

The RA

Chapter Two: The Forum

“I wish you hadn’t had to find out like that.”

“Or do you just wish I hadn’t found out at all?”

Savannah glowered. She was bad at it. The woman had resting goddess face, with a general tendency toward beatific smiles. “You want to maybe slow your roll? I’m not the one with two girlfriends and who knows how many ‘innocent’ hookups with my residents.”

My turn to glower. I probably wasn’t any better at it. She was completely right. I had no room to be mad at her for getting back with Price after what I’d done with Vickie, and Andi, and Casey, and Terri and Toni, and Ramona. With everybody, really, after massage night.

“You’re right. I’m sorry. I just... I was really looking forward to see you again, and I had a really lousy day. Then instead I saw your ex-boyfriend lounging in your bed.”

“Which I get. Like I was trying to say, I wanted to talk to you, but not with Price around. He, um, doesn’t really know about us.”

I contemplated scooting closer. She was on her bed, and I was all the way over at her desk. Did proximity matter for the Spencer effect? Marisa had been so adamant that pheromones weren’t it, and indeed it sounded like it was much more contact, or contact with objects I’d had contact with, that did it. It wasn’t the foremost thing on my mind, though.

“Is there still an us?” There it was.

“I... I don’t know. I know that’s not what you want to hear. I like you, Spencer. I like you a lot. And I think we know attraction isn’t a problem.” Her cheeks flushed briefly. Not a lot of women who get horny at being referred to as a cocksucker who still blushed. “But I think we moved faster than I was comfortable with. We didn’t set boundaries. Honestly, I think I was losing myself a little. I’ve never been like... *that* with a guy before. Not even close. Especially not a guy who’s, you know, a player.”

“A player...? Me?” My indignation kicked in instinctively, followed a moment later by the remembrance of that list of names of women I’d been with, whether for a quick lick or some rough wet shower sex. “Sorry. You’re right. I, um, haven’t been myself lately either.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“With my girlfriend? Sure. With the girl who’s very sweetly dumping me? I’ll pass.”

Savannah’s lips – god, her *lips* – pursed to one side. “I’m sorry. It’s just...”

“I get it. Price is safe. Devoted. You two have history. I’m graduating in May and you still have two years to go. We’re coworkers. I apparently have commitment issues. You could pick any one reason, but there’s plenty. I have no room to judge.”

Savannah crossed the room and gingerly bent down and kissed my cheek. “Are you mad at me? You’re right, you shouldn’t be, but... are you?”

I could kiss her, I realized. She was vulnerable, sweet, unquestionably willing to indulge her now-former boy toy in a goodbye kiss. Whatever was swimming in my spit would dive into hers, ignite the fires, and before I knew it she’d be too hot for me to even dream of letting Price have yet another crack at her.

I gave her a hug, then I said some words, and then it was over. I was gone.

“At least you still have the *other* girlfriend, I guess.” Before I could tell Janis that no, Vickie had also dumped me, she held up a finger to forestall me as she spoke into the walkie. “Secondaries starting rounds.”

We proceeded onto Higgins Basement. The small delay made me feel even more pathetic somehow when I said, “Newly embachelored, actually. A euphemism a buddy of mine came up with that feels a little better than saying ‘I got dumped.’”

Many possible reactions. A chuckle at the plagiarized witticism; sympathy and/or empathy; an inquiry to invite me to vent. Janis instead went with, “Yeah, I guess we all sort of saw that coming.”

I sniffed. “What’s that supposed to mean?” Ordinarily I’d let her snarky personality slide, but I wasn’t at my best.

“It means, duh.” She shrugged. “You were having all that intercourse, noisy and promiscuous. Did you think it ended with bringing Vickie *and* Savannah back to meet your parents? ‘Hey mom, hey dad, these are the two girls I’ve been cheating on with each other.’ Come on.”

“It’s not cheating if everybody knows what’s going on. We just hadn’t decided to be exclusive is all. They were fine with it.”

“So fine that Savannah dumped you for her, frankly, way less good-looking ex-boyfriend?” It was a small boon that we were walking past Savannah’s bedroom when she said it, but not much.

“Yeah, well, better than being dumped for nobody at all, I guess.”

I paused for Janis to check the bathroom; she barely glanced, but I wasn’t in a mood to stand on ceremony. The odds someone was drowning in a puddle of drunken vomit on the bathroom floor on this particular Monday evening seemed low. “What did Vickie say? I’m kind of surprised, honestly. She doesn’t seem like she could do much better than you. No offense.”

Was that racism? Condescension? A jab at the godless Jezebel of Higgins Ground? And why would *I* take offense? The only reason I might was the implication that I should. “She said she wasn’t looking to handhold anybody. That we were having fun, but that maybe I needed to sort myself out. Or... something. I don’t know. She was being roundabout, I think on purpose, and I—”

“HEY.” Janis was peering into a doorway. “HEY. You need to turn that music down. Way too loud.” She took a step, maybe a step and a half, before grumbling at full volume, “Some people are just animals, I swear.”

I grimaced. The music hadn’t been that loud, but it was the kind of music someone like Janis would prefer didn’t exist, especially in her hearing range. I wasn’t about to second guess a coworker, though, especially with my list of allies dwindling, so I simply flashed a sympathetic expression and held up fingers to indicate that just a little would be fine. Janis didn’t care.

When she didn’t prompt me to continue, I continued, “Anyway, yeah, I think it might have been sort of a game to her from the beginning. Stealing time with Savannah’s boyfriend was exciting; dealing with her mopey reject wasn’t.”

“Vickie can be kind of a b-i-t-c-h sometimes, all right,” Janis concurred.

“You can just say the word, you know.”

“I don’t use that kind of language.”

“You just...” I shook my head. “Never mind.”

We made our way onto Higgins Ground, Vickie’s floor. I took the split that her room wasn’t on, though Janis cattily passed on that it was dark and quiet in there. “Probably off finding a new boy to aherm-herm with, knowing her.”

“You know, slut-shaming isn’t a very cool thing to do.”

“I didn’t say she was a slut. Although, interesting that that’s where your mind immediately went.”

“You said she was off finding a new guy to sleep with. You said it with a tone that said you disapproved.”

“I do. Ugh, people can be so PC. Like I’m supposed to just accept people’s gross behavior, but they can’t accept the way I speak. It’s so unfair.”

Silence was my most diplomatic response to the pretty white blonde Christian college girl’s sense of aggrievement, and I let that ride until we were climbing the stairs up to my floor. I paused right outside the entrance. “Look, so you know, there’s a meeting going on in my lounge right now. I’m, um, explicitly not invited. So we can just skip that, OK?” Better to say it here than in the hall where my sulking might be overheard. I’d kept to myself today, hanging out on campus when I wasn’t busy being dumped, but I’d be shocked if today hadn’t entailed a lot of bad PR for me as news of yesterday’s fiascos spread.

“Why aren’t you invited? Your girls are so into you it’s actually kind of gross. Like you’re their brother instead of their boss.”

“I’m not their boss – or their brother. But, well, I managed to put my foot pretty deep in my mouth yesterday, a couple times. It’s nothing big. I think they’re a little upset, which they have every right to be. Ramona’s attending. She’ll help calm things down.”

She’d better. I’d given her explicit orders, or what to anyone who didn’t self-identify as my love slave would be called “pleading.” Since the official line was that she’d moved onto the floor to help provide oversight for the controversial male RA, she was a natural fit for the task. I loved Tori, all her brass and bluster and self-assuredness, but finding myself on the wrong side of it this time was daunting.

“I can’t believe she *lives* in our building now,” observed Janis as we entered Higgins 3, about twenty feet from Ramona’s door. “It’s so creepy having a grown adult staying here with a bunch of kids.”

“Why is that creepy? She’s about as much older than me as I am to most of my residents. Lots of schools have HMs who live in their halls.”

“It’s creepy because she moved onto *your* floor, which – no offense – is already about the creepiest place I’ve ever been.”

Again, not taking offense proved difficult. “What’s creepy about it? This is hands down the best community I’ve ever lived in in the halls.”

“Sure, for you. But your girls, they *worship* you. I bet half of them have little crushes, or pretend they do to get away with stuff. And they’re all so... yech. Huge breasts and big child-bearing hips and skimpy little outfits... It’s not decent. I know, I know, you’re fine with it and I’m probably some kind of terrible person for saying what we were all thinking.”

So far, the floor was dead silent. Andi and Jean’s room had a TV running, but the door was ajar, and no sign of them. Tori really must have whipped them into a frenzy with this forum of hers. Even so, it was incumbent upon me to defend them.

“They’re nice girls. And if they’re comfortable in their own skin, what’s wrong with that? They’re not ‘getting away with stuff.’ They like me, and I like them. If some of them get a little flirty about it, if it doesn’t cause problems, who cares?”

Janis sneered. “Yeesh, defensive much?”

We split. I took the side of the floor opposite my room, like usual, though still nobody around that I heard or saw. On the far end, I did the bathroom check. Janis was lagging behind, having stopped at the drinking fountain as she often did. The girl could hardly seem to go five minutes without drinking. I forged ahead, pausing near the stairwell door to see what I could hear from the lounge.

The door was closed, but Tori’s voice carried. “... on ourselves. Some of us, and I won’t name names, have taken things too far. Hell, all of us, probably, at one time or

another. But where did that leave us? Look around, ladies. Stuffed into shirts that don't fit, for a guy we can't have."

Janis caught up with me, but seemed as willing to eavesdrop as I was. "I'm not shaming any of you. You are gorgeous, glorious girls, all of you. Maybe we're not a sorority, but I think of you as my sisters. But is this what you enrolled in Lakeview to do? To flaunt yourselves, competing for scraps of one man? Men don't split thirty ways, ladies, especially RA men who aren't supposed to have relations with their residents in the first damn place!"

A grumble of malcontent echoed her sentiment. What was Ramona doing in there? She should be defending me! I wasn't the bad guy here! I mean, in the sexualizing and the licking and the impropriety, sure, but not in general!

"Um, hi," came a voice from behind me. I jumped in the air, startled, then turned to find Emma standing behind me. She'd sounded irked, catching me in the act of eavesdropping.

"Hi, Emma. Um, we were just... yeah. Doing rounds."

"Sure taking your time about it," she said with a frown, walking past me as far away as she could physically get, then into the lounge. More than a few eyes saw me standing there. Shit. I made for the stairwell, Janis in my wake.

"Geez. Maybe I called it wrong. Maybe they actually hate you," said Janis, though it was merely a casual observation rather than accusation.

It was probably that moment when I decided to make her pay. I didn't know how, exactly, but if my beloved Hotties were downstairs plotting a coup, then I was going to at least make the damned Spencer effect help me out with *something*.

At last rounds, I met her at the center desk with a bottle of green tea and a feeble excuse for why the seal was broken. To her credit, she did notice, and even said something about how if I were anyone else, she wouldn't dream of accepting it. As we made our way through Higgins a second time, though, she drank it down – along with some blobs of semen and all the spit I could manage. Luckily, Janis didn't know what semen tasted like, and the tea absorbed and masked it all nicely.

She stopped to get a drink on my floor again – this time, I was sure it was so put me in position to eavesdrop again – without suspecting I'd take advantage of the forum to lick the hell out of the faucet.

"I really like being on duty with you," I said as we stopped by her room on Higgins 4. There were a few rooms at the end of the hall unpatrolled, but I'd go back down to my floor that way. "You're a really interesting person."

Janis's smile was automatic. It didn't take whatever it was I'd force fed her to be taken aback by a compliment from a cute boy, especially one who tactfully stuck to purely platonic praise. "Thanks, Spencer. I, um, hope your girls don't all rag rage at you."

“Thanks. See you around, yeah?”

“Yeah!” She winced. “I mean, yeah.”

Truth be told, I didn’t think much about what I’d done to Janis for some time. Whatever this thing inside me was, it wasn’t a magical potion. It had taken time to work on Ramona, and it would probably take more on a frigid bitch like Janis. (One thing we had in common was a distaste for the b-word, but on the J-word, it applied.)

In the meantime, I had bigger fish to fry.

I’d told Ramona not to contact me that night. It was too conspicuous. If the Hotties started seeing my boss coming and going from my room at odd hours – to say nothing if their general inclination toward snooping revealed something tawdry – then her status as informant was wasted. She’d infiltrated as a supervisor seriously concerned with the behavior of a male subordinate. They couldn’t know she was here to gather intel. As far as the Hotties were concerned, she was here to guide me, not them.

The next morning, I made for the bathroom like usual – like usual before Casey had started bathing me pre-break, something she had not emerged to do since her return and I wasn’t about to make things worse by asking. There was no door, but right inside the doorway was a sign. No words, only a symbol. The male symbol.

“What the hell...?” I wished I didn’t know what to make of it. We’d have to have a talk about this; we couldn’t split the floor’s two bathrooms as one for its one male resident, and one for the thirty-three women. Clearly Tori wanted to send a sign, and she’d done it in classic style. For the time being, I took my shower quickly, and once I was dressed, rather than passive aggressively tearing down the men’s room sign, I simply put up a post-it. *Done for the day – all yours, ladies!* A little smiley face, for good measure.

Then downstairs to Ramona’s office.

“My man! How’s the wind in those sails?” asked Marcus as I slipped into the center desk area.

“Brisk, but coming from the bow.” I thanked my sister for the quick nautical lingo; she was big into kayaking. We were hopeful she might even get a scholarship out of it.

Marcus nodded, like he’d expected to extend the metaphor. “Sounds like it’s time to perform some maintenance on the ship until that more favorable wind comes her way.”

“That’s why I’m here.” I nodded to Ramona’s open office door. “Need my bilge pump.”

Marcus laughed delightedly at my engagement. “You’re lucky she’s on the phone, my man – not too sure you want her to hear you call her that.”

With that, I let myself in. She was, as he’d said, on the phone; Marcus was either an expert eavesdropper or else he’d simply noticed the red light on his desk phone indicating her line was in use. I’d forgotten that should mean I’d wait for her on the bench outside her office, or at least knock. Oops.

She noticed me enter, and gestured to close the door. “Mhm. No, I realize. As I said, we’ve already had exterminators in, and haven’t had any complaints from our residents since they returned.” Rolled eyes. “Mhm.” A sigh, the mouthpiece covered. “Mhm.” Gritted teeth. “No, I realize that, and I do apologize.”

I spoke softly, but firmly. “Hang up.” I really hoped it wasn’t anyone important. Ramona did go nuts when I got authoritative though, and I could use a little fangirling as a pickmeup. We’d done some feng shui over break with minor sound-proofing, nothing overt and certainly insufficient to fuck full volume, but our testing confirmed we could at least speak freely.

Ramona said not a word. She simply set the phone on the receiver and pressed the button to hold her calls, the one she normally hit when we were starting a one-on-one. “Good morning, master. I hear you’re in need of a little pumping.”

She was already working on my fly. “On your knees, boss. I need to sit.”

I took her chair as she obediently vacated it. Wild, how quickly I’d gotten used to ordering her around like this. I’d dated a girl freshman year who’d had a propensity for licking my face, and it got worse when she was drunk. (She drank a lot.) I’d gotten used to that, though; Ramona’s fetish was actually a lot easier to endure.

My supervisor seized the bottle of lube we’d stocked her desk with last week and prepped my shaft and her hands. We both preferred blowjobs to handjobs, but she knew why I was here. I had other needs for her mouth at present.

“So. Total shit show?”

Ramona considered, long enough that I expected a euphemism, a soft touch. “Pretty much,” she said instead. “Nearly perfect attendance, only missing Ellie, whom you should know was home attending to a death in the family. You can follow up with her when she gets back, if her roommate will let you see her.”

Ellie was Tori’s roommate.

“Let’s see. Everybody knows about the Lexi situation. We got her in to see a counselor–”

“Right, I read your email from yesterday.”

Ramona calmly stroked my shaft, two hands pumping and twisting in a gentle pattern. “Of course. It seems to have gone well; she’s going to be continuing to go in and process things. I think she’s going to be all right. As for the Casey situation, your girls are likewise all informed, and likewise, rather perturbed.”

“Casey situation? She’s barely said a word to me since we got back. What happened?”

“Ah. Evidently, she has a boyfriend back home.”

“Right, she’s mentioned him. Apparently he has some kind of cuck fetish or something. Gets off to having his girlfriend driven wildly horny by another man.” Ramona stole a lick on my shaft as I spoke. “And focus, OK? This is serious.”

“Yes, master. Apologies.” She planted a remorseful kiss on my balls. “That actually helps provide context. Reading between the lines of what she said, and what you just told me, I think her boyfriend wasn’t as aware of the source of her appetites as she might have led you to believe. Apparently they had a rather ugly fight, and he broke up with her. He said some rather hurtful things, and she’s distraught.”

“Fuck,” I sighed, and not because of that thing Ramona was doing with her thumb on my glans. “She told me...! Damn it!”

“Those issues were secondary, however. Tori had her speech prepped and rehearsed. She’s quite the orator. She claimed she’d been in talks with you about her concerns with your demeanor. Is that true? You didn’t mention that in our one-on-ones.”

I nodded. “Yeah, it sort of slipped my mind with all the fuck haze permeating every other inch of the floor. Sure didn’t stop her from taking her lick at massage night. I sort of blew it off. I didn’t think she’d get so serious about it. And let’s hike up that skirt. I think I need a lap dance.”

“Gladly, master.” She stood, raising her skirt over her hips in the same motion, and wasted no time descending her ass into my crotch.

“No panties today?”

“I had a sense you might have urgent need of me.” She nestled my cock between her plump cheeks and began to writhe. Was she really that wet from being bossed around and used, or was the lube that effective? “Would you like me to go on?”

“No, just the lap dance. You can ride it later, maybe.”

“I meant go on about the meeting, master, but I hope you’ll give serious consideration to that ‘later.’”

“Oh. Right. So yeah, what all...?”

Ramona began unbuttoning her blouse as she expounded, raising her bra over her breasts and placing my hands on them. Despite the distractions, her report was thorough and detailed. Tori had argued that I was, in short, a big slut, using my place as their RA and the good will of the Hotties to take sexual advantage of them. There had been some tough love, gently reproofing the girls for indulging me, though mostly, her story was one in which I was the clear villain. She even speculated as to whether that fight in the shower during Welcome Week had been staged, inviting Quinn to do what

she did so I'd have the opportunity to show off my penis to the impressionable newcomers.

"I mostly listened, but I did push back on that," Ramona assured me, teasing her vagina against my tip.

"I said *later*. What else?"

She complied, moaning when I gave her ass a little slap for not doing so more swiftly. Tori said she'd taken time to reflect on how out of hand things had gotten over break, and soon Hottie after Hottie was echoing that they had grown much more clear-headed about things in my absence. They chalked it up to a return to normalcy rather than removal of mind-altering chemicals, thankfully. Their remission was in many ways a relief, in some ways, thinking about Bob and his threat to weaponize the Spencer effect against my family if I made waves. Bastard.

Still, Tori had taken their disillusionment and ran with it. Words wouldn't suffice, she said. By the time the forum concluded, she'd filled out a list of new rules as long as the ones we'd made after Marisa's sexpert night, when they'd rolled out a host of ways we could all be more intimate. Some of them actually sounded like common sense – no more changing with doors open, no more masturbating in the showers, especially no showering with the RA. Then there were items Ramona did her best to capture the spirit of. Resegregating the bathrooms; approaching Ramona or one of the female RAs instead of feeding my ego by acting like only I could help them; floor programs to be designed and sanctioned by Tori and Katrina, our floor governor and vice governor. And, of course, no masturbating outside my room, no listening to my depredations, no licking, no public nudity, no licking.

"And no more floor shirts," concluded my shirtless supervisor.

"Wait, what? They love those shirts!"

"They loved showing off their bodies to flirt with their attractive and chemically enhanced RA, Spencer," Ramona corrected me, moaning softly as my cock teased at her clit. "Either way, Tori had them all go to their rooms and retrieve them. She threw them in the trash."

"She *what?!?*"

"Somebody really liked those shirts, I see." Ramona swiveled around to face me, as if to offer her tits in the stead of the sixty-four others I was to be deprived of going forward. "It's going to be fine, Spencer. Soon enough, they'll breathe you in, soak you into their pores, and they'll forget all about Tori's lectures and be throwing themselves at you again."

I let her nipple free from my mouth with a wet noise. "You're sure? Because back in August, Quinn was climbing into bed with me opening night, and Leigh was plotting to sleep with me by the following morning. Dana's mom was flirting with me totally

inappropriately in minutes. They've been back for forty-eight hours now, and not one of them has reached out to me. Not even smiled at me in passing."

"Well they're people, not sex robots, Spencer. You make us horny – so horny – and we act on it as we will. You sat through two weeks of RA training and didn't kiss Savannah until after the residents arrived. Vickie took you even longer, as did many of your other conquests. Myself, for instance, and as we discussed, I was spending more time with you than any of them."

"That was me dragging my feet, though, not them. Not you."

"Perhaps. I was entertaining more than a few inappropriate fantasies involving you for quite some time. Maybe as far back as training."

I couldn't help but grin. "Oh yeah? What kinds of fantasies?"

My supervisor leaned close, her breasts pressed against my chest, her pussy dribbling onto my cock. "You said 'later,' master. And 'maybe,'" she whispered.

I lifted Ramona by her ass and spun her, bent her over her desk, her cheek resting on her keyboard. "It's gotten pretty late, I guess, boss."

"It feels like it's been year since you used my pussy, master," she murmured elatedly as I lined up to penetrate her.

"You know, if I have you, maybe I don't even need them. You know? If they've snapped out of it, maybe I just... let them. Be a normal RA. And I'll have you for everything else."

"My master shouldn't have to settle. Please fuck me?"

I slid into her hot, wet little box and gave her another little slap. Her back arch, and her moan was loud enough I slapped it again. "This isn't settling, I promise you."

I stood my ground a moment, basking in the way Ramona's entire body trembled like a leaf in anticipation. I drew back, readying my thrust – when there came a knock at the door.

"Ramona? Your ten o'clock is here."

She whimpered in frustration, and likely in something else as well. I traced my fingers over some of the lines of artwork etched into the flesh of her back. I didn't withdraw, didn't grant permission.

"We're still pumping the bilge. I'll be with them in a bit."

"Good boss." I drove my cock into her full force. And again. I didn't let up.

"It's the dean," she murmured, eyes glazed.

"Shh." I thrust into my supervisor's needy cunt until my cock was tickling the back of her throat. I held it, just for a moment, as I patted her ass possessively. "You work for me now."

She came, but that didn't stop me.

Once I was back from classes, I left a message asking if Tori if I could speak with her when she got back from classes. As the day wore on, I grew more and more impatient. I told myself, I had to play this cool. Not only would I get better results showing remorse, but frankly, my girls were due an apology. Flirty fun Lexi, lobbying for her Tits Out schedule, was fair game for ogling. Confused fragile Lexi, struggling to rationalize why she'd gotten her tits enlarged for her RA, needed my support. And Casey. God, Casey. I left my door open, hoping to catch her on her way to her room, but no sign of her either.

It as going on ten, in between first and second rounds, when finally Tori darkened my door. She looked gorgeous as ever, and if she made it plain she wasn't aiming for sexy, it was hard for that body to avoid it. This was the exact opposite of the sort of thought I ought to be entertaining just then, however.

"Spencer."

"Hi, Tori. Come in? I wanted to talk with you about, well, everything."

She didn't budge from the doorway, though. At least, not in the direction I'd asked. "We can speak in the lounge."

I didn't give her the satisfaction of rushing after her. It was a power move, and while I wasn't interested in exerting power – Ramona was draining me dry of my capacity for that – I didn't want to open our talk by ceding any more to her, either.

I caught up with her in the lounge, where Jordyn was at work on her easel, but more pressingly, Katrina and Jo were also sitting, flanking the floor governor on the couch. I pulled up a chair opposite them, smiling into their defiant visages.

"You have something you wanted to talk about?" Tori asked coolly.

"I talked to Ramona today about the concerns you raised last night. I wanted to start by saying, I hear you. Things did get out of hand, especially right there before break. I crossed some lines, made some bad decisions."

"You hurt people," Tori corrected firmly. "It wasn't 'bad decisions,' like you turned left when you should've gone right. You used your role in this community to prey on young women who didn't know any better. You pressured Lexi into mutilating herself for you; you broke Casey into a thousand and one pieces; you used and humiliated pretty much everyone. I'm sure *that's* what you meant to say."

Katrina nodded supportively. Jo was simply glaring.

"I... Yes. That is actually more or less what I meant to say. Honestly, I feel terrible. I thought Casey's boyfriend knew about everything, and—"

"What about that bullshit you said to Lexi?" demanded her roommate. If looks could kill, Jo would have detonated half of Higgins in a radius around my person. "She does what she did, for you and for the life of me I cannot imagine why, and your response is to go 'show me your tits?'"

“If you’d let me finish, I was going to say I’m incredibly sorry for what I said to Lexi Sunday... it was incredibly insensitive. Lexi and I have always had such a flirty sort of camaraderie—”

Tori’s turn to interrupt me. “Flirty? Are you supposed to be flirting with your residents?”

“I’ll be making it my mission to try to make things up to them the best I can,” I said evenly. “But that’s between me and them. Clearly you have issues besides matters with those two, so I wanted to see what we can do to rectify things.”

“Resign.” Tori shrugged. “Resign, and let Ramona replace you with the female RA we should have had in the first placer.”

“Resign?!”

“We gave it a shot. Obviously it didn’t work. At best, you’re a child who couldn’t keep his hands out of the cookie jar. At worst, you’re a predator. Either way, you shouldn’t be here. Resign.”

I was on my feet without realizing it. “Where is this coming from? We had a good thing going, all of us. People were engaged. They were excited about programming. They felt comfortable coming to me with their needs. You suggest *I’m* a predator?! Do I need to remind you about the time I had a girl over and I found half the damn floor huddled outside my room, listening to us, touching themselves? The million times I’ve been flashed, wolf-whistled, cat-called, leered at, pinched, or otherwise propositioned? But *I’m* the predator?!”

Jo didn’t flinch, nor did Tori. I was relieved to see Katrina having the grace to look embarrassed. Maybe she remembered me and Carmen walking in on her right before break, masturbating loudly to the unsanctioned blowjob recording Toni and Terri had made. But she hadn’t said anything, either. Maybe a weak link, but if she wasn’t taking an active role, there as n’t much I could do with it.

Jordyn didn’t so much as glance in our direction.

“To those whom much is given, much is required. Luke 12:48.” I’d forgotten Tori’s dad was a minister. He’d taught her well. “You have a responsibility to us. We don’t have one to you. As far as I’m concerned, you’ve done too much damage to repair. You need to resign.”

“I am not resigning. I’ve done my best with a tricky situation, and where I’ve made mistakes, I’m willing and eager to make things better. I know tempers are running hot right now. I get that, I really do. But I’m your RA, like it or not.”

“Not,” said Jo hotly.

“Not,” echoed Tori.

They looked to Katrina. “Yeah. Not,” she said, though with notably less vigor.

“All right, then. So in the meantime, can we at least address the bathroom situation? There’s thirty-some people on this floor. We can’t force them to all share one bathroom just to spite me.”

The pivot seemed to work. Soon, instead of us yelling at one another, we were making progress. For the time being, I agreed to post the hours I’d be doing my morning routine, so those who wanted to avoid me, could. (Jo wondered aloud why I would think anyone on the floor wouldn’t want to avoid me.) For bathroom use, being less predictable, I’d post an occupied sign when I was in there. Considering there were gender neutral bathrooms in most public spaces on campus, it felt regressive, but if it gave them some small measure of restitution, so be it.

“I know there’s some bad blood right now, but I want to say I’m glad you were willing to talk with me. Maybe soon we can talk about the Halloween program? Katrina, I know you were excited about—”

“Resign. Resign. Resign.” Respectively, Tori stood, walked to the lounge exit, and opened it with each utterance. Katrina left on her heels, chin on her chest. Jo would have, except I hastily interposed myself.

“What the fuck do you want.”

“I need to talk to Lexi. I just wanted to know if she’s in and awake. I wanted to give her some space, but—”

“About fucking time.” She shook her head, but her expression softened a hair, from vitriolic to merely acerbic. “She’s in.”

I tackled Lexi first. Jo let me in, standing watch inside the room by the door. It was plain she had no intention of leaving me alone with Lexi. To think, I’d never even thought they were all that close. Lex was hunched at her computer, dressed in a simple pair of gym shorts and a t-shirt I remembered seeing hang loosely over her once-meager chest. Now, the fabric was thoroughly distended by two proud, perky, preposterous breasts that seemed to have forgiven me entirely for asking to see them.

“Hi, Lexi.”

She neither looked up nor responded.

“I’ll get out of your hair soon, but first I wanted to apologize for the other day.”

Nothing. She wasn’t typing, wasn’t clicking, simply staring, stock still.

“This isn’t an excuse, but I want you to know I only said what I did because we’ve always gotten along so well, and how many hours we’ve spent in here talking about your boobs.” Ugh, I was not saying the right things. I rushed on. “I’m sorry. If you want to talk about it, why you did it or whatever, I’m game, any time. If it’s three in the morning and you can’t sleep and you want to talk, cool.”

Lexi sniffed. Rubbed her nose. Resumed her pose.

“And, um, I hope this isn’t out of line, and I’m only saying it because maybe nobody else has said it, but...” I braced myself. Almost certainly the wrong thing. “You look great. You looked great before, and you look great now. I hope you’re not letting anybody make you feel different.”

“Would you seriously get the fuck out?!” snapped Jo, who apparently shared my reservations about my approach. After hearing Tori casually call it “mutilation,” though, I had to say something. Who knows how much grief she’d taken for those things. Nothing like assuring her she’s satisfying the male gaze to patch things up, right?

“Yeah. So, um, I’m sorry, and I’m here for you.” She still didn’t look away from her screen. Before Jo could drag me out, I made my retreat. I gave myself a minute to clear the water from my eyes, then headed back toward my room.

First, however, I stopped next door at Casey’s.

“Fuck off, devil Ra!” came a voice from the other side of the door. How she knew it was me, I had no idea.

“Casey? Please, I need to talk to you. Please.”

“I SAID GO AWAY! FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF!” There was another repetition, but she was already crying too hard to be understood. Even if I hadn’t heard her twice, though, her tone would have conveyed the sentiment.

“I’m sorry.” There was no way she heard me, though. I could hear her sobbing through our shared wall for a good long while after.

In the morning, I woke up to find a piece of paper slid under my door. It was a petition with a lengthy intro that could only be Tori, calling for my resignation. Some of the signatures were illegible, but counting them up, there were twenty-eight signatures. I studied it for a while, trying to see who the holdouts were. I was surprised and relieved to find that Lexi hadn’t signed, not spotting any L’s in the hard-to-read ones. That is, until I recognized what had to be a lazily scrawled Alexis.

It was early enough I caught Ramona before she’d headed down to her office in the center building.

“Spencer? Are you—”

“I quit.”