it was higher than what the other girls went for.

"Nine hundred going once..." "Ten thousand rands." A voice I wish I didn't know so well called out. The crowds gasped their surprise; I didn't see Andrew until the spotlight shone on him briefly. "Ten thousand going once." The announcer said, his

own voice sounded incredulous. "Sold, to the generous and loaded guy over there." He said and the crowd laughed then applauded.

"Thank you to these beautiful ladies for participating, we'll see the next five in an hour." The announcer said, "Gentlemen, come claim your prizes." He added. Great! Going on a ten thousand rand spent date with Andrew would not help my cause to get over him. I looked up at him when he stopped in front of me, going days without seeing him slightly dims my memory of how gorgeous he really is. Even more so tonight wearing a black tux that probably costs as much as he bid for me tonight. It almost felt sadly nostalgic when he extended an arm to me and I took it.

He walked me off stage, "Can we talk?" he said to me, "Do I have a choice?" I muttered and a wary smile played at the corners of his lips. "Not really. I did just bid ten thousand rands for your time." He teased. I glanced over to the table my friends were sitting at as I walked by with Andrew. Isaac looked shocked and Kay just looked pissed. I nodded at her, letting her know that I can deal with him. She'd developed irrational resentment towards Andrew ever since he disappeared on me.

Sometimes I wish I could borrow her feelings. It would be so much easier to resent Andrew after everything, than still helplessly love him the way I do. I let go of his arm the moment we were out of sight and earshot. "I'm not going on that date with you." I said and he sighed, "I know." He said, "I just wanted to make sure no one else takes you out." He added with a possessive tone.

I shook my head at that. First he acts as if he doesn't want to be seen with me, next he claims me as his date in front of hundreds of Tuks students? Trying to make sense of Andrew's actions only leaves me with migraines. "You look breathtaking." He said and I kept quiet, hating how my heart involuntarily responds to his compliment. "You *are* awesome. But is that the best you can say about yourself baby girl?" he said.

"What are you even doing here?" I asked, cutting him off. "I go here." He said and I paused for a minute. "You mean you're back to going here?" I said and he smiled slightly. "I guess you can say that." He said. "Well then, welcome back to the real world." I said, "Now if you'll excuse me..." I tried to walk away and he caught my arm. I flinched away from his touch, "You have to leave me alone Andrew, just stay away! Or I swear to God, I will file a restraining order against you." I said forcefully.

His brows furrowed, "Give me a chance Zoe." He said. "I've been giving you a chances Andrew and its gotten me nowhere." I said, placing my hand on my forehead. "Now I'm just tired, I 'am so tired of all of this. I want no more of it." I said. Andrew looked like he was about to say something but stopped when he looked passed me. I turned, following his gaze to see Isaac come around the corner.

"You okay?" he asked and I nodded, "Yeah, I'll be right there." I said to him and he nodded then walked back after a short pause. I turned back to face Andrew, finding a

glower on his expression. "Finding no problem moving on I see." He said. "You know Isaac is a friend, and how dare you say that to me. I loved you." I said, and he paused. Almost looking pained, "Loved? Past tense?" He said.

"Oh I wish it were that easy." I said. He spread his arms open, "Tell me what to do Zoe." He said, "You want me to beg on my hands and knees for you?" he asked and I shook my head calmly. "No, I just want you to leave me alone. For good." I murmured. "Give me time and space to get over you in peace." I whispered, unshed tears stinging my eyes. He tried reaching for me again but stopped himself, "Zoe..."

"We're done." I choked out, "We're over." I said more audibly. Wrenching those words out of me left an awful taste in my mouth and a sick feeling in my stomach. I avoided his pained gaze as I grabbed his necklace and whipped it from my neck, handing it back to him. I turned to walk away and he didn't stop me. I applauded myself for not crying; I guess I have no tears left. I turned back to him; "You know what your father said to me when I went looking for you?" I said.

The shock on his face was evident at that, "You spoke to my father?" he asked but I ignored him. "He said that I should bow out because you'd finally realized you deserve better." I said. "Well tell Wright senior that I did bow out, but only because I realize that I deserve better." I added. "We both do." I mouthed.

I rejoined my friends back at the party and tried to carry on as if nothing happened. Kay shot one look at my vacant neck and she knew what I'd done. "We can go if you want." She said once we were alone in the bathroom. I shook my head, "I'd already made this decision." I said, "Executing it was different beast." I added with a thick voice. Kay wrapped an arm around me and I looked at our reflection in the mirror. She and I leaning against each other cheek-to-cheek, one friend offering solace to another.

That itself was enough for me to burst into tears, I guess that's what Kay was waiting for too but the tears never came. "I know it hurts now Tumi, but it's for the best." She said softly. My shoulders slightly shook at a soundless chuckle, "Is it?" I said and she nodded fervently. We went back to the festivities and I never saw Andrew for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER 26

I finished zipping up my suitcase, while holding the phone to my ear, "Yes sis, I'm all packed and everything." I said, rolling my eyes. "I'll see you tomorrow." I added. "Okay girl, goodnight." Marti said from the other end then hung up. I picked up the suitcase from the bed and put it down. Now with mid-year exams out of the way we had a three-week vacation.

I would've loved to do some vac work but I can only do that at the end of the year. So I guess visiting my sister was the next best thing. I glanced at my bed and my brows furrowed. The queen-sized bed Andrew had bought with the intention of accommodating himself whenever he came to visit me. Like many other things around me, just looking at it sometimes brings back tons of memories.

Of him holding me to sleep, of us kissing, of him helping me study on it, of us making love. I slightly shook my head; I hated succumbing to those memories because they left pain in their wake. Then I'd remember to cut myself some slack, I loved him and I loved him deep. That won't just go away overnight. I haven't seen him since I broke up with him at the function.

I should've been relieved, I'd finally escaped the hurricane that is Andrew Wright. But now I find myself living in a black and white world. It isn't unpleasant; it's all I'd ever known before him. The problem is that now I know how bright and colorful it can be, not having that is what really hurts sometimes. Then there were the moments when I wonder if he feels the same, ah those were the worst.

I sat on my couch watching TV when someone knocked on my door. I stood up, not really knowing whom it is. Kay left for Mamelodi yesterday and Maddy went to Krugersdorp. Isaac hardly visits me here; we'd normally meet up somewhere. I opened the door to find Martin. "Good evening Zoe." He said, "Hi Martin, please come in." I said after a shocked pause.

"Did Andrew send you?" I asked, closing the door after him. A silly part of me actually hoped so. Martin chuckled, "No, he would actually be furious if he knew I was here." He said. "Oh." I said, hoping I didn't look as disappointed as I felt. Martin's eyebrows lifted slightly "No, I didn't mean..." I cut him off by shaking my head. "Can I get you something? A drink?" I asked walking over to my fridge. "No thank you. I was actually hoping we could sit and talk." He said.

I sat on the single couch on his left, watching him curiously "I know you've decided to let your relationship with Andrew go." He said, "But I'm here to hopefully change your mind about that." He said. I exhaled sharply, "Look Martin..." "Just hear me out Zoe." He said, cutting me short. "What do you think happened? For you two to break up?" he asked and I paused, resting the back of my head against the armrest.

"He disappeared, then he started pulling away from me. And the mind games, he's hot next thing he's cold, I just couldn't deal with it anymore." I said and he nodded in understanding. "Well I was there the day he decided to 'disappear' on you." He said, and I looked at him then. "His father had called him and said he wanted to correct the mistake of allowing Andrew too much freedom." Martin added.

"He first demanded that Andrew end things with you, obviously he immediately refused but that had to change when his father threatened your safety." He said and my eyebrows shot up, suddenly remembering the cold shiver I got when I walked into his office that day. "He threatened to harm you if Andrew did not do exactly what he said." Martin added.

I ran my hand through my hair in utter astonishment. "He'd do that?" I asked, finding it hard to believe anyone could be that evil. Let alone someone who shares DNA with Andrew. "Mr. Wright is a ruthless man who has dangerous people working for him. Nobody knows this more than Andrew. He couldn't risk calling his bluff." He said, "My God." I whispered. "So Andrew was faced with the lesser of two evils, he had to break your heart in order to keep you safe." He added.

It has to be this way I have no choice. Suddenly those words made perfect sense. "Andrew never wanted to let you go, so he decided to counter his father instead." He said, "He figured that a man like his father had to have some skeletons he didn't want exposed. He thought that if he found them he'd be able to use them to make his father back off." He added.

"The time he was gone, he was looking for these skeletons?" I asked and Martin nodded, "But he was also trying to make his father believe that he was doing what he'd been instructed to do. He knew his father would have him watched just to make sure, so he couldn't risk being caught seeing you." He added and I rubbed at my forehead. Realizing how wrong I was about him not wanting to be seen with me.

"Him dropping out of Tuks and moving out of Pretoria was also part of his father's demands." He went on when I didn't speak. "He wanted Andrew to come work for him instead." He added. "That's what he's been doing?" I asked and he nodded. "I think staying away from you was the hardest part for him, he hated every second of it." He said. "I'm guessing the idea of making you safe and being with you again is what kept him searching."

"But that night at the function, he didn't care who saw us together." I said. "By then he'd threatened to expose his father's secrets if he didn't leave you both alone." He said and my brows furrowed. "He was coming back to me?" I asked and Martin nodded. I shut my eyes, "He didn't say anything when he came back to the car but the look he wore explained everything." He said, "The only time I'd ever seen that much sadness in Andrew's eyes was at his mother's funeral."

A low pained sound escaped me, "Now I don't expect you to believe anything I've just said, I wouldn't either had I not been there to see it all." He went on. "I'm not expecting you to take him back either, he'd never want me to ask that of you." He said, "But all I'm asking is that you talk to him about this, then you can make up your mind." He added.

I paused for a little while before I opened my eyes, I nodded "Where is he?" I asked.

I stared out into the night through the heavily tinted windows of the 7 Series, my mind unable to fully grasp what Martin just told me. The moment I'd agreed to see Andrew he offered to take me to his house in Bryanston, the one he's been living at since moving out of his father's mansion in Sunninghill. Just then I remembered something I'd promised myself I'd do but never really got around it.

"Martin? What did Andrew say to you when he told you to follow me the day we met?" I asked and he chuckled. "Oh yes. The moment I got into the driver's seat he said 'follow that white Peugeot, stay behind.'" He said, "I looked at him like he'd lost his marbles. I asked him why and he said 'I think I just met the future Mrs. Wright'." he added and my hand went to my mouth.

"I looked at him using my rearview mirror, expecting him to be joking but he was dead serious." Martin went on then paused. "I don't think he consciously knew what he was saying himself. But I think some part of him did." He added.

The house that is supposedly Andrew's was nothing short of being a mansion in its own right. But it was earthier and less extravagant, beautiful definitely. It suited him, I thought. "Go on." Martin encouraged after opening the car door for me. I walked up to the front door and I let myself in. I didn't have time to admire the house' magnificent interior when I was on a mission to find Andrew.

I found him in the kitchen area with his back to me, looking into the fridge. "Going to the shops cant possible take this long Martin, you've been gone forever..." he trailed off when he turned to see me. He froze, his hazel gaze widening slightly. I stared right back at him. Seeing him always feels like that very first time, instant in-your-face attraction hits me like a nasty sucker punch.

CHAPTER 27

"Zoe?" He said, walking over to me, ever so slowly. He didn't take his eyes off me the whole time, as if I'd poof into thin air in front of him. I felt tears sting my eyes, thinking about everything he had to sacrifice, everything we'd both had to endure. Our love was nearly destroyed and for what?

"Is it true?" I asked; I knew Martin wouldn't lie to me but I still wanted to hear him say it. Andrew's eyes closed for a second in realization. "Martin told you." He said knowingly. "Is it true?" I repeated, my voice barely a whisper. He nodded, "Yes." He said. Something I didn't know must've snapped because I slapped him across the face then threw myself into his arms.

He held me tight, lifting me off my feet. I muffled my sobs at the crook of his neck. I don't even know how we got to the couch in his lounge. "I'm so sorry baby girl." He whispered into my hair, still holding me. I shook my head, "I didn't care, I still don't care." I said; sniffing into the tissue he gave me. "Keeping me safe, it wasn't worth all the heartache. Have you any idea how many nights I cried myself to sleep because of you?" I added.

"I couldn't think like that, nor could I bare the thought of you hurting." He said, "But I would've never forgave myself if anything happened to you." He added. "I hate you." I said half-heartedly, "Why couldn't you just screw up our relationship like normal guys do?" I added and he smiled slightly. "Sometimes I wish I had." He said, "Then maybe I would've been better off knowing I'd deserved to lose you." He added and I leaned my forehead against his.

"When you didn't return my calls I thought you were shutting me out." I said; he shook his head. "It was a daily struggle not to call you. It was too risky." He said, "I had to make my father believe I wasn't seeing you anymore. He has shady people under his payroll, people who could easily trace my calls back to you." He said then chuckled darkly. "I shouldn't have even come to see you the first time. I'd put you in danger because I couldn't stay away." He said.

"Those first weeks were torture for me, I literally just found myself at your door. It was dangerous but I had to see you, touch you." He said, stroking my cheek. "I needed to be inside you, try to feel the physical and emotional connection I so thought I'd broken. I was afraid I'd lose my mind if I didn't." he said and I paused. "Did I save your sanity then?" I asked and he his lips curved up a little.

"My little goddess can keep up." He teased, playfully hitching my leg over his hip. I chuckled warily, "No I cant, I was all kinds of sore the next morning." I said and he sobered up. "I didn't want to leave you baby girl. I swear I spent hours just watching you sleep, thinking of countless reasons for me to stay, even after you wake up." He said and I sighed, "I know." I said, had he stayed he would've potentially endangered

me and blown his own plan. "I wished I'd known at the time." I added; he tightened his hold on my waist, placing his lips to my temple. The silent apology in the touch melted my heart.

We stayed in that embrace for a while. "What the hell were you doing with Alexa?" I asked and he chuckled without humor. "Not what you must've thought I'm sure." He said against me and I smiled a bit. "Was it all part of the plan to fool your dad?" I asked and he nodded, pulling away slightly. "With Alexa I figured I'd be able to get him to believe I started seeing other people. And I'd be able to get some information out of her about you." He said and I eyed him skeptically.

"Yeah, I don't think she was pleased that I frequently wanted to know how you were doing." He said with a shrug. "Besides your two other friends she was my best chance." He added. I chuckled without humor; Alexa was the best option because unlike Maddy and Kay, she was more than happy to let me continue thinking Andrew didn't care anymore. "That's smart." I said, "Maddy and Kay would've came running straight to me just to make me feel better." I said.

He frowned, "What the hell were *you* doing at the Square at the time?" he asked, "You weren't supposed to see me with her." he added, stroking the inside of my palm. "But I did, and it hurt like hell." I said with a bleak smile and he nodded. "I know, I felt the same way when I saw you with Isaac at the function." He said. At least he knew Isaac is my friend, Alexa on the other hand made it very clear that she wanted to replace me.

"The message you left on my voicemail that night tore me up." He said and I paused, taken aback. "You listened to my messages?" I asked and he nodded. "Every last one of them. How else was I supposed to hear your voice baby girl?" he said and I slightly shook my head, putting myself in his shoes. "I'm sorry." I said and his brows furrowed. "Don't be." He said.

"I promised myself I wouldn't risk trying to see you again but that message changed that. What I didn't think about was the damage seeing me would cause when I had nothing to offer you." He said. I closed my eyes for a second, "The night of the function?" I asked and he smiled a little but it looked sad. "That was me trying to get you back, and you kicked me to the curb, hard." He said and I covered my face with my hands.

He chuckled a bit, prying my hands away. "Its okay, I hurt you, you had every reason." He said. I shook my head frantically, "I loved you, I *love* you. It wasn't easy." I said and he nodded. "I know, but I couldn't push you any further." He said then paused. "Your friends don't trust me, do they?" he said and I gave him a small smile. I suspected he felt the daggers Kay were shooting at him with her gaze at the function.

"Don't read too much into their hostility. They were only looking out for me, they think you broke my heart." I said and he eyed me for a short while. "And I did, didn't I?" he said sadly. I took his hand and placed it on the side of my face, "Stop doing that, stop beating yourself up for keeping me safe." I said and he kissed my forehead. My brows furrowed, "Martin said you threatened to expose your father's secrets, what did he mean?" I asked.

He pulled back and exhaled in a rush, "I went digging into my father's closet and I'd expected to find ugly things but not quite this ugly." He said and I frowned, "What happened?" I asked. Somehow I knew it wasn't an easy thing to do, Mr. Wright strikes me as a man that knows how to cover his tracks. "My father used to equally share his company with Johan Murren, a childhood friend of his." He said, "They started it together and found success with them as partners. Until my father got greedy and sold him out eleven years ago." He added bitterly.

I stared at Andrew, a bit too stunned to speak. "I was too young to understand back then, the Murren family were like relatives to us so I didn't know why they stopped coming around." He continued, "They moved away, that's what I was told. What everyone else was told is that Johan decided to retire young. I don't know how my father got him to agree to that story but Johan was cheated out of a company he helped build in the most brutal manner." He added.

I shivered slightly, then looked up at him when a thought came to me, "You said this happened eleven years ago. You were twelve... round about the time your mom died." I said then my eyes widened as I realized the truth of my own words. "Did this play a hand in that?" I asked, my voice low even for my own ears and the look on his face said it all.

CHAPTER 28

"Like everyone else my mother was under the impression that it was Johan's decision, I don't know how she found out the truth." He said. "She was very close with Johan's wife and kids so the betrayal on her husband's side was too much for her to handle." He added. "When I confronted my father he said they had a fight and she stormed out." He went on then shook his head, "He claimed he tried to stop her." he said, swallowing hard.

I continued to silently listen to Andrew, clutching his hand but nowhere near understanding how much pain this caused him. "I was at a sleep over the time the accident happened." He said, and I could see in his eyes that he was back there. He was a twelve year old, reliving that night again. I stroked his hair, forcing him back to the present, back to me.

He met my gaze, "I was young but even then I knew it didn't make any sense, I'd ask myself why mommy was on the road alone at that time of the night." He said and I wrapped my arms around him. "I'm sorry." I whispered, knowing those two words did little to change what happened. But hopefully they gave him some form of comfort, no matter how insignificant. He kissed the inside of my palm in response to that.

"What else did your father say?" I asked and his expression darkened. "I doubt the bastard loses any sleep knowing it was his fault she was on that road in the first place." He said, "His fault she wasn't paying attention..." he trailed off and I rubbed at his shoulders. "All he probably cares about is that I keep my mouth shut." He said after a pause.

"God knows I wanted to expose him for this, but who's to say he wouldn't have come after you out of spite." He said, "I'm pretty sure he has more scandalous secrets where that came from. And I know he wants none of them in the open." He added. "If this got out, people he wouldn't want on his tail will come snooping around for more. He knows that and he'd rather be safe than sorry."

He cupped my cheek, his gaze boring into mine. "You're safe, I'd destroy him before I let him touch a hair on your head." He said with a fierceness that had me shivering a little. "He's your father Andrew." I pointed out. "He can rot in hell." He quickly retorted. He paused then, "I did decide on another thing though, when the time comes I will take over from him. And when I do, I will rid the company and the Wright legacy off of his poison." He said.

"I owe it to my mother, hell, I owe it to the next generation." He said and I smiled at him, nodding. "And that's the difference between you and him." I said, "And

that's why I love you." I added kissing his cheek. I was glad to hear him chuckle, when he returned my smile. "I'm going to make you my wife, what would I ever do without you?" he said and I chuckled. He was teasing but there was a hint of seriousness that had my heart doing somersaults in my chest.

We stayed like that until I could feel sleepiness threaten to claim me. "What time is it?" I asked. "Passed midnight." He said and I jerked up. Wondering why I didn't notice how much time had lapsed. "I have to go." I said, trying to get up but Andrew didn't let go. "What?" he said, "I just got you back Zoe, you're not going anywhere." He said and I chuckled uneasily. Uh oh.

"My sister is expecting me tomorrow, I told her I'd vacation at her place." I said and he frowned. "Well then tell her there's a change of plan." He said. "She's lucky, she's known you your whole life, I think she can spare three weeks for the recently deprived." He said and I rolled my eyes. "You don't know Marti." I said and he chuckled. "And you still don't know me well." he said.

"Your car is not here and Martin is gone." He said and my eyes widened. "What?" I exclaimed, "And what do you suggest I do?" I asked. He smiled, "Vacation here with me instead, make up for lost time." He said, dipping in to lightly brush his lips against mine. "I've missed you baby girl." He murmured, turning to tactics he knows I cant resist. I smiled, "I've missed you too, and three weeks with you sounds heavenly." I said, "But you've rendered me immobile and my things are at my apartment." I added.

I chuckled, "If you're referring to black and red suitcase, Martin drooped it off before he left." He said and gaped at him before I shot him a mock glare. Realizing that he'd arranged the whole thing when he'd been texting on his phone an hour ago. "You think you're slick, don't you?" I said. "I know I'm slick." He drawled, claiming my mouth with scintillating passion. God I've missed this, missed him.

He chuckled when I yawned into his mouth, "Lets get you to bed baby girl." He said, I was about to stand along with him but he intercepted me when he scooped me into his arms. I chuckled, wrapping my arms around his neck as he walked up a flight of stairs with ease. "This house is beautiful." I said and he smiled down at me. "I'm glad you like it, you'll be living in it for a month." He said and I grinned.

I woke up the next morning feeling more rested than I've been in weeks, my eyes were still closed when I felt a familiar hand caress my cheek, jawline and down my neck and shoulder. I made a purring sound, slowly opening my eyes to the

wonderful sight that is my sexy-as-hell boyfriend. "I could get used to waking up like this." I whispered when his lips replaced his fingers.

I closed my eyes and sighed softly at the longing Andrew was evoking in me with his teasing lips and touch. He continued to leisurely explore my body through the flimsy hello kitty mini nightdress he claimed he found cute and risqué last night. I guess he wasn't so fond of it anymore when he swiftly took it off me. My hands went into his hair when he kissed between my breasts, "Andrew?" I whispered. "Mhm?" came his low reply.

"Please." I breathed, he was lending his touch to every part of my body except places that needed his attention the most. And I knew he was doing it deliberately. He'd turned me into a puddle of wanton need and he knew it. He smiled wickedly, "I love hearing you say that. Say it again." He murmured. His mouth enclosed on my taut nipple "Please Andrew." I whispered, writhing underneath him when he stroked my sensitized and wet flesh.

I moaned when he slipped two fingers inside me, in no time I was in the throws of a blinding orgasm. When he slowly slid himself inside me I reveled at the exquisite fullness of it. Emotionally and mentally I'd missed him terribly, now I know that the physical aspect of me also missed him. And he made up for it, with each controlled stroke and thrust, he took me to new heights.

"Give it up to me baby girl." He rasped into my ear and I convulsed around him in a climax that went on and on. Andrew pulled away, uttering an expletive as he got off the bed, carrying me with him. He backed me up against the wall before he swiftly took me again. I loved it when he took his time with me but I was also crazy about the moments he'd drive me like an animal in heat.

I was rocking against him, struggling to get air into my lungs. "You feel so good Zoe." He growled against my swollen lips "Its heaven to be inside you." He added. I used my inner walls to squeeze him, trying to break his steely control. "Damn" he groaned, exploding in me. What I didn't anticipate was that his powerful release would give rise to my own.

I sagged against him, my breath coming in gasps. Somehow I wondered how he was able to hold me whilst he was breathless and spent himself. We didn't move an inch for a short while, I heard Andrew chuckle without humor first. "This sex will be the death of me," he said and I shook on a soundless laugh. "I was just about to say the same thing." I said, lifting my head to gaze into his steady hazel eyes. "The wall?" I said with a raised eyebrow and he gave me a crooked smile. "You're getting crafty." I added. "And you're not a virgin anymore." He said and I chuckled.

CHAPTER 29

I'd just finished dressing when I called my sister, putting her on loudspeaker and placing my phone on the nightstand before tying my strappy sandals. "Hey Tumi, where are you?" she said, after answering. "Hey sis, that's why I'm calling. I'm not coming anymore." I said and bit my lip when she paused for a second. "Why not?" she asked. "Well I decided to go to Andrew's place instead." I said.

"Andrew?" she said, surprise clear in her voice. "But I thought you two were taking a break." She added. That's what I told my sister some few weeks ago, and at the time it was true, Andrew and I were apart for reasons unknown to me. Just then he came out of the bathroom in a pair of black jeans, barefoot and shirtless. "We were but we've decided to get back together." I said, watching him look for a shirt in his closet and put it on.

He walked towards me, "I love him and he loves me," I said, and Andrew leaned down to kiss my neck. "We owe it to each other to work through our differences." I added, my voice not as steady this time. I tried to push him away but he laid me down and pinned my hands above my head. "That's good, you looked unhappy without him." Marti went on. "I was." I said, as Andrew continued to kiss me.

"Are you at his place now?" she asked, "Yeah." I said, giving up on trying to struggle away from him. "Okay. You're still on the pill, right?" she asked and I gasped and Andrew stopped his sensual assault on my neck and shoulder, his frame shaking with silent laughter. "Marti!" I exclaimed. "What? I'm just asking." She said defensively.

We said our goodbyes after I promised we'd get together this weekend. "Well I guess I should be glad she's not under the impression that I'll keep my hands to myself." Andrew said and I chuckled. "She knows you're no good, you just proved it with your little stunt right now." I said getting up from the bed and he smiled. "Let me make it up to you with breakfast." He said, "My treat." He added and I grinned.

"I think I'm going to enjoy this vacation." I said letting him lead me out of his bedroom. "That's the plan." He said. And that set the tone for what was an amazing three weeks. We did spend quality time together, time that was taken away from us. We talked and laughed for hours, played games for hours, watched TV and movies for hours while we snuggled together during these winter nights. Made love for hours, then we'd do everything all over again.

Andrew had promised me three things. That he'd keep me safe, make me happy, and make me his wife. And he did. This hurricane had no end in sight and I wouldn't have had it any other way.

THE END

Huracan

Thank you to everyone reading this right now, I hope you've enjoyed Andrew and Zoe's story. Thanks again for the support you've shown me with the Dreaming Series and The Promise books. I honestly don't consider myself an author but writing is what I enjoy doing. It's your support that encourages me to keep doing it. Much love, Mahlatse Mokone.

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