

Sharing Backstage

By

Paige Parsons

Copyright 2017 Paige Parsons and Blushing Books®

©2017 by Blushing Books® and Paige Parsons
All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by Blushing Books®,
a subsidiary of
ABCD Graphics and Design
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901
The trademark Blushing Books®
is registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Paige Parsons
Sharing Backstage

EBook ISBN: 978-1-61258-316-7
Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book is intended for adults only. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual spanking activity or the spanking of minors.

Table of Contents:

Author's Note.....	5
Prologue	6
Chapter One	10
Chapter Two.....	13
Chapter Three.....	16
Chapter Four	18
Chapter Five.....	22
Chapter Six.....	25
Chapter Seven	39
Chapter Eight	45
Chapter Nine	51
Chapter Ten.....	59
Chapter Eleven.....	63
Chapter Twelve	65
Chapter Thirteen	72
Chapter Fourteen.....	78
Chapter Fifteen.....	82
Chapter Sixteen.....	93
Glossary of Theatre Terms.....	98
Translations	101
Paige Parsons	102
EBook Offer.....	103
Blushing Books Newsletter.....	104
Blushing Books	105

Author's Note

Writing Lucas and Harper's story has been about as joyful and painful as giving birth. They've lived and loved in my mind for quite some time, but getting their story on paper was no easy task. They were put on a shelf. They were torn to shreds. They each went through different looks and names, but who they were and how they loved remained, so I pushed through. Every time I thought, 'Ah-ha, I've got it,' I would reread and realize I wasn't anywhere near it.

These characters and this story hold a lot of truths and seeing it on the page often felt too revealing. We went through a lot together, and now I have to let them go. I share them with you and hope you enjoy their journey and their destination.

I must give special thanks to my personal Fab-Four (Melissa, Ruby, Pippa, and Jacqui) for getting me over the stumps and bumps of telling this story while dealing with their busy lives and schedules. Each of them served, at some point, as a motivator, sounding board, truth-o-meter, and soft landing and I am forever grateful.

"There's no such thing as failure, only feedback!"

Prologue

Last Show of the Season
Spring 2012

Every impulsive act seemed like a good idea at the moment, but in the harsh brightness of overhead fluorescent lighting, with sawdust covering you like a grainy photo filter, suddenly your naked ass on the shop table becomes a rapidly regrettable action.

Harper Harrison would give that more detailed thinking as soon as her legs stopped twitching and she could breathe a little better.

His name and breath slipped between Harper's lips in shallow pants. Her spasms only served to hold him inside her with a stronger grip. It was like she blacked out for ten seconds. Her body seized and her skin felt like one raw nerve. Their sweat mixed, as his spent body collapsed on hers. Trailing kisses along her neckline, Lucas had to force himself to take his weight off of her body. Lucas rose up on his hands, and they looked at one another a moment longer before completely separating.

Drenched in sweat and covered in sawdust, Harper was still trembling. Never one to cut corners, by the time he reached his completion, he'd sent her over the edge twice. Sex between them was always high stakes. It was risky, quick, and usually in tucked away corners of their second home, backstage.

She often wondered what it would feel like to truly make love to him in a bed and wake up surrounded by him. She would be cocooned in his strong arms, with his smooth, broad chest pressed against her back, and his goatee would be tickling her shoulder as he leaned in to kiss her neck. Turning in his arms, Harper would savor his morning kisses and slow love making, as she ran her hands across his bald head, lightly scratching, the way he loved. Harper had dated her fair share of men in college and after, but Lucas Mason was the first one who checked all her boxes. From the dimple in his chin to his hazel eyes that darkened at will, depending on his mood, he had all sorts of wow factors, and Harper wanted to get lost in them all on a more than semi-monthly basis.

It was a wasted fantasy, though, because romantic nights weren't what they did. Up against the wall, in the booth, on and over a desk, and presently on top of the shop table, was what they did. Noisy, exuberant, and, on occasion, (that time in the catwalk came to mind) contortionist sex was their speed, and they were great at it. They'd been working overtime to experience as many hands-on opportunities as possible. There was only one weekend left in the show's run before they struck and they both moved on to their next gig.

"Whew! Damn, that was, um—damn," she said.

"I'll be right back. Are you sure you have a degree in English?" Lucas said, finally releasing the hold on her waist and kissing her quickly before his shirt was over his head.

Resting back on her elbows, Harper shouted that she wasn't planning a disappearing act, but they both knew she was perfectly capable of leaving without a trace. He returned carrying his beat up old backpack that was always kept in the back of his truck when he freelanced. He had been telling her to do the same for the last three months, since she always complained about needing a sweater or a change of shoes.

“What’d you bring me?” Harper asked, then added, “Nothing too naughty, I hope, keeping in mind that you’ve already worn me out.”

“Oh, baby girl, I don’t keep that bag in the car. I have no desire for an awkward traffic stop.”

“You’re hilarious!”

“Well, I thought I might interest you in a sexy dressing room shower for two, milady,” Lucas proposed, with an added deep waist bow. His antics weren’t unexpected after weeks spent working on a period show. She’d been getting *milady* for weeks.

Guzzling half the bottle of water he handed her, Harper held her arms out for him to help her down from the work table. The itching intensified the moment the ecstasy diminished. Lucas wasn’t the tallest man she’d ever been with, yet he still surpassed her diminutive stature. Currently, her feet dangled off the side of the table, and scooting to the edge wasn’t an option. Splinters in her ass didn’t sound fun at all. The useless efforts made to remove random sawdust from her backside, and everywhere else, caused him to laugh as he watched her put her feet back into her shoes. Hand-blinged crystal covered wedge style flip flops, which added to her height and his irritation, they were shoes that would be considered cute to anyone who wasn’t a technical director, especially in the middle of the scene shop.

“It’s not funny, Lucas. This might be worse than sand. I don’t even want to think about the crevices it’s sticking to.”

Shifting from side to side, she threw him another glare, but her eyes said her heart wasn’t in it. Tossing her head from side to side, Harper was running her hands through her hair vigorously. When she walked into the shop to say she was leaving, both of them quickly decided that parting ways wasn’t what either of them wanted. He’d scolded her for sneaking up on him while he was holding a drill in his hand. Of course, Harper didn’t intend to startle him as she ran her hand down the center of his back, but she did want to get his attention. As soon as his hands were drill free, they were full of her. A benefit of her small size and agility was that she had little trouble leaping up on anything she wanted to reach. The next thing she knew, he was sitting on the edge of the work table with her straddling him. Pretty soon, kissing and fondling over clothes wasn’t enough. That was how she eventually ended up on her back with tiny pieces of sawdust clinging to her sweat moistened backside.

“Great. It looks like I’ll be making an off-week hair appointment, too.”

“You ask nicely, and I’ll wash it for you in the shower.”

Harper’s laughter drove her into convulsions. Bottled water spewed from her mouth, and she ended up thrusting both arms in the air to expand her lungs, as she started choking from water slipping down the wrong pipe.

“It’s not that funny.”

“Yeah, it kind of is. I’m not sure who that suggestion is more offensive to, me or Tasha. She is the only one whose hands tangle in this head. One shampoo from you, and she’ll be cutting the knots out.”

Lucas moved directly in front of her. The intense look on his face was causing a little shiver to run down her spine; sliding his hand around her neck, he made sure he had a solid handful of her thick, black curls as he tugged her head to the side in order to trail kisses from her neck to her lips. By the time his tongue was in her mouth, her hands were under his shirt, and her butt was bumping the edge of the table again. When he was done devouring her into an appropriate state of need, Lucas let her go. Harper stumbled and reached back to steady herself.

She used her other hand to run her fingers across her thoroughly kissed mouth. Once he was certain her legs would keep her upright, Lucas gave her backside a firm smack.

Harper refused to rub or react, and held his stare. Everything was a contest of who would blink first with them.

“Always have to prove a point, don’t you?” she said.

“Funny. You didn’t seem to mind my hands tangling in your hair, just now.”

There was no way to break his gaze without looking like she was giving in too quickly. Instead, Harper covered her nerves with a laugh.

“As long as there’s no shampoo involved, mister. Now, there was the promise of a shower. I’ll take a pass on the hair washing, but you’re welcome to explore all the other parts of me with those talented hands.”

In a blink, he turned to grab the backpack.

“Deal. Here. Take this in with you and start the water.”

“You’re so compulsive. I know you’re going to check all of the doors.”

Harper poured some water into her hand and flicked it at him, then took off. He was out of the shop and chasing after her fleeing, giggling from in an instant, and all the while fussing about her open toed shoes and the fact that she played too much. She always saw it as her personal mission to keep him spontaneous and on his toes.

A half hour later, they were lounging in the green room, consuming what even a college freshman would consider dubious eats. Harper was wearing one of his t-shirts and his sweatshirt with a pair of her shorts. He never understood that about girls. Her legs weren’t cold, yet the top half of her body needed to be swathed. His little sister was the same way, although she’d annoyingly mentioned once that the reason she showed so much leg was because they were her best asset. He was glad Harper had never expressed such a brazen sentiment, even though he was sure Kelly only said it to get a rise out of him.

“This cheese smell funky to you? *Huele como el culo. Tal vez ha estado aquí demasiado tiempo,*” Harper said without looking and shoved the suspect *queso* in the direction of his nose.

Head in his lap, Harper absently stared at the ceiling as she shoveled in other items from the random assortment of snacks. She could never be accused of having a petite appetite. Rarely did she have a meal, but she was all about snacking. Grateful for youth and good genes, Harper dreaded the day that working out became mandatory and not optional. Mostly, she kept it in check, but there were times when her cravings leaned more toward Doritos than carrot sticks. Their provisions were part opening night party leftovers, double show Saturday leftovers, and rounding out the smorgasbord was the finest in vending machine chocolates and drinks.

“Babe, if we start questioning the cheese, this whole fancy meal sort of falls apart.”

“Right. Hard pass on the cheese, thank you very much. So, what’s next?” Harper asked.

Lucas felt her body stiffen a bit, and her tone dropped to a more serious sounding whisper.

“Okay, time for my special late night, rejuvenating elixir. You might be done, young lady, but I need to prep work for the guys to do in the morning.”

“Um-hmm.”

Fine, thought Harper. She wasn’t going to address it directly, if he wasn’t. Resigned, Harper knew that it would be as it always was at that point. Lucas consistently deflected any conversation headed toward a discussion on commitment. He was up and moving around the room, putting as much physical space between them as he could without it getting awkward. Usually willing to let it go, Harper mentally shifted and decided to do something different. She swung her legs around and turned to look at him as he tried to retreat.

“How about now? I want an answer, Lucas.”

This was the hardest part of their tryst—attempting to keep things light and playful while holding out hope for something more. Harper had no problem being a vibrant, sexual woman. She simply didn't want to be that with every hot guy she encountered, and she encountered plenty. There were actors, designers, and even crew members Harper would've gladly taken to the futon. Lucas didn't exactly know that, but the reality was that she was eligible, and she wanted him to realize that, without explicit explanation. He just didn't act like he wanted more. The sex was phenomenal, but any time Harper pressed for a little more, Lucas acted like he wasn't capable. He erected an invisible wall against anything too emotional and could sidestep the unwanted topic with tremendous ease. Harper knew it would be at least another three months, post-strike, before even the possibility of their working together again arose.

“Harper, you know what's next. We go back to our regularly scheduled lives.”

“*Eso apesta!*” Lucas's incredulous look had her cocking her head to the side. “That sucks!”

“I'm back to The Ink on Monday, Harper. Don't you need to start pre-production on the musical? Or did you decide to take a break?”

“I can't afford breaks any more than you can. My inheritance bought that condo, but my working keeps the lights on. Besides, I'll be at both high schools working on their fall productions. I thought The Ink was going to hire you an assistant TD?”

“Turns out the board felt their money could better be spent elsewhere.”

“That's because most of them only think they know what it takes to get a show up. *Tales bastardos barato!*”

“Somehow, I don't think learning all the cuss words was what your parents had in mind when they sent you to study abroad,” Lucas said.

“I got what I needed to from the experience. So, you're going to keep up that crazy schedule at The Ink next season?”

“That's the job. I'm hoping the guys that volunteer here will come over and help with the bigger shows, but I don't feel right poaching them.”

“Looks like free time will be at a low, as usual.” Harper didn't want to sound or behave forlorn, but it was difficult.

“The show goes on, right? There's no such thing as theatre magic, just a bunch of folks like us having no life and getting it done.”

“Sounds like that should get printed on a t-shirt.”

He just smirked, reaching out a hand to help her up. The conversation was over. The man was a mastermind. They opted to toss all of the remaining leftovers. They shouldn't have eaten most of it, but the rest was completely unacceptable for further human consumption. Harper stayed and worked on her laptop in their shared temporary office until he was done in the shop.

Seven days later, they handed out checks to the crew and actors and locked up the space together for the last time, until the next time they saw each other around the stage.

Chapter One

Present Day
Two Years Later
Spring 2014

The theatre was in trouble. Not the typical *we need to tighten the purse strings until we get the receipts from the Christmas show* kind, but *the door could get padlocked* sort. It was the type of money trouble that kept artistic and managing directors up nights and left Harper with a knot in her stomach. She didn't need to be there every day to be comforted by the fact that the place, indeed, carried on.

So, even though she wasn't exactly surprised by the call, she was absolutely shaken to the core behind the reason. When had things gotten so bad? Riley, the current and only AD Harper had ever known in the role, was deeply concerned and making a last-ditch pitch to raise some matching funds, but it couldn't wait until Christmas. The board of directors had issued an ultimatum—either the theatre raised a quarter of a million dollars or there would be no money from the city, no funds to match from their usual private donors, and their grant from the arts endowment would prove useless without all of the other funds being in place. They had never done fundraising at that level, but a lot of the theatres in town did and were very successful. Sure, big musicals brought in money, but they also cost money and a lot of it. Riley understood this better than most and specifically more than the current money man at the helm. The problem was that he was new, and she would become the sacrificial lamb if this miracle plan didn't pan out. She had her suspicions that she still might be, and this was why Riley wanted people she could trust in the building.

“Riley, I don't know. We circle this offer every couple of months, and I have to tell you I don't know if it will work. Now, of all the times, is the riskiest of the request. If this goes wrong, it's more than a few jobs on the line. You could lose the theatre.”

“Harper, I'm building a team that I trust and one I know can take the impossible and make it a guarantee.”

“No pressure there. I will seriously have to clear the deck if I'm going to do this. How can you afford this team and me if the money is all but gone?”

“I'm going to pull a little theatrical shell game of my own.”

“Should I be worried about all of us being arrested on opening night? You know I wouldn't do well in prison.”

They both had a laugh, but the way things were going in the community and theatre as a whole, it didn't leave them many reasons to chuckle. Two theatres were closing, one executive director had been removed for skimming grant money, and even Riley, after reviving the place when she first took over, had her share of troubles with a scandal surrounding interns and her last production manager. They'd managed to keep the lid on things getting too far out of the circle by closing ranks, and Riley handled nearly every job in the theatre with a bit of freelance help per show. Harper was at the top of that hire list. Riley trusted her and wanted her in the house and on board full time, but for some reason, Harper always dodged the offer and found every reason to turn it down.

“Who's on the team, Riley?”

Harper wasn't interested or worried about the team as a whole. She knew whoever they were, they would be the best. That was the reputation the theatre had spent years building, and she had no reason to doubt that Riley would pick that moment to cut corners. Only the thought of one person put her stomach in knots.

"Asking what you already know the answer to, Harper?"

"Riley, *que no va a querer trabajar conmigo. No conmigo a cargo. No veo cómo va a funcionar.*"

"Harper! English, please. Now I know you're worried. You don't have to be, though."

"He will not work with me. More importantly, he won't work for me."

"Why don't you let me worry about getting the team on board? Bob's going to write the script. This won't just be a musical; it'll be the musical of the season. Original material, no royalties required, an all-star cast, top designers, and you and Lucas leading the team. We need this, Harper. I need you. I can't drive this train all on my own."

"Things didn't end well, and I'm pretty sure neither of us has changed enough to make it work. He has to be the boss of everything. Our history is muddy, at best. Besides, I don't know if I'd be comfortable without us having a conversation that I'm not in much of a hurry to have."

"Look, I've always wanted you on the team full time, but you kept saying no. Lucas said yes. He was in charge back then, Harper; this time will be different. You can play the boss card or work as partners, I don't care, but I need you both."

"Doesn't matter what the titles say, he'll still be the boss." Harper mumbled the first bit under her breath. The next part was intended for human ears to hear. "Can I think about it?" Even though she asked the question, Harper knew, deep down, that she wouldn't let the theatre or Riley down. They also had too much history.

Wandering around the living room in her condo, Harper attempted to empty her mind and make a decision. She knew she couldn't exactly tell Riley all the reasons the arrangement wouldn't work. In the last six months, she'd worn a path in her utilitarian beige carpeting thinking about this very topic. The room was a basic square box cut into angles by a built-in breakfast bar and a few unique built-in wall cutouts that served as bookcases and shelves for family pictures of people hardly ever seen in person, due to the craziness that was her show schedule. She straightened a picture on her way to topping off her wine glass. Emptying the bottle, because saving a half glass just seemed silly, Harper filled her lungs and closed her eyes. There was a childhood silliness that made her hope the answers would pop into her head the way they would during a surprise math quiz in school.

"Harper, are you still there?" Riley asked.

Releasing the held in air like a tiny explosion, which made her cheeks rattle, Harper answered.

"I'm here. You already know the answer, Riley. *Tienes suerte de que usted y ese maldito lugar quiero tanto.*"

"I don't know what any of that means, but I love you, too. Now, let's figure out where we're having lunch tomorrow to work out all of the details. We'll need to put together a gala committee and schedule separate meetings for them and the production team. I won't lose this place without a fight, Harper. I can't. I owe it to Connor and his memory."

Connor Morgan had founded the theatre back when Riley was in high school. She and most of her friends on the west side of the valley gained the bulk of their training under him. When he died, he had left explicit instructions that he wanted Riley in place as the new AD.

She'd worked with him as an assistant AD until the end. The following season, she was listed in the program as the new Artistic Director.

"Then I guess we better make it spectacular." Harper sounded more convincing than she felt as she hung up the phone.

They figured out as much as they could and made plans for a working lunch in the next two days. As soon as Harper disconnected the line, she scrolled through her contacts until she came to his name. Sip. Stare. Sip. Stare. When the last sip was a glass draining gulp, she put the phone on her coffee table, face down, and shoved the table away from her with her foot. The stupid thing was on wheels, and all her force sent it halfway across the room. Lucas Michael Mason. His name was either on the tip of her tongue or at the front of her brain. It was always a toss-up between fear that they would run into one another unexpectedly or that she might manage never to see him again. Both prospects made her want to bring up her last meal. He hadn't made any attempts at calling her, either. She couldn't be sure he was avoiding her, but it was evident that their last night together did not encourage him to reach out. Harper couldn't be confident about much with a bottle of Riesling in her belly that was sitting on top of only popcorn and digestive juices.

She had twenty-four hours to ruminate over their time apart. What were they? Friends with benefits, co-workers, soul mates? She'd given up on untangling their complexities a long time ago. After pushing for more every time they came together, she had finally just stopped and exercised some of the impulse control that Lucas kept telling her she needed and that came so easily to him. When he did finally give in, and they tried having a relationship, Harper had run scared. Not right away, of course—she was too intrigued by the possibilities and what he was proposing. But when he put words into action, she fled. She knew she had committed to much more than she bargained for with Lucas. She had gotten up close and touched fire. Most days, she could brush off the burnt parts and prayed the rest of her would hold together without crumbling. How could she still love him? More importantly, how could she work with him again, after everything that was between them? Half of it was only known to her, and Harper didn't do well with secrets. There would be more than the theatre's fate dependent on the outcome of this gala.

She needed sleep and to come up with a plan of action. Rinsing her glass, Harper headed up to bed. This wasn't the way she normally did things; sleeping on the couch in half of her clothes was more the standard, and the idea that she was, on some subconscious level, taking his advice stirred more emotions than she wanted to deal with before sunrise.

Not tonight, Lucas Mason, not tonight. That was her last thought as her head hit the pillow and her mind finally drifted off.