

## Prologue

Five Years ago.

\*Bella\*

The cold ocean breeze kissed my face, swaying my hair as I tried to stop it from getting tangled with the wind by holding it in my hand.

I sighed while looking around. The party music was booming loudly through huge speakers, and everyone was dancing and enjoying themselves in the ocean. Today was my best friend Vincenzo's 20th birthday celebration. Our families and friends had all gathered at this private beach owned by the Leonardis.

Everyone appeared to be occupied, and no one would notice if I slipped away for an hour or two. Vincenzo might be upset with me for missing his party, but I would explain to him later.

After casting one more careful glance around to make sure no one was watching me, I seized the opportunity to sneak away secretly to see my boyfriend, Bruno.

He had asked me on numerous occasions to go on dates, but due to my overprotective father, I couldn't go on a date with any guy until he had thoroughly investigated and given his approval. So, the only times we could see each other were at school.

I rst met Bruno back at school. We were in the same class. He was one of the most popular guys in our school, attracting the attention of many girls. When he chose to ask me to be his girlfriend, and I was over the moon that day.

I hadn't even informed Bruno about my visit before arriving at his dorm room because I wanted to surprise him.

As I stood before the door of his dorm room, my hand hesitated in the air when I heard those unexpected moans and groans. I froze in place, uncertainty lling me. Who could possibly be inside his room? Then I double-checked and there was no doubt it was unmistakably Bruno's room, room no. 09.

I approached the door as my hand made contact with the cool surface. To my surprise, it was open.

What the hell was going on?!

Inhaling deeply, I steeled myself and gently pushed the door wider. A silent gasp escaped me as my eyes stung from the shocking scene that unfolded before me.

There, within the dimly lit room, my boyfriend was exposed in his glory. He lay naked, burying his d\*\*k between the thighs of a girl on his bed, rocking his hips ercely and groaning. They were f\*\*\*\*g each other so passionately and fervently that they remained oblivious to my presence. Then, I got a glimpse of the girl. She was my classmate, Caterina, who called herself my friend. Betrayal pierced my chest as my eyes brimmed with tears.

Bruno's lips crashed against hers and I could literally see their tongue sticking into each other's throats. I made me feel nauseous from disgust. Her nails left trails of scratches on his back as their rhythmic movements synchronized as they shamelessly f\*\*\*\*d each other.

Abruptly, Bruno's body shifted, lying on his back as he guided her to straddle him, lowering her onto his d\*\*k. I stood there, too startled to move.

Cat's shameless moans lled the room as she arched her back, throwing her head back and her ngers tangling in her own hair, lost in euphoria.

"Ride me, babe," Bruno's voice resonated with a husky groan.

I felt like my insides were churning, and I would have puked if I hadn't covered my mouth. It was incredibly painful to watch them having s\*x. That cheater was the man who claimed to love me and that girl he was f\*\*\*\*g was my so-called friend.

"Oh, Bruno! You don't have to pretend that you are in love with that boring nerd," Caterina purred, riding him fast as her voice dripped with a teasing tone. Her words made me come out of my shock.

"Who could possibly love that boring slut? I am with her because she is the only virgin left in our class that I hadn't had a taste of," Bruno chuckled, his hips thrusting upwards to meet her descent.

Silent tears traced their path down my cheeks as I reached my limit. The well of patience within me had run dry. My so-called friend and boyfriend, the two people I had trusted, were now both mocking me and shattering my trust.

"Boring slut?! Huh, Bruno!" My voice shook, a fusion of anger, hurt, and betrayal trembling within each word. He was the one willing to spend hours listening to me, saying he couldn't get enough of spending time with me. Now I became boring slut.

"Bella!" Bruno's voice lled with shock echoed as his eyes snapped at me, realizing he was caught red handed.

"f\*\*k!" His cursed as he quickly disentangled himself from Caterina and stood, scrambling. I quickly averted my gaze, sparing myself from witnessing his naked body and his condom-covered d\*\*k.

In a swift motion, he retrieved his pants from the nearby chair and hastily dressed himself.

"Honey, you've got it all wrong. It's not what it looks like," he muttered with an attempt at explanation, but the audacity of his words left me speechless.

How could he even dare to deny the blatant truth before me?

"Really, Bruno?! Are you seriously trying to convince me that I conjured up a fantasy of you with Caterina in your bed?" My frustration boiled over, and I scowled, my hands involuntarily rising and falling in a gesture of exasperation.

I glanced at Caterina, and she smiled wickedly at me. No regret was in her eyes.

Bruno's gaze also shifted toward Caterina who was now leisurely donning her dress, a sly smirk playing on her lips.

"Bella! What's your expectation then?" His words dripped with frustration and boredom. "Who in their right mind would choose a girlfriend who's too much of a nerd and doesn't want to have s\*x with her boyfriend?"

I inched at his tone and wrapped my arms protectively around myself when his scrutinizing gaze raked over me as if assessing my very worth.

"Look at you!" He gestured with sweeping hands, a disdainful sneer curling his lips. "Who could possibly be attracted to you? You're not even beautiful. But, I'm still willing to forget everything and have you as my girlfriend." His nal words sliced through my fragile self-condence like a blade.

Tears that had been welling up within me now spilled over, leaving wet trails down my cheeks.

"f\*\*k you, Bruno!" The dam of emotions burst, and my voice quivered with anger as I shouted before delivering a hard slap to his face, the sharp sound of the impact echoing through the room.

I didn't stay there for another moment. Spinning around, I ed from his room, my footsteps carrying me away from the hurtful scene that had shattered my world.

I slammed the door shut behind me, wiped my eyes, and dashed down the hall.

I hailed a taxi and swiftly returned to the party, though it was well past midnight and most of the attendees had already departed. The event was winding down, and even my family was preparing to leave due to an unfortunate incident involving Rosa.

However, the thought of being alone in my room at home was unbearable, so I implored my mom to allow me to stay back and help Vin with the post-party cleanup. After a brief explanation, she reluctantly agreed, and I found myself clutching a cold beer, seeking solace on the moonlit beach. The moon cast its silvery glow across the sky while the rhythmic whispers of the ocean's waves provided a soothing backdrop.

"Hey there!" Vin's voice greeted me as he settled beside me with a beer in hand.

"I see you decided to stick around to lend a hand," he playfully teased, a smile tugging at his lips.

Vin was both my best friend and my cousin. While we weren't blood-related, our connection ran deep through our parents, who were cousins. Uncle Xavier's dad and my mom's dad were stepbrothers.

"Sorry, Vin. I'll join you in a bit," I responded apologetically. With a resigned sigh, I downed the last drops of my beer, frustration evident as I tossed the empty bottle aside.

Snatching Vin's beer from his grasp, I took a generous swig.

"Easy there, Petal!" he chuckled, using the nickname he had affectionately given me over the years. "You've already had quite a bit tonight."

The pain and betrayal icted by Bruno remained as poignant as ever, refusing to be drowned in the haze of intoxication.

"Hey, Petal, what's troubling you?" Vin's voice was laced with genuine concern as he probed, sensing my reticence.

I knew I needed to conde in someone, and Vin was the one person I could trust completely. Our friendship had always been built on transparency; we never held back from each other. Summoning my courage, I took a deep breath, my throat tightening with emotion.

"I went to see Bruno today," I began, my voice quivering as I struggled to hold back tears. "And guess what?! I found him f\*\*\*\*g my friend in his bed."

"Motherfucker!" Vin's reaction was swift, his anger palpable. "He's not worthy of being your boyfriend."

A fresh wave of sadness washed over me, and the tears that I had been holding back for so long nally spilled down my cheeks.

"No one wants me as their girlfriend, Vin," I admitted between sobs, the weight of my emotions now impossible to contain.

"What are you saying, Petal? That's far from the truth," his frown deepened.

"Yes, it's true, and I know it," I replied in a voice heavy with disappointment. "Bruno made it clear that he doesn't want me because I'm boring and not even beautiful."

I snied, pushing my glasses back up my nose.

"He's an absolute jerk," Vin muttered, his frustration evident.

Brushing some hair away from my face, he gently tucked it behind my ears before removing my glasses delicately from my face, wiping the tears from the lenses, and then placing them back onto my eyes. I averted my eyes as something tugged at my heart at his sweet gesture.

"Look at me, Bella," touching my shoulders, he gently turned me to face him as his soothing gaze peered deeply into mine.

"You are the most beautiful girl I've ever seen, Petal," he spoke with sincerity, his eyes meeting mine still glistening with tears. "Your voice is like a melody that I can listen to endlessly, day and night. Bruno's just insecure because he can't handle having a girl as stunning and hot as you. So, he said those things to hurt you because you caught him cheating on you," a warm smile adorned his face as he offered his words of comfort.

His words were like a balm, rekindling the spark of condence within me. His bright blue eyes gleamed, looking at me as if I was the most precious being on this planet, made me believe that I truly was gorgeous. I felt bold, beautiful and condent.

I didn't know what came over me next. Almost instinctively, my hands reached up, ngers tangling in his neck, pulling him toward me. And before my thoughts could catch up, I kissed him. Surprise itted across his eyes for a brief moment, but then he responded, pulling me onto his lap, our lips meeting with an intensity fueled by desire and longing.

The following morning, I awoke, nestled in the embrace of his strong arms wrapped around me protectively.

Panic surged through me as the realization hit: I had lost my virginity to my best friend, someone who had a reputation as a more formidable player than even my ex-boyfriend.

Everyone knew Vincenzo Leonardi was a notorious playboy and incredibly popular among women, never having been in a committed relationship.

Oh, God, what did this mean to him?

Rebound s\*x?

Perhaps pity s\*x?

Or just a eeting one-night stand?

None of those options sat well with me. I didn't want to be part of any of those categories.

Fueled by a mix of confusion, embarrassment, and a desire to preserve what remained of my dignity, I made the decision to ee before I found myself in an even more awkward situation in his presence.

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Please join Stu B's Page Turner for further announcements. I am going to post visuals of Vincenzo and Bella and more about the book in my group.

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Please show your love for Vin and Bella and give them some moon tickets!

Happy reading!

loves and hugs!

Stu.