

## Chapter 21 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

“Why are you angry at me?” Beni asked Adil and then his widened, “you like her too!” eyes

“I do.” Adil shrugged uncomfortably. “She’s fucking gorgeous. I watched her a full two weeks before I even told you about her. It’s been a month of stalking her and when I say I spanked more than one memory of her in my shower, I’m not exaggerating.” He took the punch to the arm as he deserved, “she’s effervescent, Beni. All I want to do is put that laugh back on her face. The one I saw when she was at dinner with the girls from work a few weeks ago when one of them resigned. She was laughing so hard she was holding her sides and tears streamed and fuck if I didn’t want to be the one to make her laugh like that.”

“Well, you didn’t. Instead, you broke her fucking heart.”

“But I can put it back together. I know I can.”

“Good luck to you. The minute she’s ready, I’m making a play.”

“You won’t win.”

“Yes I will. I live right next door to her.”

“Oh my god! It’s why you chose that apartment. Phineas said originally it was far too expensive, and you gave him the song and dance. You were hoping to play pick me up with her!”

“Yes.”

“Benicio, this is war.”

“War?”

“I want her too.”

“Except,” Beni met his gaze as they pulled into the law offices where Kyst works, “there is someone else who wants her.”

“Him?” Adil jerked his thumb at the man visible from the parking lot as he paced in the lobby. “She doesn’t want him anymore.”

“Not him, idiot. Phineas. He’s got her right now on his knee, playing Daddy to his broken-hearted little girl.”

“Aw shit.”

“Yeah. I might be able to make her tea and keep her fed but he’s sex on legs and he’s all dominant and,” he deepened his voice, “bend over and I’ll give you something to cry about.”

Adil burst into laughter, “is that what you think he says?”

“He goes to the sex club, and I know he spans girls there.” Benicio grumbled angrily.

“I won’t kink shame him,” Adil shrugged.

“I’m not! I can’t stop thinking of the fucking flogger in her drawer.” Beni watched as the lights came on in Adil’s brain. “And now he’s catching up. We might be fighting a losing battle.”

“She might not want any of us. She’s been with one man her entire life. She may want to be celibate for a while.” Adil sighed, for worse, she may want to try on a bunch of new sizes and you’ll be watching a steady stream in and out of her new condo right past your door.”

“Yeah, you’ll be right there with me, fucker,” Beni grunted at him. He waved at the phone, “call them so they can watch this.”

He looked at Kyst through the w

“I’d like to rough him up more,” Adil commented quietly, and Beni knew he meant it. His best friend might appear to be easy-going and the life of the party, but his temper outmatched even Phineas’.

“Let’s just do this and be professional,” he warned his friend who nodded.

Adil opened his messaging app and called Phineas and Beni fought the way his hands clenched to see Juniper still seated on his lap.

“You look cozy,” Adil commented bluntly.

“My phone is small, and we need to watch it together.”

“You could have casted it to the television. It’s right there in the room.” Adil called him out.

“I never thought of it. Too late now to get it all set up. We’ll need to stay like this.”

“Are you ready for this, sunshine?” Beni asked her over Adil’s shoulder.

“Yes. He’s going to know I know?”

“Yes. I’m going to serve him. He’ll open the documents, and he’ll see the photograph on the top page.”

“Okay.”

Now he was itching to get inside. He waited until Adil positioned his camera, muting it.

He walked into the office a few steps ahead of Adil and slightly off to the side. “Excuse me, are you Kyst Kennedy? The lawyer who works here?”

“Yes.”

“Can you sign for this?” Beni held the packet out. Kyst signed for it and then frowned when Beni smugly said, “You’ve been served.”

“Served?” Kyst seemed unconcerned, as he pulled the envelope open and pulled out the documents and his eyes immediately landed on the photograph paperclipped to the top. “What the hell is this?”

“This is the first of many pieces of evidence my client has in her possession regarding your infidelity. Those are divorce papers which she has signed. My card is also in the envelope so you and your lawyer can give us a call when you’ve had a moment to review them.”

## Chapter 22 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

“No. No. No.? Kyst was panicking now, his hand running through his hair as he started flipping pages.

“She knows, Kyst.” Beni took far too much pleasure in watching this man crumble. “On Friday when the doctor told her she was pregnant, but her cramps were likely a warning sign of impending miscarriage and you weren’t there to comfort her, she knows where you were.”

Beni watched as Kyst’s face drained of color and for a moment he wondered if the man might suffer a heart attack right here. It gave him a perverse sense of pleasure to watch him hurting like this. Maybe, he considered he was a bit more like Phineas with his cutthroat ways than he thought as he decided to land a punishing blow.

“She knows you were meeting with your lover and not in a meeting with your boss when she was having her world shaken again. However, nothing and I mean nothing, compares to how she felt yesterday when she saw you with her own eyes fucking Denise Perez without a condom.”

Kyst’s eyes were wild. “Perez? No. She said her name was Denise Crawford.”

“Her maiden name. Guess who her husband is, Kyst. Guess whose wife you’ve been banging for months.”

“It’s been six weeks that’s it. Not months,” he rubbed his hand, “no. Where is she? Where’s my Juni? I need to explain.”

“Oh, she already heard your explanation. She was fighting her own body trying to deal with another miscarriage, her body not doing what she wanted it to, while you were fucking another man’s wife complaining about the fact your wife doesn’t fuck you every day anymore. Sad really. The rest of the male population would simply fist themselves but you,” Beni patted the lapel of Kyst’s suit, “you managed to fuck the wife of the wealthiest man in the country.”

“You need to tell me where she is.” Kyst reached out and grabbed his arm. “Please. You don’t understand. She is my world. She is my everything.”

“She was your world.” Beni spoke up. “She was but you fucked up massively.” He started to walk away but then turned back, “I need to ask, Kyst. When your wife was laying in the doctor’s office,

being told the pregnancy wasn't viable and the bleeding wasn't normal, and you were fucking Denise while telling her she wasn't near as good as Juniper, did you believe it?"

"What?"

"Did you believe it? Did you believe your wife was better than her?"

"Yes."

"Then why?" Beni was asking for Juniper who was watching, and he was sure, was crying inconsolably in Phineas' arms. "Why cheat on your wife when you knew she was superior to that bitch in every way shape and form?"

"I don't know."

"See, that answer isn't going to cut it, Kyst. What I do know is your wife was given front row seats to watching you fuck another woman without a condom and her immediate reaction was to tell me to draw up these papers. Her mother is with her, but you will never be again."

"I need to see her. I need to talk to her."

"I'm afraid that is impossible. See, as her legal representative, all communication will now go through me. She did ask me to pass along one tidbit to you. She said to tell you that she hopes it was worth it because as much as you told Denise multiple times she didn't hold a candle to your wife, you're never going to be in her bed again."

"No. This isn't happening." Kyst held his chest as if his heart was cracking. "How did she find out? Mr. Perez. It's why he called her to his office. He figured it out and he told her. Oh my god!"

"Yup and she argued you would never do something so horrible as cheat on her, especially with another man's wife. She didn't want to help us with our investigation until you came home smelling of Denise's perfume and she knew."

"Perfume?"

"She smelled it on you Kyst. She smelled Denise's perfume and you gaslit her and she immediately knew Phineas Perez wasn't lying when he said you were fucking his wife. You gaslit her and told her it was bathroom spray, you fucking idiot."

"She threw up. She knew and it's why she threw up."

"While she was struggling to keep a fetus alive, you were out on coffee dates, getting hand jobs under tables and then fucking another woman in your wife's bed. Classy. I like her, Juniper, I mean. She's beautiful, smart and kind. I'm going to help her take you to the cleaners because she deserves it after what you've just put her through. Who the fuck makes a woman feel guilty for not being able to have sex when it's about trying to grow your family? You're a sick, greedy, selfish twat, Kyst."

"You are far more involved than a normal divorce lawyer."

“Are you kidding? I’m not even a divorce lawyer. I handle corporate law for Perez. I should tell you though, Denise lied to you. His dick isn’t broken. He just hates her guts because she’s a psycho bitch who beat up a caterer, stole money from his wallet and a handful of other transgressions she’s managed to do on his dime. You got played by a lying skank and you’ve lost everything. We simply happened to be there for the fallout of your actions, and we’ve decided she is ours to protect now.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean,” he waved his hand to himself and Adil, “we’re the best friends of Phineas Perez. We were right there when she learned all about your cheating ass and there is nothing any of us hate more than a beautiful woman sobbing her heart out. She’s made lifelong friends and protectors out of us. We’ll be her champions. until the day she dies. Juniper has just gained three of the most powerful men in the country as her allies. Do you really think she’s going to come running back to you and your pathetic excuses when we’re going to prop her up and remind her day after day how amazing she is? Not in a million years.”

Adil stepped close, “right now, her mama and Phineas Perez are helping her go through Christmas ornaments. I told her I’d return the ones she doesn’t want to you. I’ll be her delivery boy. She never needs to look at you again.”

“Where is she?”

“Safe. Away from you and the possibility of chlamydia. You should get tested. She did see you were riding bareback.”

Kyst dropped to one knee as the two men turned to walk away.

Beni spoke again, “you look as if you’re hurting Kyst. Now imagine what she felt like when you were plowing into another woman on her bed.” Beni realized he’d never really liked to see a grown man cry until today. Now he was relishing it. “We’ll see you at mediation if you don’t sign off, or court if it gets drawn

D out. You should know, while I do corporate law, my father is Emilio Rojas and as a lawyer, you should know the name. He’s fucking brutal and there is nothing he loves more on this earth than three things. My mama, me and my sister, and a good fucking fight.”

They walked out leaving the man sobbing in the lobby of his law firm feeling like they’d started getting Juniper the justice she deserved.

She wiped tears off her cheeks as she stopped sobbing against Phineas’ chest.

“I’m sorry. I feel all I do is cry on you.”

“It’s good to let it all out.” He rubbed her shoulder and accepted the cup of tea Maeve held out. “Here. Your mama made you some tea.”

“Thanks Mama.”

“I can’t believe he folded like a deck of cards in the middle of his work lobby.” Her mother snorted.

Her phone immediately started ringing and she glared at it. "I don't want to talk to him."

## Chapter 23 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

"May I?" Phineas asked curiously.

"Sure." She watched as Phineas answered the phone with a gleam in his eye which spoke of nothing good to come for Kyst.

"Juniper's phone. Juniper's new BFF speaking."

She almost giggled at the name he gave himself. New BFF. Suki was not going to approve.

"Who is this?"

"Wouldn't your cheating ass like to know?" Phineas mocked Kyst. "You were told by Juniper's legal representative that she would only communicate through him. Now how bold of you to call her after such a warning from a powerful attorney."

"Where is my wife?"

"Drinking a nice cup of tea her mama made for her and pondering how it is, the man who told her he'd only ever want to make love with her, managed to bring my wife home with him and fuck her in Juniper's bed. It's such a small world, isn't it Kyst?"

"Juniper if you're listening, honey I'm almost home. I'm on my way back to you."

"She's not there. She will never step foot in there again. She did go in this morning. She took things which belonged to her. Her granny's throw for example. It's all wrapped around her, making her feel loved, the way your arms used to."

"This is Phineas Perez, right? Why are you destroying us like this?"

"I'm not. You see, you did me a solid. I admit, I'm fucking grateful for you getting me out of my nasty pre-nup. However, when I learned how sweet and kind Juniper is, how her entire department values her, how her mother thinks she's utter perfection, well, it sat with me wrong. I don't usually care if I'm the bearer of bad news but in this case, I am feeling tremendous amounts of guilt for making my new BFF cry. So, I'm going to do what any good BFF does. I'm going to take care of her. I'm going to support her. I'm going to help her get what she deserves from her cheating husband. Honestly, if it wasn't for this sweet girl, I'd have sent you a case of Scotland's finest scotch and a thank you note for getting me out of my marriage. Instead, you my girl cry, and I can't have that."

"She is not your girl!"

"Maybe not yet but she's also not yours anymore either. Never again, Kyst."

"Look I just want to talk to her."

“And she has no compunction to talk to you. I should give you the heads up too, since I feel bad for my involvement in all this shit, I’ve pulled her out of work for a while without affecting her sick leave or vacation benefits. I’ve put her in a secure location. My mother who absolutely adores her mother, has given Maeve time off to help Juniper get through all this.”

“She needs to come home eventually.”

“For what, Kyst?” Phineas laughed lowly, his voice full of hatred, “I already provided her a full moving team. Why do you think she agreed to meet you at work this morning? It was to get you out of the house. She took all of her things already. She’s gone. She’s not coming back. I hope when you sleep in your sheets tonight, the sheets you washed to get the scent of Denise out of them, you realize when you washed them, you removed the scent of your wife from them. They don’t smell like her anymore, Kyst. You washed her out of your bed, and you didn’t even realize it.”

The sound of retching made Juniper’s eyes widen and she looked at her mother through teary eyes and mouthed, “is he puking?”

Her mother nodded with a grin on her face. Maeve seemed to be really enjoying the way Phineas was goading Kyst on.

“One other thing, Kyst,” Phineas oozed arrogance, “yesterday your soon-to-be ex-wife lost a baby. If you think, there is even a remote chance she will forgive you for fucking someone against her door, on her sofa or in her bed, while she was losing a child, you’re a very stupid man. The entire army standing behind her right now will kick her ass from here to heaven and back before we let her demean herself in such a way.”

“You want her!” Kyst accused.

“Are you insane, Kyst? Are you projecting your inability to control your cock onto me? I like her very much because she’s shown me in the last forty-eight hours how remarkably strong she is. It makes me want to help her and see her rise and succeed. Don’t put your dirty little thoughts of wanting to fuck other men’s wives onto me. I would never take advantage of my new friend like this. Her heart is broken. I only want to make her feel better.”

“Honey, I’m home!” Beni’s voice called from the doorway with a smile. He walked into the living area and immediately frowned, “oh my poor sunshine. You were crying again?”

“Who the fuck is that?” Kyst’s voice boomed from the phone. “Juniper! You’re there, aren’t you? Honey, talk to me. Come home. We’ll sort this out.”

“Didn’t I tell you, you miserable cocksucker, if you wanted to communicate with my client you needed to go through me?”

“Rojas?” Kyst was incredulous.

“Yes, asshole. Rojas.”

“Why are you with her?”

“I’m here too shit face,” Adil spoke up. “We’re all here. Tell me why she would need to come home to your lying cheating ass when she’s with her Mama and three new buds!”

“You should hang up now,” Beni said to Phineas. “Sunshine is looking paler than she was when I left her this morning.”

“You left her this morning? You spent the night with her?” Kyst screamed into the phone.

Maeve reached out and pulled the phone from Phineas’ hand. “Listen here, Kyst Kennedy. You are one statement away from me calling your mother and telling her how much of an embarrassment her son is. I treated you kindly and with love and respect from the first moment I ever met you and you repaid that by fucking a skank in my daughter’s bed. You don’t get to demand fuck all from Juni, Kyst. If she wants to throw a god-damned orgy after what you did, you don’t get to say shit. My Juni instead is sitting here with her heart broken because she lost her baby and her husband all on the same day.”

“Mama.”

“Don’t you call me that ever again, Kyst. Not ever. You lost the right to call me Mama when you betrayed my only child. These men with her right now are good men who are doing everything they can to fix what they feel is their involvement in exposing her to the truth of who you are. Your sordid accusations reek of guilt, Kyst. These men who don’t know her at all, stepped up to the plate and helped her while you were too busy screwing another woman. They carried her when her legs were too weak. They held her when she was bleeding. They made sure she had a support system in place for when all this shit went down. Where were you Kyst when your wife was losing your baby? Oh, right, balls deep in a money-grubbing bitch.”

“Maeve, you’re angry.”

“Damn right I’m angry Kyst. You know what? I think I will call your mother. I think she and your father need to have a refresher with you on morals and ethics. Call Juniper again, Kyst before she is ready to talk to you, and I’ll march her myself down to the courthouse for a restraining order. The way her heart was shattered, I hope she never has to look at your fucking face again.”

“I can explain.”

“There is nothing to explain, Kyst. You already did all the explaining in the live stream of you complaining to your mistress how your wife wasn’t giving you enough sex because she’s trying to make you a father.” Maeve sighed, “I’m hanging up now. Juniper needs to eat her lunch to regain her strength so she can move on without you in her life. She’s not only mourning the loss of her baby, but the loss of her best friend, husband and partner. You’re a disgrace Kyst.”

Maeve angrily hung up the phone and then dropped it on the coffee table. “I want to punch something.”

“Mama, I’m sorry.” Juniper whispered from her spot on Phineas’ lap.

## Chapter 24 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

“For what?” her mother wheeled at her.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you angry before and it’s me who brought this to our lives

“Hey,” her mother squatted down in front of her, “I am not angry with you. I am angry your husband has the morals of an alley cat, and I never noticed it before. I protected you all my life, sweet girl, and I feel I let you get blindsided.”

“This isn’t on either of you,” Phineas said as he reached out and squeezed Maeve’s hand. “Some people are simply far better at hiding the truth than others. I maintain he’s not playing with a full deck. Please do not meet with him unless you there is someone else with you.”

Juniper looked at her phone which was ringing again on the table and knew Phineas was right. Kyst wasn’t himself but what scared her was how much she wondered whether the man she saw in the video yesterday was the real version of him and what it meant for everything she believed in.

She watched through teary eyes as Adil took her phone and opened it up and declined the caller. He then went one step further and blocked the number. He then went through her phone and blocked him on every social media platform application on Juniper’s phone.

“He has Beni’s number,” Adil said seriously. “If he wants to talk, he can call your lawyer. Your lawyer will relay the information back and you can decide what you want to do from there. At this moment however, you are not required to talk to him.”

“I don’t know how to thank any of you. I’m not sure how I would get through this if I’d found out he was cheating on my own. I’d be trying to find a place to live. I’d be worried about finances and debts and trying to figure out a way to make things work. You’ve taken all the things which force a woman to be stuck in a relationship and removed those barriers. You’ve been supportive and kind and hell, Phineas has let me snot and cry all over his shirt and bleed all over his pants and not a single complaint. I heard you guys telling Kyst you were my champions now and I just want to say, I’m really grateful to have you in my corner.”

“Not just us,” Phineas shook his head, “your Mama, my mama, my father really wants a piece of him after he saw the video clip, Beni’s parents know about you, and I believe his mother gave him strict instruction to bring us all over for dinner on Saturday evening. Adil’s parents are on a cruise ship, but he called them last night and they offered their help any possible way. They own an island down south if you ever want to simply get away. They’ll let you stay there, and they said so last night. Our families mean everything to us. It’s why I gave into my grandfather’s requests and honestly, I would do it again tomorrow if he asked me to because I trust him and I love him. She fooled everyone and I thought I was the odd man out because I couldn’t like her as a person. It all came to light at the reception and the next morning and then over the last year when she quit her job to focus on being my wife, her words, but spent far more money a month than she made even when she was ridiculous. Yet, for all of it, if my grandfather working. It was row with another bridal proposition, and I came to me wasn’t already married, I’d do it because he’s family. Family is everything for us. You, Juniper, are now part of our family.”

The next morning Juniper was laying face down in a massage bed, her mother in the one next to her. They’d both just had full body massages and now were both coated head to toe in a seaweed mud. A nature soundtrack of whales and water played in the background.

“This is incredible,” Maeve said quietly. “How are you feeling?”

“Weirdly emotional,” Juniper admitted. “When she was massaging my low back it made me cry. I’m really tired of crying.”

“It will get better sweetheart. I promise.” Her mother said softly. “I saw Lois called you this morning. You didn’t answer.”

“I’m not ready to talk to her. She sent a text too asking me to call her, but I can’t, Mama. I’m angry and I don’t want to take it out on her.”

“I understand but they’ve loved you like their own since you were fourteen years old, Juniper. Don’t cut them out over his stupidity.”

“I know. I won’t but I need a bit of time. A lot of the pressure for a baby was coming from them, especially her. She talks all the time about how she wanted a huge family, but it never happened, and she was so hopeful we’d give her a bunch of grandchildren for her to spoil. It’s not rational but I’m blaming her for putting it into our heads that babies were necessary. I want to be a mom so bad, but her involvement made the pressure a hundred-fold worse.”

“I know,” her mother was sad. “Did she ever tell you about me giving her shit at Christmas?”

“No.” she lifted her head to look at her mother, but her mother was still facing down. “For what?”

“The baby booties Christmas ornament. You’d only suffered the miscarriage a month before and she did the whole thing about how she wasn’t sure whether to give it to you or not, but she’d bought it as soon as she’d known you were pregnant and then decided you might like to have it as a memorial and a reminder you could try again. I was livid. I cornered her and told her it was inappropriate to make you feel bad at Christmas over the loss of your child and furthermore it was none of her fucking business. I know she meant well because there’s not a mean bone in her body, but the lightbulb wasn’t on that day. She was so sad about feeling her own kind of loss she was missing the broader picture.”

She snorted, “do you know what I did with that ornament,

Mama?”

“What?”

“Garbage disposal the minute she went home. Kyst and I did it together. You weren’t the only one who told her off. He took into her hard the next day. He was awake all night thinking of it and really gave her shit the next morning. The phone call actually made me quite uncomfortable.”

“Good, she deserved it.”

“It’s why I don’t understand all of this,” she said quietly. “He was my champion Mama. He would go against his own mother without a second thought for me. He’d never once in all the time we were together ever made me feel I wasn’t the most important thing in his life until this week. How does he go from being such a good, attentive husband to what I saw? How much was fake? Was the person I saw on video the real Kyst Kennedy and I’ve simply been duped all this time?”

“I don’t know, Juni. I’m having a hard time reconciling it as well. I hoped to be able to make sense of it, but I can’t either.”

“I love him so much, Mama. I wish I didn’t. I wish I could say it’s shut off from the minute I saw him slide into her but it’s there, in my chest like an ache I can’t get rid of. I want to hate him, but I keep thinking of him being sad. I keep thinking of him hurting because I won’t talk to him. I feel sick over knowing he’s grieving and I’m not there.”

“Did you want to talk to him?”

“No. Like with Lois, I’m simply too angry. I’ll say too many things I know I’ll regret in a year.”

“Will you though?”

“Yes. I will. I don’t want to remember all of our lives with this burning hatred I’m feeling right now. There were some really good times in there.”

“What did you think of Beni’s offer for you this morning when we saw him in the elevator? By the way, I think he was waiting at his door for you to come out.”

“He’s a nice man and he’s feeling guilty too.” She smiled as she remembered Beni clearly must have been waiting for her to emerge from her apartment for her spa day this morning. “It was good of him to get me a counselling session for tomorrow.”

“They are nice boys, aren’t they?”

“They really are.”

“Phineas seems pretty intense though. I don’t think he let your feet hit the floor even once yesterday.”

“He’s feeling the guiltiest,” she agreed. “The morning, I first met him, he was a bastard, Mama and I think the guilt is making him feel bad over it.”

“He should feel bad. He was out of line for sure. However, he’s a good guy.” Her mother cleared her throat, “I should tell you what I overheard last night though.”

“What?”

“When I was getting you settled in bed and I went to bring your teacup back to the kitchen the three of them were um,” her mother gave another uncomfortable squeak, “discussing which one of them was going to win you over as their new girlfriend.”

“What?”

## Chapter 25 – Justice For Juniper Novel Free

Juniper lifted her head up completely and stared at her mother. Her mother finally lifted up and shot her an apologetic smile.

“I heard Phineas say since he was the one who brought you into their lives, he deserved first crack at the can.”

“He did not.”

“He did and then Beni said he was the one who liked you first, so he deserved it but then Adil said Beni was wrong because he was the first person to see you and question Kyst’s sanity and wanted you for himself. Then they said something along the lines of may the best man win but they’d never stop trying to steal you from whoever got you.”

“They’re best friends!” she was aghast.

“Yeah, I didn’t get the feeling their friendship was on the line over it. I think they genuinely are wanting each other to be happy but also to make you happy. It’s going to be an all-out war over who makes your heart stop hurting.”

“Why did you tell me this?”

“You deserve to know three of the hottest eligible bachelors in North America are ready to throw down for you. Look,” her mother pushed up on her forearms to look at her directly, “I’m not saying you need to do anything today. You’re hurting and clearly you’re not in good emotional or physical space to get into a relationship with anyone. However, having three hot men who want to make you feel good and spoil you as your heart is mending isn’t a bad thing. Kyst already destroyed the possibility of you ever just being with one another. Maybe it’s time to consider the possibilities of what the rest of your life can be like.”

“I can’t choose between three best friends, Mama.” She scoffed. “Imagine. If and when I’m ready, maybe Suki will be home, and we can hit the clubs or something.”

“Have you ever hit a club?” her mother was laughing.

“Yes! We’ve gone dancing!”

“Without your jealous possessive husband behind you?”

“No.”

“There you go. You’ve never had a real ladies night out because he’s always been up your ass. It’s time to let go of the attitude he is the only one for you. There is a whole world to explore. I’m not saying today but do me a favor,” her mother grinned at her.

“What?”

“When you’re ready,” she held her gaze, “when it feels like it’s time to experiment with your sexuality away the life of the wife of Kyst Kennedy, don’t limit yourself. I want you to kiss at least three men and maybe do a bit more. Don’t buy the car before you test drive it. Don’t consider anything other than what makes you feel best. I want you to be selfish, Juniper. For the first time

in your life be selfish and take what you want and if it's stealing kisses from a CEO, a lawyer, a PI or hell, if you go to a bar and make out with the bartender, I won't judge. I will judge you though if you settle down with one man too quick again. There is more to life than the shape of one cock."

"Mama!"

She shrugged, "just last week I met a new one, cock that is. Also, if you decide to join any dating apps, make sure you tell me which ones you're on. I don't want us each swiping right on the same men. The guy last week was in his early thirties. Stamina was okay but it was clear he needs a Mrs. Robinson to teach him some tricks."

With that horrible thought racing through her head, Juniper lowered her head down to the hole in the mattress and stared at the floor with wide eyes wondering what craziness was coming out of her mother's mouth next.

When the massage therapist came in to tell them they were ready to shower off, she was grateful to get out of the quiet space with her mother.

At the next station the resident hair stylists washed their hair, put deep conditioning masks in and then another woman gave them facials while they were the masks were permeating their scalps. By the time she was sitting in front of a mirror with the stylist asking her what she wanted to do to her hair she was exhausted and even the weight of her wet hair felt heavy.

"Cut it."

Her mother's head swiveled, "what?"

Right now, it hung to the middle of her back, and she was watching the stylist play with it and couldn't stop thinking of Kyst and the way he liked to play with her hair when she was curled up on his chest. "I need to still be able to tie it up in a bun on my head when I'm working because I hate my hair in my face when I'm trying to work but if we take at least six inches off I think it would do me good."

"Six inches is a lot." The stylist too her hand from Juniper's middle back to right below her shoulders.

"Long layers," Maeve blurted out. "I've always wanted to tell you to put layers in your hair and frame out your face."

"Do it." she waved at the stylist.

"What if," the stylist realizing the woman in front of her wanted a change, "we put a bunch of pretty blonde highlights all through it. Your hair is a pretty caramel color naturally so I think some blonde will really make your hazel eyes pop and

??? bring out those golden tones in them."

"Do it."

"Do we have time?"

“Honey, Phineas Perez shut this entire spa down for you today. If you wanted me to shave you bald and find a way to make it all grow back, I’d be hard pressed to find a way out.” The woman laughed, “the bonuses we are all getting is worth it.”

“He shut it all down?” she looked around and noticed for the first time how little customers were actually in the room.

“He said you were the most important woman in the world right now and to make sure you felt that way.”

“That man is coming out swinging,” her mother reminded her of what she’d overheard the night before.

Juniper wondered what it said about her that she was more than flattered by the actions and shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

The most important woman in the world. She wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry.

The next day, sitting in the therapist’s office, she was nervous.

“I don’t know where to start.”

“Why are you here?”

She shrugged and shook her head, “my whole world is imploding.”