

The last few times I said this to a man; it didn't end well. But I can't focus on all of my failures of the past; this is different. He's different. If everything I've gone through before had to get me to this point, I would do it all over again in a second. I know what bad relationships and false love feel like, and it's not like this.

He scoops me off the chair, and rushes towards the staircase. He pauses for a moment.

"Can I go up here now? Am I allowed?"

I playfully swat his butt, and he takes the stairs three at a time like he's not carrying a person, but a loaf of bread. I feel his muscles tighten around me. He must remember the layout up here, because he heads straight for my bedroom like he knows the place.

"How did you know this is my room?"

I say after we enter and he lays me down on the bed.

"After we spoke that night in the hallway up here, you went in this direction. I turned back around to try and apologize again, so I went to find you. You were passed out sideways on your bed, already snoring. I snuck in and pulled a blanket over you. I stayed for a few moments and watched you sleep. All I could think of was how beautiful you were. It didn't feel wrong, or creepy while I was looking at you, it just felt good. My eyes didn't leave your lovely face. Well, mostly."

With that admission, he looks down at my chest. My shirt is showing a good bit of cleavage, and the lace from my bra is peeking out.

"If my photographic memory recalls, you were wearing a white tank top. When you laid down, it was a spectacular sight."

He winks one eye, and I swear it actually sparkles like a cartoon. He bends his head down to my chest, and begins gently kissing the top of my shirt where my bra is showing. He nibbles at the lace on top, and it's driving me wild. It's light enough that it teases and tickles, but also warm and wanting. I feel his heart beating strongly against my torso as he leans in closer to my body. He stops for a moment, and I feel him playing with my necklace. I haven't said anything about the fact that I know it was his mother's. I'll wait until he feels ready to tell me.

His eyes travel from my necklace to my face. He's still clutching the tiny peach between his fingers. His face lights up when our eyes

connect, and I'd kill to know what he's thinking. Whatever it is, it's making him happy, and that's all that matters. He leans into me again for a deep kiss. Mouths open, heads sideways, as deep as we can go. My insides are spinning; I almost feel drunk. I steal a quick peek at his face, and it's intense. No more smiles, the man's all business. Our hands furiously grasp for zippers and buttons, anything that is impeding us from being naked, skin-to-skin. Our clumsy attempt to remove each other's clothing isn't getting us any closer to our goal. We both sit up and make serious work of finishing the job. Our faces crash back together and we gnash teeth as we resume our erotic make-out session. His soft lips do me in. I could kiss this man for an eternity, and still not want to come up for air.

We lay sideways on the pillows, and he opens his eyes. Yay, I think he's going to talk again. He's been sharing so much. He lovingly strokes my hair, and pushes it out of my eyes.

"I've missed you so much, Melanie. I think Jason and Katie are exhausted from me asking about you. When I thought you didn't want to see me anymore, my heart was crushed. I've learned how to hide my emotions well over the years, but I couldn't hide it around those two. They knew how much I missed you, but Katie encouraged me to wait. That little glimmer of hope was the only thing keeping me from pounding down your door. I wanted you to want me too. Did you think about me?"

He says it so quietly. He needs affirmation. He needs to know that his feelings are reciprocated. I'm sure the reason he didn't do the girlfriend thing in college was that it would have required too much emotional effort he didn't have to give. Even though his mother tried her best to give him love, the fact that his father and the rest of his family shunned him had to have had an impact on him. I'm sure that was part of the 'fuck you' swagger he had in college. Reject them before they can reject you. It hurts less that way.

I don't take any of that for granted, because I understand it. For him to go out on a limb and admit his feelings to me is huge. I'll never underestimate his strength.

I lie still and take in this moment.

“I did think about you Brian. You’ve been in my thoughts ever since that first night too. Not just in a sexual way, although I really enjoyed those times, but every other minute of my days. I wake up with you on my mind, and I go to sleep with you too. You’re in my dreams, and in my consciousness, and it feels as natural as breathing. Is that a good answer?”