

**CHAPTER 1**  
**DAY 1**  
**THURSDAY 26 March 2020**  
**JARRED**

The fire cracks in the background as I sit on the couch. I fix my eyes on the flames as I lazily lift my legs onto the coffee table, taking a sip of my whiskey.

*I've missed this place.* It's been three months since I've been to the farm with my family, crowding this place with cheer and laughter over Christmas. I'm grateful I have this time on my own. *How long can 21 days be, right?* The silence is what I need right now, and this is perfect.

I reach for my phone, but then I smile as I take another sip. *No! No phone for at least the first three days. Tinder can wait. I need time to reflect.* I snort as I reach for it again. *Yeah, Jarred, like you even know what that means.*

Russell lifts his head next to me, and then he barks.

“What’s up, boy. You're breaking my silence. I was just quieting down...”

Russell jumps off the couch and runs straight to the back door. It's not his usual barking tone, so I go to the window to check outside. It's dark out and I can't see anything from here, but Russell is definitely unsettled.

I drown the rest of my drink and grab the rifle in the cupboard before I step outside. My house is quite isolated. One can never be too careful on the farm. It's late. And with lockdown kicking in soon, nobody should be out, but you never know with these assholes.

I arrived late. I drove here straight from work, wanting to make the most of my time. I've been hustling away at my company since straight after Christmas, so this damn lockdown is forcing me to take a break. Running around in only my jeans with a rifle, searching for Russell was not part of my plan for the first evening alone in who knows how long.

Russell is far out now, and eventually, when I get to the trees, paranoia sets in. *I should have taken the radio with me.* I listen to Russell's barking, and it gives me the creeps. *Shit, there's definitely someone out there.* The trees are dense, it's the perfect hiding place. I reach for my phone to switch on the light and lift the rifle. I spot Russell, barking frantically now, and then I see her.

She looks frightened, staring at me with big green eyes. She's holding both her hands up.

“Please don't shoot. I'm sorry I was...”

Russell is frantic and I can't hear what she's saying.

“Russell, settle!” I shout at him, and immediately he stops. *Good boy.*

I stare back at the girl. Her long dark hair is wild, and her face is covered in dirt. So are her clothes. I see her swallow as she stares at the rifle, but somehow, I can't stop focussing on her eyes. And then I see her mouth, those lips.

“Please, please don't shoot me. I'm hurt.”

I drag my eyes away from her face and see the blood on her leg. *Shit!*

Immediately, I lower the rifle and go towards her.

“What happened to you?”

The relief on her face is evident. “Can you walk on it?”

She shakes her head and dries a lone tear from her face. “I’ve tried... but it hurts like hell.”

I swing my arm around her waist to help steady her, but her entire body is shaking. I must have frightened her, or she’s just cold by the looks of her clothes. She's wearing tights and a matching tank top. But both are torn.

“Let's get you inside, okay?”

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DAY 1**

**Thursday, 26 March 2020**

### **EMMA**

Good grief, I'm freezing. My teeth are jittering as I stand on one leg in front of the fire, rubbing at my arms. I reach for the stone wall to find my balance when he comes walking in with some towels and a bucket of water and a blanket wrapped around his neck.

I swallow as I gaze at him. He's only wearing his jeans. Bare foot, bare chest with a six-pack visible, muscles flexing everywhere as he lowers the bowl down onto the floor next to my feet. He has short dark hair and I take a breath in as his slender hand touches my leg.

"Do you mind if I look?"

I shake my head. No, not at all. *You can touch me any day!* I snap out of it, the minute the sharp pain shoots right up my leg.

"Sorry! It doesn't look too bad, though."

"Really? It feels worse." I scrunch my face in agony.

"What happened to you?"

Gorgeous grey eyes look up at me and gosh, this guy is beautiful. I clear my throat as I try to find my voice.

"I went for a run. My last run before this stupid lockdown. I'm training for Ironman," *Oh gosh, I'm babbling.* "A guy almost ran me over with his bike, stupid asshole, and I fell. I must have hit a rock or something."

"And the guy didn't stop to check on you?"

I shake my head.

"Well, let's get you cleaned up."

And before I know it, he picks me up and sets me down onto the couch. Warmth hits me as he drapes the blanket around my shoulders.

"This should keep you warm." Our eyes lock for a moment and I'm fully aware that he's still holding on to the blanket when my hand brushes over his to take a hold of it.

He's got a ghost of a smile lingering on his lips, before he moves the water closer. He sits cross-legged in front of me and gently pushes my leggings up. All the while he's watching me and my mouth dries up completely.

"I'll just clean it as best I can."

His gaze goes down to my leg and gentle hands guide my foot into the bucket. The water is hot and soothing. The Detol that he pours in gets all milky. He puts the towel into the water and gently rubs down my leg. He's not in a hurry at all.

His other hand slides around my ankle and I'm aware of him touching me, giving me goose bumps all over. Steady eyes gaze at my chest for a moment.

"You cold?"

*No! Just happy to see you.* I tighten the surrounding blanket, trying to hide this intense feeling I'm experiencing with this handsome stranger cleaning my damn leg, which in fact I could probably do myself in a bathroom or near a tap.

"Mother, trucker, but that hurts!"

My hand shoots out to his shoulder and grip it hard as he slides over my wound.

"Sorry! I have to get it clean."

I bite my lip not to scream. "Geez, can you warn a girl at least?" I snap. My fingers dig in deeper into his shoulder from the pain, when I feel his hand suddenly clutching mine as he takes it off his shoulder.

His eyebrow lifts as he looks at me.

"Sorry." I shake my head. "I'm just... agitated."

"Easy there, lady. Bury your claws."

Embarrassed, I lower my gaze. "Sorry! Clearly, it's not my day."

There's a cool gleam in his eye as he turns my hand over, which he is still holding, and starts to wipe my palms with the wet cloth. Cute, gorgeous dimples are displayed. *Wow! Is this guy for real?*

"I have to sanitize your hands. I mean, there's COVID-19 lurking out there. One can never be sure. Especially with gorgeous strangers lurking around and tress passing on private property."

My eyes shoot up at him. "My apologies for putting you and your home at risk!" I can't stop staring at his smile.

"I think you need a bath, too. I'll feel more at ease, you know? I won't force you to wear a mask."

*He's joking!* I sigh within. I'm so stressed out. *Is he serious about the bath, though?*

## CHAPTER 3

### DAY 2

Friday, 27 March 2020

## EMMA

I startle awake, and just outside the window, I hear a loud squawk, coming from a rooster.  
*What the hell?*

I sit up in bed and bewildered; I look around confused for a moment where I am. The room is small and when I look outside; I realize I'm on a farm. There are cows grazing in the field and a brood of chickens are right outside my window. Making a terrible noise.

*Seriously?*

And then my thoughts go back to last night. I check the date and time on my watch. It's the 27th. We're in lockdown. *We're in LOCKDOWN and I'm stuck on a FARM!?* And suddenly I want to cry. This could be a blessing in disguise or it could be horrific. *I hate farm-life.* I stare at the chickens. *And I hate chickens! I don't mind them producing eggs for me in the morning, but that's where I draw the line.*

As I scramble out of bed, I'm reminded of my leg, although it's not half as sore as it was last night, thankfully. I rush to the door, but then I stop. I'm wearing one of his shirts. And my panties. I've got to find some pants to wear. I peek into the cupboards, but it's all empty. Well, I'm not planning on staying in this room forever, so I head towards the living room.

I expect to see him there, but there's no one in site. I make my way into the kitchen and notice that the back door is open. Just as I switch the kettle on, a rooster makes his way into the kitchen and I squeal as I back track and jump onto the counter.

That's when I hear him chuckle. "Now, that's a site to see."

He's leaning against the door frame, beaming at me. Fully dressed in jeans and a tank top. "Good morning. Did you sleep well?"

I point at the rooster. Horrified. "What... what is that? Why is it in here?" *Gosh, this man looks great!*

To my surprise, the rooster waddles straight into Mr Muscle's arms and he hugs it?

"This over here is Cock. Cock, this is..."

We look at each other. *We never exchanged names last night.*

"Emma." I touch my forehead. "Are you seriously talking to your food?"

The guy gasps for air, looking straight at Cock.

"Never mind, Emma. She's obviously never experienced my beautiful Cock before. You are precious and special and my favourite thing in the world. Don't listen to a word she says, okay?" He glances back at me with shining eyes. "She will love you! She just needs to get to know you. Intimately. Like I do." He pushes his head against Cock again and whispers loud enough for me to hear. "We have 21 days to change her mind about you."

"This is crazy! You know that?" I get off the counter. "There's no way I'm staying with a crazy farmer-guy and his rooster for 21 days! Are you even a farmer? Besides your muscles, you look nothing like one. You are wearing sneakers for goodness' sake."

Cock turns towards me, and I squeal again. "Okay, farmer boy, please can you take Cock out of here? And I'll need some pants to wear. Please?"

"The name is Jarred."

He scoops the bird up and walks towards the back door, and lets go of him and shouts, "I'll play with you a little later, Cock."

Geez, I try to hide my smile. *Seriously!* This guy is amazing, but I feel a little out of place. *Especially when he's starring at my legs like that.*

"How's the leg this morning?"

"It's fine. I got here, didn't I?" *Hell, Emma. You sound like such a bitch.* "Sorry, I'm just..." I touch my head again. This situation is beyond awkward. *I should probably ask him to take me home, but that's the last place I want to be.* There's an awkward silence between us. "Listen, I hate to ask, but... would you mind, taking me home?" *It's the obvious thing to say, right?*

"Sure. No, problem."

And with that he disappears down the corridor, leaving me standing in the kitchen by myself. *I'm kind of disappointed now.*

He returns, handing me his sweat pants. "This will have to do. Do you want to go now or should we have some coffee, first?"

I swallow, feeling embarrassed now. My reaction to him. He's been nothing but polite to me since I've invaded his privacy.

"Thank you, Jarred. Not just for the pants, but for last night, too. For taking me in. I..."

"No problem." He half smiles at me as he reaches for the kettle. Not taking his eyes off me. "I think you should put that on. It might be safer."

There's a burning look between us before he lowers his gaze again to my legs. *Shit! Do I put this on right here, in front of him? He's not looking away! Dammit!*

"All right, then." I reach for the counter to steady myself, as I slip the pants on. I have to hold it up. It's way too big.

Before I know it, Jarred's hands are on me as he rolls up the pants to my waist, twice.

"There."

I feel like I can't breathe properly, he's standing so close. "Now I can concentrate on making us coffee."