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AN EXCERPT FROM WICKED GAMES

Chapter 1

Nadia had just sent off a text message when the locker room door opened. She glanced up, surprised to see her brother coming out.

“Done already? That didn’t take—” She broke off as one of the Rebels players appeared behind Nelson.

But not just any player.

Reid Holden.

When those piercing blue eyes met Nadia’s, a shiver ran through her.

She straightened quickly from the wall, her gaze darting to Nelson. His eyes were gleaming with excitement, and he had the biggest grin on his face.

As he approached with Reid, Nadia couldn’t help staring at the handsome hockey superstar. His thick dark hair was unruly, falling over his forehead in damp locks. He’d changed into a ribbed gray shirt that stretched across his wide shoulders and clung to every muscle of his broad chest and powerful biceps. His dark jeans hugged him in all the right places. As he came toward Nadia, the play of muscles in his strong thighs made her mouth water.

“Nadia,” her brother said with that ridiculous shit-eating grin, “there’s someone I’d like you to meet.”

Why? Nadia wondered, feeling like a deer in headlights as Reid Holden came

to a stop directly in front of her. He was wearing a pair of heavy black boots. Even without his skates on, he was tall enough to tower over her.

“Nadia, this is Reid Holden,” Nelson introduced them. “Reid, this is my sister, Nadia.”

Ignoring her racing pulse, Nadia smiled and extended her hand. “Hi.” Her voice was little more than breath. “Nice to meet you.”

Reid stared down at her as he took her hand, his large, callused palm curling around hers and swallowing it in a firm grip. The contact sent a rush of arousal from her fingertips to her swelling clit.

“The pleasure’s mine, Nadia.” His voice was much deeper than she’d expected. It slid over her, spreading heat through her veins and making her insides go all tingly.

She quickly withdrew her hand and stepped back, needing to put some distance between herself and the sexy-as-sin jock.

Nelson was still grinning like a Cheshire cat. “Reid saw you during practice and wanted an introduction.”

“Oh?” Trying to mask her surprise, Nadia looked from her brother to Reid. “Did you at least give him a quote for his story first?”

Reid’s eyes glinted. “Only on the condition that he introduce me to you.”

“I see.” Nadia bit her lip, contemplating him.

A small white scar ran above his left eye, and there was a crook in his nose where it had been broken before. Instead of detracting from his good looks, the imperfections only amplified his rugged masculinity. Reid Holden was a badass, a tough guy who gave as good as he got and had the battle scars to show for it.

Suddenly Nadia realized that he was staring back at her, returning her appraisal. As those intense blue eyes slowly traced her features, her palms moistened and her heart began beating a little faster.

Okay, a lot faster.

She took a deep breath, trying to steady herself as she racked her brain for something clever to say. Something to defuse the awareness sizzling between them like high-voltage electric currents.

“So, Mr. Holden—”

“Reid.”

She faltered, blinking. “What?”

The corners of his mouth twitched. “Mr. Holden’s my old man. Call me Reid.”

“Um...” She swallowed. “Okay.”

His eyes glinted. With amusement or approval, she couldn’t tell. “Mind if I call you Nadia?”

When she shook her head, he smiled. And damn if her knees didn’t go weak. She couldn’t help it. Between his gorgeous face, ripped body and insanely sexy voice, the man was a walking wet dream.

“Beautiful name, by the way.”

Nadia licked her dry lips. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” he said, his gaze lowering to her mouth.

She could feel the heat coming off his big body, feel her skin tingling and her

scalp prickling with awareness. He smelled positively delicious, like soap and hard-working man. When he shifted a little closer, her belly clenched, and for a moment it was hard to breathe.

Although she was no stranger to sexual attraction, she'd never experienced anything like this before.

"Now what were you saying?"

Nadia stared up at Reid, her thoughts scattered. "Saying...?"

"A moment ago. I think you were about to ask me something."

"Oh." She bit her lip. "I don't remember."

He nodded, watching her intently. "Are you coming to our season opener on Thursday?"

The question caught her off guard. "Um...well...I hadn't really planned—"

"Nadia's not much of a hockey fan," Nelson interjected apologetically. Until that moment, Nadia had completely forgotten he was there. "But I'll be at the game."

Reid nodded, but he didn't look satisfied. Lowering his eyes, he stared at Nadia beneath his dark lashes.

Heat rose in her cheeks. Suddenly the ground beneath her felt as slippery as if she were standing on ice.

What does he want from me? she wondered.

Just then the locker room door opened, and the Rebels' head coach stuck his head out and called to Reid, "Holden. Got a minute?"

Reid cast a lazy glance over his shoulder. "Be there in a sec."

The coach nodded and ducked back through the door.

As Reid returned his attention to Nadia, Nelson piped up, "Any chance I could interview you for the *Dispatch*?"

Without taking his eyes off Nadia's face, Reid murmured, "I don't give interviews."

Nelson was undeterred. "I know you don't. But since you've already broken your silence by giving me a quote, I was hoping you'd be open to answering more questions."

Reid stared at Nadia another moment, then shifted his gaze to Nelson. "I don't give interviews," he repeated.

Nelson grinned sheepishly. "Sure you won't reconsider?"

Reid gave him a long look, his eyes narrowed.

Oh, shit, Nadia thought. Nelson must have pushed him too hard.

The same thought apparently occurred to her brother, because he visibly swallowed. But before he could start squirming, Reid chuckled and began backing across the hallway.

Determined to press his luck, Nelson called out, "So is that a definite n—"

Reid pointed to Nadia. "Bring her to the game."

Before Nadia could sputter out a protest, Nelson promised, "She'll be there."

Reid nodded, a satisfied smile quirking his lips before he turned and disappeared inside the locker room.

Nadia watched him go, then swung around to stare at Nelson in stunned

disbelief. “What the hell was that?”

Nelson laughed, cupped her face between his hands and planted a smacking kiss on her forehead. “*That*, dear sister, was my lucky break!”