

I'd always wanted more from this life so when the opportunity to study abroad for my graduate program was presented to me, I jumped on board. What better way to travel and experience life than going to another country for an entire year? What would I learn while I was there? Who would I meet? Who will I be when I return? Hell, who knows, if I like it a lot, I may not come back at all.

With my bags packed and passport stamped, I loaded onto the plane for the longest flight I'd ever taken. Sitting by the window, I watched as we got further and further away from the only home I'd ever known. Nervousness settles in my stomach at the thought of being so far away from home, but it doesn't override the excitement of a new adventure. I turn away from the Georgia skyline, plug in my earphones, and settle in for a ride into my next life.

Bumps and rumbles jolt me awake. I could barely contain my excitement as I grabbed my carry-on from the compartment above. What adventures awaited me here?

I take my first step onto this new land and inhale, taking in a lungful of the crisp, fresh air. It was nothing like the greasy scent of my hometown. Ireland, rich in culture and home of whiskey; I could only hope it brought me the luck it was known for. I shoot a quick text to my dad to let him know I've landed with a promise to call him later. The taxi I ordered pulls up and the driver steps out. I wouldn't consider myself short, but this guy was *huge*, and not just in height either. How did he even fit in that car? With thighs that thick and shoulders that wide, it *must* be uncomfortable. Let's not even get started on his arms.

"You Reigna?" I blink, dragging my eyes up to his face. "You're going to the Kerr Institute, right?"

"Yup, that's me." I go to grab my suitcase, but he beats me to it. "Oh, you don't have to do that."

"Be grand. What kind of lad would I be if I let a lady get her own bag, ay'?"

It wasn't the accent that caught my attention, it was the melodious tone to his lilt. The words fell from his round lips like a gentle yet powerful stream, juxtaposing his entire appearance. I slide into the backseat as he's shutting the trunk and watch as he comes around to get in the driver's seat. His moves were graceful for such a large man. He slid into the car with an ease that should've been impossible. I check the app for the taxi company so that I could put a name to his roguishly handsome face.

Lysander.

"Any requests?" My eyes snap up to find an emerald green pair waiting for me in the rearview mirror. He averts his eyes back to the road. "It's quite the ride to the institute and I'd hate to be one of those awkward drivers who try to make small talk. So, tunes?"

My lips curve lightly. "Bluetooth?"

He nods before tapping a few things on the display. I connect my phone and scroll through the playlist until I find a song.

"This has got to be the worst song I've ever heard."

My jaw falls open. I can't believe him! He chuckles, waving his hand. "Ah, I'm sorry. I forgot you weren't from 'round here." Lysander shakes his head. "I didn't mean to offend. Just that the song's a bit strange, that's all."

I could feel my brows pulling down. "What does where I'm from have to do with your comment?"

"Our jokes would be considered insults to people who're unaware." My nose turns up. He shakes his head. "Where ya from anyway?"

I glance out the window, chewing on my lip as I consider my answer. I mean he seems nice but you could never be too careful. I guess there's no harm. "Georgia."

He looks at me again. "What's a city girl like you doing coming way out here?"

A smile curves my lips as I watch the lively city pass by. "Adventure." When I look back at the driver, I see the tilt of his mouth from the side view.

"Well little lady, you just might find it."

His comment did nothing to smooth the smile from my face. If anything, it widened. I could only hope that he was right. I'd risked a lot coming way out here and so far, I had no regrets.

Lysander turns up the music and I find myself not watching the scenery but his reactions to each of the songs I play. The one song he seemed to like during the entire ride was Feeling Good by Nina Simone. Can't blame a man with good taste, no matter how skewed.

As we traveled down the path that led to the institute, I sucked in a breath as it appeared in the distance. I'd never seen anything like it. A castle. I'd be staying in a legit castle! I must've made

a noise because Lysander glances back at me before chuckling. The deep, husky sound drew my attention.

“She’s a thing of beauty, innit? The castle has been here for over a hundred years and it’s still standing. Of course, it’s been remodeled over time but I’m glad they decided to keep the original design,” Lysander explained.

“You seem to know quite a bit about the place,” I observed, turning my attention back to the building growing larger the closer we got.

Lysander chuckled. “Ay’, I should. I own it.”

My head snapped around. “Excuse me? Did you just say you *own* this castle? Are you fuckin’ with me?”

He was shaking his head, but I could see his cheeks rising from the side of his face. “Been passed down my family line for the past hundred years. I guess I should say my family owns it.”

I settled back in my seat fully. “So what you’re like Irish royalty or something?”

“I wouldn’t go that far,” He huffed a laugh. “My however many greats’ grandfather bought the castle for my grandmother as a wedding gift. Of course, back then it was probably only like a thousand bucks.” Lysander shakes his head. “Either way, they had a daughter and she decided to turn it into the Kerr Institute.”

I found myself staring at the side of his face as he spoke. Something about the way his jaw moved as he announced each word was so fascinating. Ireland was shaping up to be full of wonders.