



*Abandoned
on his*

MOUNTAIN

DANI WYATT

**abandoned on his
mountain**

DANI WYATT

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by Dani Wyatt

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NEWSLETTER

dedication

A NOTE TO MY READERS:

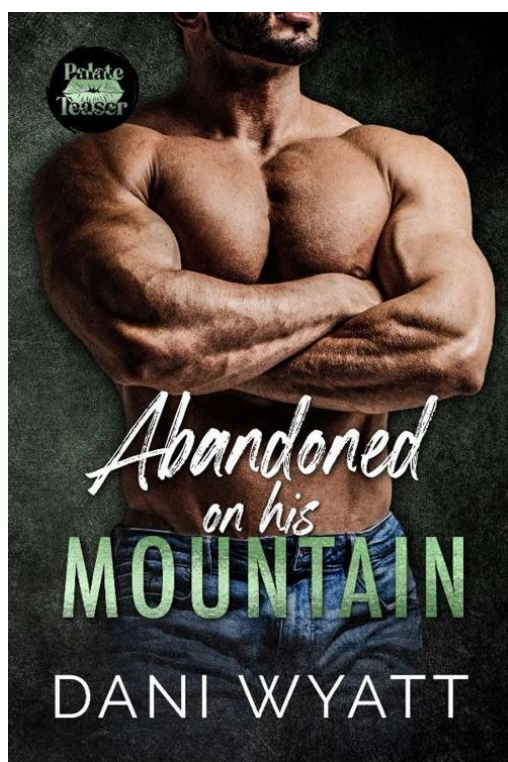
I appreciate every one of you.

For all the girls who think forearms are foreplay. I got you.

Dedicated to Rina. Barns are for

Big girls and bigger boys.

abandoned on his
mountain



contents

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Try This Mountain Man](#)

[Grab this b-a-n-n-e-d Book No pennies!](#)

[Dani's Other Books](#)

[Let's Stay Connected!](#)

[About Dani](#)

chapter **one**

Marin

GRANTED, my life is weird. Super-duper weird. But this?
This?

This is level-10 bananas.

Jesus watches me from the dashboard. Actually, several Jesuses do. One from a medallion glued above the AC vent, and another bobbling figurine above my grandpa's odometer.

I've looked at Jesus a lot in my life. A *lot*. I can never tell if he's angry, annoyed or just kind of...*meh*.

But never mind about Jesus for the moment. Right now, the AM radio is blaring so loud that the car speakers crack and buzz making the preacher's words cut in and out in weird stutters and stalls.

"Thy soul sh— be —ar—d only —f you —pent, sinn—! Re—nt!"

As the preacher rages on, I stare at the *swish, swish, swish* of the wipers battling the freezing mist that started as we turned onto the road leading out of Sherman and toward Carson Mountain.

"Grandpa. Tell me where we're going. *Please*," I beg, looking over to see the muscle in his jaw tighten to stone as he hisses something unintelligible through his dentures.

He's never been this mad and certainly has never dragged me out of the house and into the truck in the middle of the

night.

He thumps the dashboard in agreement with the roaring preacher. “Hear that, young lady? Repent!”

I swallow hard and re-focus forward. The road is dark and unmarked, the asphalt gleaming like diamonds in the headlights of Grandpa’s brand new eighty-thousand-dollar GMC truck.

Biting back tears, I twist the sleek satin of my dress in tight fingers on my lap. It’s cold, but the bulky red coat Grandpa insisted I wear as he tugged me out the front door after finding out I was not going to choir practice but to an appointment at a modeling agency, is warming me from my knees to my neck.

“I keep *telling you*. It wasn’t *my idea*.” One thing about being born with a Bible in one hand is that I honestly cannot lie. Impossible. “It was Stacey at school. She took those pictures of me, she sent them to the agency, she set up the appointment. I had to go. She’s my only friend, grandpa.”

Grandpa grumbles. “You won’t talk your way out of this. I didn’t do enough to stop your mother from ruining her life... and *mine*... but *you*...” His nostrils flare, knuckles white on the steering wheel, his gold Rolex glinting in the moonlight. He narrows his blue eyes at me. “I will not let the devil take you like it took her.”

My heart sinks. I’ve been paying for my mother’s sins since birth. In fact, my birth *was* her sin.

Mom had me at seventeen. All I know is I was born in the same room I now occupy in my grandfather’s sprawling mansion. But I guess money can’t fix everything because my mother died two days after my birth.

When I was around ten, I heard two of the deacons’ wives in church talking about how more girls would keep their knees together if they had to give birth with no pain medicine and a midwife who was paid extra to provide no comfort. Like my grandfather did with my mother.

Just because you have a nice house and go to church on Sundays, sure doesn’t mean your life is candy corn and teddy

bears, that's for dang sure.

Grandpa's wife, my grandmother, passed away one year before I was born, so he raised me tangled up in grief and anger and the twisted righteousness he thought was the solution to everything.

He never talks about my mom, except in offhand references to the shame she brought upon him for fornicatin' outside of marriage. The only thing I have of hers is a couple school pictures I found tucked inside my grandmother's old bible and from the pictures, we could be twins.

As far as my father, that's a mystery and I've never had the courage to ask.

I tug my legs together as the heated leather seat bakes me from under my rear end but it does nothing to chase away the chill that's taken root deep in my soul.

I point the toes of my red heels into the floor mat, then pull them back, stretching out my calves. I'm sure not used to six-inch stilettos. Grandpa would never have bought me anything so sexy. But Stacey did, and I just wish she had chosen a different color.

Everything on my body is red. My dress, my jacket, my nails. Even my underwear and my bra. Red, red, red... everywhere. It's always been this way. Grandpa insists the children of Jesus need to see me coming, so they know to look the other way.

How one out-of-wedlock pregnancy could turn him into an irrational tyrant I've still not puzzled out, but on the upside, I've never had to wonder if my socks match my slacks. Or my shirt. Or my shoes.

I blink twice, pinching the inside of my cheek between my molars, but the tears come unbidden. All I've ever wanted is to feel good in my skin. To feel normal somehow, like the girls at school I see walking around wearing makeup and chattering about boys and just being so carefree.

"You need to learn the value of life. Away from all this." He waves his hand around the truck. "Time that you were

humbled.”

He’s full of shit. If I was born with a Bible in my crib, he was born with a deed to a 10,000-acre tobacco farm and all the righteous weirdness to go along with it. But I don’t point that out. I’m already knee deep in sin and backtalk is not going to help.

That word *humbled*, though. That’s new. And it worries me.

The road narrows, the woods around getting thicker and more menacing. The road turns from pavement to gravel, then from gravel to mostly mud, but the truck handles the winding road upward into the mountains like a train on a track. There’s no stopping this, and the preacher on the radio thunders his agreement.

I shiver as we wind into the dense forest. That’s the thing about North Carolina. There are big cities, quaint towns and farmland but there are also mountains and back woods that reek of Deliverance.

It’s a terrible movie. But Burt Reynolds turned my insides to warm custard and had me writing out *Mrs. Marin Reynolds* in the back pages of my notebook for a year. It was the only show I could pull in the night I snuck into the attic with five extension cords and some tin foil and managed to get the thirty-year-old Magnavox to find a station.

Otherwise, no TV for me. Not unless it’s ordained by Grandpa. And, don’t even mention a cell phone. That’s two weeks of penance right there.

As we round a hairpin turn doing fifty the back of the truck slides and I yelp grabbing at the door handle. The inertia throws my burning cheek against the cool glass as Grandpa pumps the brakes and calls for Jesus to take the wheel.

He seems to make an exception to his every rule when it comes to Carrie Underwood.

Panic rises in my center, coiling around like a snake. “It was a modeling agent meeting. Something special for the last year of high school, Grandpa. Sort of like an internship.”

Wow, that's a reach but I'm desperate. "Nobody touched me, I didn't touch nobody else. I didn't *sin*. I don't need *cleansing*." I hold up the tattered printout of the email string Stacey gave me with the details. "See? Modeling. Not *tempting the holy into damnation*."

Grandpa snatches the printout from my hand, balls it up, pushing the button to lower the window then releases it into the night like a paper snowball. The freezing wind blows his silver hair around as he flashes me a *look*, the furrows in his brow so deep they could pinch pennies. "*You* are the sin, child. Your earthly form is the sin."

Hearing that isn't new. I am the apple that tempted Adam. The fire that burns men. I've heard it all so many, many times.

He takes a right, then a sharp left onto an unmarked washboard road. Mud spatters onto the side windows, and in the headlights I see a cabin ahead. No, not a cabin. A *shack*. Moss clings to the roof, and the window to the left of the front door is flapping in the wind, covered with clear plastic secured by duct tape around a crooked frame.

All the protests die on my tongue when Grandpa skids to a stop, throwing the truck into park and flies out of his door without a word. He's hella spry for eighty-five when he's fired up that's for sure.

I spring from my side, heels tottering on the gravel of the little driveway. He drops open the tailgate with a thud. And my heart sinks into the squishy ground along with my shoes.

He's throwing out red bags and cardboard boxes. A kerosene stove; Preppers' Warehouse MREs; iodine tablets. A blanket, a pair of red rubber boots. Jugs of water. A battery-powered lantern.

Suddenly, the plan starts to come into focus. *No, no, no!*

"You can't be serious? You're not going to leave me out here." I toggle my head to the right, then to the left. It's not just isolated here, it's apocalyptic.

I nearly face plant into a puddle as I stumble trip reaching for his arm, but he shoves me away. "Best thing for you, my

girl. If you end up like your mother...I'll never forgive myself." He says then turns away.

"Grandpa. I'll be good. I have mid-terms coming up. What about school?"

He slams the tailgate closed without reply. The diesel engine still rumbling tells me he's not staying. The mist filled air cools my face and after a pause, he turns to me in the red taillight glow and makes an X with his fingers as I tug the thick jacket around me. "If you survive this winter, you'll be saved. I prayed and that's what the Lord told me. You are eighteen, but you are *not* grown. You will find your humility here. With Jesus."

"And if I don't survive?" I ask as my airway constricts, the scent of the diesel mixing with the freshness of the mountain forest.

"Then your sin will die with you."

Sin. Impurity. Temptation. Evil.

I press a fist to my chest, my heart frozen, unworthy of beating.

Never in all my life did I think wearing a little make-up, reading some fashion magazines and going to a modeling agency interview would put me here. Grandpa might be crazy, but I never imagined he'd abandon me.

"When will you be back?"

No answer. Not a word. He hops back in the truck, slamming the door. Wet gravel and mud spray from the tires onto my face, my hair, my jacket and legs as he guns the engine.

I stand dumbstruck until the sound of the engine is swallowed up by the nighttime wilderness. The only upside I can think of is I don't have to listen to that radio preacher roaring about sin anymore more.

It's right *freezing* up here and a hoot owl somewhere in the trees agrees with me.

Grandpa loves listening to the weather man almost as much as he loves listening to the preacher. He said yesterday there was a storm coming in set to head over the mountains then into Sherman where we live. Then, he dragged me outside and told me to stack the wood in his truck bed in obsessively neat cords along the side of the five-car garage.

All the fireplaces in his house are gas. But, you know, you can never be too prepared for the Rapture.

The air is heavy with a new chill behind it that cuts right through me as I lug the supplies inside up a cut stone path which keeps me blessedly out of the mud. The shack is musty, but I'm relieved to find the ceiling and walls intact, with no wind or water coming in. Thank God for small favors, right?

I turn the friction crank on the lantern about two hundred times until I'm panting and my arm feels ready to fall off. Then click on the light, and survey my surroundings. A wood stove, a pile of firewood. Waterproof matches. A lumpy-looking bed with a few old quilts and a tragically flat pillow.

I'm not a snob about most things, but pillows? I ask for a new one for my birthday and Christmas every year because where I have to lay my head for 1/3 of my life seems like something that warrants a bit of luxury.

I inhale the silence inside the small structure as the heels pinch around my toes and I imagine how ridiculous I must look all made up in my silk dress, high heels and the red down coat big enough to fit a grizzly bear. There are plenty of mountains in North Carolina and I've been to many on retreats and cleansing weekends, but this is not one of them. This mountain feels lost in time. This cabin made from hand-hewn logs must be a hundred years old.

With the light from the lantern, I note there are a couple bare bulbs hanging from wires on the ceiling, but when I tug at the little metal chain on each, nothing happens.

One good thing about my background—I'm up to speed on what to do if Doomsday comes around. I know how to get a fire to draw; I know at least a bit about how to take care of myself. But all those years, I'd been told I was preparing for

the Rapture. Not getting ready to be dumped like an old loveseat out in the middle of nowhere.

Still, though. Still.

Maybe I'm stupid and naïve, or maybe I'm just relieved to be alone, but there's actually some comfort in being by myself here, outside of *Sauron's* ever watchful eye. Snort. I'd never call Grandpa that to his face, but it's a tiny rebellion and come on, J.R.R. Tolkien knows how to write an evil overlord.

I read the whole series in my library time in high school. I could never bring a book like that home with all its fantasy and mystical creatures. Anything smacking of the occult is verboten. I've never even been Trick or Treating.

I think Grandpa believes this really is what's best. It's twisted and lacks insight into who I am, but he did raise me when he could have left me to flounder in the system 'til I was eighteen.

With measured steps on the uneven floor I toddle close enough to the supplies to do a quick inventory of the MRE's and the jugs of water. The food is enough for a couple months, if I ration myself, but the water? Not so much. I'll need to find a creek or set up a rainwater collection system.

How I went from worrying about mid-terms at my private school and doing a modeling audition to wondering how to gather water for the next three months lest I die, it's a little bonkers, but I'm a pragmatist and until the wolves tear the flesh from my bones, I'll soldier on.

Thank goodness there's enough dried wood inside to start up the potbelly stove and drive some of the chill from the air. There's twenty-five long matches on the shelf. Not enough for the whole winter but I'll need to find enough wood to keep the fire burning anyway. I strike one and wait; thank God, it fires to life in the dim light.

I hold the sizzling match in one hand while I stuff the belly of the stove with some twisted paper and tinder from a box on the floor. When it crackles to life, I lay two smaller split logs

on top, waiting for them to catch before adding two more larger ones, then step back.

The air warms quickly as the fire crackles and the scent of the burning wood cheers me up. I decide to celebrate the fire-starting victory with a pack of red beans and rice I saw in the MRE's. Tugging open the silver wrapper, I squeeze the contents into a cast iron pan next to the pump sink that looks amazingly clean, then lower the heavy metal down onto the top of the stove with a clunk and wait.

The food chases away the last of my shivers, but I can't bear the idea of changing my clothes, so I huddle under every musty old blanket in the shack as well as the two red ones Grandpa brought with me.

Bundled up with food in my belly and silence in the air, the weight of it all feels like boulders on my chest.

I take a break from the gridiron bravery I've mustered so far and let the tears fall until a headache worms itself behind my eyes and into my forehead. My head falls back to the lumpy log wall as wind whistles through cracks and flaps the plastic back and forth on the front window. My eyelids droop, too heavy to hold open.

I'm floating in an uneasy sleep, hoping to wake to a sunshiny North Carolina day with Grandpa at the door holding a bag of Shipley's Donuts and a whole bushel full of I'm sorry.

My fantasy and tenuous sleep don't last, however as a howl rips through my slumber.

Wolves. Oh, Sweet Jesus, be merciful, *wolves*. The sound is unmistakable.

As if that's not bad enough, there's the click, click, click of claws on the rickety wooden porch and I suck in a breath and hold.

Then, it's the sound of sniffing under the door frame. Deep, wheezing inhalations, a low, terrible growl, and then, oh God, then the sound of scratching on the door.

It's the smell of my rice and beans, it has to be.

Or else, it's the smell of *me*. Tasty little human me. With my meat and my blood and my body and my fear sweat.

Yips in the distance, and more howls.

My heart races. I clutch my blankets around me, wishing they were woven from chainmail and look up at the cobwebs in the dark ceiling. The howls grow closer, louder, calling across the valley and up to the peaks.

*There is no way I'll make it through winter here alone.
There's no way in hell.*

chapter **two**

Davis

I HAVEN'T SLEPT in three nights and the needle on my cranky meter is well into the red.

If you ask my little brother, he'd say I'm always fucking cranky, but this no sleeping shit is not helping. I feel fucking old.

I'm twenty-five going on forty.

Fifty even.

It's insomnia, but with nightmares as a cherry on top. They'd gotten better over the last few years. They'd come maybe a few times a month, but then, well, something happened and now, they're back. Every fucking night, reliving the worst fucking day of my life like it's all happening right now. Over and over and over.

Tension knots in my shoulders as I stuff the coffee pot back into the new Mr. Coffee I bought at Guthrie's Hardware in town yesterday. We needed a new one because I slammed the old one onto the kitchen floor because it wasn't working fast enough.

My business, Davis Mountain Electric, has been getting busier every year and the money has been great, but the stress of juggling the work and the house and taking care of Stevie is wearing me thin.

But it's more than that. It's the looming shadow of what I did a month and a half ago that's got me bound up like I've been feasting on cheddar cheese three meals a day.

I run my hand down my face as I swallow the glory of the scalding black coffee, praying to the caffeine gods to get me through another day. I took this weekend off because I'm waiting for some parts for two of my jobs. The third one is stalled, because old Mr. Callahan, who owns the lumberyard in town and forty more across the country, has been dragging his feet on paying me my last two draws.

Here in North Carolina, lumber and tobacco are the currency of generational wealth, yet there's nothing old Callahan hates more than handing over his money, no matter how many zeros he's got in his bank account.

So, he can fucking wait like he's making me wait. I'm not a greedy bastard, but you sign a contract, shake a hand? Then you keep your word. I've done some fucked up shit in my life, but I keep my promises. Even the ones I shouldn't.

I honor my obligations. No matter what. All a man really has is his word.

Low TV chatter from my brother Stevie's bedroom down the hall drifts into the kitchen. He's not awake; I poked my head in before I made the coffee. He keeps that fucking thing on almost twenty-four hours a day but I can't blame him.

At least once a day I wheel him out onto the deck, or put him on the lift I installed and push his chair on the paved paths around the perimeter of the house when the weather allows. Janie, his caregiver, does the same, but it's exhausting for him. He lives in constant pain and there's nothing I can fucking do to fix it.

Guilt is my closest friend, along with Stevie and Janie who both make busting my balls an extreme sport.

Even with Janie's help, Stevie is a full-time occupation. One I will do with zero complaints for the rest of my life. Without me, he'd end up in some facility and I will never, ever let that happen.

I'm ashamed of myself pissing and moaning about not sleeping while my little brother lies in his room, probably wishing he wouldn't wake up. Not that he's ever said that. He's the most positive and cheerful fucking person I know, even though he has every reason to be a total bastard.

The sound of Stevie groaning in his sleep pierces a jagged blade through my heart. I don't think most people understand how much it hurts to be paralyzed. He can't get away from the pain, even in his sleep.

I have to get out of here.

I dump my coffee into the stainless-steel sink and rinse my mug, hanging it back on the first hook as I do every morning. Since Janie's still asleep, I unplug the coffee maker, and work my way to the back door where my heavy flannel hangs at the end of a row of hooks with coats and straps for helping move Stevie as well as a couple bridles that need repair.

I need a walk. It's four in the morning, but that's the best time to be out on the mountain.

Janie's here with the monitor on in the room I fixed up for her when she stays. She was hoping I would get some sleep with her taking the night shift.

No such luck.

I slip my arms into the shirt and take a last look around before I head outside. I rebuilt the kitchen soon after Stevie and I moved here. It's mostly open shelves on the top with the original alder wood cabinets below, which I sanded and refinished when money wasn't as abundant as it is now.

I'm not rich. Paying for Stevie's care and medical bills takes a good chunk of what I make, but things are good. We're more than comfortable and I have enough saved and invested to take care of him for the rest of his life. Everything I do is for him.

Stevie and I own almost a thousand acres of land here on Carson Mountain. We inherited it and it's worth a bucket of money, but that doesn't translate into cash. Not unless I sell it and that's not happening as long as I draw breath.

This is our home and I think it's this place that has kept Stevie going. He loves being in the mountains. I do too, for that matter. It suits me.

I'm never leaving unless I'm in a box.

I ease out the door into the chill and darkness. The soft beep of the security system isn't loud enough to wake anyone and I'll be back before they're up around seven. I just need some air and movement.

I stuff my hands into the front pockets of my jeans as my boots crunch on the damp leaves. I wind my way off the cleared part of our property toward my favorite path that leads around the original cabin, built by my grandfather and his father about eighty years ago.

It's a couple miles up the trail, but the exercise is good for my head. I grab my Winchester from my truck as I pass, because I'm not the only one that likes this mountain at four in the morning.

There's a freezing mist in the air, but I don't feel the cold. I trudge along, pushing away the looming disaster my temper has caused me once again. I don't want to entertain what ifs, but my short fuse could cost me the one thing in my life I vowed to never abandon.

Droplets of gathered drizzle cling to the pine needles, making them flicker in the muted moonlight. In the distance, wolves howl in the darkness. With the valleys and geography, it's difficult to know from which direction the sound originates.

I tighten my grip on the rifle that's braced like a yoke across my shoulders and inhale the heavy evergreen air.

I become time blind when I walk in these woods, especially at night. I don't know how far I've walked or how long when my peace shatters.

There's the faint glow of lights in the old cabin's window. Who the fuck...

No one comes up here. They know better. I've chased people off with bullets in the air enough that word gets around:

I'm not a hospitable host.

Through the leaves still clinging to the branches, there's no mistake. Someone's in there, and they are about to have a very unpleasant wake up call.

There's an outline of a figure through the window above the pump sink, but I can't tell much more than they are wearing red. Narrowing my eyes, drops of the mist wet my lashes as I stomp forward, raising my rifle.

I focus on the window, mud squishing around my boots as I move, noting the white tangle of smoke twisting from the metal stack in the roof.

Whoever it is, they sure are making themselves at fucking home, but I'll fix that right fucking now.

I'm close enough to make out the form inside, and I freeze. I suck in a breath of the chilled air, shaking the drops of water from my face.

Is this real?

The anger balled inside me dissipates into the night as I get my first look at the face of a fucking angel.

My dick springs to life against the teeth of my zipper and a zap feels like a bolt of lightning strikes the top of my head.

She's fucking *stunning*, even in the red puffy coat that's covering her from neck to knees.

Doesn't matter. I know under all that poofy down is the body of Aphro-fucking-dite.

Possessiveness spreads through me like sweet poison. It invades every cell. Worming into my DNA, becoming part of me in an instant.

What the fuck is happening? Is the sleep deprivation causing delusions?

She rolls her head around, her dark chocolate colored hair rippling around her face and splitting over her shoulders. Her eyes are closed as she raises her hands, stretching them toward the ceiling as the low light inside the cabin kisses her pink lips.

I'm instantly hard. Something that hasn't happened at the mere sight of a woman... ever.

My chest is painfully tight as she opens her eyes and stares directly at me through the window.

I'm in the tree line, there's no way she sees me, but her gaze nearly buckles my fucking knees. I've never knelt in front of anyone before, but this little brazen trespasser has me ready to fall down and bury my face between her legs in worship.

All my thoughts of blowing a hole through whoever dared to violate my property evaporate as I get closer and see the blush on her cheeks and the hint of worry around her eyes.

As I step through the last of the trees, I imagine those cheeks decorated with pearly streaks of my cum and wonder if under that coat her nipples are hard. I stall for a moment before I step into the clearing that borders the cabin and watch her walk in a circle as though she's lost.

That's it. She has to be lost, but what the fuck is a beauty like her doing up here in the first place? There's no car and my next thought has my finger looping over the trigger of the rifle again.

What if she's not alone? What if there's some dude in there with her and now, fuck, now I have to kill him.

I shake my head. *No* more fucking killing. Almost everyone in town knows about my father and what happened there. He's six feet under and it was my hands that caused it. Whether it was earned or not, I still got charged with manslaughter, but due to extenuating circumstances and my age, I didn't serve any time.

My father isn't the only blood I've had on my hands either, but there's no time for that memory lane trip right now. All I want to do right now is eat her alive.

But wait, I remind myself, what if she's not alone...

I raise the rifle and aim for the door.

chapter **three**

Marin

IT'S STILL pitch-dark when the noises finally stop but, still, I wait.

And wait.

How long, I can't be sure. I have no civilized way to measure time here. But, from my place among the blankets I crane my neck to peek out the glass window above the makeshift kitchen sink. It's not even close to dawn. Silver moonlight is muted behind gray clouds with no sign of an impending sunrise as I swallow around the lump in my throat.

With the cabin now comfortably warm and the sounds of the animals outside gone, my mind clears. The four walls around me are bare. No pictures, no art. There's a thin layer of dust over every surface. I reach over and lift a Mother Earth magazine from 1977 that sits on a log stump table next to the bed and blow the dust from the cover with a poof. Under it, something slightly less helpful but more interesting is a Penthouse from June 1980.

Scandalous.

A smile crests my lips as I thumb through the pages. I've never seen porn of any kind. Stacey has tried to force her phone in my face on occasion trying to broaden my horizons, but the fear inside me kept whispering that, somehow, my grandfather would know.

And there would be hell to pay.

But up here, in this mountain shack, I give myself permission to be normal.

Curious.

The women on the faded pages have wild hair and bold make up. Their bodies are soft and beautiful. As I turn the page, I bite back a giggle at the image of a middle aged man with a thick mustache and what looks like a bearskin rug on his chest kneeling on a circular tiger skin bed with two naked women. His hands cup each of their breasts as his mouth hangs open looking down at their spread legs, showing off rather generous rugs of their own. I dare to bring the page closer so I can inspect the part of him standing up from between his legs.

I've never seen one before. Never. I take a moment and inspect the detail as best I can in the dim light. It's a strange looking thing with a plump helmet at the top and smooth but veiny skin on the length and more of that bushy black hair around the base.

I've just seen my first penis. Take that Grandpa.

Then, I do a quick calculation and wonder if this man is still alive. He would be maybe my Grandpa's age? Oh my God, am I looking at a dead man's penis?

It's the most salacious thing I've done in my life. There's a pitter patter between my legs as my skin prickles and I lick my lips. I'm about as virgin as virgins come. I've never even touched myself in that way. I know girls at school talk about toys and shaving down there but God no. Sin upon sin. I would never.

I'm as natural as the women on the page.

I shake my head. There'll be plenty of time for carnal entertainment here alone for the next month, or two...but right now, I need to survive so I put aside the salacious entertainment and come out from my cocoon of blankets.

The red stilettos are a sharp juxtaposition to the rough wood floor as I stand, walk around in a small circle stretch, and ponder my fate. It's a blank canvas here. Like I could be. I

don't have to be the daughter of a jezebel anymore. The spawn of sin. The granddaughter of a madman.

A rich madman, but a madman, nonetheless.

I can be *Mountain Marin*. Survivor. Girl-boss. A phoenix rising from the ashes. When my Grandfather comes back in the spring, I'll be wild haired with torn clothes and animal skins hanging from the walls.

I cup my hands over my nose and mouth as the warmth of my breath renews me.

Courage is found in unlikely places, right?

If I survive this, I can do anything. I don't need money or my last name here. I know how to make a bow and an arrow from a stick. Make a rabbit snare from a rope. Maybe there's a rifle hidden under the bed...

With my flashlight in hand, my courage renewed, I force myself to creep outside not bothering to exchange my heels for the rubber boots which wasn't well thought out. There are wolf tracks everywhere, *everywhere*, like there was a dozen, two dozen, maybe more.

Suddenly, I catch movement out of the corner of my eye and freeze. I scan the forest pointing my flashlight at the tree line looking for ears, for fur, for incisors big enough to shred me like jerky.

I slide my eyes past the tree trunks, past the autumn leaves. And then I see it.

Not a wolf. But a man.

A big, *big* man. In denim and flannel, with a gun. And the *look* in his eyes. Oh my... he is *pissed*.

Uh oh.

I swallow the lump in my throat. The beam from the flashlight shakes as my hand trembles. I can't take my eyes away from him. His gaze is filled with danger. He looks more predatory and dangerous than any wolf could *ever* be.

He narrows his eyes at me then shoulders his rifle. Burly muscles tighten the plaid fabric around his biceps and stretch the white t-shirt underneath across his chest. With a few long strides, he's right in front of my frozen body. Towering above me. Muscles and power and strength.

As big as the biggest grizzly bear ever recorded but with a much sexier scent.

“What the fuck are you doing up here?”

His voice is like thunder. Shaking me to my core.

“I...” I stammer. It's not just that the situation is hard to explain. It's that looking up at him, I'd have trouble explaining *anything*. He'd have to duck to fit through any doorway with shoulders so wide, they could carry a felled oak. His dark hair is unkempt, falling over his forehead with late night mist glistening in the strands like tiny diamonds. His eyes are the wildest hazel I've ever seen, reminding me of this forest and the moon. He's maybe mid-twenties, but the hardness in his eyes makes him look much older.

“You gonna answer me?”

I swallow hard. “I'm...”

I've lost my chance to explain—his eyes say so. “Nah, fuck that. I've got a better question,” he continues.

His chest presses against me. His hips. His...

Dang, *that* thing is huge... Bigger than the one hairy-chested Buck Wild was sporting in that Penthouse spread.

He pulls me closer. No space between us. No distance. He yanks my jacket off my shoulder as I let out a little yelp. Underneath, I'm still wearing the skimpy little dress from yesterday.

I now regret the decision to not change my clothes. I guess, Mountain Marin likes tackling the rugged outdoors in a red satin slip dress and six-inch heels.

His rough fingers slide down over my bare arm, my back, under my breasts. Like he's searching me as though anything I have could be a danger to a man like him.

The air between us buzzes and zaps. Pulsing with energy, with wanting. As he touches me, everything in my body says *please* while my brain says *run*.

“The better question, little girl in red, is are you here alone?” His hazel eyes dart toward the cabin, then back to me, cocking his head to the side while I stand mute. He raises a brow on a sniff, biting into his bottom lip. “You have a speech impediment?”

I shake my head, mouth falling open as the words bank in my throat. His face is as rugged as the mountain itself with a dark short beard covering the square angles of his jaw and cheeks. His harsh jutting forehead makes him look like he’s from another time, lost here in the mountains like me.

“No, you don’t have a speech problem, or no, no one is here with you?”

I shake my head again, unable to form words because all my tongue wants to do is lick down the valleys of his chest and around those indents of his abs. I stutter something unintelligible but the growl that follows my stammering does nothing to help.

“No boyfriend? Father... *Husband?*” He chokes on that last word like he’s just swallowed something vile.

“N-n-no.” I manage. His body heat and manly scent are making my head spin. The mist has stopped but a frozen gust of wind tangles in my hair and blows up the slit of my dress. “Who are you?” I whisper, steam from my breath kissing the frosty air between us.

“Never you fuckin’ mind, little girl.” He growls. “What the fuck are you doing up here, on *my* mountain? Alone? Dressed like *this*? You got a date with a bear?”

The steam rises on each of his exhalations. And mine too. And our breath mingles between us for one second, two. Heat and want. I lean into him, inhaling his scent again, needing more. It’s fresh pine and sweat and a hint of coffee on his breath. It’s a concoction that shouldn’t work but on him?

I'm swimming in all the wrongness of what's happening down low in the heavenly haven between my legs but I'm powerless to stop it.

As dizziness wobbles my knees, I dig my fingers into the fabric covering the back of his arms and as I do, something changes.

His hand stalls on my waist. His rough fingers start a fire that burns me from the inside out. The look in his eyes changes from angry to...hungry?

The man from the magazine had that same look. Like he's coming off a seven-day purity fast and I'm the closest fast-food drive through.

The way his body stiffens makes me shudder. The way his pupils dilate and a growl tumbles from his chest is terrifying.

But, it's the way he tugs me closer and I feel something *dangerous* pressing into my hip that makes me wonder if the wolves and the bears are really the worst this wild mountain can muster.

"I—if this is your place," Mountain Marin barks at the behemoth standing in front of me, my survival instincts clearly taking a nap. "Show me some proof this land belongs to you."

His chuckle draws terror from the most primal fight or flight recesses in my DNA.

"Looks like I'm going to have to teach that mouth some manners." He grunts on a sniff and reaches down to take a handful of whatever manliness he has between his legs, adjusting himself with a cock of his hip without shame. "Those lips must be good at something other than backtalk. I can't wait to find out..."

The red sparks in his shimmering eyes ignite something feral inside me.

Fight or flight. Time slows. The usual noisy voices in my head go silent. The world seems to pause, breath held, waiting for what's next.

And then, as if someone's fired a starting pistol, I... *run.*

chapter **four**

Davis

WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS. This was *not* what I planned to be doing at four thirty in the fucking morning today.

I take off after her, matching her two high-heeled strides with one of mine. Christ only knows what'll happen to her if she veers right and heads into the forest. There are old steel leg traps left from long ago here and there and a few mine shafts not far and the thought of even a scratch on her sweet, tender flesh...

No fucking *way*.

But she's quick, damn, I love a good chase but this? I'm half in love with this girl already. She sprints toward the cabin, mud flying from under her stilettos as she stumbles on the stone walkway. She gets through the door, spinning and shooting me a triumphant grimace, slamming it shut behind her.

How does she run like that in heels out here? That's gold medal Olympic sport right there.

I'm equal parts livid and intrigued. I can't wrap my mind around how she's gotten up here alone dressed like that.

The thought that maybe someone tried to hurt her has rage bubbling inside me and a red haze covers my vision, and yet...

She sure looks fine to me. Too damn fine, to be honest.

But fuck. The smell of her shampoo is still in my nostrils and that cleavage, peeking out from under that ridiculous red jacket? I might be a recluse, I might hate the fucking world, but I've still got *needs*. Right fucking now, *she* is what I need.

I launch myself at the wood door, boot heel first, and burst inside on her scream.

She backs up, shadows from the lantern cast against the back wall and she looks *way* the fuck younger than her years. "Wish it was the wolves," she murmurs. Her voice has a sass I don't see coming and a wicked grin tugs at the corner of my lips.

The weird mix of her youth and smart mouth is gasoline on my fire. Instant fucking erection, so hard and thick that my balls fucking throb. I slam the door shut, surprised at how much I want to be in this place right now with her.

I prowl forward, watching her square her shoulders. Brave little girl.

"This is my land, *my* place," I say with dangerous certainty. I look around and notice the blankets bundled on the bed with the dirty skillet on the stove. "You think you can fucking play house in here?" I whisper at her face.

She scampers back, pushing her ass up against the kitchen table that squeaks across the wood floor. She lifts her thigh and her jacket falls away, revealing creamy skin and perfect curves in a slit so high I can nearly see paradise by the lantern's light.

Goddamn it, why. Why? This pretty little thing is the *last* thing I need right now. Yet, I want her so fucking bad.

Such a contradiction. Distraction. Temptation.

I have to figure out where she came from and get her back there. Out of sight, out of mind, and all that shit.

But, even as those thoughts come, they go. I already know, I'd keep her here forever if I could. Disappear into this wildness with her under me as I *pump, pump, pump* her full of me spread wide on that table until she loses any notion of running again.

When I'm focused on her delicious skin and mouth-watering curves, she uses my distraction to take advantage and lunges at me, shoving me hard. Her small hands collide with my big chest, giving me an annoying shot of pain to my sternum.

This little baby-faced brat. The ferocity of her anger makes me even more primal, even more intense.

With lightning speed, I wrap my hand around her throat. Her gasp makes the beast inside of me roar. She reaches for my hand, trying to push it away from hers. The sass and strength in her stormy blue eyes changes into fear and something else... desire?

Damn, this girl.

"*Stop,*" she whispers with that cute little hint of a southern drawl, but it's her eyes that tell me *please*. It's the way she leans into me that tells me *more*. And it's the fucking way she moves her young pussy over my hard dick that tells me she wants this.

Stop. That word only makes me want her more. The chase, the push back. I'm ready for the challenge Red Riding Hood, I'm ready.

"You should go back where you came from," I growl into her face.

And she closes her eyes, her lips parting with a silent moan.

"Make me," she challenges.

Fucking Christ. She challenges me. Daring me. And it's that moment I decide she's mine. Just like this land is, this little girl is all mine.

With my other hand I tip her face up to look at me, the meat of my thumb against the delicate line of her jawbone.

She swallows hard. Her tits rise and fall against her jacket. Fucking delicious little orbs. A hard nipple pushes against my pec, and it's all I can fucking do to stop myself from pinning her down and rutting her until she cries.

“Answer me. Why the fuck are you dressed like that?”

She blinks back something like surprise. “Be-because...” She stammers. “I’m...”

“You dress like this and what the fuck you think is gonna happen? You’re gonna drive men *crazy*.”

“No, it’s... I was... What are you anyways, some kind of mountain-man creeper out there in the woods watching me?”

I tip her chin up further.

A mountain-man creeper. Am I? Fuck. Maybe I am. But if I am, I don’t need sweet cheeks here busting my nuts about it. “This is my cabin. I shoot squatters...” She’s making my dick so fucking hard it could split an oak stump in half.

She purses her lips, fucking amazing lips, all bratty and rebellious. “I have nowhere else to go. I’ve got supplies. I know how to draw a fire. I have *skills*. So leave me the hell alone.”

She has nowhere to go? Fuck, that does something to my chest. And suddenly, I want to give her everything. Every fucking thing.

Fuck me.

“Yeah? You gonna go all Jack Fuckin’ London and start living with the wolves? You think they want to be your *friend*, Little Red?”

The mention of the wolves scares the shit out of her. Those blue eyes of hers turn into saucers. Good. She should be scared. She isn’t safe here. Because if it’s not the wolves that get her, it’ll be the bears. And if it’s not the bears, it’ll be the cold.

Christ. Damn. There’s not a fucking chance I’m leaving her out here alone. “Nothing out here wants to be your friend.”

“I know,” she says on a whisper.

“What they wanna do,” I begin. Using my hand over her delicate throat, I caress the vein that shows me how hard her heart is beating. I lick my lips, wondering how her skin would

feel under my tongue. Or the way her earlobes will feel between my teeth. And the way her tits will look when I've slapped them apple-red. "What *they* wanna do is tear you apart and feast on your flesh. All night long," I growl against her lips.

She shivers a little. Her body melts into mine. I need to show her who she belongs to. Now. Because she's in my place, on my land. And there's not a fucking thing that will stop me from having her.

She exhales slowly. She's a fucking honeypot, this one. And I am one hungry bear. "Is... that what you want to do, too?" she purrs.

She's got no fucking clue at all. It's been so long since I touched a woman. I don't even remember how long. And now that I'm interested in her, I'm *burning* for her. "Maybe," I draw out the word as fire licks its way up my legs and bursts in my chest.

Goddamn. What is it about her? It's like I've been waiting for her. Waiting for this red-hot little comet to slam into me like this.

Every inch of her is perfect. Every inch of her is what I want. And, fucking nuts, what if I didn't come along? What if she was up here all alone for days? Weeks? Months? I don't always take this path and with the weather coming in, if I hadn't happened this way tonight, it would have been too fucking long.

Wolves. Bears. My skin heats and anger curls in my belly thinking I could have been too late.

But, I'm here now. And what *am* I gonna do with her?

Whatever the fuck I want.

But she's got herself in a situation, somehow. I can see that clear enough. And whatever it is, I want her too much already to let her figure it out alone. "Has anybody hurt you?"

Her eyes dart back and forth between mine. "No. Not really. I mean..."

I ball my fist instinctively. “What’s *not really*?”

“No, I’ve not been *hurt*. It’s just... my friends...well, some kids from my school,” Her eyes move off of me as though the floor has the answer to my question. “We were at a party and they got this idea to go camping. And I— when they stopped here, there was a bear and everyone ran. I don’t think they were really my friends though. I think it was all just like mean girl’s club stuff. It was dumb, I shouldn’t have trusted them.”

I’m relieved that she’s not been hurt, but from the way she’s measuring every word, and the piles of supplies on the floor, she’s fucking lying and I’ll deal with that later.

“How old are you? Don’t bullshit me.”

I want to know her. For real. In the most biblical goddamned sense of all but if I have to wait, I’ll die, but I’ll wait.

“Eighteen.”

The word makes my dick weep and I’m close to a gut busting nut. I believe her, but I need to be fucking *sure*. “Don’t lie to me, Little Red.”

Now her eyes meet mine. “I am. Eighteen. Two months back.” Her eyes are honest. And I’ve been around the block a time or two. I can tell she isn’t bullshitting.

It’s all the permission I need. So, I use all my willpower and break her stare. And then turn and walk back to the door and flip the security board down into the catch slots. I don’t need anything interrupting what’s coming next.

“Okay, then,” I murmur as I walk back to her. “Maybe I can be your friend on this mountain. I can be your protector.”

The tension is thick between us. Hot as fucking steam. She’s nervous, but also interested. She watches my every move as I open the locked supply closet and get out some coffee. And then I push the button on the remote to power up the generator. As the lights come on inside the cabin, I feel her relax.

“That’s how you get the lights on.” She stares at the closet but I’m not here to talk about lightbulbs.

“You hear me? I’ll protect you, but I expect you to pay up front.”

She stiffens. Her jacket rustles, her breathing quickens. “But I don’t have any money.”

“I didn’t say a thing about money, little girl. Now take off that jacket and let me see you for real.”

Her eyes lift to mine, wide and curious. “You want me to strip?”

I nod thinking I’ve hit the fucking jackpot. I just wanted to see what she was wearing but yeah, yeah, I want you to strip baby.

Ab-sa-fucking-lutely.

I inhale her scent. Her heat. My eyes have adjusted to the low light of the cabin now, and I can really study her. She’s fucking *beautiful*. So young and tender and fresh. Taller than most girls with an elegant length to her sexy fucking legs. She’s a twelve on a scale of one to ten. “Yeah. And take it slow.”

She steps backward, straightening her shoulders. I watch as she shakes her head. “You can’t ask that from me.”

“You offered. Now, it’s what I want and you owe me.”

She swallows. I notice the way she pushes her thighs together. She can try to resist the desire she’s feeling all she wants, but I can see the signs.

“What’s your name?” I ask, trying to change the direction of her thoughts.

“Marin,” she murmurs.

“Pretty name for a scared little girl.”

Her eyes flash, angry. “You’re kind of a jerk, you know that?”

I nod. “Tell me something I don’t know. You can call me Davis.”

“Davis,” she says softly, nothing more than a hush, like that red satin dress brushing her skin. “I like that.”

“Good. Now that we know each other on a first name basis, strip. Pay up buttercup as they say.”

I see her consider her options. There’s not many. She’s either going to do as I say, what she wants as much as I do, or she’ll be alone to deal with the wilderness. Or so she thinks. I’ll never leave her alone. No matter what I let her believe.

Finally, she nods. I watch, transfixed, as she licks her plump lips. There’s a sultry confidence in her square shoulders. She takes a deep breath and nods once more. Convincing herself.

She lets the big red jacket fall to her feet. Underneath, that strappy red silk dress wrinkles around all her curves in just the right way.

“Fuck,” I let out on a breath.

She smiles a little then. With one perfectly manicured finger, she pushes the thin strap over her shoulder down her arm.

I let my eyes trace her curves. Linger over the Y of her pussy, the curve of her belly. I’m gonna make her mine. All fucking *mine*.

The other strap comes down. Creamy shoulder, a hint of a bikini tan. She smells good. Like summer. Rum and coconuts and a midnight fuck on an empty beach.

She crosses her arms and lowers her gaze, shaking her head.

“What happened?”

“I shouldn’t do this. You don’t understand. I should be away from you and everyone else. Protection. That’s why I wear red. Only red. To protect innocents from my *temptations*.”

Now that, I don't like. At all. I take a step into her, closing the gap between us. With the side of my finger, I lift her jaw so she's facing me again. "Do I look like a guy that needs protection from *anything*?"

A little smile. A dimple appears on her right cheek. Fuck. "No."

"So then keep going."

Pride, again. Confidence. Her long lashes dust her cheeks, and she scoops her thick hair over her shoulder. Slowly she turns around, casting a glance back at me that makes my balls fucking ache. "You'll have to unzip me if you want to see more."

chapter five

Marin

HIS THICK, rough fingers slowly draw down the tiny zipper at the back of my dress. Inch by inch. Breath by breath. Peeling each worrisome thought away from my body and soul.

I keep asking myself why I'm doing this. Why I'm agreeing to his command. But deep down, when I pass all the worry about sins and redemption and rapture, I know I want this. Him. And what his dark and dangerous self promises to give me.

I'm re-born here and there is no sin when you are left in a mountain cabin to die.

At least that's what I'm telling myself and I just want to follow what feels good for once. And he feels so good.

The coolness of the cabin prickles my spine, but the goosebumps that cover my body have nothing to do with the temperature. And have everything to do with *him*.

He groans as he exposes more and more of my flesh to his view, but as the dress falls away from my body, I hear his breath catch.

I know what he's seeing. Something that nobody but me has ever seen before. Not since I had the tattoo artist place it on my body on my eighteenth birthday. I told my grandpa I was going to Bible study. That's the only lie I've ever told.

His rough fingertip traces the line of my ribs as he reads the words, in their tiny script, that I have only ever seen backwards in the mirror. *“Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a right spirit within me.”*

I let my eyes fall on a knot in the pine boards on the walls. I feel ashamed at having this man see me, this man I don't know, this man whose presence makes my panties so wet and my mind spin. And yet, I like having his gaze on me. His judgment. That power.

I like the vulnerability of being naked in front of him, too. The quickened breath of his, and the occasional curses falling from his lips make me feel... powerful. But it only adds to the shame my grandpa has put on me all those years.

Temptress. Danger. Impure.

“Now you know,” I say with a shrug of one shoulder. “I am impure. I am dangerous. I am unwholesome to men. You should fear me.”

He doesn't say anything. But he takes a step closer, pressing his body against mine. The thickness of his erection makes me gasp. The cold metal of his belt buckle presses against my lower back, and his penis feels like it's nearly about to split the metal teeth of his fly.

He slips his hand between the fabric of my dress and my hip, sliding thick strong fingers toward my belly, his thumb hooking over my red panties.

My knees weaken and I lose focus on the knotted pine. The room shimmers around me, as if I stood up too fast. My heart pounds in my ears and every breath, every sensation, seems almost too intense to bear.

My exposed skin prickles with awareness of his gaze. Heat runs over my flesh, causing that flesh, especially my cheeks, to warm.

And yet with the feeling of his breath against my cheek, the sensation of his powerful manhood threatening me from behind... I feel shame, not fear. But also want. I want

whatever happens to me now. Let it all be done. If this is my destiny, then God put me here and I will accept my fate.

He slides his hand up my belly, cupping my left breast. He groans as he weighs it in his palm. My nipples perk up so tight, it almost hurts in the cold cabin air.

He grinds his hips against me from behind, urgent and intense. Slow and powerful. “Impure, huh?”

I drop my head, my hair blocks out my face and the dim morning light through the dirty windows. “So *impure*.”

His hand moves to the other breast, while his other hand touches me between my legs. I shudder with the first caress of his rough fingers against my pussy. My body is on fire now, a molten mess of things I don’t understand. I know so little of the world, and even less of sex.

But now here he is, touching me with awe, almost, groaning into my ear. And not sounding at all like he needs protection. But more like he is craving, needing, desperate for a release that only I can give him.

I close my eyes. “I am impure. I am sin.”

He growls into my ear. “Say that again.”

My heart aches with it, with all the years of shame, of feeling wrong in myself, dangerous in my beauty. “I am sin.”

“Tell me you mean it.”

I nod a little, feeling his stubble against my cheek. The heat of his breath. Cologne and sweat again. So different from any scent I have ever known. “In Jesus’ name, I mean it.”

“So then fucking prove it.”

His words light a fire in me, a flash from embers that have smoldered for so long. I let the room spin, let my mind whirl, and follow my instincts, letting my hand slide back to undo his belt.

But I’m clumsy with it. Nervous, unsure. His strong hand overtakes mine, certain fingers guiding my fearful ones. The snap of the leather coming free, the jingle of the buckle

coming open. And now the softness of his penis pressing through his underwear against my bare skin.

“You shouldn’t,” I say, my voice hoarse and low.

His cock twitches against my flesh. “The fuck I shouldn’t.”

“I mean, I’ll be your downfall,” I murmur, almost automatically, robotically. Radio preachers and tent sermons and *purify thyself, young lady, purify thyself*. “I will be your undoing.”

My words only encourage him, and his intensity sparks a reaction in my body that I have never felt before. A desperation to be undone, myself.

His fingers explore me from behind, greedy and aggressive. It’s as if his entire body tightens when he feels my soaked panties. And now even I can smell my musk mixed in with the dusty cabin air. “*Bullshit*, little girl. This dick will be *your* undoing. I guarantee it.”

My eyes flutter shut, my head drops. And I let myself succumb. “So be it.”

He yanks his underwear down and now we are flesh to flesh, the curve of my butt pressing firmly and perfectly into the bend in his hips. Like I was made for him.

He takes his cock in hand, stroking it long and greedy against the opening of my pussy. Dipping in, dipping out. My body flutters and rolls, and I find myself pawing for more, *please*, more. Wondering for a moment if this is all just a fever dream.

He pushes the side of his jaw against mine. “Put your hands on the fucking table, you hear me?”

I obey, without protest. He hikes my skirt up over my ass, stepping back and groaning when he finally sees all of me. “Jesus Fuckin’ Christ.” He reaches forward, opening his palm in front of me. “Spit. Right fucking here.”

I’m surprised, not only by the command but by his use of the Lord’s name, but I obey again. But I’m polite about it. Because I’ve always been taught that a girl shouldn’t spit.

He growls his disapproval. “Get fucking dirty, you hear me? I said *spit*.”

I gather a big mouthful of saliva and shoot it into his palm, splattering his fingers and making a tendril of wetness stick against my cheek. He likes that and grunts his approval. “Atta fucking girl.”

With his saliva-slick palm, he strokes his dick at my opening, nudging the head inside. And it feels good, but scary. So scary. “Please, I’ve never...”

He laughs a little, cruel and unkind. “No shit, angel. I could see that the first time you looked at me. Virgin eyes. You think you’re impure? You’re not. But you’re about to be.”

Oh, my *God*. This all feels so wrong. And yet, so very, very right. I feel my eyes well up a little, not in fear, not in danger, but in the overwhelming weight of all I have been told warring inside me against what I want and need.

“I...”

He slows his strokes, pulling me in close, making me feel safe and protected. “Tell me.”

“I don’t know how to do any of this.”

He chuckles, and I can feel his attitude toward me softening again. I like the way he is. Rough and aggressive, then kind and warm. He turns me around in his arms, his erection pushing hard against my belly. I glance down and gasp. It is huge. And veined. And throbbing. A solid shaft of muscle, with a purplish head and skin pulled so tight.

And it’s leaking. That little droplet of moisture, it draws me to it. And makes my mouth water. “Can I taste?”

His eyes narrow, getting greedy and intense. He’s so very handsome. So very *intense*. “Go on. You are playing that temptress well. I think you like being this girl. A mountain man’s slut lost in the woods.”

I slowly sweep the drop of moisture from the slit in the tip, and place it to my lips. It’s warm and slick but otherwise... “It doesn’t really taste like anything.”

He smiles this killer smile that absolutely makes my heart go flip-flop. “Not yet, baby. But it will.”

Now with his other hand, he pinches my cheeks. He brings his lips to mine, kissing me in a way that takes my breath away. All my friends have been kissed, behind the locker and football games and school dances. But not me. Never this. Never until now.

As he kisses me, his big rough hand comes down and pushes my panties aside. I gasp into the kiss, knees wobbling, and then I feel him draw my little bud tight with his finger. I whimper and hang onto him for dear life. Again, he smiles, but this time into the kiss, and he works me harder and harder until the room isn't just spinning. It's sparkling and shattering.

“All those curls are fucking hot.” He grunts and I know most girls my age shave themselves bare, but I could never. “You're a gift from nature. Natural mountain girl sent here just for me.”

“Oh my...”

He slows his teasing. He slides his hands down my ass and hoists me up onto the wooden tabletop. Once again, we fit together like we were made for one another.

He fists his cock in his hand, working his length against my pussy. The tip of his cock nudges between my folds, teasing my clit. The sensation is mind-blowing, toe-curling. My need builds and builds. Higher and higher. My body responds to him faster than I can process. Like every cell in my body has been ready for this all along. I hang onto him as tight as I can.

“Give it to me, angel,” he growls in my ear. “I fucking told you, it's time to pay up. Your cum is your collateral.”

I look deep into his eyes. The depth of the forest of his eyes has all the gorgeous and dangerous secrets I can't even imagine. But I desire to get in on all those secrets. I want to know everything.

Being so close to him now, it's like everything makes sense. All my desires, all my needs. It all makes sense here.

The lava that flows through me seems like instinct, not sin. And yet. "I'm so bad, Davis. I'm so, so bad."

When he pulls back from me, I worry he's finally accepted the truth I'm voicing. But he kneels in front of me, like I'm the crucifix above the altar and he says his prayers.

"Davis..." I start, but my words fall on a moan when his mouth closes on my... my pussy. His tongue laps at me, pushing between my folds. My legs quiver when he sucks my clit into his mouth and I arch off the table. "Oh, God," I breathe out.

He groans while sucking and kissing my pussy. His teeth graze over my clit, causing a delirious pleasure to shoot through my spine. I reach for him, pulling his head closer to my flesh.

"Bossy," he says with a chuckle.

"Please. *God, please.*"

He dives in once more, lapping my juices. Little sparks of fireworks appear behind my eyelids while my body becomes tense, like an arrow ready to shoot.

"C'mon, little girl. Give it to me. Come in my mouth," he says.

I don't know what he asks from me, but seems like my body knows it.

With a cry of pleasure, my body curves like a bow and frees all the tension and built-up energy.

I fall back on the table, smiling at the ceiling. He moves back on my body, leaning over me until our lips meet. He kisses me hard, his tongue searching my mouth, his teeth clashing against mine. He pulls away leaving me breathless. I feel pressure at my opening. Still feeling the bliss, I focus on the tension between my legs; a tiny opening being driven open by a huge member.

More pressure. And more.

He holds me close in his arms, pumps his hips once in a powerful thrust. The tension between my legs breaks and a

white-hot searing shaft of pain tears through my bliss. I cry out in agony.

I hear him talking to me, but he sounds far away, like I'm drowning and he's coming to rescue me. "Push through the pain, angel. Let me take what belongs to me."

Oh, the pain. My God, the pain. It rips up through my belly, so intense I can't even think outside of it. It is so sharp and so glassy that it cuts through my spinning glittery haze.

He keeps me close, staying deep inside me as my body screams both *no* and *yes*. A flood of something hot spills from my body, and I look down to see him and me both, covered in my virgin blood.

My blood streaks his cock, messy and horrible.

"God, it hurts," I say, halfway on a pained sob. I deserve this pain. I deserve to hurt. "Davis, it hurts."

But he holds me close, and fucks me slow now, slow and urgent. "I'm gonna come inside you now, baby. You understand what that means?"

"Yes," I say, gripping him tight with my quivering thighs. "Please. I deserve this. I deserve whatever you give me." I take his face in my hands, my fingers feeling tiny against his massive jaw, and bring my forehead toward his. I lock eyes with him, and in that instant, somehow, I forget myself. I let the pain cleanse me. I want all the wrongs right now. I don't care about Jesus or God or anything except following the feelings they put inside me.

"Come for me. Let me make you good again."

My body shudders at his words. A rush of my wetness spills out of me, making him groan. "Just fucking let go, baby. You're a precious little slut, and all of you is mine now. The good and the bad. The pure and the poison. Just stop thinking and let it go." And I do. Again. It's like a well of emotions and pleasure opens and runs over all the sadness and guilt. The waves twirl over and over like a current. And all of them reach to the shore, finally, finally.

Finally.

My body tightens and my consciousness sort of... slips. With ripples of unimaginable pleasure. *Rapturous* pleasure. Heaven itself.

And I just *let go*.

“Fuck. You’re so fucking beautiful,” he growls. “You feel so fucking good. You were made for me my little red whore. Perfect.”

And then with another primal thrust of his strong body, clenching his ass and gripping me close, he thrusts into me again and again, big hands gripping my butt, before kissing me one last time and coming hard and deep, all the way inside me.



The sun is slowly coming up over the horizon, beyond the frosted pine trees, when he bundles me up and lays me in bed. I’m spent. He brought me to that mountain top five more times with his mouth, his fingers and again with his thick manhood only this time, with me on top.

It was freeing. I let myself just be without thought or judgement. Come what may, this place, this man is my re-birth.

“You stay there, you hear me? No fucking running from me now. We clear?” There’s a smile in his voice, but he looks serious as a heart attack even still.

“Yes.”

“Because I like you, but I’m not fucking fighting a wolf pack for you. Got it?”

I nod up at him. And then blink once. And say, “You sure?”

He turns away, shaking his head, and turns on the light in the little bathroom, separated from the rest of the cabin by a simple curtain. The sound of running water fills the air. “Time to get you cleaned up, Little Red.”

My eyes suddenly feel heavy and sleepy. I didn't sleep well, but I'm sure he didn't sleep at all. But now, now I feel safe and warm and *okay*. "Thank you for coming up here. I don't know why you did, but thank you for protecting me."

He looks at me over his shoulder. Like he wants to explain, wants to tell me something he hasn't yet. His eyebrows furrow a little and he looks serious, concerned. But whatever it is, he lets it go. "I come up here a lot, and I'm glad I was here today. Maybe that's the silver lining to being an insomniac."

"Well, if all your pillows are like this one." I make a face at the flat horror pretending to be a pillow on the bed. "It's no wonder you don't sleep."

"Naw, not like that. You'll see soon enough."

With the bath drawn, he helps me out of bed. My legs are unsteady. Again, I feel exposed and vulnerable in front of him, especially by the bright unshaded bulb in the bathroom. But I stay close, clinging to him almost. Because while he may not make me feel exactly pure, he at least makes me feel a little better than I have in a long while.

chapter **six**

Davis

I DRY her carefully after her bath, caressing every inch with the tattered towels that have been up here for years. She's so fucking beautiful I hardly feel worthy. But here we fucking are.

I carry her, newlywed-style, from the bathroom back to the bed and lay her down to rest. The fire is stoked to keep it balmy in here so she can parade around naked and not be cold.

Her pretty Money blue eyes are heavy with sleep, her delicate cheeks pinked with the warmth of the water. In my chest, I'm feeling feelings I've never felt for a woman. The desire to protect her. The desire to keep her safe. The desire—nah, the fucking *need*—to take her apart so that in I can put her back together with something we created together growing inside her.

I make sure she's safe and warm in the bed, bundled up in blankets, hair damp and curled. Then I drag myself away from her and step outside. The cold morning air stings my face and I crack my neck side to side. Fuck. *Fuck.*

Now that I'm away from her, I can take a step back from the last handful of hours. And the seriousness of what just happened makes itself crystal fucking clear.

What the fuck am I doing? What the fuck was *that*?

It was like she fucking mesmerized me. Bewitched me. But all that shit about impurity, that's not the reason. Actually,

it's the opposite. It's her purity, her innocence, her beauty that drew me to her.

But I'm a grown-ass motherfucker. I need nobody and nothing except myself and to take care of my obligations. Then I set eyes on her, and her fucking curves and dimples and red satin dress and I'm ass pussy whipped as a teenager.

I fucked her raw. Several times. It was fucking amazing.

Whump goes my fist against the trunk of the rotten old ash, sending bark flying.

The sting of the impact does nothing to cut through the way I want her. I still smell her cunt on me, her musk, her youth.

I stomp off through the woods, to the pond that eddies by the river. I pick up a handful of stones and skip them across the surface of the water. Because seriously. Fucking *seriously*. What am I doing?

I've got shit to take care of, and huge responsibilities.

But when she finds out who I really am? And what I've done? This sweet babydoll will be gone.

And, if it's not enough to find out about the lives that ended by my hands?

When she sees my life and runs the other direction? I've made a few attempts in my life to do the 'normal' thing and date. Fucking mess. Cheating. Check.

Ghosting me after an introduction to my brother?

Check.

Check.

That happened twice. That was enough. Waste of fucking time and now? I've fucked this little girl bareback and what if she decides to bolt when she figures out, I've already got a full house of obligations that I'll never abandon.

Shit.

I exhale toward the blue sky. Clouds roll in, white and fluffy telling me the storm that was supposed to come through must have moved south.

I toss the last of the stones and head back. My mind is full of her, fucking swimming in her. Last night, it was like we were the only two people left in the world. Adam and Eve and sin itself and nothing else existed but us. The way her pussy tightened around me. The way her blood flooded over my balls.

The way I want to nut inside her until she's bulging with me, tits swollen and milky.

Fucking *Christ*. So right, but so fucking wrong.

When I get inside she's not in the bed and my heart lodges in my throat until I see the bathroom door closed. She comes out wearing one of *my* sweatshirts, that she must've found in the closet. Camo print, way too big for her. The bottom falls right at the place where her beautiful thighs meet. Revealing nothing and yet everything.

Fuck, she looks amazing. And looks surprised to see me. In her sleepiness, without makeup, in my baggy hoodie, I can see how fucking young she really is. My core tightens with the fucking wrongness of it. But my dick fucking aches to feel her again.

"Do you want to leave?" I ask her.

She rubs her eyes, blinking away sleep. "Yes, I mean... no."

I narrow my eyes at her. "Don't play games with me, little girl."

She nibbles her lip as she looks at me. Christ. Maybe she *is* some kind of fucking temptress after all. "I mean, I don't know what you're asking."

It's not rocket science. I'll chalk it up to being a little slow after all the orgasms and cherry popping pain. "Tell me what you want and I'll make it happen."

I can tell she's not used to being asked what *she* wants. But she better get used to it quick. "I mean, I think I'm bad somehow, rotten in my core. I'm here to...be humbled. Or, reborn maybe into something less...wrong." She presses her sweet, perfectly manicured hand with its short red nails to her chest, helping me see the curve of her tits through my sweatshirt. Her nipples are tight. Of course they fucking are. "It seems better if I'm away from everybody. Doesn't it?"

She's preaching to the fucking choir now. That's *my* MO, protecting the world from *me*. And that means protecting her, too.

But fuck. The way I want her, it makes me feel completely out of control. Totally off the goddamned rails.

The last time I felt this way, it wasn't with lust. It was with anger. It's a long fucking story that can be boiled down into just a few simple elements. My abusive dad. Self-defense. And my brother getting hurt for life in the process.

I thought I'd put that monster away until six weeks ago. If she knew that, she'd run for sure.

"You're not dangerous, little girl. You're just fucking gorgeous is all."

She doesn't get shy, doesn't blush or look away. "But isn't that the same thing?" The way she says it, it's a genuine question. No games now.

Yeah, she's got a lot to learn. "You can't stay up here, baby. You can't hide from the world just because of what someone else has told you about yourself."

She twirls a lock of her hair thoughtfully around one finger and then sinks down across from me against the rough wall, tucking her knees into the baggy sweatshirt, folding herself into a little ball. "All my life I've been told I'm impure. Filthy. A sin. The Devil has me, blah blah blah. But last night," her breath catches. "Last night, you took all that from me. And now, that's all gone. The worst thing happened."

Great. "*Not* exactly how I would have described last night. But thanks."

Her eyes widen and she reaches out for me, placing her fingers on my forearm. A gentle touch, a loving one. It's been so fucking long since anybody has touched me that way. If anybody ever has.

"I don't mean *we* were the worst thing. I mean, I've been told and told and told that what happened last night, with us, that... that was the thing I was supposed to fear. But it wasn't anything to be afraid of. It was actually," she looks up at the ceiling and smiles a little, sighing, "It was so amazing."

The way she says it, it's like her head is full of romance. Softness and warmth. But as far as I'm concerned, I primal-fucked her virginity out of her. And she deserves way better than that. But there's something nice about her not knowing that. There's something so sweet about her gratitude for me pumping a load inside her to claim her.

Makes me wonder how her gratitude would look on her if I really fucked her like she deserves.

She scoots closer to me now, and that *thing* is happening again. The closer she gets, the more I lose my resolve. "Baby girl. Watch yourself."

She stops immediately. But her pupils are dilated, her cheeks flushed. "I like that. Baby girl. I like that a lot."

Goddamn it, I want her. It's a primal urge. A base need. Her. Me. My cock deep inside her. The simplest thing of all.

And yet. And fucking yet.

She doesn't know me. Not really. And when she finds out the things I've done she'll probably run a mile. And I'll chase her down because I can't live without her, and she can cry and plead to be let go but it won't fucking happen. I truly am a monster. I should be feeling guilty right now about being away from home, away from my brother for so long, but I'm not. He's safe, someone is with him.

All I can think about is her.

There's so much I want to teach her. So much I need to show her. There's not a chance I'm going to be able to resist

her. I've been inside her. She belongs to me. The walls of her virgin pussy imprinted on my cock. It's simple now.

The only thing to do now is make sure she never forgets who owns her sexy little self. "You think I absolved you of your sin last night, Little Red. But just you wait. Now get up on your knees and come right here."

She does as she's told, no lip or sass. Too innocent to be a brat. Her bare knees peek out from the hem of my hoodie. She's close, but not close enough, so I curve my finger to tell her closer, closer.

When she's close enough that I can feel her sweet breath on my skin, I come up on one knee, crouching in front of her. Keeping my eyes locked on hers, I hook the Y of my hand right at the edge of her jaw, drawing her neck up, keeping her spine straight and restricted.

Then with my other hand, I slip my fingers into the dark space between her legs. She's already gushing wet, and my rough fingers part her soft moist folds. She shudders out a breath, and I draw her chin up a little further to keep her in traction. To keep her from squirming away.

I roll her swollen little nub between my fingers and she lets out a whimper. Her eyes flutter shut but I tighten my grip on her throat to keep her attention. "Eyes open, baby girl. If you break eye contact, I stop. You get that."

She opens her eyes and swallows hard, nodding. "Yes."

I nod down at her, feeling my balls fucking bursting with cum again. "Put your hands on your thighs, palms down. Don't you dare move them."

She does as she's told, exactly as she's told. I dip into her little fuck hole with my middle finger and it makes her shiver. "O-okay."

"Last night, you think I took your sins from you, huh?" I change my rhythm, drawing her inner labia up against her clit, feeling her heartbeat against her tender flesh, then circling back down into her cunt.

“Yes,” she whispers, eyes fluttering. “It felt like you did. It felt like you made me pure again.”

The way her lips pucker on *pure* makes my cock twitch. “You’re not pure, baby. Not yet. But you will be.”

She rocks back slightly with pleasure. From where I’m crouched, I can see her toes curl. I circle back around her clit, applying pressure now on both sides with my fingers, kneading it out toward me, engorging it with blood.

“Oh my god.” Her cheeks flush even redder now, and the blush spills down onto her throat. “But how, how will you make me pure?”

I shiver at the way her accent twists the word ‘pure’, almost like it has a Y in there somewhere.

Orgasm by orgasm, baby. Drip by drip. “Every time you come for me, I’m going to make you a little more pure. That understood?”

“Yeah,” she whimpers. “I think so.”

Now with two fingers I dip inside her, keeping my thumb on her clit. I feel her thighs tremble, clenching tight against the intrusion. She’s sore I’m sure, so I keep it slow and steady. “I *know* so. You trust me? You trust me to make you pure.”

“Yes. Yes, Davis. I do.”

“Beg me, baby girl. Beg me to take the Devil out of you.”

She lifts her hand, instinctively trying to grab for my forearm.

I flash my eyes at her. “Don’t you fucking dare.”

She flattens her palm on her thigh again, and her eyes fill with a sheen of tears. “I want to touch you. I want to be close to you.”

“Give me that fucking cum, sweet girl. And then you can be close.”

Her body rolls with the pleasure that I’m giving her. “Oh my god. Please, *please*. Please take the Devil from me. *Pleeeeeeease*,” she sobs, tears spilling down her milky cheeks.

“Come for me, angel,” I growl, sweet words muttered like a curse. “Fucking *come for me.*”

I intensify the contact on her clit, using the back of one knuckle now to force it from her.

More tears, more fight. “Please, Davis. *Please.* I need to... I want you to...”

I lean in close now, stubble to her sweet cheek. “Shut the fuck up and *come for me,* you little sinner.”

Her pussy bears down on me as she registers the words. “I’m gonna...”

I’ve got her exactly where I want her and she’s never getting away. “Come for me right now, baby girl. *Right. The. Fuck. Now.*”

Her body lets go before her mind knows it. I feel it before she does. She’s coming already as she’s saying, “Please. *Please.* Please. Make me right. Make me good. Make me *pure.*”

Her thighs tighten even harder on my hand, making it harder for me to finish her right, but I know that I’ve got more strength in my right hand than she’s got in her whole body.

She comes in a wave of whimpers and tears. Never breaking eye contact, never looking away. As she’s coming, I’m giving her what she needs—all the fucking praise and love she’s been missing all her life. “There you go, baby. Such a good fucking girl,” I growl at her as I keep working her pussy hard and fast. “Such a good little angel. Such an innocent sweet thing. I’m right here, I’m not going anywhere. Just give it all to me.”

She surrenders with her whole body, her whole soul. Her cries of pleasure fill the little cabin, and for one fucking second, I think of what she’ll sound like when she cries out in a very different kind of pain. When she’s bringing my fucking baby into this world.

Fuck. Holy fuck. I can’t believe that’s where my mind is.

But as I hold her close, wrapping my arms around her, lips against her forehead, keeping her safe and warm, I realize. Fuck yeah. Yeah, I can. Because that's exactly where these feelings are headed.

Her and me. Forever.

I wrap her up and I keep her close. I smooth her hair. All this talk of her being impure, her being bad, her having the Devil inside her, it's fucking crazy to me. She's as pure a thing as I've ever been near.

Holding her to me, it centers me. It makes this clear and plain. If she's the light, then I'm the dark. But for the first time in all my life, I don't want to hide. Yeah, I still fucking hate myself for what I've done and who I am. But I want to be better. Now. For her.

“How about I make you some breakfast, Little Red. And then there's someone I need you to meet.”

chapter **seven**

Marin

HAND IN HAND, we walk through the woods, following a path that runs along a little stream and past a mud-slicked meadow. The weather man Grandpa listens to was wrong about the big storm because the sun is peeking out and the chill is being chased away by the sunshine, but Davis said it's still a treacherous walk. I'm wearing the big red rubber boots and my dress and the jacket feeling completely natural and beautiful out here.

His hand engulfs mine, giving me support and warmth. His firm hold makes me feel safe and protected. Every now and then, he squeezes my hand and looks at me. Like he's trying to make sure I'm okay.

And I am. His silent attention makes me feel precious.

As we reach a footbridge at the brook, he helps me across; every bit the chivalrous gentleman. In the middle of nature, his body isn't radiating tension, his jaw muscles are relaxed, almost like he may smile. He seems at home here. Familiar with the forest.

"Is this all your land?" I ask.

He glances at me and nods. "Yeah. Inherited it from a grandfather I never knew. I walk at night a lot. Saw the light in the cabin and knew someone was trespassing."

I smile up at him in the rare sunshine. "You sure know how to treat criminals that violate your property rights. Beat

them into submission with that weapon of mass destruction you have.”

Now he really smiles, and it’s beautiful. I haven’t seen him smile much. And it warms me as much as the sunshine itself and a little ball of tension settles in my belly wondering if he’s going to delve more into why I was in that cabin. My flimsy explanation about being left by friends won’t hold up and when he finds out who I am and why I was there...I push it away. I’m Mountain Marin now and I’ll survive whatever happens.

We continue along the path, talking about everything and nothing then round a little bend. Up ahead, there’s a house with a center front peak that points toward the clouds and two shorter ones on each side. It’s like a mash up of the Tudor style houses in the fancy old neighborhoods in town and a Swiss chalet. It’s funky but classic and there’s a warm glow in the windows that makes me feel like it’s a safe place. Pines and tall oaks hug the perimeter making it feel walled off with the autumn leaves falling like fire-colored snowflakes onto the dark roof. Dreamy.

“Is that your house?”

“Yeah,” he sighs, causing my attention to shift to his broad chest. “And there’s someone I want you to meet in there.”

“Have you always lived here? I think it would be just the best thing to grow up someplace like this.”

Davis shakes his head, then drops his chin for a moment before answering. “No, I wish. First part of my life I grew up in a tin can. This? This place...was a like a lottery win from a grandfather I never really knew. Every day I wake up and look around, making sure it wasn’t a dream. I never want to leave here. Never.” His voice hardens along with the square angle of his beard-covered jawline.

“I’d never want to leave either. Do you, you know, share your life with someone?” That question catches in my throat. He asked me if I was with anyone but I didn’t ask him if there was a girlfriend or a wife in his stable. “Someone special, I mean.”

But, why would he bring me here, telling me he wants me to meet them and holding my hand if there was?

“That’s a dumb question. Sorry,” I blurt on a tight smile before he can answer.

He stalls, tugging at my arm as I step forward, spinning me around. “What happened back there...” he starts, clearing his throat, the tendons in his neck tight as his chest puffs up making the buttons on his flannel shirt strain. “I haven’t done that in a long fucking time and never felt like that when I did. So, first...” He pinches my cheeks with his other hand, holding my eyes to his. “There are no dumb questions. You ask me anything, anytime, got it? In fact, if you don’t ask me something you wanted to know and I find out?” He exhales on a low growl. “I’ll turn that perky little ass of yours over my knee to remind you that everything you think, you need and want, it’s your job to bring it to me.”

If he wasn’t holding my mouth in his hand, my jaw would be on the forest floor but I manage a quick nod as he runs his tongue over his lips on a little like sexy snarl before he continues.

“Second, just to answer your *not* dumb question, no girlfriends, no wives. But, I don’t live alone—”

The sound of a voice calling from down the driveway cuts him off and Davis turns us back toward the house.

A woman probably in her late forties with wild red hair piled on top of her head and bright red lipstick is standing there waving like crazy. She’s wearing what looks like carton scrubs, like in the pediatrician’s office Grandpa took me for check-ups and when I was sick.

She stands on the porch with her hands on her hips as we approach. “Jesus and Johnny Cash, *there you are*, Mr. Ray!”

The mention of Jesus makes my heart drop. My feet stop on their own accord and I squeeze Davis’ hand. His hazel eyes fall on me, searching and protective. “That’s Janie. But don’t worry. She’s big on Johnny Cash. Not so much on Jesus.”

Reassuring. Kind of? “If you say so. Who is she? Housekeeper?”

Davis clicks his tongue against his teeth. “Sort of. A caretaker, for sure.”

I nod, but also feel the change in his mood. His jaw is now tight, the muscle on his cheek is ticking. A frown appears on his handsome face. Sadness paints his features. As if a cloud descends over him.

“Are you okay?”

He clears his throat as if to answer, but Janie chooses that moment to bustle down the steps to greet us. “Who’s this sweet little thing? You find little red riding hood out there in the forest? I damn near filed a missing person report for you, Mr. Ray! Security system said the front door was last opened at 4am—that’s eight hours you’ve been gone! Gotta be some kind of record you being gone that long and not for work! And your phone has gone crazy. Kept beeping and vibrating. I thought you’d been kidnapped.”

What the what?

I lift my eyes to Davis, cocking my head slightly. So much to process. Eight hours away from the house is a record? *Kidnapped?*

I blink quickly at him, furrowing my brow.

Lord, what have I gotten myself into now?

Janie ushers me inside, telling me she doesn’t know where I sprang from but it’s nice to have another woman around here for once. The house is clean as a whistle. Nothing looks out of the place, and miracle of miracles, there’s no crosses anywhere. No Jesus looks down at me, judging me.

There’s lots of brown and green and soft cream colors. It’s masculine but comfortable with some pictures on the wall that look like modern art all done by the same hand. Wide windows look out the back over a field with an enormous, weathered wood barn and mountain peaks in the distance.

From somewhere in the house, I hear the unexpected sound of cartoons playing somewhere on a TV. But there are no signs of kids, toys, or any of the mess of children; so whoever he wants me to meet doesn't seem to be a kid.

Just as I'm about to ask, Davis takes me by the hand and leads me into the living room. And there, parked in front of the big flat-front TV, is a young man in a wheelchair. Dark hair like Davis', with a cowlick, slightly bony. Running down the back of his close-cropped hair is a terrible scar, long-since healed but a tight river of angry white in the dark brush of hair.

There's a large easel and jars of paint on a tray with a canvas propped up in process and I know who the artist in residence is.

"Hey, bud," Davis says. "Sorry, I had to go for a bit. You alright?"

I come around and finally get a better look at him. He isn't really a boy, a bit older. Maybe in his late teens. His eyes carry the spark of recognition and intelligence, but it's obvious he's experienced some kind of accident. A terrible one, it seems, judging by the result.

When our eyes meet, his face lights up. "Whoa, big brother, what the heck? You go missing for eight hours and come back with a girl. I thought you were going out for donuts. What is this, Goldilocks and the Three Bears? Or red riding hood?"

Davis chuckles at his excitement and this red riding hood thing is becoming a pattern. It's cute, I don't mind having a nickname that doesn't make me sound like the devil's hand maiden. "Stevie, meet Marin. Marin, this is Stevie Ray. Marin's shitty friends dropped her off at the cabin and then took off, leaving her all alone. I went walking, she was trespassing."

Stevie narrows his eyes as he meets mine, and I can see he doesn't believe it. "Is that so? You must have been cursing your luck when you ran into this cantankerous bastard. Probably better if you met a grizzly."

I snort a laugh, covering my mouth and instinctively extend my right hand for a shake. Only to notice his right hand is stuck in a fist. Embarrassment warms my cheeks as my laugh falters, but Stevie grins.

“Awkward!”

His laughter vanishes all my discomfort and I laugh along with him.

Weakly, he offers his left hand and I shake that one instead. He smirks and playfully glances at Davis. “I thought you went out for donuts, big brother. But she’s better than donuts.”

Davis looks away, embarrassed, shaking his head. “And you wonder why I never bring anybody here.”

Stevie Ray scoffs and turns down the television volume. “You never bring anybody here because you’re a cantankerous old bastard.”

Davis grumbles, the kind I’d expect from someone who has heard this many times before. He shakes his head, laughing, and then signals me to come over and talk to him.

As soon as I am close enough to feel his warmth and strength, my body responds. Like a chocolate kiss in the sun. He studies my face like he’s memorizing me. “So…” he trails off.

“So… this was your big secret, huh?”

A slow nod. He runs his hand over his rough stubble. “Among other things. But yeah. He’s my little brother. Secret number one of maybe a thousand.”

I glance at Stevie, who has now flipped to the Science Channel. “And you thought I’d mind?”

Davis lifts his broad shoulder. “I didn’t know. It’s a lot.”

I laugh a little, feeling my cheeks flush. “My family is a lot. This?” I glance around the room, out the windows, at the big rolling hills, at Stevie. “This is not a lot. This is just… life.”

Davis looks relieved. Happy even. He gives me a long up-and-down, with a smoldering desire in his eyes, before looking away, like it's just too much and not the right time for now.

Tell me about it.

“So,” he begins, clearing his voice of its husky desire, “Who wants coffee?”

“I’m good. Thanks though, brother,” Stevie says.

I sit down on a sofa near Stevie’s chair and Davis looks at me with such warmth in his eyes, such tenderness. “Yes, please,” I say softly. “Lots of cream and very sweet.”

And Davis narrows his eyes at me, licking his full lips before mouthing, *Just like you.*

Oh my goodness.



I spend the day with them, and time whizzes by.

It feels weird. Amazing and liberating, but still weird. It’s the first Sunday in my entire life that I haven’t spent five hours listening to a preacher roar about sin. It’s relaxing and comfortable. And I feel more at home here than I’ve ever felt at my own house, with my grandfather. Even Janie, who seemed a *little* suspicious of me at first, warms up to me after a while.

She even hooked me up with some clothes that were a bit more appropriate for hanging out in a mountain man’s house. She also insisted on washing out my dress... but I drew the line at the panties, doing a little sink wash in the bathroom and leaving them between some towels to dry.

So, right now, I’m in a pair of old Levi’s secured with a belt, commando mind you, and a gray hoodie of Davis’s that’s eight sizes too big, but I love it. It smells like him and I never want to take it off.

And Stevie is like a ray of sunshine. Full of joy and sass. He worked on his painting while I watched and then let me

add a few strokes when he got tired.

We discover a shared passion for Scrabble, which—much to our shared delight—Davis can't play *at all*. But after hours of double-letters and triple-triples, my stomach lets out a growl so loud that it might as well be a caged beast living in the basement.

With his good hand, Stevie tinkers with the tiles and looks at Davis who is coming in from outside where he's been loading up the wood burner that's hooked up to the boiler system keeping the house as warm as spring sunshine. "Someone needs to get this lady a square meal. Those grilled cheese sandwiches from lunch were killer, but sounds like they've worn off."

Davis enters the room from the back hallway with a big leather saddle propped on his hip and drops into a wooden chair next to the fireplace where he's kept a few logs burning since our return. He settles the heavy leather saddle onto a stand pulled out from behind the stone fireplace and starts fiddling with the leather straps.

"You have horses?" I perk up, my attention moves from the game as Davis eyes me with the certain smolder that makes my inside all gooey.

"We do. Five of them. Two came with the property from my grandfather. I'd never ridden before we got here, but now, can't say I'd want a life without a horse. I ride pretty much every day if I can."

"Is that so?" I tease, pinching my tongue between my teeth and raising my eyebrows. "Love at first sight."

Stevie snorts, a huge smile cresting his face as he looks between us.

"Seems I'm a love-at-first-sight kind of guy. Thought it was just the horses, but maybe not."

"*Whaaaaat* did you just say?" Stevie chimes in with a bust-your-nuts brotherly laugh. "What a difference a day can make. You feeling okay there, brother? You got a fever?"

“Shut up,” he barks back, but Stevie shrugs my way as Davis sit in the chair, all man-spread, rubbing the leather with some sort of oil, making me gush into my Levi’s. He gives Stevie a kind of loving *fuck you* glare. “Anyway, where were we? Right. I was going to ask *the lady* what she wanted for dinner as soon as she whooped your ass *again*.”

Stevie laughs and adds SOUP to the board, off the S in my SPELUNK. “Might as well ask her now, because she’s got me again.”

Davis turns to me, warmth in his eyes. “You hungry, beautiful?”

I nod, with my stomach growling again. “Definitely.”

“I think you should take her to Mastriano’s, brother. I think you should have a night in the town. Janie can stay a little late, can’t she?”

“Can do!” We hear Janie’s response from the kitchen.

The word *Mastriano’s* fills my mind with images that I’ve only ever dreamed about. The restaurant is one town over, on the main street that leads to the super-church that we attend every month or two. Shiny glass and white napkins and olive oil glistening from beautiful carafes. “Could we really?”

Davis nods, like I’m just too cute, too sweet. “Yeah. We can pick up some things for you too while we’re out. And I think you should wear that dress from last night.”

My body rushes with that same molten need I felt the last time he looked at me like this. “Okay,” I say in a whisper, desperately trying to hide my fire-hot blush. “But, first, can I see the horses? I love horses. I’ve only ever been up close to them a few times. I always dreamed I could ride someday, but I’m probably too old to learn.”

Davis’s eyes narrow and his chest fills, setting down the rag with the oil and nodding toward the back door. “You’ve never too old to learn. Especially when it comes to horses. Let’s go.” He’s on his feet and my belly tumbles and twists. This all is like a dream.

As we reach the backdoor, Janie comes in from the kitchen.

“Mr. Ray!” She calls to Davis holding out a cell phone. “This thing been going off in your room something fierce. You gonna see who is it? Someone sure wantin’ to talk to you.”

Davis shakes his head, opening the door and easing us through onto the back porch. “Don’t need to talk to anyone. Just throw it on my bed and close the door. I hate that fucking thing sometimes.”

Janie looks down at the phone as Davis closes the door behind us and we work ourselves down the steps and into the bit of sunshine fighting its way through the clouds.

“I don’t like cell phones much, either. Not that I’ve ever had one, but they sure just seem to interrupt things. Most people don’t even see a beautiful sunny day because they’ve got their eyes on that electronic distraction. I’m grateful I don’t have one. Maybe weird, all the kids my age probably think they couldn’t live without one.”

Davis exhales, the rough pad of his thumb rubbing across my knuckles and his touch sends hot prickling over my skin. “Some people don’t know what’s important.”

A warm rush of moisture assaults the flesh between my legs again, stealing my train of thought, so I blurt out the first thing that comes to mind, besides all the sinful things I want to do with Davis. “Guess that big storm must have missed us,” I say, squinting up the sun.

“Always another one coming,” he engages me in the conversation of weather, grabbing my hand and jerking his head toward the gabled red barn. “Horses are out in the pasture, but I’m sure they’d stop their grazing to meet a sweet sugar cube like you. I know I would.”

“You graze?” I say, a smile teasing my lips.

“I graze on that hot little pink sugar maker you’ve got between your legs.” He quickens our pace. “I haven’t been able to fucking think straight since I tasted you. You’re turning me from a mountain man into a madman. I need my fix.”

A burning flash of shame envelops me like a reflex as the incessant pulse in my needy wet lady bits reminds me that I now have firsthand experience with the sin of lust.

It's not even been twenty-four hours and I'm falling hard for this giant. I would even hazard to guess that these lusty feelings are generously mingled with love. As crazy as that sounds, in my heart, I know it's true.

Our pace picks up as we head to the barn, the horses raising their heads from the green pasture when we approach.

But, instead of going to the fence and calling them over, Davis pulls me into the barn, shutting the door behind us and slipping the wood brace into the slots... locking us inside.

"But, the horses..."

"Plenty of time for the horses," he says in a low grumble on a throaty exhale. "Horses are patient, I'm not." Davis reaches around and takes my rear end in his hands. "I can't stop thinking about how you taste. How you felt when I tore that cherry out of you, making you mine." His fingers dig in harder, making me wince; a gasp escapes from me. "I may never get anything else done because all I want to do is mount you like a stallion and pump you full of me, morning and night. You trying to turn me into a crazy person, aren't you?"

"I'm sorry," I mutter as his eyes flash.

"What did I say about apologizing to me?"

He releases my backside only to bring down his hand in a hard swat, and it's the starting pistol I need for releasing what's inside of me.

"You said I never have to say I'm sorry to you. But, I'm always sorry. My whole life I've been sorry. For everything. For being born."

I twist the soft flannel of his shirt between my fingers, trying to keep my balance. I slow my breathing as dizziness takes me when I look up at the fifty-foot ceiling in the barn and everything spins out of control.

“Come here.” He drags me along as I stumble and trip on the straw covered dirty floor. Davis slides open a large door, the scent of hay and the sound of an owl in the rafters overloading my city girl circuits. “From now on, when you feel like you need to apologize, you do it with your mouth, but not with words.”

I stare up at him, this other section of the barn is smaller. Saddles hang on the wall, lots of leather halters on hooks above, and a solid wood plank floor dusted with thick jute rugs.

“Okay,” is all I manage as he runs a hand over his head.

“Get down.” He points to the floor. “Sucking my dick is a privilege and a reward, Little Red. But, my cock can also teach you things. It’s going to be very important in your life from now on. It’s your job to take care of it. To let it teach you things.”

I nod as I drop to my knees without question; my eyes pinned upward on his, waiting for whatever comes next.

“You see what you do to me?” His eyes lower and mine follow, finding the denim on his jeans impossibly tight next to his zipper. “Take me out,” he commands, and my hands are on the buckle of his belt before he can exhale.

I work the leather through as I hold my breath and Davis’s hand brushes my hair back from my forehead. “You are such a good girl, doing as you’re told. Pleasing me.”

When I’ve wrestled the belt open, my trembling fingers battle with the zipper, the pressure from his erection forcing the teeth wide open in a fury and Davis lets out a loud moan of relief.

“There you go. Such a pretty slutty girl down there on your knees all ready to take my cock in your mouth.” The approval and desire in his eyes make another rush of wet heat between my legs, making me tighten my muscles as I pull out the thick veiny shaft from its hiding place.

Who have I become?

With this man, I'm a harlot. I never needed to be the pure virgin forever, but this? I didn't know I had this sort of behavior in me.

My nipples harden and tingle as I stare at the incredible marvel of manhood right in front of my nose.

Davis makes a grunting sound as I take his meaty shaft in both hands. "See how hard you make me? You know what it's like walking around with that in my pants all day long? You did that."

"I'm sorry," I say with a little smirk, this time playing it up as he looks down. "Will you forgive me?"

Davis nods, pointing toward my chest. "Unzip. Take your tits out, so I can see them bounce when I'm fucking that apology out of your throat."

Heat torches me from my face down as I release his girth to follow his instructions, curling my feet under my butt and arching my back. I tug the zipper down and reach inside, lowering the cups of my bra so my breasts are resting on top.

Zapping tingles meet my hard nipples as Davis nods with approval. "Such a good girl. Now, put that cock in your mouth and say you're sorry for real. That dick is your salvation, little sinner. Don't ever forget that."

This caveman has a grip on my heart as I have a grip on his manhood. I circle it with my fingers around the base, feeling the brush of his pubic hair and where his balls are crowded in his pants against the back of my fingers.

I'm drenched. There should be a flood warning going off between my legs as fire licks up my belly and chest, gathering around my exposed nipples as Davis watches me with dark lust in his silver green eyes.

His broad chest grows and releases with panting breaths. I say a little prayer as I open my mouth and hope I can gain his forgiveness.

Curses rain down on me as I slip the seeping head between my lips, looking up to see Davis's eyes roll back.

“Yes. Fuck, yes.” He groans as I tongue the underside of the head in that little v spot. The way he shudders, I think I’m onto something.

His thickness stretches my lips as I slide the hardness over my flat tongue, flicking and lapping at the special spot as I slide it in and out, in and out, listening to all the grunting and swearing from above.

“Keep going. You’re doing the Lord’s work down there, baby. I love how your cute little dimple comes out when you’re taking my fat dick down your throat.”

I draw him deep, deeper, until the head tickles my tonsils and my gag reflex bucks him straight out of my mouth as I gasp and spit onto the floor. “Sorry,” I mumble, struggling for a breath. “It’s so big.”

He reaches down and pats my head as I rub my saliva slick chin on my shoulder. “You’re trying. That’s what matters, but you did say you’re sorry again, so back in your mouth. Looks like you need a little face fuck to drive my point home, little one.”

He presses the tip of his weeping dick to my lips and drives it forward until my mouth is stretched and his heavy palm cups the back of my head.

I grab harder on the base, steadying myself as he slips the shaft in and out, faster, deeper, pulling my head back a few inches which seems to help my throat from closing when he pushes beyond my tonsils.

“Relax your throat. You’re doing great, but I want in there deeper. I want you to show me how sorry you are.” He guides my head as I hang on for dear life, at the mercy of his thick member. Desperate to make him happy, I realize my pleasure rises with his. I’m in a lust haze as saliva drips off my chin, the salty flavor of his pre-cum dancing on my tongue. And I suck at the mountain man’s manhood, moving my hands up and down, working him in every way I can imagine as he groans and growls.

“That’s it, jack off that cock while I fuck your pretty face. Your forgiveness is coming very soon, baby. It’s coming...” His voice trails off as I look up. His muscles are tight, jaw locked as he barrels beyond the limits of my throat until I see black stars. I gush as I gag, wanting to make him happy and pushing myself to hold out just a minute longer as the bulbous head swells in my airway.

I gurgle and struggle on my knees, my hands sliding up and down as he makes the most obscene sounds. Wet slapping of his body against my face... down, *down, down* my throat until my gag reflex gives up and I moan right along with him.

“Your forgiveness is here, baby. Swallow it all and you’re forgiven.”

Jets of hot release spray down my throat as the aching between my legs surges into a desperation I’ve never known before. I want him inside me. I feel like I’ll die without it, and he must read my mind; as soon as the last jets of creamy seed leave him, I’m being tugged upward and around. My belt off, jeans down, sweatshirt peeled over my head, and I’m back on my knees with my face pressed into the rough jute rug.

“Your stallion is going to breed his mare now, baby girl. This big horse dick is going to stretch that tight little cunt of yours wide, and you’ll take every inch, won’t you? You want this thick animal cock deep.”

I choke and twist as I struggle to grab something, a hand wrapping around my hair, the tip of his erection pressing against my opening. With my ass high in the air, Davis’s hand stings my flesh as he drives forward, taking my breath from my lungs. His fingers bruise my hip and I gladly accept the pain. It carries the pleasure higher and higher.

“Horse fucks for one reason. To mate. To breed. The stallion owns his mare, he pushes that long thick dick deep inside, mounting them like a fucking king.”

My belly cramps as he pushes inside me until my body says no more. He must have tugged his pants down because his flesh is slapping against mine in wet, desperate thrusts that drive my face downward, scraping my cheek on the rough rug.

He pins me down with his body, bucking and thrusting his inches into my sore opening.

“Horse cocks are as thick as my arm. The head is flat and plugs the mare after release, knotting and locking them together so his seed stays right where it belongs until she’s bred with him.”

I grunt as he slips back, then forward, back, forward, as my insides ripple and I grit my teeth against the painful force of his brutal lust.

“You feel it? That big horse dick and the way the head is growing and growing as he pumps. Desperate for that mare to be swollen with his seed. You want all of it, don’t you? Don’t you?” He grunts as I writhe and struggle beneath him. He pumps his hips faster and faster as his weight presses my chest to the ground.

He holds me there, his hand around my throat, the other between my shoulders as his ragged breathing fills the air. He rides me hard, harder until my thighs are jelly and my orgasm bursts from me like a bull from a gate.

“That’s a good mare.” He growls as he constricts my airway, owning my entire body from back to front, his hips slapping on my flesh, wet sounds coming faster; and I want him to be mad for me like this forever. “Here comes your stallion’s prize. Take it all. You’re getting bred, baby. Raw and ripe for me.”

I drive myself back onto his steel, wanting more, more of what he’s giving me even as the devil watches, my sin on display as he swears to the ceiling on a roar. He’s spurting inside me, his body turning to stone as his chest presses to my back, that long thickness pulsing and *giving, giving, giving* until I know I’m forgiven.

How this man can be so sweet then so rough and crude, so sinful and filthy I don’t know, but I love all of it. I feel purified by his use. I feel calm and centered and more like myself than I have ever in my life.

“You make me crazy, Little Red,” Davis pants, but I’m off in my own world on a cloud. “I’ve never felt like this. So *insane* for someone. I hope you understand, baby. I love you. It’s making me crazy.”

He slips from me and curls me into his arms as I drink in what he’s said. Yesterday, I was fighting for my life, sure that I wouldn’t live through the winter.

Now, I’m as safe as I’ve ever felt with a mountain man that forgave all the sins which weren’t even mine.

“I love you, too,” I whisper as he curls me into his lap, his tongue pressing into my mouth and I know I want to be in his arms forever.

chapter eight

Marin

“ARE you sure we got everything you need?” Davis loads the last three bags into the back seat of his truck, pausing for a moment, his arms braced the sides of the open door.

He looks so sexy. I clench my thighs together as I nod.

“Yes, four kinds of shampoo and matching conditioner, four toothbrushes, different brands, so I can see which one I like better, cinnamon toothpaste, face wash, perfume, moisturizer, enough make up for a runway show...what else?”

He nods, closes the door, then slips in the front seat pushing the ignition button.

“Well, I learned girls have a strong preference for their lady products but I gotta say, you’re not going to need those things for long. But, you will need clothes. Let’s make one more quick stop, there’s a shop up ahead. You pick out whatever you want.”

I shiver, remembering his warm spend deep inside me and even now, it’s seeping from my opening, reminding me that I’ve not only lost my virginity to this burly mountain man, I’ve been full throttle lost in this breeding fantasy we have going.

But, at this rate, the way he’s filling me up, it won’t be fantasy for long.

A knot curls in my belly. Is it shame? Maybe.

I've been programmed since birth to think that sex outside of marriage makes you the worst sort of woman. I remember my Grandfather leading me into an empty room after church one Sunday when I was twelve. I thought I was dying. My panties were full of blood and I was sure it was my sin that was killing me.

He must have found them, because he put me in that room with Old Mrs. Kowsky who was at least eighty years old but she smelled like she was a hundred and ten. She spent the next hour giving me the strangest version of what for lack of a better way to explain it was the birds and the bees talk.

My blood was my shame. A reminder that women are the temptation. What a way to scar a girl. More shame, cool.

What's strange though, is when Davis called me those names during our sexy times?

I loved it. I wanted more. I want to be his dirty plaything. The one that tempts him and leads him into damnation.

But, from the way he's looking at me right now, he's going willingly. And so am I.

After a whirlwind shopping spree at VanClamps farm store, the back of the truck is stuffed with bags and boxes. Davis let me run wild and I picked out lots of button up flannel, funny t-shirts, two cowboy hats, Levi's and two pair of cowboy boots.

And none of it was red.

When the total came to over a thousand dollars, I started to put things back, but he threw his arm around me, holding me next to him in my red dress and heels, nodding for the clerk to pack it up as he settled the bill.

He pulls into traffic on the main street in Thompson Ridge, the town next to Sherman, and I wonder if anyone will recognize me. I curl my body away from the door as Davis slides his hand behind my neck and gives me a squeeze.

"You okay, baby?"

"Yes, just been a heck of a couple days."

“I know. What can I do to help?” He says it in hardly more than a grunt but there’s a sweetness in every word that makes me swoon.

I shrug on a marginal smile as he darts his hazel eyes to me, then back to the road. “You look so fucking beautiful I might just pull into the Holiday Inn and demolish that little hot pink cock sleeve of yours twenty different ways. Because my dick is perma-hard with you around, baby. That dress...” He cocks an eyebrow on a playful *mmm-mmm-mmm* sound. “So, tell me about this red thing. Everything you had with you to wear was red. You said that’s the only color you wear? You love red?”

“I *hate* red.” I take a breath as he rubs the muscles on my neck with one hand and palms the wheel around a turn with the other. “My family is a little strange. My mama had me out of wedlock and they have some strange ideas. I’m sort of... you know, the scarlet letter? Only, I’ve only worn red my whole life because, spawn of sin and all.”

“Epic bullshit.” His jaw sets and a vein in his temple stands out. “When we get home, you’re ordering every fucking piece of clothing you want from wherever you want but with one exception.”

“A budget?” I giggle and he shakes his head.

“No fucking budget and no fucking red.”

I smile, my stomach growling again, but it’s not just because I’m looking forward to a yummy dinner. What’s really yum, is him. Sitting next to me. In a suit. And a tie. Mountain Marin has landed herself the hottest mountain man in North Carolina.

It’s so easy being around him. I feel so comfortable being me. During our walk to the house, he asked me more about myself and I kept it vague. Even my name. Marin Octavia I told him. I left off the Baron because most people in this part of North Carolina know of him. Owning a four-generation tobacco farm is a pretty big deal down here. “What happened to Stevie, can I ask?”

Davis stiffens and shakes his head. “You can ask anything anytime, remember?” he growls. “But, let’s leave that for another day. It’s a hard tell.”

“Of course,” I say. “Sorry.”

“Baby, stop apologizing. You never need to apologize to me. Never.” He slows the truck at a light, turning to look down at my feet then trailing his gaze to my face, leaving a flurry of gooseflesh behind. “But I look after him. Day to day and his finances. Have since he got hurt.” The muscle in his jaw flexes and he rolls his head around, cracking his neck. “Seems like the least I can do.”

I rub my lips together, a new heaviness in the cab of the truck. Grandpa always said curiosity would kill the cat, and now here I am, being nosy as usual. I realize he hasn’t asked me much, though I wouldn’t mind a bit if he did. “Just so you know, you can ask me anything too.”

He darts his eyes back at me without turning his head as the light turns green and he accelerates. “You come from people that don’t understand you, don’t appreciate you. And worse, make you feel bad for being who you are. That’s about right?”

Nailed it! “Yeah. And about ten servings of start praying for your salvation before the Rapture, young lady!”

He runs his hand from my neck down my shoulder, tracing his knuckles down my arm until his rough, calloused fingers twine between mine, making my hand look like a child’s. “I’m in no rush, baby girl. I know what I want. The rest is just gravy. But, you hear this, I’ll listen to every story you want to tell me. Every thought and memory and dream and rant and joke. No matter how insignificant or silly you think it is, to me? It’s scripture.”

Something about the way he talks turns me into a happy, blubbering mess. I don’t even know what to say to that except that I want nothing more than to be his gravy and his scripture. I smooth my skirt over my thighs. “Are you sure Mastriano’s is okay? It’s so…” I lower my voice. “Expensive.”

Davis laughs, shaking his head as the restaurant comes into view ahead. “Money isn’t a problem, baby girl. You hear me? When we get there, you order whatever you want. No fucking around with chicken breasts and a side salad, alright? We’re talking lobster. Filet mignon. Appetizers, too. All of them. Only the best for you.”

As he slows, approaching the restaurant, he moves his hand from mine, down onto my thigh now. My body reacts with a shiver and a clutch in my lower level. He doesn’t take his eyes off the road, but he slides his fingers under the side slit, and up, up, up...pushing my legs apart as he drives his hand toward my pussy. With one finger he takes my breath away as he brushes the outside of my panties, then hooks a thick finger into the elastic over my hip. “Those from last night?”

I swallow hard. “Yes. I didn’t have another pair. I do now, with the shopping but before, this was it. I’ve been busy hand washing them until the lace is starting to tatter.”

He runs his tongue over his teeth before murmuring, “Take them off.”

Now wait just a moment, buster. “But...” I stammer.

He gives me a side eye with a cocky grin. “Mine. Remember? Take them off.”

I squirm in my seat as the valet parking area looms ahead. “But I’m so wet, Davis. It’s going to leave a spot on my dress.”

He growls in response. “Exactly.” He lifts his hand, gesturing to me to get on with it. “Now, Little Red. Right now.”

Dang, my heart knocks against my chest. I kick off my heels and do as he says, wriggling out of my already wet panties. I ball them up and place them in his waiting hand.

With the sexiest and cockiest laugh, he places my panties in his suit pocket and signals for the valet to come over.

“I better warn you, baby girl...” he begins.

I reach for him, tucking in the red lace peeking out of his pocket. “Warn me about what?”

“I haven’t been out like this in a while,” he murmurs, his voice low and dark.

I’m not sure what that means or why he’s saying it with so much concern. “How long?” I ask.

He grumble-coughs as he pulls into a valet drop-off area in front of the restaurant. “A while. Outside of work, I don’t get out much. Hope I’ll know how to behave.”

chapter **nine**

Marin

I AM SOAKED. Drenched.

Every time I look at Davis, my clit flutters and I feel like I'm seeing flashbulbs everywhere. I blink away my dreamy haze and try to pull myself together as the valet comes around to open my door.

"Madam," he says, giving me sparkling eyes. He's young. Sweet. Hardly older than me. His fake brass name tag reads "Bryce."

But uh-oh. Now that he's looking at me, I notice he's got that thing happening that my grandpa is always warning me about. *The haze of temptation.*

He offers a hand to help me down out of Davis' truck, but I try to wave him away. "I've got it," I insist, even though I clearly do not. Considering I'm in a jacked-up hemi, wearing six-inch stilettos and a red satin dress that clings like sexy Saran wrap.

"No, please, allow me," he says, locking eyes with me.

Lead them not into temptation, little girl! Grandpa's voice bellows in my ear.

Before I have a chance to withdraw my hand, the valet takes it. Behind me, Davis growls, "Watch it, man." His voice is low and dangerous as a panther in the dark.

But the valet is in a conversation with his buddy and he's not really aware of Davis' warning. Now he offers his *other* hand, guiding me out of the truck by both my hand and my upper arm.

"No, no, no," I protest, "I've..."

Like a freaking starting pistol has been fired, Davis hurls himself out of his side of the truck and launches himself onto the valet from behind. "Didn't you hear her, you motherfucker?" he snarls as he tackles him from behind. "No means *no*."

Oh geez.

Poor little Bryce goes down with a startled squeal and my heart leaps into my throat. Davis looks ready to kill him, right there on the pavement, in front of all the fancy fannies at Mastriano's. People's mouths dropped open, pearls well and truly clutched.

I scramble down, desperately attempting to separate Davis from the valet. All the while trying to make sure my skirt doesn't ride up to reveal my naked self underneath. Because goodness, the fancy fannies in the restaurant most definitely don't need to see *my* fanny over their olive oil and bread.

I grip Davis' massive shoulders with all my might.

"Davis, please, please don't do this. Please!"

"No means no, you little. Piece. Of. *Shit*," he growls. He's got one arm up and cocked, ready to rearrange Bryce's babyface in the worst possible way.

I really am in love.

But still. "Davis!" I say. "Please!"

"Sir! I didn't mean anything by it," Bryce sputters out his protests through blubbers and, oh no, tears. The poor boy is crying in terror. He might wet his uniform khakis next, and who could blame him?

My hands are not getting through to Davis, not even a little. I press my lips close to his ear, whispering in a way people do with horses when they're ferocious and full of rage.

“Stop, stop, stop,” I utter softly. “Please, I’m fine. He didn’t hurt me. Don’t make a mess of things for us before we even have a chance.”

That gets through to him. His body relaxes, his breathing slows down and he lowers his arm. “Jesus *fuck*,” he growls. “You’re making an animal out of me, little girl.”

My body responds to that before my brain. Primal. Urgent. The most basic need.

Do I like that? Heck yes, I like that. But I’d rather my animal be *out* of jail, thanks.

“Tell him you’re sorry,” I whisper. “Make this right.”

Davis flashes his greedy eyes at me. “If he touches you again, I’ll kill him.”

He says it like a confession, not a threat. Like it’s beyond his control. Like it’s up to me to keep the world safe from *him*.

I rise to my feet, the hem of my dress and my crotch just inches from Davis’ face. He looks up at me with hunger and desperate need. “Fuck, baby girl. I don’t know if I can be out in the world with you.”

I smile down at him, softly touching his cheek. “Please.”

“Alright, alright,” he grumbles, and then helps poor Bryce up from the asphalt.

“You should apologize,” I insist.

Davis levels me with an angry glare that instantly makes my pussy gush. “Not a fuckin’ chance.”

I lift my eyebrow. “Right now,” I challenge him.

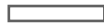
Davis’ expression changes. Something tells me he’s not used to a woman standing up to him. If looks could talk, this one would say, *You mouthy little brat*. And I like it.

My goodness. I’d get down on my knees to see that anger. “He’s very sorry,” I say to Bryce, without breaking Davis’ stare. “Aren’t you?”

Davis narrows his eyes at me, running his tongue over his teeth. So cocky. So sexy. And slowly, he shakes his head *no*.

This man.

Bryce seems glad to take the apology, no matter where it's from. He nods quickly, dusting himself off. "Yes, sir. So many apologies. It will *never* happen again."



In a table at the quiet corner, we take our seats. Everything looks calm now, except for Davis. He's staring at me with lust in his eyes. The muscles on his jaw keep flexing. His leg keeps moving under the table, shaking the cutlery. "I'm so fucking hard right now, baby. I have to fuck you. *Now*."

Sweet Jesus, thank you. *Thank you*. I glance around. The place is full of people. "Do you think you can make it through dinner?"

He eats a breadstick angrily. "Not a fucking chance."

"Kay. So. What do we do?" I take a sip of my Shirley Temple, my hands trembling. This is all new territory for me. I could happily bask in this electrifying and sultry sensation for a hot minute, but I can *feel* the energy coming off of him. Like a male lion pacing around at the zoo. If I don't do something quickly, he'll lash out at the next person that so much as looks at me. I just know it.

"Bathroom," Davis says.

"*Here?*" I ask, incredulous. "With all of these people listening?"

"You got a better idea, baby girl? If I don't have you right fucking now, if I don't make you mine again, I'll burn this place to the ground the next chance I get."

Somehow, I believe him. He is raw power. Pure fury. And all for me.

He stands up and tips his head toward the back. "Bathroom. *Now*."

My body rolls with a wave of *yes*. I obediently set my napkin down, smoothing my dress. He places one hand on my hip, guiding me in front of him. He's close behind me as we walk past the open-plan kitchen. The sizzle in the pans is nothing compared to the sizzle between us. As we near the bathrooms, I feel his erection pressing hard into the small of my back.

I use all my self-control not to reach back and touch it. But I keep my eye on the prize—the bathroom is only ten steps away.

But Davis doesn't let me reach it, he scoops me into a supply closet. He slams his hand up against the door and pushes me hard up against it, while simultaneously unbuckling his belt. With my cheek pressed against the wood, I feel him penetrate me before I can even say *please*.

He groans as he meets my wetness. I'm dripping for him and it'd be too embarrassing if I wasn't crazy with need. Right now, though, all I care about is him and the incredible pleasure his touch can give me. I reach between my legs, parting my folds to give him better access as he enters me rough and deep. So possessive. So final. So freaking good that I can't even see straight.

My knees weaken and I press against the door for support. I keep my two fingers in a V around my opening, savoring the feeling of his shaft as it drives in and out. In and out. With every pummeling drive, I feel him hitting a new place, a new spot. A whole new level of bliss.

“Oh my *god*,” I growl. “What are you *doing* to me?”

“That's your g-spot, baby,” he growls. He pulls back almost all the way, only to drive into me with the torturous slowness, pushing down against that magical spot into me with full care.

“My geez spot?” I pant, feeling myself getting closer and closer to the kaleidoscope of pleasure he took me so many times last night. Every sermon I ever heard comes into my mind. “Well, hallelujah.”

He laughs, all cocky. “*G-spot.*”

Another full penetration, and my body clamps down on him hard. He keeps me pressed against his body, not letting me move away. Woah *nelly*, this horse is on it's *way*. “Ohhhh Davis, I'm gonna...”

“Atta fucking girl,” he growls, fucking me harder as he digs his huge hands into my ass. “Come for me. Come on this dick.”

“Yes, please, please. Oh my God,” I whine, my lips against the metal door. “I'm coming, I'm coming. Oh my god... I'm...”

His grunts get harder, his thrusts get more savage. “I'm gonna come, baby girl. And you're gonna come with me. Right fucking now.”

“Yes,” I pant. “I'm... oh *Davis*...”

There it is. There it is. Filling my body with hot caramel bliss.

Behind me, I feel Davis shake along with me. His face rests in the crook of my neck. His growls join the thumps of my heartbeat. As he keeps thrusting into me, I feel his semen drip out of me, sliding down my thighs.

He hooks his arm under my hips to keep me where he wants me. My head spins with the strength of my pleasure, my body quivers with desire. And he keeps fucking me. I feel him spit hard into the crack of my ass. His first finger and then his first *two* fingers penetrate me. The searing pain of it only intensifies my pleasure. My pussy and now my ass spin white-hot circles inside me, shooting stars through my body like sparklers. Like explosions. Like white hot molten metal heat.

And the pleasure, oh my god, the pleasure... it's almost... it's just...

It's more than I've ever...

More than I can even...

chapter ten

Davis

I FUCKED her until she fainted.

I. Fucked. Her. Until. She. Fainted.

She slumps down into a heap on the supply closet floor, and I crouch down beside her. “Baby. Wake up, baby,” I pinch her cheeks, brushing back her hair from her face.

“Baby girl. Wake up.”

Nothing. Fucking nothing. She is *out*.

Ho-leeeee *shit*.

I run my hand through my hair, trying to get my bearings. I came so hard I can barely see straight, but everything in me is laser focused on her. Tunnel vision on the only thing that matters. Her.

And the way I love her.

Because I know I do. I love her senseless. To heaven and back. Now and always.

But holy fucking shit. That’s my girl. On the floor. Cum spilling from her sugar-cunt and in another world. Because of me. My cocky pride at making her cum until her consciousness cracked is only *slightly* less than my concern about her.

I put my half-hard dick away and zip up my pants. In the corner of the supply closet, I see a first aid kit. I pop it open

and find what I hoped to find; two paper-wrapped vials of smelling salts taped to the inside of the lid.

The door flies open just as I'm about to snap one under her nose. And there stands Mr. Mastriano, the owner of this place. As big as a bear but way more confused. He looks at Marin and me and at Marin again. "Sir?"

It doesn't look good. That's for sure. Time to think fast. "Low blood sugar. Happens all the time. We gotta get her pancreas checked."

Mr. Mastriano, though, knows a thing or two. Been round the block, I can tell. Something tells me we aren't the first couple to end up in this supply closet. He takes off his suit coat and covers her half-naked body gently and respectfully.

Props to this guy for sure.

"Ah yes, the pesky low blood sugar. Of course."

I prop her head up on my knee and waft the smelling salts under her nose. She comes back to life both adorably and awkwardly, rumpling her nose and trying to get her face away from the sharpness of the ammonia.

Her eyes meet mine as soon as she's back in the world.

"You okay, gorgeous?"

She rubs her nose hard. "I love you. I love you so much," she says, as she blink-blink-blinks up at me.

Aww fuck. She's everything. So innocent. So hot. So open. So sweet.

"I love you too, baby girl," I say, holding her close, while Mr. Mastriano chuckles and leaves us be.



Dinner was perfect, fucking perfect. And it had nothing to do with the food. Just being there with her, across that table, with the candlelight glinting in her eyes. Talking, laughing, just being... was perfect.

Back at the house, Janie has left for the night. And this house feels way more like *home* with Marin in it. I'm in the kitchen, pouring myself a bourbon and making her a virgin mojito. In the room next door, I hear her talking to Stevie. She insisted on bringing him back some risotto arancini and also tiramisu.

"So how was it?" Stevie asks. "Christ, this tiramisu is awesome."

She laughs sweetly. Somehow, I guess she's sharing the tiramisu with him. "It was amazing. I passed out, it was so good."

I muffle a snicker and listen for Stevie's response. "No way."

She giggles again. "I mean, it was *amazing*. I'll say that much."

I listen to the sound of their spoons on the take-out container and look out into the yard. For one fucking second, I see a flash-forward to another time. A hope. A dream.

A pile of leaves, carving pumpkins... and a pregnant Marin sipping hot cider by the fire pit.

Fuck. My heart. My heart just absolutely aches at the thought of it. Because I don't know if I deserve her, but holy Jesus—I hope I do.

I've blocked old Franklin Baron on my phone after reading his ten text messages and listening to one of his voice mails. He must have gotten my number from Callahan because those two are as thick as burned oil.

When I put it together, I called her out on her fake name too. I didn't tell her how I figured it out though. She said she's not all that proud of her lineage and I can't say I disagree. I disliked her grandfather before but now?

Now?

Let's just say he's had a nice life. Or he hasn't. I don't give a fuck but if he so much as throws a nasty look ever again at Marin?

What he saw me do to that fucker in the alley will seem like a massage at a day spa compared to what I'll do to him.

He fucking left his granddaughter at the cabin. His voicemail saying, 'I'm storing something at your cabin. You owe me. Don't go checking on it. I'll pick it up in the spring. Mind your own business and I'll forget what I saw. If you decide to get nosy, I've got Police Chief Reynolds on speed dial. He's a deacon at my church. You call me back and tell me you got this message and we have an agreement. Your cabin for the winter for me forgetting what I saw. I'll be waiting with my finger on speed dial.'

What a righteous fuck he is.

Rage tosses tinder onto my rising temper but there's nothing to do about him right now. I've got the prize he decided to throw away like an old lottery ticket and he can go pound fucking rocks in that mansion of his by himself for the rest of his days.

Which will be numbered if he tries to mess with my girl ever again.

"By the way," comes Stevie's voice, breaking my daydream. "About my brother..."

I freeze with the muddler crushing the mint. Uh oh...

"He's not as bad as everybody says he is. I swear. He's a jerk. He's got a temper. But he's not nearly..."

Marin clears her voice in surprise. "Does everybody say he's bad?" she asks, with a worried little lilt.

Shit. Shit.

I grab our drinks and head into the living room. I'll tell her everything, and soon, but not like this, not right now. I clear my voice and jingle the ice, making some noise to interrupt them. "Damn, you two. Looks like we should have gotten two tiramisus."

Marin's big innocent eyes look up at me. She doesn't look doubtful, but maybe a little surprised. I give her the virgin mojito and glance at my watch. I know what he said to her and

I know she's gonna have questions. It's time to tell her the truth. No lies. Not between us.

"You better get some rest, brother," I say to Stevie.

Stevie glares at me. "Since when *you* tell me it's bedtime?"

Since I fell in love with a temptress.

I give him the side eyes and he gets the message, playing along with a very sudden yawn. "But yeah, you're right, big brother. You always know best!"

I roll my eyes at him and then wheel him into his room, then into his bathroom I help him get his teeth brushed and take a piss, and all the stuff he can't do on his own—thanks to me.

I carry him to his bed and tuck him in, making sure he's got his iPad and his little emergency button in case he needs anything in the night.

"Night, brother," I tell him, messing his hair then planting a quick kiss on the top of his head, which he both loves and hates since he was a baby.

"Night, dickhead," he groans, and I switch off the lights. But before I can get very far down the hallway, he calls me back. "Wait, Davis. Come back."

I turn on a dime and head back to his room. Probably forgot to get him a glass of water. I always forget the damned glass of water. "Yeah."

By the light in the hallway, I can see he's smiling. "I'm happy for you, brother."

Fuck. He and I don't talk about happiness often because it's been so hard to come by. I clear the wave of emotion from my throat. "Thanks, man."

"Yeah. It does me good to see you good." He gives me a fist bump. And then, "Now get the hell out of here and go back to your girl."



When I get back, Marin is all tucked in cozy on the sofa by the fire. Her cheeks are flushed, her eyes are sparkling. Looking at her makes my whole body fucking *yearn*.

She pats the cushion beside her as if to tell me to join her. “You’re really good to him.”

Fuck, if only she knew the story, she wouldn’t be so impressed. But standing there by the firelight, looking at her, I know she needs to know the truth. She needs to know what happened.

I sit down beside her and scoop her into my arms so she’s straddling me. Yeah, I’m fucking hard for her, but that’s not the point of this. Not yet. Not now.

I wrap her in my arms and kiss her. Slow, warm, and loving. Making out with her like I’m 16 and kissing a girl for the first time. I let my hands slide down her back, gripping her ass, exploring every curve and valley.

“This is gonna be slow. This is gonna be honest. With kissing, talking, and saying the hard things.”

She nudges her forehead with mine, nodding slowly. “Okay.”

And just like that, with her in my arms, I just... tell her.

Everything.

“It wasn’t easy for us growing up. My Dad... he was an abusive bastard. With me. With my mom. I was too young to protect her before she passed when my brother was born, and I wouldn’t have minded for myself, but Stevie... I just couldn’t let him go through that. I did everything to protect him, to give him the life he deserves, but...” I sigh and she peppers my neck with soft kisses. Comforting me, calming me in a way only she can.

“One day, Dad was about to hit Stevie. All the anger, all the rage of those years came crushing down. I saw red then. It

happened so fast. I shoved Stevie aside and landed a punch on my dad.”

She gasps, but squeezes my shoulders and caresses my cheek. So I continue. “That punch gave him a fucking aneurism. He... died. I killed him before he even hit the floor.”

“You were trying to protect your little brother,” Marin whispers.

I shake my head, a dark chuckle escapes from my lips. “Yeah, and I put him in a wheelchair instead.” I sigh, my chest aches with the pain that will never go away. Like she can feel my pain, she places her hand against my chest and rubs it away. “When I pushed Stevie aside, he tripped and fell down the stairs. Ended up with a spinal cord injury. I can’t lose my temper. I can’t.”

I expect her to look at me with disgust, but when our eyes meet, I see no disgust or fear. I see understanding and compassion. A weight leaves my shoulders. Like finally, fucking finally, I am not alone anymore.

She wraps her arms around me tight, keeping me close, and kisses my forehead with such love that it makes my eyes fucking well up with tears.

“Terrible things happen to good people.” Her whispered words feel like balms against a scar.

I bury my face into the warmth of her hair, her shoulder, her breasts. “I’m not a good person, Little Red.”

“You are, though,” she says, softly.

I want to believe her, but it’s not easy. I want to come clean about what happened in the alley and her grandfather but that’s beyond a buzz kill and I’m not ready. “Let’s agree to disagree,” I murmur.

She starts unbuttoning my shirt slowly and nods. “I can do that. For now.”

With every button she opens up, she places a kiss on my skin, causing a shiver to run through my body. I help her get rid of my shirt. She slides down from my lap, fumbling with

my belt. Her dainty fingers keep brushing against my dick which is ready to burst out of my slacks. When she finally manages to unbuckle my belt and pull down the zipper, I let out a growl. She kneels down between my legs, looking at me with innocence and love in her eyes.

She tries to pull down my slacks, but fails. When she huffs with annoyance, I chuckle and lift myself up enough for her to do as she pleases. She pulls down my suit pants and boxers. My cock springs free, almost hitting her face. She giggles with that girly enthusiasm, making me fall for her even more.

But when she wraps her small hands around my thickness and leans down to lick the precum off of my dick, there's nothing girly about her. She's desire incarnate. A temptress.

"Fuck," I breathe out when she moans with my cock between her pouty lips.

With her eyes locked on mine, she moves her lips on the line of my shaft and peppers my length with wet kisses, applying little suction.

"Put it in your pretty mouth or I'm going to die," I groan.

This girl. This beautiful angel will be the death of me.

With a smirk, she licks her lips and takes my head inside her mouth.

"Good girl. Now, suck," I direct her. And she does. I watch as she tries to take more of me inside her mouth. Her eyes water, but she pushes until I feel her throat tighten around the head. She gags on me, but instead of letting me out of her mouth, she sucks harder and that's it.

With a feral need, I pull her onto my lap and push the straps of that fucking red dress off her shoulders, baring her delicious tits. I bite the smooth skin of her breasts and suck the rosy nipples into my lips. She shrieks and then moans. With her wanton moans and whimpers, I'm one second away from bursting. I place her where I want and thrust into her warmth in one deep push. She holds onto me for dear life as I fuck her senseless. Around her, I'm losing all my control and considering the moans she lets out, she doesn't mind.

She's my other half. The rest of my soul I've been missing.

As her body clasps around me, she quivers and comes. Watching her come is the most erotic image I've ever seen. I slow down, trying to stay inside her as long as I can. A smile appears on her face when she finally catches her breath and she looks at me with adoration.

"This is heaven," she whispers, and I can't deny that statement.

"This is heaven," I agree with her.

We rock into each other, chasing the pleasure in slow yet deep thrusts. As my orgasm rips through my body with earth-shattering power, she joins me with her own silent cry of pleasure.

"You're a good man, Davis," she tells me, resting her face into the crook of my neck. "And I don't care if it takes the rest of our lives for me to prove it to you, but you are."

The rest of our lives. Looking up into her eyes, the future gets crystal clear.

chapter eleven

Marin

IT'S crazy here today in the best way. Janie and Stevie are battling.

They've had an ongoing war since breakfast about whether Judge Judy would win a fight with Jerry Springer.

Stevie watches too much garbage TV but I gotta say, my money is on Jerry. He's had to duck and cover from a lot of flying chairs from the little I've seen and I think he could dance and dodge around Judge Judy until he took his shot.

So, that battle rages on as I try to teach my caveman, mountain man how to make apple fritters and pork barbecue.

Janie is ah-mazing, don't get me wrong, but she's from Texas and they make the wrong kinda barbecue down there. I would never tell her that but it's time this house did barbecue right.

"I don't like vinegar." Davis grumbles as I pour the distilled apple cider vinegar into a measuring cup then over the pork butt. "Doesn't barbecue just mean put it on the barbecue?" He bobs his eyebrows with a frustrated frown.

"Shush. You need to expand your horizons. You can't just throw a piece of meat over hot coals and hope for the best. Once this is marinated, then, *oh then*, we will slow cook it over just the right hickory wood for six hours... baste at the end with sauce and..." I pinch my fingers to my lips, then make a kissing sound.

“I can get behind that if there’s kissing involved.”

He brushes my hair behind my ear. Such a simple touch but it sends a cascade of longing and comfort deep into my soul. I give him a soft punch in the rock-hard muscle of his shoulder. “You made a right mess out of the apple fritters. And be careful, that pan of oil is still hot.” I point toward the pan then give a sad look at the over-fried dough sitting in a stack on a plate like lumps of coal.

“I want to make a mess out of you.” He leans down, trailing his tongue up my neck and heat blooms on my cheeks, my heart hammering away like it always does when he gives me that look.

“*Shhh*, they’re right there.”

He tosses a look over his shoulder into the living room, where Stevie is in the middle of his passionate closing argument on how Judge Judy would knock out Jerry Springer, paying us no mind at all.

“I don’t care who is where when I need you. You should know that by now.”

He’s right. It’s been two more days of Mountain Marin being pummeled in the best way by her Mountain Prince and I’d hazard to guess at least a third of our waking hours is spent in some form of fornication. I’m getting my cardio in at least.

So, I’m pretty sure Janie and Stevie are down with what’s happening between us. Davis made no attempt to conceal that I was sleeping in his room with him. Only, there wasn’t much sleep going on.

Until about three AM last night. Davis fell asleep inside me still hard. Like, bam, he finished, gave me a kiss, spooned me slipping back into home base then, he was out.

I laid there for a few minutes wondering if this was some new sexy game but when he started snoring? I was pretty sure the jig was up. I drifted off pretty quickly as well, but woke up to him sliding in and out of me, but it didn’t take me long to realize, he was sleep-fucking me!

He was babbling all this filth but when I'd respond, he was in his own world. Didn't stop his hands and cock from sending me to the heaven again though. When we both woke up this morning Davis was frantic, looking the clock and muttering about sleeping five hours in a row.

Turns out, that hasn't happened in years. He has nightmares and insomnia but last night, seems the cycle was broken. He said I have a magic pussy. Bush and all.

Snort.

He does have great pillows too. He even had a few brand-new ones stacked in his closet. He really is the cream in my coffee. Snort. Not a metaphor but

"Did you finish your water?" Davis asks as I brush my hands down the front of the flannel shirt I'm wearing, and I nod.

"Yes, enough with the water. You've hydrated me until my eyes are bulging. What's with you today and the water?"

"Water's good for you."

"Yes, I know. As well as B-12 and Vitamin D and Magnesium and the other six vitamins you make sure I take every day. But, really, enough with the water today. I just finished two more bottles."

"Good. Did you pee?"

I squint, shaking my head. He's certainly a stern sort of steward but, geez-whiz, is he going to start keeping track of my urine output?

"Ouch, fuck." Davis grunts, breaking my train of thought. He holds up his hand and the right side is bright red and dripping with oil. "Fucking burned myself."

Janie and Stevie look over.

"You okay, bro? You've been damn distracted lately." Stevie snorts.

"Yeah, I'm okay." He eyes me and I know I'm being railroaded. "Marin will be my nurse. We've got burn cream in

the medicine chest. You guys...just don't start acting out the Judy vs Jerry showdown."

They go back to ignoring us as Davis winks and tips his head to the hall. "I need medical care."

I roll my eyes as his looks turns hungry and wet warmth explodes between my legs. "You need mental health care, is what you need, and to ask for forgiveness because you just burned yourself on purpose in order to not have to learn to cook. You are troubled, Mr. Davis Ray. Troubled."

He rolls his sexy hazel eyes, pressing his boot to my butt in a mock kick, urging me forward down the hall to the master bedroom. He shoulders the door shut behind us and nods toward the bathroom. "In there."

"Are you seriously hurt?" I ask as I tighten my brow and reach for his hand.

"I'm fine. Get in the bathroom."

We've spent plenty of time together in the shower and with me bent over the counter, and sitting on the counter, and down on my knees, but there's something different going on here.

Tingles ripple down my back as he ushers me inside with heavy hands on my shoulders and points toward the commode.

I'm right confused at this point, but Davis stands like a statue waiting for me to comply.

"You have to pee, don't you?" he asks and I slow nod, trying to puzzle together if this is a new sexy time thing or what.

"*Yeahhhhhh*. You've been force hydrating me for the last hour. My bladder is bursting."

"Good. Take your pants down but don't go yet." He turns toward the double vanity where he fucked me bent over while I tried to brush my teeth this morning.

The ample-sized rustic bathroom still makes Davis look larger in the smaller space. His blue flannel is rolled up above his elbows and his forearms are *epic*. Thick with veins and

dusted with dark hair and the sinuous muscle flexes and moves under his tan skin.

Uggg. His forearms are directly connected to my bang-me button and I'm not even the least bit ashamed. But, I'm trying to put together what's gonna happen right now and for the life of me, as creative as I am, I'm not seeing his vision.

He rustles in one of the drawers of the vanity and pulls out a small box, his thick fingers working the top in an attempt to get at whatever is inside.

"Pants down," he commands and my belly tumbles. He growls as he fumbles with the little box, finally ripping it in half and two white plastic things about the size of a toothbrush come flying out. One hits the wall, the other Davis catches in midair as he steps my way.

"What *is* that?"

"Pregnancy test," he says, like it's the most normal thing in the world.

I swallow hard. I know they make them, I've just never seen one nor imagined I'd be taking one at eighteen after meeting a mountain man in a cabin where my grandfather dumped me for the winter.

Phew. That's a lot.

Nevertheless, I've been a willing participant in Davis's rather obsessive need to test out the functioning level of my womb, so...

He picks up the pamphlet that fell to the floor, squinting at the microscopic print on a sneer, then tosses it in the trash can on a sniff. "Pants down and sit, but don't pee until I tell you to."

This is level *twenty*-bananas but by the set of his jaw and the way he's holding the little green and white stick, aimed at me like a gun, he's as serious as a heart attack.

I wiggle my jeans and panties over my hips and down my legs and Davis drops to his knees in front of me as I sit, tugging the fabric down to my ankles.

“I’m not sure I can pee with an audience. I get stage fright.”

“Well, sooner or later your body will do the right thing and I’ll be ready when it does.” He meets my eyes with a rare smile that turns me into a marshmallow. “Just picture Niagara Falls.” He reaches over and turns the knob on the closest sink to full blast so the sound of the rushing water fills the room.

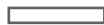
Then he pops the little top off the test and tosses it over his shoulder. It chitters across the tile floor as he muscled his body between my legs until the insides of my knees brush the sides of his torso.

“Now, pee.” He holds the stick just under where...well, where you’d think it should go but instead of peeing, I burst out laughing.

His forehead tightens as he brushes the back of his other hand over his grimace. “This isn’t funny. I think you are pregnant, and I want to know. I want to know if I’m a father the day I take root inside you. The tests I bought say they can detect pregnancy within a day of conception. I don’t want to miss anything. Now, stop laughing and pee.”

Watching this huge mountain man on his knees, holding the pee stick between my legs, barking orders is more than my little heart can take.

Tears run down my cheeks as I laugh and finally, my body can’t take it anymore and my big mountain man gets his wish.



“I’m going to be a father.” Davis buries his face into my neck as I hold the little stick with two pink lines in my hands, sitting curled on his lap.

After the peeing, Davis rushed us out of the house giving me a piggy back ride all the way to the barn. He wanted privacy and didn’t think the bathroom was quite the right venue for the event.

I bounced along on his back in a daze, the reality that I'm pregnant taking up most of my brain space.

Now I'm sitting on a bale of hay, the horses in their stalls chomping away at their breakfast oblivious to the way my life has just changed.

I think of my mother and the school photos I found that are tucked into my own bible on my bedside table back at my grandfather's house.

Would she be proud? Ashamed? I'm only a year older than she was when she had me. The barn swallows swoop and chirp as they fly up and down the aisle and the world feels...new.

I have a passing thought of my Grandpa as well. This was exactly what he didn't want for me. Exactly what he thought he would prevent by leaving me in that cabin.

"Baby." Davis grips my jaw, turning me to him, his other hand pressed warm and flat on my belly. "You okay? You're gonna be the best mom. I already know it and I'm going to do everything. I'm going to do all the diapers and the potty training. I'm going to sit up at night when you nurse them. If you don't sleep, I don't sleep..."

"It's just..." I feel floaty and warm. "It's a lot but I'm happy. I am." It's true. Sitting on Davis's lap here in the barn, I've never been happier.

His warm lips meet my forehead, his hand releasing my jaw to run up and down my back when he pulls away, his eyes wide, and I practically see the thought bubble over his head.

"We need to get married," he says, wild eyed, settling me on the hay bale as he spins in a circle, eyes darting around. "Now."

"Wait, what? I—"

He drops to one knee, grabbing my hands in his, his chin low, my heart in my throat as he looks up. There are tears on his cheeks.

"Marin...you will marry me." His voice cracks as I screw up my face.

“You mean...*will* you marry me?”

He shakes his head his hair falling over his forehead. “You *will* marry me. I’m letting you know.”

“Wow.” I chuckle at how fitting his anti-proposal is, given his bossy nature. “So, if you were asking, I would be saying yes. But, you’re not asking.”

“Right.” He nods, grabbing my face and pulling it to his, his tongue invading my mouth in a long, warm kiss before he pulls back and stands, tugging out his phone. “I’ve got it all set up,” he says, tapping the screen. “It’s all legal and binding.”

“What is set up? What do you mean, legal and binding?” I ask, then perk up. “We need a selfie.” I smile, turning into a side pose. He’s been taking my pictures all day every day and it’s better than modeling for some stranger, but the pictures are darn good if I do say so myself.

He holds up a finger, stepping back, holding out the phone then turning so I can see the screen.

“Hello?” A woman in her forties I’d guess comes on the screen. “Mr. Ray?”

“Yes, we’re doing it. Can you do it now?”

What in the *what* is going on?

The woman nods as he turns the phone so I’m showing in the little square at the bottom of the screen.

“Go to the form link I sent you, both of you can sign with your finger at the ‘X’s’. Then, we can proceed.”

More tapping on the screen, then Davis sits next to me, holding out his phone. “Sign here.” He says as I blink and look from his excited eyes to the screen.

“It’s a marriage license. Sign it. She’s going to marry us. Now.”

He reaches for my hand, tucking my fingers into a fist, then pulls out my index finger and points it at the screen as my jaw falls open and a beam of sunshine cuts through the dust in the aisle and lands on the phone.

“Marry...” I say, swallowing. “I’m getting married?”

“Like I said, it’s all legal. Virtual weddings, they do them now and I spoke to the officiant earlier.”

“But I’m getting married? Right now?”

He nods. “You can have whatever kind of wedding you want with whoever you want. But, that’s the celebration, it can come after. I don’t want you pregnant and not married to me. You’re mine now, I need that to be true in every way. You’re my soulmate. I know it. I’ve had happily ever after going on in my head since I saw you that first night. Be my wife, baby, I love you now and always and forever. We’re going to make it official and fuck. Then, *then* we will celebrate.”

He uses his finger to sign his spot on the electronic form, then waits for me as the woman in the background shuffles something, breathing quietly.

If you are happy, I am happy. I’m with you always, Marin.

It’s like a whisper on a breeze that flutters into my ear. It’s my mother’s voice. I know it as well as I know anything and as Davis holds his breath, brushing the backs of his fingers across the tear on his cheek I nod and swipe my signature on the phone.

“Yas!” Davis’s arm wraps around me, pulling me up next to him as he holds the phone at arm’s length. “Okay, let’s do this.”

And just like that, I’m Mountain Marin, married to her mountain man.

chapter twelve

Marin

MY TEARS ARE wet on my cheeks as I hug myself, remembering Stevie screaming.

How did I end up right back in this God-damn truck?

One minute I was watching the sun glint on the beaded sweat across Davis's abs and the polished blade of his ax, listening to the logs split and thinking of how he would want a shower when he came back inside and I was going to join him. It's been close to a week of heaven and now this?

This?

Only, ten seconds after he hopped on the tractor and drove into the woods to pull out another felled tree, the front door flung open and an iron grip circled my upper arm, my feet shuffling on the wood floor as I was dragged out the front door.

Grandpa must have been watching to be sure Davis was out of earshot

He shoved me in through the driver's side of the truck, never releasing his grip as his fingertips dug into the sensitive flesh on the inside of my arm, bellowing about how the devil was strong in me and how he'd find a way to beat him out of me.

"How did you find me?" I hiss, more angry than afraid.
"How did you even know to come to that house?"

“I know things you do not.”

I smooth my dress as much as I can. I can't wrap my mind around what's happening. I can still feel Davis inside me, his cum wetting my thighs as the Jesus gang leers at me from the dashboard.

The preacher on the radio raises his voice. “In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders!”

“A-*fucking*-men!” Grandpa glares at me.

Thump-thump-thump on the steering wheel, and more bellowing, this time scripture from Deuteronomy. And that's how I know he's pissed. Really pissed.

Deuteronomy is the big guns.

I thought I was free of it. At least until Spring. A respite at least. Stupid, naïve me. All this time in the love haze had me thinking maybe, just maybe...

“All of you! Clothe yourselves with *humility* toward one another! Because *God* opposes the proud! He shows favor to the humble!”

Grandpa thumps the steering wheel. “Hallelujah! Where's your humility, Marin? Where's your respect for your elders?”

The preacher starts again. And I reach calmly forward and turn the radio off.

“Respect goes both ways,” I say, sitting up straight and shaking my arm loose from his prying grip. “Didn't anybody ever teach you that?”

“That's enough, young lady—”

“No. I don't think it is. I am not a temptress, Grandpa. I am not impure. I am just *me*. I am an eighteen-year-old girl, who has all her life been policed and chided and made to believe that she is bad, through and through. Just because God created me in a way people seem to find me pretty. I'm eighteen, what you're doing right now is against the law. Kidnapping. False imprisonment. Assault.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I’ve never assaulted anyone in my life.”

I glare, then reach one hand across and lift the torn sleeve of my dress, shaking it at him, showing him the bruises from his fingers underneath. “Assault.”

He scoffs. “You want to talk about assault? I could tell you a thing or two about that animal you’ve been spending time with.”

This?

I almost laugh. He thinks Davis is holding secrets from me. He has no idea.

“I know all about the accident,” I tell him with a note of triumph. “Davis was just taking care of his brother. Bad things happen. You think I care about that? You have no idea. He respects me, and I respect him back, that’s how it works. Maybe if you cared about someone other than yourself you’d understand that.”

He grins as he turns my way. “You don’t know anything, you stupid little girl. You don’t know the half of what Davis Ray is capable of.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means—” He falls silent as his eyes flick to the mirror. “Damn him!”

I hear the roar of an engine as I turn in my seat, my hair being swept out of the open window as I see the massive truck bearing down on us.

And the darkened face of Davis glaring from behind the wheel.

The front of his vehicle almost collides with the back of ours, but he swerves and mounts the bank to the left, his truck throwing dirt and melted snow in an arc behind. I scream in panic as Grandpa tries to turn into Davis, gunning the engine, but he doesn’t have the courage to maintain that course.

Davis’s truck careens back onto the road at a sharp angle, brakes squealing in protest, suspension barely hanging on as

he pulls right across our path, missing the front of our vehicle by an inch. I scream again as his truck skids, barely holding onto the mountain path, almost toppling over the steep edge as the rear end fishtails then regains its hold.

Grandpa swears, slamming on his brakes as Davis slows in front, turning his truck to block the road.

Davis is out of his door in an instant, booted feet planted firmly in the dirt, a shotgun held loosely in his hands.

“Get the fuck out here, old man,” he demands, spitting at the ground at his feet.

“You wait here,” Grandpa tells me, but I no longer care about his orders. As he slides out of his seat, I open my door and bound onto the road. My slippers sink into the mud but I don’t care. I’ll go barefoot to Davis’s side if I have to, but I *am* going to his side.

“Baby, you okay?”

I don’t even look at Grandpa as I nod and squelch through the wet ground, pulling myself in beside Davis. “I am now.”

“I’m going to give you one chance,” Davis says as he turns to face my grandpa again, his voice a low growl. “One fucking chance. You get back in your truck and get the fuck off my land.”

“Or what?”

My fury is lit as I pull my shoulders back and he darts his eyes between us, I say, “We’re gonna pop all four of your tires. Then you’ll have to call Larry at the tire shop and we don’t want to do that, do we, Grandpa?” I say, cooing, “What will Larry do when he learns that you’ve been bonking his wife every Sunday after Bible Study for *the last twenty years*? Do we want to see that?”

Davis nods but adds, “And I’ll shoot you as a trespasser.”

“You will not!”

“You want to try me? You break into my home, steal my things and I’m supposed to just let you go?”

Grandpa huffs. “I didn’t break in or steal anything!”

“You took the most precious thing I have.” Davis puts an arm around me. “The two most precious things.”

“What’s that supposed to... You don’t answer your phone, what am I supposed to think? I told you one day I’d call on you and you needed to be there. Tit for tat. I kept your secret but by God, I won’t anymore. I get here and find *her* gone from where I left her and having a goddamn vacation with you and your fucking brother!”

“You left her for the fucking wolves, old man.”

“I left her to repent! You’re going to jail for the rest of your fucking life, Davis Ray. God only knows what you’ve done to *her*. What you’ve forced my granddaughter’s soul to endure.”

I fling myself around, arms crossed, and my heart pounding. I feel powerful and exhilarated and utterly...*myself* thanks to Davis. “I love him. He hasn’t forced me to do anything. And I’m eighteen, anything me and Davis have done is our business—”

“Shut your damn mouth! I don’t want to even think about what you’ve done!”

“You don’t talk to her like that,” Davis growls, stepping forward, raising the shotgun. “Get the hell off my land.”

“Tell *her*,” Grandpa says, pointing from Davis to me. “Tell her what you did.”

“You’re too much,” I scream, laughing hysterically. “I told you he already told me all about it. I know what happened and it wasn’t his fault.”

Grandpa folds his arms over his chest, glaring at Davis. “Tell her, or I will.”

What is it going to take to get through to him that I know everything and I still love this man? That we’re going to be together forever...

Turning to Davis, his eyes are on the ground, jaw locked. He’s...*shaking*.

Davis raises his eyes to my grandpa, but his face is a riot of emotion that's written in the dark lines between his brows and the frown that pulls his lips down into his beard.

"What's he talking about?" I ask. "Davis?"

I touch the exposed skin of his arm and he flinches, turning with darkened eyes that look right through me. I want to kiss him and take away the pain, but I want to know. I need to know.

"Davis?" I repeat, as he exhales so hard it looks like his body deflates, letting the gun drop. He slides down, sitting on the ground with his elbows on his knees, face in his hands.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I'm sorry, baby..." Anger contorts his features as a single tear falls down his cheek.

"Sorry for what? Don't cry."

"He was going to kill her." He starts but I'm lost as I stare at the man I love looking defeated. "That guy was pounding on her. His knuckles were bloody, her face..."

"What are you talking about? Who are you talking about?"

He shakes his head. "The man I killed. Not my father, another man. A guy in an alley. He was fucking beating on a girl. Screaming she was holding out on him. All I saw was my fucking father, screaming his excuses for why he was hitting my mom. I lost it."

"Bullshit," Grandpa laughs. "Bull fucking shit. You enjoyed yourself. Who knows how many other people you've killed."

"No." Davis chokes then looks at me. "There's no one else, baby. I promise you. No one else."

My heart is breaking as the world seems to dim and sway.

"It's okay," I say.

"I saw the whole thing." Grandpa spits. "He's a *murderer*, *Marin*, and he's going to go to prison for a long time."

"You saw?" I turn and gape. "You saw and did you help?"

Grandpa scoffs. “What was I going to do? That junkie deserved to die, waste of the life God gave him but that doesn’t mean the law will let this animal off the hook—”

“You didn’t try to help that woman? You didn’t, I don’t know, call an ambulance? Or the police?”

“Ran off as soon as she got free.”

“You saw the whole thing and you did *nothing*,” I repeat. “What kind of a man does that?”

I kneel, not caring about the mud and the cold. My grandpa may as well not be here. He’s dead to me.

Taking Davis’s face in my hands I stare into his eyes, even as he tries to turn them away.

“You protected a girl you didn’t even know. You risked yourself for her. I love you so much for that.”

“I killed a man. Two men,” he says. “I don’t deserve you. You are all the goodness in the world, baby. And I’m a fucking killer. I can’t risk—” He shakes his head, kicking the heel of his boot in the mucky dirt. “Losing you, going to prison, leaving Stevie. I don’t see a way out.” He glares at my grandfather, the anger returning to his eyes. “I could kill you, old man, then my secret would die too. My sin will die with you.”

A knot forms in my throat.

“I love you,” I say, ignoring the threat to my grandpa, “and I’ll go on loving you no matter what. For better or worse, right? That’s what it said in our vows.”

“Vows?” Grandpa’s voice cuts through. “What vows?”

“Marriage vows,” I answer, keeping my eyes on Davis. His face relaxes, brow smoothing and a flicker in his eyes returns. He knows that I mean what I say, that what he did was right. “I’m pregnant and married, Grandpa.”

“You’re pregnant?”

Silence stretches on the dirt road in the middle of nowhere, and I don’t care. I have everything. My Davis, the baby

growing inside me, the brother I never had in Stevie. Everything.

I'm the luckiest girl alive.

And as Davis draws a deep breath and stands, pulling me into his arms, I know none of it will be taken from me.

“Damn right,” he says in a low growl, turning to my grandpa. “Damn right she’s pregnant. And mine. You watched that girl getting beaten bloody and you did nothing. You took notes so you could blackmail me later. You come forward with that information, and there will be plenty of questions for you to answer too about that. And kidnapping my wife. Threatening her. Leaving her to die in a cabin. Do what’s right. Not what you preach, but what’s right. Then, I’ll let you live.”

Davis pulls me against the solid muscle of his body and I inhale his scent, feeling the tension melt away.

“Get in the truck, baby. Go on now. He isn’t going to do a damn thing. Because if he does, I’ll be coming for him. Marin is mine now. Anyone hurts my family, they better be ready.”

My life is still level-10 bananas. But now, I’m not alone. And I’m all in.

chapter **thirteen**

Davis

SHE ISN'T in a little black dress or in a little red dress. Fuck no. Because today? Today she's in a long *white* dress. And she looks fucking gorgeous. Dark hair all around her bare shoulders wearing plum lipstick, light make up, cowboy boots...gorgeous. Just like always.

City Hall is bustling. All the normal Tuesday afternoon business of Sherman swirls around us, but I pay zero fucking attention. Because I've got her in my arms, and we've got a date with the judge in twenty-five minutes.

We're getting married in the gazebo behind the courthouse and I've had it decorated with a hundred thousand little blinking white lights, pink roses, gold balloons and paper lanterns like the picture she showed me from one of her bridal magazines.

Things with her Grandpa are... *thawing*. Slowly. He's seeing the error of his ways. But not enough to be invited to witness our wedding. The others will meet us outside once the judge is ready. I told her she could have a giant wedding and whatever she wanted but she just wanted this. The big dress, her friend Stacey, Stevie and Janie here to watch and the rings.

She's all about the rings since drawing the Sharpie ones on our fingers every day is probably not practical. Or healthy.

I gave her a debit card so she can spend at her whim, but she doesn't drive so either Janie or I take her everywhere she

needs to go like the princess she is. Janie took her to the jewelry store to buy my ring, and I don't know what she picked out, but it could be a Hello, Kitty pink plastic band. If she picked it out, I'm wearing it.

I'm pretty sure I knocked it out of the park with what I chose. She had a few pages in the wedding magazines dog eared and some of them were for rings.

She doesn't seem to want a big rock. She wanted something antique looking with a few delicate diamonds. I got her exactly that, but then, I got her something bigger to wear around her neck. My girl needs to shine like the diamond she is so we will exchange rings, but I'll also be putting a two-carat heart shaped diamond around her neck.

We're all going to Mastriano's after for a big meal too. That's what my baby wanted and I'm down for making all her wishes come true.

But we've got a little time to kill before it's time.

And there's only one way I want to kill time with her. Now and always.

"Twenty-four minutes," Marin says, tapping her phone for the tenth time in the last thirty seconds. "This is the longest freaking wait of my *life*."

I hold her close, pull her perfect bubble butt close to my cock. "Baby. People got traffic court and shit. They can't stop everything because we want to tie the knot."

She turns around in my arms. "We already *knotted* it," she says, not understanding why I start chuckling at the innuendo. "I just want to be your wife in front of the people that matter. *Now*. Is that so much to ask?"

Goddamn, I love her. And I want her. So fucking bad. "You know the only thing that would make this second wedding more perfect?"

She looks up at me, wide-eyed, naïve. Just a little girl in need of care and protection. And a good rough-fucking every six hours, at least. "What?"

I tuck her hair behind her ear and lean in close. She smells like cupcakes. Christ, she's gonna be the end of me. "My cum inside you."

"Oh *god*."

I side-eye the hall. A janitor is just leaving the women's bathroom, blocking the entrance with a *WET FLOOR: DO NOT ENTER* sign. Now we're fucking talking.

I take her hand in mine and lead her over there. There are people everywhere and it only takes a second for the two of us to sneak in. I close the door behind us and lock it, and then give her ass a smack. Her ass jiggles in just the right way. "Mmmm. *Fuck*. You're built for fucking, baby girl. So that's exactly what we're gonna do."

She giggles, tottering along the slightly wet tile. "Oh *you*."

I spin her around in front of the sinks, so she's looking at me in the mirror. I hike up her satin skirt, revealing her red lace thong. She looks fucking amazing in this thong. But there are rules. "What the fuck did we say about red?"

She lets her head fall, laughing. Her hair slides aside, letting me see the line of her spine. I love her right down to her fucking bones. "These are what I was wearing when we met, so..."

Christ. Some rules are made to be broken. I hook them aside with my finger and unzip my pants. I'm achingly hard already; have been all fucking day. And night. No matter how often I have her, I only want more. "This cup will *never* runneth over. Ever."

I push into her without warning, without permission. She's mine and she fucking knows it. I hilt myself in deep, groaning as I enter.

"Oh *God*," she says. "I missed you so much."

Deeper and deeper, in and out. "I want to fuck another baby into you today, sweet girl. *Before* we re-tie the knot."

She grips the Formica countertop. White nail polish today. Angel-pure. "I want to break every rule with you. If anyone

can do you, you can,” she purrs. “Let me make a double Daddy out of you, *pleaaaaase*.”

Daddy.

It makes my dick fucking throb inside her. That word is gonna be in her future. Every fucking day. But she has no idea yet.

I press hard into her cervix, feeling my cock compress. Knowing my baby is already growing inside her does nothing but fill me with pride. I’m still obsessed with breeding her whether it’s physically possible or not, my nuts don’t care.

We’re not making love now, nah. This is pure fucking. Pure primal fucking. The most basic instinct there is. With three hard drives, I’m coming inside her. And god-fucking-damn, it feels so good.

Once I deposit my whole baby-making load deep inside her, I pull out and spin her around. What a perfect little fucktoy she is. I hoist her up now on the bank of sinks and drop down between her legs. My cum is spilling from her pussy already. And I’m not gonna stand for that.

I position one of her hands to help her find her balance. She kicks her stilettos off and her heels go automatically to my shoulders. The smell of the two of us inside her sugar cunt is fucking intoxicating. The sweetest smell in the world.

I take her left hand and position it right at her opening, place it strategically to give myself room for what I’m planning to do. “Keep that cum inside you, sweet girl. You hear me?” I ask, and then get to work on her clit.

She keeps her pussy half shaved now. I love her little curls but she loves having things a bit bare as well which works for me. More to kiss, more to taste. Best of both worlds.

She groans out a growl of *yes*, digging her heels hard into me. “Oh my *God*.”

I pull back from her folds, wiping my mouth on her inner thigh. She tastes like heaven itself. “I need you to keep all that cum inside you for as long as you can, no matter how hard I make you come. Think you can do that for me, baby?”

“Yes, Davis,” she says, eyes wide and sincere. “Anything you want.”

I get back to work, closing my eyes and getting lost in the ripples and waves of her pink slit. As I work her closer to orgasm, I feel her hand start to shift away from her tight little hole, so I use my hand to keep it there, putting pressure on her fingers with mine, so she’s halfway fingering herself as I suck her clit.

I dive in deep, drawing that pleasure out of her. I roll her clit between my teeth, working her up, and up, and up, and...

A knock at the door breaks my focus, but she just bursts out with a laugh. “I’m almost there,” she whispers to me. “Please, please don’t stop.”

Never. Never fucking ever. I don’t care if this whole fucking place collapses around us. She’s the only thing that matters. Now. And always.

I eat her out like it’s the last thing I’ll ever do. Her thighs clench tight around my head, and for a moment, all I know is her. Her smell. Her warmth. Her body. Her soul.

And like that, on my knees before her, I feel her come hard and strong.

She’s all I’ve ever needed. Her and me. Forever.

chapter fourteen

Davis

“OH MY GOD! I thought he was dead!” Marin’s eyes are popping out of her sockets as Stevie chuckles, pausing the action.

“You’ve seriously never seen this before?”

“I read part of the book. I thought—”

“I can’t believe you’ve never seen *The Lord of the Rings*.”

She swats his shoulder as I pull her harder into my arms. “What part of *ultra religious household* don’t you understand? All this was considered demonic. I had to read the dang book at school, I never would have been allowed it at home.”

“If it’s any consolation, I’ve never seen it either,” Paul says from the other side of Stevie.

“Really?” Stevie says, sounding incredulous. “You don’t have to humor her, you know.”

“No, I’m not. I never had any interest in the whole fantasy thing.”

“That’s it. Get out.” Stevie raises his one good hand and points at the door. “I never want to see you around here again.”

For a second, he sounds serious.

Then he snorts a laugh and soon all four of us are creasing up.

Paul is Stevie's physio, and he's good at his job. What with the experimental treatment that has Stevie able to use both his arms for a short while, and Paul's relentless but kind encouragement, Stevie is walking again. Don't get me wrong, he's never going to be running marathons, but if he can get around on a crutch for a short distance when he needs to, it will give him that little bit of extra independence.

Most importantly, he says the pain is becoming more manageable, and that's got to be a blessing.

"Philistines," Stevie mutters, grabbing the remote again and starting the film.

"If elves and dwarfs had a battle, which one would win?" Marin says, turning to me. "You know about war, right?"

I chuckle. She's seen me reading books about warfare and thinks I'm some kind of expert.

But when it comes to elves and dwarfs, how the fuck should I know?

I shrug. "Dwarfs are very dangerous over short distances," I tell her, remembering the quote from earlier in the film.

She chuckles. "Sure, but elves are immortal."

Stevie huffs. "They're not immortal like that."

"Elrond said he was there, like, two thousand years ago," Marin points out.

"They don't die of old age. They can still be killed."

"Okay, so dwarfs or elves? Which would win, smarty pants?"

"I don't know. I don't think they'd go to war against each other."

I kiss the top of her head as she growls at my brother's infuriating reply. "Baby, can you help me with something a second?"

She shakes her head. "No. I'm watching this—"

My fingers are under her chin, and I force her to turn my way and meet my eyes. And she falls silent, staring at me, her pupils dilating.

“Oh...”

I nod, taking the remote from my brother and pressing pause without looking.

“Guys, mind if we just take a break for a few minutes? There’s... something I need to discuss with Davis.”

“It’s going to take more than a few minutes,” I tell her as I stand, taking her hands and pulling her up.

“That’s okay,” Stevie says. “Take your time. We’ll just...” He glances at Paul. “Take your time.”

I pull Marin along behind me and through to the kitchen, and press her up against the counter, leaning in. I need her, and when I reach between her legs, it’s obvious she needs me too.

Wordlessly, I pull her little panties aside and press my fingers into her dripping cunt, her breath turning to a gasp as I lift her up. She leans forward, taking my lips with hers as her ass slides onto the countertop, her legs spreading wide, arms snaking around my neck.

“What’d you want my help with, Davis?” She grins and mewls, arching her head back, exposing her throat. I dot kisses along it and dig my teeth into the soft flesh, hearing her moan as her fingers dig into my shoulders.

“It must be a few hours since the last time you came on my hand.”

She nods. “Uh huh, you forgetting what it tastes like?”

I draw a deep breath, smelling her scent on the air, and shake my head, leaning in and taking her earlobe into my mouth. “Never. But that doesn’t mean I don’t want another hit.”

My fingers move inside her, forward, back, forward, back, making her breath come in shudders and starts as she matches the rhythm of her breathing to the movement of my hand. She’s noisy, but I don’t care. This is my house, and if she

wants to scream for the whole damn mountain to hear I'll be so proud.

"I love you," she says. "I love you so much."

"I love you too, baby. More than you'll ever know. If I live to a hundred, it won't be enough time to show you how much you mean to me. Now be a good little girl and cum on my hand. I want to taste that fucking nectar you produce."

She rocks back and forth, which is about all she can do sat where she is, but I don't care. I speed my fingers, hooking them inside her to hit her G-spot, smiling at the memory of the first time I told her what it was. She cries out, shoving her face into my shoulder to keep the noise from disturbing my brother and his guest.

But there's no sound from the living room, and I guess they're busy discussing the movie or who would win a game of chess between Galadriel and Gandalf or something.

"You're close, baby, I can feel it." I encourage her, rubbing her clit with my thumb as I stroke deep inside her. "Let it go. Come for me. Make Daddy proud."

That word is still new, but I like it. I like that she chose it for me and I like the idea of taking care of her. Of taking care of all my precious ones.

"Daddy..." she whispers, then I feel her tense up and release.

She soaks my hand, letting it all go as she mumbles relieved sounds into my shoulder, her body quivering until I pull my fingers out. Then I bring my hand to my face, and while she watches I lick each finger clean.

"Fucking delicious," I tell her. "If I could survive on nothing but this I'd be a happy man."

She giggles, then pulls my hand to herself and licks away some of her release, moaning before I lean her into me and steal a long, satisfying kiss.

"We should get back," she says, nodding toward the living room.

I nod. “Let’s see what happens in the rest of the film, shall we?”

She giggles as I lift her down from the counter, then I take her arm with mine and lead her through.

When we round the corner, about to step into the living room, both of us freeze.

There, on the couch, Paul and my brother are in each other’s arms on the sofa. And the way they’re breathing, I’m guessing this particular physio session isn’t exactly by the books.

Marin turns to me and grins, then we both back away.

“Now I’ll never find out what happens at the end of that dang film,” she whispers with mock annoyance.

“Are you kidding? Baby, Stevie will watch that with you all day every day if we let him. I think we can give them this one.”

“And us? What are we going to do for the rest of the evening, huh?”

I grin, sweeping her up into my arms as I turn toward the stairs. “I can think of a few ways to pass the time, Little Red.”

chapter **fifteen**

Marin

10 YEARS *Later*

Applause joins the soft background sound of the nature. My cheeks hurt from smiling so much as I watch Janie bring the cake. Janie, Stevie, my grandpa, Margaret and little Steven are all gathered around the table.

Davis wraps his arms around me from behind and I lean into his strong body. I look around me. We're exactly where everything started ten years ago. In the cabin. Only this time, we're surrounded with love and joy.

"Make a wish, Mommy!" Margaret, my gorgeous daughter, interrupts my thoughts.

I nod. "I wish to spend the rest of my life in your arms," I whisper, only for Davis to hear.

"Happy tenth anniversary, baby girl," Davis whispers into my ear, biting my earlobe. "Let's cut the cake and send everyone home so I can have you all to myself."

The soft words cause me to shiver with desire.

"Oh, Jesus," Grandpa murmurs when he notices the photo on the cake.

It's me. From one of the modeling gigs I did after my second pregnancy. It's one of the daring ones, with a mom

tummy, boobs and c-section scar. A woman's body through and through. I look hot in a black lace babydoll, looking into camera while straddling Davis' lap.

I didn't think modeling would be my calling but Davis made me feel so good about me, it all fell into place naturally. When I was younger, it was my friends that pushed the modeling always telling me how beautiful I was, tall, thin... perfect for that industry. I do feel lucky that I've got what other people consider physical beauty and I don't struggle with my weight, but I'm just me. I have my flaws and insecurities like everyone.

I do a very rare shoot these days but it's been fun and Davis goes with me to every show and shoot, no questions.

I finished high school with some tutors, then took some courses at the local college but being a mom was really where my heart wanted to be.

The year after we married, Davis asked me if I ever wanted to try to find my biological father. I thought about it for a few months, then decided yes. Grandpa had revealed that my mother had only told him a first name and that he was a cowboy passing through town with the rodeo.

Well, Davis has some mad skills when it comes to research and giving me what I want because after a month, he had a name, phone number, address, email and lifetime rodeo stats, bank account and credit report. He wanted to pay someone to get his medical records but I said maybe we should meet him first and he would offer up any information that might be important.

He was shocked at first as I can imagine. He didn't know I existed. He's a good man, living in Arizona with his wife and two grown children. After some phone calls and lots of emails and texts, we met for dinner at his ranch in Phoenix and it felt like my mom was right here with us.

As time went on, we developed a nice friendship. I don't call him dad, but he's been there for me ever since I contacted him. His wife and my half-brothers are all part of our extended family and now I know where my love of horses comes from.

“Franklin,” Davis warns Grandpa, and I laugh when my grandpa lifts his hands in surrender.

It’s still a miracle to see him this relaxed and carefree. If it was 10 years ago, he would probably think of me as the devil incarnated. Not now, though.

“I told you marijuana is way better than the tobacco business,” Stevie says. “Look at old Franklin, finally seeing the fun in life.”

Stevie Ray is right. Stevie Ray convincing my grandpa to change profession was one of the best things to fix my relationship with the man who raised me. And together, they’ve done a lot to help people in chronic pain and with spinal cord injuries. And my gorgeous husband has also helped them. They started a family business of sorts. Davis, Stevie, Paul and my grandpa. Such a weird combination, but it seems to work. Grandpa still has Jesus on his dashboard, but life and time has softened him. He has finally seen the wrongness of his ways. Or possibly it’s the THC. But either way, I’ll take it.

Everything in my life seems to work as I look at the people I’m surrounded by, and the life I’m living with the man I love.



A wolf howls in the distance, and the kids squeal with delighted fear from inside our blanket fort as I close The Hobbit book I’ve been reading to them over the last month. I leave out the really scary parts but it’s a timeless story and I hope they grow to love a good adventure as much as I do.

Davis puts the final touches on our cozy little castle—one final comforter, pulled tight over couch cushions set up vertically—and crawls in with us looking like a giant among the Hobbits. Little Steven and Margaret smooch between us.

“Daddy. Will you protect us?” Margaret, now nine years old, asks with a hint of worry. She’s old enough to have a curious and active mind, yet still struggles to make sense of everything. With her dad’s eyes and my hair, she’s apple-pie

sweet right down to her core. Steven, at the age six, is a spitting image of me, but full of mischief just like his Uncle Stevie Ray.

I glance at Davis, teasing him with the soft lilt in my voice. “Will you, *Daddy*? Will you protect us?”

His eyes, intense and hungry, meet mine in the dim light. The cabin is dark, just like it was that first night I met him. It’s now repainted and renovated, though. Fresh and new. But still, being here reminds me of that night. When everything changed for me forever.

“Of course, I will,” Davis responds, gruffly. “Daddy will always protect you. *All* of you.”

God. From the first day to this, nobody and nothing makes me feel so full of love and desire as him.

Margaret lets out a sleepy yawn. “You promise, Daddy?”

“Promise, Sunshine,” he says, giving her a kiss on the forehead. “Now, go to sleep. Rest up. We’re chopping firewood tomorrow and I need you to be ready.”

“Can I swing the axe?” Steven asks for what feels like the seven-hundredth time today, and I bubble out with a giggle.

“Go to bed, stinker. Close your eyes,” I say, giving him a little tickle on his still-chubby tummy. “Count your sheep.”

“I want to count wolves,” Stevie says, sounding sleepy now, too.

“Then count wolves,” Davis says, sternly. “But you heard your mother. Go to sleep.”

They both shut their eyes, pretending to be asleep. Like two little terrible actors playing dead in a school play. Davis gets up on one shoulder, watching me over the two of them. Eyes connected. Souls connected. Hearts connected. As one.

“I love you,” he mouths to me.

“I love you, too,” I whisper back.

The wolves howl again, getting closer now. I hear claws nearby, but now I’m not afraid. Not with Davis here. Never.

“I have something for you, gorgeous,” Davis says, keeping his voice low so as not to wake the kids.

I roll over as best I can, wedged in between cushions and blankets and everything. “We said no gifts.”

He lifts an eyebrow at me. “You said no gifts. But Daddy decides for himself.”

The way he says it makes me blush instantly. We are always evolving, changing, getting kinkier and closer and hotter. We still make love like it’s the very first time. Every time. Enough passion to light the world on fire.

He slips his hand into the pocket of his plaid flannel, lumberjack green. And hooked over his thick, strong finger comes a gold chain with diamond letters. One for each of the kids, and two gold horses. “Happy tenth anniversary to the love of my life. The center of my universe. The only pure thing in the world.”

“I love it. Even if you broke the rules. You want to go for a ride in the morning?” I ask, already itching to get into the saddle and take a ride to where everything started. I love the trails and I’ve become quite the horsewoman and riding has become my church.

“You know by now, there isn’t a single kind of ride I don’t want to take with you baby.”

“My smooth-talking mountain man.”

“That’s me. Forever baby. Forever.”

Want more Daddy time?

[Grab it here!](#)



try this mountain man

MOUNTAIN MAN'S KITTEN BLURB

For three years I hid in the shadows.

Which is no easy task when you have to duck to get through doorways and Dwayne Johnson would need to bulk up to give me a run for my money.

I could take on a tank and have it turning tail and calling for mama. Me, Miller 'The Grip' Graham, is terrified of one thing and her name is Katarina - my kitten - Harcourt. She's my everything with sapphire eyes, slow voluptuous curves and a smile that would make the devil reform.

Trouble is, I can't seem to get a word out when I'm around her. But today is my day. I've just won the log toss at the local Lumberjack Jamboree and I'm riding high. My dick is hard and it's go time.

The minute I gather my courage, stomp over to claim what is mine, she hands me something that nearly tears my world apart.

Author's Note: This mountain man has met his match. When the object of his obsession hands him a tiny bundle of furry fury, he's in way over his head. He needed her before, but who knew a tiny kitten could bring this hulk to his knees. She's taming the tiny beast and melting the heart of another. A happily ever after from the top of the mountain—where they can both see forever.

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about dani

Dani Wyatt used to feel bad about having such dirty thoughts. Luckily, one day, she decided to start writing them down. Her ultra-obsessed, alpha heroes have a wicked possessive streak and an insatiable libido. Her heroines are intelligent, quirky, and worry about having too much muffin top. So, if you like your insta-love over the top, super-hot, and always a happily ever after, you're in the right place.

She's fighting middle age like a warrior and lives an average life battling gravity. When she's not writing, she is probably laughing about some irony (like the fact that A-1 Steak Sauce is vegan), reading, riding her horse, or looking cross-eyed at some piece of technology sent to ruin her day.

Thank you.

I have so many amazing people I've met since I started putting
my

naughty thoughts on the page. To some of the first fans who
supported me, the bloggers,

fellow authors who have been more than generous with their
time and opinions, as well as the other professionals that

put up with my particular kind of crazy, thank you.

...you guys remind me every day that when we support each
other, everyone wins.

xoxoxo