

A photograph of two trumpets on a stage. The background is a bokeh of city lights at night, with a warm, orange-red color palette. The trumpets are in the foreground, one slightly behind the other. The text 'TRUMPET BLUES' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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SOPHIA L. HANSEN



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ALSO BY SOPHIA L. HANSEN

*MINE*

*LEAFBOUND*

*YOURS*

*C.R.O.P. BRIGADE*

*Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU to my wonderful family for always encouraging me on this writer's journey.*

*Craig - my love and main man - your support means the world to me!*

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Buzzing speakers scrape at my nerves as decrepit shocks collide with Boston's finest potholes. The cabbie barrels down Newbury Street. He's not stopping. He's not even slowing down. Tension ramps from my shoulders to the back of my neck, settling just above the nape.

I raise my hand to knock on the divider, but stop my knuckles stop just short of the taxi's grimy partition. And the seat, more duct tape than vinyl, looks worse than the plexiglass. Not about to put my new Louis Vuitton bag on *that* to fish for something to rap with. Reading the dashboard ID is nearly impossible in this jolting ride, but I squint hard and make out the name.

“Anthony, my building’s coming up.”

He can’t hear me over the radio’s screeching din. This is not what I need to start the day. Why couldn’t I get a nice Berklee dropout for a driver? Might not be any cleaner, but at least the music would be better. Should have gone with a limo. *When are you going to learn, Agnes?*

“Anthony!”

Eyes dart to me in the rearview mirror. “Yeah, lady?”

*Sigh.* “You missed my building.” I don’t have time for this.

“Oh. Sorry. Next street is one-way. You want I should take the alley? Drops you ‘round back.”

“No! Just let me out here.”

I shove cash into the money tray, avoiding actual physical contact with the edges, and vacate the four-fendered deathtrap while there’s still time to start the meeting. Squealing tires grab my attention. Make that three-fendered. *Figures.* If he’s unhappy with the tip, he should get it right the first time.

The building manager will hear about this. If that doorman can’t flag me a decent taxi, then what’s he getting paid for?

The bright summer sky darkens, rumbling as the forecasted

downpour begins to materialize. It takes a minute to dig, but...  
*Ha!* I open the umbrella just as fat drops of rain splatter on the ground, but not on me or my bag.

I weave between the other pedestrians on the crowded sidewalk and steal a glimpse at my watch. Who says you can't power-walk in Louboutins? I'll still make it before the rest of the team. Just a few more doors.

Music catches me by surprise. A piercing note hangs in the air before the horn trills down, then up again, setting the hook in my soul. Torrential memories threaten to burst through, but I've shored my heart against this flood more than once.

I'd expect a street musician in the Commons, or even along Mass Ave, but in the business district? There isn't even a T-stop in sight. I'm dragged back through time. I shouldn't stop. I wouldn't stop, but the pull is irresistible. Those trumpet blues...

*The only thing bluer than your riffs are your eyes.* That's what I used to tell Jake... before he left to tour.

Before I took the bar exams.

A lifetime ago.

*More like two,* I scoff.



Another glance at my watch tells me the team is about to arrive, but my feet refuse to move. Eyes closed, I remember summer concerts by the Charles, driving through New Hampshire in the fall, winter lines for Steve's ice cream, and spring...when our perfect bubble burst. The song ends, and I open my bag. I'd like to leave a larger tip than I did the cabbie. Maybe he'll play here again.

When I stoop to place the bills in the trumpet case, the player looks up with a smile and a "Thanks."

Bluer than blue eyes meet mine. Bluer than the notes that stopped me in the first place. My hands shake, and my purse lands in a puddle.

"Jake?"

"Wow, Aggie? Is it really you?"

"Should have known it was you on the horn."

He breaks our eye-lock to pick up my bag, grabs a t-shirt from his case, and dries it off.

The logo catches my eye. "Ryles? You still gig there?"

"It's been a while, but at least I have something to polish the brass with." The left corner of his mouth lifts into that half-

grin I'd kissed hundreds of times. He holds out the bag but doesn't release it, textured leather bridging the gap created by our choices. Warmth blossoms into ache deep in my chest. It's getting hard to breathe. I'm never at a loss for words, but...

"You look good, Aggie. Look like you done good."

"What are you do—?" A lump in my throat strangles the words.

"I've played all the corners. Never knew if the next one would be yours."

"But you left."

His grip on our designer bond slackens ever so slightly. "And you stayed. Did it go the way you planned?"

"Yes." I pull the purse from his grip. "And no." The admission takes me by surprise. "How about you?" My eyes flick from unkempt hair to threadbare jeans before landing on his gaze.

"It's a long story."

I stare into his eyes, letting the rest of the world fall away.

"That's okay. I've got time."



