

NUKA AND SASHA BONUS SCENE  
FROM PROTECTING WILLIAM

TWO YEARS AGO—SASHA

“So, what’s the deal with you and the bartender?” my sister, Nuka, asked.

“Is this why you dragged me to the freaking rooftop with the promise of ice cream? To grill me on my love life?” *Or lack thereof.*

“He’s all wrong for you,” she said as she shoved her ice cream cone in her mouth.

“Not exactly looking for husband material in the hellhole we call home.”

She screwed up her face. “Do not call Litmus our home.”

“Well it is, isn’t it? We’ve been talking about getting out for three years already. So while we’re stuck here, I’ll go out with whoever I want. I’ll look for a steady boyfriend when we’re out. Someone who’s normal. Someone who has absolutely nothing to do with Litmus.”

“That’s what you want? Someone *normal*?”

“And dumb as doornails. He won’t care I’m smarter than him, because *everyone* will be smarter than him.”

She laughed at me, but I was kinda serious. Guys were intimidated by my intelligence, and I was never going to be one of those girls who dumbed themselves down to please a man. *Screw that.*

“So a non-Immune who doesn’t know how to spell his own name?”

“And black, greasy hair. No muscles. Doesn’t talk much. Has the sense of humour of a fish.”

“You paint an attractive picture, Sash. But you do realise you’ve described someone who could never break your heart.”

I cocked my head to the side. “And people say you’re the dumb sister.”

She pulled back in shock. “Who said that?”

“I can’t reveal my sources. But I can say his name starts with C and ends with olton.”

“Colt? That’s rich coming from him. He’s not the brightest crayon in the box.”

“Or sharpest tool in the shed,” I added.

“The light’s on but nobody’s home with that one.”

“He’s a few cards short of a deck.”

“As sharp as a marble.”

“The elevator doesn’t go all the way to the top floor.”

She pursed her lips. “Are we still talking about how dumb Colt is or are we just saying random shit now?”

I laughed. “Dunno. Don’t care. So long as you’re backing off about the bartender.”

“Well, he marks one thing off your list.”

“He does?”

“Yeah, he’d give Colt a run for his money in the brains department. Are you sure a small town somewhere isn’t missing their village idiot?”

I sighed. “You’re right. The antenna doesn’t pick up all the channels.”

“He’s as smart as bait.”

“We better not start this again,” I said. “But I’m fine, okay, sis? I know what I’m doing.”

“I just want you to be happy. Like I am with Brett.”

“Yeah, well, not everyone has a heart like Brett. It’d be physically impossible for him to hurt you.”

She scoffed. “Are you forgetting that before Ryker came along, Brett used to train me? Physically impossible? I have memories of bruises to contradict that.”

“Training doesn’t count. I’m sure he didn’t *enjoy* kicking your ass. But I mean emotionally. It would kill him if he ever hurt you. And he’d kill anyone else who’d hurt you too.”

“You’ll find that one day, but not if you keep going for the complete opposite of your ideal guy.”

“Whatever,” I mumbled as I finished off my ice cream. “Lecture over with, then?”

She grunted in frustration. “Fine, get out of here.”

As I walked towards the door, her voiced followed after me.

“Just be prepared to get knocked on your ass when Mr. Right falls at your feet.”

*Not likely.*

## *ONE YEAR AGO*

When I dragged the hot blond guy out on the dance floor when I should’ve been working, I knew I was in trouble. But I wanted a distraction.

I was getting itchy. And not in the “I need to see a doctor” way.

Four years of trying to get out of Litmus, I was restless.

The plan was to have fun with the random stranger and live off the memories until the next time I got itchy. He'd go home with the memory of hooking up at Litmus and wouldn't give me another thought.

Fate had other ideas. Not only did he turn out to be my half-sister's adoptive brother, but he also happened to be the one who would bring Litmus down.

He became my saviour. My knight in shining armour. Not that I was a damsel in distress. I did my own fair share of ass kicking. But we wouldn't have got to that point if it hadn't been for William.

*NOW*

As I stared up at my handsomely delicious boyfriend with glassy eyes, his amused smirk matched my own.

We were both a wee bit drunk.

"Who has a joint bachelor-bachelorette party?" I grumbled.

They'd just ambushed our quiet night of drinking (minus the bride because she was pregnant) and girly things like facials, manicures, and pedicures.

Will came straight over to me, lifted me off my spot on the floor and took my mouth like he owned it. Which, really, he did.

There were grumbles around the room about inappropriate PDA, and considering his mother was sitting right across from me, I had to pull myself out of his grasp.

His arms wrapped around my back and brought me closer to him again, not letting me get away. "Brett's idea to gatecrash. Although, it wasn't meant to be that way. We had every intention of staying away and giving you girls your space."

"So, what happened?"

"What do you think? Seth made a joke about you hiring male strippers."

I burst out laughing. "So, naturally, Brett decided to come and intimidate the poor guy?"

"Something like that," he muttered.

My eyes narrowed. "You had something to do with it too."

His eyes widened in shock. "Me? Not at all."

I coughed in between saying "Bullshit."

"Okay. I'm a little bit guilty."

“Well, he—and you—will be happy to know Nuka gave a strict *no strippers* rule when Illy and I were told to organise this. She says her waddling butt wouldn’t be able to enjoy a half-naked, sweaty man all over her unless it was Brett.”

He screwed up his face. “Not something I want to hear about my sister. And I can’t believe she’s only four months pregnant. It looks like she’s got a basketball underneath her shirt.”

“Shh.” I slapped his chest. “She’s highly sensitive over her size. Although, with Brett as the father, I’m not shocked. He’s giant everywhere.”

A growl came from deep within Will’s chest. “How do you know he’s giant *everywhere*?”

“Trust me; it was by accident. When they first got together, they didn’t have a lock on their bedroom door. It took a few times for me to remember to knock before just walking in.”

“Honey,” he said through gritted teeth, “you have an eidetic memory. You’d think you would’ve learnt the first time.”

I did, but I secretly loved it when he acted all jealous-like.

When I first met Will in the belly of litmus, all I was looking for was a shiny distraction to take me away from the hellhole I lived in. Even if it was only for one dance, one hour, or one night. But with one kiss, I was hooked.

I fought my feelings the whole way, of course. That was the Sasha way. I never made things easy on myself. *Where’s the fun in that?*

I never imagined settling down with someone who was my equal in nearly everything in life, but I also never imagined guys like Will existed.

Nuka was right a few years ago when she said the perfect guy would come along and knock me on my ass.

“Move in with me,” I murmured.

“Hello, complete randomness.”

“It’s not random. You’ve been asking me for months.”

“Yes, but I don’t know how we went from talking about Brett’s junk to moving in together.”

“Because you look handsome.” We wobbled a bit. “Your face is how we got there.”

He laughed. “You’re drunker than I thought.”

“Yeppers. Still wanna live with you though. It occurred to me this week that living with a baby probably won’t be fun. Plus, I’m sure Nuka and Brett want to have proper family time without the crazy aunt hanging around.”

“As much as I’m dying to move in with you, if you’re not ready, we can—”

“I’m ready. This isn’t a drunken passing thought. I’ve been thinking about it for a while.”

He grinned. "Then I'm in."

"It's official," Nuka cut in. Loudly. I didn't realise she was eavesdropping. "When I throw the bouquet at the wedding, I'm aiming for Sash."

"Calm down," I said, "we're just moving in together."

Nuka smiled. "I think it's about time I tell Will about a conversation you and I had a few years ago."

"I have no idea what you mean," I lied. I knew exactly what was coming. "And I think it's about time the boys leave, right? You came, you saw there were no male strippers, so now you can go back to being bachelors instead of bachelorettes."

Will held on tighter. "Nah, something tells me I'm going to wanna hear this."

Nuka cleared her throat as all the guests turned their attention to her.

"Shouldn't we be telling a Brett and Nuka story?" I cut her off. "This is *their* night. Ooh, like what about the time Nuka waited for Brett in the Deakin locker room, completely naked, only Colt was the one who turned up first."

"I remember that!" Colton called out from somewhere in the back.

Brett scowled. "I told you to erase that from your memory, asshole."

"Yeah," Mum cut in, "I don't want to be hearing about my daughter's sexcapades."

"I wanna hear the story about Sash," Will said, earning a scowl from me. "You're cute when you're mad." He kissed my nose.

"That's why you like to piss me off?"

"Whatever, you love me."

"I do ... for reasons beyond me."

"Because I'm adorable."

Nuka spoke up. "Because you're not a greasy-haired, dumbass with no sense of humour."

"Huh?" Will pulled back.

"About two years ago," Nuka continued, "Sasha was describing her perfect man. She said he'd have dark hair."

Will ran his hand through his short, neat, blond hair.

"And as well as being *normal*, he was also going to be dumber than everyone she knew, because she was sure she'd never meet anyone who gave her a run for her money in the smarts department."

Will had an eidetic memory too. He was also full of useless information and randomly spouted facts about anything and everything.

"And the kicker," Nuka said, "he had to have the sense of humour of a fish."

“Hey, one out of four ain’t bad,” Illyana said.

Will gave his younger sister the finger and then turned to me. “Is that right? Your perfect guy’s the complete opposite of me?”

“Yep. But you won me over anyway.” I grinned.

“Damn right, I did. And just so you know, I’m gonna marry you one day. Can you deal with that?”

“Nuka,” I called out.

“Yeah?”

“When you throw the bouquet ... aim for me.”