**The Black Sheep**

by \*Lady Lucia\*

**PART ONE**

The water was freezing.

Alyssa made the mistake of dipping her toes in to test the temperature, which only made the upcoming task more daunting than before.

An icy cold lake. The worst possible ‘outfit’ for the occasion. And a secret she would do anything to keep.

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It all started just before 8th grade.

Alyssa and Sophie used to be the closest of girls. The two cousins only lived a single state away from each other, and their families spent countless holidays and vacations together. While the girls’ parents didn’t necessarily consider themselves “rich,” they were definitely well off. On top of their regular homes, Alyssa’s parents owned a mountain cabin, and Sophie’s owned a lake house.

When they were kids, everyone would joke that Sophie and Alyssa were ‘twins,’ and the girls never had much of a problem with the reputation. The big difference was their blonde and brunette hair, but they were nearly identical in everything else. Aside from color, they had the same hair type, and stayed around the same height and size throughout the course of their childhoods, as well as a few similar facial features due to being cousins. When together, the girls had a habit of swapping outfits, matching hairstyles, and generally being inseparable throughout any given vacation.

Until they were teenagers.

Like most girls, they both quickly grew out of their more cute and childish ways once middle school began. It was a subtle shift at first, but it soon came apparent that they were quite different girls from each other now that separate friend groups and experiences in separate states began shaping them. Each time there was some holiday or family gathering, every conversation between the two of them felt more and more forced, and it was mostly their common age that kept them together amidst the adults and younger kids surrounding them.

And then there was the frisbee game that changed everything. Every summer, their extended families had a tradition of playing Ultimate Frisbee whenever the July bar-b-cue took place. The teams were more or less the same each time, though it wasn’t the popular family vs. family game. Instead, it was a fair division of age and skill level. Because of their childhood closeness, Alyssa and Sophie had always been exempt from the even age distribution, despite them being born within a few months of each other.

But that all changed when they were both thirteen. In the summer between their 7th and 8th grade middle school years, Sophie and Alyssa both collided with each other HARD in a mutual attempt to catch the frisbee they had both been too focused on. The fully running kind of collision that made them literally butt heads and then go crashing to the ground together.

Both girls immediately blamed the other for their throbbing heads and little scrapes and bruises from the rough fall. It was an amusing sight to anyone watching, though a few aunts and uncles tried to explain that things like that can happen. They were both too focused on the catch, and it was no one’s fault. Unfortunately, logic doesn’t always work when it comes to bitter teenage girls. It was Alyssa who suggested they separate into different teams, referencing the age factor and how they shouldn’t be on the same side anyway. Sophie instantly agreed, and that was that. For the rest of the game, each girl covered the other one with a vengeance, aggressively blocking any attempted pass to the point where one of the adults eventually (and wisely) called the game early before things got more catty between the two of them.

By the time dinner rolled around, the two girls had cooled down, but the damage had already been done. They were no longer two cousins who were friends due to age and circumstance. They were two cousins who were low key at odds with each other.

It was subtle at first.

As infuriating as their frisbee collision was, it was less like flicking a switch and more like sparking a fuse. Just enough drama to set things in motion. The team switching was just the beginning when it came to their budding rivalry. The next few family gatherings had an air of competition between Sophie and Alyssa, though no one else felt it except the two of them.

It started with little things. Alyssa would talk about how she was getting into student government, and then Sophie would counter with her JV soccer experience. But not right away. Sophie would ‘respectfully’ wait a few minutes, then lead with her own accomplishments. Then she talked about her art, and Alyssa used the same tactic to talk about her music. Just like the game of frisbee, neither girl could be pinpointed as the aggressor. They were both trying to one-up the other, but always did so while politely playing nice in front of family.

The pattern continued through 8th grade, and then into their high school years. Grades, extracurriculars, and hobbies. It’s not as if they were competing FOR anything, but the unspoken rivalry had been too established for either of them to back down. They also had a habit of stealing outfit ideas from the other as another way to make little unspoken jabs. By the time they were both sophomores, Alyssa was more on the preppy side, while Sophie was a little more alternative. Still, it was easy enough for each girl to check out the other on Facebook/Instagram and adapt a creative outfit idea to something more fitting in terms of their particular style and colors. Even after developing curves as teenagers, their body types remained nearly identical. Another reason it was so easy to steal inspiration from the other.

For all their little attempts to outdo the other, neither girl had ever ‘won.’ Not that there was anything to win. It wasn’t the kind of rivalry with pranks, or snarky remarks, or tiny acts of violence. Both Alyssa and Sophie were cordial enough to each other around their extended family. The unspoken tension between them only ever resulted in the same attempts at one-upping and passive aggressive behavior.

That is, until the Thanksgiving that changed everything.

It was Sophie’s family’s turn to host Thanksgiving, and they had opted to do so at the lake house. The vacation spot was more like a house and less like a cabin, with more than enough bedrooms for everyone staying. Both she and Alyssa were 16, a few months into their sophomore year in high school. And just like usual, they started things off on a competitive foot.

Sophie’s brunette hair was shoulder length, and she wore one of her usual combos - dark jeans, a dark tank top, and a lighter sleeveless cardigan. Alyssa had been the first of the two of them to chop off her blonde locks and rock the shoulder length hair, and Sophie couldn’t resist doing the same when she saw how cute it looked in a recent social media post. And, when Alyssa saw that Sophie had stolen the haircut, her reaction was to go out of her way and shop for something that would resemble one of her cousin's outfits before the long holiday weekend. Foregoing her normally bright colors and mildly conservative clothes, Alyssa arrived wearing matching jeans and a pine green tank top that had the same dark and lace style Sophie’s did, as well as a similar gray-ish cardigan. She had really banked on Sophie going with the dark green tank top from a few recent online posts due to it being a popular Thanksgiving color, but her hosting cousin ended up greeting her at the door with a burgundy one instead. Regardless, their outfits were close enough for Sophie to notice immediately.

Both girls began their usual song and dance as they ‘caught up’ via sharing what they had been up to since the start of the school year, and faked smiles when anyone compared their current appearances and referenced a ‘twin’ story or two from when they were kids. Alyssa had really hoped Sophie would be the first one to break and change outfits, but her own impatience ended up getting the better of her.

“Hey, Sophie? Where am I staying tonight?” Alyssa sauntered into the kitchen where Sophie had been tasked with setting up some appetizers as part of her hosting responsibilities. Now that more people were beginning to arrive, Alyssa wanted to change into her Thanksgiving dress. It was brand new, and she was beyond eager to rock such a flattering outfit. While a family holiday wasn’t how she’d normally ‘premiere’ an exciting dress, looking classy and mature compared to Sophie’s typical alternative look was too appealing of an idea.

“Not now, Alyssa. Why don’t you go put your feet up?” Sophie faked a small smile. The kitchen opened up to the living room, which gave her the perfect opportunity to play hostess. “Don’t worry, I’ll get your things where they need to go.”

“You’re the best!” Alyssa returned the smile, though her friendly voice was laced with a little more sarcasm. “I’ll just use the bathroom to change, I guess.”

Oh. Alyssa wanted to change. What better time for Sophie to have a little fun with her cousin than when on her home turf? “Oh, why didn’t you say so?” Sophie asked. She didn’t really have a plan, but she had a minute or two to figure it out. “Hold on, okay? I’ll meet you at the stairs.”

“Alright, cool,” Alyssa nodded. She resisted the urge to roll her eyes at the mildly patronizing words and wandered off to the stairs by the front door while Sophie finished up the appetizer tray and washed her hands.

Sure enough, Sophie took her sweet time, making Alyssa awkwardly dawdle at the base of the stairs for a few minutes. But then she finally appeared with Alyssa’s duffel from the delegated ‘stuff closet’ nearby, where everything was haphazardly thrown until it could be dealt with after the meal prep and other hosting duties were done.

“This way!” Sophie winked. Now that they were partially out of sight from any prying eyes, she let go of the bag and let it unceremoniously thud to the floor, not particularly caring if there might be anything fragile inside. “Don’t dally, Alyssa. It’s rude.” Then Sophie bounded up the stairs, not making any effort to wait for her.

Alyssa just rolled her eyes, picked up her bag, and walked up the stairs at her own pace. She saw Sophie waiting for her at the end of the hall, and learned that the two of them would apparently be sharing a room. “…and, since you’re the guest…” Sophie said, finishing up her explanation on the rooming situation, “…I’m giving you the air mattress. Trust me, it’s WAY more comfortable than the bed.”

“Of course it is,” Alyssa muttered. She walked right past Sophie, then let her bag thud to the floor in the room, as if to say ‘I don’t care that you dropped it.’ Then she winked at Sophie, doing her best to mirror the annoying confidence and patronizing attitude her cousin was throwing around. “Okay, you can go back to the kitchen! You do so well there.” And then she shut the door in Sophie’s face.

Sophie waited outside the bedroom door with a grin, but made no move to go back to her kitchen duties. Instead, she pressed her ear to the door, waiting for the shuffling sounds and unzipping of Alyssa’s duffel bag to fade. Being in charge of hosting meant that she could get away with giving Alyssa the room without a lock on the door. And, when it seemed like her cousin was probably beginning to change, Sophie counted a long five seconds in her head, then burst into the room with no warning.

Alyssa heard the creaking of the door, and instinctively jumped to cover herself up. “Hey!!” she exclaimed, praying to God it wasn’t one of the younger boys stumbling in on her. Or maybe intentionally walking in on her. But no, it was just Sophie. And Alyssa immediately realized the mistake she made by turning around to cover her front side.

It was even better than Sophie could have hoped for. She hadn’t been planning on taking a picture or anything like that. That wasn’t her style. It had merely been a spur of the moment plan to rattle and maybe embarrass Alyssa a little bit, which clearly had worked. With the few seconds she counted, Sophie thought her cousin would have only removed one article of clothing, but there Alyssa stood. Black panties. Black bra. And both were in the most boring style and cut she had ever seen. Not that it mattered, as the sight of her twin-like cousin so exposed was still all too amusing.

But then it got better. As Alyssa faced away to hide her exposure, Sophie saw it. Just above the waistband of the dull black panties. Holy shit.

Alyssa. Had. A. Tattoo.

**PART TWO**

“Oh my God!” Sophie clasped one hand over her mouth. This was NOT happening right now! Alice, of all people? This was 1000x better than catching her blonde cousin in just her black underwear. And it opened so many more possibilities.

Alyssa snapped out of her embarrassment pretty damn quickly after the realization of what she had just accidentally revealed to Sophie. No, not accidentally. Sophie had barged in on her without knocking. Either way, she had to act quickly.

No longer caring about covering herself up for the time being, she rushed across the room and grabbed Sophie’s free wrist. In one not so smooth motion, she yanked her cousin into the bedroom and slammed the door behind both of them. “Sophie!” she whispered, despite having the privacy of a closed door and a separate floor from everybody else in the house, “Promise me you won’t tell anyone!”

It was just as Sophie suspected. Like her, Alyssa was only sixteen. Too young to get a tattoo without her parents’ written consent and physical presence at the tattoo parlor. And, knowing Alyssa’s parents, there was no way in hell they would have been on board for any body ink for their teenage daughter. “Well? Aren’t you going to show me?” Sophie grinned, her voice at a totally normal volume in comparison. Interestingly enough, Alyssa suddenly seemed way less bothered by the fact that she wasn't wearing any clothes. At least, in comparison to how she had so desperately tried to cover up a moment ago. Maybe it was because they were ‘twins,’ or cousins, or both girls. Or maybe she had just temporarily forgotten in her haste to keep her little secret.

“Sophie. I’m being serious.”

“So am I! I need to know what I’m hiding for you. I mean, you’re asking me to lie to ALL our relatives, Alyssa. You’re asking me to lie to family!”

“…Fine.”

Alyssa ignored her cousin’s overdramatic reasoning, as she knew full well that Sophie would have no issues with keeping a secret. Even if the two of them weren’t close any more, they were both teenagers. Lying to parents was almost a reflex when it came to things adults probably wouldn’t approve of. Lightly blushing at the fact that she was about to show off the tattoo that only she and her closest friends knew about, as well as the fact that she was barely dressed, Alyssa reluctantly turned around.

Knowing how uncomfortable her cousin must be, Sophie decided to lean into that embarrassment. She placed her hand on the small of Alyssa’s back, giving a tiny push. “You’re too close, Alyssa. Step forward a bit.”

Alyssa begrudgingly did as she was told, getting tiny goosebumps from Sophie’s touch on her bare skin. She tried telling herself it was like wearing a bikini, especially considering the cut of her underwear and bra, but it wasn’t the same. One, because Sophie had walked in on her with no warning and two, because Sophie was still clothed in comparison.

Sophie bit her lip in an attempt to hold back a giggle. A tramp stamp. Her cousin had gotten a tramp stamp! Obviously, the nickname for a lower back tattoo could be a little annoying and sexist at times, but it didn’t stop Sophie from enjoying the irony of her mildly prudish cousin having one. Compared to some of the tattoo designs she had seen online, Alyssa’s was way smaller in comparison. The black lines connected and overlapped in a subtle vertical pattern, and it was actually pretty cute. But it still didn’t change the fact that Alyssa was the last person she would have ever expected to get a tattoo.

“Not bad, Alyssa!” Sophie placed her finger at the base of the tattoo, following the pattern all the way up to the top, “And it even matches your underwear!”

“Okay, you’ve seen it.” Alyssa pivoted on her heel and slapped Sophie’s hand away. “Now promise me you won’t tell anyone.” She crossed her arms over her chest, more keen on covering her cleavage than her underwear. Even if they were both girls, she still felt self-conscious due to her cousin being fully dressed. “Promise me, Sophie.”

Sophie paused for a moment. This was just too rare of an opportunity. Her rival cousin, standing in her underwear. Desperate to hide her secret. But Sophie also wasn’t a naturally devious girl, so she was thinking on her feet, grasping at whatever inkling of an idea came to her first. “I promise, Alyssa,” she said. When she saw the relief on her cousin’s face, Sophie continued, holding up one finger, “On one condition.”

Alyssa should have known it wasn’t going to be easy. After years of competition, Sophie finally had the upper hand. Alyssa only had to pray she wasn’t the type of girl to use such perfect blackmail again and again. “What condition…?”

A number of ideas raced through Sophie’s head. Spill your whole plate on yourself at dinner. Flirt with one of our college cousins all night. Go jump in the cold, autumn lake. It’s exactly why she had used the ‘one condition’ line. To stall for a few more seconds. She needed time. Time! That was it. “I need you to go find my necklace for me.” As fun as every option was, only one of them would give Sophie the time she needed to further iron out a plan to embarrass her dear cousin.

“Your necklace?”

“Yep! You’re a good swimmer, right?”

“Wait, what?”

Sophie then jumped into her explanation, making up the entire thing on the spot. How she was hanging out on the little island in the middle of the lake earlier, how her necklace must have fallen off somehow, and how she had been planning on wearing it with her Thanksgiving dress tonight. When Alyssa tried to point out how it could have fallen off somewhere in the house, Sophie was quick to lie about how she had already searched everywhere else, including the boat, and that the island was the only place she never got a chance to check due to her hosting responsibilities.

This was perfect. Instead of making Alyssa jump into the lake, Sophie was going to get her to swim out there while she began working on the next stages of her still forming plan. “I was just going to find something else to wear, but this is SO much better!” Sophie smiled. “Your choice, Alyssa. Find my necklace, or have everyone else find out that you’re a total tramp. Pick your poison!”

“But…” Alyssa lightly blushed at the teasing insult. “Can’t I just take the boat out there? Why do I have to swim?” Or maybe Sophie was just purposely being difficult now that she had such good leverage. Realizing that she had no reason to stay in just her bra and underwear, Alyssa finally walked back to her initial outfit to get dressed. Whether it was swimming or boating, she would need to abandon her plan to put on the classy dress early.

Now that Alyssa was turned away, Sophie let herself fully grin at the sight of her scantily clad cousin’s ass as she wrested her tight jeans past the boring underwear, and at her secret tattoo until it was covered up by the dark green tank top. “You can’t,” Sophie said, “There’s a lake-wide ‘no boats’ rule for Thanksgiving, effective 3 PM.”

She was echoing her parent’s words from earlier, as they made sure it was clear no one could take the boat out today, even if one of the guests might want to. Sophie actually didn’t know just how convenient it was until right now, because the rule actually served a dual purpose for her. Normally, swimming out to the island would be unsafe and totally against the rules. Even in broad daylight, going that far out was too dangerous. Doubly so at night. A boat could potentially hit someone who swam too far away from the dock. But tonight was one of the rare nights where someone could swim if they wanted to. Not that anybody sane would want to this time of year. The water was freezing, but Alyssa didn’t need to worry about that just yet.

“But…I don’t have a swim suit…” Alyssa replied. She turned back around in the matching outfit to Sophie’s, trying to come up with any good reason that might get her out of such a daunting task. Alyssa wasn’t stupid. She knew the water would be cold, which is why no one brought swimwear for the holiday, including her.

“Don’t worry about it, Alyssa,” Sophie said. “I’m sure I’ve got something lying around that you can borrow. It’ll be like old times!”

Now that she was going down this road, she realized she had the perfect thing for Alyssa to wear.

**PART THREE**

Alyssa couldn’t believe she was going along with this.

After a lot of bickering, Sophie had actually convinced her to put on a white thong and matching bra that she had retrieved from her own bedroom. The lace underwear was much sexier than anything Alyssa owned, and she refrained from asking Sophie why she would feel the need to pack something like that on a family vacation.

As if being so exposed outdoors wasn’t enough nervousness for one night, both girls knew full well that jumping into the lake would instantly make the thin, white undergarments partially see-through. Sophie reminded Alyssa that it was already dark outside, so she would be fine. Alyssa figured that knowing what the water would do to the borrowed lingerie was just another way to make her squirm internally, and Sophie was pretty smug about how uncomfortable and hesitant this was all making her cousin. Any complaints or argument was just met with a wink and the word “tattoo,” always said with an amused lilt.

Alyssa had met Sophie down in the basement. The wide, carpeted space was normally used for meals and family board games due to the larger table than in the dining room upstairs, but Alyssa was surprised to see that the table was completely bare. Sophie was waiting in the adjacent laundry room for her, and had just rolled her eyes when Alyssa asked about the empty basement. Apparently, Sophie’s parents had already explained that the basement was going to be for more casual things this weekend, and there should be plenty of space for everyone to eat in the nicer upstairs rooms.

Of course, Alyssa had been one of the last ones to arrive. She had driven alone, as her parents were spending Thanksgiving with her grandparents who were unable to make the trip up to the lake house. And, as much as she hated to admit it, she was terrible with directions. Even with her phone app, Alyssa had missed an exit or two and her journey had been delayed. However, the excuses for missing the meal explanation became a lot less important when Sophie held up the white underwear with a smirk.

Sophie gave Alyssa a little privacy to change, and Alyssa learned from her mistake upstairs. She locked the door to the laundry room from the inside, then reluctantly peeled off her own clothes and underwear to make way for Sophie’s. Though the lace lingerie was clean, it still felt wrong to wear another girl’s underwear. Even if it was her cousin’s. And compared to Alyssa’s usual underwear choices, these felt completely off. The bra was dry for the time being, but the sheer material still displayed her pale C cups more prominently than she would have liked. The thong was worse. The thin strip of fabric tightly nestled between her rear cheeks, and Alyssa could tell without turning around that entire ass was sticking out.

Her hesitant thoughts were interrupted by a sharp knock on the door. “Alyssa! You done?”

“Sophie, I can’t wear this outside!” Alyssa whined. Wearing her OWN underwear outdoors would be embarrassing enough, despite how bikini-like they appeared. But this was something else entirely.

“Ooh, show me!”

Alyssa paused. She didn’t want to. She really didn’t want to. But she found herself unlocking and cracking the door for her cousin, still a bit one-track-minded in regards to keeping her tattoo a secret. “See? This is too much.” Alyssa crossed one arm over her chest and covered her crotch with the other.

“I can’t see anything,” Sophie rolled her eyes, “Show me?”

“What are you doing with that?”

As Sophie pushed the cracked door the rest of the way open, Alyssa instantly noticed her brand new dress draped over her cousin’s arm. That, and a towel held in her other hand. But the dress was obviously her bigger concern.

“Don’t you want your dress when you get back?”

“Yeah, but-”

“But nothing,” Sophie scoffed. She hung the dress up on the nearest rack and dropped the towel on top of the dryer. “Just dry off and change in here when you get back. Unless you’d rather take the front door?”

“No, this works,” Alyssa muttered. She felt a light blush coming on, which only darkened when she realized how noticeable it would be in the well-lit laundry room. It made sense. She couldn’t exactly return to the lake house soaking wet from her swim, and it was definitely too cold outside to air dry. She had imagined putting on her original clothes and going upstairs to change afterwards, but Sophie’s idea was actually more convenient. And, though she wouldn’t admit it, Alyssa was low key grateful that her cousin thought about the towel, as the exposed secret and daunting task that came with it had briefly purged all logic from Alyssa’s mind.

“Good. Glad the underwear works for you!”

“That’s not what I meant, Sophie!”

“Yeah, yeah. Whatever,” she dismissively waved her hand, “Okay, here’s what you’re looking for. I was going to hunt for it tomorrow morning, but this is SO much better!”

Before Alyssa could try to argue, Sophie jumped into a description of her lost necklace. A small gold pendant with an emerald, held by a thin gold chain. That should have been enough, but Sophie went into way more detail than necessary, talking about the kind of clasp, the little grooves on the edge of the pendant, and even the shade of the emerald. As if there would be multiple lost gold necklaces on the island, and Alyssa needed to find just the right one. The thorough description was the perfect thing to keep her awkwardly standing there in the borrowed underwear, and served a double purpose in regards to implying that they were past the point of debating about whether the underwear was fine or not.

“Got all that?” Sophie asked. Now the only girl rocking the sleeveless cardigan combo, and the only clothed girl for that matter, she confidently walked past Alyssa and opened the outside door on the other side of the laundry room, “Hurry back, okay?” She gestured to the dark back yard and the lake beyond it.

“I don’t know, Soph…” Alyssa took a hesitant step towards the door. She cautiously peered outside, a little wary of the dim light coming from the rising moon.

“Go on, Alyssa!” No matter how cool she had played it so far, the thought of her cousin doing something like this was just too good. And the sight of Alyssa’s tramp stamp and thong-covered ass as she gazed outside just further empowered Sophie. Now that it was so close to happening, Sophie couldn’t help but give her a ‘helpful’ shove out of the laundry room. As easy as it would be to add a spank to the motion, Sophie refrained, figuring that pushing too many buttons might result in her reluctant cousin bailing at the last second.

“Wait, Sophie-” Alyssa actually stumbled a little bit, almost stubbing her toe on the cement walkway outside as Sophie’s stubborn hand remained on her back to push her farther outside. “I’m going, I’m going! Ugh!” She whipped around to free herself from Sophie’s hand, placing a hand on her hip. “Soph, this isn’t fair!”

Sophie paused for a moment, enjoying the sight of her cousin standing outside in only the unfamiliar undergarments. Clearly the shove had given Alyssa a moment of confidence inspired by annoyance. Just like that, her cousin was fully displaying herself in the revealing underwear. “Hmm…” Sophie looked Alyssa up and down, not being subtle at all about the once-over. Then she gave the same smirk as before, resting a hand on the door beside her. “Yeah, those look better on me.”

With that, she slammed the door in Alyssa’s face.

**PART FOUR**

Alyssa didn’t hear the door lock, but something told her Sophie wouldn’t hesitate to do that to her if she tried to get back inside at this point. Suddenly becoming all too aware of what she was wearing, she scurried off to the side of the yard to take shelter in the small copse of trees. Though it was plenty dark outside, Alyssa still worried that anybody glancing out one of the upstairs window might see her.

Using the trees as cover, she quickly made her way to the lake, half crouching down the entire way there. Oh God, what if somebody could see her ass from behind?? Alyssa glanced over her shoulder to check, and could easily see a few relatives socializing by one of the windows. None of them seemed to notice the half naked girl outside. Thank God.

Wincing as she stepped on a sharp twig, then a pinecone, Alyssa swore to herself and slowed down. Step by step, she carefully moved towards the shore. Finally. The feeling of soft sand. She did another quick glance back to the house, then nervously walked the rest of the way to the lake. The adrenaline had kept her warm before, but the cool wind blowing off the lake made her shiver and realize all over again just how much of her skin was exposed.

The water was freezing.

Alyssa made the mistake of dipping her toes in to test the temperature, which only made the upcoming task more daunting than before.

An icy cold lake. The worst possible ‘outfit’ for the occasion. And a secret she would do anything to keep.

Why did she not lock the door?? If she had just been a little more careful, she would be sauntering around in her beautiful dress and looking much better than Sophie right now. But no, she was borrowing underwear she would never want to borrow under normal circumstances and about to go for the coldest swim of her life.

Now or never. She just had to do it. Both because someone might notice her standing on the shore any moment now, and because waiting any longer would crush the pitiful amount of courage she was holding onto. Taking a deep breath, Alyssa sprinted into the lake and dove the rest of the way in before the cold water on her legs could convince her to turn around.

HOLY. SHIT.

Alyssa gasped as her whole body plunged into the lake. She had done the “Polar Bear Club” thing before, but that was only ever for a few seconds. Not this time. While it wasn’t dangerously cold, it was enough to make her want to get out and run for the towel waiting for her in the laundry room. But she somehow managed to steel herself, setting her eyes on the prize. “Swim, Alyssa.” She muttered to herself, teeth chattering as she tread water for a moment.

It was the only way to keep her tattoo a secret. Otherwise, her parents would ground her for life. Maybe even force her to get it removed. And she would lose her edge against Sophie. It may be petty, but she couldn’t stand the idea of her “twin” cousin suddenly becoming the more perfect girl when they were compared.

So Alyssa fought the urge to get out of the lake, and began swimming towards the island instead.

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Meanwhile, Sophie had already gotten to work. She had been watching from a distance while Alyssa made her way to the water in such inappropriate attire, though her cousin had definitely been discreet. If Sophie hadn’t been eyeing the trees and the water carefully, she wouldn’t have noticed Alyssa’s stealthy movements. The moment she saw Alyssa begin her swim, Sophie grabbed Alyssa’s dress and the towel and raced up to her room, only slowing down to creep around the corner on the main floor.

“Not bad, Alyssa,” Sophie smirked to herself. Alyssa’s dark green dress hugged her curves in all the right ways thanks to their nearly identical body types. Her blonde "twin" had definitely picked the perfect dress for the occasion. It was classy and mature, and showed off her figure in a subtle, but noticeable way. The ideal dress for a nice party where you want to look good without showing too much skin. But, in her opinion, such a nice dress was meant for a cute brunette, not a prudish blonde. Sophie turned around, admiring her own ass in the mirror, then smoothed out the dress with her hands before adding one little accessory - the gold necklace she had just described in excruciating detail to Alyssa.

Normally, Sophie wasn’t the devious type. But from the moment she saw Alyssa’s tattoo, the gears in her brain had never stopped turning. Her scantily clad and no doubt freezing cousin would be gone for a little bit longer, and it was time to ensure that the two of them would never be compared again. In fact, if this worked out the way she expected, Sophie would be in an entirely different league than dear Alyssa.

The name of the game: Gossip.

It was so easy. Alyssa wasn’t there to defend herself, and Alyssa’s parents weren’t around to either defend her or be appalled by her alleged behavior. Instead, they would just have to hear things through the grapevine. That was actually for the better, as Alyssa would have multiple waves of trouble crashing down on her.

Due to Alyssa’s current lack of clothing, Sophie started with the fact that her cousin was a total exhibitionist. For example, the time Alyssa ran a full mile (four laps around the school’s track) in just her underwear, holding her boobs the whole time to cover up. Or the time she ditched her clothes in the bathroom after school and ran to her car in just a towel to drive home like that.

Somehow, Sophie managed to play it cool. And she always gave just enough doubt to let others fill in the blanks. Like how Alyssa claimed to her friends that the mile run and the toweled drive were ‘dares,’ but the mutual friend that shared it with Sophie suspected that Alyssa secretly wanted to do it. The fact that Sophie was friends with Alyssa on Facebook, as well as the fact that plenty of their relatives still thought the two of them were close, gave plenty of validity to her fake stories. “I don’t know,” Sophie mused, “It just sounds like she’s putting herself in these situations on purpose, doesn’t it?”

Then came the slutty stories. As Sophie strutted around in Alyssa’s dress, she decided to swap gears when she realized she only had so many minutes until her cousin would come back without a necklace to show for her troubles. She tried to keep the stories realistic, but definitely went a little bit overboard in comparison to Alyssa’s usual demeanor and reputation. Though Alyssa claimed to be single, Sophie shared how she was actually juggling three different boyfriends because she ‘couldn’t decide’ which one she liked more. Alyssa thought her parents would frown on her making out with multiple guys every day, so she decided to keep them all a secret until she could choose one. And, in an even worse story, Sophie shared how Alyssa made out with EVERY guy at a party a few weeks ago for the sake of "experience." To make what would normally be an unbelievable story actually believable, Sophie just shrugged and said “Hey, we all know how Alyssa is with school. Maybe she just takes the same thorough approach with boys.”

When gossiping to the college aged cousins, Sophie wove her stories with plenty of amusement in her voice as they ate up her lies. But when mentioning things to the adults, she took on a more ‘I’m a little worried about her’ tone. More often than not, she would shrug and say “Maybe it’s just a rumor,” but always in a way like she was a cousin half-heartedly trying to defend a cousin. Sophie only repeated each story once, then moved on to a new one, figuring that everyone could gossip amongst themselves and swap stories after she had successfully planted at least one story to each little group.

And, when Sophie was done planting story after story, she slipped away from all the socialization on the main floor to set the final part of her clever plan in place.

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The moment Alyssa arrived on the island, she realized just how impossible of a task it was that Sophie gave her. Beyond the shore of the small island, the trees obscured nearly all of the moonlight, making it difficult to walk without scraping her feet or stubbing her toes in an even worse way than before. Finding a necklace on the ground during the day would be challenging enough, but finding it when she could barely see the ground in front of her was not going to happen.

She silently cursed at herself for not thinking this through, shivering as the night wind blew against her damp body. Sophie’s soaked underwear clung against her skin, and she could only imagine just how visible her most private areas were if they were seen under proper lighting. And she still had to swim BACK.

On the one hand, Alyssa knew that not finding Sophie’s necklace would risk her secret being revealed. But on the other hand, Alyssa was realistic. Pawing around on the dark, cold island would only increase her suffering, and she would still probably come up empty handed. Hell, sticking around too much longer without properly drying off might make her catch a cold. Sophie would understand. Besides, they were cousins! Sure, they competed a little bit, but Sophie wouldn’t really rat her out. Swimming to the island and back should be enough of an ordeal for Sophie to be satisfied.

Taking a deep breath, Alyssa padded back onto the sand. She gazed back at the familiar lake house in the distance with a sigh, then braced herself for the second round of frigid water.

**PART FIVE**

Alyssa emerged from the lake soaked and shivering, with no necklace to show for her troubles. One quick glance towards the lake house informed her that no one was near the upper windows at the moment, and she decided to risk it. Her feet were sore enough from walking through all the rough terrain on both mainland and island, and another blind walk through the forest didn’t sound particularly appealing. Setting her sights on the laundry room door, Alyssa broke into a sprint across the yard, wanting nothing more than to dry herself off and be back in the warmth of the house.

There was just one problem: She had no idea Sophie’s parents had the sprinkler system set up.

Just as she crossed the halfway point, Alyssa’s back foot got caught on the hose that lay loosely stretched out across the grass. Since she was running so quickly, it didn’t just make her stumble. Alyssa went careening towards the ground, instinctively turning herself to at least fall sideways. Her right arm and thigh hit the slightly damp dirt, and the friction made her sharply inhale as she gracelessly skidded to a stop.

“Shit!” Alyssa hissed to herself. It was too dark to see the damage, but she had to assume there would be a few scrapes and bruises on both arm and thigh from the fall. The weak silver lining was that at least no one witnessed the humiliating moment. Alyssa pushed herself back up and brushed back her hair as she stood, echoing the first “Shit!” a little more loudly when realizing she had done so with the slightly muddy hand.

This was a disaster. Alyssa had accepted that she wouldn’t be able to immediately shower the lake water off, but how was she supposed to explain the rest? Even after cleaning the smudged dirt off her side, any damage from the fall would be painfully obvious in her sleeveless dress. Maybe Sophie had something long sleeved and classy she could borrow? Ugh, that meant she had to explain how she couldn’t find the necklace AND ask her cousin for help at the same time.

One step at a time. Alyssa jogged the rest of the way to the side of the house, worried again that somebody might spot her in the yard. Unlocked. Thank God. A small part of her had suspected that Sophie might go so far as to lock her out, but she hadn’t entertained the thought too much. She had planned on crossing that bridge once she got there, and was beyond grateful it never came to that.

Alyssa cracked the door and slipped inside, ready for this awful ordeal to be over. However, when she stepped into the laundry room, Sophie was waiting for her. And wearing the dress she had brought for Thanksgiving dinner.

It took everything in Sophie not to laugh. Her normally proper cousin looked absolutely ridiculous. The jump in the lake had ruined both hair and underwear, but the effects of Alyssa’s fall was a pleasant bonus.

“Good news, Alyssa! I found my necklace. Looks like you’re off the hook,” Sophie giggled. She flicked the little gold accessory to bring attention to it, loving every second of how dramatically different the two of them looked. The brunette "twin," with perfect hair and perfect make-up, and rocking an elegant dress. The blonde one, well, having none of those things.

“That’s…that’s MY DRESS!!” Alyssa exclaimed. She finally found her words, though she still couldn’t believe it. The insultingly pointless nature of her freezing swim faded away entirely at the sight of Sophie in her expensive dress. “Sophie! What the fuck?”

Had Alyssa not noticed? The lack of towels, the lack of anything useful to cover up or dry herself off with. This was going even better than expected. If this was Alyssa’s reaction, then the next part just might work. “It looks better on me, doesn’t it?” Sophie winked. And just like the last time she made a comment like that, she slipped out of the laundry room and closed the door behind her.

As expected, Alyssa rushed after her. No way in hell would her cousin strut around in her dress all night. Not a chance. Even if her rough fall made her question whether or not she would wear it herself, Sophie wearing it without permission was unacceptable. The thought of it being a trap didn’t cross her mind, so she burst through the door in pursuit.

However, there was one important thing that Alyssa didn’t know. Though the basement had been empty and seemingly safe before, that had changed entirely in her absence. The reason that the table was empty before wasn’t because of it being used for more casual purposes, like Sophie explained earlier. It was because the food and drinks were being served upstairs. Each family member was responsible for carrying their own plate and glass down to the lower floor, where the only table big enough for the whole family would be waiting. All Sophie had to do earlier was quickly clear the table of the napkins and utensils before Alyssa joined her downstairs to get what she thought would be proper swimming attire.

While Alyssa was freezing her ass off, Sophie had quickly set the downstairs table again prior to putting on Alyssa’s dress, and now the basement was no longer empty. Every single member at the Thanksgiving gathering was either seated or working their way to the table. Except for Sophie. She had scurried off to the side of the room as gracefully as possible after closing the door on Alyssa, acting like she was in the middle of hosting duties. To further sell the act, Sophie chose the basement cupboard as her target, and took out a few more cloth napkins as a logical task.

And then it happened. Exactly like Sophie planned.

If she had nearly left Alyssa stranded with no clothes, her dear cousin probably would have done things a lot more cautiously. Maybe peeked her head through the door, and then tried to take a side door or window on the main floor while everyone was distracted with the meal downstairs. Or, another mildly amusing option, somehow climbed up to the second floor to access one of the bedrooms.

But Alyssa didn’t do either of those things.

Instead, in her appalled frustration at her dress being stolen, and in her desperation to get it back, Alyssa burst through the laundry room door. Immediately revealing herself to everyone.

**CONCLUSION**

It was better than Sophie could have ever imagined.

In her shock, Alyssa stood as still and frozen as a statue, her slightly open mouth gaping like a fish. Her perfect, gently curled blonde hair from earlier in the day was now a wet, tangled mess that partially clung to her face and neck. Various parts of her body had unattractive streaks of mud from her fall, including the upper side of her forehead and a bit of her hair, and she only had on the white underwear to conceal herself. Not that it did much.

Sophie had to stifle a laugh at how her cousin’s hardened pink nipples were practically poking through the wet bra, perfectly visible to anyone looking. And, for a brief moment, Sophie could have sworn she saw a bit of a cameltoe in Alyssa’s soaked thong that was see-through enough as well. Sadly, Alyssa was a blonde. Not even soaked, white underwear was enough to give away whether or not she shaved down there or not.

But then her scantily clad and thoroughly unattractive cousin came to her senses, letting out a muffled squeak and flinging her arms around herself in the presence of her entire extended family. And she partially turned away, just like she did back in Sophie’s room.

Alyssa’s cheeks turned crimson as she huddled a few steps past the doorway. The safest play would be to run back into the laundry room and slam the door behind her to take cover, but her legs felt locked in place and her brain had only barely been capable of instinctively telling her to cover up so far. “I…I…” It was all too much.

Everyone was staring at her.

Earlier, she had accepted that Sophie’s white underwear would become see-through because her ‘task’ had been under the cover of night. Alyssa thought Sophie had only insisted on white for the internal embarrassment, and she had almost forgotten about the revealing color until she stepped into such a well-lit room. She may as well have been nude, and…and Sophie was standing over there in her dress! As if she was the proper cousin.

But it was too late. The damage had been done. That last detail was just icing on the cake.

Sophie knew full well that Alyssa was ruined. Her slutty, exhibitionist cousin. The practically naked teen who burst in on Thanksgiving dinner. With Sophie's recent gossip, none of Alyssa's excuses would hold water, even if they were true. Clearly her little kink extended as far as exposing herself to family! Such a freak, Sophie thought to herself, biting her lip to hold back a smirk.

The recently perfect blonde would forever be the black sheep of the family, frowned at and gossiped about for years to come. But Sophie wasn’t done. Not quite yet.

Before Alyssa could find the words to defend herself, or anyone else in the room could find the words to reprimand her, Sophie jumped on the opportunity to put the final nail in Alyssa’s proverbial coffin.

She couldn’t help herself. It was too easy.

“Alyssa!!” Sophie gasped, acting just as shocked and appalled as everyone else in the room. “Is that a tattoo?!”