

Chapter One

The smell of hairspray and chemicals lingered in the tiny salon, but Holly Donaldson barely noticed them anymore. It was just one more thing that entered her respiratory system along with the air she breathed.

Blocking out the constant whir of the hair dryers, she took a sip of water and eyed her cousin's hair as she formed a plan of attack.

"All right. So you said sexy and different for your big night out at the theater?" she reiterated, already getting an image in her mind.

"Yeah. Something different from the stick straight boring stuff," Chloe murmured and pulled a hand through the blond locks.

"Got it. When I'm done with you, you will be a luscious goddess draped on the arm of your hot as hell husband-to-be, Ryan."

"Hey, back off," Chloe giggled. "Apple boy is mine."

Holly stuck out her tongue and crinkled face, reaching for the comb and curling iron. "You never did share your toys."

"Ah, but some toys a girl's gotta keep for herself."

"Ain't that the truth?" She let out a soft little sigh. She really did envy her cousin a bit, having found such an amazing man and seemed deliriously happy.

Her stomach twisted a bit and she bit her lip. Would she ever be able to say the same? So far she'd done nothing but strike out with the men she'd dated, having left some relationships with her confidence knocked down a notch.

Her last boyfriend's comments about her bedroom skills had made her seriously consider joining an abstinence for life program. Okay, maybe not really, but it hadn't made her want to jump into bed with someone anytime soon.

"Hey, you know, you're going to meet him," Chloe said quietly.

Jordan Sonia Poll 2/27/16 10:57 PM

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:45 PM

Comment [1]: There are descriptions throughout the manuscript that don't fit with what we know about the characters or the situation. For example, the phrase "plan of attack" doesn't fit how I would think a cosmetologist would think. A better phrase might involve something more cosmetology related such as "she pictured the curls she would sculpt around her cousin's heart-shaped face". That way the reader get's a clearer visual of Chloe too.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:47 PM

Comment [2]: This is another example of descriptions that don't quite sound right. Chloe and Holly are cousins. They should be very comfortable with each other, so why is Chloe murmuring? It could be because she is shy but that character insight was not given. I recommend sharing more background between the two characters of Holly and Chloe so as to give more insight into the characters themselves.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:48 PM

Comment [3]: Does this mean Ryan is from New York? This line and the others that discussed sharing toys confused me. Why would they share men? Have they done so before?

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:55 PM

Comment [4]: This action shows comfort and playfulness between Chloe and Holly. However, as a reader, it didn't match my image of Holly. The joking in the dialogue between the two represents their close bond adequately enough without this. That said, the dialogue is fun to read but confusing in this section with the lack of explanation and back story. Another reason to give background sooner rather than later.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:55 PM

Comment [5]: Would this be Harry? If so, I recommend saying it here for clarification and insight into Holly and Harry's relationship.

"Meet who?"

"The man who's going to rock your world and make you forget your own name."

"He's going to give me amnesia?"

"Holly."

"I know, sorry." Holly shook her head with a sigh, combing Chloe's hair into different sections. "I'm almost thirty and have been doing this dating thing for awhile now. I'm tired of it. Need a break. I swear to God if Mr. Right is out there he's going to need to hit me upside the head with a two-by-four to get my attention."

"That's sexy." Chloe giggled and then cleared her throat. "Speaking of men you used to date, did you see that Harry is getting married?"

Holly just barely avoided choking on her cough drop and clenched her hands around the curling iron.

"Harry's getting married? Are you sure?"

Her cousin nodded, not glancing up through the magazine she was flipping through. "There was an announcement in the paper this morning."

"What the...wow." Harry was getting married? Her brows drew together as she tried to digest that information.

That seemed a little bit strange. She'd just broken up with him last February, and she'd only been gone to Venice Beach for six months after that.

"To who?"

"What?"

"Who's he getting married to?" she asked, rolling a section of Chloe's hair onto the iron.

"Oh. Ainsley...Peters I think her name is."

"You've got to be kidding me!" She jerked the iron away from Chloe's head and set it down on the hair station. "Ainsley I'll sleep with any man with money Peters?"

"Should I know her?" Her cousin finally raised her gaze, looking confused.

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Comment [6]: Refer to comment 8.

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:07 PM

Comment [7]: As I mentioned before, the dialogue is playful and entertaining to read. It does a good job of giving insight into Holly's character and even a little into Holly and Chloe's relationship. This can also be done with Holly's body language and actions. I recommend setting the scene more so the reader has the secondary way of getting to know Holly and the other characters. For example, ... [1]

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 8:26 PM

Comment [8]: This timeline seems a little ... [2]

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Holly shook her head. "Maybe not. Besides, now that you're over in Eastern Washington you're really out of the loop."

"I'm not there all the time. I get back here at least once a month." Chloe flipped another page in the magazine. "I love coming into town and staying in Ryan's condo. It gives me time to come see you, since you do wonders with my hair. Not to mention I love to catch a show at the Paramount every now and then. Though I still think Ryan goes mainly just to please me."

"Probably. Men in love are so weak," Holly replied, but her mind still lingered on the Harry bombshell.

Harry had seemed devastated when she'd left for Venice Beach. He'd sent her emails and text messages for a month after she'd moved, begging for her to take him back.

Hell, he'd made her feel like the ultimate bitch for a while. And then it had all stopped. The emails, the pages, the phone calls. She'd assumed he'd moved on. And apparently he had, but with Ainsley Peters? She wouldn't wish that woman on Donald Trump.

She'd only been back in Seattle for three weeks and had meant to look him up. Her scowl deepened.

She needed to get her damn Gilmore Girls DVD set back. That shit was expensive and the man still held onto them like they were in a custody battle.

She rolled her eyes. Good Lord. That should have been a clue about what a dud Harry was. What kind of man watched Gilmore Girls?

"Not too break into whatever deep thought you're having, but I'm meeting Ryan in an hour." Chloe flipped another page in the magazine. "And though half a head of curled hair could fit right in down here in Seattle, I'm just not sure I have the gonads to pull it off."

"Sorry, Chloe. I was just thinking."

She turned her head into her sleeve as another round of coughs racked her body.

"Yikes, that sounds bad."

"Ugh. This is the tail end. It's nothing now. A few days ago I was knocked off my ass."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:08 PM

Comment [9]: Great opportunity for backstory that could give insight into Chloe's character and how Holly feels about her cousin.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 7:11 PM

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Comment [10]: This is a tiny detail but tiny details should lend insight into the character or their situation. This wasn't lead into nor explained further as it should be to do this. Perhaps it would help to answer the questions "Why is she coughing? Where did she get her cold? What insight could this provide into Holly's character? How will this effect her actions now or in the future?"

She went to wash her hands and then picked up the curling iron again. "You know, I don't think Harry has any idea how bad Ainsley really is. Maybe I should..."

"Should what?" Chloe lifted her head again. "Should what, Holly?"

"I don't know. I need to see him. He's still got some stuff of mine...and I really think somebody needs to warn him about Ainsley."

"He's getting married in three weeks."

Holly drew her bottom lip between her teeth and sighed. "Well, that doesn't leave me much time."

"Uh, no it really doesn't." Chloe shrugged and wrinkled her nose. "Why would you want to, anyway? From all accounts the guy was an awful boyfriend. You said so a million times yourself."

"Yeah, I know. But still, he deserves to know what he's getting himself into, and I deserve my DVD collection back."

"Hmm." Chloe still didn't look convinced, but turned her attention back to the magazine. "Well, rumor has it that the wedding party was going out to Burnham's for dinner tomorrow night."

"Burnham's, hmm?" Holly curled another chunk of Chloe's hair. "I think I'll blow off my yoga class, because that just may be my chance." She shook her head and grumbled, "And I want my damn stuff back."

Holly spritzed perfume onto her chest and stared at herself in the mirror. It was the same woman who'd stared back for the last twenty-nine years. Granted the body was a bit thinner now--a little, but still not skinny--but the face was the same. Blonde hair framed her face in layers, before falling long down her back. Hazel eyes were narrowed with determination.

She turned to the side and pursed her lips, debating on heels. Should she ditch them? Already five ten without them, in them she tended to be taller than some of the men. It put her about even with Harry.

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No. She'd keep the heels on. She wasn't ashamed of her height--quite the opposite, actually. And wearing heels always gave her that extra boost of confidence.

She turned back to face the mirror straight on and gave a brisk nod. What she was about to do had nothing to do with herself. This was all about tying up loose ends and maybe warning Harry about the terrible mistake he was about to make. He'd thank her for it later.

"That's a pretty dress. Where'd you get it?" Chloe asked.

"Nordstrom."

"It's nice. Shows off your breasts nicely."

"Hmm, I think a little more cleavage wouldn't hurt." Holly reached into the neckline of her red dress, adjusting her breasts. "I need to make sure I have his attention tonight."

"Why is it so important that your breasts be popping out if you're just going to get your stuff back?" Chloe frowned as she leaned against the far wall, her arms folded across her own breasts.

"I just need to get his attention. This will get it, and then I'll sit him down for the talk."

"You know what? I'm just gonna say it. I think this is a really bad idea." Chloe pushed away from the wall and shook her head. "I know you saw *My Best Friend's Wedding*. This is not going to end well."

"Julia Roberts had terrible technique." Holly ran her hand over the curve of her stomach and scowled. Too bad she'd never have one of those toned, flat tummies.

"Oh jeez. Look, Holly--"

"Besides, I'm not trying to get Harry back. I only want to make sure he knows why this chick is marrying him." She gave a firm shake of her head. "She's obviously taking advantage of a rebound relationship, and Harry needs to know that."

"Why? He's a jerk. They sound perfect for each other," Chloe grumbled.

"Trust me. Jerk or not, no one deserves this woman."

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:10 PM

Comment [11]: At this point, I forgot Chloe said the dinner was the next day and not that night. I recommend mentioning and clarifying the time earlier in this section as a reminder.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 1:44 PM

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“When was the last time you saw her? Maybe she’s changed.”

“She used to be a regular at my shop. I swear, Chloe, this woman would flaunt her expensive gifts from lover’s non-stop. She flat out told me that she intended to marry for money.”

“I don’t know,” Chloe hedged.

“Don’t worry, cuz. I know what I’m doing.” Holly switched topics. Fast. The last thing she needed was to be talked out of this. “How was the theater last night?”

“Fabulous! But Ryan fell asleep. I’m sure he thinks I didn’t notice, but I totally did.”

“Nice.” Holly grinned.

Holly glanced at the clock and winced. “I should get going. Thanks, for hanging out with me, Chloe. I’ll keep you posted.” She grabbed her purse and slipped it over her shoulder, before giving her cousin a quick hug goodbye. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a dinner to crash.”

Climbing out of the cab and standing in front of Benham’s Seafood restaurant, some of her confidence slipped a bit. Maybe she should have had a drink first. This was a little extreme—even for her.

She took a deep breath and hurried up the steps, holding her head high as the doorman opened the door for her.

“Thank you,” she murmured and stepped past him into the air-conditioned building.

Not that a restaurant in Seattle needed air conditioning this time of year. She’d only had to put on shorts once, and they were already a week into August.

The interior of the upscale dining spot was dark with hardwood floors and mahogany tables spread about. Her gaze scanned the room until she found what she was looking for. The private room in the back.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:11 PM

Comment [12]: When Holly says things like this, and has actions like earlier where she sticks out her tongue at her cousin, it makes me wonder as a reader how old she is. She sounds a bit too immature but that could be fixed by giving her more dimension. This can be done by adding more in depth backstory, explaining her actions in the past and present, and providing more personal reflection in the form of Holly’s thoughts.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:23 PM

Comment [13]: This is another point where setting could help build a moment. What kind of restaurant is this? Is it still in Seattle? If it is a really classy place is Holly nervous? Or is this her usual?

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 1:54 PM

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Fortunately there were windows, and she could see the small party gathered inside. Fifteen, maybe twenty people. No doubt all members of the wedding party and close family were there.

“Excuse me, ma’am, do you have a reservation?”

Holly jerked her gaze back to the waif-like-model in front of her.

“Actually I don’t. My fiancé suggested meeting here for dinner tonight.” *Liar.* She tilted her head and gave a hesitant smile. “You wouldn’t happen to have a table available, would you?”

“Hmm.” The hostess glanced down at the podium in front of her. “I think we can accommodate that. So a table for two?”

“That would be wonderful. Thank you.” Holly switched her purse from one arm to another. Lord, she felt remarkably calm for what she was going to try and pull off tonight.

“Did you want to wait for your fiancé, or--”

“If you don’t mind, I think I’ll wait at the table. He’s notorious for being late.”

“All right,” the hostess nodded and stepped away from the podium. “Follow me.”

“If at all possible, do you have anything near the back? Maybe back by that room over there?” she asked in a rush. “I noticed it’s more private.”

“Oh. Well, I think there’s a table.” The hostess paused, her gaze seeking the corner of the restaurant. “Yes, we do have one.”

The hostess led her to a small table where a floating candle lay flickering in the middle. Holly sat down and took the menu that she was handed.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Your waitress will be with you shortly.”

Once the hostess disappeared, Holly raised the menu in front of her, high enough so it covered all of her face except her eyes.

Peering over the leather folder, she scanned the room just feet away from her now. Annoyance pricked lightly and she tightened her fingers around the menu.

Shrill, high pitched laughter drifted through the glass window just as a flash of gaudy red hair--jeez, who was doing her hair now?--appeared from the corner of the room. All eyes were on Ainsley Peters who wore a floral sundress with a crown on her head.

Holly narrowed her gaze and made an inaudible harrumph. A crown. Could she be anymore tacky?

"Hello there."

With a startled gasp, she spun around and looked up at a male server who'd appeared next to the table.

"I'm James, and I'll be your server today. Can I get you something to drink while you wait for the other half of your party?"

"Mmm. I think just water for now."

The server gave a brief nod, and she didn't miss the male appreciation in his gaze as he gave her a brief smile.

"Very good. I'll return shortly."

Generally she would have been flattered by his attention, and honestly, she was still getting used to it since she'd dropped a few pounds. But tonight was different. Tonight she had absolute tunnel vision.

The server disappeared and she jerked her gaze back to the room; watching the people inside like they were some kind of exhibit in a zoo.

Harry, Harry, Harry. Where was the guy? She skimmed the room. Lord, look at all the pretty men. It looked like a freaking Abercrombie and Fitch convention. Maybe he'd--there!

Her eyes narrowed as he appeared from behind a group of people and slipped his arms around Ainsley, who giggled even louder. *Money hungry witch.*

I'm sure that crown represents you being the queen of blowjobs. That's the only way she could've gotten Harry to propose so damn fast.

"Your water."

Holly resurrected her smile and took the glass of water from the server.

"Would you like to order something to start with? Our calamari is a very popular choice. Or we have--"

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 4:59 PM

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"No. I'm fine." She winced at the edge in her voice. *Easy girl*. She glanced up at the server through her lashes and murmured in her best husky voice, "Thank you, James. I'll signal you if I need anything else."

A flush stole up his neck and he gave a brisk nod, before scurrying away.

Good. Hopefully he'd let her be for a bit. She turned her gaze back to the room, just in time to see the bride plant a wet kiss on Harry's mouth. And he *allowed* that? Harry hated PDA!

Harry pulled away and then--yes!--headed for the door. He slipped outside the room and moved in the direction of the bathroom. This was her chance.

Holly set down her menu and stoop up, hurrying after him. Her mind swirled with too many thoughts. What to say. Would he freak out if he saw her? Was she completely out of her mind? What would his reaction be--

Strong fingers wrapped around her arm, swinging her around. She gasped and stumbled to a halt, raising her gaze to the man who held her.

"Long time no see."

She ran her gaze over him. He looked vaguely familiar; black hair that was just a bit too long, piercing blue eyes, and a tall--at least several inches over six feet--muscled body. He seemed raw--had an edge about him. The way his gaze moved over her thoroughly and without apology. As if he'd already stripped her naked and was visualizing her flat on her back.

"Excuse me? Do I know you?" She tugged at her arm, but his grip didn't ease, if anything it seemed to tighten. Tiny goosebumps broke out on her bare skin and she swallowed hard.

"I don't know, you tell me." His mouth curled into what should have been a smile, but it didn't make him anymore approachable.

Frustration and unease swirled in her belly. "If I knew who you were, we wouldn't be having this conversation."

The window of time to talk to Harry was damn near ready to shut. He'd been in the bathroom for at least a couple of minutes.

"What are you doing here, Holly? Last I checked you weren't invited to this dinner."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 2:00 PM

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Her jaw dropped and she stopped trying to pull away. So he not only knew her name, but he was one of the attendee's of the dinner? *Play dumb, Holly, play dumb. Time to cut your losses and run.*

"I think you have me confused with someone else." She met his gaze and the amusement she saw there sent another stab of alarm through her. She would almost swear he knew her intentions, but that would be ridiculous. "If you'll excuse me, I was just on my way out."

"But you haven't yet eaten."

Now how the hell did he know that? *Oh no.* She ran her tongue over her lips and drew an unsteady breath in.

He'd been watching her. Watching her watch them. Who was he? She scanned his face again, trying to place where she'd seen him before. Was he one of Harry's friends? A distant relative? Or...God. It clicked into place.

"Noah."

His smile widened and he winked at her. "Good memory."

Noah. Harry's tree loving, forest ranger cousin and the complete enigma of the Williams family. She'd only met him once at a family barbeque Harry had invited her to. Even then, the man had only said one word to her: hello. Not much for conversation apparently.

Even though they hadn't exchanged many words, well, beyond that one, she'd found her gaze drawn to him more than once at the party.

Lowering her eyes from his mocking stare, she bit her lip. Damn. She shouldn't have shown her hand. She should've just pretended not to recognize him.

"Yes. Well, nice to see you again. But as I was saying, I'm on my way out."

He laughed, and the sound sent little shivers down her spine. "So you're saying that you showing up here, during a wedding party dinner is purely coincidence?"

He cut right to the quick, didn't he? Deciding on a different technique, and wanting to erase any of his suspicions, she relaxed and let her mouth curl into a smile.

“Actually yes. I had no clue Harry was even engaged, and I’m only here because I was supposed to meet a friend for dinner.” *Liar*. She was so going to hell for all these lies.

“Meeting a friend?” He quirked an eyebrow and lowered his gaze to her breasts. “Dressed like that?”

“I like to look nice.” A hot flush worked its way up her chest and her smile grew brittle. “You can let go of my arm now. I’m leaving.”

“Let me walk you out.”

She tugged at her arm again. “I don’t think so.”

He cocked his head and lowered his voice. “I’m walking you out. Let’s go, sweetheart.”

A little over confident, wasn’t he? Her smile disappeared and she glanced back in the private room. Her heart sank a bit when she noticed Harry had returned. How the hell had he gotten back in there without her noticing?

“Holly.” This time her name was a silky warning on his lips.

Not wanting to make a scene, she nodded and allowed him to lead her toward the entrance of the restaurant.

The hostess stepped into their path, her brows drawn together as much as her botoxed forehead allowed.

“Is this your fiancé? Did you want another table?”

Oh jeez. There went her cover. She turned her gaze away, knowing her face was pink. “Thank you, no. I’ve changed my mind about dinner.”

“Interesting,” he murmured as they stepped outside and walked down the steps towards the parking lot. “So which is it? A fiancé or friend? Or none of the above.”

She didn’t want to hear it, and she sure didn’t owe him any kind of explanation. With a new burst of energy, she jerked her arm away and gave him a frigid smile.

“There, you walked me out. I hope it was good for you.” She rummaged in her purse for her keys. This asshole had completely blown her opportunity to speak with Harry. “I’ll be on my way now.”

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 12:58 PM

Comment [14]: I love it when the male protagonist uses “sweetheart” in reference to the female protagonist. It is endearing, dangerous, and so very sexy all at the same time.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:28 PM

Comment [15]: This might be an interesting place to add a little scenic development with added detail. Did they weave through the empty tables? Why didn’t the party or the waitresses not see them until they were about to walk out?

Two hands slammed down on the car on both sides of her, and she drew in a startled breath. Noah stepped forward, boxing her in between his body and her Toyota.

“Let me just make one thing clear, Holly.” His words whispered hot across her face, and a tremble ran through her. The smell of his aftershave tickled her nose, turning her thoughts into a jumbled mess.

“Make what clear?” she asked, shaking her head so she could think straight again.

“You left Harry a bit broken hearted when you ended things last summer. But he’s moved on and Ainsley’s in love with him.” His gaze locked on hers; all amusement gone now, just cold determination. “So you’d better just stay the hell away now, do you understand?”

Her stomach flipped and an uneasy tremble rocked through her. He hadn’t yelled the words, but spoke them as calmly as if he’d been telling her they were due for rain.

Part of her wanted to snap back that she didn’t want Harry back; that she wanted her damn DVD’s back. And maybe she’d happen to mention that he was about to make the worst mistake of his life. But what the hell business was it of Noah’s anyway?

She ran her tongue across her mouth and quirked an eyebrow, folding her arms across her chest.

“Don’t you have anything better to do than run after me with your over active imagination?”

His mouth curved upward, though he didn’t seem amused. “I’m sure I do.”

“Then why don’t you go do it,” she suggested, tearing her gaze away from his white teeth bared beneath the hard curve of his lips.

“I will.” His head dipped, until those lips nearly brushed her ear. “Just remember what I said, sweetheart.”

Her pulse jerked and a confusing heat spread through her body. Suddenly she just wanted him away from her, and she raised her hand to push him back. Before she could make contact, he pulled his arms away and released her.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 10:46 PM

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 2:07 PM

Comment [16]: Does this sound as weak of an excuse to her as it does to the reader?

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:33 PM

Comment [17]: When picturing Holly run her tongue across her mouth, I think of a cartoon wolf licking his chops. “Mouth” implies both of her lips, which seems odd here. I recommend rewording or saying “lip” instead of “mouth” here.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:41 PM

Comment [18]: Because you use “curve” soon after this, I recommend changing this “curve”. Perhaps “twitched” or “smirked” might work better. Using the same word repeatedly to describe something, especially something sexual, is an issue throughout the manuscript. I recommend using a wider variety of verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. That way it won’t be so repetitive.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 2:37 PM

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“Good to see you again, Holly,” he called out over his shoulder as he crossed the parking lot back to the restaurant.

She watched him go, her fists clenched as her blood pressure spiked. What an ass. And just look at him. Dressed in jeans and a worn out looking t-shirt. He’d stuck out like a flea on the poodle in a dog show at that dinner tonight.

“Jerk.” She unzipped her purse and delved in with unsteady hands to find her keys.

She wrapped her fingers around the oversized frog key chain and jerked it from the bag. Unlocking her car, she climbed inside and drew in a deep breath.

So where did she go from here? Her gaze drifted back to the restaurant and she drew her lip between her teeth.

Maybe she should just back off and leave it be. Let Harry go and get married--try and get her things back later.

She shook her head and started her car. She still had just over a week. Screw it, she’d find a way to have that one last chat with him. And maybe the tiniest part of her knew that by meeting with Harry, she’d be telling Noah to go screw himself.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:42 PM

Comment [19]: How did he walk back to the restaurant? Nonchalantly? Confidently? This could give insight into Noah’s character and how he was feeling at the moment.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:45 PM

Comment [20]: This simile doesn’t make sense to me. Being a pet owner, I know it is hard to see a flea on an animal. However, Noah visually and otherwise stuck out from that crowd. I may just not have the right cultural knowledge to understand this simile but neither may other readers. I recommend changing.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 5:14 PM

Comment [21]: This second motive is a good thing to add. However, it makes her already brittle reason for seeing Harry seem even more so. I strongly recommend rewording this while also giving Holly a stronger motive to talk to Harry besides just getting her DVDs back.

Chapter Two

Noah lingered inside the door of the restaurant, watching Holly as she climbed into her car. She didn't leave immediately, and he prepared himself to walk out and go another round with her.

Would she try and come back inside? He'd barely thought it, before a second later she started her car and backed out of the parking spot--tires squealing.

She was upset. He gave a soft laugh and shook his head. Imagine that. But really, how stupid was she? The girl had thought she could walk right into Harry's wedding party dinner to try and, what, get him back?

No. That didn't seem likely. He'd known the first and only time he'd met Holly Donaldson that she would never be happy with someone like Harry. And if by some chance she had come back today to fight for him, then she was seriously deluding herself.

He turned and headed back to the private room, though in truth the break from the nauseating rehearsal dinner had been needed.

Holly might have left the restaurant, but she lingered in his head. The vision of how she'd looked that day at the barbeque had come to mind more than once in the past five months.

Holly was a woman who knew exactly how to flaunt her curves--though he was disappointed to see she'd lost some weight since then. That day her body had been scarcely hidden beneath a tiny blue sundress. Full pale breasts had peeked just above the neckline, and her long legs had ended in three-inch sandals. In the heels she'd been just as tall as Harry, but still a many inches shorter than himself.

He'd walked onto the patio and spotted her leaning with her elbows on the railing, her bored gaze drifting around the party.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 2:11 PM
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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 10:47 PM
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He'd seen her, and he'd wanted her. Wanted to turn her around so her ass would press into the crotch of his jeans, and lift the flimsy dress above her waist. He'd wanted to find out what she wore underneath. A thong? It was either that or nothing, because he hadn't even seen a hint of a panty line.

The blood in his cock stirred and his jaw clenched. But back then she'd been off limits. She'd belonged to Harry. And when he'd driven back to Montana after that family barbeque he'd tried to forget he'd ever met her. "Try" being the key word.

He tugged the door to the private room open, and a wall of sound greeted him. Time to pretend that he fit in with these rich, materialistic people whose main concern seemed to be making sure birds didn't shit on their Lexus'.

"Noah. Where did you go?"

He turned and gave an easy shrug to his cousin who seemed half drunk already.

"I thought I saw an old friend," he lied. Had Harry seen Holly? Likely not judging by how overly cheerful he appeared.

"Ah, good deal." Harry leaned towards him and lowered his voice. "You ready to get some pussy at my bachelor party next week? We're going to hook you up with some fine ass chicas, buddy."

Noah's lips twisted at his cousin's crudeness, though it had been awhile since he'd been shocked by it. Besides the only *fine ass chica* he wanted right then had just driven out of the parking lot like a bat out of hell. And, if he admitted it to himself, a woman he probably shouldn't be touching in the first place.

"Yeah, about that, I don't think I'll be able to make it to the bachelor party."

"Not make it?" Harry's eyes widened. "Oh come on, cuz. This is--"

"Harry, what are you doing over here?" Ainsley came up behind them, slipping her arm through her fiancé's. "You're behaving yourself, aren't you, honey bunny?"

"Of course, love. Just having a talk with Noah." Harry cleared his throat and lowered his head to drop a kiss on her down turned mouth.

Ainsley pulled away, looking much more pleased. "Good. Just think, before long we'll be husband and wife."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:46 PM

Comment [22]: The terms "ass" and "crotch" don't work well here. I recommend changing it sound more like "He wanted to turn her around against that railing, lifting her flimsy sundress above her waist, and pushing into." That way you don't have to change the jarring words, just delete them.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:47 PM

Comment [23]: Like in comment 22, adding an abruptly sexual comment like this on the male side works well to get things going and makes the man seem primal in his sexual appetite. He can't control himself. However, this sentence sounds more vulgar than sexy. I recommend rewording to focus less on his cock and more on his primal sexual stirring and desires. For example, "Thinking of her completely naked against railing as he thrust into her had his jeans suddenly and uncomfortably snug."

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Noah hid a smile at the flicker of panic he spotted in Harry's eyes. Maybe it was Ainsley's high-pitched baby talk she used on him, but he just couldn't understand what his cousin saw in the woman. Well, besides a freakishly large pair of fake breasts.

"You want some more champagne, honey bunny?"

Noah's teeth snapped together. Damn. That voice. It was like listening to a chipmunk trying to sound sexy.

"That'd be great. Thanks, Ainsley."

Noah glanced over at his cousin again, curiosity burning deep.

"So you're in love, huh?"

"It would appear so." Harry smiled and leaned close to whisper, "Besides, she lets me fuck her in the ass."

Noah closed his eyes and tried not to gag out loud. Now there was an image he didn't want stuck in his head.

Don't ask about Holly. Don't even do it-- "You ever see that one woman? That one that you were dating last year?" *You dumb shit!* Noah winced and took a sip of his champagne.

"Holly?" Harry's brows drew together and his gaze turned thoughtful. "No she moved to California. I tried to get her back; she had nice tits--real ones. I kind of forgot about her once I met Ainsley, though. Why do you ask?"

"No reason," he murmured noncommittally. "Just wondered what ever happened to her."

"Yeah, I guess she left to go work at a hair shop in Venice Beach, so she dumped me."

"Holly does hair?" His eyebrows rose and he mentally played back how she'd looked in the parking lot. She did have some high maintenance looking hair. It really shouldn't have surprised him.

"She did. Who knows what she's up to now. I'm surprised you even remember her." Harry grabbed a shrimp off a platter and lifted an eyebrow. "Didn't you just meet her that one time at the barbeque?"

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“Yeah.” One time had been enough to leave an imprint in the **women-he’d-like-to-sleep-with** department of his brain.

Harry’s smiled widened. “Well, she was a hot little thing. Sexy as hell, but a bit of a dead fish in bed.”

Jealousy stabbed in his gut, and he drew his brows together in surprise. Why **did that bother him**? Of course Harry slept with her. They had been together for almost a year.

But saying she was bad in bed? He thought about the way Holly’s eyes had flashed anger at him when he’d boxed her in at the car. How for the briefest second it had shifted to a flicker of awareness in her gaze.

Holly a dead fish? He didn’t buy it. Not for a minute. In fact, it made him question how attentive his cousin was with the women in his bed. **His** cousin who now was checking out one of the bridesmaids.

Asshole. Ainsley’s shrill laugh carried from across the room and he shook his head. They were perfect for each other.

Why the hell would Holly want him back? He shook his head and finished off his champagne. Hopefully the girl had learned her lesson, because if she hadn’t...**He’d** have to make sure she didn’t shove her nose where it didn’t belong.

A smile curled his lips as he glanced back out towards the hotel entrance. This could get fun.

* * *

“Why are you going through with this again?” Chloe groaned and grabbed another cookie from Holly’s counter.

“Two reasons. I want my DVD’s and thought I should warn Harry about Ainsley.” Holly nibbled on her own cookie and then picked up her glass of milk.

“The fact that Harry’s cousin spotted you is a sign!”

“A sign?” Her pulse sped up a bit at the mention of Noah, but she was careful to keep her expression blank.

“Yeah. A sign that you trying to have a chat with Harry a week before the wedding is a really bad idea.”

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:48 PM

Comment [24]: This too seems more rough than sexy. I recommend rewording to something like “Once had been enough to leave an impression. More so than he would like”.

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 5:41 PM

Comment [25]: There is obviously a lot of history between Noah and Harry since they are cousins. I would assume that they grew up together. To give insight into their characters as well as their relationship, I recommend giving more backstory here. Some questions you can consider answering include: Are Noah and Harry close? Why or why not? Why is Noah so protective of Harry and his wedding when he thinks he is a jerk?

“But it’s the perfect opportunity. He’ll be at the church today with some of the wedding party going over details for the reception.”

“Seriously, why warn him? The guy deserves his fate.”

Holly shrugged. She was not about to deny that. Part of her wanted to leave Harry to his miserable future.

“It’s mostly about getting my DVD set back. That set cost over three hundred bucks. How messy would it be trying to ask his new bride for it back? Plus, if I can help the divorce rate not go up another notch then I’ll try.”

Chloe rolled her eyes and grabbed another cookie. “I think you’re way too intent on making this about you, when you’re completely out of the picture.”

A little bit stung, Holly winced.

“I mean why don’t you just send him an email?”

An email wouldn’t let her see Noah again.

Holly’s mouth fell open at the random thought. Where had it come from? She had no desire--absolutely none!--to see that arrogant piece of shit again. Did she?

“Ah, so I can see you’re thinking about it. Good girl. Just get out his email address and--”

“I’ve made up my mind.” Holly stood up and headed to her bedroom. “Now I need to get dressed or I’ll never get there early enough to see him.”

“You’re absolutely nuts,” she heard Chloe mutter after her. “And have been watching too many movies.”

Maybe she was nuts. Holly sat in her car as she stared out at the church. Glancing around the parking lot, she noted there were only a few cars there. One of which was definitely Harry’s.

Do this. You need your stuff back and it’s for his own good. Holly slipped out of her car and drew in a steady breath.

Her heels clicking on the pavement was the only sound in the quiet morning as she crossed the parking lot. *But what if they really did love each other?*

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The thought crossed her mind and she stopped. Not now. Not when she'd just driven forty miles to have this *are you sure you know what you're doing* talk and demand her stuff back.

Do it. Just go on inside and find him.

The hum of an engine had her turning around, just as an SUV came to a stop next to her.

"What are you doing here, Holly?"

She licked her lips, blinking warily at Noah who sat in the driver's seat; the sunglasses he wore shielded his gaze.

"I don't think that's any of your business."

He sighed and then shook his head. "Get in."

"What?"

"Get in," he repeated. "If you want to see Harry, then I'll take you to him."

"Excuse me?" She frowned and shook her head. "No. I don't trust--"

"Harry isn't here. He's hanging out at one of his friend's house just down the road," he said tersely. He reached across and opened the passenger door, so it swung open towards her. "Get in and I'll take you there."

Holly glanced back at the church and hesitated.

"You don't want to piss me off, Holly. And it's going to happen if you storm into that church to have it out with a man who isn't even in there. Ainsley's inside, not Harry." He revved the engine. "If you insist on doing this, I'll take you to him."

She eyed him through narrowed eyes and weighed his words. He was right. The last thing she wanted to do was come face-to-face with Ainsley.

"Oh for God's sake." He turned off the engine and got out of the driver's seat and came around the car towards her.

"What are you doing?" her eyes widened as she hastily backed up.

He was quicker, grabbing her and hoisting her up into his arms.

"Put me down! What are you--" Her words ended in a gasp when he deposited her into the back seat and slammed the door.

"I told you. No scenes."

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She gripped the handle to open the door, but it didn't budge. Her pulse began to thud faster as Noah climbed back into the driver's seat and turned the engine on again.

"Why isn't the door opening?"

"The child locks are on."

Did Noah have kids? Somehow she just couldn't picture it. Unease stirred in her gut. What was he trying to pull?

"You'd better take me to see him."

"I'll take you, Holly." His lips twitched. "And you might even like it."

She almost snorted at the bad sexual innuendo, but yelped instead as the SUV shot forward when he hit the gas.

"You know I have to say, I'm a little surprised you were that easy."

She gripped the handle on the door as the SUV took a sharp corner leaving the Church parking lot. "Did you just call me easy?"

His deep laughter sent little shivers through her.

"And you were right to say you didn't trust me." He glanced over his shoulder at her and there was a slight smile on his lips. "You shouldn't."

That unease in her gut turned into a heavy ball and she gripped the handle again, tugging furiously in hopes it would open this time.

"How far away is this house, Noah?"

He laughed again and didn't answer.

"You were never going to take me to him, were you?" Her teeth snapped together. God how could she have been so stupid? She should have realized he wasn't going to help her.

He shook his head. "No, Holly, I wasn't. And I can't believe you thought for one minute I would."

Jeez, he had to reiterate her personal thoughts. What a bastard.

"Let me out of the car," she demanded.

"I can't do that."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 4:53 PM

Comment [26]: There is no need to point out the bad innuendo. The reader can catch on and it makes it even more humorous to not have the author point it out. I recommend changing it to say something similar to "Before she could snort the SUV shot forward, throwing her back into her seat with a yelp."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 9:42 PM

Comment [27]: This is another point where you can let the reader do the work. I recommend rewording or deleting.

“Why not?” The anger in her belly burned hotter and she slid across the seat to try the opposite door handle. It didn’t open either.

“You’re not honestly considering jumping out of a moving vehicle, are you, sweetheart?”

Holly gave a growl of frustration and slapped her palm against the window.

“This is ridiculous!” She stared out at the blur of trees. “Where are we going?”

“Away,” he answered ambiguously.

“Away,” she mimicked him. “We’re going away? What the *hell* kind of answer is that?”

“The only answer you’re getting right now. And watch your mouth. Didn’t your mother teach you any manners?”

“Didn’t your mom teach you that kidnapping is a *felony*?” she shot back and slapped the window again.

“If you break my window it’s going to seriously piss me off, Holly,” he warned.

“Well, guess what? I’m already pissed.” Slap. Her hand connected with the glass again and again. “Maybe you should have taken that into account when you abducted me!”

She rolled across the seat as he swerved the car to the side of the road.

Was he going to let her go? They were in the middle of no where--she hadn’t seen another car since they’d gotten into the SUV--but hell, she’d hike her way back to her car if she had to.

He climbed out of the vehicle and came back, wrenching the back door open.

“Get out.”

Relief flooded through her. He was letting her go. Thank God. She scooted out the door, making the jump down to the ground.

“It’s about time you came to your senses--oh!”

He jerked her hard against him; both of her wrists in one of his hands.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/2/15 2:32 PM

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 10:44 PM

Comment [28]: This seems odd to say because it is in response to Noah saying not to piss him off. I recommend removing this piece of dialogue and going straight to her smacking the window or rephrasing it completely to respond directly to Noah saying not to piss him off.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 10:39 PM

Comment [29]: Because Holly slaps the window more than once, I recommend removing the onomatopoeia.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:03 PM

Comment [30]: I recommend changing “rolled across the seat as he swerved” to “flung across the seat as he swerved”. Because “swerved” is an aggressive action, Holly’s resulting action should be equally as harsh.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 1:19 AM

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"Maybe I didn't make myself clear," he murmured, his gaze full of determination and something else...something hot. It sent a jolt of heat straight from her stomach to between her legs.

Her pulse quickened and she dragged in a shuddering breath, tugging at her hands.

"Are you completely insane?" she whispered.

"Maybe." His lips twisted, his gaze inspecting her face. "Or maybe I'm just willing to go to any lengths to make sure you don't break up Harry's wedding."

"I'm not..." She ran her tongue over her suddenly dry lips. "Harry's wedding isn't until next week."

"Exactly. And that means we'll have one whole week to get nice and acquainted, Holly."

Noah watched her eyes widen with shock, and the fear flicker in her eyes. He almost felt sorry for her--almost. Except that she hadn't even bothered to deny she was trying to break up Harry's wedding.

Selfish little witch. Taking her out of the equation had been an impulse move. But the more he thought about it, the better the idea of it seemed.

"You can't do this," she choked, her body beginning to tremble. "This is kidnapping!"

"So you said already."

"Yes, but I didn't realize you intended to take me away for a week!" She tugged at her wrists again, and he tightened his hold. "Oh my God. You're loony. You're beyond loony. You're--"

Her knee connected with his shin and he winced, pushing her back against his SUV.

"Stop it," he said harshly, trying not to think about how soft her body was against him. How her breasts pressed against his chest. "I'm not the one trying to break up a wedding."

Her eyes flashed, the fear gone now, leaving only anger. "It's none of your business. This has nothing to do with you."

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:28 PM

Comment [31]: Heat is mentioned in the following sentence so I recommend rewording this to make it more sensual.

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:22 PM

Comment [32]: This timeline would have been helpful to have it touched on a couple more time previously. Always having that timeline on Holly, Noah, and the reader's mind can really add the drama.

Also, I love the concept of the ruggedly handsome and primal cousin of the ex boyfriend whisking away the ex girlfriend so she won't break up his cousin's wedding. Such a great twist!

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:23 PM

Comment [33]: This inspires a question I asked before: Why is Noah so upset about his cousin's wedding? This is a very key question that needs explaining through backstory and reflection.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 3:29 PM

Comment [34]: You have used "tremble" a couple times already. I recommend choosing a different word here.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/3/15 10:28 PM

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“And Harry has nothing to do with you either. Not anymore. You gave up that right, Holly, when you ditched his ass last summer.”

She lowered her gaze and he watched her pink tongue sweep across her lush mouth again. He bit back a groan. Christ, she looked sexy when she did that.

“Okay,” her tone calmed significantly. “You’re right. Of course you’re right. Why don’t you just take me back to the church and I’ll get in my car and drive home. Deal?”

His chest shook with laughter and he shook his head. How stupid did she think he was? Did she honestly think she could pull out that docile act to convince him she’d changed her mind?

“No deal. I can’t take that risk. I don’t trust you any further than I can spit, sweetheart.”

“Stop calling me sweetheart,” she screamed and tried to--oh hell no she didn’t--knee him in the groin.

He pressed his body harder against her, making sure she couldn’t move.

She glared at him, her mouth drawn tight and her breasts rising and falling with each breath she jerked in.

“I’m going to have you arrested, Noah,” she warned. “The minute you let me go--”

“Who says I’m going to let you go?”

He knew he was joking, but from the way she paled he realized she may not know it. He reached out and ran a finger down the side of her cheek, her eyes widened. *Such soft skin.*

“Relax, Holly. I’ll let you go, but not until the couple has exchanged their vows.”

“That’s not until next week,” she said again in a rush. “People will start looking for me. I have to be at work.”

“No you don’t.”

“What?”

“No. You don’t.” He laughed again and slid his thumb inward to stroke over her bottom lip. Her body trembled in the response. “I believe you work for the

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:24 PM

Comment [35]: This sentence is a great addition. However, instead of focusing on the sensual sweep of Holly’s tongue the focus is on “pink”. I recommend just removing that single word to help the sentence flow better and keep its sensuality.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:25 PM

Comment [36]: You use “shook” right after this. I recommend choosing a different term here.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:25 PM

Comment [37]: This break in the train of thought could disrupt the reader. I recommend rewording.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:26 PM

Comment [38]: You already mentioned that they were pressed against each other. I recommend adding more description to both references to set them apart and not seem so repetitive. For example, was she pressed flushed against him? Did his hips push into her? Was it delicious or shocking?

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:27 PM

Comment [39]: “Rising and falling” implies a gentle motion. I recommend changing. Perhaps “jerked” (then changing the following “jerk” to “gasp”) or “shuddered” would be more accurate.

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:29 PM

Comment [40]: This sensuality of this moment is kind of lost here. I recommend adding a little more description to really make the moment flow better. For example, “He laughed again and traced his thumb down her cheek to stroke over her full lips.” This way the reader can follow the sensual path Noah’s thumb takes.

Divalicious Hair salon, right? Funny, I called to get an appointment with you and they said you'd taken the next two weeks off for vacation time."

"You son of a bitch!" Her mouth shook against his finger, and her eyes flashed with anger. "You want a hair cut? Well you just come into my shop after this—I dare you. Come in and let me go at you with a pair of shears. I swear to God when I get done, even your mom won't recognize —"

He pulled his thumb away and replaced it with his mouth. **Crushing his lips down on hers.**

Jordan Sonia Poll 6/7/15 5:30 PM

Comment [41]: Holly is furious here, She should be shouting. I suggest adding the occasional exclamation mark in this section.

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Jordan Sonia Poll 6/6/15 3:36 PM

Comment [42]: I recommend rewording. Crushing lips down on another pair of lips doesn't sound correct. "Crushing" already implies a force moving downward. I suggest rewording it to add a smoother flow and even a little connection to Noah's earlier daydreams of Holly at the BBQ. For example, "Violently crushing her lips with his own as he had wanted to since he saw her at that BBQ." Or if chapter ends here then the reflection can be moved to the beginning of a new chapter in his voice.