

Kait & Noah: Part 1

SAMPLE

Written by N. E. Fletcher

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Erotic Romance – Mature Audiences Only

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Wednesday, March 4, 2015

“I started this new series, and you absolutely *have to read it!*”

I laugh, “Ok, which series?”

Raven claps, “It’s by Sherilyn Kenyon, and it’s called The Dark Hunter Series. OMG, Kait, it’s wonderful. You’ll fall in love with it.”

“Ok, I’ll try it.”

“Yay, OMG. I’m so glad we’re friends. I’ve never met anyone who loves reading more than me.”

“Love you too, Rave.”

“I’ll give them to you as I read, ok?”

“I’d love that.”

We’ve reached the parking lot. Noah’s Lexus IS in his assigned parking space, and so is Blake’s Mercedes.

“Alright!” She’s so excited, she kisses my cheek, “I’ll see you tomorrow, ok? Be safe, love you.”

“Love you!”

She disappears out of my sight. I go to Noah’s car; he had Lexus make a unique key for me. The fob is pink.

I hop in, turn the radio on and wait. I play a mobile game. Fifteen minutes later, Blake knocks on the window.

“You good?” He asks when I put the window down.

“Yes, why? What’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” he grins, “Just wanna make sure my baby sis is good.”

“Where’s Rebecca?”

“Practice. Hunter will take her home. I’m going to go to Tori’s place.”

“Hmm. Have fun.”

He winks, kisses my forehead then heads over to his car.

“Hey, sis!” Tori is so cheerful.

“Hi, Tori,” I grin.

“Noah says he’ll be five more minutes.”

“Ok, thanks.”

“Yep,” she kisses my cheek, “Bye!”

I wave as they pull off. Noah enters the car five minutes later. He kisses my cheek after he mumbles a ‘Hi.’ As he backs out, he wrinkles his nose.

“You’re listening to Taylor Swift.”

“So!?”

He laughs, “Why so defensive?”

“I love Taylor Swift.”

“I love you.”

I melt. Hmm. He turns, “Where are we going? Our houses are that way.”

“I’m bringing you to meet my father.”

“What!?” My heart lurches, “But I haven’t showered; I’m ugly, and my hair is a mess. Noah no! Please. I’m not prepared!”

“Stop being ridiculous.”

“Noah!” I gasp; my chest is starting to constrict, and my breathing is shallowing. It feels like I’m going to have an attack.

“Breathe, Kaitlyn,” he touches my arm. The warmth of his touch calms me instantaneously. “My dad will love you.”

“A warning would be nice!”

“Are you upset?”

“A little bit . . . jeez, Noah!”

“Kaitlyn. Your parents love me. My mom loves you.”

“You’re Blake’s best friend. You’ve been friends forever. They’ve loved you way before you and I, and so does your mom when it comes to me. This is different.”

“You have to meet my father, Kait, please.”

“Crap,” I pull down the mirror before me to check my appearance.

“You look fine!”

“Shut up!”

Noah’s father is staying in the penthouse of the Four Seasons. It’s enormous and beautiful. And empty? Noah has a key card.

“He’s probably in his study. Let me go grab him.”

“Ok.”

He disappears around the corner, and I step down from the steps of the foyer. The wall in the back of the apartment is glass, overlooking the entire city. It’s absolutely breathtaking. We’re so high up, too; it’s a little scary. I hear footsteps and talking, and I turn. Noah comes with his father, who doesn’t look a day over 30. He’s dressed in a grey linen button-down shirt

and khaki-colored linen pants. He doesn't even have grey hair, not that he's that old but still, jeez. He looks incredibly young. His face lights up as he sees me, and a tiny amount of the weight on my chest lifts.

"Kait, my dad. Dad, Kaitlyn Kartiery."

"Kait," he smiles, taking my hand.

I'm grateful he's referred to me as Kait. As if Noah told him I preferred that.

"Mr. Jones, hi," I smile.

"It's so nice to meet you finally," he kisses my hand, "Noah has told me so much about you."

I blush, "Good things, I hope."

"All good things. Can I get you something to drink?"

"Um, no. I'm ok."

"Sit, let's talk," I blanch. Talk about what!?! "Relax, belle fille."

I sit and cross my legs, taking a deep breath, "I'm sorry, I'm just really nervous," I bite my tongue. Why would I say that?

"I won't bite," he laughs, "Relax. Don't be nervous. I already love you. You're my daughter."

We end up sitting and talking for hours. Noah's dad is a sagacious person, even though he's so young. I love him too, already. The three of us talk about everything and anything. He makes me promise to visit frequently.

Monday, March 9, 2015

“Kaitlyn! Kaitlyn!”

Who’s calling me? I turn around. It’s Laina.

“Hi, Laina,” I say.

“Hmm,” Raven makes a disappointing sound next to me.

“Shush,” I say softly.

“Hi Kait . . . hello,” to Raven and Chad, who is drooling.

“Yes?”

She hands me an envelope, “It’s an invitation.”

“For?”

“Every year, I have a family reunion. It’s a massive event at my parents’ ranch outside town. Everyone usually comes with me, and since you’re a part of everyone, you’re invited.”

“Thank . . . you?”

“You don’t have to come if you don’t want to . . . but . . . Noah probably won’t come if you don’t so, please come . . . my family misses him.”

“Ok.”

“Ok . . . thanks. Bye,” she leaves.

“Ugh,” Raven says, “Sounds like all three of you are in a relationship.”

I wrinkle my nose, staring down at the card, “Please, Raven.”

“Don’t go.”

Easier said than done.

“Worst threesome ever,” Raven mumbles, and I hit her arm.

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“Actually . . .”

Raven and I hit Chad’s arm.

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Noah plays the piano while I am sitting by the window doing homework. I find myself thinking and wondering about Laina’s trip. It’s constantly at the back of my mind. It’s irritating. Anyways, it’s for five days, and all of us would be sharing a house, like that time at Noah’s dad’s cottage. However, this time I’m not so excited to go. I don’t think I want to deal with the drama. Plus, surrounded by Laina and people just like her? That sounds like a nightmare.

“Kait.”

“Yes, baby.”

“What’s the matter?”

I sigh. Hmm. I want to try something.

“I don’t want to go to Laina’s family reunion.”

“Ok . . . we can stay home, have our own private spring break,” he winks, smirking.

Hmm. What a perfect response. Why is he perfect?

“She was adamant that you be there.”

“Why?”

“She said her family misses you.”

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His brows furrow, “Why is she telling you this?”

“Says if I don’t come, you won’t, so I need to come.”

He laughs, “Serious . . . mental case.”

“Not funny, actually.”

“Actually, really funny. It’s either we go, or we don’t. Not rocket science.”

“How about I stay? You go so I don’t feel guilty, and I’m not held responsible for your not being there.”

“So you’re asking me to be away from you and your amazing vagina for five days?”

“Noah!” I throw a pencil at him. I have never been so flushed in my life.

He comes over to me, wrapping his arms around me and burying his nose in my hair, “We can stay here, and we can fuck fifty times a day for five whole days,” he says softly, “No interruptions . . . I can have you coming apart at your seams . . . literally.”

I blush and shift my weight to the other foot, “That sounds really nice,” I say honestly.

“It does, doesn’t it?” He grabs my hand suddenly and pulls me to his bedroom. Locking the door, he pulls his t-shirt over his head while I, too, strip myself. We’re on the bed in no time, and he’s inside me, lighting my flames. I moan his name as my nails dig into his skin. Oh. Making love to Noah is so amazing. All the time. I come, calling out his name, and he follows suit.

“Ah,” he sighs as he buries his hands in my hair and kisses me deeply, “I love you.”

“I love you, Noah.”

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He sighs and falls on his back on the bed, “Baby, we can do whatever you want. It doesn’t matter to me. However. I prefer to stay here; the hell with Laina and her family reunion.”

“You mean a lot to Laina Noah.”

“I understand that. She meant a lot to me too, a while ago.”

I sigh, “I guess we’ll go. Three days if need be. Compromise. Good.”

He smiles at me, “Ok. Oh, baby?”

“Yeah.”

“You need a nice dress for Saturday. We’re going to a fancy dinner.”

“I get to use your credit card?”

“Of course, my sweet.”

I giggle as he peppers sweet kisses all over my face.

Friday, March 13, 2015

“Oh my gosh, Lenny! Hi!”

“Hey, beautiful,” he gives me a bear hug.

“Where’ve you been?”

“Dual enrollment, lots of it. Haven’t been around much.”

“So you just skip your classes here?”

“Pretty much.” I roll my eyes, “You look good. How’s Noah?”

“Good. I’m here with them for practice.”

“Ok . . . come on, let’s walk.”

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“Sure, let me set my things down.”

I set my things down to follow him. We walk, talk, and catch up. We circle back to the bleachers about an hour and a half later. I didn’t even notice time was flying by so fast.

“Where the fuck have you been?”

Woah. I frown at Noah’s seething anger.

“Noah—

“Really, Kaitlyn, it’s bad enough your prancing around with God knows who—but without your phone, un-fucking-believable,” he turns on his heels, heading back to the track.

I turn to Lenny, “I apologize for his childish behavior Len, I’m surely going to put him in his place, and I’ll see you Monday.”

“Cool, have fun,” Lenny winks.

I run after Noah.

“Listen, you . . . twat—

Noah narrows his eyes at me.

—I’m a big girl, ok? I can go wherever I want with whomever I like. Don’t you ever disrespect me in front of my friend like that? *That was rude!*”

“Ok, so if I disappear with Laina for three hours, are you still my girlfriend?”

I seethe, “Screw you. Screw Laina all you want . . . asshole.”

I grab my things and storm off to the parking lot. I half expect him to follow me, but he doesn’t, and I end up sitting and waiting on a bench. Max pulls up right in front of me in his Audi.

“Need a ride?”

“You’ll take me home?”

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His lips quirk up, “Yes.”

“Straight home?”

“Yes, Kaitlyn.”

“Noah will kill you; Blake will disembody you.”

“Threat duly noted.”

I get in the passenger seat; it smells of weed, leather, and expensive cologne. Hmm. He puts the window up, turns the AC on, and out the radio on Taylor Swift.

“Noah mentioned you liked her,” he explains.

“Did he also mention I’m obsessed with Rihanna?”

“I think he forgot that one.”

“I’m in a Rihanna mood.”

He switches to a Rihanna song.

“Since when do you two talk?”

“We might fight, but we’ve been best friends since elementary.”

“Right,” I grip the handle as he drives, “Do you always drive this fast?”

“Always.”

My stomach lurches, “I think I’m gonna be sick.”

“Kaitlyn, do not throw up in my car.”

“Slow down then!”

“Ugh,” he slows a little.

“You’re gonna get pulled over.”

“Shit!”

“What is it?”

“Cops.”

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“I called it! Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!”

Blue and red flashing lights. I try not to panic because not only was he speeding, it smells like straight-up weed in here. Holy crap!

“Relax, ok? We’re fine!”

Max pulls over on the curb.

“Don’t talk; I can handle this.”

My heart is beating out of my chest. This is insane!

“You? Really? Which of the two of us has the most level head?”

“You’d probably get us arrested if you talked. Be quiet,” he rolls down the window as the officer stops outside my door. Dressed in his all-black uniform, he has a belt around his waist—carrying a baton, taser, and a gun in its holster. The officer looks to be in his mid-forties.

He curses, “Max. Really? This is the third time this week.”

I look from the officer to Max, who smirks.

“Hi, Paul.”

Paul Rivera. His patch says Rivera.

“You’re getting a ticket. I mean it . . . do I smell weed?”

“No, natural herbs to detoxify my body.”

Officer Rivera rolls his eyes, “Good evening, young lady. Are you in his car against your will?”

I laugh, then sober, “No, sir. He’s my friend. He’s taking me home; I told him to slow down, Mr. Officer.”

“You’d think he’d slow down after all his tickets. One more, and I’m suspending your license.”

“Yes, officer,” Max smiles and hands over his paperwork without the officer even asking for it.

Mr. Rivera takes the papers back to his car and comes back with a ticket for Max.

“Here,” he hands Max the ticket, “One more, and I am suspending your license. I mean it.”

Max salutes and drives off.

“Why do you know each other?”

“My dad is Chief of Police.”

I laugh, “Wow.”

“Yep, alright. Let’s get you home safe.”

There’s a knock on my door.

“Come in!”

The door pushes open, and Noah steps in. I sit up straighter on the bed.

“Hi,” he says.

“Hmm.”

He sits on the bed next to me, “I apologize for yelling and cursing at you today. I apologized to Lenny. I am really sorry.”

“OK.”

“That’s all you have to say?”

“Why are you so jealous, Noah?”

“Why are *you* so jealous?”

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“Am I?” I bite the inside of my cheek.

“Yes, me too apparently . . . I guess I have to get used to you having guy friends outside our friends. I liked you better when you didn’t like people.”

“You’re ridiculous.”

“I know,” he sighs, “I don’t like sharing you.”

“I don’t like sharing you,” I kiss him, “We’ll just keep working on us, Noah. I just wish you’d stop exploding.”

“Temper and anger issues.”

“I remember,” I sigh.

“Did you get a dress for tomorrow?”

“Yes.”

“Can I see?”

“No, you’ll see tomorrow.”

“Fine,” he lays back on the bed, “Max called.”

I laugh, “Did he tell you we got pulled over!?”

He chuckled, “Yeah, he said you were freaking out.”

“Not really!”

“I believe him. I imagine you were losing your shit.”

“Whatever,” I shrug, “I didn’t know you two talked like that anymore.”

“Um . . . Max will always be Max; I don’t let his personality setbacks come in between our friendship. We’ve been friends for too long. Can’t let a woman come in between that.”

“Ouch,” I feign hurt.

He laughs, “Really, love?” I smile, “Plus, I have to admit that since he and Laina fell out, it’s been incredibly easier being around them.”

Noah hops off the bed and heads over to my desk, where I have my albums, camera, and pictures. I watch him as he searches for the red and gold album with a small padlock. He opens the top drawer, grabs the key from the secret compartment, then opens the album.

“See something you like?”

“All of it . . . I love.”

I blush.

That particular album is filled with . . . explicit photos of me. It was a gift idea for him. But I understand the severity of letting it out of my sight, so I keep it here locked up. Noah gets to see it whenever he’s by and as it is occasionally updated. Never in a million years, or five years ago, I would ever think I’d be so comfortable with my body. All thanks to Noah Jones, who has helped me to fall in love with every inch of myself as he’s fallen in love with every inch of me. It’s undoubtedly empowering, especially to see and to know how I can affect him.

“Stay the night.”

“Bet,” he says.

I giggle, “Please.”

“Ok,” he claps and rubs his palms together, “Let me go move my car.”

“Yep, don’t want mom and dad knowing you’re here.”

“Or Blake.”

“Or Blake,” I laugh.

Noah disappears for 15 minutes, comes back, showers then joins me in bed.

“My favorite place to be,” he sighs as he wraps his arm around me.

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Saturday, March 14, 2015

“Well?”

Blake sputters his drink and chokes.

I frown; I didn't think I'd look that bad.

“Rebecca, I should go change.”

“You really should,” Blake mumbles as he cleans himself up.

“Don't be ridiculous. You look stunning,” she says.

“But Blake—

“Is ridiculous. Yes. Tell her! She looks good!”

Blake swallows; he's extremely uncomfortable, “Does she have to have those out?” He points at my chest, “And her legs . . . this slit? Can you sew it up?”

“Blake,” Rebecca laughs.

“I'd feel much better if you wore a potato sack.”

I roll my eyes and step in front of the mirror. Woah. My eyes widen. I look amazing, absolutely beautiful . . . like Rebecca.

The red dress has long sleeves; the neckline comes all the way down to the swell of my breasts. The waist is tight, outlining my petite frame, and the bodice flows until there's a slit on the right, showing off my long leg.

Paired with gold heels, I've done the liberty of borrowing a small gold Chanel purse from my mother's closet.

"Whoah . . ." Noah says as he enters the room. He slows, sizing me, "Babe . . . you look . . ."

"Like she could get you both in trouble tonight. Hands off," Blake says.

"She's already my girl Kartiery . . . too little too late."

The way Noah is looking at me . . . makes my stomach somersaults in anticipation of what we could be doing. Or what he thinks he can do to me right now. Blake frowns disapprovingly at both of us.

Noah looks as handsome as always in an expensively tailored suit. He, too, looks delicious.

"Blake! Get a grip! You don't ever get this riled up when I dress up!"

"I'm used to you. Not her. Let's go before I get any sicker."

Rebecca and Blake walk us to Noah's blue Lexus.

"Take care of my baby sister Jones and drive safe . . . if you get hurt, I'm going to kill you."

We laugh.

"Yes, sir. You get home safe too."

They nod at each other.

"Later, baby," Rebecca kisses me, "Have fun."

"Later," I wave. Noah pulls off. "Are we meeting your mom there or what?"

"She's leaving work later. She'll be there before the award presentation."

"You still haven't told me exactly where we're going . . . nor what it's about."

"You'll know in due time."

Noah pulls up in front of an enormous building, with valets in front hopping in and out of cars. There's a giant red carpet leading up into the building with a considerable amount of people standing on it, dressed so well I'm glad I dressed the way I did. I clutch my purse tight. This is nerve-racking. What is this even? I don't always feel like I belong in Noah's world, filled with high-end events such as these with filthy rich people dressed in expensive clothing. It seems tiring.

A young man opens my door with an incredulous look on his face. Yeah yeah yeah, the car is impressive. Only . . . I don't realize he's gaping at me until Noah comes around and throws an arm around me possessively.

"Eyes up here, bud, she's mine," Noah is amused.

Hmm.

"Sorry, Ma'am, sir," the guy is embarrassed, "Your car is amazing too."

"Thanks. Don't scratch it," Noah hands over the keys, and we head inside.

The building clearly has some years on it, but it's a fantastic structure decorated in blood red and gold. The incredibly high ceiling has the largest chandelier I've ever seen; It's beautiful. The people here are even more so beautiful.

"When will your mom be here?"

Noah is taking in his surroundings before he takes me over to a large stand containing a giant book. It is apparently a sign-in sheet. He jots down our names impeccably.

"Soon."

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“Noah . . . what is this? Where . . . are we?” I pause as I look past the round tables with name cards at the sign by the foot of the large stage. I have to squint.

‘Honoring the CEO, founder, and creator of Jones Enterprises.’

He didn’t!

“You didn’t! Noah!” I hit his arm.

He shrugs, blushing a little, “I didn’t know what else to do.”

“But you dragged me into this!”

“I need you,” he says quietly, “I’m sorry, Kait, but . . . I really need you.”

I sober. Noah. Vulnerable. This is novel. He’s eyes are swimming with desperation.

“Ok,” I sigh, “So you’ve invited your mother to your father’s appreciation dinner. I’m absolutely sure your mother doesn’t know because she’s still been avoiding him . . . we’re trapped here for a good 30 minutes because they close the doors during dinner . . . your mom is going to hate me.”

“No, I don’t think she will.”

“I—

“Noah?” A blonde lady and a younger version of her who is stunning stop in front of us, “It’s so nice to see you!”

“Daisy, hi . . . Dee,” he nods at the younger girl who blushes and bats her eyelashes at him. I fume; I’m standing right here!

“Hi Noah,” she says, all sultry to my man.

“This is my girl, Kaitlyn,” Noah pulls me close.

“Oh,” Daisy smiles sweetly at me, “So glad to finally meet the damsel Noah is always running off to. She’s beautiful, Noah.”

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Noah grins, “Kait, Daisy is my dad’s publicist, and Dee is her daughter.”

“Hi,” I shake their hands. Dee is not so pleased to have met me.

“We’ll see you around,” Noah promises and takes me around the room to meet people. When we finally get to our table, I’ve already met all the people who work for Mr. Jones and closely with Noah.

Lyssa stumbles in minutes later, not seeming to notice her surroundings; looking like she belongs on a magazine cover, she sits next to Noah after she kisses my cheek. Noah has tensed; he’s holding my hand under the table. I watch Lyssa closely as everyone at the table greets her lovingly. She knows she recognizes these people; she obviously doesn’t remember from where and I see she’s a little confused. Noah and I are waiting for the explosion that’s bound to happen. “Let’s all give a round of applause to our great honoree Nathaniel Jones,” the announcer says. Noah and I stiffen. Lyssa freezes, then blushes crimson . . . literally. Her eyes widen and water as she looks over at Noah.

“You didn’t,” she mumbles.

“Don’t be mad,” Noah says as his father begins a speech, “Mom—
Lyssa gets up, “Noah. I really can’t do this.” She storms out.

Noah and I follow after her. She’s a bit hysterical.

“Lyssa, this is my fault. I put the idea in Noah’s head—I’m so sorry,” I say.

Lyssa takes my hand to silence me when we reach outside. She takes a deep breath and turns to Noah.

“Why have you done this, Noah?”

“Mom, you two are miserable without each other. I’ve had to witness this crap for years, and I’m tired of it. Can’t you two be cordial!?”

“I can be cordial not seeing his stupid face. I can’t believe you!”

“Mr. Jones is crazy about you, Lyssa,” I mumble.

She starts to cry, “I wanted this to be on my terms, not his.”

“Mom,” Noah gasps, his eyes watering. He hugs her. “He doesn’t know . . . this was my idea.”

“I didn’t know either, Lyssa. I was just as surprised as you are.”

“Now I’m a mess!” She pulls away, wiping her eyes.

“You still look amazing, Lyssa,” I say to her.

She sniffs and giggles, then straightens. Taking a deep breath, she says, “Fine. Let’s go talk to my estranged husband.”

Inside, we wait as we watch Mr. Jones being passed around and talked to. Lyssa is holding on to Noah’s arm and partially hiding behind him like I sometimes do. It’s a very innocent-like thing to do, making her look 15 years younger, which is what she actually looks like. Not like someone in her late thirties.

“Kait,” Mr. Jones says as he sees me and hugs me, “You look wonderful as always. How are your parents and siblings?”

“Good,” I smile as he kisses my forehead. He truly is an amazing man. I couldn’t have asked for a better father-in-law.

“Here,” he hands me a small black bag, “This is for you and your siblings, I meant to give it to you the other day, but I forgot. Don’t open it until you go home.”

“Ok,” I beam.

“Noah, who—

He freezes as his eyes widen.

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Lyssa is red, “Hi Nathan.”

“Alyssia,” his voice is a breathless whisper, and his expression . . . makes me want to cry.

My God, how could they ever deny loving each other when they stare at each other like this? The air is literally crackling with electricity . . . literally. “We’ll give you two some privacy,” Noah says; he takes my hand, “We’ll be at our table.”

“Did you feel that?” I whisper as we take our seats.

“Absolutely . . . it was like—

“Falling in love—like us.”

“Like us,” Noah kisses my lips softly, “Fingers crossed?”

“Fingers crossed,” I beam up at him.

Alyssia and Nathaniel Jones’ POV

Feeling like 15 years old again, Lyssa blushes with her hands in front of her, clasped. Although she feels vulnerable, she does not want this extraordinarily tall and handsome man in front of her to see it. She is not fifteen; she is a grown woman who has been through too much for her ever to fall victim to a man again.

“I didn’t know you’d be here,” Nathan mumbles.

Please! Don’t talk; the sound of his voice makes her knees weak. It always has. Lyssa felt all her control slipping, so she turned on her heel and headed out. She needed air to clear her mind, stop it from reeling, and get

her better senses back. She needed air immediately. Nathan follows, of course.

“Alyssia, stop!” Nathan grabs her arm.

The electricity was still there, even after all these years. It shocks them both.

“Don’t please . . . I’ve waited years for this . . . please. Don’t leave.”

Lyssa starts to cry, hating herself for it, too, in the process. People are staring. Nathan notices this and sees how uncomfortable she is under prying eyes. She hasn’t changed; she never liked the limelight.

“Will you come with me?” He asked her, his arm outstretched to take hers,

“I won’t bite. I won’t hurt you, I promise. Please.”

“Ok.”

In the hotel room, Nathan and Lyssa sit on the bed, not touching or even saying a word for a very long time.

“How could you?” Lyssa finally said in a barely audible voice, “After all we went through?”

“I’m sorry. I really am. Please understand that I’ve done nothing but suffer these past years without you in my life. Please forgive me.”

Lyssa gets to her feet, pacing the room until she stops before him.

“Was it worth it? Your family? Not raising our child together? Losing me for six years?”

“No . . . it wasn’t,” the tears come unbidden.

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Lyssa stood still, watching as the strongest man she knew wept. Of all the years she's known him, after everything they went through and he's just now crying. Why didn't he show this vulnerable side of himself before? At least this display of remorse would've given her some hope.

"I never meant to hurt you, my love; I am so sorry. Please give me a chance to make it up to you."

"How Nathan!?"

Nathaniel gets down on both knees in front of her.

"Anything . . . name it. I swear."

She sniffs, "Give up your company, move back to Strat."

He swallows visibly, seeming scared more than ever, "You'll call off the lawyers? Start over with me?"

"Yes."

"OK . . . I'll just need time to get the temp CEO till Noah graduates, I'll need to get my things from London . . . will you give me time? And then I'll do whatever you ask of me."

"Sure."

"I'm really sorry, Alyssia, I am," and he starts to cry, "I'll do whatever it takes to make you happy."

Lyssa gets down on her knees to be level with him, noticing the band around his finger, "You still wear your ring."

"Yes," he whispers.

She looks down, "I knew I'd never be able to survive this confrontation."

"You? Look at me!"

She giggles, wiping her cheeks, "You're a mess."

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They laugh.

“Don’t give your company up.”

His eyes widen, “No, Lyssa, please, I said I would, and I mean that.”

“No, stop . . . I—I was just testing you. I don’t want you to give your company up. I would never do that to you.”

“I don’t care, Alyssia; just take me back!”

“Slow down, Nathaniel . . . slow down . . . we have to talk about this!”

“Fine,” he caresses her cheek, “Whatever you’d like, you can have.”

His touch is seriously distracting, and the butterflies that erupt in her stomach? Unbelievable.

“Love . . . loyalty . . . time.”

“Yes, yes, and yes,” he pulls her close, “I knew you still loved me when you didn’t move on.”

“Well,” she blushes, “I’ve had another lover. It was briefly, and it didn’t mean much . . . it was just for the company.”

Nathaniel doesn’t say anything for a long time; he would have to deal. He sighs. They both lay down and curl up on the floor, holding each other.

“You’re missing your whole dinner.”

“This is much better.”

March, Sunday 15, 2015

Lyssa stood in the kitchen, drinking a cup of peppermint tea. Tea always relaxed her; she needed it more than ever right now. She was so nervous and out of it. She and Nathan had spoken about so much last night and this morning as they had stayed up all night. There would be so much change in her life, but the most important thing was that her husband was back, and even though she was feeling guilty, she was more delighted.

Quietly, Nathan entered the kitchen, spotting Lyssa on the far left, just staring outside with a cup of tea in her hands. He could guess it to be peppermint. She's in her robe with a silk night dress under it. Even though they didn't make love last night, it felt as if they did. He was beyond happy to be in her presence again.

"My love," he put his arm around her.

She jumps, startled, "Nathaniel. You scared me."

"Sorry," he smiles sheepishly.

"Finished with the calls?"

"Daisy is having a meltdown about the overnight changes, and Nicholas, my manager, is, of course, also freaking out."

"I didn't mean to disrupt anyone's life."

"You're not. Where's my son? He didn't come home last night."

"He sometimes stays with Kaitlyn. It's Sunday, they'll be by after church, plus he has to finish packing for his trip."

"Right . . . Laina's family reunion thing, right?"

She smiles, "Good to see you're still invested in his life."

"He's my only son. Literally, the only pure thing that I've ever created."

“Pure? Is that an apropos term? He’s certainly a womanizer. Like you were.”

“Womanizer . . . but he’s taken a liking to Kaitlyn.”

“Liking? They’re inseparable.”

“Has he spoken to you about his relationship with her?”

“He has.”

“Marriage comes up?”

“Every time . . . do you think he’s too young?”

“We were younger than him when we decided to get married.”

“Times are different now.”

“Nothing is different. He’s in love. And she’ll be an amazing wife to him.”

“I agree,” she sighs, “Wow. We’re already talking about that?”

Nathaniel laughs, “Yep . . . they’re very happy together plus they’re a good couple . . . she’ll be an amazing Mrs. Jones, just like her mother-in-law.”

“Nathaniel?”

“My love?”

“I love you very much.”

“I love you, baby.”

They beam at each other.

I glance over at Noah as he parks in his driveway behind his mother’s Mercedes SUV.

“Do you think he’s here?”

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“I hope so . . . you know, it’s kind of weird having to play matchmaker for my parents.”

“Hmm.”

“I just hope he does right by her, or I’ll personally be kicking his ass.”

“He will . . . I believe that he will.”

“Kait?”

“Hmm?”

“You know I love you, right?”

“Yes, Noah. You tell me every day.”

“No, Kaitlyn,” he takes my hand, staring intently into my eyes, “Seriously.”

I blush, “Rebecca did say you loved incredibly hard.”

His brows furrow, “What?”

“Rebecca said that’s how you are in relationships . . . you give it your all.”

“You say that as if I’ve loved all girls the same.”

“Well,” I blush, “Isn’t that what she means by that?”

He’s insulted. I shift in my seat.

“I’ve only ever loved you and Laina, and I never loved Laina like I love you.

Now I’m not even sure if I truly ever loved her or . . . I never even tried to fight to get Laina back. It was just whatever but you, Kaitlyn . . . I’d go to the ends of the earth for.”

I blink. Christ. My Noah is perfect; everything he says is perfect.

“Hmm . . . good to know.”

We get out of the car and head up to the house. Mrs. Jones is in the kitchen in a robe, looking like she’s my age, her hair is down, and she’s never been more gorgeous.

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“Hi, my babies. Breakfast?”

“Please,” Noah and I say in unison. I look at him and blush. We sit and have breakfast.

“Morning, eating without me?” Mr. Jones walks into the kitchen wearing jeans and a t-shirt.

Noah chokes on his orange juice. Mrs. Jones is blushing as Mr. Jones joins her by the stove. He puts his arm around her waist.

“I thought we were gonna wait till tonight to tell him?” She asks.

“He’s a big boy. He—

“I’m literally sitting right here,” Noah says.

“Um . . . Noah . . . your dad and I . . . have decided to . . . rekindle our . . . relationship and try to work . . . on our marriage.”

I take Noah’s hand under the table.

Noah scratches his head, “Although this is the exact direction I wanted it to go . . . this seems rather quick . . . aren’t ya’ll going a little too fast?”

“We don’t want to miss another minute,” Mr. Jones says.

“Well, I’m happy, and I support you.”

“With us trying to get our marriage together—

Mr. Jones cuts Lyssa off, “—comes my responsibilities that I’ll have to give up.

“The company?” Noah guesses.

“Yes and no, I’ll just be a lot less active. With your blessing, I’d really like to use a lot of my time trying to repair my marriage and do right by your mom. So, we’ll be co-CEOs until you graduate college.”

Noah looks at me. I smile at him, urging him on.

“Deal,” Noah says.

“Ah!” Lyssa squeals and hugs Noah. Mr. Jones hugs his wife and son and then pulls me in.

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

6:27 a.m.

“Look alive, Kait.”

“At 6:30 in the morning? Get real.”

“You used to be a morning person.”

“Used to. Keywords.”

“Or are you just a little bit on edge because you’re going to spend the next three and a half days with Laina?”

“Don’t remind me,” I sit on the passenger side and recline the chair back.

Noah tucks me in with my favorite red blanket and pillow.

“You can sleep the whole way. Get some rest.”

“I’m not going to let you drive seven and a half hours straight.”

“You’re not going to let me?”

“No.” He starts to tickle me, “Noah, stop!”

We laugh, and I kiss him. It becomes quickly heated.

“Easy baby,” he breathes, “Or we won’t leave.”

“Right,” I sigh.

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“You already took all of Monday to screw my brains out.”

“Should’ve taken Tuesday too.”

He laughs, “Let’s get going; the sun’s coming up.”

12:43 p.m.

“Are you ok?”

“I’m fine,” I stretch.

“You’ve gotten quieter.”

“I’m fine.”

“Ok,” he says.

“I want to pee.”

“Again?”

“Yes again.”

“Ok, there’s a pit stop coming up; we can stop there.”

“Can I drive the rest of the way?”

He sighs, “Sure, baby.”

At the stop, I pee, grab a snack and head back to Noah, who is filling the gas tank.

“I really need to stretch my legs,” I walk in circles around him.

“Me too,” he yawns.

“You’re tired.”

“A little,” he says sheepishly.

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“Did you sleep last night? You didn’t.”

“I didn’t really . . . I was watching you sleep.”

“You do that a lot,” I frown.

“I know . . . it’s become a habit, I guess.”

“A bad one.”

“Not really.”

“Dude, you are low-key, totally obsessed with me.”

“A little bit,” he laughs.

I laugh.

2:12 p.m.

“Pull up to the gate as close as you can.”

“OK,” I do as Noah says, and he reaches across from the passenger seat to talk from my window into an intercom system. He presses numbers, and someone comes on.

“Hello,” says the deep masculine voice.

“Hi Roger, it’s Noah.”

“Noah! Hey! Welcome back.”

Noah smiles, “Thanks. Let me in?”

“I just might not,” Roger says but the huge gates open anyway.

“Thanks,” Noah says, “Let’s go, baby.”

Hmm. Roger and Noah seem to know each other very well. How many times has he been here? My mood dampens a little bit. Ugh.

The drive up is long, between a row of beautifully blooming trees, and then, between the break in the trees comes the view of the estate on acres and acres of land.

“This is not a ranch,” my jaw drops. “This is a palace. She grew up here?”

“Yeah,” Noah says, “Park under the awning.”

I park Noah’s sleek black Lamborghini under the colossal awning with equally expensive cars. It was a pleasure to drive; I must say, luxury at its finest. I think about how everything about Noah and Laina bleeds wealth and aristocracy and that maybe they belong together. But I roll my eyes at my train of thought. Sure, make myself feel like more crap.

“Something wrong?” Noah asks.

“No . . . I was just thinking about how ridiculously wealthy you are.”

“It’s just money,” he smiles a little.

“Says the person who’s been wealthy all his life.”

“Not all my life . . . rough childhood.”

“Rough?”

“Yes, rough.”

“You were too young to know you were poor Noah.”

“Are you done?”

I laugh, “Yes. But—

He cuts me off by kissing me. I laugh.

“Shut up, Kait.” I hit him playfully, “Ow! You vixen!”

I laugh.

“Noah?”

I roll my eyes at the voice. Perfect timing, you boyfriend-stealing piece of shi—

“Ugh, let’s go,” Noah whispers and exits the car, “Hi, Laina.”

He comes around to open my door then he hugs Laina. She’s all legs and breasts in a baby blue mini dress and matching heels that make her taller than me and almost as tall as Noah, while I’m just in a simple spaghetti strap Dior dress Noah bought me months ago, complete with gladiator sandals.

“She drove your Lamborghini,” she frowns.

I frown. Why is her tone accusatory? And what does it matter if I drive my man’s car? What the heck is her problem?

“Yeah, she loves it,” Noah takes my hand.

She looks at our joined hands, “You love that car; you never even let me touch it let alone drive it.”

Oh. Shit.

“I hardly see why my girlfriend driving my car is any of your business.”

Oh. Shit.

“Kait! Ah!”

Rebecca. *THANK GOD.*

“O. M. G. How beautiful is this place? Come on! Let’s go take a swim in the Olympic pool!”

“Um,” Rebecca is already pulling me away. I look back at Noah.

“It’s ok, baby. I got our bags. Go.”

“One sec,” I tell Rebecca, then kiss Noah, “Let’s go . . . oh hi, Laina.”

She doesn’t answer, and I roll my eyes.

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“I didn’t pack bathing suits; I knew something like this was gonna happen,” I say.

“That’s ok. I packed for the both of us. Come!”

“Ugh!”

She laughs—evil to the core this one.

“This place is amazing.”

“Hmm,” Noah opens the door to the bedroom where we’ll be staying.

“Don’t you think?” I step into the room and pause.

The room is enormous, designed victorian styled contrasting to the French of the rest of the house. One would think that would look bizarre, but the entire house is designed intricately. Like stepping into another era each room we enter. The four-poster bed is covered with a gold and green duvet, and next to it on both sides sit bedside tables that are designed similarly. There’s an area to my right with two settees and a small table. It’s gorgeous. I see my bags by a door I presume to be the closet.

“You unpacked my things?”

“Ah yeah . . . is that ok? Should I have?”

“It’s fine,” I shrug, “Just sweet, that’s all.”

“I aim to please,” he bolts the bedroom door and crosses the room to stand in front of me.

I smile up at him, “You succeed.”

Noah wraps his arms around me completely before we kiss deeply. He takes a deep breath.

“I love you.”

“I know . . . and I, you.”

“Let’s go take a shower and get ready for Mrs. Lewis’s Dinner.”

I gulp. Laina’s parents? They’re probably twice as horrible as she is.

“OK,” I step back to take his hand in mine.

After a shower and some passionate lovemaking, I’m spinning in circles in the huge closet.

“Kait!”

“I’m coming, Noah. I can’t find anything to wear!”

I hear him groan, and in he comes in a cuffed khaki style skinny jeans pants and a white untucked long sleeve button-down shirt. The neck button is undone. He’s fuming a bit but doesn’t realize that I’ve paused to observe how handsome he is. He has at least a day’s worth of whiskers on his cheeks. My God, man, why is this boy so freaking hot?

I smell his intoxicating cologne as he passes me, searching through the clothes. Hot and smells delicious, no wonder I can’t resist him. He takes down a golden yellow A-line dress with a V-neck.

“2013 Chanel. It still has a price tag. Five thousand euros and she says she has nothing to wear. Didn’t you plan your outfits for this trip?”

“I kind of just threw some things in my suitcases.”

He sighs, handing it over to me before he goes to find the matching wedge heels on the shoes rack in the back of the closet.

“Here, my love, I’m sure you’ll look stunning in those. You always do.”

“Thank you,” I curtsy a little bit and grab the shoes. I join him in the bedroom when I've finished.

“You look lovely,” he kisses my cheek, “Ready?”

My mood sombers, “No.”

“You're nervous, that's ok. I'm here, and so are your siblings. Tori and Hunter. We'll all always protect you,” he winks.

“I know,” I sigh, “I feel the love.”

We join the other couples at the top of the spiraling staircases. Laina joins us a little later, looking like Aphrodite in another chic mini dress. More people join us, dressed expensively and beautifully. There are five of them our age; Amanda from school, who is notorious for being . . . um . . . promiscuous; Krystal, who is always with Laina. Samantha, Laina's hilarious southern cousin; Nico, Laina's gay cousin; and Corey. He is a laid-back relative of Laina, an incredibly handsome bad boy dressed in all black.

“So you go to school with Laina, huh?” Corey asks.

“Yes,” I smile.

“I'm sorry.”

I burst out laughing, “Oh my gosh.”

He smiles handsomely, nudging Samantha, “She's got it worst than us, cuz.”

Samantha laughs, “A little bit; she didn't have to grow up with her, though, so imagine that.”

“Right,” Corey grins.

“She’s not that bad,” I cringe. I’m having to defend Laina? The world is ending.

Samantha knowingly narrows her eyes at me, “Unless you have something that she wants.”

“Right,” I shift.

“Yep,” says Corey, “And we’ve all been at the end of that stick.”

“He’s better with you anyway,” Sam nudges me, “He deserves you.”

“Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“Trying to steal my girl stiff?” Noah puts his arm around my shoulders, facing Corey.

“I gotta always try,” Corey winks at me, then he and Noah hug, “How’ve you been?”

“Good,” Noah smiles and hugs Sam, “Hey, Sammie.”

“Noah,” Sam says in her southern drawl, “Always criminally handsome. It’s really not fair; these boys have nothing on you with you looking like that all the time.”

“What can I say?” Noah winks, putting his hands in his pockets, “Gotta keep them on their toes.”

It’s probably the first time I’ve ever heard Noah brag about his devastatingly handsome features. He’s often quite humble.

I smile. Noah is humble, handsome, and all mine.

“Right, well, just because I low-key can’t stand your ex-girlfriend’s dirty ways doesn’t mean I blame her for still trying to jump your bones. You leave her no choice.”

We laugh. It's actually quite refreshing that we can talk about this so freely, especially with people related to Laina. It could be worst.

"It's a damn shame I'm so in love with my girl, huh?"

"Pooh," pouts Sam, and she winks at me.

"Dinner!" Rings a bell, "Dinner!"

Noah is about to take my hand, but Sam grabs me. Noah and I both pause as our eyes lock, waiting to see if I react in any way, but nothing. He smiles. I smile.

"She's mine for the rest of the trip Jones."

"Until bedtime," mumbles Noah, and we head into the dining room.

Again, like walking into a different era. There are three huge chandeliers above the massive dinner table. And paintings upon paintings on the walls. There's a fireplace with an enormous picture of Laina on top of it and beautiful intricate curtains covering half a dozen doors.

"Welcome, children," says a feminine voice.

Everyone hugs the petite lady one by one, looking like the dead stamp of Laina; she's gorgeous and sweet. By her side is a tall, well-built, well-groomed-looking man. Laina's father, I presume.

"Noah!" The couple shriek as they see him. They hug and kiss him affectionately.

"Looking well as always," says Laina's mother.

"Isn't he, mom?" Grins Laina, who laces her hands through his.

I'd be upset about that if Noah hadn't visibly cringed, so I relaxed.

"Kait," Noah says. Samantha pushes me towards Noah as he steps away from Laina.

“Kait!” Exclaims Laina’s mother, “Hi! Welcome.”

“Hi,” I blush.

I’ve misjudged her—they.

“I’m Laura; I’ve heard so much about you.”

“All good, I hope,” I glance at Laina.

“Of course, your sister never shuts up about you.”

“Oh,” I laugh, “It’s so nice to meet you, Mrs. Lewis.”

Why couldn’t your daughter be as sweet as you?

“Call me Laura.”

“Mikael,” Mr. Lewis shook my hand.

Lovely people. If it weren’t for the resemblance, I wouldn’t believe they were Laina’s parents.

“Come on, let’s have dinner,” Laura moves aside to allow everyone to sit at the table that seats 15. Sam pulls me next to her.

“Come, sugar,” she says all southernly.

Noah sits on the other side of me. I’m grateful when Corey sits on the other side of Noah, too, and he winks at me. I blush. Laina can sit with her man: Max, with whom she seems to be back together. She does sit next to him. Good for her.

“So Laina has made sure to find out from you all what you liked best, and Mikael and I—

She takes her husband’s hand

—have made sure our cooks prepare your specialized meals to the best of their ability.”

I frown and tug on Noah’s shirt, “Laina didn’t ask me anything,” I whisper.

“I told her,” he says.

“Oh.”

Hmmm.

In comes Maria, the head of housekeepers, with three men pushing large carts full of covered plates. Efficiently, they serve the dinners, uncovering and placing one plate at a time. They don't say a word, just smiling pleasantly, and all three men are out in less than four minutes.

Wow. Such coordination.

“I hope you enjoy it; we did really work hard,” says Maria after everything is placed.

“Thank you,” Laura kisses her cheek before she disappears. “Bon Appetit!” I was certainly not sure what to expect with my food, but when I look at it, I'm surprised. There's a four-ounce piece of seasoned butter steak, a four-ounce piece of grilled salmon with loaded mashed potatoes, and steamed broccoli. My stomach churns.

“Did I get it wrong?” Asks Noah.

“No . . . it's perfect.”

“Then why do you look displeased?”

“I'm shocked,” I confess.

He laughs, “Well, don't forget I'm a little bit obsessed with you.”

“Just a little bit,” I tease, and we laugh.

“Eat up, baby, enjoy.”

I do as he says.

Laura strikes up a conversation twenty minutes into dinner. I listen as everyone laughs and talks.

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“So, Kait, tell me, how was boarding school?” She asks.

“Compared to now?” I look up at Noah, “Awful.”

“You didn’t think so back then?” She guesses.

“No . . . my life was actually quite simple and . . . predictable. Although I enjoyed those years, I never really knew what I was missing.”

Noah takes my hand under the table.

“Falling in love does that to you,” she looks at her husband, “Can’t imagine ever living without your soulmate.”

“Yeah,” I blush.

She gets it.

“How’s Lyssa Noah?” Asks Laura.

“Oh, she and Mr. Jones got back together,” Laina blurts. My brows furrow. How the *eff* does she know that? “Tell them, Noah.”

Noah shifts, clearly uncomfortable. Um, how does she know this? This literally happened a few days ago. I sit up.

“They’re working on some stuff . . . I’m really not at liberty to discuss to a whole table of people my parents’ business.”

“We understand,” Mr. Lewis says, “Send them our best.”

Noah nods.

“Well, are you at least going to tell them that your dad is giving you the company?” Laina again.

“Laina,” Max says, “If he wanted to, he would’ve. Chill, babe.”

“Mr. Lewis, how’re your vineyards going?” Blake to the rescue.

And a whole new conversation is started with that. I zone out for a bit, absolutely brooding and fuming. So apparently, Noah has been spilling his guts to Laina. Hmm. *Ok.*

“Kait . . . right?”

Rebecca is talking to me; everyone is looking at me. There’s dessert on the table. Hmmm. Yum.

“Huh?” I blush.

“You’re going to law school,” she says.

“Yes. I am.”

“Oh, you’ll be a wonderful lawyer; I can already see it,” Laura claps her hands cheerfully.

“Hmm.”

Noah opens the bedroom door and steps aside to usher me in. After he comes in, he closes the door. I untie the straps on my heels and step out.

“Let me help,” he makes to bend.

“No, I got it. I’m fine.”

“Ok,” he frowns, “Kait, I’m sorry.”

A million things cross my mind right in that instant, accentuating several mixed feelings. But two emotions overpower my common sense and rationale; jealousy and rage. Before I know it, I’m exploding.

“Sorry!? You’re sorry!? How does she know all of that, Noah!? Huh!? How!?”

He frowns, shoving his hands in his pockets, “We talked.”

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“When!? Those things literally happened two days ago!”

“Well . . . she’s known . . . we talked about it. I . . . told her when it happened.”

I blink at him. Why does this bother me so much? Why does this hurt me?

“So that Sunday in the park when you came to me about it, I wasn’t the only one?”

“Kait . . . she’s my friend. That’s it. I was just confiding in her. She knows all about it from . . . when we were together, and I wanted someone who knew—

I raise an eyebrow.

“I don’t mean it that way. She’s known. She’s been with me through a lot of it.”

“So that Sunday in the park when you came to me about it, I wasn’t the only one?” I repeat, irritated.

He sighs, “No, you’re not.”

“Have you told Blake? Hunter? Max?”

“I have not, no.”

“Weren’t you friends with all of them before you were with her? I’m confused. Because that is your excuse, you’re *friends*.”

“It’s not an excuse.”

Wow.

Wow.

Wow.

This hurts me. Bad.

I turn away from him and head into the bathroom. I will myself not to cry, but my eyes sting, and I can't help but feel utterly betrayed. Why does he discuss things with her? Intimate things that mean so much to him? I mean, I get that he might need someone else to talk to but not her, of all people. With whom I already feel like I'm sharing him. No wonder she feels she has the right to do things like weave her fingers through his or ask him why I am driving his car. I cry. I can't help but cry. I don't want to do this trio thing with Noah and Laina; I want her to stay out of our relationship, stay out of our business. But she won't do that if he continues to invite her in. Why am I not enough for him to confide in? I am supposed to be the one person on this planet that he talks to and feel completely fine. But that is too much to ask. And here I thought I was special to him in how he communicates with me, only to find out that he shares with Laina just as much as he shares with me. What in the actual . . . dammit. This hurts me.

After my shower, it takes me a while to fix my red puffy eyes. When I exit the bathroom, he's sitting on the floor just outside the door.

"Kait," he says, getting to his feet.

"I'm going to bed," I say quietly but dismissively. I don't think my mind can put me down anymore regarding Laina. I might just want to leave already. Noah takes the hint and leaves me be. I lie awake a long while after, even after he's showered and come to bed. But I lie away from him, on the opposite side, as far away as I can.