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*Icebreaker*

HANNAH GRACE



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*Chapter One*

## ANASTASIA

“AGAIN, ANASTASIA!”

If I hear the words *again* and *Anastasia* together in a sentence one more time, it might be the thing that finally tips me over the edge.

I’ve been on the edge since I woke up this morning with a hang-over sent directly from the pits of hell, so the last thing I need right now is more grief from Coach Aubrey Brady.

I focus on suppressing my annoyance, like I do every training session when she makes it her mission to push me to my limits. Rationalizing it’s her dedication that makes her such a successful coach, I decide throwing my ice skates at her is something that should stay in my imagination.

“You’re being sloppy, Stas!” she yells as we fly straight past her. “Sloppy girls don’t get medals!”

What did I say about not throwing skates at her?

“Come on, Anastasia. Put in some effort for once.” Aaron snickers, poking his tongue out at me when I shoot him a cold glare.

Aaron Carlisle is the best male figure skater the University of California, Maple Hills, has to offer. When I was offered a spot at UCMH and my skating partner wasn’t, Aaron was luckily in the same position, and we became pairs. This is our third year of skating together and our third year of getting our asses kicked.

I have a theory that Aubrey is a Soviet spy. I don't have any evidence, and my theory isn't well developed. Developed at all, actually. But sometimes, when she's screaming at me to straighten my spine or lift my chin, I swear a slight Russian accent slips out.

Which is peculiar for a woman from Philipsburg, Montana.

Comrade Brady was a figure skating superstar in her heyday. Even now, her movements are delicate and controlled, and she moves with such grace it's hard to believe she can shout as loud as she does.

Her graying hair is always pulled back into a tight bun, which accentuates her high cheekbones, and she's always wrapped tight in her signature faux-fur black coat, which Aaron jokes is where she hides all her secrets.

The rumor is she was supposed to go to the Olympics with her partner, Wyatt. However, Wyatt and Aubrey were practicing those lifts a little too often, and she ended up holding a baby instead of a gold medal.

That's why she's been in a bad mood since she started coaching twenty-five years ago.

"Clair de lune" fades as Aaron and I finish our routine nose to nose, our chests heaving against each other as we try to catch our breath. When we finally hear a single clap, we move apart and skate toward what will undoubtedly be the source of my next headache.

I haven't even stopped moving when her green eyes lock on me and narrow. "When are you going to land your Lutz? If you're not going to deliver, it needs to come out of your long program."

Aside from Brady, successfully doing a quadruple Lutz and not landing on my ass is the current bane of my existence. I've been practicing for God knows how long, but I can't quite manage to nail it. Aaron can execute it flawlessly, which is why I convinced the choreographer to put it into our routine in the first place.

Pride is a foolish thing. It's incredibly foolish when it comes to figure skating, since when you get it wrong, you bounce your face off

solid ice. I'd take face-planting over the annoying, fake-disappointed face Aaron pulls anytime it's suggested we take it out.

"It's coming, Coach," I say with as much fake enthusiasm as possible. "I'm getting there; it's not perfect yet, but I'll keep practicing."

It's a minor lie, a harmless one. I *am* getting there. What I've failed to mention is I'm only getting there off the ice, specifically when I'm attached to equipment that helps me get there.

"She's getting there," Aaron lies, throwing an arm around my shoulders. "Just a bit longer, A.B."

It's nice for Aaron to be on my side and show a united front to KGB Aubrey. What he says in private is that the only way I'm going to pull it off is if I start doping and build a time machine to get my prepuberty body back.

She mutters something inaudible and waves us off flippantly. "I'll see you two back here tomorrow, and if you could both not be hungover, that would be great. I'm fairly certain eating Kenny's before training isn't going to get either of you onto the Olympic team. Understood?"

*Shit.* "Yes, Coach," we say in harmony.

Aaron is staring at his phone, waiting for me in the lobby when I finally exit the women's locker room.

"I fucking told you she'd know." I groan, swinging my bag toward him as soon as I'm close enough to hit him in the stomach with it. "I didn't even have anything!"

He grunts at the impact, tugging the bag from my hands and flinging it over his shoulder. "The woman has the nose of a bloodhound."

Like most things in life, skating is far easier when you're a man because nobody is picking you up and launching you across the room twice a day.

Freshman year, I gained the freshman fifteen. Well, it was more like the freshman five, but Aaron said I was getting too heavy to lift, so I haven't put on an ounce since.

I try to stick to my meal plan religiously, with the odd party here

and there to keep me lucid. My best friend's twenty-first birthday yesterday was the perfect opportunity to let loose a little, even if it did mean braving Brady with a hangover.

We climb into Aaron's new G-Wagen, the latest guilt gift from his adulterous but wealthy father, and head home. Aaron and I decided it would be cool to live together, with my best friend, Lola, at the end of freshman year. Our schedules are similar, and our lives revolve around skating, so it made sense.

Aaron takes the turn onto Maple Avenue and looks over at me while I rummage through my purse for my most prized possession. "What does the planner say you're doing tonight?"

I roll my eyes, ignoring his teasing tone. "Getting laid."

"Ew," he says, the tip of his nose wrinkling as he grimaces. "It's bad enough you plan what time you sleep and eat, but do you need to plan having sex?"

He's not lying about the sleeping and eating thing—every minute of my life is meticulously scheduled in my trusty planner, which my friends find equal parts hilarious and ridiculous. I wouldn't necessarily say I'm a control freak, but I'm a woman who needs to be in control.

There's *definitely* a difference.

I shrug, suppressing the urge to point out that at least I'm getting some, unlike him. "Ryan is a busy guy and I'm a busy girl. I want to see him as much as I can before basketball season."

Ryan Rothwell is six feet six inches of pure athletic perfection. UCMH point guard and team captain, he's as serious about his sport as I am, which makes for a perfect no-strings-attached situation. The added benefit is Ry is the sweetest guy, so we've become great friends through our mutually beneficial arrangement.

"I can't believe you're still fucking around with him. He's, like, double your size, how does he not crush you? No, wait. I don't want to know."

"I know he is." I giggle, pinching his cheeks until he bats me away. "Sorta the whole point."

Most people assume Aaron and I are more than partners, but we're more like siblings. It's not that he isn't good-looking, we've just never had any romantic interest in each other.

Aaron is much taller than me and lean like a dancer with his sculpted, muscular body. His black hair is kept short, and I swear he wears mascara because his sky-blue eyes are framed with the darkest, jealousy-inducing lashes, contrasting prominently against his pale skin.

"I officially know too much about your sex life, Anastasia."

Aaron can't decide if he likes Ryan or not. Sometimes he's cool with him and Ryan gets to see the Aaron I see—the one who's fun to be around. You'd assume Ryan had personally ruined Aaron's life or something the rest of the time. Aaron can be so abrupt and harsh that it's embarrassing. It's unpredictable, but Ryan brushes it off and tells me not to worry about it.

"I promise to not talk about it for the rest of the drive home if you promise to give me a ride to Ryan's later."

He contemplates for a minute or so. "Okay, deal."

LOLA LOOKS UP FROM THE salad she's stabbing aggressively with her fork and huffs. "I'm just saying, who's dick is Olivia Abbott sucking to get the lead role for the third year in a row?"

I can't help but cringe at her harsh words, but I know she doesn't mean it. She was already feeling delicate this morning after the copious amounts of alcohol we consumed last night for her birthday, so today wasn't the best day to find out she didn't get the part she wanted.

I've watched every show for the past two years, and Lo knows as well as I do, Olivia is an exceptionally talented actor.

"Can she not just be very talented? And not be sucking someone's dick?"

"Anastasia, will you please let me be petty for five minutes and pretend I don't know she's better than me?"

Aaron throws himself into the chair beside me and reaches over to pick a carrot stick from my plate. "What're we being petty about?"

"Olivia Abbott," Lola and I respond in unison, the distaste in her tone evident as hell.

"She's hot. Might be the hottest girl on campus," he says nonchalantly, clearly not paying attention to how Lola's jaw drops. "Is she single?"

"How am I supposed to freaking know? She doesn't talk to anyone. She swans in, gets the role I want, and carries on being an anomaly."

Lola studies performing arts, and it must be an unwritten rule that you have to have a larger-than-life personality, because everyone I've met in her major is like her. It's usually an exhausting battle for attention, even as a spectator, but Olivia keeps to herself, and for some reason, it seems to bother people.

"I'm sorry, Lols. There's always next time," I offer. We both know it doesn't mean anything, but she blows me a kiss anyway. "If it makes you feel any better—I still can't land my Lutz. Aubrey is going to work it out soon and banish me to Siberia."

"Oh no. You're officially a failure, how can you ever step foot on the ice again?" She grins, her eyes shining as I scowl at her. "You'll get there, babe. You're working hard." Her eyes move to Aaron, tapping away on his phone, totally uninterested in our conversation. "Hey, Ice Princess! You gonna help me out here?"

"Huh? Sorry, yeah, you're hot, too, Lo."

I'm surprised I don't see the steam leave Lola's ears as she yells at him about not listening to her.

I slowly retreat to my bedroom, eager to not draw attention to myself and get caught in the crossfire of my roommates' argument. Living with Aaron and Lola is like living with siblings who always wanted to be only children.

Aaron, like me, is an actual only child. The miracle baby to his two aging, midwestern parents desperate to keep their marriage together. Living with other people after being his parents' pride and joy for eighteen years was a big transition for him, and for us, who are the ones who have to live with him and his mood swings.

Now he's not in Chicago, things between his parents aren't great, and we always know when they're extra bad because Aaron gets an obnoxiously expensive and unnecessary gift.

Like a G-Wagen.

In contrast to the two of us, Lola is from a huge family. Being the youngest and the only girl guaranteed her the number one spot in her house, and she has no problem putting Aaron in his place.

I'm still hiding out in my room when my phone buzzes, and Ryan's name flashes on my screen.

RYAN

The boys wanna throw a party tonight. Your place instead?

They were supposed to be going to a pep rally or some shit, but now they're staying home.

Just wanna be alone w you.

Sure, roommates are in though.

Will have to be quiet.

Ha

Should probably give yourself that instruction in a mirror.

You free now?

Yeah, come over.

Omw. Bringing snacks.

"Everyone friends again?" I call out cautiously as I make my way from my bedroom to the living room. They're both fixated on the *Criminal Minds* rerun on the TV, but I get a faint "Yeah" in response, letting me know it's safe to approach.

I lean over the couch for a handful of popcorn from the bowl resting between them, making a mental note to add it to my food tracker when I get back to my room. “So, the basketball team is having a party. I was wondering—”

“If we will go with you?” Aaron interrupts, sounding uncharacteristically hopeful.

“No?”

Lola spins to face me, her red curls bouncing around her shoulders and delight written all over her face. “If we mind that Ryan wants to come here?”

“Yeah. How did yo—?”

“Cough up, Carlisle,” she laughs, holding out her hand. He presses a few twenties into her palm, muttering something under his breath as she counts them out. “We heard about the party, and I didn’t think you’d wanna get railed with drunk freshmen making out on the other side of the door. We’re going to walk there.”

Our home is one of Aaron’s dad’s better *forgive me* presents. It was either after his affair with his secretary or before he decided to have sex with the interior designer. Maple Tower is a beautiful condo block on the edge of campus, and our place has a great view and tons of natural light.

The building isn’t exclusive to students, so it’s a peaceful place to live, but it’s close enough to everyone else that stumbling home from parties is easy.

Aaron and I aren’t supposed to be at parties, but what Aubrey doesn’t know won’t hurt her.

I’VE ALREADY WATCHED LOLA TRY on ten different outfits when Ryan texts to let me know he’s finally on his way up, giving me an excuse to leave her and her ten almost identical black dresses.

The butterflies I get when there is a knock at the door and I know Ryan is on the other side of it were strange to me at first, but now it’s cute.

He’s practically filling the doorway when I open the door to let him in. His messy blond hair is still damp, and he smells strongly of orange and something I can’t quite put my finger on, which is now weirdly comforting to me. His head dips to mine, and his lips press against my cheek lightly. “Hello, beautiful.”

He hands me the bag of snacks he always insists on bringing because apparently, I don’t eat enough, and I don’t have anything good to eat when he’s here. Ryan eats more than any person I know, and his version of good is loaded with sugar.

For some reason, Aaron and Lo are watching us from the living room like they’ve never seen other human beings before. Ryan laughs when he spots them; fortunately, he’s used to their antics by now, and he offers them a quiet “Hello” as I lead him in the direction of my bedroom.

“Hey, Rothwell?” Lola shouts as we reach my door.

He lets go of my hand, turning around to face her. “Yeah?”

She’s leaning over the back of the couch, and I know from the mischievous look on her face I don’t want to hear whatever she has to say.

“Since my bedroom is next to Stassie’s and I’m going to be listening to your grunting and balls slapping all night”—my eyes widen as far as they can go from behind him—“can I have the code for your room, so I don’t have to fight for the shared bathroom at the party at your place?”

Campus housing has electronically coded locks on bedroom doors for security. Ryan’s room has a private bathroom, so Lo’s request is a good idea since the bathroom line gets ridiculous the drunker people get.

It’s her delivery that’s going to require some serious work.

“Sure, I’ll text it to you. No snooping, Mitchell. I’ll know if you have.”

She holds up a peace sign. “Scout’s honor. Enjoy all the sex.”

"Jesus, Lols." I groan loud enough for her to hear as I drag Ryan into my room away from her. "I'm so sorry."

"I like her. She's funny." He chuckles, taking my face between his hands and tilting my head up so he can kiss me.

It's soft at first, then more urgent as his tongue moves against mine. His hands travel down my body gently until they reach my thighs, scooping me up in one quick motion. My legs automatically wrap around his waist, my body familiar with his after doing this so many times.

There's banging outside of my room, which I *think* is my roommates leaving, but every hot kiss Ryan places on my neck steals my attention away. I should check if it is them going, but it suddenly plummets to the bottom of things on my mind when Ryan lowers me to the bed and climbs on top of me.

"How was your day?" he mumbles beneath my ear.

He always does this. He kisses me perfectly, positions his body between my legs, applies enough pressure to have me squirm, scrambles the thoughts in my head, and *then* asks me something mundane like how my day was.

The second I try to formulate a response, his fingers journey beneath my T-shirt, and he traces the curve of my jaw with his nose. Every inch of my skin feels like it's buzzing, and he hasn't even done anything yet. "It was, uh, uhm, fine, I, mhmm, skated . . ."

His body rocks as he laughs. "You mhmm skated? Sounds interesting. Why don't you tell me more, Allen?"

I hate him. I really, really hate him.

I incoherently mumble something about ice and Russians as he strips us of our clothes until we're both in our underwear. Ryan's body would make a Greek god weep; tanned skin from his summer home in Miami, and a torso with more abs than I can count.

Forget a Greek god, it makes *me* want to weep.

Gripping my panties on each hip, he waits until I nod before

slowly pulling them down my legs, throwing them behind him, and spreading my legs wide.

"Stas."

"Yeah?"

His forehead creases. "Can Lola really hear my balls?"

*Chapter Two*

NATHAN

THERE'S A HAND NEAR MY dick that isn't mine.

She's fast asleep, snoring loudly with her hand wrapped around my waist and tucked into the band of my boxers. I gently untuck and examine it—long fake nails, Cartier rings, and a Rolex strapped to her slender wrist.

*Who the fuck is it?*

Even after a night of God knows what, she still smells expensive, and there are strands of long golden-blond hair draped over my shoulder from where she's lying behind me.

I shouldn't have gone to the party last night, but Benji Harding, and the rest of the basketball guys, are persuasive little shits. As much as I love throwing a party, nothing beats going somewhere else and coming home to a quiet house not full of other people's mess.

Unless you're talking about this kind of mess. The kind where there's a woman in your bed, and you can't remember who the hell it is.

The commonsense part of my brain tells me to roll over and look at her, but another part that remembers all the silly situations we've gotten ourselves into keeps reminding me that drunk Nate is a dick.

*That part of my brain has real concerns this is going to be someone's sister, or worse, someone's mom.*

"Can you stop moving about?" the mystery guest snaps. "What is it with fucking sports guys and early mornings?"

That voice. It's one I wish I didn't recognize.

*Oh fuck.*

I slowly roll over so I can confirm my own worst fear: that I did have sex with Kitty Vincent last night.

And I do.

She looks peaceful when she's trying to sleep; her facial features are soft and delicate, lips blushed and pursed. From how calm she looks right now, you wouldn't know she's an absolute raging bit—

"Why are you staring at me, Nate?" Her eyes fly open, and she disintegrates me with one look, like the fucking dragon she is.

Kitty Vincent is everything wrong with rich girls with Daddy's credit card, a subspecies of women at UCMH I happen to be an expert on. Expertise I've gained from having sex with practically all of them.

Except for this one.

I was never supposed to do it with this one.

There's nothing wrong with her visually. To be frank, she's an absolute knockout. She's just an absolutely terrible human being.

"Are you okay?" I ask carefully. "Do you need anything?"

"I need you to stop staring at me like you've never seen a naked woman in your bed before," she snipes back, pushing her body to lean against the headboard. "We both know you have, and you're creeping me out."

"I'm shocked, Kit. I, uh, don't remember how this happened . . ."

I remember being at the party and trying to get Summer Castillo-West to give me her number, but tragically being rejected for the fourth September in a row. I also remember playing beer pong with Danny Adeleke and losing, which I'd rather not remember, but I still don't remember how *this* happened.

"Oh shit. Wait, aren't you dating Danny?"

She rolls her blue eyes and reaches for her purse sitting on the table beside my bed, cursing when she finds her phone battery is dead. Brushing her hair from her face, she finally looks over at me,

and I have never known a woman to look so irritated by my existence. “We broke up.”

“Right, right. That sucks, I’m sorry. What happened?”

I’m trying to be polite, a gracious host, some would say, but she raises one of her perfectly sculpted eyebrows at me and frowns. “Why do you give a fuck?”

I rub my jaw nervously with my palm as I attempt to think of a reason to give her. She’s right; I don’t care. I just hate cheaters and I panicked, but since they broke up I don’t have anything to worry about. “Only trying to be nice.”

She gives me the fakest smile I’ve ever seen, swings her legs off the bed, and struts butt-ass naked toward my bathroom. It’s hard to concentrate on how good she looks because, with one last disinterested look over her shoulder, she scowls at me. “If you want to be nice, get me an Uber.”

*Thank God.* “Sure.”

“Exec only, Nate. It’s bad enough I’m going to be seen leaving here. Don’t make me suffer further by being cheap.”

When the bathroom door slams shut and I hear the shower turn on, I know it’s safe to scream every curse word I know into my pillow.

I’M STANDING AT THE FRONT door watching Kitty climb into her Uber, Exec obviously, because of all the potential shame.

Raking a hand through my hair, I can’t decipher how I ended up here after swearing this year would be different.

I distinctly remember saying to Robbie, my best friend, on our drive back to California from Colorado, that senior year was going to be different. I must have said it at least twenty times on our two-day coffee-fueled journey.

I lasted three weeks.

I’m quickly dragged from the pity party I’m throwing for myself by the sound of muttering behind me. Robbie and my other room-

mates, JJ and Henry, are all sitting in our living room sipping their mugs of coffee like the cast of *The View*.

“Well, well, well,” Robbie says smugly. “What happened here, you little ho?”

Robbie has been personally terrorizing me since we were five years old. Robbie’s dad, whom I still call Mr. H sixteen years later, was the coach of our local ice hockey team back in Eagle County, where we grew up. That’s where we met and became friends, and he’s been a pain in my ass ever since.

I ignore him and head straight past their prying eyes to the kitchen, pouring a mug of coffee and giving him the finger instead of the satisfaction of a response.

Gulping down my coffee in what feels like two seconds, I can still sense their eyes on me. This is the worst part of living with your teammates—nothing is a secret.

JJ, Robbie, and I are all seniors who have lived together since we shared a dorm freshman year, but Henry is a sophomore from the team.

The guy is incredible at hockey but has a bit to go with the whole social pressure side that comes with being on a sports team. He hated living in dorms and struggled to make friends outside the team, so we offered to let him move in here.

We’ve always had a spare bedroom because our garage was converted into a wheelchair-accessible bedroom for Robbie, and Henry was more than grateful for the offer.

Even in the three short weeks he’s been here, we can already see him more confident—which is probably why he no longer has a problem helping JJ and Robbie give me abuse.

“Why did you have sex with Kitty Vincent?” Henry asks over the rim of his coffee mug. “She isn’t very nice.”

Oh yeah, and the kid has *zero* filter.

“I’m going to pretend I didn’t, buddy. She wasn’t very excited