

---

# CRASH COURSE

---

SCOTIA STORMS

CATHRYN FOX

*Cathryn*  
**FOX**  
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR



---

## COPYRIGHT

---

Crash Course  
Copyright 2022 by Cathryn Fox  
Published by Cathryn Fox

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.** Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, brands, media, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of various products referenced in this work of fiction, which have been used without permission. The publication/use of these trademarks is not authorized, associated with, or sponsored by the trademark owners.

This e-book is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This e-book may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to your favorite e-book retailer and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Discover other titles by Cathryn Fox at [www.cathrynfox.com](http://www.cathrynfox.com). Please sign up for Cathryn's Newsletter for freebies, ebooks, news and contests: <https://app.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/cif8n1>

ISBN ebook: 978-1-989374-54-2

ISBN Print: 978-1-989374-53-5

**I**n Nova Scotia, April showers bring...snow. I'm not just talking about a light dusting here—like the weatherman called for. I'm talking thick, heavy flakes that are weighing down my hair and piling up fast beneath my Jimmy Choo's. Having grown up in Baddeck, a small town on Cape Breton Island, where they get even more snow than they do here in Halifax, you'd think I'd know better than to wear expensive shoes in April. But I had to talk to my fashion design teacher over at the community college and I always like to appear put together and professional. But you'd think I'd know to carry my shoes and put them on just before my meeting.

I trudge across the street, my feet and ankles freezing, and note a few cars swerving as they take the corner. I guess they took their winter tires off too soon. At least I know better than to do that, and I'm glad I walked to the campus this afternoon instead of driving, even though only a fool would be traipsing outside in this kind of weather. I snort at that. I suppose I've been called worse...

I hurry across the street, on my way to my friend Kennedy's house, and as I approach Beckett Moore's Jeep in the driveway, I roll my eyes, because yes, he's the one who's called me worse. Not to my face, of course, but I'd heard things back when we attended Baddeck High together. Who would have thought we'd both end up at the same college in Halifax? I probably should have figured it out though, considering he's an amazing hockey goalie, and much coveted by the Scotia Storms, the academy's kick ass team.

Beckett and I even shared a few business classes our freshman year—keeping our distance in the classroom, of course—and while I'm enrolled in the business management program, I'm also taking design classes at the community college because fashion is my passion.

I put my hand on Beckett's snowy Jeep to steady myself as I navigate around it, not wanting to land on my butt as my feet slide, but the second I make the turn—big fat snowflakes blurring my vision—Beckett comes sliding out from underneath the vehicle, the dolly's wheels getting stuck in the snow.

I gasp at his sudden, unexpected appearance, and try to jump out of the way, but I slip and contort, hurting my back, and end up with my legs wrapped around his head, as I straddle his face. Wait, is he grinning?

“What the hell, Beckett!” I try to stand, but only end up wiggling and gyrating, and dear God, never in my entire life did I imagine I'd be sitting on Beckett's face—or that I'd be enjoying it. Okay, maybe I did once, a couple months ago at our friend's wedding, when he accidentally smudged cake on my cheek and dress, then accidentally swiped at my breast when he tried to help me clean it off. Ridiculous, right? Especially considering the fact that I hate this man with every

fiber of my being and would like nothing more than to wipe that smirk from his face. A man as horrible as Beckett should not be gifted with such adorable dimples.

“Need a hand?” He puts his big, rough hands on my hips to still me.

Ohmigod, he has no idea what his touch is doing to me. Or maybe he does. There isn't a girl on campus besides me who is immune to his charm. In my current predicament, as snow falls onto his face, his mouth so close to the needy juncture between my legs, I'm not convinced I'm immune to it either.

“What were you doing under there?”

“What are you doing up there?” he counters, and I'm pretty sure his hands are holding me in place.

“I'm trying to get off.”

Ohmigod, kill me freaking now.

“Is that so?”

I give a fast shake of my head, and my wet hair clings to my cheeks. “It's not...I mean, I didn't mean it that way.”

“You didn't mean you're not trying to get off me?”

“Yes. No.”

I'm going to kill him for twisting my words, although maybe I'm the only one thinking they sound sexual. How could I think otherwise when I'm talking about getting off as I wiggle on his face?

He lifts me, easily moving me around, until I'm on his waist, and he sits up. His face is right there, inches from mine, and his gaze drops and takes in my mouth as I try to plant my shoes on either side of him. To anyone looking, I'm sure they

think we're dry humping in the driveway, except I'm wet, and it's not from the snow.

What is going on with my body?

I put my hands on his shoulders for leverage, and he helps me lift myself off. "Good?" he asks as I get to my feet, my sex once again right there in front of his face. I grumble under my breath and keep my hands on his shoulders as I carefully lift one leg over him and set it down on the ground beside the other. Once I'm stable, I let go of his shoulders, and try not to think about how his muscles moved beneath my fingers. But seriously, the last thing I want to do is fall on him again.

Okay, maybe it's not the last thing.

I shake my head and shut down that ridiculous inner voice, making a mental note to give myself a good hard lecture later. We hate Beckett.

He jumps up from the dolly and snatches it up. "What are you doing?" I ask.

"I was fixing the muffler hanger. It was loose and rattling, making a terrible noise."

"In the middle of a snowstorm?"

His gaze leaves my face, leisurely traveling over my light stylish coat, tight jeans and ruined shoes. His brow arches in question as his gaze cuts back to mine.

"Yeah, okay."

I turn from him, and nearly face plant as I try to make it up the sloped driveway. I windmill my arms, nearly losing my backpack off my shoulder, but before I fall, his hand is around my waist, anchoring me to his body. I'm sure the touch is as painful to him



as it is to me. I've heard the things he'd said about me our senior year in high school, although he pretty much stopped speaking to me after my seventeenth birthday, walking around our high school like I didn't exist. I'm not really sure what I ever did to him. The morning after my party, my car was vandalized. Someone had spray painted "slut" on the driver's side door.

Everyone assumed it was Beck, and when my parents confronted his parents and Beck was call downstairs to answer questions, he vehemently denied doing it. Funny thing is, I believed him. Even after the cold way he treated me, I still believed him.

Our parents didn't associate with each other before the incident; they didn't really like each other. Probably because mine own and run Baddeck's elite golf and ski resort, and his are blue collar workers, and yes, it's also true—and sad—that my parents think they're way better than everyone else, and didn't want me associating with those from the other side of the tracks. After the graffiti incident, both sets of parents despised each another.

He might not have put that word on my car, and while I don't for one-minute think he thinks I'm a slut, he no doubt assumes I'm a pampered princess, which in a way I am, but I don't hold the same beliefs as my parents. He just can't be bothered to see me as anything else, and because of it, I can't be bothered to show him. So now we're enemies, despite the fact that we share the same circle of friends.

"Thanks," I tell him, despite our past. He's helping me walk, and I'm grateful.

"Sure."

He helps me up the stairs, and pulls open the front door. Kicking snow off his boots, he wipes his face, leaving a big streak of grease on his forehead.

“Oh, you have...” I reach for his face and he flinches back. “Grease.”

“Yeah, I know. I don’t want you to touch it and get dirty. You’re dressed so nicely.”

Appreciating that, I nod, and he waves his big hand, a gesture for me to enter. I step inside and moan as the warmth envelopes me. Our friends Kennedy, Matt and their little girl Madelyn moved into this downtown house last October, and Beckett moved in with them shortly afterward, so I’m used to seeing him here. Or maybe a girl could never get used to seeing Beckett, especially since he likes to walk around without a T-shirt.

“Piper,” Kennedy yells as she comes running down the hall, a dish towel in her hands. “You’re soaked.”

“I fell,” I explain and steal a fast glance at Beckett, hoping he’s not about to give the gory details of me riding his face.

“Come on, let’s get you out of these clothes.” I start shivering almost uncontrollably as I take off my ruined shoes, and set my backpack on the floor. I hope the fabric inside isn’t soaked. Matt agreed to be my model for my final clothing design project, and I don’t want to drape him in wet fabric.

Kennedy glances at Beckett’s wet clothes and hair and shakes her head. “Did you fall too?” Before he can answer, she says, “Get changed, you’re dripping all over the floor and I don’t want you to catch your death of cold.”

“Yes, Mom,” he teases with a smirk, and Kennedy gives him the death glare. Honestly, they get along like brother and

sister, and from what Kennedy tells me, he's amazing with her daughter. Me? Not so much. As an only child, I'm not used to siblings and I never really babysat. Nope, any spare time I had, I was working at the family's resort. My parents have been grooming their only child to take over for as long as I can remember. Too bad I hate the idea. Maybe even more than I hate Beckett.

I'm too afraid to tell my folks, though. They've been so good to me, and they pay for everything, from my food and rent to my education and extracurricular activities. Heck, they even sponsored a brand new Olympic sized pool for the academy, simply because I love to swim. I even have my own key to the facility, and can use it any day, at any hour. I owe my parents, and the lodge has been in the family for generations. It's only right that I take over when they retire. I've consoled myself with the idea that I can design clothes on the side, but let's face it. Who has time for such things when running a golf resort and ski lodge year-round?

"I just have to put this in the garage," Beckett says and holds up the dolly.

Kennedy nods and asks, "Did you get your Jeep fixed?"

"Yeah, and I'll get to your spark plugs once the snow lightens."

"No hurry on that. I'm not planning on driving anywhere in this." She glances out the door, shivers and hugs herself.

"You're always so cold," Beckett says, and puts his free hand on her arm, and rubs up and down to create warmth with friction. She smiles up at him, her gaze full of warmth and it's easy to see they have a special bond.

"Thanks."

“Good now?”

“Yup.”

I don't like the guy, but it's so nice how thoughtful and caring he is with Kennedy. It's so damn sweet. But is it odd that I have this weird knot of jealousy tightening in my gut? Yeah, I think it is. Honestly, I've had male friends and casual boyfriends over the years, but I've never experienced a real closeness, or a special bond with any guy.

With that he nods and disappears back outside. Kennedy loops her arm in mine and takes me toward the stairs. We head up, and I say, “You and Beckett really get along well.”

“Yeah, he's a sweetie.” I almost snort, but don't want to be rude. “We really like having him here. He's handy too, and always willing to help out with anything we need.”

If I spent the night, would he help out with the ache between my legs?

Dear God, what am I saying?

Kennedy frowns. “I'm a little worried about him, though.”

“Worried? Why would you be worried?”

“I think he's working too hard. I haven't seen him with a girl in...forever.”

“You mean he's not parading them in and out of here every weekend?”

“Nope.” We reach the landing, and she puts her fingers to her lips to let me know Madelyn is sleeping, and I breathe a sigh of relief. It's not that I don't like Madelyn, I'm just a bit nervous and uncomfortable around her. I never know what to say. All I do know is that I'm not a natural around children.

Inside the master bedroom, Kennedy grabs me a pair of sweats, a T-shirt and sweater, which I probably won't need because it's super warm in the house. "I have an extra pair of boots for when you leave, or you can stay over if it gets too bad out there. Hey, the four of us could make a night of it."

Stay over, and be forced to spend more time with Beckett. No. Thank. You.

"Thanks," I say. "I'm sure I'll be fine."

"At least stay for dinner."

"Sounds great."

"I'll leave you to get changed. Meet me downstairs when you're done. I'll put on a fresh pot of coffee."

Ever so grateful, as Kennedy makes the best coffee ever, I listen to her footsteps on the stairs and glance around, feeling a little uncomfortable getting changed in their master bedroom. I quietly open the door, and tip toe to the bathroom, shutting the door tightly behind me. I glance at my face in the mirror, and shake my head. With mascara dripping down my cheek, it's a wonder Beckett didn't scream in horror when I sat on his face. The girls I've seen him with would never be caught dead with their makeup running. Although I must say I haven't seen him with anyone since he's moved in here.

God, I sound like a jealous fool, when I'm anything but.

I peel off my coat, and damp sweater and wiggle out of my jeans. Not an easy task when they're wet. I bend forward and grab the tub, having a hell of a time getting my ankles through the skinny jeans, when the bathroom door swings open. I gasp, straighten, spin around and lose my balance as my gaze lands on a bare-chested Beckett, his T-shirt draped

over his shoulder, in that sexy way that teases every erogeous zone in my body.

He falters backward a bit. "Oh, ah...sorry."

"I...I was trying to get off..." I hop around on one foot stuck inside the leg of my jeans, and that's when I realize I'm only in my bra and underwear, about to faceplant again.

He closes the distance between us faster than a world elite sprinter, and the second I'm in his big arms, his dimple appears as he smirks and teases, "Again?"

“Beckett!” Piper screams at me, and I turn around, fast, to give her privacy as she hops around on one leg. Okay, maybe not that fast. The sight before me is spectacular, and I could make fun of her since we hate each other, but I don’t want to. I’m not much into revenge—even after she invited everyone in our high school class to her fancy-schmancy birthday party, except for me—and maybe my brain is too caught up in her near nakedness to think of some witty comeback.

Honestly, I’m not bitter about being left out. Much. But way to make the boy from the wrong side of the tracks feel like a real loser. At the time my parents told me, the only one who can make me feel less valued is me.

They were right, I know that, but as I sat my seventeen-year-old ass in my bedroom, with my best friend David, who refused to go to the extravagant pool party because I wasn’t invited, it was hard to rationalize the truth behind my parents’ statement. I might be older and wiser, and I hate to admit this, even to myself, but sometimes I still feel like that

young boy who came from nothing, who always had to prove his worth. And then to get blamed for some graffiti I was not responsible for. At least my family believed me, but it just showed what others thought of me. I know I'm the number one goalie at the academy, and have no trouble finding someone to help warm my bed, but it can be hard to shake the deeply rooted feelings of insignificance.

But I refuse to prove it to Piper and her stuck-up family.

"Get out!" she shrieks again.

"Oh, right," I say her shrill words pulling me back to reality. "I was coming up to get changed and Kennedy asked me to grab her phone on my way back down. She left it in here earlier, and I didn't realize you were changing. Sorry."

"Here it is, just don't turn around." I reach behind me, and her cold hand touches mine as she places Kennedy's phone in my hand.

"There's this thing on the door," I begin, trying to be funny. "It's called a lock. It's a pretty new invention so I understand if you didn't know about it. I can show you how it works later, if you like."

"Just go, please," she mumbles under her breath, and there's something in her voice. A kind of shaky vulnerability I never expected to hear from the princess who's been pampered her whole life. I step from the room, shut the door behind me, and come face to face with Kennedy. She's standing in the hall, her mouth ajar as she stares at me wide eyed. Across the hall, in her bedroom Madelyn is awake and calling for her mom.

I cringe. "I guess we woke her, huh?"



“Yeah, but it’s okay.” She gives a dismissive wave of her hand as she grips Madelyn’s doorknob. “It was time for her to get up anyway. What’s going on?”

I gesture to the closed door. “I sort of walked in on Piper changing. I didn’t realize she was in there.”

“She was in my room changing when I went downstairs. I didn’t realize she was in the bathroom either.”

I throw my hands up in the air. “See, not my fault. Oh, here’s your phone.”

She takes it from me. “Speaking of seeing…”

I glance down, almost sheepish. “Yeah, she was half dressed.”

“Ugh. That couldn’t have gone over well.”

I stare at Kennedy. Is that a smirk playing with the corner of her mouth? Can’t be. She knows we hate each other, and no way would she ask me to grab her phone if she knew Piper was changing in the bathroom.

The washroom door creaks open, and Piper’s face is red as she stands there in Kennedy’s clothes. I never thought that a T-shirt and sweats were sexy before. She has a sweater draped over her shoulder as her wet hair drips, leaving the T-shirt a bit damp.

“I’d better get Madelyn,” Kennedy says and opens the bedroom door. “I’ll meet you both downstairs.”

Piper glances at me. “Do you have to walk around without a shirt on?”

“Does it bother you?”

“Yes...No.” She shakes her head.

“Maybe you like what you see?” I tease, just to pull a reaction out of her.

Her blue eyes turn murderous. “No, I don’t. It’s just that it’s cold out.”

“It’s cold out but it’s not cold in here. Kennedy keeps this place hotter than an inferno. She’s always cold.”

“Fine, do what you want.” She makes a beeline for the stairs and while I was going to put my shirt on, I decide to leave it draped over my shoulder. I stand there for a second and just shake my head as she leaves, grateful that our semester is almost over, and she’ll likely be going home to the family’s resort for the summer. My plans are to stay here and work at the campus cafeteria, and take on more hours at Mighty Auto Service Station.

I poke my head into the bedroom, and my heart swells as two-year-old Madelyn smiles at me. “Beck,” she says and holds her arms out.

“Sometimes I think she likes you better than me,” Kennedy says, and I hold my hands out to the wiggling little girl. Kennedy hands her over, and Madelyn kisses my nose.

“At least someone around here likes me,” I murmur. I love the kid, I really do and even though Matt isn’t her biological father it doesn’t matter. He loves her like she’s his own.

Kennedy frowns at me. “I like you.”

“Okay that’s two out of three females,” I say as I head into the hall carrying Madelyn downstairs. I walk into the kitchen and find Piper at the kitchen table, a frown on her face. “Everything okay?” I ask.

Her head lifts and her smile is as fake as every puck bunny's social media profile picture. Come on, no girl wakes up looking like they just spent hours getting their hair and makeup done. While I appreciate the effort, and I've dated many of them, I'd much prefer a real girl over the saccharine ones who pretend their lives are perfect.

No one's life is perfect. Except for maybe Piper's. Or at least I thought it was, up until I found her sitting here looking like she might cry. My heart constricts as I put Madelyn in her highchair and tug on my T-shirt. Kennedy goes to the front door to greet her fiancé, and my very best friend, Matt. He was over at Kennedy's mom's place, helping her move some furniture.

"Hey, Piper. Are you sure you're okay?" I ask, keeping my voice low.

She nods again, far too fast and far too exaggerated for it to be believable. "Yes." She shakes her phone. "Just my folks, excited that I'll be coming home in a few weeks."

Holy shit, she doesn't want to go back to Cape Breton Island. It's all over her face. I stare at her, and for the first time in my life, I get the sense that all is not perfect in her world.

"You'll be helping out at the resort?"

She smiles, but it doesn't reach her pretty blue eyes. "Once again, I'll be in charge of scheduling activities, and giving tennis and swimming lessons. Things like that. Someday I'll take over the place." She snorts. "I've been groomed for that for as long as I can remember. I honestly don't know why I need a business degree. I already know how to run the place."

I stare at her for a second and while she's trying to put a positive spin on things, I can almost taste the resentment on her

tongue. Why would anyone resent being handed a million-dollar business? I'm not sure I understand it, but I guess I can be dense like that.

"Tennis lessons, swimming lessons. Sounds like a hardship." I'm not trying to be an asshole here; I'm just saying that to see her reaction. What's to hate about inheriting a resort and why does she not want to go home? I know she's close to her parents. Heck, I love my family too and try to get back to see them every chance I get. I'm the second oldest, with two younger sisters who are both smarter than me and will kill it in the world when they're older, and one younger brother who is going to be a lawyer judging by his arguing skills. It was my older brother who taught me auto mechanics. I'm working hard to help pay my way through school, so my parents can put make sure my siblings get what they need growing up. I plan to kill it in the NHL so I can help my parents pay for my siblings education, and get them out of Cape Breton.

Don't get me wrong. I love where I grew up, but opportunities for careers are few and far between. My grandfather worked in the coal mines for years. My dad did the same until he got sick and took a mechanics course. With Cape Breton's economy heavily dependent on tourism, outside of that, there's a high unemployment rate, and I want my siblings to make something more of themselves.

"Not a hardship at all." She sets her phone down. "Will you be heading home this summer?"

"At some point I'll try." I don't bother asking if she wants to meet for drinks or dinner when I do. Hell, we live only minutes away here, and don't meet up for anything. Sure, we're always doing things together because we're in the same

group of friends, but outside of it, we steer clear of each other.

“Matt,” she says, her face lighting up as he enters the kitchen, and while I get she really likes him, I also get that she wants to end our conversation.

My phone pings, and I glance down and read a message from Dryden. He’s one of the other goalies on the roster. He wants to know if I want to go practice, so I can critique him and help him get better, but I text back and let him know I’m busy. I’m all about helping the next guy improve, and I want him to be great to take over when I finish at the academy, but I’m about to eat, and it’s a mess outside. I’m sure the rink is closed due to the storm anyway, and I don’t want Piper thinking she upsets me so much that I always run the other way. I’d prefer it if she thought I was indifferent to her.

Matt says hello as he leans down to kiss Madelyn, and she blows bubbles on his cheek. “Hey, chicken nugget,” he says, and pours himself a glass of water. Kennedy pulls a pot roast from the oven, the perfect meal for a cold day like today.

“You still on to be my model?” Piper asks Matt.

Matt laughs. “Sure.”

I narrow my eyes and stare at my buddy. “Wait, you’re going to be a model?”

“It’s for my final assignment,” Piper explains. “I have to design something fashionable, professional and affordable, aimed for a broke-ass male student who needs business work clothes.” She turns to Matt. “You’re still okay with walking the runway?” She puckers her lips. “I know it’s a lot to ask, but you have the perfect body to showcase clothes.”

Okay, not trying to take offense here. I am the epitome of broke-ass student. Though why would Piper ask me and what does she know about being broke?

Matt, modest guy that he is, laughs at that, and Kennedy hugs him. "It's true," she whispers, but we can all hear.

"Get a room," I say and roll my eyes, but there's a part of me that's jealous at what they have. I'm not against marriage by any means, I'm just busy working two jobs to pay for school and I'm the main goalie for the team, so I'm busy. Hell, I don't even seem to have time for girls anymore. Although I'm not sure time is the real problem here. I think maybe I'm just tired of the parties, and well...the fucking.

Holy hell, who am I?

Seriously though, it's all getting old. I was ecstatic when Matt and Kennedy found a place together and asked me to move in. It helped cut costs their costs and now I'm not subjected to the parties at the frat house every weekend. Okay, yeah, I really don't know who I am anymore.

"Wait, why are you designing men's fashion when you're a business student?"

She almost pales but responds with, "It's just a hobby. Something I enjoy."

When she doesn't say more, I nod and go to work on setting the table, putting out placemats, and cutlery and four glasses of water. I rinse Madelyn's cup and fill it with apple juice, bending to kiss her on the head as I give it to her. I glance up quickly to find a strange look on Piper's face.

"What?"

“Nothing,” she replies quickly and turns to Kennedy. “What can I do to help?”

“Grab the casserole dish on the bottom shelf.” Piper jumps up, like she’s happy to be away from me, and sets the casserole dish on the counter. Kennedy plates all the food and Matt brings it to the table.

“Kennedy, this looks amazing,” Piper says.

I dig right in. “She’s a great cook.” I wink at Kennedy. “She makes a mean lasagna.”

Kennedy sets her fork down, and I sense something is going on as she and Matt exchange a glance. Matt sets his fork down too and I sit up a bit straighter.

“We were wondering,” she begins, and my stomach knots. I don’t think I’m going to like what she was wondering. Kennedy reaches out and takes Matt’s hand. “We never had the chance to really celebrate our engagement, and we saved so we could book a resort on Prince Edward Island for a few days after our finals. Ryan Potter is from the island, and he knows the owner of the resort. He got us a great deal. He comes from a family of potato farmers. You know Ryan, don’t you, Piper? He’s a right winger on the team.” Piper nods, and Kennedy frowns, and continues with, “Unfortunately, Mom can no longer babysit. She’s taken on someone else’s shift at the restaurant that week.”

“I can help out,” I blurt out.

“Thank you, Beck. We appreciate that, but we also know you hold down two jobs and can’t be a full-time caregiver, but we were thinking, between the two of you, we could put together a schedule.”

Jesus fucking, Christ. Is she kidding me?

Piper looks like they just asked her to go skydiving without a parachute when she asks, “You want me to babysit?”

“I mean, if it’s not too much to ask.”

She blinks, repeatedly, and I can’t help but think she’s looking for an excuse. “I’m expected home to help out at the resort.”

Kennedy shrugs. “Oh, well if you can’t. It’s not a problem, we can probably find someone else to help out. Right, Matt?”

Before he can answer Piper blurts out, “No, no. I guess, I can postpone. You know if you really need me, and I owe you since Matt is being such a great sport helping me out with my class project.”

Kennedy smiles. “It’s settled then. We can talk details later.” Kennedy focuses in on Piper. “Someday I have to visit your family’s resort in Baddeck. Tell me more about it.”

I can barely eat, and that’s saying something as Piper talks about the resort—which she doesn’t want to go home to. By the time she’s finished—and I’m still freaking out that I’ll be sharing this house with Piper—our meal is done. Matt and I do the dishes as the three girls all retire to the living room. I wash and Matt dries as snow continues to fall outside.

“Why do we live here again?” he jokes.

“Family,” is all I say. “I realize someday I’ll likely move far from Nova Scotia, but I like being close to family while in college. Are you sure Piper is the right girl to help with Madelyn?”

Matt gives a confident shake of his head. “Absolutely, and she has you to help.”

I want to ask more, tell him I think it’s a bad idea, but they’re pretty close with Piper and I don’t want to rock the boat, so I



stay silent. We finish up in the kitchen and step into the other room. Piper has a worried look on her face as she glances out the window.

“I think you should stay,” Kennedy says. “We can blow up the air mattress.”

“You can have my room,” I blurt out without thinking.

What the hell?

She turns to me. “I don’t want to put you out.”

Matt laughs. “Haven’t you heard? Beckett likes to put out.”

I laugh and shake my head. “It’s not a problem. I want to shovel later when the snow stops and I’d just disturb you if you’re sleeping down here.”

“It’s settled then. You’ll take Beck’s bed,” Kennedy announces and jumps up. “Beck, can you watch Madelyn while Matt and I go downstairs and blow up the mattress.”

“Yeah, no problem.”

I scoop Madelyn up and note the way Piper is staring at me as we settle in to watch Madelyn’s favorite cartoon. She has that same confused look on her face as she did when we were in the kitchen. Does she not think I know how to take care of a child?

When Kennedy and Matt return with the mattress, I stand. “I have some things to do in my room. I’ll come down when you’re ready for bed.” I bolt up the steps and shut my bedroom door tight. The first thing I do is put fresh sheets on the mattress, then I settle on top of the bed, put my earbuds in and do some studying. Hours later, when I hear them all coming up the stairs, I open my door, mumble good-night and make my way downstairs.

Since the snow is still coming down, I decide to shovel in the morning and drop down onto my make-shift bed. I lie still a long time, my thoughts on Piper, and living under the same roof with her for a few days. I toss restlessly, then decide a cold shower is in order.

No way am I going to lay on this air mattress and take my dick in my hand. One, I have no privacy down here, anyone could come downstairs and two, I don't want to think about stuck up Piper when I tug one out. No fucking way in hell. I push off my blanket, soaking wet because Kennedy keeps this house hotter than hell, and tip toe upstairs to the bathroom. With the night light casting enough light for me to see, I leave the light off, and jump into the shower. At first I turn it to cold, but it does little to put out my fire.

Unable to help myself, I turn the water to hot and the next thing I know, I'm quietly groaning as I take my dick in my hand, my thoughts on the girl sleeping in my bed as I stroke myself to satisfaction. Once done, I turn off the hot water, and pull open the shower curtain, just as the door opens, and the light flicks on.

"What the...?" I begin, my eyes adjusting enough to find a wide-eyed Piper standing there, staring at my still erect dick.

"Ohmigod..." She puts her hand up to block her vision, and damn if this isn't fitting after I walked in on her earlier. "I didn't...know...what...what..."

What the hell? Is she asking what I'm doing in the shower, so late at night? If so, I might as well admit the truth. After all, she should know who she agreed to spend a week with, right, and maybe this will change her mind and put me out of my misery.

"Um...getting off."

A moment of silence and then, “There’s this thing on the door,” she begins, her voice hoarse and low, and so damn sexy my dick stands up and takes notice. “It’s called a lock. It’s a pretty new invention so I understand if you didn’t know about it. I can show you how it works later, if you like.”

Okay, it’s true. I deserved that, and I have to say, I kind of love her quick wit and nonchalant attitude. Go Piper.