

COME AS YOU ARE bonus scene

Flynn

A whoosh lands on my ears as I shave. I turn off the water, set down the razor, and wipe the shaving cream off my face. I leave the spacious bathroom, looking for the source of the sound.

Curiosity grips me as I walk across the hardwood floor, my eyes zeroing in on an envelope. It's beige and my name is written on the front in calligraphy.

I glance at the bed. It's perfectly made, and Sabrina left for a work a half hour ago, so I'm not sure if she left it then. Or if someone else dropped this off.

Bending, I pick it up, and slide my thumb under the flap. I take out a thick sheet of stationery and unfold it.

Duke,

The pleasure of your presence is requested this Saturday night at our favorite kind of party. Costumes will be prepared by your favorite seamstress, and left out for you. You may meet your companion at the bar. You'll recognize her.

Your Angel

Smiling, I tuck the envelope into the book I've been reading about space exploration. Of course I'll recognize her. I recognized her that time at The Dollhouse. She's the one I'm always looking for. Those eyes own me. That smile belongs to me.

I can't wait to see what she has in store.

I text her a reply.

Duke: As you request, I will be ready.

Duke: By the way, did you slip back into the apartment to drop off the invitation?

Angel: Yes, and I caught a peek of you shaving. Incidentally, you look hot shaving. But then again, you always look hot.

Duke: I find it hot that you were spying on me.

Angel: You make it hard not to.

Duke: You make other things hard.

Angel: *rolls eyes at your jokes that I adore*

Duke: It's no joke. I'm definitely hard.

Angel: I'll put it to good use after work.

And she does.

I adjust my cap. Button the last button on my pin-striped shirt. Grab my glove.

All systems are go.

I head to the party at a mansion in the East Sixties. Music pounds from the ballroom, and I slide on my mask and head inside.

I make my way to the bar, ask for a glass of champagne, and then wait, scanning the room, hunting for a woman in white.

A few minutes later, she arrives, filling out the dress better than the actress herself did. Her hair is styled like the most famous blonde in movies, and the satin clings to her lush frame.

I ask for another glass, and when the bartender hands it to me, I head for the woman. *My woman.*

“You’re no ordinary movie star,” I say, a variation on the first words I ever said to her.

“And you’re no ordinary center fielder,” she says from behind her white mask.

I offer her the champagne.

We drink, and then I ask her to dance.

As I wrap a hand around her hip, she runs her fingers up my arms. “Nice arms. I’ve been admiring them all night.”

“Have you?”

“And the uniform too. I love how it fits. Everywhere.”

We move closer to each other, and I glide my hand around her waist, just like we promised we’d

do at the costume shop a few months ago.

She loops her hands around my neck. "I've always had a thing for athletes."

"I've always had a thing for parties like this. You never know what might happen at a costume party. A dance, maybe more."

That's exactly what does happen. We dance, and then we *more* when we find a coat closet down the hall. Time is of the essence, so I kiss her deeply as my hands make their way under her skirt. She's fast too as she undoes my pants, and soon we're in the first position we ever found ourselves in.

She's against the wall. I'm inside her, and her legs are wrapped around my waist. Tonight, we're Joe and Marilyn, skipping first, second, and third base, and sliding into home. When she comes, I'd say my costume is a grand slam.

Hers too.

We go to many more costume parties and masquerade balls. For Halloween, Sabrina designs a mad data scientist costume for me, complete with a lab coat with letters and numbers written on it. For herself, she crafts an internet cat meme, wearing a cat costume with cardboard mugs attached to the sleeves, which she can remove and knock off any surface.

At the Halloween party, we dance, practicing some of the moves we learned together. A little tango, a little foxtrot.

"YouTube is a beautiful thing," I tell her when I tug her close.

"We are such nerds learning to tango from YouTube," she says, laughing, as she presses her breasts against me.

"Hot, sexy nerd I want to kiss."

“I always want to kiss you, Flynn.”

That sounds like an invitation I ought to RSVP to, so I do, kissing her hard, and deeply, reminding her that she’s mine. Only mine. Always mine.

But that’s not really something either one of us ever forgets. The way she melts into me, as we dance, and later, when I make love to her, is all the reminder we’ll both ever need that we belong to each other.

Costumes, or no costumes.