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Episode Five

Maeve

A week later, I sip tea on my balcony, breathing in the steam from my mug. Cars stream by and the Thames stretches past in the distance. Behind me, my suitcase leans packed and ready against the door.

In a few days, my best friend will be married.

I'd planned to go solo. Catch the flight to New York and do a fair amount of crying.

But now, I'll be watching all of Dean's dreams come true, and at the end of the night, I won't be dancing alone. I'll be dancing with Sam.

Sam. Rugged, incredible, delicious Sam.

Memories of the last few nights rush through my mind. And last night too. I shiver as I remember Sam's hands traveling up my arm, sliding my dress off. The feel of his mouth on mine.

Since the Night for Lost Stars event, we've been making up for wasted time. Now that I've had a taste, I can't get enough of Sam.

I close my eyes, replaying how he pressed me back against the wall, anchoring me with his arms.

But I can't linger on the memories. I have a plane to catch, and messages to answer, including one from my California friend.

Maeve: You asked if it's worth it. To date a friend.

Sierra: And the verdict?

Maeve: Yes. Yes it is.

I picture Sam and I smile. This friendship, this passion, this connection.

Maeve: I'm so glad we took the chance. I can't wait to hear what you do with yours.

Sierra: Ha. Me too. I can't wait either.

After I close the messages, I check the time. I finish my tea and wash up, not wanting to return to a mess. In a few hours, Sam and I will be on a plane to New York. We'll have seven hours to spend together. With anyone else, I might be worried about how to spend the time.

But with Sam, I know I'll be entertained, one way or another.

The bell to my flat rings, and within moments, Sam's at the door, dressed in casual jeans and a tight shirt.

"Hey, beautiful," he says, dropping his suitcase to the floor. His hands go straight to my waist, and I smile. "You wore my favorite yoga pants."

"I did. I wore them for you." I press my body against his, and one hand slides up my back, tangles in my hair, tugs a little. "It's going to be a long plane ride, Sam."

"Then we're going to have to make this damn quick."

Our lips collide, and then it's a race to see who can undress the other faster.

I win.

We don't arrive early at the airport. I'm not sure I've ever cut anything so close in my life, but Sam's crooked grin makes me think that some things are worth bending rules of punctuality for.

He steps close to me and tucks a loose strand of hair behind my ear. "Ready to go watch Dean get married?"

I take a deep breath and nod. "Absolutely."

We work our way through security and the usual checkpoints and onto the jetway. Sam makes everything feel easy, chatting to the flight attendants, his charm putting everyone at ease, including me.

We buckle in, and without a word, he takes my hand and laces our fingers together.

“Now, I do need to come clean about something,” he says.

I freeze.

Uh-oh.

Is this it?

The point where my perfect fantasy comes crashing down around me?

He takes a deep breath. “I’m sort of . . . nervous about takeoff.”

It takes me a minute to understand what he’s saying. “You’re afraid of flying?”

“No,” he says playfully. “I didn’t say that. You’re putting words in my mouth.”

“Sorry. You’re nervous about flying,” I tease, but not unkindly. He’s sharing this piece of himself with me—this vulnerability, and I like it. “Thank you for telling me.”

He shrugs, but behind that cocky exterior, vulnerability flashes in his eyes.

I run my hand along his cheek, drawing him closer. “It seems to me like this is just a big excuse to hold on to me.”

He winks. “You’ve figured me out. Also . . . I should add that it’s helpful if I have a distraction.”

“Oh? What kind of distraction?”

He shrugs innocently. “Maybe the kind that involves you telling me what you plan to do once we get to our hotel room.”

“Are you sure you want me to spoil the surprise?”

He grins in a way that says yes, oh yes, he would like some spoilers please.

“I was thinking how much I’d enjoy being bent over the sink and watching us in the mirror,” I say.

“Dear God in heaven, may this flight take two minutes,” Sam growls. Then he whispers in my ear, “Good thing we have this row to ourselves. Keep talking.”

I laugh as the pilot’s voice comes over the intercom, and the flight attendants begin their tutorial. The plane moves under us, getting

ready for takeoff, and his eyes slide closed as I continue to whisper into his ear about my plans for the evening. We stay like that until the plane's in the air, gliding along.

"Sam," I say, once we reach cruising altitude. "Looks like I don't need to distract you anymore."

He glances out the window. "Excellent. Now I can work on distracting you."

It's a good thing no one's sitting next to us. By the time Sam starts describing how I'll look in the mirror, I wish this plane would land right now.

Hours later, when we check into our hotel, we break the speed record undressing, falling into one another, and making each of our spoken fantasies a reality.