

All of a sudden my vision fills with a broad chest covered in a black t-shirt with the bar's logo on it. The words *The Dive Bar* are scrolled across the red and white flag known for scuba diving. In my periphery I can see the man's muscular arms as the material bunches around a wealth of biceps. Before I have a chance to lift my face to find his, he kneels, bringing his line of sight directly in front of my belly. Which mysteriously starts quivering.

Did I happen to mention my navel? Well, it's pierced. Not that that's remarkable, as many gals have their belly buttons pierced, but I also have an elaborate tattoo of a lotus flower floating on water. I had the work done only six months ago. And not that that's remarkable either, since at least a quarter of the population has tattoos.

It's just no one other than my tattoo artist—who was a female, by the way—has ever been this close in proximity to something so personal. So... intimate. At least it feels intimate.

Maybe this contest wasn't such a good idea after all.

I inhale a shaky breath as I look down onto his mass of wavy blond hair skimming his shoulders. He begins lifting his head slowly, scanning my torso, lingering on my breasts before peering up at me.

The dancing lights give me intermittent flashes at his deep green eyes bracketed by creases as he smiles, rustling up a funny feeling inside me. I canvas his tan face, noting a scar on his left temple, freckles dotting his nose, and a cleft indenting his chin. Lips, lush and pink curve even higher, and I mimic the move. Our eyes remain locked as we're both frozen in this moment.

That is until the MC barks through the microphone, shattering the bubble and causing me to jump.

"Come on, Xander, no playing favorites." He chuckles. "Mark her with a number and let's get this show on the road."

Xander never breaks eye contact as he gently skims his hand up my left leg, resting it on the back of my thigh. The warmth of his touch does more than cause a flutter inside; it heats me up, producing a burn that centers at my sex. My breaths become quick and shallow as I struggle to remain composed. I know my nipples tighten and threaten to slice through the thin material of my shirt. But his gaze never strays as he then lifts the marker, pressing it against my flesh and marking my skin.

"Lucky number seven."