

A full-page photograph of a muscular man with a beard and extensive tattoos on his arms. He is wearing a white tank top. The text '15.0 DADDY' is printed on the tank top in a large, stylized font. The numbers '15.0' are in a bright pink color, and the word 'DADDY' is in a gradient of orange and red. The man is looking off to the side with a serious expression.

# 15.0 DADDY

BLUE COLLAR DADDIES BOOK ONE

SARAH BLAKE

# **i.s.o daddy**

Blue Collar Daddies

Book One

**sarah blake**

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# one

. . .

IN SEARCH OF DADDY.

**A**bbie giggled to herself as she typed the words. She couldn't believe she was doing something as wild and reckless as this, but she couldn't turn back now.

21, F, VA.

NEW TO THE LIFESTYLE AND LOOKING  
FOR A DADDY TO SHOW ME THE ROPES.

Oh, she'd definitely like a Daddy to show her the ropes...  
then tie her up with them.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A LITTLE WITH A  
BIG ATTITUDE, MESSAGE ME.

Yeah, she thought that was a great line, too. But did it send the wrong message? She wasn't a brat. Okay, maybe she was. But only a tiny little bit. Nothing a well-seasoned Daddy couldn't handle.

Her tongue poked out between her lips as she stared at the blinking bar mocking her on the screen. What else could she say? That she loved long walks on the beach? Sunset was her favorite time of day? She was a Sagittarius?

Ugh.

She scrubbed her hands over her face. This shouldn't be so hard. It was just a silly little ad in the personals section of

Greg's list. It wasn't like she was writing anything important. Just an advertisement looking for a man who'll hopefully change her life forever.

No pressure or anything.

She rewrote the words and stared at them. She had to admit it was a great freaking line. So clever and hilarious. Any Daddy who saw it would immediately think she was the Little for them. Then they would fight to the death over her, and she'd claim the victor as her Daddy forever and ever, Amen.

She didn't give herself any more time to think as she pressed the post button.

There.

It was out there in the world.

And now, all she had to do was wait.



A BELL CHIMED, AND JETT LET OUT A LOW GROAN AS HE pulled his head out from under the hood of the car he'd been working on. Wiping his hands on the rag slung over his shoulder, the black grease staining the already filthy fabric, he turned toward the office. From his spot in the garage, he couldn't clearly see who'd come in. Despite the late hour, he assumed it was a customer.

Using the back of his hand, he brushed it over his sweaty forehead, knowing he smeared grease across his skin. But whoever it was shouldn't give a shit about it. They were walking into a mechanics shop. They should expect their mechanic to be disgusting and covered in black oil.

If they weren't filthy, they were just a terrible mechanic.

Stomping across the bay, he shoved the office door open, letting it slam shut behind him. He skirted around an open filing cabinet and headed for the front counter. He needed to remind Livy to close them or someone could get hurt. Likely her.

A man in a suit and a pissed off expression glared at him from across the counter, and he sighed, barely refraining from pinching between his eyes. He could feel a headache forming there, and it wasn't from a long day working. It was definitely situational.

"I need my car fixed," the man said. Jett's brows rose at the tone. Entitled little prick, wasn't he?

He was much shorter than Jett, but then again, most people were. Even if he tried to make himself smaller, he still towered over everyone. And his broad shoulders, and solid body didn't help at making him look any less intimidating.

Jett's gaze flitted over the man again. His suit was pressed, but the pants were slightly wrinkled, likely from sitting all day. With weirdly smooth and pale skin, he looked like he never saw the sun. There wasn't a premature wrinkle in sight.

Shaking himself, Jett leaned against the counter. "What's the problem?" he asked, and the man huffed out a breath, looking so put out at the question. But how could Jett help him if he didn't know the problem?

"It's making a noise," the other man snapped.

"Cars make a lot of noises," Jett drawled. "Gotta be a bit more specific, bud." The man's jaw ticked, and satisfaction filled him.

He loved pissing dickheads off.

"I don't know." The man flailed his arms around, looking ridiculous. "It's a loud clunking sound. If I knew the problem, do you think I'd be here?" He glared at Jett, a vein in his neck throbbing. "And don't call me *bud*."

Even if he wanted to say it, he wouldn't, but Jett *did* think the other man would be here. He certainly wasn't going to fix it himself; he'd hire someone else to do it. And why wouldn't he, when he clearly had money to throw around?

Jett didn't understand how this guy could be so clueless. Did he know nothing about cars? He firmly believed everyone should know how to fix their vehicle. If they were driving it, they should know it inside and out.

But it seemed like so many people just didn't know, and they didn't seem to want to know, either. They came in with easily fixable—and usually cheap—issues; but because they had no idea what to do or what was even wrong, they ended up paying way too much and waiting way too long to get it fixed.

He guessed he couldn't complain since it was how he made his living. But incompetence still annoyed him.

“Right,” Jett sighed. “What should I call you then?” He had a few ideas, and none of them were nice.

“Ted,” the man bit out. “Can you fix my car or not?” He scanned Jett, his lips curling in disgust. Jett snorted and turned his attention to the computer.

If this motherfucker only knew...

“Make, model, year.” Ted let out another frustrated sound at Jett's question. He took a deep breath, knowing he was close to losing his patience. Not that he had much to begin with.

“Just fix it,” Ted sneered.

“Make. Model. Year,” Jett repeated, glaring at Ted before turning his attention back to the little old computer.

“Bentley—” Jett sighed and turned his gaze to the man. Do people not read signs? “Is that a problem?”

“We don't work on Bentley here,” he said. “Take it to the dealership or a different shop.”

Ted blinked at him before his face shifted into something uglier and angrier than before. “What the fuck do you mean you don't work on Bentley? You're a mechanic. You work on all cars.”

Sure, but having to order parts for a foreign car wasn't worth the hassle or money. Especially not for a dickwad like this guy.

“I'll pay double,” he blurted. “I need it fixed by Monday.” Jett's brows rose, but it was tempting.

“I have a life. Shop's closed on weekends.”

“Triple,” he gritted out, resting his hands on the counter. Jett’s head tilted to the side as he folded his arms over his thick chest, thinking.

“Quadruple,” he challenged, mostly to see if he could get away with asking for that much. Ted’s jaw ticked, sweat beading on his brow as his face turned a light shade of red.

Probably not good.

But Jett held his stare and waited.

“Fine,” he gritted out. “Quadruple, and I expect it done by Sunday.”

“That’ll depend on what the problem is.” Jett shook his head. “Can’t promise I can get the part this weekend.”

“If I’m paying that much, I expect it to be done quickly.”

Jett sighed. He hated to admit the asshole had a point.

“I’ll figure it out.” Finally giving into the urge, he pinched between his eyes before turning back to the computer.

Ted rattled off all the information Jett needed, then handed his car keys over and headed out. He didn’t know how the other man was getting home and didn’t really care. It wasn’t his problem. But he doubted the guy was taking the bus.

Grabbing the keys from the counter, he made his way out front to drive the car into the bay to check things out. From the way the engine shook and a clunking sound came from the hood, he assumed it was the carburetor or transmission. Easy fix. Hopefully.

After popping the hood, he slid from the car. Weston let out a low whistle as he sauntered toward him. “Nice cage.” He ran his grease-stained hand along the door as Jett poked his head under the hood.

“Sonofabitch,” he breathed. “Transmission’s fucked.” Weston cringed.

“That’ll be a bitch to replace.” Jett scrubbed his hand over his face. That headache that had been a dull ache was building

in intensity now, and he took a deep breath, trying to ignore the pain.

“No way I can get it done by Sunday.”

“Sunday?” Wes let out a bark of laughter. “Absolutely fucking not. Maybe next week. The week after.” He shrugged, and Jett shook his head as he spoke.

“Asshole needs it Sunday.”

“Impossible,” Wes said, but suddenly snapped his fingers and pointed at Jett. “I have a buddy who works at the Bentley dealership. Maybe you can buy the part from him.”

“Doubt it, but check with him, will you?”

“No problem.” Wes clapped Jett on the shoulder. “Hey, me and the boys are going out for beers. You in?”

“Nah.” Jett waved dismissively. “Go on without me.” Wes eyed him warily. “Seriously, man. Y’all go.”

“What are you gonna do instead?”

Park his ass on the couch with a few beers and a shitty TV dinner while he watched the game.

“Just need a night to myself,” he easily lied.

“Every night is a night to yourself when you live alone,” Wes laughed. His grin immediately fell when he remembered why those words stung. “Shit, man. Didn’t mean it like that.”

“All good.” Jett waved again, clearing his throat.

It wasn’t Wes’ fault Mandy, Jett’s ex, decided to fuck his friend in their bed. And it wasn’t Wes’ fault he’d kicked her out before she even finished getting dressed. But that had been over a year ago and he was over it now.

Mostly.

Even if she’d moved on to someone else, someone who wasn’t the guy she’d been caught with, someone with more money and no record, he’d moved on, too. Not that he’d been with another woman since. But emotionally, he’d moved on. And he was over it, over her and her betrayal.

He'd ignored his colleague's solid advice of, "The only way to get over someone is to get under someone else." It didn't feel right to use some girl to help him get over Mandy. He wasn't a one-night stand kind of guy.

The guys cleaned up around the shop as Jett looked at the rest of the car, checking the oil, tire pressure, and wiper fluid. He drowned out their conversations, and jerked his chin at them as they left the shop one by one, to go party and do all the shit he used to do.

Before Mandy left, he would've gone with them. He'd have called her and she would've met him at the bar with her girls. They'd get shitfaced before heading home and fighting before fucking and passing out.

Every weekend.

He was too old when he used to do it, and he was damn well too old now.

When she left, it hurt. But it was the best thing that could've happened to him.

He was healthier than ever—okay, not really. He just started lifting weights again and had packed on some muscle. And he wasn't getting absolutely blitzed every weekend anymore, so that was a win. Now only a few beers sufficed, and he actually slept. His stress levels were low. Mostly.

He was fine.

Everything was fine. *More* than fine.

Everything was routine, and he didn't have any surprises anymore. He lived a simple, drama-free life.

Just the way he liked it.

## two

. . .

Abbie stared at her phone as it rang. She contemplated just ignoring it again and going back to drawing in her sketchbook, but she knew her mother would call her again. And again. And again. She'd never stop.

Ever.

She'd call until Abbie finally picked up, then she'd have to listen to her mother scold her for at least fifteen minutes, before prattling on about some mundane thing that happened at the country club this week.

Even though she knew it was coming, she sighed and answered, putting the phone on speaker.

"Abigail!" her mother screeched, and Abbie cringed at the harsh sound. "Why didn't you answer the first time I called?" This was the fifth call, but she couldn't tell her mother the truth, could she?

She carefully set Ottie, her stuffed otter, down on the couch before she pushed from where she'd been sitting on the floor to her feet, leaving her sketchbook and pencils on her light purple coffee table. Her mother had a way of ruining her creativity, and she suddenly didn't feel like drawing anymore.

She began pacing, her phone clutched in her hand. Mindlessly, her thumb slipped between her teeth and she began gnawing on the nail.

"Sorry," she muttered. "I was in the kitchen and didn't hear my phone."

*Liar.*

She'd totally heard it. She'd stared right at the screen and waited for the call to end. But every time her mother called back, a little more anxiety twisted her stomach.

"Right." She didn't sound like she believed Abbie in the least. Not that she blamed her. It wouldn't be the first time she'd ignored her mother's calls.

Abbie tugged on the bottom of her yellow hoodie as she glanced down at her leggings. The hoodie had a picture of an otter holding up a peace sign. It was her favorite, but even the cute image couldn't keep her anxiety at bay.

"Are you listening to me, Abigail?" her mother asked sharply. She tried not to remind her it was just Abbie for the millionth time, so she bit her tongue until it felt like it was about to bleed.

"Yes," she grumbled. Her mother scoffed, telling her she didn't believe her in the least. Which was fair. Abbie hadn't been listening.

"Christopher's party is this evening," her mother said.

"I remember." Abbie bounced on the balls of her feet as she stared down at the picture she'd been drawing. She'd never forget Chris' birthday. He was her best and only friend.

He'd always played middleman when they were growing up, always taking the attention off her by being the golden child. She never resented him for it. She didn't mind living in his shadow. Without it, she'd be under her parents' full scrutiny twenty-four-seven.

Even when he was off in the military, he still somehow had their attention on him. From across the world, he was able to keep them from hounding her too much. But then she'd gotten older, and her mother started to take more notice. She sunk her claws into Abbie, and she'd only gotten free a year ago.

Her mother prattled on about the details and how stressful planning the party had been. Abbie sank back to the floor, setting her phone back on the table, and stared longingly at her sketchbook and pencils.

Another time.

She could finish the picture another time.

Grabbing Ottie, she hugged him tightly to her chest, staring blankly at the phone. She could've just hung up. Her mother would've never been the wiser. It wasn't like she really wanted Abbie's opinion on anything, she just wanted someone to listen to her.

Which might've been sad, if she wasn't talking about firing half the party staff for no reason.

Turning her attention back to Ottie, she squeezed him tighter. She wished she could take him tonight. Mostly for comfort, but also because she was always so scared of someone breaking into her apartment and kidnapping him. And if they did that, she'd have to hunt the motherfudger down and end them.

Dark thoughts.

But she guessed living on the not-so-safe side of town made you into a bad-bahookie. And that's definitely what she was.

A total bad-bahookie.

"What are you wearing tonight?" Her mother's shrill voice pulled her from her thoughts and she blinked a few times, forcing herself to refocus. If Abbie had learned anything from her, it was to do the exact opposite of everything she did. And the thing Abbie worked the hardest at not replicating? Her mother's voice. It was awful.

"Hm? Oh. My green dress." She jerked her thumb over her shoulder as if her mother could see.

"Really?" her mother sighed, and Abbie's hold on Ottie tightened. "You don't have another one?"

"I like that one." She felt herself closing down.

"It's just so..." Her mother trailed off, and Abbie closed her eyes, knowing what she was about to say. "Childish." She spat the word out like an insult, and Abbie wrapped her arms tighter around herself, giving herself a much needed hug.

She didn't think it was childish. She thought it was beautiful.

It was pastel green, and the poofy skirt hit above her knee. There was a light spattering of gold over it, and the top was modest. Sure, it looked like a fake princess dress, but she loved it.

"Why don't you wear a black dress?" Abbie scrunched her nose. A black dress? That didn't scream plain and boring at all, did it?

"I like the green one."

"Abigail," she said tightly. She could picture her mother pinching between her brows like she so often did when Abbie was annoying her. "Just this once, I'd like you to not embarrass the family. Some of your father's colleagues will be there, and you can't look like you're playing dress-up. You need to look like an adult."

Thing was, she didn't much feel like an adult. Why should she try to look or act like one?

Her phone vibrated against the table, but she forced herself not to look at it. If she did, she knew she'd get too distracted and end up agreeing to whatever her mother said.

Not that she'd disagree. Her mother always got what she wanted.

She couldn't take it anymore. Her gaze shifted and she stared at her phone, wondering if it was someone responding to her Gregslist ad. She hoped so.

Now that she was living on her own, she wanted to date. She'd never been on a date before, or had a boyfriend. Actually, she'd never had a boy interested in her at all. Or a friend, really. And her neighbor didn't count.

A sharp pang of sadness settled in her tummy.

"Are you listening?" her mother cried. Abbie blinked, shaking herself as she turned her attention back to the phone call.

"What? Yeah. Of course."

“What did I say?”

“You said...” She trailed off, trying to think of something her mother would say. She had a handful of insults she cycled through. It shouldn’t be hard to figure it out.

“I told you to wear your black dress,” she snapped.

“It doesn’t fit,” Abbie lied.

There. A perfectly reasonable excuse to not wear it.

“You really should go on a diet,” her mother said disappointedly. “Anyway, I think you have an old dress in your closet here. It should fit. It’s from before you lost the weight, but I’m sure you’ve gained it all back.”

Abbie’s hands clenched into fists. She wasn’t big. She was short and her doctor said she was an average weight, maybe a bit chubby, but nothing to be worried about. But compared to her mother, she looked like a behemoth.

Her mother was tall and thin, not a single ounce of fat on her body. Except for the filler she had injected into her cheeks and lips. Was it even fat? Abbie didn’t know.

The point was, despite the softness to her belly, and the fact that her thighs touched, she liked the way she looked. And she didn’t understand why her mother made her feel so terrible about it.

It had taken her years to come to terms with her body, and to ignore her mother’s body shaming comments and projected dysmorphia. She didn’t hate her body the way her mother did—well, actually, she didn’t hate most things the way her mother did.

Which was everything.

Her mother hated everything.

“The green dress—”

“No,” her mother snapped, cutting her off. “Do something with your hair. And put on normal makeup. Nothing outrageous like you usually do. Just something pretty and soft.”

Abbie didn't think her makeup was outrageous. So what? She liked glitter, sue her. Was it a crime to glue rhinestones to her face or slather on fun-colored lipstick?

She didn't think so.

"Right," she breathed, rubbing her forehead. Her phone buzzed again, and her stomach twisted. Two notifications in a few minutes. It had to be a response to her ad. She never got any notifications.

"Nothing outrageous," she agreed. Her mother was silent for a long moment, then primly cleared her throat.

"Be there an hour early so I can approve of your outfit," she said. "And probably fix the mess." She said it under her breath, but Abbie still heard her loud and clear. Her mother hung up without a goodbye, but she didn't care.

She snatched her phone up, anticipation swirling in her belly as she opened her notifications.

*Oh my God! Responses!*

She'd decided to add a photo of herself, but covered most of her face. If anyone in her real life ever found out about her being a Little, she wouldn't have a choice but to hide forever. She'd probably have to move to a new state—no, a new country. Her mother always reminded her how much she embarrassed the family, if they knew about this part of her? She'd be disowned.

Still, excitement filled her as she unlocked her phone and went to the Gregslist app. Her thumb shook as she went to her inbox and stared at the few messages she'd gotten.

Slowly, her smile fell.

**BigEd69:**

Sexy baby. I'll be your Daddy.

She looked at his profile and grimaced. He looked older than her grandfather.

Pass.

**Bobby765:**

Feet pics. \$75

She gagged.

Definite pass.

She was open to a lot of things, but she hated feet. If she didn't need her own to walk and generally function, she'd chop them off so she'd never have to look at anyone's feet ever.

**CarGuy33:**

What kind of daddy issues do you have? Sad.

She threw her phone onto the couch, ignoring the tight lump in her throat. She didn't have daddy issues.

She just wanted someone to baby her, and take care of her. To spoil her like a little princess and protect her. She wanted someone who could discipline her when she needed it, and comfort her. And, of course, she wanted someone to fuck her when she needed to come.

And she wanted to call that person Daddy.

That wasn't such a bad thing, was it?

Maybe posting had been a mistake. A big stupid mistake. She made a lot of them, but this felt like her biggest one.

Maybe she should just take the listing down.

*But what if a Daddy responded?*

She stared up at her glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to her ceiling. She was mostly just tired of being lonely. Maybe that was the real reason she posted the listing in the first place, and why she was keeping it up.

Why was it so hard for her to make friends?

She'd been in school for three years, had been working at the museum for a year, yet, despite that, she'd made no friends.

What was wrong with her?

She didn't smell. And she didn't think she was that weird. Okay, so she had a thing for otters, and according to her mother, she liked wearing outrageous makeup. And liked glitter. No, she loved glitter.

But did that warrant no friends?

She had Chris, she reminded herself. And his best friend, Pike. He'd always been like a brother to her. And she had her neighbor, Weston. He was always really kind to her.

Even if she only spoke to him when they saw each other in the mornings when they were heading out for the day, or the off chance she needed help opening a jar or something.

She sighed.

Maybe her mother was right. Maybe she was too much, and if she was less, people might like her.

It was weird and sad and pathetic to post on Gregslist looking for a boyfriend, right? She blinked back the tears stinging her eyes.

"I'm strong and independent," she told herself, her voice wobbling. "I don't need a man or a Daddy." She held Ottie tighter to her chest. "I just need my Ottie."



JETT SLUMPED ONTO THE COUCH, HIS HAIR AND BEARD STILL wet from his shower. He took a long swig of his beer as he opened his laptop, balancing it on his thick thigh.

He still hadn't heard from Wes about his friend having the part, so he was scouring Gregslist, hoping someone was selling what he needed and wasn't a million miles away.

He turned on the game and settled in for a long night of scrolling.

He still couldn't believe he'd agreed to do this stupid fucking job. It was going to be a bitch finding what he needed,

and an even bigger bitch to get it done in basically twenty-four hours.

Maybe he should just call the asshole and tell him he'd changed his mind. That would save him a ton of trouble.

But Jett wasn't that kind of man. Once he committed to something, he didn't back out. No matter if he wanted to put his head in a pool full of piranhas, he'd still see this stupid fucking job through.

And the massive payday he was looking forward to didn't hurt to motivate him.

A part of him still didn't believe it, and he likely wouldn't believe it until the money was sitting comfortably in his bank account.

The crowd on his TV cheered, and he tore his eyes from his laptop to watch the final few moments before the touchdown. It was for the opposing team, which seemed to be the cherry on top of a weird, shitty day.

Grumbling to himself, he turned back to his old laptop as he grabbed the poor excuse of a sandwich he'd made himself for dinner and took a bite. With every listing he scrolled past, he got more annoyed. It seemed everyone had every part he didn't need. Of course.

#### IN SEARCH OF A DADDY.

He nearly missed it, but once his brain registered he'd really just read that, he scrolled back up.

What the fuck?

He didn't have time to start down the Gregslist personals rabbit hole, but he had to admit he was intrigued as fuck.

**LittleAbbie:**

21, F, VA. New to the lifestyle and looking for a Daddy to show me the ropes. If you're looking for a Little with a big attitude, message me.

Attached was a mostly obscured photo of a dark-haired girl. She'd stuck a glittery digital sticker over her face, hiding her identity.

At least she was smart enough to do that.

He ran his hand over his head as he reread the listing. Was this girl trying to get herself killed? Her posting this was a serial killer's wet dream.

A pang of anxiety twisted his gut. He shouldn't feel anything for a literal stranger on the internet. He should let this naïve little girl learn a lesson about posting shit like this.

But if she got hurt, and he found out, he'd never forgive himself.

He knew he was no one's white knight—he was a far fucking way from that. But he couldn't sit by and let someone make a dumb fucking decision and put themselves in this amount of danger.

There was stupid. Then there was this.

He read the listing again.

Twenty-one. Shit. Nineteen years younger than him. She'd definitely think he was a creep for messaging her. But what choice did he have? Sit by and wait for the news to plaster her photo on the screen and talk about the dangers of online dating?

If this could even be considered online dating.

God, it was such a stupid, reckless thing to do.

Maybe she did need a Daddy. Or at least someone to make sure she didn't do stupid shit like this.

He didn't know why he was so annoyed about it. He knew it was irrational to feel angry over something like this, and he had less than no right to tell her what to do. But that thought didn't stop him from clicking *message* and typing out a few words to the little girl.

After Mandy, he'd learned a lot about himself. Mostly that he was a Dom—a Daddy Dom, specifically. He'd never heard

of it before. It was just something he'd stumbled upon during a late night of scrolling online, and he spent hours reading about the lifestyle.

Everything about being a Daddy resonated with him, straight to his soul.

Everything.

He'd never had a sub or a Little. He'd never played with one. He'd talked with a few in online chatrooms, but nothing serious. He'd made a couple Daddy friends, but they were just online. It wasn't like they were best friends or anything.

But he'd interacted and researched enough to know it was what he wanted. He just didn't know how to go about it.

Posting on Gregslist certainly never crossed his damn mind.

A part of him wondered if this was fate. If this girl had posted and he was having this visceral reaction to it because they were meant to be or some woo-woo shit. But another part of him worried he was just excited to see another person like him outside of a DDlg chatroom.

He knew a girl like this wouldn't want him. As soon as he told her his past, she'd run for the hills. As she fucking should.

And if she was always as reckless as this, he'd never survive being her Daddy. Her ass likely wouldn't survive it, either. He couldn't be with someone who cared so little about their own safety.

But isn't that the point of having a Daddy? So she doesn't have to worry about that shit anymore? So he can take care of everything for her?

He shook his head. As much as he wanted control and to take care of everything, he still needed his girl to have a bit of self preservation. And this listing was the exact opposite of that.

He looked at the photo again. From what he could see, she looked cute. Pretty dark hair parted in pigtails, golden tan skin,

a cute, frilly top. It looked like she had glitter on her cheeks, so maybe she'd been at a party.

Shit.

She was fucking cute.

Someone as cute and innocent as her needed a Daddy. And he could be that, couldn't he?

No, he needed to stop. He couldn't seriously be considering this. Not that there was anything to even consider. It was just a silly little girl pulling at his Daddy side. That was it. It didn't mean a damn thing.

He needed to just keep scrolling until he found the part he needed for that stupid fucking car. He needed to forget about this girl and her listing altogether. He needed to put his laptop away, finish the game, and eat his stupid sandwich.

Yet, instead of doing any of that, he finished typing out a message and hit *send*.

# three

. . .

Abbie stood with her back against the wall, a champagne flute in her hand, and a scowl on her face. She'd been standing in this exact spot for the last hour and she was tired and ready to go home.

This wasn't the first, and likely not the last, stuffy party of her mother's she'd attended. Yeah, it was her brother's birthday party, but it was *definitely* for her mother.

She took a sip of the bubbly liquid, holding in a gag at the taste. She hated the stuff, not that she'd complain. Her mother would scold her and remind her how much a bottle of it cost.

Sighing, she looked around the party. She couldn't wait to go home and slip into her otter jammies before stocking up on enough snacks to feed an army. Abbie wasn't planning on leaving her pink velvet couch for the entire weekend. Well, maybe she'd move to her otter-shaped bean bag chair. Otherwise, her butt was staying planted on the couch with her favorite show on.

A man bumped into her, and her champagne sloshed over the edge of her glass, soaking her black dress. It was her mother's dress and she knew if she returned it in less than perfect condition, she'd never hear the end of it.

"Shoot." She held her arms out as she looked down, inspecting the damage. He grunted as he stepped back.

"You should pay—" She glanced up at him and his words stopped.

He was an older man, maybe in his fifties, dark hair with grey peppered throughout. His skin was the obvious orange of a bad fake tan, and his face looked weirdly perfect, like he'd gotten a bit too much Botox.

"Are you okay?" he asked. Abbie pushed her brows together, confused. His tone, his face, his posture—everything had shifted from tense and angry, to relaxed. Jovial.

"Fine." She gave him a tight-lipped smile. His eyes raked over her, and she had to force herself not to squirm.

"You seemed to spill on your dress." He pointed at the damp spot on her chest. Instinctively, she rested her hand over the spot. His gaze was riveted to it, and she felt goosebumps ripple over her skin at his attention.

"Guess so," she laughed nervously. Her body felt too hot and too cold. She just wanted to get away from this guy, but he didn't seem to notice her discomfort. And if he did, she didn't think he cared.

He held his hand out and she stared at it. "Ted," he said. "Ted Bosco." She hesitated before sliding her smaller hand into his. It was weirdly smooth—it might've been smoother than hers. It was like touching a baby.

She hated it.

"Abbie," she said as she tried to pull her hand away. His grip barely tightened before he let go.

"Abbie..." He trailed off, giving her an expectant look. "Abbie what?"

"Little," she bit out. "I'm Christopher's sister." His eyes widened, the only sign of his shock.

"Damn." He scanned her again, slower. This time, his gaze felt slimier and she shifted on her feet. "You're way too beautiful to be related to Chris." He chuckled, but she couldn't force a laugh out.

"I—um." She didn't know what to say. It was weird to accept a compliment that also insulted her brother. He stared at her intently, waiting. "I need to find my mother."

“Wait.” He grabbed her wrist too tightly, forcing her to stop. The half-empty glass shook in her hand. From annoyance, or anger, or fear, she didn’t know. “Can’t we talk a bit longer? I’d love to get to know you.” He dropped his voice in a way that made her want to gag.

“I—I really need to go. My mother will be searching for me.” She hoped he didn’t know her family well enough to know it was a lie. But by the way his lips barely tipped up and his eyes sparkled with triumph, she knew he saw right through her.

“I think she was somewhere in the sitting room,” he said, waving his hand dismissively in that general direction.

Men and women in fancy clothes sashayed by, barely giving them a second glance. No one cared that this man was grabbing her, that his grip was too tight. He was hurting her, but she didn’t want to make a scene so she swallowed her pain.

Soft music and the strong scent of flowers floated through the air. The chatter was a dull roar in her ears as she stared up at Ted.

“I know,” she lied, her voice breathless. “She’ll be looking for me.”

“Will she?” he asked quietly. She swallowed thickly, her heart hammering in her chest. He stepped closer, and she stumbled back. He kept moving toward her until her back pressed against the wall.

Ted hovered over her, his hand still on her wrist, the other clutching his glass tightly. His cologne was suffocating, and she tried to hold her breath. He was crowding her, making it impossible to think.

It wasn’t a good feeling.

His hand moved from her wrist to her narrow waist and she stiffened. If she screamed, would anyone care?

“How have I never noticed you before?” he murmured, his fingers digging into her side. She didn’t think he wanted an

answer to his question, so she kept her lips clamped tightly shut. Not that she would've been able to talk, anyway.

She couldn't look away from his piercing blue gaze. All the air in her lungs disappeared as he readjusted his grip.

She'd never been cornered like this from a man before, and she wasn't loving it. She'd always assumed she'd melt under this type of dominance, that she'd combust at the way a man could take charge of her. Control her.

But now that it was happening, it just made her feel panicky. She wanted an out. She just wanted to run away, grab Ottie, and hide under her bed.

“Is everything okay over there?”

She let out a relieved breath as she turned her attention toward Pike, her brother's best friend. His jaw, peppered with dark stubble, tensed as he flicked his green eyes between her and Ted. She gave Pike a pleading look, hoping he could read her.

“Fine,” Ted said tightly. “My date and I were just chatting.” Pike's brows lifted.

“Date?” He turned his attention to Abbie, and she subtly shook her head.

No, Ted wasn't her date. And yes, she wanted to throw up just thinking about it.

“Funny,” Pike mused, folding his arms over his massive chest. He stepped his feet apart, and to anyone else, that stance would've looked like him getting comfortable. But to her, knowing he was an ex-Marine and current martial arts instructor, she could see the panther ready to pounce. “I don't recall Abbie having a date.” His dark brows lifted as he stared at Ted, waiting for a reasonable excuse.

“She does,” Ted sneered. “If you'll excuse us—”

“I won't.” Pike stepped forward. “Come on, guy. Let's not make a scene. I'd hate to knock you on your ass in front of all these fancy people.” His tone was light, almost playful, but Abbie could see the promise of death in his eyes.

Ted pushed away from her and straightened to his full height. She nearly laughed. He looked so ridiculous next to massive Pike. Next to him, Ted looked like a wet noodle.

Where Pike was broad and muscular, his suit jacket looking like it was about to bust at any moment, Ted was all lanky, thin limbs. It was ridiculous to think he could ever take Pike in a fight. It was even more ridiculous to watch Ted buck up to him like he even stood a chance.

“Abbie.” Pike held his hand out, his gaze still on Ted’s, as she slid her hand into his. He didn’t give her time to think as he yanked her behind him.

By now, a few people had sensed the tension and were watching the show unfold. She wanted to die. If her mother caught wind there was a fight about to happen, she’d lose it. And if she found out the fight was about her, her mother would send her into an early grave.

She needed to make the situation better. She needed them to both just calm down.

“I feel sick,” she blurted, and both men turned their attention to her. Ted’s lip curled in disgust as he stared at her.

“Sick?” he repeated. “Are you contagious?”

“Probably.” He shuffled a step back, his eyes flicking between her and Pike. He just grinned as Ted moved another step away.

“I can’t get sick,” he said, shaking his head. She rested her hand on her tummy, widening her eyes, hoping she looked like she was about to puke. She must’ve, because Ted hurried away, forgetting about Pike and his threats.

As soon as Ted was out of earshot, she dropped her hand, her shoulders dropping with it. A long breath left her as she glanced at Pike, giving him a grateful look.

“Thanks,” she breathed. “He was a total creep.” Pike nodded, looking after where Ted had disappeared.

“Should follow him, teach him a lesson,” he grunted. She rested her hand on his strong forearm, and his gaze snapped

down to her.

“Thanks, Pike.”

He loosened a long breath, his full lips tipping up in the corner. “Of course, kiddo.” She scrunched her nose at him.

“I’m not a kid,” she mumbled, and his grin widened.

“Oh, you’ll always be a kid to me.” Patting her hand, he guided her closer and led her through the party toward the kitchen. She chewed on her lower lip as she glanced around, worried her mother would pop up out of nowhere.

“I should—”

“Relax,” Pike said softly. “Let me get you a fresh drink, then you can go back to standing in the corner looking ready to bolt at any second.” Her face flushed as she nodded.

“It was that obvious?” she whispered. Shoot. Her mother would *not* be happy with her. Pike sent her a sympathetic look as he shoved the swinging kitchen door open.

Servers rushed past them as they refilled trays with hors d’oeuvres before returning to the party. Abbie was sure they were under strict orders to have a constant flow of food, and if they failed they’d have to deal with her mother’s wrath.

“Just to me,” Pike said as he gently shoved her onto a barstool. She felt guilty for taking up space and making the server’s lives harder, but they didn’t seem to notice. “But I know you better than most.”

“Think Mom noticed?”

His jaw tensed, and she knew the truth was yes, she’d noticed. And Abbie would probably hear about it in the future. Forever.

Before he could answer, the door swung open and Chris stormed in, pausing when his gaze met hers. “What’s wrong?” he demanded, stomping forward. He shot Pike an accusatory look, but she jumped to her feet, trying to soothe her brother.

She wobbled in the heels her mother made her wear, and she would’ve toppled if it weren’t for Chris grabbing her and

setting her back on the stool. “Stay,” he growled, pointing at her.

Rolling her eyes, she glanced at Pike, finding him grabbing water and food for her. “Why are you in here?” she asked, looking back at Chris.

He sighed, running his fingers through his short hair. “I’m hiding.” Her brows rose in silent question as Pike set her plate in front of her. “This isn’t a birthday party.”

Pike snorted. “No shit.”

“What is it?” she asked, blinking at them. “It looked like a birthday party. Wait, is it because there was no cake? Mom never has cake at these things. I’ll take you out for cake tomorrow, though. Don’t you worry, bro. I’ve got your back.”

She patted his arm, and his shoulders fell, a small smile gracing his face. “Thanks, squirt.” She scrunched her nose at him.

“Hate that nickname,” she mumbled, but he just laughed, sliding onto the stool beside hers as Pike took the one on her other side. “So, what’s going on?” She grabbed a crab puff and shoved it in her mouth.

“It’s a mating party,” he muttered, and she choked. Pike’s hand landed on her back, trying to help her dislodge the puff.

Chris shoved her water bottle in her hand, forcing her to drink. Finally, it went down and she took a giant breath, wiping roughly at her watery eyes. “A what?” she cried, and Chris winced.

“It’s a bunch of single women,” he explained. “Mom’s trying to find me a wife.” He shuddered dramatically, but she didn’t smile.

“She’s what? Why would she do that?” She glanced at Pike, finding him staring at the marble countertop. “She can’t do this. Did she even talk to you about it first?” Chris gave her a look, and she sighed, already knowing the answer. “It’s not right.”

“Yeah, well, she’s ready for grandkids,” he groaned, and Abbie’s stomach flipped.

“But are you even ready for kids? For marriage? A girlfriend?”

“Definitely not.” He grabbed a crostini off her plate and took a bite. “Don’t worry about me, squirt. I’ll be fine.” He studied her for a long moment. “What about you?”

“What?”

She felt Pike shift uncomfortably next to her, but she didn’t look at him. She was too busy gaping at her brother.

“You ready for kids? For a husband?”

Her head fell back as she laughed so hard she snorted. She laughed harder, and tears streamed from her eyes. It took her a few moments to realize she was the only one laughing.

“Uh, no,” she giggled. “Could you imagine that? Me, a wife? Someone’s girlfriend?” She shook her head, her smile fading as she stared down at her lap.

“Why’s that such a funny thing to think?” Chris asked softly.

“Chris, come on.” Her throat suddenly felt too tight. Why was she reacting like this? It was ridiculous.

So what if no one had ever shown her any interest ever before? That didn’t matter. She’d eventually find someone, but even if she couldn’t, it was fine. She could still have a fulfilling life without a man. Without a Daddy. But the thought made her feel queasy.

She wanted to be loved, to feel loved. She wanted the cheesy love story, and a guy so obsessed with her he blew a gasket when she wasn’t around. She wanted a fairytale with a mix of a crazy, possessive, protective man.

But things like that didn’t happen for her. She didn’t find guys like that—she didn’t find guys at all. Maybe she could settle for someone so she didn’t have to be alone anymore. So she could just finally lose her stupid virginity.

“No, you come on,” Chris snapped. “You’re a catch.”

“You are,” Pike agreed. She batted her damp eyes with her fingertips.

“Thanks, guys,” she whispered.

She contemplated telling them about the Gregslist listing but decided against it. They’d probably make her delete it and she wasn’t ready to do that yet.

Even if she thought nothing would come of it, she still wanted to wait. To see if maybe she could meet someone. Even if she met another Little, she’d be happy. A friend, a boyfriend, she didn’t care. She was just tired of being alone.

With a deep breath, she straightened her shoulders. “So,” she said, sliding her gaze to Chris. “Anyone catch your eye tonight?”

He groaned, dropping his head forward. “God, I can’t believe she did this.”

“Can’t you?” Pike muttered. “Wouldn’t be the first time she’s meddled in your life like this.” Chris grimaced, but nodded his agreement.

Their mom had tried to get the government to discharge Chris before he was deployed overseas, but, of course, that hadn’t happened. Abbie had been ten at the time, and was so upset at losing her best friend. Her mother had convinced her that if Chris left, he’d die.

Abbie had mourned him for months. Then he was allowed to come home for Christmas and he was alive and fine. That was the first time she realized her mother liked lying to get attention, and didn’t care who she hurt or upset in the process.

As long as she got what she wanted, she didn’t care about much.

“Maybe you’ll meet someone,” she said cheerily. Chris gave her a sidelong look that told her she was crazy as he ran his fingers through his hair again. “Or not.”

# four

. . .

Jett checked his messages again, just to make sure he hadn't missed one. The darkness of his cold room surrounded him as he scrolled on his phone, rereading the message he'd sent *LittleAbbie*.

Was he too much? Too stern? Too harsh? Too demanding? Probably.

He had no right to be any of those things, and he grimaced at the words.

Little girl. Take this listing down right now. What were you thinking, posting something like this? When you find your Daddy, tell him so he can redder your ass.

Maybe he should've left that last bit out.

Or maybe he should've never messaged her in the first place.

If she were smart, she'd read his message and block him. But she hadn't blocked him because he could still see her profile and the ridiculous, mocking listing. She'd had to have read it already, right? It had been hours since he sent it.

Unless she had a life and was busy on a Friday night, unlike him.

That wouldn't be so wild to believe. A girl who put herself out there like this didn't sit at home on weekends. She was out with friends, doing whatever twenty-one-year-old girls did.

He gritted his teeth together at the thought of her flouncing around town in a little dress with her cleavage showing for anyone to see. He didn't like that. Didn't like the thought of her in a skimpy little outfit for anyone but him.

Jesus, he needed to get a grip.

He'd never even talked to her before, hadn't seen her full face, yet he was obsessed.

He felt his cock stir as he scrolled back to the listing and stared at her photo. The way her top was tight across her breasts, her dark little pig tails contrasting her pink shirt.

Fuck.

He shoved his boxers down and wrapped his hand around his thick cock. He absently wondered what she looked like, how pretty she'd be on her knees with his cock in her mouth.

What kind of sweet sounds would she make? Would she let him into her throat, or stop him before he ventured too deep? Would she stare up at him with teary eyes as she gagged and struggled to fully take him?

His hand moved faster, his neck straining as he stared at her.

Would she swallow every drop he gave her? Or would she slide her soft body up his and sink his cock into her tight little pussy? Would she scream for Daddy while he fucked up into her?

He wouldn't slow down or show her any mercy. He'd watch his little girl take his big cock, her nails digging into his hard chest as she cried out, struggling to take all of him.

But she'd do it.

And he'd be so fucking proud of her.

Could he make her squirt while she rode him? What would she sound like when she came? Would she scream, or whimper, or softly cry out?

His hips bucked as he squeezed himself tighter, wishing it was this girl's little pussy instead of his fist.

He'd flip her onto her hands and knees, and slide his cock back inside her. She'd bury her face into the pillows, but he'd grip her hair and pull her head back, wanting to hear her scream for him. Wanting the whole damn neighborhood to hear her scream for him.

Maybe he'd use his thick finger to play with her asshole. Had she been taken there already, or would he be her first? He didn't know if he really cared, he just wanted to own every inch of her—own every hole.

She'd beg Daddy to let her come like his good girl. He wouldn't let her, not yet. Not until he felt that familiar tightening in his balls, the tingling at the base of his spine. He'd strum his fingers over her swollen clit as he fucked her hard and fast, not holding back.

He squeezed tighter, his back bowing as he grunted his release, picturing his cum was filling her instead of landing in thick globs on his stomach.

His chest heaved as he tried to breathe, his hand still too tight around his aching cock. He was still hard, ready to go again.

But then he blinked and realized what he just did.

*Shit.*

He shouldn't have done that. He should not have done that.

He checked his messages again, then closed the app and threw his phone on the bed beside him. This couldn't happen again. He couldn't fuck himself to her ever again.



ABBIE FUMBLER WITH HER PURSE AS SHE SEARCHED FOR HER house keys. She glared up at the burnt-out lightbulb on the wall, muttering to herself about incompetent people.

She winced.

She sounded like her mother.

Taking a deep breath, she tried to rework it in her head. Even though she'd complained several times to the apartment manager that the light needed to be replaced and nothing had happened, it wasn't a big deal. Maybe they were short staffed. Or too busy to change a silly little bulb. She could do it herself.

That was a thought.

Shaking herself, she went back to her bag, trying to find her stupid key. She really should put the thing on a key ring.

Someone stomped up the stairs, the metal railing vibrating with each step. Panic tightened her chest and she searched faster.

It was late. Like, well past midnight late. She'd wanted to leave earlier—Chris tried to convince her mother to let her leave earlier, but she wouldn't have it. Said it would look bad if Abbie left early.

So, she'd stayed until the last guest left, then stayed a bit later. Her mother had scolded her for hiding out in the kitchen and being a general embarrassment.

Though, she hadn't heard about the incident with Ted, which was a small mercy.

The footsteps grew louder, and she cursed under her breath. Shoot. She really needed to get a key ring.

The person stepped onto the landing, running into the wall as they stumbled forward. He let out a loud burp, then a hiccup. Maybe he was too drunk to notice her.

*Please be too drunk.*

She froze, squeezing her eyes shut. She had eight neighbors on this floor. A few were the creepiest, slimiest men she'd ever met. Then there was Mrs. Anderson across the hall, and Mr. Johnson beside her. And right next to Abbie's apartment was Wes, a guy close to Chris' age that was normal and kind. Not pushy, and never tried to invite her into his apartment.

He came home drunk most weekends, but he usually had a girl on his arm. It was rare he ever came home alone, so she assumed the drunk guy behind her couldn't be Wes.

But then he stumbled forward again, chuckling to himself. He brushed past her, then paused. His head flopped toward her, causing his body to go off balance.

"Abbie-Girl, that you?" he slurred, and she took a deep breath.

"Hey, Wes." She winced as she turned toward him, wishing she'd found her keys so she could've avoided this.

Even if he was a nice guy and she liked talking to him, she even asked him for help most days, she didn't feel like talking to him right now. She just wanted to take a bath and go to bed.

After listening to her mother go on and on about how much of a disappointment she was, how embarrassed she'd been that her daughter had been mingling with the help all night instead of her affluent friends...well, it'd made Abbie feel raw. Made her feel vulnerable.

"Can't find your keys?" he asked, leaning heavily on the wall beside her. She sighed as she nodded. "Need a key ring." Her lips twitched.

"No *lady friend* tonight?" she asked, mostly to tease him. His face fell, his shoulders falling with it.

"Didn't find anyone," he mumbled, but the words felt too heavy, his expression felt too sad to be true. She wouldn't pry. Even though she really wanted to, she wouldn't.

He let out a long breath and cleared his throat. He took her in again, his brows pinching together when he noticed what she was wearing.

Ugh.

She knew she should've changed before coming home. This dress cost more than their rent combined. For three months. He probably didn't know, probably didn't recognize a Chanel dress and thought it was just a regular black dress. If

he knew how much it was worth, he'd probably have an aneurysm.

"Where have you been?" he asked, his eyes narrowing. "Hot date?" She snorted and shook her head.

"Not exactly."

She would've sold her left ovary for a hot date instead of having to attend one of her mother's parties.

"It was my brother's birthday and my mom threw him a party." There. That was a perfectly normal thing. A mom throwing her son a regular birthday party.

Not a mom throwing her son a soirée to find him a future wife.

After Chris told her about that, she and Pike made a game out of counting all the women there for Chris. And jeez, there were a lot. She didn't know how she hadn't realized it immediately.

"Ah." Wes leaned his head against the wall, his eyes drooping. "Cake sounds so fucking good. You have any leftovers?" She grinned up at him.

"Me? Have cake leftovers?"

He grunted, closing his eyes completely. This wasn't like him. Was he okay?

"Silly question," he mumbled.

"Wes?"

He grunted again.

"Maybe you should go home, buddy."

Another grunt.

"Are you reverting back to your caveman ways? Because I'm fluent in caveman speak." She grunted a few times, and he cracked an eye open, his lips twitching.

Sighing, he pushed off the wall. "Let me help you find your key, then I'll go home." He fumbled with his phone before turning the flashlight on and shining it at her bag.

“Thanks,” she mumbled, her face heating as she looked into the chaotic mess that was her giant purse. She searched forever, but finally, at the bottom, she found her little gold key.

“Unlock it,” he demanded, still swaying on his feet.

“You can go—“

“Unlock,” he said firmer. She rolled her eyes, but unlocked her door. “In you go. I’ll wait for you to lock it.”

“I’m not an imbecile,” she growled, and he smiled down at her.

“Didn’t say you were. Just making sure you’re safe. Go.”

She stomped into her apartment, flipping the light on as she went. Wes winked as he reached in and wrapped his hand around the doorknob and firmly shut the door.

“Lock it,” he grumbled through the door. Sighing, she did.

“Good night to you, too!” she called. There was a pause and she almost expected him to ignore her. But then he cleared his throat and tapped on her door.

“Night, Abbie-Girl.”

She leaned against the door, shaking her head. He was too overprotective. Kind, but intense.

Since she didn’t really have anyone else to call and she didn’t want to bother Chris, Wes was usually the one who came over to help with random things. Like rehoming spiders that seemed to always end up in her bedroom. Probably because she liked to sleep with the window open. And he was always good for coffee in the mornings since she often forgot to restock when she went to the store.

Sighing, she pushed off the door and made her way through the apartment, plopping her oversized bag on the pink velvet couch before kicking off her teal sneakers.

It was quite the outfit.

After the party was over, she immediately changed out of the heels her mother forced her to wear and put on her

comfiest, favorite sneakers. They definitely didn't go with the dress, and her mother nearly had a heart attack, but thankfully Chris distracted her so Abbie could slip out undetected.

Unzipping the dress, she slipped it onto a hanger and hung it on the rack behind her door. She needed to take it to the dry cleaner's, then her mother would pick it up later.

She didn't have the extra money for it, so she hoped her mother would pay when she picked it up. But if not, she guessed she could just not buy those sketching pencils. She winced. She really needed those. Both for her class and to keep her sane.

Walking back through the apartment in just her bra and panties, she turned on the bath and let it fill with hot water. She picked up her dark brown hair as she went into the kitchen to grab her face wash. She'd washed her face in the kitchen sink that morning, and every other morning, since her bathroom sink water pressure was atrocious.

Face wash in hand, she started back toward the bathroom, but her bag caught her eye.

*Had anyone replied?*

The thought flitted through her mind so quickly she almost missed it. But then it was front and center and she couldn't think of anything else.

Her stomach was in knots as she rummaged through the bag until she found her phone at the bottom. She didn't know why her hands were shaking as she unlocked it and scrolled to the Gregslist app.

Several notifications popped up as she opened it. She scrolled, skimming the mostly pervy messages. A lot of guys saying they'd fuck her while she called them Daddy, some people telling her to go to a therapist, others offering to pay her a lot of money to be their sugar baby.

Nothing promising.

But then one message caught her eye and her breath hitched.

**JettMechanic:**

Little girl. Take this listing down right now. What were you thinking, posting something like this? When you find your Daddy, tell him so he can redde your ass.

She reread the message six times, each time the words making her giddier.

Had a guy really said that to her? Really? She probably shouldn't feel so excited about it, but she did.

And weirdly horny.

Okay, it wasn't that weird to get turned on by some alpha-Daddy telling her she needed a spanking for being naughty. But was it weird to get turned on by an alpha-Daddy who was a total stranger? She didn't even know what he looked like and he made her have this reaction.

She pressed her thighs together, her hands trembling harder as her thumbs hovered over the screen. Should she reply?

Probably not.

But maybe she should.

With her lip between her teeth, she tapped out a message, her clit throbbing with each word. She'd never said anything like this to a man before, and she couldn't believe she was doing it now.

Maybe it was because she felt a certain amount of anonymity online and she could say whatever she wanted that made her so brave. Or maybe something was just wrong with her.

She tossed her phone back in her purse and skipped to the bathroom, ready to play with her detachable shower head until she couldn't remember her own name.

# five

. . .

**J**ett stared at the message in shock. Of all the things he thought this girl would say, this wasn't it.

**LittleAbbie:**

You could be my Daddy and punish me.

He scrubbed his hand over his mouth, his cock jerking at the words. Shit. It'd only been a couple hours since he jacked off, yet he was ready for more. He'd been ready for more before he was even done coming last time. Which was absolutely fucking insane considering his age. At forty, he definitely shouldn't be hard again.

But he felt like he hadn't come in years, his cock was achingly fucking hard, and all he wanted was to sink into this girl's cunt.

His hand drifted to the bulge under his boxers, his hold tightening around his length.

No. He couldn't do that again.

But then he reread the words, and he swore the tip of his cock leaked a bit of precum.

She was a naughty, feisty thing, wasn't she? Trying to take control by taunting him. She'd never get away with something like that if she were his girl.

But could he be her Daddy?

He was still new, but he felt confident in his knowledge and abilities. He thought he could do what he needed to take care of her, to spoil her like his sweet little princess, and fuck her like his good little slut. To discipline her when she got too naughty, and still be gentle with his little girl when she wanted to play.

Anxiety twisted his stomach. No one had ever accused him of being gentle before, and he had a darkness inside him that made him reluctant to corrupt her. Mandy constantly reminded him that he was too much—too big, too rough, too intense.

Prison fucked with him, made him harder and scarier than he'd ever been before. But he'd been out for fifteen years, he shouldn't still feel the repercussions of his stay, but he did.

Did he want to soil this sweet, innocent girl?

Yeah.

Yeah, he really did.

But could he? Could he really go down this path with her knowing it couldn't lead anywhere? He didn't have anything to offer her. Maybe he could just be a dick for her to ride, a Daddy for her Little until she found her forever man. He could be the bridge between her and her future man.

Why did the thought of that make him feel sick? It didn't matter. That's all he could give her.

He'd have to be upfront and honest with her from day one, tell her he wasn't looking for anything serious. He just wanted to explore this dynamic, same as her.

Nothing serious.

No commitments.

Just some fun. Some Daddy/Little girl fun.

With a deep breath, he typed out a response. It was probably too late for her to reply, so when he got a message back immediately, he was shocked. And a little concerned.

**JettMechanic:**

Are you trying to take control? That's not how this works.

**LittleAbbie:**

How what works? You're not my Daddy. I can take control if I wanna.

His lips twitched. She had a point. He settled deeper onto his bed, the brightness of his phone screen burning his eyes.

**JettMechanic:**

You don't know me, you shouldn't ask a stranger to be your Daddy. You should know better, little girl.

His heart hammered as he waited for her reply. He scrubbed his hand over his short hair, then over his thick, dark beard. He nearly lept off the bed when she replied.

**LittleAbbie:**

So you're saying if I did know you, there would be a chance to convince you to be my Daddy?

He barked out a laugh. Little thing had a way of twisting words to get what she wanted. She might have a bit of brat in her, something he desperately wanted in a Little.

Shit.

She might be perfect for him. But just like he was a stranger to her, she was one to him, too. He had to make sure she was legit and not some greasy old guy getting off on playing with grown men.

The thought made him queasy. Well, multiple things did. He doubted she was some old perv, but he didn't doubt she'd had a million replies. Was she talking to them all like she was talking to him?

That didn't sit right.

He needed her to be his, and only his.

**JettMechanic:**

Maybe.

**LittleAbbie:**

Then it's settled. We'll get to know each other, and while we do, I'll convince you to be my Daddy. Deal?

He grinned, but his body still felt too tight. Too pent up with possessiveness. This could backfire on him. It could scare her away before he ever had a chance, but he had to know he was the only man in her life.

**JettMechanic:**

On one condition.

**LittleAbbie:**

I'm listening.

**JettMechanic:**

I'm the only one you can talk to. No other men. No other Daddies. Just me.

Like he expected, her reply wasn't immediate. She was probably contemplating blocking him and calling the cops to make sure he didn't stalk her. He wouldn't do that, though. And if she told him to fuck off, or that she wanted to keep her options open then...

Then what?

He'd have to respect it. It was her decision, her life. He had no right to demand this of her, yet he didn't take the words back.

His phone vibrated, and his stomach flipped as he opened the message.

**LittleAbbie:**

Deal. You're my one and only Daddy.

Fuck, those words shouldn't make his heart tighten the way they did. This was the first, and likely only, conversation he'd ever had with her, he couldn't get attached.

Yet he was.

He didn't want to sleep. Didn't want to eat, or go to work, or do anything besides talk to this girl.

He was so fucked.

**JettMechanic:**

Good girl. Go to bed, we'll talk tomorrow.

**JettMechanic:**

And I'm not your Daddy. Not yet. Not until we talk about this some more.

**LittleAbbie:**

What do I call you if not Daddy?

His fingers hovered over the glass screen as he hesitated.

**JettMechanic:**

My name is Jett. You can call me that for now.

**LittleAbbie:**

Your name is Jett and you're a jet mechanic?  
That's hilarious.

He grinned broader as he shook his head.

**LittleAbbie:**

I'm Abbie. It's nice to meet you Jett The Jet  
Mechanic.

**JettMechanic:**

Name's Jett, and I'm a regular car mechanic.  
Never worked on a jet before.

**LittleAbbie:**

Bummer. Your business cards would've been  
epic with that gimmick.

His head fell back as he laughed. She was fucking funny.  
And cute.

And he was so so fucked.

**JettMechanic:**

Go to bed, Abbie. I'll message you tomorrow.

**LittleAbbie:**

Can I give you my number?

That would make things easier and he could make sure she  
took the listing down, but he didn't feel right taking her  
number yet.

**JettMechanic:**

How about your email?

**LittleAbbie:**

How old are you? Who uses email?

**JettMechanic:**

Brat.

**JettMechanic:**

Give me your email and remove the listing.

**LittleAbbie:**

Jeez, someone's bossy.

**JettMechanic:**

You're the one on the hunt for a Daddy. Get used to bossy, little girl.

**LittleAbbie:**

Touché.

**LittleAbbie:**

Night night, Jett The Not Jet Mechanic. Talk 'morrow.

He took a deep breath, a lightness filling his chest he'd never felt before. She sent her email to him, and he quickly typed out a message to her before returning to their chat. He wanted to keep her up a bit longer, talk to her forever. But she was just a little girl and she needed her sleep.

**JettMechanic:**

Goodnight, Abbie.



SHE WAS ABSOLUTELY FREAKING GIDDY. SO EXCITED SHE could barely contain herself. There was no way she could fall asleep after that. After talking to him. Jett.

Sighing dreamily, she kicked her feet as she stared up at the ceiling, an excited squeal leaving her. Maybe she shouldn't get too excited yet. She didn't even know what he looked like, or how old he was. She knew where he lived, since Gregslist said he was in the same town. But he felt dominant, and honestly, what was hotter than that?

Her tummy swirled with a nervous kind of excitement as she reread their messages. She'd been so bold. She was pretty

proud of herself, being so open and forthright with him.

She should probably tone that back a bit. No one wanted a domineering sub. And that's not who she was anyway. She was just excited and was ready to get the ball rolling on this whole thing. Even if it just lasted a few conversations, it was a step in the right direction. And that direction was finding her forever Daddy.

She couldn't help but wonder if this man could be him.

Her eyes grew heavy, but she fought her sleep, wanting to hold onto this feeling forever.

Maybe Jett was her forever Daddy.

The man of all men.

Her fantasy come to life.

Wouldn't that be nice?

## six

. . .

Jett was not her fantasy come to life.  
Seriously.

What lunatic woke up at five a.m. on a Saturday?  
Psychopaths, that's who.

Her perfect dreamboat Daddy would sleep in on weekends. He'd stay in bed with her all day, lazily watching cartoons and drawing. But Jett was up bright and early, and was emailing her.

She still couldn't get over that. Actually, she couldn't get over any of it. The fact that she'd actually talked to this guy? It was insane. But the fact that he was emailing her was even more bizarre. Who still emailed people?

Well, she did. She had to for work and school. But other than that—well, okay. She emailed Chris sometimes too. But that was only because he was always so busy and she knew the only way to get ahold of him would be to email him or contact his assistant.

That's all besides the point.

Stay focused, Abbie.

The point was, she never casually emailed anyone. But she'd also never dated anyone either, online or off. So who was she to say what was normal or not?

Anyway, what woke her up in a grouchy mood this morning was her phone dinging at the ungodly hour of five. It

wasn't Jett's fault she'd left her phone on loud. He didn't know it.

And she had to admit she felt like it was a good sign he was emailing her first, just to say good morning. Her annoyance quickly wore off when she read his message.

**jettcarver83**

Good morning, LittleAbbie. Hope you had a good night and no nightmares. Do you have a stuffie to fight the monsters away?

She'd written back instantly.

**abbie1ittle**

Hi, Jett The Not Jet Mechanic. I have Ottie, my stuffed otter. He's cute, but not vicious. He's not someone you'd want to fight a monster for you. He'd try his hardest, but he's just too small and sweet.

She'd sent that over three hours ago and still hadn't gotten a response. Did she say the wrong thing? He'd asked her about Ottie, so she was honest. But was she too childish? Was he already having second thoughts?

Maybe she was too little for him. Maybe he'd been expecting her to say she didn't have a stuffie, that she was far too old to have one. Or maybe he wanted her to say something about him fighting the monsters away for her, but she hadn't thought about that until it was too late.

God, she was terrible at flirting. If that's what it even was. Was that what he was doing? She didn't know. She'd never know, not unless he flat out said it.

She repositioned her legs under her as she sat up higher, getting a better angle to shade the picture. She *should* be doing homework, but it was math and she despised math. So, instead of doing that, she was finishing up this picture she'd been working on for the last week.

And she had to admit, it might be her new favorite piece. It was of a girl standing in front of a shattered window, looking

out over a sweeping landscape as the sun set. It felt sad, but hopeful.

She was going to scan the sketch onto her computer, then project it onto a canvas and paint it. She was stupidly excited for that. It was a new technique, and she was ready to try it.

Without her permission, her eyes slid to her phone again. When would he message back? And why was he up so early? She wanted answers.

No, that's not even true. She just wanted to talk to him.

She was so screwed.

“What do you think, Ottie?” she muttered, leaning back and grabbing her stuffed otter from the couch. “Too much? Did I scare him away already?” Ottie stared back at her, his black, beady eyes reflecting the dim overhead light. “Yeah, you're right.” She let out a long, drawn out sigh. “He probably already ran for the hills. I should've known better—”

*Ding!*

Words stopped coming out of her mouth at the sound. Her eyes slowly lifted from Ottie to her phone, finding a notification on the screen.

A notification for her email.

Her hands shook as she reached for it. She didn't know what to expect. It might not even be him. It could be a newsletter from her favorite artist.

But as she unlocked her phone and went to her email inbox, there it was. A reply from jettcarver83.

**jettcarver83**

Ottie doesn't need to fight. We'll get you a new stuffie just for protection. How has your day been?

She bounced a few times, another excited squeal flying from her lips. “See that, Ottie? You were worried for nothing. And he said we're gonna get you a friend. You'd like that, wouldn't you, little buddy?” She scratched the otter's head,

then snatched him up and clutched him to her chest as she typed out a quick response.

But she hesitated. Should she message back so quickly? Would he think she was desperate? Obviously, she was if she was posting on Gregslist looking for a Daddy. But she didn't want to seem so...needy.

Before she could make up her mind about what to do, he sent another message.

**jettcarver83**

We need to talk about a few things before we go any further.

Great.

That didn't make her insanely anxious or anything.

Immediately, her insides shriveled up as she shakily typed a response.

**abbie1ittle**

Ummmm. Okay. Talk about what? Talk about our favorite colors? I've been obsessed with raspberry pink lately. Or about how Rembrandt changed the world by using paint to add texture to his paintings? Or about how it's still a conspiracy whether we actually walked on the moon or not? That happened so long ago, can you believe people still debate it? But it happens all the time. I saw a whole Reddit thread about it the other day.

She knew she was rambling. Knew everything she'd just said was likely not what he wanted to talk about. But the whole we need to talk thing was really throwing her for a loop and making her itchy.

Her breath caught as she read what he said.

**jettcarver83**

I like blue. I don't know who Rembrandt is. And yes, some guys I work with talk about the moon landing a lot. I don't understand it. What I meant was that we need to discuss us. Our dynamic. We can't go too long without figuring out what we want from each other.

She chewed on her lip. Was he upset with her? Annoyed? It seemed like a short message. Well, it was long, but his words were short. Direct. To the point. Not like her.

abbielittle

What color blue?

Stupid.

Stupid reply.

*He's going to hate me and think I'm stupid. I need to be serious.*

But it's so hard to be serious. So hard to not deflect things when they made her feel big emotions. She didn't know what to do, or what to say. What did she want from him? From their dynamic?

When she posted, she hadn't thought about it more than just not wanting to be lonely anymore. She was tired of having no one to talk to, no one to confide in, no one that cared about her.

Sure, Chris and Pike cared, but they didn't count. Not the way Jett would count. Or another guy who wanted to be her Daddy.

Her phone buzzed.

jettcarver83

There are different blues?

She smiled to herself. He didn't seem annoyed. Did he? Maybe he was. She was never good at figuring out people's feelings. It was one of the reasons why her mother was always so annoyed with her.

abbielittle

There are so many! At least a million different shades. I'll show you one day. I have a giant book with every color in it.

His reply was instant.

**jettcarver83**

I'd like that.

He'd like that? She squealed again. She was a wreck. How was she ever meant to meet him in person when this was how she reacted to just his messages? She had no idea what she was doing, and he'd probably think she was a nutjob if she had that rollercoaster of emotions in front of him.

No one wanted to deal with that.

He sent another message.

**jettcarver83**

Now, let's talk about us. Do you want to talk about it on the phone? Or is this fine?

Yikes. Hearing his voice? She wouldn't be able to contain herself. She'd be a mess.

abbielittle

Email is fine. Or carrier pigeon. Or Oattie could crawl to you with a handwritten letter. Whatever works.

She cringed. What an idiot.

**jettcarver83**

What are you looking for exactly? I can't promise you forever. I don't know if I can even promise you a relationship.

Her heart sank.

She shouldn't be, and it was stupid to expect anything more than this from a stranger, but a part of her had been expecting forever. She'd been expecting him to sweep her off her feet, just like the heroes always did in those romance novels she read.

But this wasn't a romance novel, and he wasn't her hero. He might not even be a real Daddy.

**abbielittle**

That's okay. I don't need forever. Just wanted some fun.

The lie made her shudder. She was not a fun type of girl. She wanted commitment. She wanted forever. She didn't want fun.

Okay, she did want fun. But not only that. Fun came with everything else.

**jettcarver83**

Alright, that I can give you. You said you're new to the lifestyle. How new? Have you ever had a Daddy before? Been to a club?

She took a deep breath. She couldn't very well tell him she was a virgin. The poor guy would definitely run away if he knew that.

**abbielittle**

Totally new. Never had a Daddy. Never been to a club. I've only read a few DDlg romance novels.

**jettcarver83**

They have DDlg books? I had no idea. Send me a list of your favorites and I'll read them.

She blinked at the message.

He'd read her favorite books?

Every time he lost a point, he immediately gained ten more.

**jettcarver83**

I'm fairly new too. Never had a Little or sub. Talked to a few, but nothing serious.

**abbielittle**

You still want to be my Daddy?

Abbie cringed after she sent the message. Maybe not the best thing to just say. But she had to know.

**jettcarver83**

If that's what you want, I'd like to explore it with you. It never has to become sexual if you're not comfortable with that. I'm fine being your Daddy in every other way.

That was sweet of him. She thought about it for a moment. Did she want it to be sexual? Maybe. She still didn't know who he was or what he looked like. After she found that out, then she'd revisit the sexual thing. But for now, she was fine putting that on the back burner.

**abbielittle**

Can we pretend like the sexual stuff doesn't exist for now? Revisit later?

**jettcarver83**

Of course, Abbie. Anything you want.

Those words should not make her feel all warm inside, but they did.

**jettcarver83**

Send me a list of your limits, both hard and soft, and I'll send you a list of mine.

As that message came in, hers was sent to him at the same time.

abbielittle

Can I call you Daddy? And can I have a photo of you?

STUPID!

She should've waited. Why didn't she wait? And why did she ask him those things? He was definitely going to think she was a creep now.

jettcarver83

If you're comfortable with it, you can. Here's a photo of me. Can I have one of you too?

Her mouth fell open at the man on her screen.

Of everything she'd been expecting, of every man her imagination could conjure up, this man was not it.

His black hair was cropped close to his head, his tanned skin covered in tattoos. He had a short black beard that covered his strong, square jaw. Some gray was peppering his temples, and he had a few lines on his forehead, but not enough to tell her his age. It was a photo of his reflection in a mirror, and she could see every inch of his hard, massive body. He looked ridiculously tall. And muscular. So muscular.

His light blue shirt was tight across his chest, and his arms were so big they looked like they were about to rip the shirt. He had to be tall. His hips were well above the bathroom counter he was standing in front of. When she looked in her mirror, she couldn't even see her hips, she was so short.

Her stomach did a silly flip at the thought of them next to each other.

Or of her bent over in front of him, both of them looking at her in the mirror while he pounded into her from behind—

*Bad Abbie.*

Stop thinking about him like that.

But jeez was he hot.

Way too hot for her.

**abbielittle**

That's really you? Omg.

**jettcarver83**

Who else would it be?

**abbielittle**

You're sure you're not a catfish?

**jettcarver83**

...I don't know what that means.

She laughed. Poor guy.

**jettcarver83**

Your turn. Let me see you.

She took a deep breath as she scrolled through her photos to find her favorite selfie. With her lip between her teeth, she stared at it. She felt her best in it. She was wearing a pink top with her hair in space buns, pink lipgloss and light blue eyeliner. And she had a rhinestone glued under her eye. Maybe it was a bit much, but she felt good in it. Cute.

That day, she'd felt her most beautiful and she'd taken a million selfies to remember it. She was glad she did now.

She sent the photo, and threw her phone, not wanting to read his reply.

Grabbing Ottie, she held him tightly again. "Oh, God. What if he thinks I'm hideous?"

Her phone vibrated, and she shook her head. Nope. She didn't want to read whatever he had to say.

But slowly, her fingers inched toward her phone.

**jettcarver83**

You're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.

Alright. That did it.

She was officially dreaming.

Or she was dead.

She was definitely dead. Because no one, other than her brother, and he didn't count, had ever called her beautiful.

No one.

**jettcarver83**

I can't stop staring. My God. Maybe this was a bad idea. You need someone pretty like you. You'll make me look like an ogre.

She smiled to herself, shaking her head. Silly man.

**abbielittle**

I think you're pretty, Daddy.

Her heart soared at the word. She couldn't believe she'd called him that. Was it too much too soon? But he'd said she could. Had he actually meant it?

**jettcarver83**

Thank you, pretty girl.

Oh, just stick a dang fork in her, she was done.

**jettcarver83**

Send me your list of limits, and the one of the books. I need to get back to work, alright? But we'll talk again later. Will you be okay?

Every inch of her was buzzing with warmth as she typed her reply.

**abbielittle**

I'll be okay. We can talk tonight?

**jettcarver83**

Promise we can. I'll email you when I get home.

**abbielittle**

I can't wait.

## seven

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He lied. Jett didn't email her when he got home. He emailed her the second he shut the hood on that rich fuck's car. He hadn't even taken the time to clean his hands properly before he pulled his phone from his back pocket and sent her a message.

Now he was home, showered, and eating his dinner while he chatted with her. She was incredible. So sweet and cute. And he couldn't stop staring at her photo. She'd sent him a picture of Ottie, who was equally as cute, and she'd sent him a photo of something she'd been drawing.

She was insanely talented. Why the fuck a smart, talented, gorgeous girl like her was even giving him the time of day, he didn't know. But he wouldn't complain.

He liked talking to her. And despite their age gap and obvious differences, they had a lot in common.

They both wanted to travel, specifically to Europe. She talked about wanting to go on a road trip along the East coast, and that had been something he'd talked with his brother about for years. But now Beck was traveling the world as a famous rockstar with his band and didn't have the time to go for a road trip with him.

Not that Jett blamed him. He'd almost given up his life for his little brother to pursue his dreams, so he was happy to see him successful and happy.

He shook those thoughts from his head as he read her most recent message.

**abbie1ittle**

Tomorrow is homework day, then I have school on Monday morning, then work in the afternoon. What about you?

He'd asked what her plans for the rest of the weekend were.

**jettcarver83**

I have to finish working on this guy's car. He's coming to pick it up tomorrow.

**abbie1ittle**

Still can't believe you're not a jet mechanic.

He grinned. He knew she'd keep him on his toes and a smile always on his face.

**jettcarver83**

What are you in school for?

**abbie1ittle**

Art history. I want to be an art conservator. Being an artist would be perfect, but I don't know if I can.

**jettcarver83**

Of course you can. You're so smart and talented.

**abbie1ittle**

Thanks. But you don't know that. And I need money, not talent.

His stomach twisted. He knew what it was like to want something and not have the money for it.

**abbie1ittle**

That wasn't me asking you for money, by the way. I'm just saying, grad school is expensive.

jettcarver83

I understand. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know, though, okay?

abbie1ittle

Okay.

He didn't know why everything felt off now. He needed to do something to cheer her up.

jettcarver83

Tell me about your family.

Her reply wasn't instant like all her others had been. Maybe it wasn't the right question to ask. He knew not everyone was as close with their family as he was—well, his brother. He didn't have any other family.

abbie1ittle

I have an older brother. He's my best friend. My dad is a lawyer, and my mom is a housewife. You?

Short. To the point. Very unlike his Abbie.

No.

No. She wasn't his Abbie. She wasn't his anything.

jettcarver83

Parents died a while ago. Just me and my baby brother. We're close, but he travels for work a lot so I don't see him much.

abbie1ittle

Oh, I'm so sorry. Does that make you sad?

jettcarver83

Sometimes. But I know he's having fun and living life. I'm proud of him.

abbie1ittle

You sound like a good big brother.

jettcarver83

He says I am. I think I could be better.

abbie1ittle

I think you're perfect.

He was a grown man. He shouldn't feel giddy. His face shouldn't be hot from blushing.

What was this little girl doing to him?

abbie1ittle

Think we could meet one day?

He stared at the question. He wanted to meet her. Wanted to touch her, hold her, kiss her.

But was it too soon?

jettcarver83

One day.

abbie1ittle

Next weekend? \*puts up prayer hands\* \*bats lashes\* Pretty please, Daddy.

He snorted. Such a brat. He liked it, though. Liked her.

Fuck.

He was so fucked.

jettcarver83

If we're still talking by next Saturday, then, maybe.

abbie1ittle

Why wouldn't we be talking?

jettcarver83

You might get sick of me.

abbie1ittle

I doubt that. Otie is already obsessed with you.

jettcarver83

Just Otie, huh? Not you?

abbie1ittle

I can't tell you I'm obsessed with you already. You'll think I'm a psycho.

jettcarver83

Would it make you feel better to know I'm obsessed with you, too?

He wasn't lying. He was obsessed with her.

It was probably a problem. Here he was, trying to get her offline so she didn't have an obsessive weirdo on her hands, only for him to become the obsessive weirdo.

At least he wasn't stalking her, though.

He wasn't that crazy.

abbie1ittle

That does help. Ottie says he thinks we should meet Saturday.

jettcarver83

Does Ottie make the decisions, pretty girl?

abbie1ittle

No, but I think he should.

He barked out a laugh. She's going to have a red ass constantly with her sassiness.

*So. Fucked.*

After she sent him her list of limits—well, it was more like a lack of limits. There was hardly anything on it since she was apparently open to everything. Which shouldn't make him so excited, but it did. Just the thought of her soft skin bright red from a paddle, or her tied to his bed as he fucked into her made his cock swell.

He'd had so many depraved thoughts, especially when he noticed degradation was something she was fine with. He wasn't huge on it, but he sometimes liked to throw a pretty little slut out there for good measure.

jettcarver83

We'll talk about it again later this week, alright?  
Let's take it slow.

abbie1ittle

I hate slow.

jettcarver83

I know. Me too. But I don't want to mess anything up.

abbie1ittle

How could you mess it up? We're just having fun.

The words were like a bucket of ice water washing over him. Shit. How could he forget that's what she'd said? He'd had a visceral reaction then, and he'd had one now. He didn't want her just for fun anymore. He wanted her for more.

He knew it didn't make any sense. He knew he couldn't give her anything other than fun, but after talking to her for the last week, he wanted to give her the world. He wanted to give her so much fucking more than just a few nights in his bed, or over his knee. He wanted to give her everything she could ever want.

jettcarver83

Still need to be careful, pretty girl. Do you often try to meet strange men from the internet?

abbie1ittle

No, Daddy. You're the first.

He didn't know if he believed her. She seemed really comfortable talking to him. Almost too comfortable. Not for the first time, he wondered if this was normal for her.

abbie1ittle

Have you met anyone online?

How the fuck was he supposed to answer that? Technically, yes. Well. No. But, yes.

He and Mandy had a mutual friend. They'd met at the bar one night, but it wasn't until she'd messaged Jett on Facebook a week later that their relationship started. So, they'd met online, but already knew each other.

Meeting a stranger online was entirely new for him.

jettcarver83

No, just you. Can I tell you a secret?

**abbie1ittle**

Of course! I love secrets. I'm the best secret keeper ever.

He smiled softly. He just wanted to fucking kiss her.

**jettcarver83**

I'm a bit nervous. So, can we take it slow? For me?

It was true. He *was* nervous. But a part of him knew she was too. He knew she was trying to rush things along so they could get the hard part over and done with, like ripping off a bandaid. But he wanted her to sit in this for a bit longer. He wanted her to be positive that she wanted to meet him, because he somehow knew that he'd never let her go once he saw her in person.

**abbie1ittle**

Omg, Daddy! You're nervous? We can wait. I don't want to rush you.

**jettcarver83**

You're too sweet, pretty girl. I think it's time for bed.

**abbie1ittle**

It's only eleven.

**jettcarver83**

And we've been up since five.

He felt like shit that she'd messaged him back this morning. He'd assumed she'd sleep through his message and would reply when she woke up and he could gauge what a good time was to expect her to wake up. But when her reply came back instantly, he felt like dogshit. He didn't know if he

woke her up, or if she hadn't been to sleep. Either way, she needed to sleep more.

Maybe he'd make a nap part of her rules.

**abbie1ittle**

Yeah. About that...

**abbie1ittle**

Why did you get up so early?

**jettcarver83**

I had to work. Why were you up so early?

**abbie1ittle**

You messaged me and my phone went off.

Yeah. He was the worst.

**jettcarver83**

I'm sorry, pretty girl. I won't do that again. I'll wait for you to message me after you wake up.

**abbie1ittle**

I liked waking up to your message.

He smiled as butterflies swarmed his stomach. He shouldn't feel like this. He was a man, damnit.

**jettcarver83**

I'll message you then, pretty girl. But keep your phone on silent. You need your sleep.

**abbie1ittle**

Okay. I will. Promise.

jettcarver83

Good girl.

Fuck, why did that make his dick jerk so much? Mandy hated being called a good girl. She always said it felt so patronizing, like he was talking to her like a dog. But he loved praising. He loved telling his girl she was being good for him. Loved seeing her pupils dilate and feel her pussy tighten at those words.

jettcarver83

Time for bed, pretty girl. We'll talk tomorrow.

abbie1ittle

Okay, Daddy. Night night.

jettcarver83

Sweet dreams.

# eight

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**W**ho knew a week could go by so fast? She'd been talking to Jett for an entire week, unlike he'd said, she still wasn't tired of him. If anything, she just wanted more. Needed it. Craved more.

**jettcarver83**

Are you all ready for bed, pretty girl? Jammies on, teeth brushed, hair combed?

This was her favorite part of the night. He'd started tucking her in a couple nights ago, and even if it was just through email, it still settled something inside her. He was natural at being a Daddy. He made her feel a lot of things, things she couldn't entirely decipher, and things she knew she shouldn't feel.

After he said he couldn't give her anything more than fun, neither of them had brought it up again. She assumed he still felt the same way, but she definitely didn't. She hadn't when this started, and she didn't now.

**abbielittle**

Yes, Daddy. I have Oattie, too.

**jettcarver83**

That's my good girl.

Jeez. She loved those words. They made her feel all warm inside.

**jettcarver83**

Want to try something different tonight?

She perked up at that. Usually, they talked about their days before he told her it was time to go to sleep. He hadn't ever suggested anything different.

**abbielittle**

Sure thing, Daddy. What do you wanna try?

**jettcarver83**

I was thinking I could call you. Maybe we could talk on the phone while I finish tucking you in?

She stared at the words.

Talk.

On.

The.

Phone?!

She hated talking on the phone to people she knew in real life. She definitely didn't want to talk to someone she didn't know.

But she did know him, didn't she? They'd been talking nonstop for days. And if she ever wanted to convince him to meet her in person, this was the next step.

**abbielittle**

I'd love that!

**jettcarver83**

Give me your number. I'll call you.

She sent him her number and held her breath as she waited. And waited.

And waited.

Maybe he wasn't going to call.

But then her phone began vibrating, and an unknown number was on her screen. Oh, shoot. Jiminy Christmas. Now she had to answer.

This was happening.

It was really, really happening.

Sliding her thumb along her screen, she pressed the phone to her ear. "Hello?" she said breathlessly.

There was a brief pause.

Then...

"Hello."

Goosebumps rippled over her skin at his voice. It was deep and raspy, slightly accented, and exactly what she'd imagined when she thought about how he'd sound. She'd never heard anyone with such a deep voice.

"Jett?"

"Expecting someone else?" he teased.

"You never know," she muttered.

"Only me, little girl. That was our agreement, remember?"

"I remember." She tilted her head to the side, thinking. "Does that mean you're only talking to me, too?"

"Don't want anyone else. Just you."

Butterflies filled her tummy at his words. "So," she breathed, her heart racing. "Why'd you wanna talk?"

"Wanted to hear your voice," he grumbled. God, his voice was amazing. Could she come by just him talking? Maybe. Probably.

"Well?" she asked shyly. "What do you think? Do I sound like a man?" He chuckled, and the sound went straight to her

throbbing clit.

“Definitely not,” he said softly. “You sound perfect. Exactly what I imagined.”

“You’ve thought about how I sound?” she whispered, and there was a beat of silence.

“Thought about your voice, your body, your scent. Thought about everything. Can’t stop thinking about you, pretty girl. It’s nonstop.”

She nearly melted.

Jeez.

“I’ve thought about you, too,” she said quietly.

“Yeah? And? What do you think?”

“I like your voice,” she blurted, feeling her face heat. “A lot.”

“Yeah? What do you like about it?”

“How deep it is,” she breathed, and he cleared his throat. “It’s so deep.” He made a weird sound, like he stubbed his toe. “Are you alright?”

“Fine,” he grunted. “Anything else?”

“Everything,” she admitted. “I like everything.”

“You’re sweet, pretty girl,” he said, his voice softening. She pressed her palm to her hot cheek, trying to fight the smile tugging on her lips. “What are your plans for tomorrow?”

“Nothing,” she rushed out. “I have no plans. None at all. Why? What are yours?” He was laughing as she spoke, and she grinned to herself, liking that she could make him laugh.

“How do you feel about a date?”

“A date?” she gasped. She’d never been on a date before, but she didn’t know if she should tell him that. Would he think it was weird? But he’d never thought anything else she said was weird. “Um. Well...”

“We don’t have to,” he said. “We can wait until you’re more comfortable with me. I know I look scary, but I’m not.”

“No, no, it’s not that,” she said, waving off his worries. She didn’t think he looked scary at all. She thought he looked like a big ol’ teddy bear. “It’s just...”

“It’s okay if you don’t like me,” he continued. “I know it’s one thing to email, or talk on the phone, and another to—”

“I’ve never been on a date!”

There was a long beat of silence. Then he cleared his throat. “You’ve never been on a date?” he repeated.

“God, why did I say that? You probably think I’m a total loser.” She groaned, covering her eyes with her hand as she fell back on her bed. She should’ve just lied and gone with it.

“I don’t like that.”

“What?”

“Don’t like the way you’re talking about yourself.” There was a dark note to his voice, one that made her shiver. “Don’t like you calling yourself a loser. Don’t like you berating yourself.”

“But I am a loser! Who hasn’t gone on a date at my age?”

“Abbie,” he growled, and she froze. “Stop it. Right now.”

“But—”

“You’re not a loser,” he interrupted. “You’re a good girl for telling me the truth. I’ll make it more special now.”

“No,” she breathed, shaking her head. “Don’t change anything.”

“It’s your first date. It needs to be special.”

“Can we just call it a meet up?” she asked quietly. “Save the date for another time? I’m already going to be so nervous meeting you I might throw up right on your shoes. Oh my God. Why did I say that?” But he was laughing again. Not at her. At her words.

“You’re so damn cute,” he chuckled. “We can save the date for later.”

“Thank you,” she whispered. “So, you want to meet me tomorrow?”

“If that’s what you want.”

“Yes.” Her head bobbed even though he couldn’t see her. She really, really wanted that.

“Want to meet at the park then? Say about eleven?”

“Eleven?”

“We can go later if you need more time to wake up,” he teased.

“No, no. I just thought that was late for you. Isn’t that your dinner time?”

“Such a little brat,” he rumbled, but she knew he was teasing.

“Eleven is perfect.”

“Good.”

There was another pause, then he roughly cleared his throat.

“Let’s get you to bed, then, pretty girl. You have a big day tomorrow.”



SLIDING FROM HER CAR, SHE SHUT THE DOOR SOFTLY BEHIND her and made her way toward the bench by the swing set, the place where they’d agreed to meet. She couldn’t believe she was doing this.

She’d spent her entire morning trying to find something to wear that wasn’t too much, but also still felt like her. She finally settled on a pink pleated skirt with fishnet leggings and a lavender crop top. She felt good in it, confident. Especially with her lucky yellow sneakers on.

Looking around, she wrung her hands together. This was really happening. Any second, she’d be meeting her man. Her

Daddy. Even if she hadn't called him that since before they talked on the phone last night. It was easier to say what she wanted over text, when she didn't have to hear his voice. She didn't know what she was going to do when she had to actually speak to him face to face.

She sat on the bench and her leg bounced wildly as she scanned the park. Maybe she should've brought Ottie. She'd contemplated it, but ultimately decided to leave him at home. She didn't want anything to happen to him if something happened to her.

Not that she thought anything would happen to her.

But she was meeting a stranger from the internet. Anything could happen. What if he wasn't who he said he was? What if he kidnapped her and killed her? What if—

She needed to stop while she was ahead. But maybe sending Chris her location wouldn't be a bad idea.

Pulling her phone out, she turned her location on for Chris, and, as expected, got an immediate text.

**Chris:**

Why did you turn that on? What's going on?  
Where are you? Are you okay?

Abbie sighed. Maybe that was a bad idea.

**Abbie:**

I'm fine. I'm at the park, just being safe. Jeez.

**Chris:**

The park? Why?

**Abbie:**

Why do you think? To have fun. To swing. To frolic through the flowers. You should try it some time.

CHRIS:

Noted. Be good.

She rolled her eyes. Who did he think she was? Like she'd do anything bad. Or reckless.

You know, other than meeting an older man from the internet in the park. That wasn't reckless or dangerous or anything.

What was she even thinking?

Her eyes flitted everywhere, taking in faces and cars, trying to find him. She couldn't sit still, she was so anxious. Jumping to her feet, she began to pace and chew on her thumbnail.

God, this was insane. Certifiably insane. She'd never done anything remotely close to something like this before. Why did she think this was a good idea? She was definitely going to wind up in a freaking ditch somewhere, decapitated.

She froze, her entire body going rigid.

What if he tried to kill her? What would she do then? He looked massive in his photos. It wasn't like she could fight him off.

Oh God.

Oh God.

Oh God!

What was she supposed to do?

Leave?

But what if he was actually who he said he was? And was super sweet and kind? She'd be standing up a perfectly normal, good man. But if he was dangerous...

Why didn't she think about any of this before? She never stopped to think. Her mother was right. She needed to get her head out of the clouds and be realistic.

Maybe she should just leave. Text him and tell him she'd gotten a sudden stomach bug and couldn't make it. Tell him to forget about her and move on with his life.

But could she?

She'd gotten a small taste of what having a Daddy could be like, and if she were being honest, she was addicted. To him. To his authority. His dominance. Everything about him. And he hadn't given her a single red flag. But bad people were good at pretending, weren't they?

Before she could make up her mind, a deep voice rumbled from behind her. "Abbie?"

She turned toward him.

Then screamed.

# nine

. . .

Jett re-gripped the steering wheel. He'd been sitting at the park for over an hour, staring right at the bench they'd agreed to meet at. He should've gotten out, should've been the one waiting for her. But now that the time to meet her was here, he was so fucking nervous. He'd never been this anxious in his life.

Not when he'd fought off those men to protect his brother.

Not when he'd gone to prison for it.

Not when he'd gotten out and had to start his life over.

But meeting this little girl was the thing that was going to do him in. It was the thing that was going to make him crumble to his knees, he was so damn nervous.

He watched her pink skirt sway as she paced back and forth, her head lowered. He wanted to reprimand her, tell her she needed to be on alert at all times. Anyone could sneak up on her and she'd never know it. She needed to be more careful.

But that's what she had him for. Now, he'd protect her. She could relax and live her life carefree. He could take care of everything.

She looked so fucking small. So delicate and fragile. So pretty. She looked different than she did in her photo, but not in a bad way. She looked...softer. Prettier. More innocent.

Fuck.

He should leave. She was better off without him and his baggage. She was still so young, she could find someone who could give her the whole world. He couldn't. He was a damn mechanic and an ex-con. It wasn't like he had a lot of money to shower her with gifts, or to take her everywhere she wanted to go.

But he'd try.

He'd fucking try.

What if she saw him and hated him? Or was scared of him? He could deal with a lot of things, but this sweet girl thinking he was scary? That he'd ever hurt her didn't sit right with him. At six-foot-five, he knew his size was intimidating. But he never wanted her to feel intimidated.

She looked around again, and he took a deep breath. She was probably wondering where the hell he was. He needed to get out of his old truck and walk up to her. Shake her hand. Say, "Hi, I'm Jett. Nice to meet you."

His stomach twisted tightly as he opened the door and shut it firmly behind him. She didn't look up or in his direction at the sound. She really needed to learn to be more aware of her surroundings.

Slowly, he walked across the park, watching everyone, making sure no one messed with her. As he got closer, every instinct in him was screaming at him to run away. To leave. A voice in his head was reminding him she was too good for him. She was too pretty for him. He needed to leave her alone. He needed to go away.

But he couldn't stop walking toward her.

It was like she had a magnetic pull on him, and he just needed to be near her.

He tried to make his footsteps louder as he got closer so he wouldn't accidentally scare her. It didn't seem to matter, because as he stopped behind her, she was still pacing, still muttering to herself. She didn't even notice he was right there.

He thought about reaching for her, touching her shoulder, but thought better of it. He was new to being a Dom and a

Daddy, but he knew consent was important, and he definitely didn't have her consent to touch her, even just her arm.

So he cleared his throat.

Nothing.

Again.

Still, nothing.

Okay, he was starting to get worried now.

“Abbie?” he asked in a low voice, trying not to startle her.

Her shoulders bunched, and slowly, so fucking slowly, she turned around.

Her pretty blue eyes were massive as she stared up at him, her full, thick lips parted around her thumb.

Then she let out an ear piercing, blood-curdling scream.

On instinct, he lurched for her as he looked around, trying to find the threat. He stopped just shy of touching her, but his body was close enough to smell her sweet, cotton candy scent.

“What?” he demanded. “What is it?” He covered her smaller body with his, ready to tear apart the fucker who made her scream like that.

But then he took a deep breath and noticed she'd closed in on herself, that she was trembling.

He looked down at her, hating how small she looked.

“Abbie?” he rasped, but she didn't answer. Her eyes were on the ground, her arms wrapped tightly around herself. People were staring at them, and he knew he must look ridiculous.

It took him a moment to realize why she'd screamed. She screamed when she looked at him.

She was scared.

She was fucking terrified.

So terrified that she'd screamed like he was murdering her.

Fuck.

He should've known this was a bad idea, that he'd be too big for her. Too—

“I'm sorry,” he croaked, taking a huge step back. “I didn't mean to frighten you.” His heart dropped to his feet as he stared at her, at the way she held herself. “I'll just—I'll leave you alone. I won't text or call you anymore. I'm sorry.”

With his head down, he turned away. He didn't want to. He wanted to prove to her that he wouldn't hurt her. He knew he looked scary, with the tattoos and the roughness to his face. But he wouldn't be like that with her. He wouldn't hurt her. Wouldn't make her feel unsafe. He'd rather die than ever make her feel like that.

“W—wait.”

He froze a few steps from her. He took a slow, deep breath, trying to steady himself. Turning, he tried to make himself appear smaller, tried to soften his expression.

“I—I didn't mean to scream,” she whispered, glancing around. People were back to walking their dogs, playing with their kids, and generally ignoring them. But he could still feel lingering stares on his back. He was used to it, but he didn't think she was.

“I know I'm a big guy, but I won't hurt you,” he said quickly. “I'm sorry.” She shook her head, her dark brows bunching together.

“You're not—” Her gaze swept over him, from his scuffed boots he'd tried to polish this morning, to the top of his freshly shaved head. He nearly laughed as her eyes widened comically. “You're not scary. I was just in my head and you snuck up on me. That's all.”

“I was trying to be loud,” he said, rubbing the back of his neck. “You were in your head? About this?” He gestured between them and watched her throat bob as she swallowed.

“Are you a murderer?” she squeaked, then squeezed her eyes shut. “Stupid, Abbie. He wouldn't tell you if he were a murderer.” He thought it was cute how she reprimanded herself, but he didn't like her calling herself stupid.

“I’m not a murderer,” he said firmly.

He might’ve almost killed a guy, but that was purely self defense and protecting Beck. Not because he was a cold-blooded killer. Somehow, now didn’t feel like the right time to tell her, though.

Her eyes flicked between his for a long moment, and he held his breath. What was she looking for? What did she see? He wasn’t sure if he wanted to know.

She nodded like she’d made a decision. “Okay. I believe you.”

He loosened a breath, his broad shoulders slumping. She still watched him warily, like she was waiting for something to happen. He let himself take her in again, his heart rate skyrocketing.

She looked fucking adorable in her little outfit—her pink skirt and purple top, her bright yellow shoes. She had an otter-shaped bag slung across her body, and a stack of colorful, glittery bracelets up one arm. He searched her again, and his brows dipped.

“Where’s Ottie?” he asked. “I thought you’d bring him.” She blinked, looking startled.

“I didn’t want to forget him.” She toed the grass as she shrugged. “He might’ve gotten dirty or something.”

“I wouldn’t have let you forget him,” he murmured. “And I could clean him if he had.” She looked up at him beneath her lashes.

“Really?”

“Of course.” He nodded firmly. He knew that little otter was her lifeline, so he’d assumed she’d bring him with her. He kind of wished she had. “Have you had breakfast already?” She scrunched her nose.

“I was too nervous to eat.” He nodded again, having figured as much.

“Me too,” he admitted. Glancing over her head, he saw the diner he knew was there. “Want to go to that diner? We can

grab a bite and talk.” She glanced over her shoulder, then back at him.

“My brother knows where I am,” she blurted. “He has my location.” He blinked at her.

“That’s good,” he said slowly. “Very safe of you to give him that information. Did you tell him who I was? Give him my name and photo?”

He knew she was about to lie to him.

“Of course,” she scoffed. “I’m not a dummy.”

“Never said you were,” he muttered, sliding his hands into his pockets. Even if she’d wanted a Daddy, they hadn’t fully agreed to anything, including punishments. He couldn’t take her over his knee for lying.

Yet.

But one day, he would.

“I can talk to him if you’d like,” Jett offered. “Send him a photo of my I.D.?”

“What?” Her eyes widened again. “No. No way.”

“Why *no way*?”

“He would immediately hunt you down and skin you alive,” she hissed. “And I like your skin right where it is, thank you.” His lips twitched at the words.

“He’s that dangerous, huh?” He folded his arms over his chest, and her gaze ate him alive.

Maybe he didn’t scare her after all. Not with the way she was looking at him.

“He’s super dangerous. Uh-huh. Head of the mafia. Of the cartel mafia.” She eyed him. “So, if you do any funny business, my brother and his cartel-mafia-FBI buddies will hunt you down.”

“Damn.” He scrubbed his hand over his mouth to hide his smile. “Cartel-mafia-FBI? That’s who your brother is?”

“Yep.” She folded her arms over her chest, mimicking his pose, as she nodded, looking ridiculously proud of herself. “Don’t you forget that.”

“I won’t,” he said, trying to hold in a laugh. “You’re safe with me.”

“I have a gun, too,” she blurted, and his smile fell.

“What?” He gaped at her.

“Yep. I do. Right here.” She patted the otter bag. “And a knife. A butcher one.”

He didn’t know if she was serious or not. “Let’s just keep those things safely in the bag, alright, pretty girl? Don’t want to scare anyone.”

She glanced around, then back at him and nodded like what he’d said made perfect sense. He still didn’t know if she was serious, and that kind of worried him. Not for his safety, but hers. She definitely didn’t know how to use a weapon. She’d end up hurting herself more than an assailant.

Holding his hand out, he gestured behind her to the diner. “Shall we?”

She turned, giving him a long look over her shoulder that was way too cute to be intimidating, then faced forward again and stomped through the grass toward the restaurant.

He shook his head, a smile finally breaking out across his face.

Yeah, he was definitely glad he replied to that listing.

# ten

. . .

She slid into the vinyl booth, watching as Jett slid into the other side. He smiled his thanks up at the waitress, and when she smiled back at him, Abbie wanted to gouge the other woman's eyes out with the non-existent knife she didn't have in her purse.

"Hey, what's that look for?" Jett asked softly. She slid her glare to him and his brows rose.

She was being ridiculous.

First, she screamed in his face and felt terrible because he thought she'd been afraid of him. Then she lied and said Chris was in the mafia-cartel-FBI. Which wasn't a thing. She knew that. But at the time, she couldn't think of anything else, so that's what came out of her mouth. And lastly, she lied and said she had a knife and gun in her bag.

She didn't even have a license for a gun. Didn't even have actual knives at home to cook with! As soon as she'd actually started talking to Jett, she'd felt some of her unease unfurl in her stomach. But then it tightened right back up when she fully took him in.

He was freaking hot.

So big and cuddly-looking. Even if he was a bit intimidating, there was something in his eyes that grounded her. Made her feel calm.

Which was absolutely freaking insane.

She knew that.

“What look?” she asked, shaking herself.

“You look like you’re ready to set someone on fire.” She tilted her head to the side. That could’ve been a really good threat earlier. Why hadn’t she thought of that then? “Okay, now you’re looking too thoughtful.” He grinned at her, showing off his perfectly straight white teeth.

“I have a lighter in my purse, too,” she blurted, then felt her face heat. She really needed to learn to bite her tongue.

“Yeah?” He leaned back in the booth, readjusting his position.

It was too small for him, and she looked around the small diner, trying to find somewhere else they could sit. All the tables were taken, but there were a few free spots at the bar. She twisted her lips to the side. She didn’t do well on barstools, though. She tended to fall off them.

“Abbie?”

She blinked. “What?”

“You spaced out there, pretty girl. What’s going on in your head?”

God, if he kept calling her that, she was going to melt into a puddle right at his feet.

“I was trying to find a new place to sit,” she mumbled, looking around again. He cleared his throat, shifting again. See? He was clearly uncomfortable.

“Why?”

“The booth is too small. You need a table.” She wasn’t looking at him, still trying to find the one empty table she knew didn’t exist.

“Abbie?”

“Hm?”

“Can you look at me please?”

There was that voice. She’d only heard it a couple times on the phone, mostly when she’d said something bad about

herself. He really didn't like that. But that voice she knew as his gentle reprimanding voice, and it too would melt her into a puddle.

She slid her gaze to him, finding him resting his tattooed forearms on the table, leaning close to her. She swallowed thickly. "Hi," she squeaked.

"Hi," he said back, his voice deep. "I appreciate you wanting me to be comfortable, but let me worry about that, alright? You just sit there and relax. Would you like some crayons? Think I saw a bucket of them when we came in with the kiddie menus."

Her face burned bright red, and she covered it with her hands. What was a guy like him doing with her? Asking if she wanted to color, asking about Ottie? She had to be dreaming. Men like him didn't exist.

"What is it?" he asked softly. "Did I mess up already?" She spread her fingers, looking at him through the gaps.

"How could you possibly think you've already messed up?" she breathed, gaping at him.

"Well." He held his thick fingers up, ticking off his list as he began to speak. "You screamed when you saw me, told me your brother would skin me alive, said you have a gun, knife, and lighter in your bag, and now you won't look at me. We can go if this is too much. I should've known it would be too much." He shook his head, his dark brows bunching. "Come on. I'll walk you to your car. You don't have to—"

"Stop!" His mouth snapped shut, his brows lifting. "You haven't messed up. I'm just insanely nervous, and don't know how to talk to men who aren't my brother or Pike. Or my neighbor—" He made a low growling sound deep in his throat and she stared at him.

"We'll get back to that," he growled, eyeing her. "Continue." She shook her head, trying to get her thoughts in order again.

"Okay, well, anyway, I just can't talk to men. And you're like the king of all men. The most manly of men. Most

masculine of masc's—" His lips twitched.

"Most masculine of masc's?"

"I just don't know what to do or say. And I've already made a fool of myself a million times over. I don't know why you're even still here. You should've already run for the hills."

"Well, there are no hills to run to," he said teasingly.

"Jett!" she cried, closing her eyes as she dropped her head back.

"I'm kidding, pretty girl. You know I'm kidding. Even if there were, I wouldn't run to them. You're cute when you say all this shit, even if you've threatened to kill me a few times. It's still cute." She cracked an eye open.

"Really?" she whispered, lowering her head and opening her other eye.

"Really." He gave her a firm nod, his eyes boring into hers. "I don't lie." She let out a long breath, nodding as she relaxed back into the booth. "Now, would you like some crayons and a picture to color on?"

"You won't think it's weird?"

"I wouldn't have asked if I did." He tapped his fingers on the table. "You know what? I'll get them for you. If you don't want to use them, you don't have to. But they'll be there. How's that?"

"Okay." She smiled shyly, and he winked at her, sending heat coursing through her body. Honestly, she liked having him taking charge. She liked knowing she didn't have to make any decisions.

He slid from the booth and made his way to the bar. Leaning on it, he waited for the waitress to notice him.

Abbie clenched her hands together under the table as the waitress smiled prettily up at him. With her pretty red hair twisted in a clip at the back of her head and the effortless way she seemed to talk to him, to float around the diner, she'd be a better fit than she was for Jett. But he just dipped his head as

she handed him the kid's menu and crayons, shooting Abbie a weird look from across the room.

Abbie immediately averted her attention back to the table. Her hands unclenched as she watched Jett stroll back to the table from the corner of her eye. He slid the paper in front of her, and she bit back a smile.

"It was meant to be," he said as he sat down. "You can color it for Ottie. He'd love it, don't you think?"

It was a picture of a beaver building a dam, and a small giggle left her. "That's not an otter." When he didn't say anything, she peeked up at him from below her lashes. He was just staring at her. Were his cheeks a bit pink?

"What is it?" He shifted his gaze to the paper, his brows bunched.

"A beaver." She clamped her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing, but her entire body vibrated with the effort.

"Oh." His dark eyes twinkled as he grinned at her. "But Ottie will love a beaver friend, won't he?" She nodded happily as she grabbed a crayon. She hesitated. Her mother always hated how much she colored. Even if it was on her own artwork, she still felt like it was too childish. "Go on, pretty girl. I'll order for us."

She chewed her lip nervously. "I'm a little picky," she whispered, feeling her face flush. He patiently waited to hear what else she had to say. "I don't like vegetables." She scrunched her nose as he chuckled.

"Well, they're good for you, so you'll need to eat them sometimes." She shook her head, and his brow rose. Just the one. She tried to mimic it, but her tongue ended up slipping between her lips. "What are you doing?"

"How do you do that thing with your brows?" she asked, wiggling her finger at him. "Chris does it too and I can never figure out how to do it. Do you practice in the mirror or something?" His face tightened, but he took a deep breath.

"Chris?" he asked, his voice level.

“Hm? Oh, my brother.”

“The one in the mafia-cartel-FBI?” She nodded, leveling him with a look.

“And don’t you forget it, buddy.”

“I won’t. Now, what do you want to eat?” She hummed, her fingers tapping on the table as she thought.

“Grilled cheese? Extra pickles.”

He blinked.

“What?”

“Grilled cheese,” she repeated a bit louder. Poor man was probably hard of hearing. It came with age. “Extra pickles. Did you get that?”

“Oh, I got it,” he said in a low voice. “It’s just the combination I wasn’t sure if I heard correctly.” She gasped.

“You’ve never had grilled cheese with pickles?”

“Can’t say I have,” he laughed.

“You haven’t lived until you’ve had that,” she said. “You can try some of mine. But just a bite.” His mouth tucked up in the corner.

“Just a bite,” he agreed. “Color, pretty girl.”

She put the tip of the crayon on the paper, but stopped herself and looked at him again. He was staring intently at her, his face soft.

“Shouldn’t we talk?” she asked quietly, and he shrugged.

“I want you to be comfortable, and if you’re not comfortable with talking, this is fine.”

Okay. That was sweet.

“But I want to talk,” she said. “Well, I don’t. I want you to.”

“Me?” She bobbed her head happily. “What do you want me to talk about?” She twisted her lips to the side as she thought.

“What’s your favorite movie?”

“Smokey and the Bandit.” Her head reared back. “What?”

“I’ve never heard of that.” His mouth fell open.

“You’ve never—we’re having a movie night soon, little girl. I have to teach you some culture.” She giggled, shaking her head, trying to ignore the warmth that settled in her at the way he said little girl. “What’s yours?”

“Twilight.” He snorted. “What?”

“That can’t be your favorite movie.”

“Well, it is. I watch it on repeat. It’s the only thing that ever plays on my TV.”

“Yeah? You don’t watch anything else? Not even cartoons?” he prompted, leaning forward.

“I mean, yeah. I watch cartoons. I’m not a psychopath.”

He opened his mouth to say something, but the pretty waitress sauntered up to the table. His smile fell slightly as he looked up at the woman. Abbie turned her attention to the picture and began coloring.

“What can I get you?” she purred.

Okay, she hadn’t actually purred or sounded all that suggestive. But Abbie was feeling a bit raw, and feeling like she had to compete with the absolute bombshell waitress just wasn’t great for her confidence.

“I’ll take a burger, side of fries. She’ll have a grilled cheese with extra pickles. Tea for us both—”

“I don’t drink caffeine,” she blurted, and they both turned their attention to her. She rubbed her chest, smiling weakly. “Anxiety.” The woman scanned her. Not unkindly, but not kindly either.

“What would you like instead?” Jett asked gently.

“Sprite, please.” He nodded, and turned toward the woman, who was already writing it down.

“It’ll be out in a moment.” She tapped the table, her eyes lingering too long on Jett. Abbie dropped her gaze back to the picture. She didn’t really feel like coloring, though.

“Alright, where were we?” he grumbled. She didn’t look at him. “Hey, what’s wrong?” She shrugged. She felt stupid feeling like this. She didn’t have any claim over him. She couldn’t. Not when they’d agreed to just fun. God, she hated that word. Fun. “Abbie.”

“I’m fine.” She forced herself to smile brightly, finally looking up at him. His eyes narrowed slightly, his jaw tensing under his thick beard.

“I think we need to talk,” he said softly, her smile disappearing.

“I was already bad, wasn’t I? I’m so sorry. You can talk to her. You can look at her—at any woman. It’s fine. I know we’re—”

“Hold on.” He held his meaty hand up. “What are you talking about?”

“The waitress,” she mumbled, shrugging. “She’s really pretty. And she keeps looking at you, and you’re—”

“I only have eyes for you, baby.”

Her insides tightened. Baby. How often had she dreamed of someone, of a man, calling her that?

“You don’t think she’s pretty?” she asked pathetically, and he shook his head.

“Not even a little bit. Not nearly as pretty as you are.” She didn’t know if she fully believed him, but it was kind. “And you weren’t being bad. You never could be.”

“You don’t know me,” she blurted. “I could be bad all the time.”

“A bit naughty, maybe. But never bad.” His eyes searched hers, his fingers twitching. She wanted to touch him, but was scared to ask. She didn’t want to come off too needy. “Are you okay? Need anything? We can change tables or ask for a new server. Or go somewhere else.” She shook her head firmly.

“It’s okay. Sometimes my brain thinks something and then I spiral.” She gave him a weak smile, and he nodded sympathetically.

“You tell me when that happens, alright? I’ll stop you from spiraling. And if you’re already doing it, I’ll pull you out. I’m here to help you, pretty girl.”

Those words should not make her feel choked up, but they did. Panic immediately filled his face.

“What?” he asked frantically. “Shit. What did I say?”

“Nothing,” she laughed, batting her cheeks with her fingertips. “It was just really nice.” His eyes searched hers.

“I don’t do great with emotion,” he admitted. “But I’ll try.”

“If you want me to stop crying, you need to talk about something else!” she cried, rubbing her eyes with her fist.

“Twilight,” he said desperately. “It’s your favorite movie.” She grinned as he shook his head.

“Have you seen it?”

“Can’t say I have.”

“Can we watch it after your smokey movie?” She bounced a few times on the booth, and he chuckled.

“Sure thing, pretty girl. Anything you want.” Her smile broadened. “I was thinking we could talk about—“

“The Great Otter Race?”

He just stared at her.

“That’s a thing?”

She shrugged. “Don’t know. But it should be, don’t you think?”

“Definitely,” he agreed, his lips twitching. “Let’s talk about us. Our expectations, limits, all that.”

“But we’ve gone over it already,” she groaned, and he shook his head.

“You sent me a list of your limits—well, no. It was more of a list of shit that you were fine with. But you have to have limits, Abbie. You can’t be into everything.” She shrugged, lowering her eyes.

“I haven’t tried much, so I don’t know.”

“You’d be into knife play?” he asked, and her eyes widened. “You want me to cut you up? Lick your blood?”

“No!” She looked horrified.

“What about chasing you through the woods? And when I caught you, I could do anything I wanted to you.”

“Running? No thanks.” She wasn’t opposed to the second part of that, though.

“We haven’t talked about punishments. We haven’t come up with a safe word. We haven’t even decided what exactly we want to be to each other. You have to pick actual limits, because if I think you’re open to everything and try something that scares or hurts you, I’ll want to die. So, we have to just figure it out, okay?”

She began to breathe quicker. It was a lot to throw at her. A lot of decisions. She wasn’t great at decisions. Logically, she knew she needed to talk about all this, but her brain wasn’t working. Static was blaring in her head and she couldn’t think past the sound.

“Abbie?” She shook her head as she tried to breathe. She was fine. She knew she was. But why did her body feel so hot? Why was she suddenly lightheaded? And why were her fingers tingling?

Oh, and that pesky thing called breathing? Yeah, she couldn’t do it. She couldn’t take a breath. Why couldn’t she breathe? Was something wrong with her lungs? Probably.

It was fitting her lungs would stop working in front of the hottest man she’d ever seen.

Suddenly, a massive body was next to her, pressing her into the wall. A pair of dark, worried eyes peered down at her.

“You’re okay,” Jett soothed. “I’m here.” She just stared at him. “Are you breathing?”

She didn’t think so.

Her vision was starting to go spotty.

That probably wasn’t good.

“Shit. Baby, breathe.” Her hand was lifted from the table and placed on a strong, warm chest. He inhaled deeply, and she felt his chest rise. “Breathe with me.”

She tried to copy him, but it was so hard.

“I said to breathe.” His voice dropped, and it was full of command. Full of dominance. She found herself taking a breath. Just a small one. Just enough for a little air to fill her lungs. “That’s my good girl. You’re doing great. Breathe again.”

She stared straight into his eyes as he made her breathe again. Maybe later she’d feel embarrassed. But right then, she felt safe.

Taken care of.

“Such a good girl,” he murmured. “Keep breathing for me.” She whimpered, and he scooted closer. “I’m here, pretty girl. I’ve got you.”

They took a few more deep breaths, then she leaned her forehead on his huge bicep. Finally, her heart calmed and her breathing evened out.

“I’m sorry,” she croaked. He lifted his arm and draped it around her, pulling her close to his side. Jeez, he smelled so good.

“Don’t apologize,” he said softly. “Just relax. Are you thirsty?” She nodded, then a straw was at her lips. She took a small sip, sighing at the sweet taste of Sprite. “That happen a lot?”

“It used to happen more.” She nestled deeper into his side, his arm a comforting anchor around her.

“Why did it just happen?” His voice was low, soothing. Coaxing.

“Overwhelmed.”

Jeez, it was dark in here. Why was it so dark?

She forced her eyelids apart, and winced at the brightness. Okay, not dark. She just had her eyes shut.

“Overwhelmed by my questions?”

“Mhm.”

She shut her eyes again, sighing at the sweet darkness.

“I won’t do that again,” he murmured, and she yawned. Why was she so tired? Maybe because she hadn’t been able to sleep last night. And her anxiety from the day. And the panic attack.

It was a lot.

“Just rest, pretty girl.”

“Need to go home,” she mumbled. “Ottie.”

“I’ve got you. Just rest.”

# eleven

. . .

**S**o this isn't how he saw his day going. He definitely didn't think he'd be a makeshift pillow for this girl, but here he was in the middle of the diner, blocking her from view with his body as she cuddled into his side.

He didn't want to wake her, but knew she'd probably be embarrassed as shit when she was more alert later. But this felt so right. He stroked her silky hair as he stared down at her, watching her lips press together before relaxing.

"Abbie?" he whispered. She didn't stir. How out of it was she?

He should've known better than to bombard her with all those questions. He was overwhelmed himself, he couldn't imagine how she felt. This wasn't a normal situation, which is why he wanted to figure it out. He wanted to have a plan. That's who he was.

He was so far out of his fucking depth, it wasn't even funny.

"Pretty girl," he cooed softly, only loud enough for her to hear. "Want some grilled cheese?" He tried to keep his touch gentle and coaxing, wanting her to wake up, but she barely stirred. "I have a surprise for you too. But you have to eat your lunch."

That got her attention.

He knew the moment she was fully awake because her little body stiffened. She jerked away from him, and he tried

not to take it personally. He'd be freaked out too if he were her.

“Sorry,” he said gruffly, moving to slide from the booth. But then her smaller hand rested on his tattooed wrist, and he paused. He stared at it, at their contrast.

*What the fuck was he doing?*

His gaze lifted to hers and she sucked in a breath as she stared back at him. There was so much he wanted to say, so much he wanted to ask. He wanted to make things clear between them, but after what just happened, it didn't feel right to bombard her again.

“I didn't mean to do that,” she muttered, and he dipped his chin.

“It's alright.” But she shook her head at his words, her brows pinching together.

“It's not. But thanks for saying so.” With a deep breath, she removed her hand from his arm and turned back toward the table, looking closed off.

*Move or stay? Move or stay?*

He fought with himself, unsure of what to do. Leave her alone and go back to his side of the booth, or stay next to her while they had their meal? What would make her feel more comfortable? More secure?

He didn't know, and it was pissing him off. When there was a problem, he liked to figure out the solution and fix it. He didn't like feeling like this. Unsure. Unprepared.

Without a word, he grabbed his plate and dragged it across the table. He settled in, picking up his burger and taking a bite. Her eyes were on him as he reached for his sweet tea, but he ignored her, not wanting to make a big deal out of it.

He tapped his finger against the side of her plate. “Eat,” he rumbled. Her breath caught, but she didn't reach for her food. “Abbie.” He turned toward her with his brows raised. Her eyes narrowed slightly.

“You said you had a surprise for me,” she said slowly. “Was that a lie to wake me up?”

“If you eat, you can find out,” he said. She rolled her eyes as she looked down at her plate. Damn, if she were really his, he’d take her to the bathroom, flip up that little skirt, and spank her ass until it was the same shade of pink.

“Want a bite?” She held up half of the sandwich, her eyes dancing as she grinned at him.

“I’ll try whatever’s left,” he told her. “Eat, Abbie.” With a sigh that was far too dramatic for the situation, she took a bite and chewed exaggeratedly.

Such a little brat.

The cutest little brat he’d ever seen.

They ate in silence for a few minutes, but then his worries began creeping in again. He needed answers to his questions. The problems wouldn’t just disappear if they ignored it.

One thing at a time.

Clearing his throat, he turned to watch her. She hummed happily to herself as she nibbled a thick-cut fry, bouncing slightly on the seat.

“I’m going to ask you a question while you eat,” he said. She stopped humming, but still bounced slightly. Nodding, she took a larger bite of her fry, watching him warily. “What would you like your safeword to be? Something easy to remember. Something you wouldn’t normally say.”

“I say a lot of things all the time,” she said, and he scrubbed his hand over his mouth, hiding his smile.

“What about red?” he asked, and she shrugged.

“A bit boring.” She turned her gaze toward the ceiling as she thought. Suddenly, she snapped her fingers. “I know!”

“What is it?”

“Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious! Perfect, right?” Her smile was wicked, and he shook his head.

“Something a bit easier, pretty girl,” he chuckled.

“That one was gold. Can’t believe you didn’t like it,” she muttered to herself. “What about snickerdoodle?” He huffed out a laugh, but nodded.

“You’ll remember to say that if you need to?” he asked, and she nodded.

“Of course, I will. They’re my favorite cookies.” He made a mental note as he nodded.

“Snickerdoodle it is then. If you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, sick, hurting—just, if you feel—”

“I know how to use a safe word,” she interrupted, giving him a teasing smile. He sighed as he ran his hand over his short hair.

“I felt like I needed to explain it.”

“I’ve got it, big guy.” She patted his arm. “Now,” she clapped, rubbing her hands together, “let’s get to the surprise part. What is it?” He shook his head, smiling.

“Another question,” he said, and she groaned. “So dramatic.”

He’d said it teasingly, but her face fell and he knew he’d fucked up. “Sorry.”

“I was kidding,” he said gently, but the smile she gave him didn’t reach her eyes. “Abb—”

“Next question?” she interrupted.

He wanted to pry, but knew he had no right to. So instead, he just took a deep breath and moved on. “You don’t have to decide this on your own,” he began, and her brows pinched together. “What exactly do you want out of this?” He waved his hand between them, watching her carefully. He didn’t want her to have another panic attack, but he was about to have one if he didn’t get at least a few answers.

“What do you mean?” she breathed.

His eyes dropped to her lap, finding her twisting her hands together. He wanted to reach out and stop her. He wanted to

reassure her. Let her know it's fine, she didn't need to have all the answers. He just didn't want to fuck up.

"We said fun," he said cautiously. She kept her face carefully blank. Too blank. "Is that still what you want?" Her lip slid between her teeth as she looked around the tiny diner.

"Yeah," she said, her voice high-pitched. "Yeah. Just some fun. That's it. Nothing more. Not for me. What about you?"

Somehow, he didn't believe those words. "Maybe," he drawled. "Maybe something more."

"More?" Her eyes widened, her face slightly flushing.

"Eventually. If that's something you'd want."

She was nodding before he was even done speaking. "Like, my real Daddy? Not pretend? And we can see each other? And have sleepovers? Could I put glitter in your beard? Paint your nails? Oh, I know! What about—"

She stopped talking as he began laughing, her face flushing a bright red. "We can do all that." He shook his head, still smiling at her. "How about this? We start off slow—" She groaned, long and loud, and he rolled his eyes. Seriously, so dramatic. "We start off slow—"

"How much slower can we possibly go?" she cried. "We're moving slower than snails!"

"No sex," he continued, ignoring her outburst. Her mouth snapped shut, her face going impossibly redder. "Not yet. We need to figure out limits. And what you said about me being your Daddy?" He subtly looked around, making sure no one was close enough to hear.

"Will you be? Please?" She began bouncing again, looking like an eager little puppy.

"You don't know me," he murmured. "You might not want me once we get to know each other better." She scoffed.

"Like that would ever happen."

"Abbie—"

“And if it did, we could just end things. Go our separate ways. Easy peasy, right?”

Yeah.

It would be so easy to just leave her.

“The whole reason I posted that listing was because I wanted a Daddy,” she said quietly. “To be honest, I don’t have a lot of friends. Well, any. I don’t have any friends. And...I don’t know. I read these books about these Daddies with their Littles, and it just seemed so nice to have someone like that, you know? I’m tired of being alone all the time. So I thought posting would let me meet my Daddy. And then you replied, and we started talking, and...” She shrugged as she trailed off. “I just wanna try it. And if we hate it, then we can just be friends.”

This was the most serious he’d ever heard her. When they texted, she was still silly, never taking anything seriously. And last night, even though she was anxious to talk to him on the phone, she wasn’t like this. Even when she had a panic attack, he didn’t think she was this serious.

He took a deep breath. “That’s what you really want? With me? You’re not just settling for me because I’m the first one who replied?” She shook her head.

“I’m not a dummy,” she muttered.

“I didn’t say you were.” He smoothed his fingers over the table, wishing he was touching her instead. “I just want to make sure you want this.”

“I do.” She rested her hand on his knee, and his dick twitched.

Not now.

That would be a disaster.

“I want you, Jett.”

Yeah, he was going to jack off thinking about those words coming from her lips later. Fuck him.

His voice came out deeper, more hoarse when he spoke again. "I want you too, Abbie." He dropped his gaze to her chest, watching as the small swell of her breast rose and fell with each breath.

"Now," she breathed, drawing his attention back to her face. "About that surprise?"

# twelve

. . .

Abbie didn't fully know what to expect as he led her to an old black truck. It was impossibly shiny, and lifted really high. There was no way she could get in without a running leap. Maybe they could just take her car if they were driving somewhere.

She paused a few feet from the car, watching as he walked to the passenger's side. She wasn't an idiot. She knew not to go near his car. He was still a stranger. A hot stranger she desperately wanted to fuck.

Okay, simmer down. He said he wanted to go slow. No sex. And what kind of bullfuzzies was that? She was a virgin, but she didn't want to be one much longer. Not when he was hopefully going to be around all the time.

The sound of him slamming the door shut startled her out of her pervy thoughts, and she blinked, smiling up at him as he made his way back to her. He held a little pink gift bag overflowing with white tissue paper in his hand.

He looked nervous as he stopped in front of her, gripping the white string for dear life.

"Is that it?" she asked excitedly. "I didn't get you anything. I'm sorry. I didn't know we were exchanging gifts." He waved dismissively and roughly cleared his throat.

"You don't need to get me anything. Just seeing you is enough."

Jeez Louise, she was going to get a cavity from how freaking sweet he was.

“If you hate it, I can take it back and get you something else,” he said as he handed her the bag. She barely listened as she ripped the paper out and shoved it at him, then reached in and gasped as her fingers brushed over something soft.

Pulling out the stuffie, she held it in front of her, her mouth hanging open.

“Oh my God,” she breathed.

“You hate it,” he groaned. “Give it back. I’ll return it—“

“Don’t you dare touch him,” she growled, clutching the stuffed seal to her chest. “The flamethrower in my bag? Remember that? I’ll use it if you try to take Sealy from me.”

“Flamethrower?”

“I combined the gun and lighter. More efficient.”

She looked back at her little gray seal. He was so freaking cute, and she somehow knew Ottie would love playing with Sealy. Oh, she was so excited to introduce them.

“Ottie is used to being an only child,” she muttered, glancing at him. “You know how they can be. He’ll likely be jealous of Sealy taking some of my attention away from him. But he’ll get over it.”

“Good,” Jett said tightly. She glanced up at him, finding his eyes crinkled and his hand covering his mouth. Maybe he had heartburn. Also something that happened with age.

“Thank you, Da—Jetty! I love it!” She wasn’t sure if she was ready to call him Daddy yet. Despite wanting it to her soul, she didn’t feel like it was right yet, and she didn’t want to force it.

He cleared his throat again, sliding his hands into the pockets of his jeans. “You’re welcome, pretty girl.” She chewed on her lip as she clutched Sealy to her chest. “What is it?”

“Can I give you a hug?” she blurted. He looked a bit startled, and she braced herself for rejection. But to her utter shock, he opened his arms wide.

She threw herself at him. He didn't budge an inch as she wrapped her arms around his waist. He was so broad, her hands couldn't reach all the way around, but she didn't care. Not when he wrapped his big arms around her and held her close.

Her eyes fluttered closed as she breathed his scent in. Not in a weird way. But something about it made her feel safe. She nestled her head against his chest, and he seemed to relax.

“Come on, pretty girl. I'll walk you to your car.”

“We're leaving already?” she asked, pulling her head away to look up at him.

“It's already two. I don't want to take up your whole day.” She scrunched her nose at his words.

“You were supposed to be my day,” she said softly, and his face softened. He squeezed her again, holding her close, and she smiled.

She liked this. A lot. She could get used to it.

“Wanna come over?” she asked, and his eyes widened.

“Jesus Christ, baby. You need to have more self preservation. You're going to give me a heart attack.” What the heck was he talking about? “We just met this afternoon. You shouldn't invite me to your house. I could be a killer.”

“Are you?”

“What?” He blinked.

“Are you a serial killer?” she asked, stepping from him. She missed his warmth, but she kept her distance.

“Of course not!” he said, shaking his head, looking horrified. “But you don't know that.”

“But you just said you weren't.” She scratched her head. He was so confusing.

“You can’t just believe someone because they say something,” he sighed. “I could’ve been lying.”

“Are you lying?”

“I’m not. But you never—“

“I’m confused,” she interrupted. “Are you trying to convince me that you’re a serial killer? Because I didn’t think you were. Well. I did earlier, but that was before we met. But now I know you’re not.”

“But you don’t know that,” he said, exasperated. She squeezed her eyes shut, shaking her head.

“Okay, are you, or are you not a serial killer?”

“No. I’m not,” he said, and she nodded. Obviously.

“So...what’s the problem? I’m not inviting anyone else to my apartment. Just you.”

He dropped his head back, groaning. “You are so fucking innocent,” he said under his breath. “You’re going to give me gray hair prematurely.”

“I think you already have some,” she muttered, touching her temple where she saw some gray peeking through his dark hair. He leveled her with a hard look, and her hand drifted behind her.

Yep. That was definitely his I’m about to spank you face, and jeez was it hot.

Nope. She definitely shouldn’t think his spanking face was hot. But it was, and it wasn’t her fault.

“I do not have gray hair,” he growled, and she quickly nodded.

“Nope. Of course you don’t. I don’t see any gray hair. Must’ve been a trick of the light.” The words fell from her mouth rapidly, but he just huffed out a laugh, shaking his head at her.

“I’m not coming to your house today,” he said firmly. “Maybe one day soon. But not today.”

“I still don’t fully understand,” she mumbled. “I thought you were safe?”

“We’re not doing this again.” He scrubbed his hand over his face, looking tired. Did old people need to take naps? He might’ve needed one. “Do you want to play for a bit?” He waved his hand toward the swing set and she bounced on her toes.

She really wanted to, but knew people would likely stare and she didn’t want him to be uncomfortable. “I really love Sealy,” she said instead, ignoring his question. His eyes narrowed slightly, but he dipped his chin.

“You’re welcome, baby. I wasn’t sure how attached to otters you were.”

“I love all animals.” She hugged Sealy to her chest. He really was a cutie.

She let out a long sigh. What else could they do if not go to her house? That’s where all her stuff was. And she didn’t really want to be watched while she played on the swings or jungle gym.

“There’s a museum down the street,” Jett suddenly said. Her gaze lifted from Sealy’s beady one, to Jett’s warm one. She tried not to let her excitement show. “We could go there.”

“What kind of museum?” Not that it really mattered. She’d go to any museum ever.

“I don’t remember. But I saw a sign on the way over.” She bounced on the balls of her feet, barely containing an excited squeal. “I’ll take that as a yes?” She bobbed her head eagerly.

“Yes! I’ll race you!” she cried, turning to sprint to her car. A big hand wrapped around her arm, stopping her. Her bottom lip pushed out as she looked over her shoulder at him.

“No racing. You’ll drive safely, or not at all. Understand me?”

Oh, that was a voice she hadn’t heard before. And she liked it. A lot.

Something was so wrong with her.

But mixing that voice with his spanking face...yeah, just kill her now, because it was a deadly combo.

“Do you understand me, little girl?” he growled, his voice firmer, leaving no room for naughtiness.

She let out a long sigh. “Yes,” she sulked. “I won’t race you.”

“And?” His brows rose expectantly.

“And I’ll follow all the silly traffic laws and drive safely.” She barely stopped herself from rolling her eyes. What a party pooper. She always drove fast, especially when there was a good song on the radio.

But it seemed like she wouldn’t be allowed to have any fun with Mr. Grumpy-Party-Pooper-Pants around.



YOU COULDN’T PRY THE SMILE OFF ABBIE’S FACE WITH A freaking crowbar as she danced up the steps to her apartment. She’d had the best afternoon ever.

She and Jett went to the museum—it ended up being a space museum, and while space tended to make her anxious as heck, she still enjoyed it. Mostly because he seemed to be amazed by everything. She was grateful it wasn’t the fine art museum she worked at, because that one was just a few blocks from the space one and it would’ve been awkward having to explain to her coworkers who this hunk of a guy was with her.

Next door to the space museum was this tiny toy store. She’d wanted to go inside, but hadn’t said anything. Just made a mental note to go there during her lunch break on her next shift. But Jett must be a mind reader, because he didn’t say a word as he dragged her in and told her to pick something out.

Of course, she’d played coy and pretended like she didn’t want anything. But when she saw a little turtle, she knew she had to have it. Ottie and Sealy needed a baby sister. But he’d already gotten her Sealy, and she hadn’t wanted to seem

ungrateful, so she, again, made a mental note to come get that turtle another time.

Maybe she just had a really bad poker face, because he scooped it up and bought it for her. Then he took her out for ice cream, and...yeah. It'd been a great day.

Everything about her time with him felt magical.

She still didn't fully understand why he was so against coming back to her apartment. It wasn't like she'd jump his bones the second they walked inside. Even if she'd thought about climbing him like a tree a few times today, she had some self control.

Kind of.

Not really.

But it wasn't her fault he was so climbable.

She stepped onto the landing and shock froze her, her smile dropping. Her spine snapped straight and her shoulders went back.

“Abigail. Where have you been? I've been knocking.”

Abbie's mouth opened then closed. What was her mother doing here? She'd never been to her apartment before.

Ever.

She always said she'd never step foot in this part of town. After Abbie chose to leave her family's money and influence behind in favor of living life the way she wanted to, she had to make ends meet.

Yeah, her apartment wasn't the best and the neighborhood sucked, and most of the people in the complex were either on drugs or selling them, but this was home. And she loved it.

She loved it because she'd gotten it all on her own, without any help. All the things inside she'd saved up for and bought herself.

And now her mother was here, her lips pressed into a thin line as she stared at her.

It wasn't like her presence could take everything from her, squash all her accomplishments, but it felt like that. It felt like the second her mother stepped over the threshold into her apartment, everything was over.

"Mother," Abbie said slowly, forcing herself to take a step forward. "What are you doing here?"

"I have a few things to discuss with you." She glanced over her shoulder as Wes' door opened and he stepped out.

He turned and paused, his blue eyes wide as he shifted them between Abbie and her mother. Roughly, he cleared his throat and hesitated before stepping forward, giving Abbie a wary look. He could probably feel the unease rippling off Abbie, and the disapproval coming from her mother.

"Abbie-Girl," he murmured, still looking between the two women.

"Hey, Wes. This is my mother. Mother, this is my friend Wes." Her mother gave him a tight, demure smile as she clutched her purse tighter to her side.

"Ma'am." He dipped his head as he passed, and she all but plastered herself to Abbie's door. "You good?" His voice was low enough for only her to hear.

"Fine. I'll text you later." She patted his arm and tried to give him a reassuring smile, but he still looked unsure. He knew some of what happened.

A few days after she moved in, she'd accidentally locked herself out of her apartment. She was sitting against her door sobbing and generally feeling bad about herself, berating herself, telling herself she couldn't make it on her own and how stupid she'd been to think otherwise.

But then Wes' grease-stained boots stopped in front of her before he crouched and asked if she needed help. She spilled her guts to him that night.

"I promise I'm okay," she said softly, her fingers tightening on his arm. He gave her mother a final glance, one that wasn't entirely friendly, and nodded before reluctantly making his way down the stairs.

“You have interesting friends,” her mother sneered, and Abbie took a deep breath.

She just wanted a reaction, and Abbie wouldn’t give it to her. Not today.

“Would you like to come inside?” she asked tiredly, gesturing to the door. Her mother barely stepped to the side as Abbie rummaged through her Ottie look-alike purse and found her gold key at the bottom.

She tried to ignore her presence as she shoved her door open and stepped inside, trying to remember if she’d cleaned up. But who was she kidding? Of course she hadn’t remembered to clean up.

Clothes were strewn everywhere, a half-drunk cup of coffee was still sitting on the counter, and a crumpled bag of Cheetos was on her clear acrylic coffee table. Panic clawed at her chest as she looked around, and she braced herself for her mother’s reprimand.

But it didn’t come.

Instead, her hands tightened around her purse, her lips still pressed tightly together as she walked into her living room. She paused when she saw her otter chair, her Botoxed brows barely rising.

“Is that an...”

“Otter? Yeah, it is.” Abbie dropped her bags on the counter before turning toward her mother. It was a small apartment, basically everything in one room.

Living room and U-shaped kitchen were one open space, and a small hallway in the back led to her bedroom and the bathroom. Her mother got a good look at everything as she scanned the small space before her gaze finally landed on her.

“Were you shopping?” she asked, giving her toy store bag a pointed look. Abbie chewed her lip as she glanced at it and the gift bag beside it.

“Um, yeah. Kylie’s daughter’s birthday is Tuesday,” she lied. “I wanted to get her something.”

“Kylie?”

“A girl I work with,” she muttered.

Kylie was probably the only one she actually liked. She was a custodian and extremely introverted, but kind. Or Abbie thought she was kind. She’d never actually had a conversation with her. They just smiled as they passed each other in the hallway.

Her mother nodded a few times, then looked at the pink velvet couch, then back at the otter chair. “You can sit,” Abbie blurted. “The couch might be more comfortable than the chair.”

She watched her mother’s throat delicately bob as she swallowed, then watched in shock as she sank to the otter chair and perched on the edge.

“Please, Abigail. Sit. We need to talk.”

Her tummy was in tight knots as she rounded the couch, shoving the teal blanket and a stray box of cookies away as she sat. She folded her hands in her lap, mimicking her mother’s posture as she smiled tightly.

“Okay. About what?”

Her mother took a deep breath as she shifted on the chair. “As you know, your grandfather passed away years ago.” Abbie’s brows pushed together. What did that have to do with anything? “Apparently, he left you a hefty inheritance.” She blinked.

Inheritance?

“He did?” she breathed, and her mother’s pointed chin barely dipped. “How much?”

“Two-hundred-fifty-thousand dollars.”

Abbie’s mouth fell open. “Oh my God.”

“Since you decided to leave, your father and I weren’t sure if you’d want it. But we’ve talked, and have decided—”

“You’ve kept it from me?” she asked breathlessly. They couldn’t do that, could they?

“We didn’t keep it,” her mother gritted out. “It’s not yours until you’re twenty-five, or we decide to give it to you.”

“But he left it for me.” Abbie pressed her hand to her chest, tears burning her eyes.

“With conditions.” Her mother took a deep breath, her long, elegant fingers twisting together. “Your father and I have a proposition for you.”

Abbie tried to swallow past the lump in her throat, tried to hear past the roaring in her ears.

“Abigail?” She wiped at her face as she looked back at her mother. The quicker she left, the quicker Abbie could have a breakdown in peace.

“A proposition,” she rasped, even though she felt like she knew what it was going to be before her mother even spoke.

“We’ll give you all the money early if you move back home.”

Abbie’s heart fell to her feet. She knew it was coming but it didn’t make the words any easier to digest.

“I—I don’t want to move back home. I like it here.” Her mother scoffed, waving dismissively.

“You’ve had your little rebellion, it’s time to grow up and come home.” Abbie shook her head at the words.

“It’s not a rebellion. It’s my life.”

“Abigail—”

“Abbie!” she cried, banging her fists on the couch. “My name is Abbie!” Her mother’s expression didn’t shift as she stared coldly back at her. “It’s my life! I don’t want that money. I’ll wait until I’m twenty-five, and if it still has your strings tied to it, I won’t take it. I don’t want it.”

“You’re being unreasonable. You’d really rather live here than with us? You’d rather be poor than have that money?” She looked around as she spoke, looking like she was afraid of contracting syphilis.

“Yes! I’d rather live under a bridge than live with you!”

“Abi—”

“Get out. I don’t want you here anymore. Please leave. Please—just get out.”

Her mouth opened and closed, her eyes widening as shock finally filled her face. Abbie felt a bit guilty for blowing up on her, but it was all too much. Despite her amazing day with Jett, her emotions were shot. She’d been through a lot, had highs and lows and was tired. Her mother’s words were the final push to send her over the edge.

Abbie didn’t let her mother say anything else as she rose from the couch and made her way across the small apartment with as much dignity as she could muster. She slowly opened the door and prayed some lunatic wasn’t on the other side as she held it open and stared at her mother, biting her tongue to keep her tears in.

Slowly, her mother stood and walked gracefully toward her. Abbie’s hand tightened around the doorknob as she got closer. She held her breath, anticipating more words to be spat at her, but her mother simply walked by, her chin lifted high. She slammed the door after her, finally letting the tears she’d tried to keep in flow freely.

Her mother’s perfume lingered in the air long after she’d disappeared, and Abbie pressed her back to the door as she sank to the floor.

It was insulting to know her parents saw her independence as an act of rebellion. That’s not what it was. It’s freedom. It’s her life. She’d worked hard for everything she’d done, everything she owned, and she only had herself to thank for it.

But it stung knowing she was little more than a joke to them.

# thirteen

. . .

Jett tried not to check his phone for the millionth time, but worry was coiled tightly in his gut. He hadn't heard from Abbie since they spent the day together...two days ago.

It hadn't been from a lack of trying. He'd texted her a few times Saturday night, but when he hadn't heard back, he assumed she needed a breather. So he gave it to her. But by mid-morning on Sunday, he broke and texted again. Five times. Then called.

Nothing.

Every time he tried to reach out, he was left with a bigger knot in his stomach than he'd had before.

Now it was Monday afternoon, and he still hadn't heard from her. He should've gone to her apartment when she invited him Saturday, at least then he could show up and demand to know she was alright.

Or maybe she met him and didn't feel the same connection he'd felt. Which he couldn't blame her for. She was a sweet, gorgeous girl. And he was...well, he was him. Too big. Too rough.

He knew those were Mandy's words, but it was hard not to constantly hear her voice when things went wrong.

"Hey, man. Someone's here. Can you go inside while Livy helps them?"

Jett's head lifted as Abel made his way to him, wiping his hand on his navy blue uniform shirt. He glanced at the office

window, finding Livy standing at the counter helping some guy, and he sighed. It was a rule to never let her be alone with male customers knowing how big of assholes they could be to women in this industry.

“On it,” he sighed as he pushed to his feet. Abel caught his arm as he passed, his dark brows bunched.

“You good?”

“Fine.”

He looked like he didn't believe him, which didn't surprise him. Abel saw everything, especially things no one wanted him to.

“You'd tell me if something was wrong?” he asked, and Jett snorted.

“Course not.” Abel let out a long sigh, his dirty hand falling to his side.

“Didn't think so. Go.”

He jerked his chin at the office, and Jett didn't waste any time as he stepped inside. The man at the counter's head briefly lifted, a smile on his face. It fell when he did a double take, fully taking Jett in as he stormed to the front.

Livy's face was bright red, her blonde hair tucked behind her ears as she fidgeted. The guy straightened to his full height, his gaze flicking between them.

“What do you want?” Jett asked, and Livy's head snapped to him.

“What do I want?” he repeated incredulously.

“He means—”

“Yeah, why are you here? What do you need? What do you want?” Jett sank onto the rolling chair as he stared at the man. Even if he was sitting, everyone in the room knew he still had the upper hand.

“Oil change,” he said tightly, trying to keep his voice light as he glanced at Livy.

“I was just ringing him up,” she said, and Jett nodded, not taking his eyes off the guy.

He knew he was being an asshole, but not hearing from Abbie was making him cranky. Was making him worried. But mostly he didn't know what to do, and that pissed him off more than anything else. There was a problem, and he didn't know how to fix it.

He needed to fix it.

Livy glared at him as she stomped to the old little computer and angrily typed, sending him periodic dirty looks. The guy shifted uncomfortably as he flicked his gaze between them. Had he interrupted something? Why were they being so weird?

“Just take a seat. Someone will be in to help you in a moment.” Livy smiled sweetly up at him, and the guy nodded before clearing his throat.

Reaching across the counter for a pen, Jett shifted on his seat as he watched the guy scribble something down on a piece of paper. Livy's face flushed bright red as she tucked her hair behind her ears again.

“Call me anytime,” he said quietly, and her lips twisted into a hidden grin.

“I will. Thanks.” She slid the paper into her pocket and he shot her a wink as he made his way to the lobby area and sat down. Jett's eyes were narrowed as Livy turned toward him, her smile immediately falling. Lifting her finger, she pointed at the door behind him. “Back office. Now.”

Sighing, he pushed to his feet and trudged forward, feeling her glare stabbing him in the back. As soon as they were inside, she slammed the door as he turned toward her.

“What the hell was that?” she snapped, throwing her hand out.

“What? I was just making sure he wasn't harassing you.”

“The only person harassing anyone was you!” she scolded, folding her arms over her chest. It would be comical to see this

tiny woman scolding him, but as small as she was, she could hold her own, probably more than most of the guys. “You were being an even bigger dick than usual.”

“Thanks,” he said dryly. She let out a long sigh.

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing. Just slept like shit last night.” Her eyes narrowed.

“You were weirdly happy all last week, and now you’re weirdly miserable. Who is she?”

“What?” He blinked at her. Was he that easy to read?

“The girl. Who is she? God, you’re not back with Mandy, are you?”

“Fuck no,” he scoffed.

“Good. Then who—”

“No one,” he said, even though it tasted like ash. Abbie wasn’t no one, she was someone. She was everything. But how did he go about explaining this whole messy situation to someone?

Livy stared at him patiently, waiting for him to make a decision. He shouldn’t tell her anything. He should keep it to himself. But she was around Abbie’s age and she was always on her phone, always on social media. Maybe she could find Abbie for him.

But was that crossing a line? Would that freak her out?

Sighing, he ran his hand over his hair. “Her name’s Abbie,” he started. And it was like once he began, he couldn’t stop. He told Livy everything, from how they met, to their amazing day on Saturday, to how he hadn’t heard from her since. She listened, making sympathetic sounds as she nodded.

“And you’re sure everything was okay when you parted ways?” she asked, and he nodded, staring down at the old linoleum tiled floor. “Then maybe there was some emergency, and she hasn’t had time to get back to you.”

Maybe, but something told him that wasn't it.

“Or she could've gotten sick.”

Yeah, maybe. But any excuse wasn't a good enough one. If she had a problem, he wanted to be the one she came to to help solve it. If she was sick, he wanted to nurse her back to health. If she had an emergency, he wanted to be there with her through it.

But this shutting him out bullshit? He didn't like it. He hated it.

He knew he didn't really have any claim over her, couldn't make her talk to him or be in his life, but maybe that should change.

She clearly didn't think he was all in, and maybe before Saturday, he hadn't been. He'd still be reserved, waiting for the other shoe to drop, or waiting for her to find someone better than him. But maybe he needed to put his insecurities aside and claim that girl as his own because not talking to her was killing him.

She wanted a Daddy, so maybe it was time for him to be her Daddy.

# fourteen

. . .

**H**er phone vibrated, but she ignored it. After her visit from her mother, Abbie had spiraled all weekend. She'd spiraled straight down that dark hole she'd always tried so hard to climb out of, but here she was, lying in bed and staring at the ceiling, depression overtaking her.

She called in to work and skipped her morning classes. She felt herself getting bad again, but she couldn't seem to shake herself out of it. And she didn't entirely know why she felt so bad. It wasn't like anything her mother did or said was true, so her words shouldn't affect her, but they did.

Vibrations shook her pillow again, and she groaned as she grabbed her phone and stared at the screen. It was Jett calling. Again.

But she didn't want him to see her like this, to hear her like this. She was supposed to be happy all the time. She was supposed to enhance his life, not make it worse. So it was better for everyone if she just disappeared for a bit, just until she got her emotions back in order. Then she'd call him and beg for his forgiveness and hope it wasn't too late.

His call went to voicemail, but immediately it began ringing again. Couldn't he take a hint? She wasn't in the mood to talk. But it wasn't fair to him to treat him like this. If she wanted to have a relationship with him, or any other living, breathing adult man, she needed to learn how to communicate.

But she could do that later.

Right now, she just wanted to sleep.

She grabbed Ottie, Sealy, and Flash and clutched them tightly as she watched her phone screen go dark, then light up as he called her again. Maybe she could just send him a quick text. Let him know she was fine and still alive, but she just needed some time.

Or maybe he'd get tired of chasing and just leave her alone, kind of like everyone else did when she got like this. She didn't really know why she retreated in on herself. All she knew was that when she felt like this, she just wanted to be alone. She wanted to deal with it all alone.

Maybe it was because her family never knew how to manage her when she was depressed, or maybe it was because she'd learned a long time ago that no one really cared how sad she was. The world still turned, and life went on. No one would sit around and wait for her to feel better.

But wouldn't it be nice if they did?

Another call came through, and for some stupid reason, it just annoyed her. Why was he doing this? He'd spaced his calls and texts out over hours over the weekend, never back to back like this.

Grabbing her phone, she answered it before she could talk any sense into herself. "What?" she growled. There was a long pause on the other end, then he cleared his throat.

"Is that any way to speak to Daddy, little girl?" he asked, his voice low. Her stomach did this stupid flip at the words, and she squeezed her eyes shut.

"I'm not in the mood to play," she whispered, her voice raw.

"And I'm not playing."

It was her turn to be quiet.

"You asked me to be your Daddy, so that's what I'm doing. I'm not going to leave you alone until you tell me to, and even then I might not. So, are you going to tell me what's going on and why you've been ignoring me, or am I going to have to take you over my knee to get some answers?"

Her mouth was hanging open, widening with each word he said. He could not be serious. She couldn't believe he'd just told her that!

And she hated her stupid body for reacting the way it did. It was ridiculous, and he was being way too demanding. But she liked it, and what did that say about her? That she was insane? Probably.

"Nothing's wrong," she muttered. She waited for him to say something, but when he stayed silent, she began squirming. "I just have some stuff going on right now. I'm sorry I worried you." Still nothing. Was that not the right answer?

"I'll give you one more chance to tell me the truth, then I'm going to start adding five spanks for every lie you tell."

"That's not fair!" she cried, but his silence told her he didn't much care about how fair she thought it was.

She took a deep breath, her fingers gliding along the different textures of her stuffies as she petted them. How much should she tell him? Everything? But telling him she was upset that she inherited a quarter of a million dollars and her rich mother asked her to move back into their ridiculously-sized mansion hardly seemed like a reason to get depressed.

He'd probably scoff, tell her she was being stupid. Poor little rich girl, upset she can't live the life she wants. So what? There are people dying. There are people who can't afford food or clothes. And she's upset about this?

It seemed silly.

"I had a talk with my mother when I got home Saturday. She said some stuff I wasn't stoked about, and I've been upset ever since." There. Not a lie, but not all the information, either.

"Talk about what?" he asked, and she sighed.

"Some family stuff."

Also not technically a lie.

“Is everything okay?” The genuine concern in his voice made her feel like garbage.

“Yeah. She just asked me to move back home, and I said no. We had a little argument, but nothing major. Everything’s fine. I’m just being dramatic and wallowing.” She tried to laugh, but it came out broken and tight.

“Where do you live?” he suddenly asked, and she pushed her brows together.

“What?”

“Where do you live?” he repeated. “I’m coming over. You sound sad. I don’t like it.” Her lips twitched, and she shook her head.

“I’m fine, Jett—”

“That’s not what you call me,” he growled. “Tell me where you live.”

“But you said not to let strangers come over.”

“If you don’t tell me what I want to know, I’m going to put a massive plug in your ass. Address, Abbie. Now.” She gasped and bolted upright in bed.

“You can’t do that!”

“Sure I can. I’m the Daddy, I can do whatever I want.”

“Who are you and what happened to Jett?”

“Abbie,” he growled, the warning clear in his tone. She pressed her thighs together, her clit throbbing. It was seriously unfair it was so hot when he said her name like that.

“My place is a mess,” she blurted.

“So is mine. Address.”

“But I have underwear everywhere. And bras. So many bras. And trash. A ton of trash.” She winced. That was all a lie. She wasn’t a total slob. Just a bit messy.

“I’ll clean for you. What’s the address?”

“I have a rat infestation, and if you come over you’ll get bitten, then who knows what’ll happen to you? You might

contract rabies, then I'd have to put you down, and you don't want me to have to do that, do you?"

"If you have a rat infestation, I'm definitely coming over and packing your shit and bringing you home with me. Then I'll hire an exterminator—"

"An exterminator!" she wailed. "They'll kill all the rats!"

"I'll make sure they're the non-killing kind of exterminator," he said calmly. "Abbie, what's your address, baby? Or do you not want me anymore?"

"No!" she cried, tears burning her eyes. "I mean, yes. Yes!" He was silent, and she rubbed her forehead. Even she confused herself. "Yes, I still want you."

"Then let me take care of you, pretty girl."

Her stomach was in knots as she told him her address. As soon as she finished, she jumped out of bed. "I have to go!" she shouted.

"Wait, why? What's wrong?"

"You're coming over!" She frantically looked around, then caught sight of herself in her mirror hanging on the back of her door. Her hair was a total mess, and she had stains on her pajamas. She sniffed herself, and yep, definitely needed a shower. "Oh God."

"It's okay," he laughed. "Just relax. I'll be there in fifteen."

"Fifteen minutes?" she cried.

"Yep. Don't stress, baby. I'll take care of everything once I'm there."

Don't stress, her butt. How could she not stress?

"I have to go," she breathed. "I need to take a shower and clean my apartment. And—oh God. Do I need to wash my sheets? When was the last time I washed my sheets? I'm supposed to do that weekly, right? It's definitely been longer than a week."

"I'll wash them for you. I can even help you with a bath. It's going to be okay," he said gently, and she shook her head.

She felt so overwhelmed. She didn't know how she was going to do everything in a few minutes. "Just breathe for me, pretty girl."

She forced herself to take a deep breath. One thing at a time. She could do one thing. And that thing was take the world's fastest shower.

# fifteen

. . .

**N**umber one-sixty-five.

The little gold numbers stared back at him, begging him to knock on the door. But his palms were sweating—actually, he was pretty sure every inch of him was coated in a nervous sweat. He glanced down at himself. Maybe he should've gone home to change out of his work clothes first. But when she'd answered and sounded so sad, he didn't think about anything else other than getting to her and cheering her up.

So he drove straight from the shop here. A part of him was happy she lived so close. He could pop over at his lunch break if she was home, or if she needed him, he was only a few blocks away. He thought he recognized the building as Wes' place, but he couldn't be sure. He'd only been here once, and it had been in the dead of night two years ago after they'd been at a bar and Wes was too drunk to drive himself.

He took a deep breath and raised his fist to the door. There was black grease under his nails and in the fine lines of his skin. He should've scrubbed himself raw before he left the shop.

Something crashed on the other side, followed by a loud wail, and all his worries about the way he looked flew out of his head as he banged on the door. "Abbie? Abbie! Are you alright?" She groaned, and panic surged through him. "Open the door!"

Another crash had him all but clawing his way through the dented, beaten up metal door. “Abbie!”

It flung open, and there she stood in a little light green crop top and denim shorts. She was barefoot, and her dark hair was in dutch braids. But when he got to her face and noticed the tears in her eyes, he stopped checking her out and scooped her into his arms. Walking into the apartment, he kicked the door shut behind him, holding her close to his chest.

“It’s okay, baby. Daddy’s here. What’s wrong?”

“H-hit my t-toe,” she whimpered.

“Oh, your toe? I’m so sorry, pretty girl. That’s gotta hurt.” He looked for a place to sit, pausing a moment too long on the chair in her living room. Was that an otter?

Shaking his head, he sank onto the couch and rearranged her on his lap. She rested her head on his chest, and he smoothed his hand down her back, gently rocking her.

“It’s okay. You’re okay. Want me to take a look?” She nodded pitifully, wiping at her eyes. Poor baby looked so tired.

He carefully grabbed her foot and pressed his lips together. Her little toe was a bit red, but it didn’t look broken. “Can you wiggle it for me?” She moved her toes, and he nodded. “It doesn’t look broken. You might need some ice. How about that?”

“It is broken!” she wailed, throwing herself back at him. She would’ve fallen off his lap if he hadn’t had a firm grip around her waist.

“Maybe so,” he muttered. “Maybe it needs to be amputated.” She gasped, pulling away from his chest.

“Amputated?”

Nodding sadly, he stared down at her little glittery purple-painted toe. “If it’s hurting that badly, it might be beyond repair. Might need to just take it off.” She shook her head, her damp eyes wide as she stared up at him.

“Don’t needs to take it off,” she muttered, and he smiled softly at the change of her voice. As if she noticed what she’d just done, she stiffened. “I’m fine.”

Gone was Little Abbie. Big Abbie was back.

“What were you doing?” he asked, eyeing her and her change of mood.

“Cleaning up.” He looked around. It didn’t look that messy. He’d seen his place in a bigger wreck than this.

“It looks fine,” he said. “Not a mess, like you said.”

“Don’t look in my closet and you’ll still believe that.” She grinned up at him. “Are you hungry? I can make us food—okay, that’s a lie. But I make a mean frozen pizza.”

“You relax, pretty girl. I said I wanted to take care of you.” He tucked some stray hair behind her ear and felt her body relax slightly. “Want to tell me what happened?”

Her eyes dropped as she shook her head. “I don’t wanna talk about it.”

He had to force himself to take a deep breath. She had that right. He couldn’t demand she talk about it, even if he really wanted to know. So, if she wouldn’t talk about it, then he’d just have to make her forget about it for a while.

“That’s alright,” he murmured. “I’ll be here when you’re ready.” She smiled weakly, her eyes still trained on the floor. “How was your day? Did you have classes today?”

Her face flushed red. “I, um. Well…”

“What?”

“I skipped,” she blurted. “I wasn’t in the mood to go. So I faked being sick and called in to work, and skipped my classes for the day.”

He just stared at her. She must’ve been really upset, and that made him feel even worse. Because while he was being a dickhead to everyone, including himself, she was suffering. He should’ve put his own feelings aside and made sure she was okay. He should’ve taken better care of her.

“I’m sorry, baby,” he said softly. She peeked up at him from under her lashes.

“You’re not mad at me?”

“Of course not.” He ran his hand over her back again and again, hoping it soothed her. “I don’t like that you skipped, but I understand you were upset about something. You can’t make a habit of it, though.” He added the last bit with a firmer voice and felt her shiver against him.

“Yes, Daddy.”

He sucked in a sharp breath. It was the first time he’d heard her say that to him. She’d said it over text, but he hadn’t heard it come from her sweet voice, and fuck, it did something to him.

“Oh, no. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that—”

“Why?” he interrupted, and her mouth closed then opened again, but no sound came out.

“You—you don’t mind?”

“Baby, we agreed to this. I’m Daddy, you’re my pretty little girl. You still want that, don’t you?” She bobbed her head slowly. “I’ve done some thinking.”

“Oh, no. That can’t be good. Did you hurt yourself?” She tapped his head as she inspected it, like she was looking for damage.

“Brat.” He dug his thick fingers into her sides, tickling her, and she squealed.

“Mercy!” she cried, and he immediately stopped, but still held her close.

“I want you to know that I’m all in. I don’t want to go slow anymore. I don’t want to be cautious. These last couple days not talking to you has driven me insane, and it made me realize how much I really want you. I know we already said we wanted to do this, and that eventually we could have something more, but I want that now and I don’t want to wait.”

She stared up at him, and he braced himself for her to tell him to get lost. To tell him she didn't want anything serious with him. Instead, she threw her arms around his thick neck, burying her face in it.

"I want that too," she whispered.

"Yeah?" He wrapped his arms tightly around her, hugging her to his chest.

"I never wanted to move slow." He smiled to himself. Yeah, she wasn't a patient person. Not a cautious one, either. But he was. He liked doing things the right way, and oftentimes, the right way meant doing it slowly. To make sure he didn't make any mistakes.

But being with Abbie wasn't a mistake. He knew that in his soul. He wanted her.

"So," she pulled away, and he reluctantly let her, "if you introduce me to someone, who do you say I am?"

"I say this is my naughty little girl, Abbie," he said seriously, and she swatted his chest. "No hitting."

"I'm serious," she groaned. "Do I call you my friend? My boyfriend? What?"

"Call me whatever you want, pretty girl."

She groaned, dropping her head back. He'd never had to officially ask Mandy out, or any of his girlfriends before her. They'd just known they were together. They'd never had this talk.

"Yes, I'm your boyfriend," he said, and her breath caught as she looked back at him. "And you're my girlfriend. Is that okay?"

He felt like he was too old to be someone's boyfriend. But she was still young, and he'd give her anything to make her feel secure and comfortable in their relationship and his commitment for her.

"Are you crazy?" she breathed, and he stiffened. "Is that okay? It's more than okay! It's wonderful. Perfect. Amazing. I'm so excited." She bounced on his leg, clapping happily. He

laughed, but it quickly died when he saw her face fall. “I’ve never had a boyfriend before.”

“No?” She shook her head, looking embarrassed. He didn’t know how she hadn’t dated anyone before. She was funny, and sweet, and so fucking pretty it physically hurt him.

“I know that makes me a loser, but—”

“It doesn’t.”

“Jett,” she sighed, and he gripped her chin.

“It doesn’t,” he said again, more firmly. “I like being your first. Your first boyfriend, your first Daddy—”

“My first time,” she blurted, and his mouth fell open. “Oh my God! I didn’t mean to say it! Forget I said that. Erase it from your brain. Oh God. Oh God!”

She tried to cover her face with her hands, but his fingers were still gripping her chin, his mouth still open in shock as he stared at her.

Of all the things he thought would come out of her mouth, that hadn’t been it.

“You’re a virgin?” he rasped, and she reluctantly nodded.

“But we can pretend like I’m not if that’ll make you feel better.”

“Oh, we’re not pretending you’re not,” he growled.

A dark, fucked up part of him liked that she was a virgin. That she could be his in all ways. That he could give her her first everything. But he didn’t want her to feel embarrassed about it.

“I should’ve waited to tell you that,” she mumbled, and he finally dropped his hand away.

“You’re a good girl for telling me now,” he said, and her eyes widened, her cheeks flushing pink. Yeah, he loved that she liked being called his good girl.

“I am?”

“Of course, baby. You’re always my good girl.” He dragged his finger down her cheek. “Is that why you didn’t know your limits?” She nodded as she sucked her bottom lip between her teeth. “We can learn them together, then.”

She wiggled on his lap, her breathing shallow, and he knew she was thinking about all the ways they could learn. Of everything he could teach her. His cock hardened, and when she gasped, he knew she felt it.

“We’ll take it slow,” he said softly, stroking his finger down her neck. Goosebumps rippled over her body, and he leaned forward, pressing a light kiss to her racing pulse on her neck. “Daddy will take care of you, pretty girl.”

“I know,” she breathed, her big eyes flicking between his. “Thank you, Daddy.”

His cock jumped at the breathy way she’d said that. God, he needed to take a cold shower. But even that wouldn’t help him. He’d need to fuck his fist for the rest of the night just to get some relief.

“Not tonight.” But he wanted to. He wanted to take her to her room, lay her on her bed, and bury his face in her sweet virgin pussy until she came so many times, she couldn’t remember anything but his name.

He wanted to stretch her with his fingers, get her ready to take his big cock. He wanted to hear the way she whimpered and whined as he fed her his dick, the way her pupils would dilate while he made her look up at him. The way her saliva would smear all over her chin as he fucked her mouth until he came, then watched as she swallowed it all like his perfect girl.

Fuck.

He needed to get himself under control.

“Not tonight,” he said again. She was breathing heavily, like she was thinking about all the same things he’d been. “Soon.”

“Soon,” she agreed. “Like tomorrow night.”

A burst of laughter escaped him, and he shook his head. Leaning forward, he pressed a soft kiss to her cheek.

“We’ll see,” he chuckled. “Now, are you hungry?”

“Starving,” she said, licking her lips.

“For food, baby.” Her bottom lip rolled out in a pout, and he tapped her nose. “None of that. I’ll order us some pizza. Grab your stuffies and get comfy. We can watch a movie while we eat.”

She looked ridiculously excited at that, and jumped from his lap. He stayed holding her waist, and she paused.

“You’re forgetting something,” he said, and she tilted her head to the side, looking confused. He tapped his cheek, and her face flushed as she gave him a quick peck. She started to take off, but his grip tightened. “The other side.”

She huffed out a breath as she kissed his cheek. He hesitated, wondering if this would be her first kiss, too.

“One more,” he murmured, pointing at his mouth. Her hands tightened and he almost told her she didn’t have to. But then she planted her hands on his broad shoulders and leaned over, pressing her lips to his.

He kept it gentle, not wanting to scare her away. But fuck, he wanted to taste her. He wanted to slide his tongue into her mouth. But he didn’t.

She pulled away, her breath coming in fast pants as she stared at him. “Did you like that?” he asked, and she nodded.

“Very much. Can we do it again?”

He chuckled, squeezing her side slightly before letting go. “We can do it however much you want. Go get your stuffies, baby.”

# sixteen

. . .

She had to be dreaming, because there was no way she was curled up on her couch next to the hottest man she'd ever seen with her three stuffies while they watched *Tangled*. No way this was really happening.

But it was. Or it had been. But now the movie was over and she didn't want to move; she didn't want Jett to leave. She was so comfortable and felt the lightest she had all weekend. But she knew that once Jett left, reality would fall back around her and she'd be just as sad as she was before he came over.

"Alright, baby. It's getting late. Time for bed." She shook her head, burrowing deeper into the couch. He turned toward her, leveling her with a firm look. "Bedtime."

"Not tired," she said. It was a lie. She was tired. Desperately tired. But she didn't want him to know that, because if he did, he'd definitely leave and she didn't want him to. "No other movie."

"Tomorrow."

"Now."

His brows lifted, and there was that spanking face again. She gripped her blanket tighter. "I think we need to talk about punishments," he muttered. "Seems you get cranky when you're sleepy." She gasped.

"I'm not cranky," she grumbled.

"Yeah," he laughed. "You are."

"And we don't need to talk about punishments."

“Yeah, we do.”

“What do we need to talk about? How awful they are? I agree. How great of a Daddy you’ll be if you never spank me? Big time agree with that.” He scrubbed his hand over his mouth, the corners of his eyes crinkling before he shook his head.

“You’re not distracting me with how fucking cute you are.” He crooked his finger at her. “Come here.”

“I’m okay.”

“Abbie,” he growled.

A shiver worked through her body. Why was she provoking him? Maybe so she could hear that voice. It was a ridiculously hot voice. But what if she pushed him too much, and he didn’t want to be with her anymore?

“Come here.” He patted the spot beside him on the couch. She flicked her gaze from it, to him, and shook her head.

“We can talk from here,” she squeaked.

“But I think you’d get the message so much better if you were closer.”

Her heart lurched into her throat as she slowly pulled the blanket off and got to her feet, then she lined up Ottie, Sealy, and Flash in a neat row before turning toward Jett.

She was trying to drag this out as long as she could. She did not want to have this conversation. But he just patiently stared back at her, calmly waiting for her to take her seat next to him.

Slowly, she sank onto the couch and tipped her head back to look up at him. He was so much bigger than her, and she loved it. It made her feel small and precious.

“So, lovely weather we’ve had, huh?” she asked, laughing nervously. He tucked her hair behind her ear, gently stroking his fingertips down her back. The look he was giving her was far too serious and too soft.

“You know I’d never hurt you, right? And if you ever said your safe word, even during a punishment, I’d stop.”

“I know,” she whispered. Even if she’d only known him a short while, she weirdly trusted him more than she did most people in her life.

“And if you think a spanking would be too much, I can give you other punishments,” he said, still stroking her back. “Your comfort comes first, pretty girl. I never want you to be scared of me. I know I’m a big guy, and a bit scary-looking, but I’d never do anything to hurt you. Ever.”

She turned toward him more, resting her hands on his thick thigh. “I know, Daddy. I trust you.” He blinked at her like he was shocked.

“You do?” She nodded, her eyes glued to his.

“Of course I do. You’re my Daddy. Do you trust me?”

“Yeah, baby. I do.”

“And you know if you say the safe word, we can stop, too, right?” She wanted him to know this wasn’t just about her. She wanted him to feel comfortable, too. It was sweet he cared so much about her and her wants and needs, but what about him?

He was still staring at her like he was shocked. He cupped her face, gently running his thumb over her soft cheek. “You’re too sweet for me, pretty girl. Too fucking sweet.”

A small smile spread across her face, and she dropped her eyes, heat rushing to her face. “You’re sweet, too,” she whispered.

“Not as sweet as you.”

Her eyes lifted to his, finding him staring intently at her with hooded eyes. Was he going to kiss her again? She liked it the first time. That hadn’t been her first kiss, but it might as well have been with how inexperienced she was.

“I know what you’re thinking,” he rasped. “And we can’t. Not tonight.”

“We can’t kiss again?” she pouted.

“Kiss?” She nodded eagerly, scooting closer to him.

“I liked it.” A cocky grin spread across his face, and his arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her even closer.

“Yeah? You liked that, baby?” Her head bobbed again, words completely lost to her. His fingers wrapped around the back of her head, and he gently tugged her closer.

Then his lips were on hers, and she melted into him.

Flames engulfed her entire body, and her clit throbbed in time with her racing heart as he took complete control. His lips moved effortlessly over hers, and then he ran his tongue along her seam and she gasped.

It was all he needed, and he pushed his tongue into her mouth. She nearly combusted.

Leaning back, he dragged her onto his lap. But he was too big, and she ended up straddling only one of his thighs. It pressed firmly against her pussy, sending zaps of pleasure through her body, and she moaned.

“Fuck,” he rasped against her lips, his fingers tightening in her hair. “You taste so fucking good. So sweet.”

Their tongues moved together again, and she gripped his shirt tightly in her fists. Mindlessly, she rolled her hips, grinding against his thigh as a needy whimper left her.

“Fuck yes, baby. Use me to make you come. Can you do that for me, pretty girl? Can you use Daddy’s thigh to come?” He dropped his hands to her hips, gripping them tightly as he dragged her back and forth like she weighed nothing.

“Daddy!” she cried, gripping his shirt tighter. He moved her body like she was a ragdoll, and she loved it. Loved feeling like she was there for his pleasure, for him to use and play with.

“I know, baby. That feels so good, doesn’t it? You’re Daddy’s pretty little girl, aren’t you?” He found her lips with his again, kissing her until she was breathless. She rested her forehead against his, panting heavily as her release barreled closer.

She whined, the sound so needy and pathetic, it seemed to spur him on. A low growl ripped from his chest, his thick fingers digging deeper into the soft flesh of her hips as he moved her faster.

“Ride Daddy’s thigh,” he grunted. “Come for me, pretty girl. Make a mess on me.” She squeezed her eyes shut, and his hand came down on her ass, a startled cry leaving her as she snapped her eyes open. “Eyes on me, Abbie. I want you to see who’s making you come.”

“Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!”

“Come,” he demanded, and she exploded. Her head fell back as she let out a loud scream, her release hitting her hard and fast. He didn’t stop dragging her along his leg, forcing her to ride out her orgasm until she was completely spent.

She collapsed against his chest, breathing hard as he wrapped his arms around her and held her close. “You did so good, pretty girl.” He pressed his lips to her forehead, and she sighed happily, nuzzling deeper against his wide chest.

“Thank you, Daddy.”

“Anytime.” She giggled, shaking her head. Of course, he’d say that. “We still need to talk about punishments. But we can do that tomorrow.”

# seventeen

. . .

**A**fter Jett left last night, she'd tried not to let herself get too sad again. But once he was gone and she wasn't distracted anymore, everything came back down around her. She'd tried to sleep, but ended up staring at the ceiling most of the night.

Now, she was staring at the clock, counting down the minutes until she could leave work and go home, probably to wallow some more. It wasn't that she wanted to wallow, it was just that's all she felt like doing.

Despite that, she'd forced herself to go to school this morning, then come in to work, and she'd even made herself respond to Jett's messages when all she really wanted to do was hide under her blankets and pretend like she didn't exist anymore.

But she'd promised him that she'd do it, that she wouldn't disappear, and she couldn't break that promise.

She was used to disappointing people, especially her parents, but she didn't want to disappoint Jett. She wanted him to be proud of her.

She wanted to feel the warmth that settled in her bones when she saw the satisfied look on his face when she made him happy. She never wanted to see the look he'd give her when he was upset with her.

How cold would he be? She was used to ice-cold. She was used to being shut out. But she didn't want that with him. She wanted to do better for him. She just didn't know how. Didn't

know how to make herself not spiral into the feelings she so often succumbed to.

Her phone vibrated, and she blinked, realizing she'd zoned out while she stared at the blank cream-colored wall of the museum. No one had been in, so it was a ridiculously slow day.

Sometimes she wished she'd had more to do, but sitting at the front desk waiting to greet people wasn't an exciting job. She hoped conserving paintings would be a bit more fun.

Yeah, she knew it wouldn't be. But at least she could work in solitude and not worry about having to put on her customer service face and voice and pretend to be friendly.

Vibration drew her attention again, and she snatched her phone off the desk to read the messages.

**Jett:**

What are your plans tonight?

**Mother:**

Call me back.

**Chris:**

What's going on? Mom's freaking out.

Abbie sighed and ran her hand over her face. She was tired of people needing her for stuff. Why couldn't they all just leave her alone?

She was tired of responsibility, and talking to people, and placating them, and trying to make herself feel better while also making sure they were alright. It was all too much.

But, she texted Chris and Jett back.

**Abbie:**

No plans. Why?

**Abbie:**

Ask her what her deal is.

She didn't know if she believed her mother was actually freaking out. Maybe in the *I'm not getting what I want and Abbie won't let me control her way*, but not in the way that she was actually worried about Abbie or why she'd gone quiet. She was more worried about her image.

That's all she'd ever been worried about.

It was one of the many reasons why Abbie left. So she could do what she wanted, when she wanted, and not have to worry about her mother losing her mind when she did something that would inevitably make the family look bad.

Which seemed to be every time she breathed.

She turned her attention back to her phone, sighing as she read Chris' message.

**Chris:**

She won't tell me.

Why did it fall on her to talk about it? Why wouldn't her mother just tell him? Was this some weird punishment? By making her recount the story over and over? Or maybe she knew Abbie wouldn't want to stir the pot and she was hoping it would be enough to get her to move back home.

Whatever the reason, she was tired of giving in. A year ago, she'd told her family and herself that she was done. That she was walking away. She wanted to do what she wanted because she was tired of living under her mother's dictating rule. But she was still doing it. Still jumping when her mother said to, still scrambling to obey.

Well, no more.

She was done.

So, instead of responding to his text like she normally would, she ignored it and moved to Jett's messages,

immediately feeling lighter. A smile spread, and warmth bloomed in her chest.

**Jett:**

Another movie night? We can do it at my place since we were at yours last night. Anything you want, pretty girl.

He was inviting her over? That was a big step, right? Sure, he'd been at her place last night but it hadn't exactly been planned. This was an actual plan. An invite.

**Abbie:**

I'd love to. But I have an early class in the morning.

**Jett:**

So, bring an overnight bag and stay the night.

She stared at the text.

Yeah, this was definitely a big step. She wanted to do it. Wanted to know what it was like to fall asleep and wake up next to him. She wanted to play house with him, even if it was just for the night. Get a glimpse of her future with him.

Was that too much? Probably. He said he was all in, and he'd put a label on them and their relationship. But that didn't mean forever...right?

She didn't want to believe that. So, she decided to stay in her deluded fantasy land and say it did mean forever.



JETT WAS A NERVOUS WRECK. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHY HE'D invited her over. She told him her place was a mess last night, but when he walked into his house, he seemed to notice every imperfection.

Fuck. He wished he lived in a nicer place so he could impress her. It wasn't a shithole, but she deserved a palace; not a little two bed, one bath house on the side of town that wasn't exactly considered the wrong side of the tracks, but was still so far from the fancy neighborhoods, it might as well be considered the fucking slums.

He took a deep breath as he ran his hand over his head. It was going to be fine. He'd cleaned everything the best he could, dusted every surface, and even mopped as quickly as possible.

Was it enough? Would she take one look, scoff, and leave?

No. That wasn't Abbie. She wasn't so shallow she'd think badly of him for his tiny, dated house. She'd say some wild thing only she could come up with, and plop her little ass on his sofa while he finished dinner.

He hoped.

Was this how she felt last night? This nervous?

He grabbed the steaks from the fridge and set them on the counter. He was grilling them and some asparagus for dinner. Maybe he was trying to impress her. Okay, yeah, he was definitely trying to impress her.

He wasn't a great cook, but he knew he could grill a damn good steak.

A hesitant knock came from his door and his spine snapped straight. Glancing at the clock, he took a deep breath. She was here earlier than he'd anticipated.

Making his way to the door, he wavered for only a split second before opening it. She stared up at him with wide eyes, a lime green backpack strapped to her shoulders. She wore a light blue crop top with clouds all over it, and plain black leggings with sneakers.

She looked fucking adorable.

"Hi," she said shyly, her hands twisting on the straps.

"Hey, pretty girl. Come in." Stepping to the side, he sucked in a sharp breath as she walked past him, brushing her

arm against his chest. If she noticed, she didn't make it obvious.

Her sweet scent lingered around him, invading every one of his senses and making him fucking stupid. He could barely think past the vanilla shoving its way up his nose. She was imprinting herself on him, and he was gladly welcoming it.

Slowly, he shut and locked the door behind her, carefully gauging her reaction as she looked around. She bounced on the balls of her feet, her head gradually twisting from one side to the other as she scanned the open layout kitchen, dining, and living room.

"Know it's not much," he grunted, and her shoulders bunched like he'd startled her.

"It's so cute," she muttered. He stared at the back of her head, unsure of what to say. No one had ever called his place cute before. "I think you need a few more pictures on the walls, though."

"How about you draw me some?"

She turned toward him, her eyes wide. "You'd really hang up my art?"

"Course I would, baby." He wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her to him, placing a kiss to her forehead. Her head fell further back, her eyelids hooded as she looked up at him.

Fuck, she was so sweet looking. So innocent.

He wanted to corrupt her. Wanted to keep her innocent. Wanted to do so many depraved things, she'd never be the same. But he also wanted to wrap her up and protect her.

*Love her.*

Lowering his mouth to hers, he kissed her hard and hot, his hand sliding into her dark hair. He used it to control her, to angle her head exactly where he wanted it and keep her there. He loved the way she seemed to melt for him when he took control; the way her body seemed to know she already belonged to him, that he was her owner.

His tongue ran along the seam of her lips, and she eagerly opened for him, moaning into his mouth. He wanted to praise her, tell her she was being such a good girl for him while he tasted her, but he didn't want to take his lips off hers. Didn't want to ever stop kissing her.

But then she gasped for a breath, and he eased back a bit. He needed to remind himself she was inexperienced and not used to a guy like him.

Sure, she wanted a Daddy, but he needed control. Complete control. In the bedroom, he needed to know she'd do anything he told her. That she'd obey him without question. But she was so young, and a virgin, he didn't want to terrify her.

Could she handle him? Could she handle the control he craved so deeply, in and out of their bedroom? Would she let him pick out her clothes, brush her hair, bathe her? Would she obey him?

Part of him knew she wouldn't, not without some sass. And he was beginning to want that sass, the little fire she had burning within.

Pulling away, she sighed dreamily, her eyes glazed. "Hi," she breathed, and he huffed out a laugh.

"You said that already." He placed another gentle kiss on her forehead.

"Yeah, but that felt like a better greeting than before."

A grin spread as he shook his head, giving her a final squeeze before taking a step away, letting his hand trail down her arm to her hand. "Come on, pretty girl. I'll show you where you can put your stuff. Did you bring everything you need? I have an extra toothbrush—"

"I have it all," she squeaked, and his grin broadened.

She was fucking adorable.

He'd never been this nervous leading a girl to his bedroom before. Before Mandy, he rarely fucked anyone when he was sober, and even more rarely made it past the front door without

bending them over the closest surface and fucking them until their throat was raw from screaming. He'd then send them on their way and stumble to his bedroom, falling face first into his pillows just to do it all again the next night.

This was different, though.

Abbie was different.

He was being gentle with her. Taking his time. He didn't want to terrify her. He didn't want to use her for a quick release. If he had it his way, she'd be with him forever. But he didn't usually get his way.

He knew when she left him, it was going to hurt a hell of a lot more than it did when Mandy left. Even with her cheating on him, he knew that pain would never compare to what he'd feel if he lost Abbie.

He didn't know what the fuck he'd do. He wouldn't survive it.

He never wanted to know what it felt like, but he wasn't stupid. She was young and gorgeous and so fucking smart and funny...she was a catch. There was no reason for her to be with an older ex-con like him.

Stepping into the bedroom, he shook the thoughts from his head and awkwardly stood to the side as she stepped further in. He glanced at the bed as he ran his hand over his head. What was she thinking?

"The sheets are clean," he blurted. "Just washed them." She gave him a startled look, which was fair. It was a weird fucking thing to say. But he wanted her to be comfortable and not worry about sleeping in his unwashed sheets.

"Okay," she muttered, glancing back around the room. Her eyes zeroed in on something, and he pushed his brows together before panic surged through him.

Oh fuck.

*Oh fuck.*

How had he forgotten that was there? Why didn't he double check he'd put everything away? Fucking idiot.

Idiot.

“Sorry,” he grunted, rushing past her. “Fuck. Sorry.”

He grabbed the flashlight from where it sat on his bedside table like a fucking trophy, and yanked the drawer open, throwing it inside. His face was flaming as he turned back to her, finding her with her mouth hanging open, her eyes wide, and cheeks maybe redder than his.

“Sorry,” he said again.

Still, she just stared at him. Had he broken her? Did she not have sex toys? Maybe not, since she was a virgin. Or maybe she did. He didn't know what virgins kept in their bedside drawers.

“Was that—that—was that—”

It was cute as shit when she stammered like that, and he felt some of his embarrassment melt away, especially when she shifted, pressing her thighs together.

“A pussy pocket?” he finished for her, his voice low. Her eyes seemed to widen even more. “Yeah. I thought I put it away. But I forgot.”

“You use it?” she blurted, and he slid his hands into the front pockets of his jeans. He eyed her for a moment, trying to figure out what she was feeling.

Horror? Excitement? Turned on?

But then she shifted again, her breathing ragged, and he had his answer.

“Almost every night.”

“Oh my God,” she breathed, pressing her hands to her hot cheeks. “Every night?” His chin dipped in a slight nod. “How many times a night?” She immediately shook her head. “No. Nope. Forget I asked that. Forget those words ever came out of my mouth.”

He should put a stop to this before it went too far. But he couldn't. He didn't want to.

“Sometimes only once. Sometimes I keep going until it feels like my cock is going to fall off from how sensitive it is. I like to finish and keep stroking myself, to see how much I can take.”

“You like to torture yourself?” She gaped at him, and he smirked as he stepped forward, sliding a hand free from his pocket. Reaching out, he cupped her face, stroking his calloused thumb along her soft lower lip.

“It’s not torture, baby,” he murmured. “I can show you how good it feels.” He didn’t know if she realized she was nodding. “I can make you come again and again, and when you think you can’t take anymore, I’ll keep going, just to show you how fucking good Daddy can make your little body feel. Would you like that, pretty girl? You want Daddy to eat your pussy until you can’t think anymore? Until your little clit is so swollen, it’s numb?”

“Oh my...oh my God.”

He pulled her lower lip down slightly, his gaze glued to it as he slipped his thumb into her mouth. “Suck,” he rasped, and she did. Immediately.

Her tongue lapped at him, and the feeling went straight to his aching hard cock. He wanted to feel her mouth around him, wanted to watch her little throat bob as she swallowed all his cum.

Then he wanted to throw her face first onto his bed, lift her ass in the air, and eat her dripping cunt from behind until she couldn’t hold herself up anymore. He’d flip her to her back and keep going, not stopping until she was a mess for him.

Fuck, he wanted to do that right now. Wanted to watch her drop to her knees and take his long, thick cock from his jeans. He wanted to see how big it was in her small hands, how big it looked in her little mouth.

It took everything he had not to order her to strip and kneel at his feet.

He pulled his thumb free, rubbing the dampness along her lips before dipping and kissing her long and hard. His hand

slid around her waist, down to her ass and he roughly jerked her forward, letting her feel how hard he was. How badly he wanted her.

“Daddy,” she whined, and his grip on her ass tightened at the needy sound.

“I know, baby girl. I want it too. But not right now.”

She pulled away with a cute pout, but he just nipped her bottom lip and tapped her ass softly.

“Put your bag on the bed. You can hang shit in the closet or put it away in the bathroom if you want. Whatever will make you feel at home. I’m going to go start dinner.”

“You cook?”

She slid her backpack off and set it on the bed. He watched as she pulled out her three stuffies, and, without thinking, he reached for Ottie. He tilted the soft toy back and forth. He’d seen photos of the little guy, but he was older in person, a little ratty and dingy, but cute.

“Mine. No touching Ottie.” She snatched Ottie from his hands, and he was almost too shocked to say anything. But then his face went stern, and she gulped.

“Snatching is naughty, baby,” he said firmly. “You know you’re not allowed to do that.”

“But Ottie doesn’t like strangers,” she explained.

“Still shouldn’t grab things out of my hands like that.” He folded his arms over his chest, staring down at her. “What if Ottie would’ve ripped?”

She stared down at her toy with a gasp. “Rip?”

“What if I was holding him too tight, and you tried to grab him like you did, and his seams ripped?”

“That would not have been good,” she breathed, and he shook his head in agreement.

“No, it wouldn’t have.” He hadn’t tried punishing her yet, and he wasn’t entirely sure how she was going to feel about

this, but now was as good of a time as any to show her who the boss was. “I think this deserves some corner time.”

“What?” Her head snapped up, her eyes wide. “Corner time?” He nodded firmly, not letting up. “But Daddy, I don’t need corner time. It was just a mistake.”

“And standing in the corner will help you not make this mistake again, won’t it?” He lifted his brows, and she swallowed thickly. “You don’t have to take your pants and panties off this time, but next time, you’ll have to.”

“How generous,” she grumbled, placing Ottie carefully on the bed.

“You could do it this time,” he growled. “With a hot bottom.”

“I’m good!” she squeaked, hurrying to the corner. He was surprised she hadn’t put up more of a fight. Maybe she needed this as much as he did.

“I’ll be back in five minutes, then you’ll come outside with me.”

“Outside?”

“I’ll explain later. Nose in the corner, stick that bottom out.”

Sighing dramatically, she did as she was told. Reaching down, he popped her ass twice, smiling to himself at the way she cried out. He liked that. A lot. He rubbed the ache in, groping her ass until she moaned.

“Be my good girl,” he murmured, lowering his mouth to her ear. “Stand nice and still, and think about what you did. I’ll be back in a moment.”

“Yes, Daddy,” she whispered. He patted her ass softly as he passed, adjusting his hard cock as he strolled to the kitchen.

Damn.

This felt right.

It felt more than right.

Having her in his room, cooking dinner for her, disciplining her...maybe fucking her, eventually. Yeah, this was what dreams were made of. This is what he'd never known he needed.

# eighteen

. . .

Corner time freaking sucked. Sucked giant hairy toes. It was awful.

Jett had definitely forgotten about her.

Her legs were aching from standing for so many hours, and she left like she was about to pass out from hunger. How long had she been standing here? A day? A week?

She couldn't tell anymore.

Something crashed outside the room, and she jolted but didn't pull her nose from the corner. She might not have ever been punished before, but she'd read enough books to know leaving time out before Daddy said so was a sure fire way to end up over his knee.

*Hmmm.*

Maybe she should go check on things, see if he was okay. She didn't want him to fall and hurt himself. That tended to happen with the elderly, and she didn't want him to have broken a hip or something.

Deciding his health was far more important than corner time, she pulled away. Her stomach twisted as she crept down the hallway, crouching to hide behind the bar as she approached the kitchen.

She quickly looked over it, finding Jett with his back to her as he did something, his broad shoulders shifting with his movements.

*Thank God.*

Thank God he wasn't hurt, of course. Not thank God she wasn't caught.

She could just tiptoe back to his room and get back into position and he'd never be the wiser. But as she turned, her foot got tangled with a barstool and down she went.

A scream slipped from her, and a harsh curse ripped from Jett. But it was too late. She was already on the floor, her knees crashing into the hard wooden planks as he rounded the corner.

Pain erupted up her knees, into her thighs as she just gave up and crumpled to the floor.

"Abbie!" Jett's hands slid under her arms and he yanked her up. She'd expected him to put her on her feet, but instead he cradled her to his chest, bridal style.

He hurried back to the bedroom and sank onto his bed, holding her tightly. "Are you okay, baby? What's hurting? Shit. I should take you to the hospital." He frantically searched her eyes. "Say something. Are you alright?"

"My kn—knees hurt," she whimpered. His attention moved to them, and he slowly rolled her leggings up until her knees were exposed. They were a bit red but didn't look bad. She was just being dramatic.

"Oh, baby. I'm so sorry. Do you need some ice?"

"I'm okay, Daddy." She wiped her damp cheeks with the backs of her hands, sniffing hard.

"You sure? Can you walk?" She nodded pitifully. Now that the shock of falling was wearing off, the only thing that really hurt was her pride.

How embarrassing.

He set her on her feet, keeping his hands planted on her hips until she was steady. "Walk for me."

Sighing, she stepped toward the door, then walked back to him. His brows were pinched tightly together as he watched her closely.

“Are you limping?”

“I’m fine,” she sighed. “A little sore but it’s okay.” He grunted, turning his gaze up to her.

“You’re really okay?”

“Yep. See?” She did a little jig, dancing in place and bending her knees to show how much pain she wasn’t in. He grunted again, then his eyes narrowed.

“Why were you in the kitchen and not in the corner?”

“I thought you fell and hurt yourself. I was just coming to check on you, Daddy.” His brow rose, and she tried not to squirm.

There was his spanking face.

Oh no.

Her hands drifted behind her, protecting her bottom as if that stare alone was enough to spank her. Jeez, he was too powerful.

“You knew I hadn’t hurt myself,” he growled.

“I thought you forgot about me. Memory is the first thing to go when you age.”

His eyes widened. Yep. She was definitely digging her hole deeper. She probably needed to stop talking, but that was never her strong suit.

“I was just making sure you hadn’t broken a hip. That can be deadly for the elderly.”

“Abbie,” he warned, but she didn’t take the warning. Nope. She barreled right past it and kept going.

“Do you have life alert?” She scanned his chest and frowned, placing her fists on her hips. “Where is your necklace button thingy, mister?” She wagged her finger at him. “Very naughty to not wear that thing.”

He stared at her, his jaw tensing.

Yeah. Her poor butt was toast.

“Come here,” he said in a low voice.

“Oh, I’m okay right here.” She smiled brightly at him. “Do you need to get back to what you were doing? I’ll just go back to the corner.” She threw her thumb over her shoulder, shuffling back a step.

“Abbie. Come. Here.”

Yikes. That must be his spanking voice.

He pointed at the floor between his spread legs, staring at her. She shouldn’t push him or her luck, but for some reason, she couldn’t stop herself.

“Oh, no. Really, I’m fine.” She backed herself into the corner, literally and figuratively. “I’ll just stand right here.”

“Fine.” He stood and a weird pang of disappointment flooded her. He was giving up? He wasn’t going to spank her?

What was she even talking about? She didn’t want him to spank her. Did she?

But a part of her felt like if he did, she’d feel better. More confident that he actually wanted this. She’d feel like...like he was actually her Daddy? But that was ridiculous. Of course he was her Daddy.

But he hadn’t spanked her yet, and she’d given him reasons to. Was she testing him? Maybe. Probably.

Jeez. She was manipulative. She had more of her mother in her than she realized. Shame filled her and she stepped forward, her eyes lowering to the floor, ready to apologize to him.

“Jett—”

His boots came into view, and she stopped talking but didn’t look up at him. “You’re acting out and being bad,” he said. She flinched at the words. She’d often been told how bad she was growing up, even if she didn’t always feel like it was warranted. This time it was, though. He was right. She was bad. She was awful.

“I’m sorry, Jett,” she whispered, tears filling her eyes. She didn’t want to be bad.

“Hey,” he murmured, crouching slightly. “Look at me.” She wiped her cheek with the back of her hand as she shook her head. She didn’t deserve to look at him. She should just get her bag and go home.

Yeah. That’s what she should do.

He’d be better off without her and her manipulative ways. She felt terrible, but this was for the best. She was protecting him. And now that she knew she was exactly like her mother, she’d never date anyone else. She never wanted to subject anyone else to her toxic ways.

Without a word, she skirted around him, aiming for the bed where her backpack was. Maybe she should apologize for being such a nuisance and waste of time before she left. It would be easier over text but she owed him this to his face.

Turning back around, she kept her eyes on the floor. “I’m sorry I was bad. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. No, I do know. I’m just like my mother. I should be alone forever. I’m sorry, Jett. I—I shouldn’t have said any of that. And—and I should just go home. You should forget you ever met me and find a Little who isn’t bad.”

She hadn’t meant to start crying, but tears were leaking down her cheeks and she couldn’t stop herself. She turned to grab her bag, but a giant hand landed on it, pinning it to the bed.

“You’re not leaving.”

Her vision was blurry as she stared at it. She tugged on the strap, wishing he’d just let her go without a fight. But he seemed to put more pressure on it, not letting it move even an inch.

“You. Are. Not. Leaving.”

Finally, she glanced up at him, finding his face hard and jaw tense. She wanted to say something, but couldn’t seem to speak.

“Understand me? You’re not going anywhere. You’re sleeping right there tonight.” He pointed at the bed, and she gulped. “Right next to me. And if I had it my way, you’d sleep

there every fucking night. You're not going anywhere, Abbie."

Her mouth opened and closed. But the only thing that came out in such a small voice she barely recognized it was, "But I was bad."

His face softened, and he sat on the bed. Reaching for her, he dragged her between his legs before tucking her hair behind her ear.

"So what? You were a bit naughty, but that's okay. I expect you to sometimes be my naughty little girl. You're not perfect, and that's okay."

"My mom used to tell me I was bad," she whispered, and understanding filled his face.

"I won't say that again. I'm sorry."

"You shouldn't apologize. I'm supposed to apologize—"

"And you will," he said. "You're going over my knee in a minute. But I need to make sure you're okay first." Her mouth fell open.

"You're going to spank me?"

He nodded firmly. "Of course I am. What kind of Daddy would I be if I didn't?" She just gaped at him, unable to say anything. He was seriously going to spank her? Sheesh, a bit of an overreaction.

Okay, not really. But jeez. She didn't want to get spanked.

Or maybe she did. That was the whole reason she left the corner in the first place.

Ugh.

Gently, he tugged her forward until she was sitting on his thigh. He wrapped his arms around her, holding her tightly. "Now, why did you really leave the corner?"

"I heard something, and was going to check on you," she mumbled, and he shook his head.

“That’s really thoughtful of you, but what were you supposed to do?” he asked gently.

“Wait until you came to get me.” She rolled the thick fabric of his jeans between her fingers, her eyes on it instead of him.

“Right. And did I come to get you? Call for you? Give you any reason to think I was hurt?” She shook her head. “Will you look at me, please?”

She didn’t want to. She wanted to stay looking right where she was, but he’d said please, so she took a deep breath and shifted her gaze to his.

“There’s my pretty girl,” he murmured, gently stroking her hair from her forehead. “Now, answer me.”

“I don’t like corner time,” she whined.

“You’re not supposed to like it. It’s a punishment.”

“But I thought you forgot about me. I was there for hours.”

“You were there for less than four minutes.”

Her mouth opened as she shook her head. “There’s no way. It was definitely a few hours. Maybe even a day.” She could’ve sworn she saw his lips twitch before he went all stern again.

“I promise it was just a few minutes.” He rested his massive hand on her thigh, massaging gently. “I’m sorry I called you bad. I didn’t know that would hurt your feelings.”

“It’s okay.” Her eyes dropped again, but he touched her chin, and she lifted them back to his.

“Will you explain why it upset you so much?” His dark gaze searched hers, and she hesitated. She didn’t know what to say, where to start. There was twenty-one years of baggage in that question, and she didn’t know where to even begin unpacking it.

“My mom used to tell me I was bad,” she said, and he nodded.

“You said that. Why did she tell you that?” He spoke to her with so much gentleness it hurt her heart. He was such an incredible person.

Even if he was about to spank her, he was still so kind.

“I don’t really know.” She shrugged, forcing herself to look at him and not at his jeans she was still playing with. “Sometimes, she’d send me to my room without explaining why. I’d be in there for hours. Sometimes she’d forget about me and I wouldn’t eat dinner. If Chris was home, he’d usually at least bring me food and water. But she never did.”

His face shifted, and gone was her gentle giant. This man she barely recognized. His expression was angry, but there was something darker in it. Something more.

“That’s abuse,” he said in a dark voice, and she shook her head.

“No, it wasn’t. She never hit me or anything.”

“It doesn’t matter.” His arm tightened around her. “That’s still abuse. How old were you when she did that?”

“For as long as I can remember,” she whispered. “I remember being just a little kid. Maybe four or five when she’d lock me in the room. I used to cry and bang on the door, but over the years, I learned it just made me feel sick and I would get so tired, so I stopped doing it. I started drawing instead.”

“Where the fuck was your dad when she was doing this? Why didn’t he stop it?”

Abbie shrugged again. “We used to live in New York, so he was always so busy with his cases. We moved to Virginia so he could slow down, not that he has. He still works a lot and is barely ever home.” Jett searched her eyes, his hold on her tight.

“You said he’s a lawyer?” She nodded. “Then he should know what your mother was doing was illegal, but more than that it was just wrong. He should’ve protected you.”

“He was too busy to notice,” she said, defending him. “Mother always said to never bother him when he was home. He worked too hard to be stressed at home, too. So when I saw him, I was just happy he was around, you know? I didn’t want to upset anyone.”

He looked like he wanted to argue, to say something more. But he took a deep breath, seeming to calm himself.

“When did she stop locking you in your room?” he asked quietly.

This time, she couldn’t help it. Her eyes dropped.

She didn’t want to tell him. It was pathetic the amount of control her mother had over her.

“When I moved out last year.”

“When you...Jesus Christ, baby. She locked you up your entire life.” He hugged her tightly to him, resting his hand on the side of her head and holding her to his chest. He rocked her gently back and forth, and somehow, it soothed something in her. It made her feel safe and protected, like he genuinely cared. And when had she ever had that? “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” she croaked, her throat tight. “I deserved it sometimes. But sometimes, I think it was just easier for her to ignore me like that. I was a weird kid. I mean, I am still weird. Obviously.” She tried to laugh, but it came out strained.

“Watch it,” he growled, and she tugged her head away to look up at him. “Don’t call yourself names.”

“But it’s true. I’m a weirdo.”

“Abbie,” he said in that low, warning voice of his. “That’s your last chance. Then I’ll get the paddle.”

“You have a paddle?” she gasped.

“Not yet, but I can use a wooden spoon until I get one.”

“A wooden—no! You can’t use that!”

“Watch me.”

She gulped. Yep, he was totally serious.

He took another deep breath. “No more corner time,” he said, and relief flooded her. She hadn’t even realized she was so anxious about it until he said that.

“Promise?”

“I swear, baby girl. What else would she do? I don’t want to do something to trigger you again.”

“Nothing.” She shrugged. “She just would say I was bad, that I was the worst child she’d ever seen, and lock me in my room.”

“Fuck.” He scrubbed his hand over his mouth. “Fuck. I’m sorry.”

“You didn’t know,” she murmured, resting her hand on his shoulder. “I should’ve told you. But I didn’t know it would upset me like that.”

“No, I shouldn’t have left you during your first punishment. That was my fault. I should’ve been here to check on you, to make sure you were okay.”

God, her heart ached for him. Reaching up, she pressed a soft kiss to his cheek.

“Thanks for taking care of me, Daddy,” she whispered, and a fierce expression fell over his face.

“Always,” he vowed. “I will always take care of you, Abbie. I’m sorry I fucked up this time, but it will never happen again. I promise you that.”

Somehow, she believed him.

# nineteen

. . .

“How are you feeling?” Jett asked, gently stroking her cheek, some of that fierceness he’d just had dissipating again. “You okay?”

“I’m fine,” she said, nodding. She actually felt better getting some of that off her chest. She’d never talked about it to anyone before, not even Chris. He saw what happened, but he was so much older than her, he wasn’t around for a lot of it.

She was only a little kid when he left. He’d come home sometimes, but after he was overseas in the military, that stopped happening. It wasn’t until he’d come back that he spent more time with her. By that point, she was used to being locked up in her room, and he assumed it was her wanting to separate herself from the family, not her mother still doing it.

“I’m okay,” she said again.

Jett eyed her for a long moment, like he thought she was lying. But she wasn’t. She was fine. She was more than fine.

Well, she was fine other than the guilt for disobeying him eating away at her.

Sighing, she rested her head on his shoulder. “I’m sorry I left the corner,” she muttered.

“I know you are, baby,” he said softly. “Do you want your spanking now or later?”

She still couldn’t believe he was actually going to spank her. Seemed a bit overdramatic, if you asked her.

“Now,” she groaned. “Just get it over with.” His chest shook as he huffed out a laugh. She liked the way it sounded, and she smiled to herself.

“Okay, I want you to strip off your leggings and panties, then rest your hands on the bed and bend over.” He gently set her on her feet as he stood. She gaped up at him.

“What?”

“That’s the position I want you in. I need to put the food back in the fridge. Somehow, I doubt this will be quick.”

“But—but you want me naked?” she cried.

“Not naked, just your bottoms and panties off.”

“That’s not much better than being fully naked!”

“I could make you get naked,” he drawled, folding his arms over his chest. “It’s part of the punishment, pretty girl.”

“But...do I have to take my panties off?”

“Is there a reason you don’t want to?”

“I mean, other than the obvious reasons?” Her eyes were wide as she stared up at him. He couldn’t be serious.

He studied her for a moment. “Is spanking a hard limit for you? I’ll find something else for you instead, if I need to.”

“No,” she groaned, scrubbing her hands over her face. “I just can’t freaking believe I have to be half naked for this.” She grumbled to herself as she turned away from him. “Okay, okay. I’m doing it.” She waved her hands at him, shooing him away.

“Keep the attitude, and I’ll add more to it,” he warned. She barely held in an eye roll. If he saw that, it would probably not be great.

She listened to him walk out of the room, and she hooked her fingers under the band of her leggings. Was she seriously about to do this? It seemed like she didn’t have much of a choice.

Well, she did. If she wanted to use her safe word and back out that way, but that wasn't fair. It was just a bit awkward. She'd never been naked in front of anyone before, and the first time was to get a spanking. And not even a fun spanking, a stupid punishment one.

What bullfuzzies.

Sighing, she slid her leggings down her legs and stepped out of them, kicking them to the corner of the room. Now for her panties. Should be easy. Just shove them down and bend over.

*Just do it, Abbie.*

But she couldn't.

This was too much. It was a lot, right?

God, why did she ever think she could handle dating a guy like Jett? He was older and more experienced. Getting naked in front of someone was nothing to a guy like him. But for her, it was insane. Actually insane.

She couldn't do it.

But if he came in here and found her not in position and with her panties still on...yeah, maybe her momentary embarrassment was worth not getting anything added to her punishment.

She didn't think her poor butt could handle that much.

With a deep breath, she quickly took her panties off and kicked them next to her leggings. She heard his steady footsteps slowly approaching the bedroom and hurried to get into position.

She bunched the blanket on the bed tightly in her fists, heat rushing into her cheeks. Was he just standing there staring at her? She couldn't hear him walking anymore.

"You're such a good girl for Daddy," he murmured, and she let out a startled cry.

"Jeez, you move like a freaking ghost," she breathed. "I didn't hear you sneak up on me."

“It’s not sneaking if you’re expecting me,” he said, and she shook her head. Impossible man. “Ready?”

“Not really,” she mumbled. Was anyone ever ready for a spanking? She thought not.

He sank onto the bed next to her, but she forced herself to stay staring at the blanket. It was just a plain black blanket, nothing fancy. She didn’t know why she’d been expecting something else on his bed. Like a quilt. He seemed like a quilt kind of guy. Maybe she’d make him one. She didn’t really know how to make a quilt, but she’d figure it out. It couldn’t be that hard.

“Abbie? Are you listening?”

She blinked, shaking herself from her spiral. “What?”

“Baby, you have to listen,” he sighed.

“Sorry, Daddy. I just got lost in my head.”

“What were you thinking about?”

“Quilts.”

There was a pause, then he cleared his throat. “Quilts?”

“Yeah. I want to make you a quilt, but I don’t know how. They probably have videos online, though, right?”

“Probably,” he agreed. “You don’t need to make me a quilt, though.”

“You seem like a quilt man,” she told him, sliding her eyes to him. He was holding back a grin as he shook his head.

“Whatever you think, pretty girl. You make me a quilt and I’ll use it for the rest of my life.”

“Like a blankie?” she asked, and he nodded.

“Sure. Now, what I was saying is—”

“Wait, back to the blankie—”

“After your spanking,” he said firmly.

Ugh. Fun sucker.

“What I was saying is, I’m going to take you over my knee for the first one. Is that what you want?”

“No,” she groaned, and he froze.

“No?”

“No, I don’t want a spanking at all!”

He just shook his head as he gently patted her ass. “Stand up for me.” She stood, not really understanding why he needed her bent over if he was just going to have her stand up again anyway.

He was impossible.

“Anything you want to say?”

“I’m sorry for leaving the corner,” she said.

“I know, baby. And after this spanking, it’ll all be okay.” He tugged her forward, but she dug her heels in.

“Don’t you think we should talk first?” She sounded panicked, even if it was just nerves making her feel like that. She knew Jett wouldn’t ever really hurt her, but she wasn’t sure if her poor bottom would survive getting spanked by his dinner plate sized hands.

“What would you like to talk about?” he asked calmly.

“The weather has been lovely, don’t you think?”

“Abbie, come on. The quicker you get over my knee, the quicker we can be done with this and cuddle.”

“We get to cuddle afterward?” Her eyes widened as he nodded.

“Of course.” He patted his thigh. “Over you go.”

Was she really going to do this? Yeah, it seemed she was.

He helped her lay across his lap, and she held herself stiffly, anticipating his first smack. She jolted as he rested his hand on her ass, gently rubbing it across one cheek, then the other, down to her thighs.

She hated how turned on this was making her, how much she liked him touching her like this. Every swipe of his rough,

calloused hand against her smooth skin made her even wetter. She really hoped he couldn't tell, and if he could, she hoped he wouldn't point it out.

“Since this is your first spanking, it'll be a count of ten,” he said softly, still smoothing his hand over her. “I want you to count for me and ask for another, pretty girl. Can you do that?”

“I think so,” she mumbled. She didn't want to. It was bad enough laying across his lap, half naked with a wet pussy. She didn't want to have to count, too.

“I know you can do it,” he told her. “You're my good girl, aren't you? You want to be good for Daddy?”

Warmth pooled in her belly and spread through her entire body. “Yes, Daddy. I wanna be your good girl.”

His hand continued lightly circling and rubbing her ass until she eventually relaxed. He lifted his hand, and she held her breath.

Here it comes.

He brought his hand down on one side, a bite of hot pain shooting through her. She gasped, losing most of her breath at the feel of it. He was not playing around. Jeez, that hurt.

He paused, rubbing his hand over the burning. “What do you say, baby?”

“One, Daddy,” she choked out. “May I please have another?”

*Smack!*

Jesus! It hurt so much!

“Two!” she cried. “Please, Daddy. May I have another?”

“You're such a good girl,” he told her, bringing his hand down again. Tears welled in her eyes as she held back her sobs.

“Three. Another, Daddy. Please.”

*Smack!*

By the time she was at number eight, she was a sobbing mess on his lap. A screaming, crying, slobbering mess. She didn't know how he even understood what she was saying anymore, she was crying so hard.

“Two more, pretty girl. I'll be quick. You okay?”

Was she okay? What kind of question was that?

“I'm good,” she cried. “My butt's gonna fall off, though!”

Was that a laugh? She could've sworn she heard him laugh.

*Smack!*

*Smack!*

“Thank you, Daddy!” she screamed, nearly throwing herself off his lap. He grabbed her and pulled her to his lap. She straddled him, her arms wrapped around his neck as she sobbed into his chest. “I didn't like that.”

“Me either,” he said softly, rubbing her back. “I don't want to punish you.”

“You loved it!” she accused, her voice high-pitched and thick with tears. “You're a sadist!”

“I mean, maybe a bit,” he teased. “But I don't like seeing you cry.”

“I won't ever get another spanking,” she told him, pulling away to wipe her cheeks. She winced at the pain on her bottom. How was she meant to sit for the rest of the night? Tomorrow? Oh, God. Was she going to have to stand during class and work? And then she'd have to explain why she was standing.

Maybe she could just lie. Tell everyone she had hemorrhoids or something.

“Pretty girl?” Jett's fingers brushed her cheek as he tucked stray hair behind her ear. “Were you listening?”

“Sorry, Daddy.” She tapped her head. “There's some stuff going on in here.”

“Yeah? Like what?”

“Well,” she took a big breath, “I won’t be able to sit tomorrow. So now I’m gonna have to lie and tell everyone I have hemorrhoids.”

He just stared at her, his lips parting. “What?”

“I can’t very well tell them my Daddy spanked me, now can I?” she huffed, but he was still staring at her like she had nine heads. She glanced over her shoulder, making sure that wasn’t true, but nope. She still just had one head.

“And that was the best lie you could come up with?”

“What else was I supposed to say?” She wiped her face again as she watched him. Despite the warm pain on her butt and thighs, she felt better. Lighter. Not guilty anymore.

“I don’t know,” he breathed, scrubbing his hand over his mouth. The corners of his eyes crinkled, and she narrowed her eyes at him.

“Are you laughing at me?”

“I’d never do that, pretty girl.”

Yeah, she didn’t know if she believed him.

“How do you feel? Hurting too bad? Was I too hard?” He smoothed his hand over her back, resting it on her hip. “Maybe I should check.”

“It’s okay!” she squeaked, moving her hands to cover her bottom. She didn’t want him to inspect her, up close and personal. She had to keep some dignity.

“I’ll check before we go to bed tonight, and in the morning,” he said, and she shook her head as he spoke.

He’d do no such thing.

“No need to do that,” she told him, but he ignored her as he pulled her in for a tight hug and kissed her forehead.

“Daddy has to make sure his baby girl is alright,” he said softly.

Jeez. Give this man an inch, and he’ll take a million miles.

“More cuddles?” he asked, and she bit her lip. Would he think she was needy if she said yes? He must’ve read her mind, though. Because he just nodded and held onto her tighter. “More cuddles.”

Without a word, he lifted her and laid back on the bed, rearranging her over him. Oh, she liked this. She rested her head on his chest, loving the way his heart sounded against her ear. It was oddly comforting.

Slowly, her thumb drifted toward her mouth, and she gently sucked on it. He ran his hand up and down her back as the other massaged her head. Oh, that was nice. Her eyes drifted shut and her breathing became a bit deeper.

She could get used to this.

# twenty

. . .

Jett was bringing the grilled steaks and asparagus inside when he spotted a very sleepy looking Abbie stumbling from his bedroom. He set the tray with the food down on the counter and rushed to her, lifting her in his arms. Her legs immediately wrapped around his waist as she rubbed at her eye with a fist.

She'd fallen asleep almost immediately earlier, which surprised him. His poor baby must've been exhausted after going through so many emotions. So he'd laid with her for a bit, then came out and cooked dinner. He was planning on gently waking her up after he took the potatoes from the oven. Instead, she obviously woke up on her own.

He set her on the counter, but she didn't let go of him. She nuzzled into his neck, her lips finding his skin. She gently sucked on it, and he ground his teeth together.

Fuck, that felt good.

But she was clearly not in the right headspace to do anything about that. So he let her suckle his neck as he white-knuckled the countertop.

"Pretty girl," he murmured. She let out a soft whimper. He gasped as she dug her teeth into his neck. "No biting, baby." But she ignored him and bit down harder.

Jesus fuck. That hurt. But the pain went straight to his aching cock. As bad as it hurt, it still felt fucking good. He wanted her to bite him when he was buried deep inside her.

He shook his head. Later. He'd think about that later.

"I need to finish getting dinner ready," he said softly, running his hand over her back. She shook her head, her teeth scraping along his skin. "Stop biting Daddy, baby girl."

She grunted her disagreement, but, to his shock, unlatched and sat back with a huff. Her bottom lip poked out as she folded her arms over her chest.

His brows rose. "No pouting either, baby."

She snapped her teeth at him, looking so disgruntled and pissed off about that, he was barely able to hold his laugh in.

"Do you want another spanking?" he asked, resting his hand on her thigh. Her eyes widened as she shook her head.

"No spankin'." Her dark hair flew around her as she continued shaking her head. Her voice was different than it usually was.

Was she in Little space?

He eyed her for a moment, waiting for her to pull back like she did the other night, but she didn't. She just kept shaking her head.

"Then no pouting or biting." He placed his hands on either side of her face, stopping her. "And no more shaking your head. You're going to hurt yourself."

"I won't," she protested. "I don't hear my brain rolling around." He grinned at her.

"That's good, baby. Can you sit right there while I finish dinner, or do you need some floor time?" She chewed on her lip as she looked at the counter, then the floor. Judging by the look on her face, the floor was obviously what she wanted.

Without a word, he lifted her and put her on the floor before laying a blanket out beside her. "I'll go get your stuffies. Sorry I don't have other toys for you, pretty girl. Daddy will do better." She crawled onto the blanket, ignoring him as he hurried to the bedroom and gathered her soft toys in his arms.

She sat on her legs as she stared up at him, her entire face lighting up when she saw Oattie. Her hands raised above her head and she made grabby hands at him.

“Oattie! Oattie!”

“Here are the others too,” Jett said, setting them beside her. “What are their names?”

“Flash,” she said, bouncing Oattie on the turtle. “Sealy.” She bounced him on the seal he’d given her.

“Those are great names, pretty girl.”

“I know,” she said matter-of-factly. “I’m the best name picker.”

“That you are,” he agreed, scrubbing his hand over his mouth to hide his smile. “I’ll be back in a few minutes, okay?”

“Kay.”

She rolled onto her tummy and began playing with her toys. He wanted to just sit and watch her, maybe play with her. But he couldn’t. Not right now. But another night, he would.

He hurried through plating their food and setting the table, periodically glancing over at the living room to check on her. She was still playing with the toys, but it looked like Sealy was trying to kill Flash. Oattie seemed to be playing referee, and she was cheering them on.

Bloodthirsty little thing.

Finally, he made his way back to her, crouching at the edge of the blanket. “Dinner time, baby.”

“Hold on,” she grumbled. She banged Sealy down on Flash, and let out a high-pitched cry. “Winner!”

Jett stared at her as she lifted the seal’s little arms up, waving him around as he did his victory lap around Flash. “Wasn’t that awesome, Daddy? Did you see?”

“Sure did, baby. Come on. Tell me about it while you eat.” Standing, he held his hand out to her. She beamed as she took it and jumped to her feet, letting him guide her to the table.

She told him about the wrestling match between the toys as he cut her food up and fed her, feeding himself between her bites. And before they knew it, dinner was over and cleaned up, and she still hadn't stopped talking.

She followed him around like a baby duck, talking and talking and talking. Not that he was really complaining. It seemed like she didn't have anyone else to talk to, so he'd happily listen to her forever. It made him feel good knowing she felt so comfortable with him.

He wondered if he could take her to the bathroom, strip her, and get her in the bath without her realizing it. Was that wrong? Maybe a bit. But she had her safe word. Maybe if he didn't make a big deal about it, she wouldn't even think twice about it.

And it was getting late. She needed a bath before bed, and she'd told him she liked to read before she fell asleep. He wanted her to be comfy while she was trying to relax.

Without a word, he headed for the bedroom. Of course, she was on his heels.

“And then, she told him to go jump off a bridge. It was rather rude, but I understand it. He shouldn't have been so mean. And mean people should jump off bridges, you know? Oh, that reminds me. This one time I saw a ladybug fly off a leaf—”

He pulled everything out of her bag she might need and led her to the bathroom. It was small, but he'd given it a deep clean before she came over so he could bathe her. Turning, he knelt in front of her and tugged her shorts down her legs.

He held his breath, waiting for her to protest but she didn't. She placed her hands on his shoulders as she spoke, stepping out of the shorts. He glanced up at her, finding her staring at the wall as she talked about the average speed sloth's move.

Tugging her panties down, she stepped out of them, too. Okay, she must really not be aware of what was happening. Standing, he tugged her shirt off over her head. Then reached around to unclasp her bra.

That's when she stiffened.

"Um, Daddy?"

"Yes, baby?"

"Why are you taking my clothes off?" she asked quietly, looking up at him with wide eyes. Pink rushed into her cheeks as she shifted her weight, pressing her legs together as he pulled her bra off completely.

"It's bath time. Why? What are you thinking about?" He stared down at her body, taking in her curves and the softness of her little tummy, the fullness of her small breasts.

Fuck.

He wanted to sink himself inside her, wanted to taste her rosy nipples, wanted to feel her tongue lap at his cock after he finished filling her with his cum.

"Are you going to—are we about to—" She pressed her hands to her cheeks. "I thought we'd be in the bedroom for this, but I've heard good stuff about shower sex." She stared longingly at the shower, and he grinned down at her.

"No sex tonight," he said, and her bottom lip rolled out. "But if you're a good girl, Daddy might make you come again." Her eyes lit up at that, then she licked her lips.

"What about you?" she asked quietly. He tilted his head to the side in silent question. "Can I make you come? Oh my God, I can't believe I said that."

Reaching out, he skimmed his hand over the curve of her waist. "You want to make me come, pretty girl?" Her breath caught as she nodded. "How do you want to do that?"

"How would you like me to?" He shook his head.

"I asked you a question, I expect a real answer."

Her entire body flushed pink and she swayed into him. He skimmed his hand higher, gently cupping her breast. She gasped as he brushed his thumb over her tight nipple.

"My mouth," she whispered. His brows rose as he softly rolled it between his thumb and forefinger.

“Yeah? You ever give head before?” Her throat bobbed as she shook her head. Fuck, he shouldn’t like that so much. But he did. He liked being her first in everything. “We never talked about limits.”

“I told you I’m open to everything,” she breathed.

He eyed her as he pinched her nipple, twisting it slightly. She cried out, arching her back. “How do you feel about a bit of pain?”

“Yes,” she gasped. “I like it.”

He moved to her other one, giving it the same treatment. “How about bondage? Can I tie you up and fuck you?”

“Please,” she moaned, dropping her head back.

“Anal?”

“Yes,” she squeaked, her face flushing.

He continued playing with her nipples as he contemplated asking her the final question. But he didn’t want to scare her away. Would it be too much?

But he had to know.

Leaning forward, he ran his nose along her jaw as his free hand snaked between her legs. She was hot and soaking wet for him. A low growl ripped from his throat as he nipped at her neck.

“And what if Daddy called you his pretty little slut? His perfect little whore? How would that make you feel?” He rolled her clit between his fingers as he kissed along her neck.

“Yes!” she cried. “Please, Daddy. Yes!”

“Yeah? That turns you on? Being Daddy’s good slut?” She groaned as she gripped his shirt in her fists, holding herself up.

“God, yes. I want that. I want to be that for you.”

“You’re so perfect for me, pretty girl. So fucking perfect.”

He pulled away, but her grip on his shirt tightened. “I’m close—I haven’t—”

“Shh.” He ran his fingers through her slick pussy lips again before pulling away. “Good things come to those who wait.”

“Bullfuzzies,” she grumbled.

He grinned as he pressed a kiss to her nose. “Bath time.”

Moving to the tub, he turned the water on and looked around at the sad state of things. No toys, no bubble bath, no soap that smelled like her. He’d have to remedy that soon.

Turning, he held his hand out to her and held his breath, waiting for her to reject him. But she never did. Instead, she slid her palm against his and let him lead her to the tub. He lifted her into the warm water, and she sighed as she sat back, letting it coat her skin.

“Sorry I don’t have anything for you,” he grunted as he kneeled beside the tub. “I’ll get you some stuff tomorrow.”

“It’s okay,” she said shyly. “I don’t need anything.”

“Your Little might want some things to play with, though.” He hesitated, unsure of what to do. He’d never bathed anyone before. “Want to wash your hair?”

“No, thanks. Can I have a scrunchie?” Yeah, he definitely didn’t have any of those. “I have one in my bag. In the side pocket.”

Jumping to his feet, he rushed to her bag and looked through it, finding a giant, silky pink scrunchie, and took it to her. Well, he assumed it was a scrunchie. He didn’t know what the fuck that was.

“This?” He held it up, and she eagerly nodded, taking it from him as he knelt again. He watched as she effortlessly tied her hair into a bun at the top of her head. He’d need to learn how to do that, maybe how to braid, too. It seemed like she liked her hair braided.

He’d never done any of this before and felt weirdly anxious about fucking it up. Punishments, cuddling, playing? He could do that all day. But this? It was different. It felt more intimate.

Clearing his throat, he reached for a clean washcloth and poured soap on it. It was his, so she'd smell like him and not her usual sweet scent, but he didn't mind. It felt like he was marking her with his scent, and his caveman brain liked it. A lot.

"What kind of toys would your Little like?" he asked casually. He wasn't sure how young her Little was, but judging by her playing with her toys earlier, he didn't think she was that young.

"I like coloring," she said, and he nodded. He assumed she'd like that. "And painting."

"What else?"

"Reading." He nodded as he scrubbed the cloth over her back.

"What about dolls? Tea parties? Legos?"

"Oh, I think I'd like Legos."

He scrubbed the cloth down her arm, keeping his voice light. "You've never had any?" Her face fell slightly as she shook her head.

"Legos were for boys," she muttered. "Mother said I couldn't have them. But I found some from when Christopher was a kid in storage and played with them. When she found out, she threw them away."

He paused, staring at his girl as she ran her fingers lightly through the water. Her mother had a lot to answer for. The fucking bitch.

"I'm sorry, baby," he said softly, and she shrugged.

"It's okay."

It wasn't, though. It wasn't okay that she ever felt anything other than loved by her fucking family. Here he was, thinking his childhood sucked, and then she had to deal with the shit she did.

At least his parents just left him and Beck the fuck alone. Let him take care of his little brother the way he wanted and

stayed out his way. Abbie clearly wanted her family's approval—maybe she just wanted her mother's approval. But she never had it, and likely would never have it. And it fucking killed him. Tore his heart apart for her.

“I'll get you some Legos,” he said, moving onto her legs. “I'll get you all the Legos you want.”

She beamed up at him, that sad look on her face gone. “You don't have to buy me anything, Daddy,” she told him, and he snorted.

“You're just saying that to be polite,” he said, and she nodded unashamedly.

“You're right. You'll really get me some? Can I pick them out?”

“Sure thing, baby. We can go tomorrow.”

“Really?” She bounced a few times, clapping her hands together. Water sloshed over the side of the tub, soaking his jeans; but she didn't seem to notice or care, and when she had that happy look on her face, he didn't have the heart to tell her to stop. He had extra towels; he could clean the mess up later.

He dragged the cloth over her chest, and she gasped, her eyes widening. Their gazes met and held as he slid it over her breast. “Lay back, pretty girl.” She obeyed, slowly lying back and letting him run the cloth over her body, paying extra attention to her peaked nipples.

By the time he was dragging the cloth down her stomach, she was a whimpering, wiggling mess. “Stay nice and still,” he said, his voice husky. She whined, but stayed still as he slid his hand between her legs, letting the cloth float in the water.

Fuck, she was so hot. So wet. He dragged his fingers lightly over her lips, loving the way a blush bloomed across her chest and up her neck into her face. She gripped the edge of the tub as she stared up at him, her breathing shallow.

“You're so wet, baby girl,” he rasped, spreading her lips apart with his fingers. “For me?” He tapped his finger against her swollen clit, and her mouth fell open.

“Daddy,” she moaned. He could feel her restraint, how hard she was holding onto the tub, trying not to move.

“I know,” he murmured. Slowly, he circled her clit, watching her breath hitch. He kept a slow, steady pace, not wanting to end this too quickly. “Does that feel good, baby?”

“Yes.” She reached for him, gripping his shirt tightly in her hand. “Please. Please.”

“Please what, pretty girl?” He moved his finger faster, then slid it lower. Her eyes widened. “Ever had something inside you?”

“Um.” Her fist tightened on his shirt. “Yes.” His brows lifted.

“What?”

“Tampons,” she muttered, her face flushing. He nodded, circling her entrance lightly, teasing her.

“What else?”

“My fingers,” she whispered. His cock was about to fucking snap in half.

“I want to watch you fuck yourself,” he told her. “I want to watch your little fingers disappear in your tight virgin pussy. You’d let me watch, wouldn’t you, baby?”

“Anything you want, Daddy,” she breathed. She was killing him. He jerked forward, grinding his hard cock against the edge of the tub. Fuck, he’d need to jack off in the shower to be able to sleep tonight.

“What else?” She looked away, and he dipped the tip of his finger inside her. “What else, Abbie?”

“I have a toy,” she said so softly, he almost didn’t hear her.

“A toy?”

“Three, actually.”

“Three toys?” His brows rose, a slow grin curving his lips. “You’ve used them all at the same time?” Her eyes snapped back to him.

“Never.”

“Hmm. Could be fun.”

She shook her head, but her eyes sparkled with interest. Yeah, it seemed like she wanted that as badly as he did.

“Yeah, I think you’d like that,” he murmured, leaning toward her. His finger pressed further inside her, and she cried out. Fuck, she was tight. He couldn’t wait to feel her wrapped around his thick cock. “You’d like Daddy filling your tight ass with one toy as he fucked your pussy with another, while you held a little vibrator against your clit. I’d fuck your mouth while you were completely filled, watching as you came over and over and over for me.”

“Daddy,” she whined, lifting her hips.

“No moving.” He gripped her nipple between his two fingers with his free hand, pinching warningly. “After I came, and you swallowed it all down, I’d keep fucking you with your toys, not stopping until you were so cum-drunk, you couldn’t even speak. Would you like that?”

“Uh-huh.” She nodded eagerly, her pupils blown. “Can we do that tonight? I wanna do that tonight.”

He chuckled, leaning forward to press a kiss to her cheek. “Not tonight,” he said softly. “But someday soon. I have to stretch your pussy first, get you ready for my cock.”

Her breath hitched at his words, and he took the opportunity to press his lips against hers. His tongue slid into her mouth, and her entire body went taut. He pushed his finger in deeper, loving the way she moaned against him.

“Come for me,” he breathed, rubbing his thumb against her clit as he fingered her faster. “Come for Daddy.”

Her back arched up into his, her chest pressing against his, soaking his shirt. He pulled away to watch her shatter and moved his fingers faster. “That’s it, pretty girl. God, you look so fucking good taking my fingers. You gonna come for me?”

“Daddy!” she cried, and he felt her pussy flutter around his finger.

“You’re so fucking close,” he grunted, moving faster, harder. “So damn pretty. Such a good girl for Daddy.”

“Oh, fuck!” she screamed as she clamped her thighs around his hand, her head falling back as she came. He’d never heard her cuss before, but it was weirdly hot. He groaned at the feeling of her squeezing his finger, imagining it was his cock instead.

*One day.*

“Good girl,” he murmured, pressing his lips to her cheek. “Such a good little girl.” He gently kissed her again, feeling her body relax under him. She smiled dreamily up at him, sighing softly.

“Thank you,” she said shyly. He grinned as he pressed his lips to her forehead.

“Relax now, baby.”

He continued bathing her, watching her eyes lull closed, then snap back open. Yeah, his girl was exhausted and needed some sleep. He could give her that.

Jett finished as quickly as he could and pulled the drain on the tub before lifting her out and drying her off. He laid her back on his bed, reminding himself she was different, their dynamic was different. She wasn’t just another naked woman, she was Abbie. His Abbie. And his needs could come later.

Much later.

He dressed her in her cute otter pajamas and tucked her in tightly, before taking a shower. She didn’t stir at all, which told him just how tired she was. And when he laid down, she immediately found him in her sleep and cuddled close. Fuck if that didn’t make him feel a million feet tall.

She wanted him, even in her sleep. She knew he’d protect her, that he’d love her.

Love her.

Fuck.

He stared up at the ceiling as the words settled inside him.

It was too soon. Way too fucking soon. But now that he'd thought it, he couldn't stop himself from fully falling into the feeling. It was right, this was right. Being with her was right.

Being with her was perfect.

# twenty-one

. . .

Wes:

I hate to bother you, but can you grab my work boots from outside my apartment and bring them to the shop? I had a sleepover and couldn't run by my place this morning.

Wes:

Pretty please with extra cherries on top?

Ugh. He knew she wouldn't say no to him, especially when he said please and added those extra cherries. Freaking Weston.

Stomping up the steps of her apartment building, she scanned the corridor, spotting his smelly, dirty work boots sitting right where he said they'd be. He probably left them outside so they didn't stink up his entire apartment, but she had to deal with it every time she passed them.

She didn't have time for this. But he'd helped her more times than she could count and rarely ever asked for anything, so she'd do this for him.

Just this once.

Plugging her nose, she pinched the boots between her fingers and held her breath as she sprinted down the steps to her car. She flung them inside and rounded the car, checking the time on her dash as she slid into the driver's seat.

She had thirty minutes before she needed to be at work, but with the errand for Wes, she had to cut that in half. Which meant she had no time to stop for lunch. Thankfully, she had emergency chocolate in her bag.

And she needed to text Jett to let him know she was fine and heading to work. But she'd been running since the second she stepped out of her class and hadn't had a chance to take a breath, much less send him a text.

Pulling up to the little mechanic shop where Wes worked, she stormed inside. He owed her big time for this, stinking up her car with his freaking boots. Maybe he had lunch she could steal. That would be a fair trade.

Stepping inside, a girl behind the counter smiled at her. "Hey, what can I do for you? Need an oil change?"

Abbie shook her head as she walked forward. "I'm here to see Wes." The girl's smile tightened.

"Wes? For what?"

"He has two radioactive boots in my car that he needs to get out." She threw her thumb over her shoulder, laughing slightly. But when the girl just gave her a confused look, Abbie sighed. "I'm his friend. Well, his neighbor. A neighbor-friend? He asked me to bring his work boots to him. So, here I am. Being the best friend in the world—"

"Oh my God, you touched them?!" the girl squealed, jumping from foot to foot. "You're so brave!"

"I know!" Abbie wailed, flailing her arms around. "It was disgusting!"

"Everyone knows Wes' boots are the worst." Abbie nodded her agreement. Yeah, she knew that. "You brave, brave soul. I'll go get him."

"Thanks."

She didn't catch the girl's name, but Abbie liked her. If for no other reason than she felt her pain when it came to touching those freaking shoes. He needed new ones. Maybe she should

get him a pair for his birthday. When was it again? Maybe Christmas was better.

The door to the office opened, and Wes strolled in, grinning. “Hey, Abbie-Girl. Thanks—”

“Never make me touch those things again!” she cried dramatically. He lifted his hands, his brows raised.

“Sorry. I didn’t realize they’d make you freak out,” he said.

“They’d make anyone freak out!” She shuddered at the thought of touching them. “Never again, Weston. Never. Again.”

“Sorry.” He huffed out a laugh. “I didn’t have anyone else to get them.”

“And you should wash them, you know.” She glared down at his feet. How did those things smell so much?

“I wash my feet every day,” he huffed, and she shook her head.

“I mean your stupid boots.”

“Hey, my boots aren’t stupid.”

“But they are smelly.” She wrinkled her nose at him, and he laughed.

“Noted. I’ll get you some ice cream or something to say thanks.”

“Or you could give me your lunch?” She put up prayer hands, batting her lashes.

“My lunch?” He gave her a confused look, pushing his brows together. “Did you forget groceries again?” Her face heated.

Yeah, she’d been known to pop over to his place to bum a meal or two off him when she’d forgotten to stock up on groceries and didn’t have extra money to eat out. She felt guilty about it, but he always offered, so it wasn’t like she was stealing or anything. And she gave him candy all the time, so it was even.

“I don’t have time to stop. I need to get to work.”

“Ah, shit. I didn’t realize you were on your way to work. I wouldn’t have asked. Fuck, I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.” She shrugged. It was fine. She was mostly just teasing him. But she was starving. This morning, she’d left Jett’s place in such a hurry she didn’t stop to eat the breakfast he’d made her. Even though he grumbled about it, he had to let her go, otherwise she would’ve been late to class.

She’d promised him she’d eat lunch, but...what he didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him, right?

But she knew he’d somehow figure it out. That man just knew everything.

After spending nearly every night at his house this week, she’d learned she can’t keep anything from him. She was pretty sure he was a mind reader.

“I didn’t bring lunch. I was going to pick something up. Fuck. Can you wait like five minutes? I’ll grab you something. Just sit here.”

“Wes, it’s fine.” She waved him off, feeling guilty. She shouldn’t have asked him for food. He wouldn’t stop until she was fed, and she didn’t have time for Wes’ crazy right now. “I was kidding.” He looked like he didn’t believe her, but she didn’t have time for this. She needed to go.

The door behind him opened, and she expected the girl to come toward them, that warm, friendly smile on her face. She looked around Wes’ wide body to tell her she was leaving, but froze.

Jett stared back at her, looking just as shocked as she felt.

“Abbie?”

“Jett?”

They spoke at the same time. Wes glanced over his shoulder as he stepped out of their way. She and Jett just stared at each other. She knew her mouth was hanging open, her eyes wide.

What was he doing here?

Finally, she took him in, taking in his uniform shirt and dirty jeans, his grease-smeared skin and sweaty face.

He worked here.

“You work with Wes?” she blurted, and Jett’s attention snapped to the other man. Wes stepped back into the wall.

“You know Wes?” Jett growled. “How?”

“He’s, um, he’s my neighbor. Hey, Jetty? You okay?” Why did he look like he was about to kill Wes?

“Is he now?” His jaw was tight as he glared at him. Weird reaction.

“Jett?”

He ignored her as he stalked toward the other man.

“You didn’t tell me you knew her,” he accused, and Wes held his hands up innocently.

“I didn’t know you knew her,” he said, shaking his head.

“Jett?” she said again, trying to make her voice louder.

“Why is she here to see you?” he demanded, then whirled on her. “Why are you here to see him?”

“I—I—”

“My boots.”

“What?” Jett’s head snapped back toward him. Jeez, the big guy would give himself whiplash if he kept doing that. “Your boots?”

“Wes texted me and asked if I’d bring them to him,” Abbie explained. Jett slowly looked at her.

“He texted you?” He glared back at Wes. “You have her number?”

“Ah, yeah, man. She’s my friend.”

“How often do you text?” he asked, pointing the question at her.

“Rarely. Just when he needs something. Or I need something. Or...” She trailed off, not sure why he looked so mad. “He just needed his boots, that’s all. And when I got his text, I—”

“When?”

“What?” She blinked, confused.

“When did he text you?”

Oh, no.

She knew where this was going.

Her hands drifted behind her as she backed toward the door.

“Well, I really should get going,” she said, smiling brightly. “See you later, Jetty. I’ll, um, I’ll call you after work. You wanna come over tonight? You know what, why don’t you just text me.” She whirled toward the door, ready to race out.

“Freeze!” he shouted, his voice echoing in the small room, and she froze, turning back toward him. “You,” he pointed at Wes, “out. No one comes in here. Not until we’re done talking.”

She gulped.

He was not happy.

Uh-oh.

“Maybe you should take it easy—”

“Get. Out,” Jett ground out.

“Abbie-Girl?” Wes glanced worriedly at her. “You know Jett?”

“He’s, um...he’s kind of my boyfriend.” She winced as Wes gaped at her, then at Jett.

“You didn’t tell me you were dating anyone,” Wes said to him.

“Get out.” They ignored him.

“And you didn’t tell me either,” he said, pointing an accusatory finger at her.

“It’s not like you tell me every time you have a girlfriend,” she shot back, and he rolled his eyes.

“That’s because I never have girlfriends. I fuck around, you know?”

“Get the fuck out!” Jett roared, making her jump. She watched Wes’ throat bob as he looked between them, but whatever he saw on Jett’s face must’ve made him think twice about whatever he was going to say.

He hurried out of the office, leaving her to Jett’s mercy. Traitor.

Not that she thought Jett would hurt her, but she didn’t want to get yelled at. She hated getting scolded. She’d rather get a freaking spanking.

Jett rounded the counter and stalked toward her, caging her against the wall. “I thought I told you to text me when you left school,” he said quietly, his voice different than she’d ever heard. “I haven’t heard from you all day.”

“I forgot,” she mumbled.

“But you didn’t forget to bring Wes’ shoes to him. Didn’t forget to text him back. Didn’t forget about him.” Her eyes widened at his tone. She’d never heard it before. Sure, he’d been upset with her, but he’d never sounded so...cold.

“Daddy?”

“Don’t,” he snapped, and she flinched at the sharp word. “Are you with him?”

“What?” She gaped up at him. “Wes?”

“Stop saying his name.” He pushed off the wall and began pacing in front of her. “Are you fucking him? Was he another guy you met online? Another Daddy?”

“Jett,” she whimpered, tears burning her eyes, but he shook his head.

“You’re cheating on me already.” He let out a humorless laugh.

“I—I’m not—” Her hands shook as she wrapped her arms around herself. “Why are you saying this?”

“Cheating. Lying.” He was muttering to himself, not even looking at her. “Should’ve fucking known.”

“Daddy—”

“I said don’t,” he growled.

“You’re not—you’re not—” She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t get the words out. If she said them, they’d be true.

You’re not my Daddy anymore?

But she didn’t want it to be true. She didn’t want him to leave.

“Jett, man, calm down.” He whirled around, and she shrunk back against the wall. When had Wes come back into the room? She hadn’t even seen him.

“Calm down?” Jett laughed again, shaking his head. “Didn’t expect this from you. From either of you.” He shot her an accusatory look over his shoulder, and she felt a hot tear drip from her eye. He tracked it, swallowing thickly before shaking his head and looking away.

“What the fuck do you think is going on between us? She’s my friend. That’s all.”

“Sure.”

“You’re making an ass of yourself, man,” Wes said, shaking his head. She tried to take a breath but she couldn’t. Why couldn’t she breathe? “I don’t know what’s going on between you two—”

“I thought she was my girlfriend, but apparently, she’s yours, too.”

“Fuck you,” Wes snarled. “Abbie isn’t that kind of girl. And if you don’t know that, then you don’t deserve her.”

“And you do?”

“I wouldn’t accuse her of fucking cheating on me!” Wes shouted, making her jump.

“Guys,” she rasped. She didn’t feel good. Her tummy was rolling, and her vision was blurry, but not from tears. “Daddy.”

“She didn’t tell me she was coming here,” Jett said. “If she had nothing to hide, then why keep it from me?”

“She’s not Mandy,” Wes told him gently, stepping forward.

Jett paused.

“Daddy,” she said again, but her voice sounded far away. Her chest burned, and black dots danced in her vision. Had she stopped breathing? She tried to take a breath, but it wouldn’t come. “Daddy.”

The world spun, the room shifting until she hit something hard. A shout made her wince, and a pair of rough hands grabbed her. But it was too late.

Everything went black.



“SHE’S NOT MANDY.”

Jett paused, taking a deep breath. He ran his hand over his head. Fuck. Fuck! Wes was right. Abbie wasn’t Mandy. She wasn’t a cheater. She’d never—but why didn’t she tell him she knew Wes? And why didn’t she tell him she was coming to see him?

Why didn’t Wes tell him?

What were they hiding?

*Nothing.*

They weren’t hiding anything.

It was a weird coincidence. Abbie was amazing and kind, of course she befriended her neighbor. Of course Wes would

like her. She was impossible not to like, not to fall for.

Had Wes fallen for her?

He shook his head, trying to shake the thoughts loose.

He needed to get his shit sorted. He couldn't stand that he'd made her cry, that he'd scared her. He hadn't meant to, but when he saw them smiling at each other, and saw the way her face paled when she saw him, it felt like he'd caught her doing something she wasn't supposed to be doing.

He felt like he had when he walked in on Mandy riding his friend.

He didn't want to be a fool again, but Wes was right. He knew he was. He was making an ass of himself.

Abbie was sweet, so fucking sweet she'd give him cavities. It wasn't fair to accuse her of shit Mandy did.

"Fuck," he breathed. Wes glared back at him. Yeah, he deserved that look.

"Daddy."

Her voice was so small, so weak, but it pierced the air. He whirled, watching as his baby girl fell to the ground, her eyes rolling back. She looked even more pale than before, her lips colorless.

"Abbie!" He raced toward her, his arms outstretched. She hit the floor, but he immediately lifted her.

Turning, he found Wes with the back office door open and watched as he shoved shit to the floor. "Put her down," he said, waving toward the desk.

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. What happened? He'd taken his eyes off of her for only a second, and she fainted? What was wrong with her? Was she sick? Clearly.

And he'd yelled at her. He'd assumed she was pale because she'd gotten caught, but what if she was pale for another reason?

Like she was sick. Or tired. She had a big test today, she was probably exhausted.

Fuck.

“She hasn’t eaten lunch,” Wes told him. “Maybe that and the stress—”

But no, it wasn’t that. Now that he thought about it, he thought he knew what happened.

“She stopped breathing,” Jett said softly, remembering the first day they met and how she held her breath when she got anxious. And he’d made her anxious.

Fuck.

Fuck him.

This was his fault.

“Pretty girl,” he murmured, stroking her cheek. He could see her chest moving, could feel a steady stream of air coming from her nose, so he knew she was breathing now. “Baby.” He ran his fingers through her hair, gently coaxing her from sleep, similar to how he had this morning, and every other morning he’d woken up beside her.

He felt so fucking bad. He shouldn’t have yelled at her. Shouldn’t have accused her or Wes of anything. They were good kids. But he was an insecure bastard. He knew Abbie was too good for him, too pretty. She’d fit better with a younger man like Wes, a more attractive one like him.

He shook himself. He couldn’t spiral right now. He needed to be there for his girl.

“Abbie, baby,” he said again, gently shaking her. Her eyelids fluttered open, and she stared up at him with glazed eyes. “Hey, baby girl. There you are.”

“Does she need an ambulance?” Wes asked worriedly.

“Jett,” she whispered.

“It’s okay,” Jett murmured, stroking her head. “I’m here. I’m sorry, baby. I lost my temper.” Tears filled her eyes as she shrank away from him.

“Mad at me,” she whimpered, and he shook his head.

“No, baby. I’m not mad at you.”

“Yelled.”

“I know.” Fuck, he felt so guilty.

“Is she okay?” Wes asked.

“I’m sorry, Abbie,” Jett said again. “I’m so fucking sorry.”

“Bad word,” she scolded, but her voice was still weak. She looked too pale. Too fragile.

“Jett!” Wes shouted, making her jump. She reached for him, and he leaned into her, letting her hold on to him. He hated that he was covered in sweat and grease, but she needed him. He could bathe her later.

“Give her a minute,” he grunted, glaring at the other man over his shoulder. “Do not yell again. You scared her.”

Wes gave him a guilty look before turning his attention to Abbie. He stepped forward, but paused, looking back at him. Jett didn’t move. And he wouldn’t. Not even if Abbie told him to get lost and go fuck himself. He’d still be right here.

“You okay, Abbie-Girl?” he asked softly. Jett’s jaw clenched at the nickname, but Wes ignored him. “Need the hospital?”

“No hospital,” she cried, and Jett immediately turned back to her, gathering her in his arms.

“It’s okay, baby,” he cooed, trying to calm her. “I’m here. I’m here.”

“Mad,” she whispered again, and he swallowed thickly. He wasn’t sure if she meant that she was mad at him, or was telling him she didn’t like that he was mad at her. Either way, he felt like shit.

“I’m sorry.” He’d apologize however many times she needed to hear it. He glanced at Wes, finding him staring down at her, looking stressed. “Can you grab her something to drink and eat? Maybe some sugar? She should have emergency chocolate in her bag.”

He barely got the words out before Wes took off out of the room. He turned back to Abbie, finding her staring up at him with a guarded expression. "I'm sorry for yelling," he told her. "I'm sorry for scaring you, and for accusing you of cheating."

"I'd never do that," she whispered, and he nodded, looking away.

"I know." He took a deep breath. She'd been so honest with him the other night, he could be honest with her, too. "The last woman I was in a relationship with cheated on me. She'd been cheating on me for months, and I never knew. Not until I walked in on her fucking one of our friends. It was—" He sighed, running his hand over his head. "I didn't realize how much it fucked me up. But seeing you with Wes when you weren't supposed to be here...it was a shock, but it brought up those old feelings. I wasn't even talking to you, wasn't seeing you. Was seeing her. Was mad at her."

She wrapped her arms around his neck, holding him close. "I'm sorry, Jetty," she whispered. "I didn't know. I would've told you, but I was just in a hurry to get to work, and I didn't think about texting. I'll do better, I'm sorry."

"No, baby. It's okay. I know you were busy." He wrapped his arms tightly around her. "I'll do better, too, okay? What happened out there won't ever happen again."

She nodded, her cheek sliding against his neck. "Sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry for," he told her firmly. "I fucked up."

"Bad word," she said again, and he smiled to himself.

He'd feel like shit about this for a long time, probably forever, and he'd do everything he could to continue apologizing. He didn't like that he'd turned into a jealous monster, and he really needed to fix himself before he completely ruined everything with Abbie.

Wes walked back into the room with an electrolyte drink and some chocolate. He handed them to Jett, but sat in a chair beside the desk where Abbie was laying. She smiled weakly at him, and he patted her leg.

Jett didn't like that. But he reigned his crazy in. Just a bit.

"How do you know each other?" he asked gruffly. Wes shot him a look, but Abbie sighed tiredly and any jealousy that was still lingering disappeared at that sigh

"We're neighbors," she said. "I moved in next door to him about a year ago. He's my friend."

"Friend?" Jett glanced at Wes, finding him nodding. "Haven't heard you talk about her before."

"Yeah, you have," Wes scoffed. "My cute neighbor who needs help rehoming spiders?"

"You told people about that?" she gasped, then pointed. "Gossiping isn't very nice." He flashed her a grin that had Jett gripping the edge of the desk so he wouldn't throttle the other man.

*Get it the fuck under control.*

"So, you've known each other a while," he said tightly, and she nodded.

"Wes was there for me when I didn't have anyone else," she told him, sounding sad. "He was the first friend I made when I moved out of my parents house. He helped me in the beginning since I didn't know how to do anything. He's practically my brother."

"Your extremely hot brother." He grinned, but that made Jett's control snap.

"Don't flirt with her," he snarled, and Wes' grin fell.

"Just joking—"

"Well don't. She's mine. Understand me? Mine."

"Oo, oo. Jett, caveman. Caveman must stake claim." Abbie made her voice deeper and mimicked a monkey, waving her arms around.

He shot her a look, but when he saw her throw her head back and laugh, he didn't care. He just took a deep breath, calming himself.

“You feeling okay, baby?” he asked, stroking his hand along her thigh.

She nodded as she nibbled the chocolate, dropping her eyes. He didn’t like that. He glanced at Wes, finding him watching her intently.

Nothing is going on between them, he reminded himself. Friends. She was allowed to be friends with Wes. And if he was being honest, Wes was a good friend to have. He was a good guy and he was glad Abbie had someone who’d been looking out for her all this time. That she hadn’t been totally alone.

“I’m taking the rest of the day off,” he said, and Wes nodded.

“I’ll let Martin know.” He eyed him. “This is serious then?”

“It is.” He watched Wes’ throat bob.

“You hurt her, I’ll fuck you up.”

He nodded firmly. After his freak out, he understood it, but didn’t like it. Didn’t like the way Wes was staring at him. “Got it,” he grit out. Wes’ face stayed hard as they stared at each other.

“Oh no,” Abbie breathed, and Jett’s attention immediately turned to her. She tried sliding off the desk, but both men reached for her. “I need to go to work!”

“You’re not going anywhere,” he said, his voice low. “Sit back down. Relax. Eat your chocolate—”

“Jett, I have to—”

“No.”

“But I already missed a day last week—”

“And you’ll miss another day this week,” he growled. “You fainted, baby. I’m not letting you go to work.” Her eyes slid to Wes, and he held his breath, waiting for his reaction.

“Aren’t you going to say something?” she cried, throwing her arm at him. Jett glanced over his shoulder, finding Wes’

brows raised, a small smirk on his face.

“Like what?” he drawled.

“I don’t know! Tell him he’s being unreasonable.” She sent a glare Jett’s way, and his expression hardened.

She shifted on the desk, pressing her legs together as her face flushed.

Yeah, she knew that look. Knew what it meant.

Spanking.

“I agree with him,” Wes said, and Jett’s head snapped to him.

“What?” he and Abbie said at the same time.

“You shouldn’t be working.” His gaze slid to him, and Jett braced himself. “You’ll take care of her? No more yelling? Stressing her out? Accusing her of this shit?”

“No more,” he vowed. “I’ve got her.” He turned back toward her, finding her staring up at him with wide eyes. Eyes that were still full of trust, full of warmth, when they shouldn’t be.

She should’ve sent him away, told him she wanted nothing to do with him. But for whatever fucking reason, she still wanted him. He wouldn’t do anything to change her mind.

## twenty-two

. . .

She hated to admit she was happy about calling in to work today. She hated working at the museum, but if she wanted to ever actually make money as an artist, she had to work there, had to gain experience so she could be a conservator when she graduated.

Or...

Or she could just sell her art like she'd always wanted to do. She could try to start an online business, take commissions, and have gallery showcases. But no. No. She needed to be realistic. Who would ever want to buy her art? No one, that's who.

But she still loved painting and drawing. It's all she ever wanted to do, so she didn't care how she did it for a living. If it was in the form of restoring someone else's art or creating her own, she just wanted to have a brush in her hand for the rest of her life.

Still, longing filled her as she stared out the window at the passing scenery. Sometimes her dreams felt so insurmountable, too unobtainable. Sometimes she felt like giving up.

Sometimes she thought about taking her mother up on her offer and moving back home, getting her money, and doing what she wanted with her life. But truly, the thought of that made her nauseous.

"You okay, pretty girl?" Jett asked softly. She glanced at him, smiling tightly as she nodded.

“Yep.” He gave her a look that told her he didn’t believe her, but surprisingly, he didn’t push her.

It shouldn’t have been surprising, though. He’d been quiet since they left his work. Truthfully, she’d been quiet, too. She didn’t know what to make of his outburst, of his accusations. She didn’t like it. She hated to think he thought she was the type of person who could cheat on him.

But after he explained what happened with his ex, she understood his reaction. And she felt awful for him. And wanted to kill his ex.

Who would ever even think of cheating on Jett? He was incredible. He was everything she’d ever wanted—dominant, tall, kind, attractive...a Daddy. It hadn’t felt right calling him that since he told her not to, though. She knew he hadn’t meant it, but when he said, “*Don’t*,” something inside her broke. Just a little sliver, but it was enough to hurt.

Really freaking bad.

And she didn’t like it. Didn’t like this unknown feeling she had in her tummy. She liked waking up every day knowing Jett was there for her, was her Daddy, was her man. But now, after everything...it felt different.

She didn’t know how to fix it, and judging by his silence, he didn’t know how to either.

They pulled up to his house, and he shut the truck off, but didn’t move. Tense silence filled the cab as he stared ahead, and unease swirled in her belly. Maybe she shouldn’t have agreed to leave her car at the shop. Maybe she should’ve brought it so she could leave.

Not that she wanted to leave, but what if he didn’t want her anymore? What if this awkwardness stayed forever? What if what happened at the shop ruined everything?

“I ordered a few things for you,” he said suddenly. Her mouth felt dry as she looked at him. “They were delivered today.”

“You didn’t have to buy me anything,” she told him gently, but he just shook his head.

“I wanted you to be comfortable here...” He trailed off, still staring at his house.

Was he regretting that now?

She watched as he slid from the truck and walked around it. She knew not to get out on her own, that he'd help her down. But now that things felt so weird between them, was that rule still in place?

Were any of her rules still in place?

Was he still Daddy?

She shuddered, remembering the way he'd spat the word at her, accusing Wes of being her Daddy, too. How could he think that?

The door opened, and she forced herself to stop reliving those moments, the words. She stared up at him, feeling unsure. He usually just grabbed her and lifted her down, but he hesitated.

*He hesitated.*

He didn't want her anymore. She was sure of it. He just didn't know how to get rid of her.

Then she'd stupidly fainted, and now he felt obligated to take care of her. Maybe it would be better if she just left him instead. Save them both the pain and trouble of dragging this out any longer.

Reaching past her, he undid her seatbelt and held his hand out. She stared at it, swallowing thickly as she slid her palm against his. Carefully, she jumped out, landing heavily on the ground.

“You okay?” he asked, and she nodded, not wanting to tell him that landing on the hard ground kind of really hurt her ankles. His throat bobbed, his dark eyes on hers, before he nodded and looked away.

He kept his hand wrapped tightly around hers as he led her to the front door and inside. Once she was in, he helped settle her on the couch before he went back outside to gather the

mail. And boy, he wasn't kidding about buying her stuff. It was way more than a few things.

He was completely weighed down with boxes and bags, and her breath caught. She couldn't remember ever getting that much stuff all at once. Not even for her birthday or Christmas. One or two big gifts, a card, that was it. Maybe a few smaller items, but nothing like this.

"You don't have to open it all now," he said gruffly. "Some of it's for Big Abbie, some is for Little Abbie. But everything is for you."

Her gaze flitted from one box to the next, taking everything in. She didn't know where to start. What she really wanted to do was dive straight into the pile like it was a pile of leaves, but she still felt weird. Reserved.

Instead, she grabbed the closest thing to her and opened it. She gave Jett a shy smile as he sat on the other end of the couch, watching. "Go on," he said gently. She couldn't hold back anymore, and ripped the bag apart.

Her mouth fell open. His head fell back as he laughed, the sound making that anxiety she'd had since the shop unfurl a bit.

"Jett!" she cried, throwing the box at him. "What is that thing?!"

"You don't know?" He lifted the box, looking through the clear plastic, then at her. "It's for your ass."

Yeah, she knew that.

"Oh my God!" She pressed her hands over her face. "Of all the things I thought you'd get me, I didn't think you'd get me *that!*"

"Why not?" he asked, still chuckling. "Don't you like it?" She watched through her fingers as he pulled the butt plug out. He turned the base toward her, and her lower stomach tightened.

*Daddy's Girl.*

“You want me to wear that?” she whispered, and he nodded.

“You said you were open to anal.”

“How can you talk about this so casually?” she wailed, covering her eyes again.

“If I’m going to fuck you one day, shouldn’t we be comfortable talking about it?”

She paused.

Was he going to do that? He hadn’t done much more than kiss her; sometimes he’d touch her while in the bath until she came, but he never went further. She hadn’t even seen him without a shirt yet. And he was talking about sex? About butt plugs! The man was insane.

“I bought a few others for you, too,” he said, and her hands fell away from her face as he searched through the bags and boxes. He grabbed one, and moved to rip the bag open and she lurched over the gifts. “Abbie!”

“Mine,” she said, snatching the bag from his hands. His lips twitched, but his face quickly morphed back into a stern expression.

“Abbie,” he growled as she sat back on the other end of the couch. “Are you supposed to snatch things out of my hands like that?”

“But you were going to open my gift,” she explained. “It’s mine. You’re not supposed to open it.”

“So, you ask me to not open it. You don’t jump across everything and grab it. You could’ve hurt yourself, baby girl.” Her face heated. God, she loved his voice. Loved the way he said baby girl.

“Sorry,” she whispered. Daddy lingered right at the end of that word, but she still didn’t feel right saying it.

“Open your gift, then you’ll get to use it,” he said, and she narrowed her eyes.

“What is it?” He shrugged, reclining back, draping his arm along the back of the couch.

“Open it.”

Her heart hammered as she ripped the bag open and pulled out a box. She gaped at it, then at him.

“Training plugs?” she breathed, and he nodded.

“There should be another box in there.”

She dropped the set of training plugs and reached back into the bag. “Oh my God! I’m not ever using that thing.” She shook her head as she stared at the giant plug.

“It’s a punishment plug,” he told her, sounding way too freaking cheery about it. “You’ll use it. Maybe now. Look at what it says on the base.”

She opened the box, glaring at him as she slid the massive plug out. Turning it over, her eyes widened.

*Daddy’s Naughty Girl.*

“I am not naughty,” she huffed.

“I think you are.” He grinned as he pushed to his feet and extended his hand to her. “How are you feeling, baby?”

“Fine,” she whispered. “I think I held my breath too long.”

“I think so too.” His face tightened, and she dropped her eyes, not liking the disappointment she saw there.

“I don’t mean to do it,” she muttered. “I don’t think about it. It just happens.”

“I know, pretty girl,” he said. “I’m sorry.” She glanced up at him, finding his hand still outstretched for her. “Do you want lunch before or after your punishment?”

“I’d like lunch without a punishment.” He chuckled as he shook his head.

“Not an option, pretty girl. You were naughty. And naughty little girls get punished, don’t they? You know the rules.”

Yeah, she knew the rules. Didn’t mean she liked them.

“I’ll eat after,” she grumbled, slapping her palm against his. He yanked her to her feet, wrapping his free arm around her and resting his hand on her ass.

“Watch the attitude,” he warned, giving her a gentle pat.

For some stupid reason, she wanted to push him. She wanted to see how far she could go before he lost it again. Her throat bobbed. Why would she want that? She hated seeing him upset. She hated seeing how angry he was.

But maybe a part of her was worried he’d get mad at her like that again, and she didn’t like it. She didn’t like the yelling, or the cold look in his eye. She didn’t like any of it. So maybe she was trying to push him until he broke again, so she had an excuse to leave.

She didn’t want to. She really, really didn’t want to. But she didn’t know what else to do, how to fix things. And if he freaked out so easily, could she really stick around? She’d lived her entire life walking on eggshells, she wouldn’t do it anymore.

No matter how much she cared about Jett, she didn’t want to live that way with him.

“Are you okay?” he murmured. She blinked and turned her attention up to him. She hadn’t realized she’d zoned out.

“Fine.”

He didn’t believe her. She knew he didn’t.

But he still led her silently to the bedroom. With each step, she felt her stomach twist tighter, felt more unease fill her. As she stepped into the room, she dug her heels in, yanking her hand away.

Jett’s shocked expression as he stared down at her hurt, but she couldn’t do this. Couldn’t play like this with him. Not before they talked about it. Not before they figured out where they went from here.

“I can’t—” The words were choked, and tears filled her eyes. “Earlier—what you said—”

His face crumpled. “I’m sorry, Abbie,” he rasped. “So fucking sorry.” He sank onto the bed, resting his head in his hands. She wrapped her arms around herself as she stared at him, watched him take deep breath after deep breath. “You changed your mind? About us?”

“No,” she breathed, shaking her head. She hadn’t changed her mind. She was just... “I’m confused.”

“Confused about what?”

She paced in front of him, her hands tightening and loosening at her sides. She didn’t know what to say, where to start. She’d never had anyone actually listen to her, so now that someone was, she had nothing to say. No, she did. She just didn’t know how to explain what she was feeling.

“I don’t like how you talked to me,” she blurted. “I don’t like how you made me feel.”

She wasn’t looking at him as she spoke and paced. She couldn’t. She didn’t want to see his expression, didn’t want to know what he was thinking until she’d gotten it all out.

“I didn’t like that you yelled, and that you were mean to my friend. And I didn’t like that you told me not to call you Daddy anymore. It confused me, and it hurt me.” She stopped and stared down at him, but his face was unreadable. “I know you have a past with cheating, but I’m not her. I wouldn’t do that to you, or anyone else. It’s not right—it’s mean. And I don’t want to be mean.” His lips barely lifted in a soft smile.

“You’re not mean,” he agreed. “I messed up. I shouldn’t have reacted the way I did.”

“No, you shouldn’t have.” He nodded, agreeing with her. “Everything just feels so wrong now. I want it to be how it was before. I don’t like feeling unsure about us.”

“I don’t either,” he murmured. “I’m sorry I’ve made you feel like this.” She shook her head. She was tired of apologies. She wanted actions. He took another deep breath, running his hands against his jeans. “I shouldn’t have told you not to call me Daddy. That was a mistake. One I’ll live with for the rest of my life.”

Her lips twisted to the side as tears burned her eyes.

“Do you want me to still be your Daddy?” he asked softly, like he was afraid to hear the answer.

“Of course!” she cried, lurching forward a step. But she stopped herself. Because if she threw herself at him and he rejected her, that might hurt more than his words. She forced herself to calm down. “I do if you do.”

“I want that more than anything,” he rasped. “I know I fucked up, and I’ll do everything I can do fix what I broke, but please—” A small, quiet sob left her, and he paused. “Please don’t leave, Abbie. Give me one more chance.”

She’d never seen him so broken up before, so sad. And she hated it. Hated that he felt like this and she couldn’t take his pain away. But he was the one who caused it, for them both.

“One more chance,” she repeated, her voice croaky. “Please don’t yell again. Don’t do anything that you did today again. Please.”

“Did I scare you?” he asked, his face paling. She knew he wouldn’t hurt her, but hearing him yell, seeing him so mad... yeah. It freaked her out a bit.

“A little,” she whispered, wincing.

“Fuck. I’m so fucking sorry.” He scrubbed his hand over his face. “If you don’t want to give me another chance, I understand. You should feel safe, and if I scare you—”

“I feel safe with you!” she blurted, her voice sounding frantic. Was she losing him? God, she didn’t want to lose him. “It just—you yelling—”

“You didn’t like that,” he finished, and she nodded, wiping roughly at her face. “I would never hurt you, Abbie. I’d sooner take my own life than ever raise my hand to you.”

“I know,” she whispered. “I’m not afraid of you, Jett. You don’t scare me. Just your voice does, sometimes, when you get really loud and angry.” His face tightened.

“Fuck.” He squeezed his eyes shut. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” she said quietly, shuffling forward another step. She didn’t want to do or say anything, not until he was ready. Not until she was positive he wouldn’t change his mind and reject her.

His eyes fluttered open, and he immediately held her gaze. “I’ll never do that again.”

“I believe you,” she whispered.

And she really did.

The way his eyes were red-rimmed, and the way he looked like he hated himself...yeah, she believed he’d never do this again. That he’d think twice before raising his voice or accusing her of anything.

“Can we start over?” she asked. “I’ll tell you about all of my friends. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you about Wes, but I didn’t think about it. It’s not like we talk or hang out all that much. He’s just my neighbor. But if you don’t want me around him, I won’t talk to him ever again.”

“No,” he breathed, scrubbing his hand over his face. “I’m not going to take you away from your friends. I need to work through my shit. I thought I was over it, but apparently not.”

“I can help,” she offered, and he lifted his eyes, his face looking lighter.

“Thanks, pretty girl. You’re the sweetest.”

She grinned. “I know.”

He chuckled as he held his hand out, and this time, she didn’t stop herself. She didn’t hesitate.

She threw herself at him, and his arms immediately wrapped around her, holding her tightly to his solid chest. This felt right. This was what she wanted. To be in Daddy’s arms after a long day, to be held and soothed by him.

To be loved by him.

She pushed that thought away. It wasn’t love. Whatever she felt for him, what he felt for her, it wasn’t love.

It couldn’t be.

It was too soon, and if she let herself think the word, she knew she'd accidentally say it. And then she'd definitely scare him away.

But she held onto him tighter, squeezing her eyes shut as he rocked her gently. "I'm sorry, my precious baby girl."

"It's okay, Daddy."

He loosed a breath at the same time she did. Something about calling him Daddy made them both feel better, like a lock clicking into place, a puzzle piece finding its forever home.

The L word blared in her head again, but she shook it away.

*Home.*

That's what he felt like. Not love. Just...home. Warmth. Comfort.

*Love.*

Ugh. She was in so much trouble.

# twenty-three

. . .

**J**ett hated himself. Hated that he'd scared her, and hated that he'd done anything to make her second guess their relationship. Hated that he'd fucked up.

But most of all, really fucking hated that she'd been scared.

It was the one thing he knew to be aware of. It had been drilled in him from a young age. He was always the biggest guy in the room, always the one people sought out to fight first, or to protect them.

He knew what to do, and today he'd done the opposite of it.

He knew to make himself smaller, less intimidating. Knew to talk softly, to keep his voice level and calm. Knew to never whirl on someone suddenly, not unless he was ready to fight. He knew a lot of things. But he'd been so blinded by his own shit, that he hadn't stopped to think.

And he'd scared her.

He hadn't meant to terrify her. She was a little thing compared to him, and he never wanted her to feel like she had today. Never wanted her to question her safety around him.

But today, he fucked up. Today, he almost lost his girl.

He shook his head, disappointed and pissed off with himself. It was the middle of the night, and Abbie was soundly asleep in his bed, right where she belonged.

He couldn't sleep, though. So he'd snuck out of bed, grabbed a beer, left the back door open a crack so he could hear if she needed him, and was sitting on the porch staring up at the stars. This was the best thing about living in a small town. No lights to hide the stars.

When he lived in New York City, it was the thing he'd hated. Even though that's where he'd been raised, he still always longed to see the clear sky. To stare up at the moon, the constellations. To be away from the loud noises and overcrowded streets.

Thinking about his past made him think of Beck. That's what he went by now, but when he was a kid, he'd always been called Beckham. Now he was a famous rockstar, traveling the globe and selling out venues every night with his absolute best friends.

He was proud of his baby brother. Was proud of everything he'd done with his life. Even if Jett had spent a few years locked up for his brother, he'd do it again.

There wasn't much he wouldn't do for the kid.

With his brother on his mind, he grabbed his phone but hesitated. Beck was in the UK, so he knew he'd be awake right now, but what if he was busy?

Ah, fuck it.

He pressed the call button and rested the phone against his ear, listening to it ring. He didn't think Beck would actually answer, so when his voice filtered through the phone, he was genuinely surprised.

"Big bro. How the fuck are you?"

"Nice greeting, man," he snorted. "Good. How are you?" He took a long swig of his beer as he listened to Beck go on and on about traveling, and how amazing Europe had been. He listened to him talk about selling out Rome a few nights ago, and how insane the crowd had been. He listened to him talk about taking Roxy, the lead singer of their band, to the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

His life seemed amazing.

No, it didn't seem that way. It just was amazing. Unreal.

Jett wasn't jealous. He wasn't the traveling type of guy. He definitely wasn't the fame type of guy. He liked his solitude. Liked his privacy.

He wanted a simple life, preferably with the girl in his bed right now.

"Anyway," Beck sighed. "Roxy and Keiren just left, so Wade, Des, and me were about to head down to the gym."

"Oh, right. Of course," Jett said gruffly. "I won't keep you." There was a beat of silence, then Beck cleared his throat.

"What's new with you? I spent the whole time talking about myself."

"Oh, same old shit. You know me."

But that wasn't true, was it? He had something new, someone new to talk about. He hesitated. What if Abbie changed her mind? Or what if it didn't work out? He'd have to confess to his brother he'd lost another girl because he was inadequate.

And that's why Mandy cheated, right? Because he wasn't fulfilling her in some way. Because she wanted someone else. Someone better.

And if Abbie left, it'd be for the same reasons.

But he didn't want Abbie to leave. He wanted this to work. He knew he'd fight for her and never give up. She was all he wanted.

"Well, actually..." He didn't even know where to start. "I met someone."

"Yeah?" Beck sounded genuinely surprised. "A girl?"

"Obviously." His brother laughed, and the sound soothed something in him he hadn't realized was there. "She's a good girl. A bit young for me."

"How young?" he asked warily, and Jett took another long pull of his beer to stall.

“She’s twenty-one,” he muttered.

“God damn, you fucking cradle robber.” He cackled, and Jett grinned to himself, shaking his head. “What’s her name? Tell me about her. I swear it’s like pulling fucking teeth trying to get any information from you.”

Jett sighed again. “She’s an artist. I’ve only seen a few of her pieces, and I don’t know shit about art, but she’s fucking incredible.”

“Yeah? Does she sell them? I’ve been trying to find something to get Roxy for her birthday.”

“Don’t know. She should, she’s that incredible.”

Like he said, he didn’t know shit about shit, but he knew talent when he saw it. And Abbie was damn talented.

“She’s in school for art history,” he continued.

“Smart girl.”

“Yeah, man. She’s a genius. No idea why the hell she’s with me,” he laughed tightly, but his brother didn’t.

“You’re loyal, and a good man. You’re hard working, and you take care of those you love. You protect them. Cherish them. Encourage them and their dreams. Don’t sell yourself short.”

“I don’t want to hear this mushy shit,” he groaned.

“Tough,” Beck grunted, and Jett’s brows rose at the firmness in his voice. It was hard to remember his brother was in his thirties and not a snot-nosed kid anymore. “How’d you meet?”

He took another drink. That question was a bit tough. He couldn’t exactly tell him he’d responded to her ad looking for a Daddy.

“Online,” he said. There was another beat of silence.

“Online?” Beck repeated. Yeah, judging by his tone, it was probably best to leave the details out.

“Yep. Uh, we talked for a while then met in person. We were safe.”

“Did you wallop her ass for meeting a stranger online?”

“Beckham,” Jett warned, even though he’d had the same thought a million times. But he didn’t want anyone, not even his brother, thinking about his girl getting her ass spanked.

“Whatever,” he breathed. “She needs to know not to do that.”

“It’s not like she’ll ever meet anyone else online,” he drawled.

More silence.

“So, it’s serious then?”

Shit. He’d walked right into that one.

“Yeah.” He set the beer on the table in front of him and scrubbed his hand over his head. “Yeah, it’s really serious.”

*I think I love her.*

But he didn’t say it. He couldn’t. Not yet.

“Might’ve fucked up today, but she thankfully forgave me,” he said.

He didn’t know why he said it. Maybe because he needed to talk about it with someone, or maybe because the beer was making his lips loose. Either way, the words were out. And when Beck asked what happened, Jett told him everything.

“I just freaked out, you know? Saw Mandy, not Abbie. I thought about Mom bringing in all those men, and how she’d never had the same guy in her bed twice. A part of me always thought it was normal, you know? For women to move on quickly. But today, when I saw her talking to Wes, I didn’t want her to move on. I still wanted her. And I freaked. I got so fucking mad. Not at her, not even at Wes. At myself. At Mandy. At Mom. Mad because they made me ruin things with the girl of my fucking dreams.”

Beck listened intently as he spoke, and it was like once he started, he couldn’t stop.

“I don’t want to lose her. I can’t. I know I’m not a smart man, and I know I’ve fucked up in the past. I know I’m not good enough for her, and I know she deserves someone better than me. But since the second I saw her photo, there was just something about her. Something that made me selfish. I won’t let go of her.”

“You love her,” Beck said gently.

“I don’t know.” He let out a long breath. “I don’t know if I’ve ever loved anyone before. Other than you.”

“You love her,” he said again, and Jett knew he was right.

He did love her. He loved her more than life. And he thought that might’ve been the real reason he’d been so upset today, why seeing her with Wes had hurt so much.

Because he loved her and he thought he’d lose her.

“You do. I know you do.” There was a longing in his brother’s voice he’d never heard before. But before he could ask about it, wood creaked and he glanced over his shoulder.

Abbie was rubbing her eye while holding Ottie by the arm. “Beck? Hey, I gotta go.”

“Yeah, me too.”

He ended the call and held his hand out to her. She took it and he gently tugged her toward him, sliding her into his lap.

“What are you doing up, pretty girl?” he asked softly, wrapping his arms around her. She rested her head on his chest, looking so tired he felt guilty for waking her up.

“I woke up and you weren’t there. I got scared.”

“Oh, baby. I’m sorry.” He stroked her hair softly, something in his chest easing as she relaxed into him.

“Who were you talking to?” Her voice was softer, higher pitched. Maybe she was so tired she was slipping into Little space. She seemed to do that when she first woke up.

“My brother.”

“Beck?” she asked, and he nodded, surprised she remembered his name. It wasn’t like he talked about him much. “Is everything okay? Is he hurt?” She pulled away to look up at him.

“Oh he’s fine.” He kissed her temple, his arms right around her. “He’s in London. Just got there from Rome.”

“Wow,” she breathed, her eyes wide. They sparkled in the night, and a thought flitted through his mind.

“You want to travel, pretty girl?”

Her dark brows bunched slightly. “I don’t know. Travel where?”

“Europe. Across the US. Anywhere. Everywhere.” She twisted her lips to the side, hauling Oattie higher into her arms.

“Do you?”

“I asked you first,” he laughed, tapping her nose. She scrunched it, nipping at his finger as he pulled it away. God, she was so cute. So fucking perfect.

“I don’t know,” she muttered. “It seems stressful.”

“Yeah, it does, doesn’t it?” He smoothed his fingers over her silky hair. He loved touching it, loved touching her. “Don’t know how Beck does it for a living.”

“What does he do?” she asked, tilting her head to the side. “I don’t think you’ve told me.”

He sighed.

He hated telling people. They tended to treat him differently after that.

“He’s in a band,” he said, and her brows rose.

“A band? He’s a singer?”

“Plays guitar.”

She studied him for a moment, and he took another breath. This was Abbie. She wouldn’t freak out.

“You ever heard of Roxy Bandera?” Her eyes widened. He’d take that as a yes. “He’s one of her bandmates.”

“Your brother is Beck? Like, the Beck?” She was gaping up at him, her eyes massive.

“The Beck?” he asked, laughing softly. “Don’t tell me you had posters of my baby brother in your room or something.” Her face flushed, and his head fell back as he laughed.

“No,” she huffed. “I liked Des more.” He grinned at her. She probably wouldn’t like the kid if she’d met him. He knew him almost as well as he knew his brother, and the guy was a total dick. But their publicist had spun his award-winning bad attitude to him being a tortured artist, not just an asshole.

“Better not like any of them anymore,” he growled, digging his fingers into her ribs. “You like Daddy best. Don’t you?”

“Yes!” she cried, wiggling on his lap to escape his tickling. “I like you more than anyone else ever!”

“That’s what I thought.” He nipped at her neck as he stopped moving his fingers. She giggled until she finally calmed down enough to take a deep breath. She glanced up at him, looking unsure. “What is it?”

“So, you know Roxy?” she asked quietly, shyly.

“Yeah, she usually hosts Christmas, so I go up to New York every year if they’re not on tour.” Her mouth was on the floor. “What?”

“You never thought you should’ve told me you were besties with Roxy freaking Bandera?” she cried.

“I wouldn’t say we’re besties,” he chuckled. “Oh, speaking of Rox—”

“Oh my God, you call her Rox. How cool. She’s so cool, isn’t she?”

“She’s pretty cool,” he agreed, grinning at her. “She’d love you.” She shook her head as he spoke.

“I can’t meet her,” she wailed. “Are you insane?”

“It’ll be hard to not meet her when we’re at her place for Christmas in a few months,” he said.

“What—what? Me?”

“If you want to go,” he said softly.

“But I wasn’t invited.”

“You’re my girl. Of course you’re invited.”

“Maybe,” she whispered, and he nodded. He wouldn’t push her on it right now. They had time to discuss. But he’d get his way.

“Anyway, her birthday is coming up and Beck said he’d like to buy one of your art pieces for her.” She just stared at him. “Pretty girl?” Nothing. She wasn’t moving. Just staring. “Abbie?”

He didn’t think she was breathing. Shit. What did he say? He needed to stop fucking up.

“What’s wrong? What did I say?”

“Beck Carver wants to buy my art for Roxy Bandera.”

That was it?

“Is that a problem?” he asked. “I can tell him no. But we were talking about your art, and he said he’d love to take a look, maybe buy something if you’re willing to sell.”

“He can have it!” She sounded frantic. “He can have it all. He doesn’t have to buy it. Just take it. Oh my God. No, wait. He can’t. I’m not good enough to have my art hanging in Roxy Bandera’s house. Could you imagine?” She pressed her palms to her cheeks, breathing deeply.

“I can imagine it,” he said firmly. “You’re talented and she’d be lucky to have your art hanging up.” She shook her head, her eyes on the ground. “Abbie, look at me.”

Reluctantly, she turned her gaze to him. “If you don’t want to sell anything, that’s okay. But don’t talk badly about yourself. I never want to hear you put yourself or your art down again. You understand me?”

Her breath hitched. Was that too much? He hadn’t punished her earlier, even though he knew he should’ve. But

he couldn't bring himself to, not after she'd told him he'd scared her.

"Yes, Daddy."

"Good girl." He kissed her cheek, breathing in her soft, sweet scent. "If you don't want to sell, that's okay. I'll tell him to fuck off. But if you do—"

"He's never even seen any of my pieces," she blurted. "How does he know Roxy Bandera would even like it?"

"You can just call her Roxy," Jett teased. The look Abbie sent his way told him she thought he was nuts. "He'll love it."

"But what if he doesn't?"

"He will."

She didn't look like she believed him. At all.

"Does he want a custom piece? Oh God. When does he need it by? I need to have time to paint her something perfect."

"I can give him your number so you can work everything out," he offered and she shook her head so hard he was worried she'd give herself whiplash. "Okay, not that. How about I call him again and let you two talk? I'll be with you the whole time."

"Really?"

"He's just a man, baby," he said softly. "A stinky, annoying man. Just like every other man on the planet."

"But he's famous. He's *the* Beck."

"Don't tell him you call him that," he groaned. "He has a big enough ego." She laughed, resting her head on his chest and relaxing into him again, and he sighed happily.

This felt right. Everything about this moment with his girl was perfect.

"Let's go back to bed, pretty girl. You need your sleep." She nodded, rubbing her cheek against his shirt.

"How come you couldn't sleep?" she asked as he lifted her in his arms, cradling her against his chest.

“A lot on my mind.”

“Anything I can help with?” He blinked down at her, finding her staring up at him with wide, unguarded eyes.

That’s when he realized he didn’t have to do this alone anymore. He had someone. Even if he wouldn’t bog her down with his bullshit, it was nice to know he had someone in his corner. That he didn’t have to go through life by himself, he could lean on her when the shit in his head became too much. And she would do the same.

“No, baby girl,” he said softly. “Just being with you is enough.” She frowned slightly, and he kissed her forehead. “I was just thinking about today.”

“It’ll take a while before we’re back to normal, huh?” she whispered, and he nodded.

“Yeah, I think so. I don’t want to ruin this.” He set her down on the bed and tucked the blanket around her before sitting in front of her. Bracing his hands on either side of her, he leaned over to kiss her cheek. “I won’t lose you because I can’t control my emotions.” Something flickered in her eyes, and he knew she’d think about his outburst forever. That it would always be something she’d remember, and he hated himself for it. But there was nothing he could do to take the memory away, nothing but prove to be better.

For her.

# twenty-four

. . .

**I**t'd been five days since Jett's freak out at the mechanic shop, and he hadn't disciplined her once. Not even a gentle love tap on her ass. Nothing. Zip. Nada.

And it hadn't been from a lack of trying.

She understood his hesitance the first day. She even understood it the second day. But by day three, she was tired of getting her way all the time. She wanted some structure. Discipline. She wanted him to be her Daddy again, but he was treating her like she was too fragile, like he was a giant ogre and could hurt her.

She hated it.

He hadn't even made her come in almost a week, either. That she didn't understand. What did his outburst have to do with her coming?

So she'd been doing progressively naughty things, hoping he'd finally turn her over his lap and spank her until she cried. But nothing. Not even when she'd stuck her tongue out at him. To his face.

He'd lifted his brow and gave her that look she knew meant his spanking hand was getting itchy, but he hadn't done anything. Just told her not to do it again.

Maybe it was a mix of needing a release, and wanting her Daddy back that led her to this moment. And now that she was here, she was starting to rethink her decisions.

She knew she was pushing him. She knew he probably knew it, too. But he hadn't said anything other than a gentle scolding here and there. And she was tired of it.

So, here she was, lying in his bed. Naked. With her vibrator in her hand as she stared at the door, waiting for him to get home.

The idea was simple. She'd make herself come while he watched, because what was he going to do about it? Nothing. He'd proven he was done punishing her, so that told her she could do whatever she wanted.

A car door slammed shut, and her breath hitched. He was home. Oh God. Was this a stupid idea? Maybe. Probably. But it was too late to back out now.

The front door opened, then closed. "Baby, I'm home!" he called, and her heart lurched into her throat.

She turned the vibrator on, and, with it already slick with lube, she pressed it against her entrance. It was her big one, and the fit was tight as she pushed it inside. She gasped at the vibration, at the stretch of the toy as it slid inside.

"Baby girl?"

He was closer now, and her back arched. Her legs spread further as she pressed the toy all the way inside, letting it bottom out. The rabbit ears pressed against her clit, and she rolled her hips, chasing the pleasure.

She knew it wouldn't take much for her to come. It had been so long, and she was so desperate for it. Just a few seconds longer, and she'd soar over that edge.

"What do you think you're doing?" Jett asked from the doorway, his voice dark.

She was breathing heavily as she turned her attention to him, her nipples hard peaks as she cupped her breast with her free hand.

"Hi, Daddy," she panted.

His jaw tensed under his thick beard as his eyes roamed over her body, stopping at the toy between her legs. He

watched as she fucked herself slow and deep, unable to keep her moaning quiet.

“What are you doing?” he asked again, tearing his eyes from her pussy to look at her. “You know you’re not allowed to come unless Daddy lets you.”

“But it’s been so long,” she moaned, pressing her chest up into her hand. “I needed it so badly.”

“So you ask me. You don’t do it alone.”

There was that voice that made her melt. The voice that told her she was seconds away from getting punished.

*Just another little shove.*

Her thighs began trembling, and she let out a loud cry. “Do not come, Abbie,” he growled. “You don’t have my permission.”

She ignored him, moving the toy faster, the long, plastic rabbit ears rubbing against her clit with every hard thrust.

“Abbie,” he warned. But she was too far gone to care anymore.

She crashed over the edge, screaming her release as her thighs clamped around her hand. The vibrations forced her orgasm to go on forever, her entire body shaking as she finally began to come down.

She turned the toy off, and slowly pulled it from her, breathing heavily as her eyes fluttered open. They widened as she stared up at Jett looming over her.

“Hi, Daddy,” she said again.

“Hi, baby.” He didn’t sound all that happy. “You know you’re in trouble, don’t you?” She nodded. “Turn over, get on your hands and knees.”

“What?”

“You heard me.”

Oh boy. He meant business.

“How was your day?” she asked instead, but he just folded his arms over his chest as he glared down at her. “Did you like your lunch? I worked extra hard on it.” She’d made him a sandwich this morning so he didn’t have to eat out. It was a Nutella, marshmallow fluff sandwich.

Delicious.

“It was great, baby. Turn over.”

“But—”

“I won’t ask you again.”

She didn’t want to point out he hadn’t asked her at all.

Instead, she set the vibrator aside and rolled onto her hands and knees. Her arms and legs shook as she held herself up, her pussy still spasming from her intense orgasm.

“I’ve been too lenient on you these past few days, haven’t I, baby girl?” he asked, stroking his big, warm, calloused hand along her soft asscheek. She didn’t answer him, and he brought it down on her skin. “I asked you a question.”

“A bit,” she whimpered.

“You need Daddy to punish you, don’t you?”

“Yes, Daddy.” He brought his hand down again, the smack loud in the otherwise quiet room.

“And this was a naughty way to go about it, wasn’t it?” he asked, rubbing the sting in. “You should’ve just asked me. I’d give it to you. Instead, you’ve been purposefully pushing me, and you knew this would be the thing to push me over the edge.”

“Yes, Daddy,” she said quietly.

“It’ll be a count of twenty, then you’ll get plugged.”

“What?” She turned to look at him over her shoulder.

“And another thing, but I’ll tell you about it later.”

“Wait. What?”

“Turn back around,” he ordered. Reluctantly, she turned forward again, her stomach twisting with anticipation.

“I don’t want a plug, Daddy,” she whined, and he spanked her again.

“You wanted something inside you so badly, so that’s what you’ll get. Now, take your punishment like a good girl. You know what I expect of you.”

Yeah, she knew.

His hand came down, and she gritted her teeth. “One. May I have another, Daddy?”

*Smack!*

*Smack!*

*Smack!*

Tears dripped silently from her eyes as she took her punishment. She deserved it. She craved it.

She gripped the blanket in her hands as he spanked her again and again, pausing only long enough to hear her count and ask for another.

“You know not to push me anymore, don’t you? If you want a spanking, just ask and Daddy will give it to you,” he told her as his hand descended on her ass again and again. “Last one, baby. You okay?”

“Yes,” she cried. “Another. Please, Daddy. Can I have it?”

*Smack!*

A loud wail left her and she collapsed to the bed. He laid beside her, smoothing his hand over her back in long, soothing strokes. “You were such a good girl for me. You did so good, pretty girl. So good for Daddy.”

“I’m sorry,” she sniffled, but he shushed her gently, still stroking her back and hair.

“I know you are,” he murmured. “It was partly my fault. I should’ve been punishing you every time you were naughty, but I didn’t want to scare you.”

“You won’t.” She turned to look at him, and he smiled softly at her as he wiped her tears from her cheek with his

thumb.

“Ready for the plug?” he asked, and her eyes widened.

“You were serious about that?”

“Of course I was.” Leaning over, he pressed a kiss to her lips. “Back up on her hands and knees. Unless you’re sore or dizzy. How do you feel?”

“Fine,” she muttered. “Except for the fact you’re about to shove something in my bottom.” He chuckled as he slid off the bed.

“That’s such a pretty sight,” he sighed, smoothing his hand over her tender flesh. “Your little pink ass will look even better with Daddy’s big plug in it.”

Yeah, she wasn’t so sure about that.

She heard him open the drawer she knew her Big toys were in, and held her breath. She couldn’t believe she was agreeing to this. She’d never had a freaking plug in before, and didn’t know what to expect. Didn’t know how badly it would hurt.

Her entire body lurched when he set his hand on her hip. “Easy, baby. You’re okay.”

Easy for him to say. He wasn’t the one about to get something shoved up his butt.

“Breathe for me,” he murmured. “I can tell you’re holding your breath.” Shoot. She hadn’t realized she was doing that. She took a deep breath, and he patted her back. “Good girl. Ready?”

No.

No, she really wasn’t.

But she forced herself to stay calm, to take another deep breath. “Ready, Daddy.”

“You’re being such a good girl, you should get a reward. Too bad this is a punishment.”

She grumbled under her breath about that. This had been her plan, but it was severely backfiring. She'd expected a little spanking. Not this. Not whatever else the maniac had in store for her.

A cool liquid dripped onto her ass, and she stiffened. "It's okay," Jett soothed. "Just relax."

She squeezed her eyes shut as she breathed, feeling something hard press against her entrance. "Look at you," he murmured. "You're doing so well. You're taking this big plug in your tight ass. Can't wait until it's my cock you're taking instead. Fuck. So good. That's it."

As he spoke, he slowly pressed the plug deeper, until it was fully seated inside her. It stretched her, filled her completely. But it wasn't unpleasant. She wiggled around, getting used to the feel, and let out a small moan.

"Yeah, I think you feel good, don't you?" he said, running his hand over her ass. "Fuck. I like that a lot."

Her face burned. He was right. She did like it. She liked how full she felt. Even if it was a punishment, it was still turning her on.

A lot.

"What's the last part of my punishment?" she asked, unsure if she really wanted to know. When he didn't answer, she glanced over her shoulder, finding him grinning.

"Roll onto your back, baby."

When she moved, the thick plug shifted as she gasped. Pleasure shot through her body, but she forced herself to breathe through it as she got into position. She didn't know what he was doing as he looked through the drawer again. There was no telling what he was about to pull out.

"You're not allowed to come," he said, his back to her. "No matter how badly you want to, you can't."

Oh no.

This couldn't be good.

Turning, he held a rope in his hands, and—and—

“Is that your flashlight?” she gasped, and he nodded.

“We’re going to have a little fun.”

Fun? With a rope and that thing? Maybe for him. What about her?

“Arms above your head, pretty girl.” She hesitated, and his face softened. “You always have your safe word. You know that.”

Right. Her safe word.

“What is it?” he asked, stroking her thigh.

“Snickerdoodle,” she whispered, and he nodded.

“Good girl. Arms up.”

She lifted her arms, resting them on the pillows above her head. He kneeled on the bed beside her and tied her wrists together, then to the headboard. He jerked on the rope a few times, then let her wiggle around trying to get free.

When she realized she couldn’t, that she was tied down and completely at his mercy, she didn’t feel scared. She felt more turned on than she’d ever been in her entire life.

“This isn’t what I thought we were going to do tonight,” he murmured as he slid another rope under her. “I thought we were going to have a nice little movie night. Eat some dinner. Daddy was going to bathe you. I didn’t think I’d be tying you to my bed.”

“Aren’t you glad you are, though?” she said before she could stop herself. He winked as he rested the flashlight on her lower stomach, the opening resting on her mound, right above her own. “What are you doing?”

He ignored her as he tied the rope around her waist, securing the toy with it.

“Um, Daddy?” she asked warily, but he continued ignoring her. He jerked on the toy a few times, but that thing wasn’t going anywhere. It was tightly secured to her body, and was staying right where he put it.

Then he stood at the end of the bed and slid his shirt off. Her mouth went dry as she watched every inch of his tanned skin come into view. His stomach was flat, a dark patch of hair was on his tattoo-covered chest. Another thin line went from his belly button down, disappearing under the waistband of his jeans.

With practiced ease, he unbuckled his belt and slipped it off with one hand. She pressed her thighs together, moaning as the plug shifted. Her clit was throbbing, her heart was pounding. How could he expect her not to come?

He slipped his boots and jeans off, leaving him in his briefs. His thick cock strained against the dark fabric, hard and ready to impale her. God, she wanted him inside her.

Now.

She wanted him deep inside her.

“Please, Daddy,” she whined, but he just shushed her as he slid his boxers down his strong legs. He was even bigger than she’d anticipated. A thick, throbbing vein wrapped around it, and her mouth watered, needing to taste him. She wanted to trace that vein with her tongue.

“Spread your legs, pretty girl,” he murmured. Her eyes widened. Was this it then? She was about to lose her virginity? He didn’t say anything as she spread them and he crawled onto the bed, settling himself between them.

He lowered his mouth to her peaked nipple, and she gasped, arching up into him. “Daddy!” she cried. She liked the way his mouth felt, the way his tongue moved.

She wanted more.

He moved to the other nipple, gently scraping his teeth along it. Her head thrashed back and forth, the pleasure almost too much. The more she moved, the more the plug shifted inside her, and the more she needed to come.

Her pussy was dripping, her clit aching. She needed it. Needed him.

“Please,” she whimpered. “Please. Please.”

“Please what?” he asked, kissing the center of her chest.

“I need to come,” she groaned. “Please let me.”

“I haven’t even touched you,” he chuckled.

“Touch me, then. Please.”

“This is a punishment, pretty girl. You’re not allowed to come.”

“But—”

“I can add another spanking,” he said, and her mouth clamped shut. She didn’t want that.

But maybe if she was a good girl for him, he’d change his mind and let her come. That was a solid plan. She could do that. She could totally do that.

“Lay nice and still, baby. Daddy wants to play for a bit.”

He snaked down her body, and then his face was between her legs. She’d never had anyone that close to her pussy before, had never had anyone’s tongue on her clit.

But she liked it. A lot.

Jett sucked on her clit, rolling it between his lips as he drove her pleasure up. Then his thick fingers were at her entrance, and he pressed them inside. “Fuck, you’re so fucking tight. I can’t wait to feel you milking my cock.”

“Please!” she screamed. “Fuck me!” He paused and looked up at her. The stupid toy tied to her stomach was in the freaking way, so all she could really see was his eyes.

“Not tonight,” he said. “But soon.”

Then he dove back in, licking her clit and fingering her until she was nearly in tears. Every time she got close, he pulled back and let her settle down, then he dove back in.

It was driving her insane.

“Daddy! I need it. Please. Please. Please. Please—” She wasn’t above begging. Right now, all she wanted was to come. All she wanted was to feel his cock stretching her until he filled her with his cum.

He didn't give her what she desperately wanted, though. Instead, he pulled away, his lips and beard glistening. His body hovered over hers as he pressed his lips to hers, letting her taste herself. She licked his lips, sucking on them and his tongue, savoring her flavor. She liked it. She wanted to taste more of herself.

"Fuck," he groaned, dropping his forehead to hers. "You're perfect."

"You would be too if you let me come," she said, and his face fell into her neck as he laughed.

"I guess I'm not perfect then." He kissed her again, and she shifted her hips, feeling his cock rubbing against her thigh.

"Please put it in," she whispered. "I want to feel you."

"No," he said gently. "Not tonight." Her bottom lip rolled out in a pout, and he nipped at it. "None of that. Now, lay still."

He sat back on his heels and grabbed the lube lying beside her. He poured some in his fist and stroked himself. His head fell back, the veins in his neck straining as he groaned. The thick head was red and leaking, and she shifted again, her body desperate to feel him.

"Stay still," he growled, smacking her thigh. "Next time, I'll spank your pussy until you do as you're told." Her eyes widened. She didn't know how she felt about that, but she wanted to disobey just so she could find out what it felt like.

Another time.

He dropped one hand by her head, the other still wrapped around his cock as he led it to the entrance of the fleshlight. "I wish this was your pussy," he muttered. "But you were a naughty little girl, making yourself come in Daddy's bed without his permission. So this is what you get. You get to feel Daddy fucking this fake pussy while you watch. But you don't get to come. You don't get to feel it inside you."

He shoved all the way in, and groaned. The rope tightened around her waist as he bottomed out. "Fuck," he panted

through his teeth. “You’ll feel so much better than this thing. Can’t wait until I’m buried inside you, baby.”

“Me too,” she breathed, her eyes wide as she felt him pull out, then slam back in. His balls slapped against her clit, making her whimper. If that kept happening, she knew it would be enough to make her come.

He fucked the fleshlight hard and fast, grunting and groaning above her. Would he be this rough with her? God, she hoped so. She didn’t want him to hold back.

With every thrust, she felt herself getting closer to the edge. She tried to fight it, but it was impossible. “Daddy,” she whined. “I’m so close.”

“You’re close?” He paused, and she nodded.

“You keep touching my clit. I’m so sensitive, and so close.” He grinned as he dipped his head to her nipple, lapping at it.

“Daddy said no coming,” he told her as he kissed his way across her chest. He fucked the toy harder, smiling as she whined and begged.

“Please!” she screamed. He trailed his nose along her jaw, breathing her in. She shuddered as he licked her racing pulse, his hips never faltering.

“Look at Daddy’s needy little slut,” he purred into her ear. Her legs trembled. She was so close. “You need to come so badly, don’t you?”

“Yes!” she cried. “Please!”

“Try to come before I’m done. I won’t let you afterward.”

Oh, thank God.

She spread her legs wider, angling her hips up. She felt the underside of his cock drag against her clit with every thrust. The faster he moved, the harder he fucked the toy, the more it jostled her, making her tighten around the shifting plug.

“I’m coming!” she cried. “It feels so good, Daddy.” Her back arched, and he immediately dropped forward, his mouth

latching on her nipple. He growled as he fucked into the toy harder, forcing more pleasure from her.

“Fuck,” he grunted. “You want Daddy’s come, baby?”

“Please,” she whimpered. “I wish you could come inside me. I want to know how it would feel.”

“Yeah?” he breathed, his fist bunching the blanket tighter by her head. “You want to feel Daddy’s come in your tight virgin cunt?”

“God yes,” she groaned.

“You want to feel Daddy’s big cock stretching you? Taking your virginity?”

“Please!” She nodded frantically. “Do it now. Please. Please, Daddy. Please.”

“Another time.” He fucked the toy harder, the headboard slamming against the wall. “Fuck, I’m coming. I’m coming, baby.”

He let out a low moan as he spilled inside the toy, his eyes squeezed shut and his entire body taut. Finally, he relaxed, his chest heaving as he breathed deeply.

“Fuck,” he breathed again, and she nodded.

That was intense.

He dipped down and pressed a long, slow kiss to her lips. “You did so good for me, pretty girl.” She felt her face flush at the sincerity in his voice, and she smiled shyly. “Let’s get you untied and dressed.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” she whispered as he climbed off the bed. He kissed her forehead as he untied the toy from around her waist, then moved onto her arms. He massaged her shoulders as he lowered them, murmuring soft words to her.

“Next time, I’ll use you instead of the toy,” he said, stroking the hair from her face.

“Really?” she whispered, and he nodded.

“If you’re ready.”

“I am,” she said. “I really am.” He grinned.

“Then I’ll plan something special. Give you what you deserve.”

She sat up and threw her arms around him, her breath hitching as the plug settled in deeper. “Thank you, Daddy,” she told him again, peppering his face with kisses. “I can’t wait.”

## twenty-five

. . .

“How about this?” he asked, holding up a little yellow dress. It was one of her new ones for Little Abbie he’d bought for her. She hadn’t had a chance to try everything on yet, but she loved looking at all the pretty colors.

This one was yellow with little white hearts all over it, and a white ribbon to tie around the waist. She nodded happily as he grabbed a pair of over-the-knee socks and matching yellow hair ties.

He helped her stand and slid the dress over her head, purposefully not putting a bra or panties on her. It was one of his many rules. No panites for Big or Little girls. She sat back on the bed, and the short fabric rode up her thighs as he knelt in front of her, grabbing her foot in his giant hand.

His gaze lifted, settling between her legs. “I love the no panty rule,” he muttered, winking at her as her face flushed. She knew better than to try to close her legs, so she left them slightly spread, letting him get his fill before he moved back to sliding the socks up her legs.

“Alright. Time for hair.” She chewed her lip. He wasn’t great at doing hair, which wasn’t surprising seeing as he barely had any. But he loved brushing her hair and trying to style it for her, she didn’t have the heart to tell him he made her look ridiculous, or that it hurt when he yanked on a tangle too hard.

Grabbing Ottie, she followed Jett into the bathroom and stood in front of him, facing the mirror as he gently combed

her hair before parting it on either side of her head. Her eyes grew heavy at the gentle touch, the way he lightly played with her hair.

“You look adorable,” he told her, and she blinked her eyes open. “You tired, baby?”

“I’m okay, Daddy,” she muttered. He eyed her like he didn’t believe her, but didn’t say anything. Instead, he just nodded and pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“We’ll go to bed early tonight,” he said softly. “You didn’t have a nap today, and what we just did took a lot out of you, didn’t it?” She shrugged slightly, and he nodded. “Early night it is.”

When she didn’t argue, he just kissed her again, then led her to the living room, her hand wrapped tightly in his as he gently tugged her along, Ottie still clutched in her hand. If she wasn’t so exhausted from what just happened, she knew her mind would be reeling.

Everything about it was...hot. Hotter than anything she’d ever experienced before. Hotter than anything she’d ever imagined. And now that she’d seen Jett—*fully* seen him—she didn’t quite know how she was going to survive sleeping with him.

That thing would split her in half.

But she’d be happy about it.

Even if it killed her.

“Stay here,” Jett said, pulling her from her thoughts. She blinked up at him, feeling her face flush. He gave her a knowing grin as he cupped her face with his big hand. She nuzzled into his touch, feeling his warmth and safety spread over her. “I’ll get you some juice. Why don’t you play while I cook dinner?”

“Don’t really feel like playing,” she said, scrunching her nose, and he searched her face.

“How about you paint me something instead, then?” he said after a moment.

“Really?” Excitement surged through her as he nodded. She bounced on the cushion a few times, clapping her hands together. “I can do that.”

“Can’t wait to see it, baby.” He pressed a soft kiss to her forehead as she scrambled from the couch. “Careful.” She ignored him as she hurried across his little living room and dug through the supplies he’d bought her.

After their heart-to-heart the other day, he’d let her dive back into her gifts, and watched on with an indulgent smile as she ripped open every bag and box. She oohed and aahed at everything, feeling slightly ridiculous that he was just watching her, but the more she opened, the more Little she felt and soon, she didn’t care anymore. She was just excited to open things.

He bought her so many things for her Little, like toys, and every kind of art medium she could ever want. There were cute outfits, and more shoes than she knew what to do with.

Oh, and glitter.

So much glitter.

But he’d also bought things for her Big. Like Big girl toys, some they’d yet to use but she was excited for, and lingerie. Mostly roleplay costumes, like a naughty schoolgirl and a sexy maid, but also some cute bra and panty sets. It seemed he liked dresses and skirts a lot, though, since that’s mostly what he bought for her Big and Little.

She pulled Jett’s giant t-shirt over her head as a makeshift smock to protect her pretty dress, and gathered her supplies in her arms before making her way across the house to the dining table. Dropping everything on it, she slid onto the chair on her knees, hovering over the giant paper as she began sketching with a pencil. She already had the image in her head, and it slowly came to life in front of her.

She was so zoned out, she didn’t hear Jett set her juice beside her, or feel when he pressed a kiss to her head again. Her tongue poked between her lips as she sketched, erased, then re-sketched. Ottie was smashed between her body and the

table as she re-angled the paper, drawing from a new direction.

The more she drew, the more she felt herself slip into Little space. It always happened like this—she was so relaxed, so focused while drawing that her Little peeked out. Everything melted away, and all that was left was the paper in front of her and the pencil in her hand.

“Almost ready for dinner, pretty girl?” Daddy asked as he stepped behind her, his hand resting on her back. She cried out, throwing herself over the paper.

“No looking!” she shouted. “Issa surprise!”

Had he seen it already? Oh no. Why didn’t she draw somewhere else where he couldn’t see it?

“Alright, baby,” he soothed. “Why don’t you pick it up and hide it so I can’t see?” Oh, she could do that. She could hide it. She was the best hider ever.

“Close your eyes,” she told him, keeping a close watch to make sure he did as she asked. To her amusement, the big guy shut them, but she knew he was still aware of everything.

Jumping off her chair, she stopped when she ran straight into his chest. “No running in socks,” he scolded. “You’ll slip and hurt yourself.”

Yeah right. No, she wouldn’t.

She raced across the house, sliding along the hardwood floor into the bedroom. Putting the paper in a safe place, she darted back out of the room. She slid along the floor again. She really liked doing that.

Again!

She had to do it again!

Bracing her hands on the wall, she glanced around, finding Daddy in the kitchen. Now was her last chance to get any more sliding in, so she took it. She pushed off the wall, running as fast as she could down the hallway. Planting her feet on the floor, she soared into the bedroom, a squeal of delighted laughter flying from her lips.

Turning, she raced back out of the room. Only this time, instead of there being a clear space, the chair Daddy must've pulled out was in her way. She crashed into it, flying over the seat onto the other side, landing heavily on her hands and knees.

She screamed as pain shot up her arms, her knees scraping along the unforgiving wood. "Daddy!" she cried. "Daddy!"

His thunderous footsteps raced toward her, and he scooped her into his arms effortlessly, holding her closely to his chest as he took her to the couch. "Shh, baby. It's okay. I'm here. Daddy's here. It's okay. You're okay."

She was sniffing so hard, she couldn't breathe, and tears wouldn't stop leaking from her eyes. "H-h-hurts!" she wailed. He tugged her socks down and inspected her knees, gently prodding at them.

"You might have some bruises tomorrow," he muttered. "Does anything feel broken?"

"Everything!" she cried, throwing her head back. His arm around her waist stiffened, making sure he kept her upright. "Everything feels broken! It all hurts!"

"I'm sorry, pretty girl," he soothed. "How about some ice?" She nodded pitifully.

"I think ice cream would be better," she mumbled, wiping at her face with her hands.

"It'll get your skin all sticky," he said, lifting her and holding her against his chest as he made his way back to the kitchen.

"It's to eat. Silly Daddy." She tapped his forehead as she sniffled again.

"Why would you need to eat ice cream?" he asked, setting her on the counter. Her bottom lip rolled out.

"I hurt myself, Daddy. Everyone knows you're 'posed to have ice cream if you hurt yourself." He nodded, understanding filling his face. Good. She was glad he was

finally understanding. See? If he listened to her more often, she could teach him all kinds of things.

“I think that only counts if Little girls listen to their Daddy when he says no running in socks,” he said firmly, tapping her nose.

“I wasn’t running.”

“No?”

“Nuh-uh.” She shook her head, wiping her face with her palms again. “I was slidin’. Is different.”

“Still naughty,” he muttered. “No ice cream for naughty girls.”

“But Daddy—”

“No ice cream,” he said again, more firmly. Her lip fully rolled out in a dramatic pout. She even pulled out the big guns—her biggest, best puppy dog eyes. No one could resist those. “None of that.” He tapped her lip. “As cute as you are when you pout, no ice cream, baby girl.”

“No fair,” she breathed. He shook his head as he moved to the freezer and grabbed an ice pack.

“What’s not fair is you doing something I told you not to do, and taking away our movie time,” he said as he turned back toward her.

“I took our movie time away?” Tears welled in her eyes. She loved movie time. “How comes?”

“Because instead of watching a movie, you have to write lines.”

Her mouth fell open. “Lines?” she cried. “No way. That’s a cruel and unusual punishment!” His lips twitched, but he quickly shifted his expression back to stern. Shoot. She almost got him.

“It could be you writing lines while you have a hot bottom instead,” he mused, and her eyes widened.

“No hot bottom!” she cried, and he grinned.

“That’s what I thought. Show me where it hurts.”

She lifted her leg, looking down at her knee. It was a bit red, but not too bad. And it wasn’t even hurting that much anymore. But she was still feeling dramatic.

“See, it’s broken, Daddy. There’s no way I can write lines with a broken knee.”

His stern expression didn’t change as he gently poked at her knee. She dramatically winced, but he just watched her as he continued prodding at it. Was he going to do that all day? She wanted him to feel bad and give her some ice cream.

“You think it’s broken?” he asked, and she nodded pittifully.

“So broken, Daddy. See? Can’t even move it.” She pretended to try to move her leg, and when it stayed stiff, he sighed.

“I guess since it’s broken, you deserve some ice cream, huh?” Her eyes widened. She won? Grabbing her under the arms, he lifted her to the floor. “Go get some. It’s in the freezer.”

“Really?” she breathed, her suspicions rising.

“Yep. If you can make it to the freezer on your broken leg, you can have some ice cream.”

Oh, the rat.

Her eyes stayed narrowed as she took a step. Then another. And another. Until she was finally at the freezer. Yanking it open, she pulled out the unicorn ice cream she’d begged him for at the grocery store the other day, and turned.

His arms were folded over his thick chest, one brow raised as he watched her. “Not broken, then?”

“It’s a miracle!” she cried, throwing her arm out. “It’s an ice cream miracle!” He snorted, shaking his head.

“Are you really hurting, baby? I need to know.”

She let out a long sigh. “No, Daddy. Not hurting.”

“Good. Then you can eat and do your lines at the table.”

“What? I still have to do those? But I’m injured!”

“You just said you’re not hurting,” he pointed out, but she waved him off.

“Semantics.” He covered his laugh with a cough as he scrubbed his hand over his mouth.

“Dinner, lines, bath, bed,” he told her. “We’ll do your spanking tomorrow night.”

“My...my spanking! What?” She gaped at him as he nodded, grabbing the ice cream from her hands and putting it back in the freezer.

“You need to go to bed early,” he explained. “So tonight is the first half of your punishment, tomorrow is the second half.”

“Halves? That’s not fair.” He kissed her forehead. “But you said just lines. No hot bottom.”

“That was before you lied to me, wasn’t it?” His brows rose as he stared down at her.

“Ugh, why do you have to be all smart, Daddy? Just let me get away with some stuff.”

“Oh, I can’t do that,” he grinned at her. “If I did, you’d be a spoiled little girl.”

“Don’t you want to spoil me, though, Daddy?” She batted her lashes as he lifted her and she wrapped her arms and legs around his body.

“Of course I do, baby girl,” he said, kissing her nose. “But that doesn’t mean I can let you get away with being naughty. Naughty spoiled and princess spoiled are totally different.”

“They are?” she asked as he sat on his chair, pulling both their plates in front of him.

“Yep. Open up, pretty girl.” Her entire body heated at the words, but she did as she was told and opened her mouth, letting him feed her. He didn’t do it every night, but she loved

when he did. So, she settled in as he fed her, trying not to think about her lines or impending spanking tomorrow night.

## twenty-six

. . .

She stared at her phone as it vibrated in her hand. Why was her mother calling her? Abbie was always the one to reach out first after a fight, never her mother. So either this was a case of the body snatchers, or something terrible had happened.

Her stomach twisted with anxiety as she answered and pressed the phone to her ear. “Hello?” she asked warily.

“Abiga—Abbie.” Her breath caught. Her mother never called her Abbie.

*Ever.*

“How have you been, darling?” she asked, and Abbie’s brows scrunched together. Darling? Since when did her mother call her that?

“Fine,” she breathed. “Is everything okay? Why are you calling?”

“I can’t call to talk to my daughter?” Abbie twisted her lips to the side as the words sank in.

“Of course you can. I just thought...” She trailed off, not needing to say it.

She thought after she kicked her mother out of her apartment, that was it. That she wouldn’t talk to her again.

“I feel terrible for the way things ended,” her mother said.

She...she felt terrible?

“Are you okay?” Abbie asked, concerned. Was she being held at gunpoint or something? What was with her?

Jett walked into the living room, holding a plate and bottle of water, giving her a curious look. She waved him off, not wanting him to interfere.

He had something big planned for tonight and she’d been anxious about it all day. It had been a few days since her spanking for running in the house, and she knew tonight was the night he was taking her virginity. Which she was excited about. And nervous.

But now with this call from her mother, she wasn’t sure if she’d even want to do anything tonight. She had this way of making Abbie feel out of sorts and turning her life upside down.

“Oh, I’m fine, darling.” Jett sat on the couch, his brows bunched in worry. “Your father, Christopher, and I are going to Enchanted tomorrow night, and I know how much you love it. Would you like to come?”

She stared at Jett. What was she supposed to do? She didn’t want to face off the with she-devil alone, but introducing her boyfriend to her parents was a big step. Would Jett even want to do that? Could she subject him to her mother’s judgment?

“Can you hold on for a sec?” Abbie blurted, muting her phone before her mother could say anything.

“What’s going on?” Jett asked, eyeing her.

“I, um. My mom invited me to dinner tomorrow night,” she said, and his brows rose.

“Okay, that’s good, right?”

“You never really know until you’re there,” she laughed tightly. “But, um. Well...”

“What, baby?” he murmured, his expression softening.

“Would you like to go?” She winced. There was probably a better way to ask him that. “I mean, you don’t have to, of course. You know what? Forget I asked.”

She reached for her phone, but he grabbed her wrist. “Yes,” he breathed. “If you want me there, I’ll be there.”

“Really?” she whispered, and he nodded firmly.

“Of course, pretty girl,” he said softly. “Whatever you want.”

“It’s at Enchanted,” she said, wincing.

“Never heard of it.” Yeah, she figured he hadn’t. It wasn’t his style.

“It’s one of those stupid fancy restaurants with the tiny portions and million courses that’s way overpriced.” His throat bobbed as he swallowed.

“Right,” he said tightly before roughly clearing his throat. “That’s fine.” But he didn’t look fine. She knew it was probably out of his budget, but she couldn’t bring herself to tell him she could cover for him. Or likely, her father would pay for everyone.

“And both my parents will be there,” she added. “And my brother.”

“Christopher,” he said, and she nodded. “I’d like to meet him.”

“And my parents?”

“Can’t say I’m as excited to meet them, but if they’re in your life, they’re in mine.”

“You really want this?” He nodded firmly, then used his chin to point at her phone.

“Tell her I’ll be there.”

Abbie’s stomach twisted as she unmuted it and pressed the phone against her ear again. “Sorry, Mother,” she said.

“That was incredibly rude, Abigail.” There she was.

“I, um, I had to speak with Jett. He’ll be going tomorrow night, too.”

There was a long beat of silence.

“Jett?”

“My...my boyfriend.”

More silence.

There had to have been a better way to say that.

“Your boyfriend.” It wasn’t a question. She was just repeating what Abbie said.

“Yeah,” she breathed, staring at him. “We’ve been together for a little over a month.”

“I didn’t know you were seeing anyone.” Why would she? It wasn’t like Abbie ever called her up to update her on her life. “Well, your father and I would love to meet him.”

“Really?” Abbie gaped at the phone. This could not be her mother. There was no way.

“Of course.”

Something about this whole thing felt wrong. Maybe her mother had been abducted by aliens and given a lobotomy. That could be the only explanation as to why she was suddenly...nice? No, nice wasn’t the right word. Pleasant? Tolerable?

“We’ll see you both tomorrow night at eight.”

“See you then.”

The line went dead, but Abbie kept the phone pressed to her ear, still not believing any of this. It was insane. Everything about it was insane.

“Abbie?” Jett asked gently. “You okay, baby girl?”

She dropped her phone to her lap as she stared up at him. He watched her carefully, like he was waiting for her to freak out.

But she couldn’t freak out, not with the million things currently going through her mind. What game was her mother playing? What did she have planned? Was this another ploy to get her to move back home?

If her inheritance wasn’t enough to get her to move back home, her mother pretending to be nice for a night wouldn’t be

enough either.

She froze.

The money. Her inheritance.

She hadn't told Jett about it. Not because she was hiding it, but how did you just tell someone you have a quarter of a million dollars coming your way in a few years? Would he be mad? Was he going to freak out?

Her mother would definitely tell him. She knew she would. Whether as a way to try to convince her to rethink her decision, or a way to test Jett's loyalty to her, it didn't matter. She knew her mother would bring it up, and if he found out like that, it would upset him a lot more than if she just told him now.

But she didn't want to. She didn't want him to look at her differently. She didn't think he would, but he might. He was a dominant guy, the type of man who had to be in charge. Did that mean if she had more money than him, he'd feel inadequate? Would he not want to be with her anymore?

"Baby, what's wrong?" Jett asked, sitting on the floor beside her. "Shit. Breathe, baby girl. Breathe." She twisted her hands together in her lap. She hadn't even realized she'd been holding her breath.

"I'm rich," she blurted, and his eyes widened.

"What?"

She dropped her head into her hands, covering her face. Why did she say it like that? Idiot. She was the biggest idiot ever.

"Abbie?"

She had to talk to him. She didn't have a choice but to tell him now, but she didn't want to. Why did she blurt it out like that?

"Abbie." He rested his hand on her back. "Talk to me, baby. You're freaking me out."

With a deep breath, she spread her fingers and glanced up at him. He was staring down at her worriedly. “I’m rich,” she said again. He gently tugged her hands away from her face, but she pulled them away. “Like, rich rich.”

“Okay,” he said, drawing the word out. “You’re rich. So what?”

“No,” she groaned. “You don’t understand.”

“What is there to not understand?” he asked. “You have money. Pretty self explanatory.”

“No.” She shook her head. “It’s not like a few million dollars wealthy, Jett. We’re—my parents—they’re rich. Like, you know when people say eat the rich?” He nodded. “It’s them they’re talking about.” His lips twitched, but it wasn’t funny. He still wasn’t getting it.

“So, what’s the big deal?” he asked. “I’ve dealt with rich people before.”

“My mother will eat you alive,” she said quietly. “She’s going to judge you more than you’ve ever been judged.”

“I can handle your mother,” he said firmly. “She doesn’t scare me.”

“It’s not about scaring you,” she breathed. “It’s about hurting your feelings.” His face softened, and he rested his hand on her back.

“You’re sweet, baby girl. But let me worry about that, okay? I promise everything will be fine.” She shook her head as he spoke. “Are you embarrassed of me?” Her mouth fell open.

“Embarrassed? Of you?” She could hardly believe he’d think that. “Of course not.”

“Then why are you freaking out?”

“Because I’m going to inherit two-hundred-fifty-thousand dollars in a few years!”

His eyes widened. “What?”

“Remember the day after we met, I didn’t talk to you? I didn’t go to school or work, or—”

“Yes.” She took a deep breath, steadying herself.

“My mother came to my apartment after our date,” she explained. “She told me I had an inheritance. I’ll get it when I’m twenty-five, but she could give it to me before then if she and my father signed off on it.” He nodded, still looking a bit shell shocked. “Her only stipulation was that I had to move back home.”

“You had to—no. No. You’re not moving back there.”

“I know,” she whispered. “When I moved out, I chose to leave that life behind. The money, everything.”

“You left because you were being abused,” he said fiercely. “You did the right thing.” She shook her head.

“I didn’t leave because of that,” she told him, and his brows scrunched together. “My mother thought it was a waste of time for me to go to school. I could’ve been married to a wealthy man by now, but I wanted to spend my time painting and studying old artists.”

She shuddered as she relived that night with her mother. It was the last night she lived at home. After her mother threatened to stop paying her tuition and set her up with one of her friend’s sons, she went to her room and packed a bag with only the things she needed and left.

She just had her bag with Oattie and some clothes in it and walked out the front door, and didn’t stop until she was at an apartment building begging the landlord for an apartment. She was lucky she’d already been working at the museum so she had some money in savings, but it was a different life from the one she was used to.

“She wanted to arrange for me to get married,” she explained. “And I didn’t want that life, so I left. I left because I wanted to choose what I did with my life. I wanted to choose who I married, if I ever married.”

“You were really brave, baby,” Jett said softly. “I’m proud of you.” Her throat tightened. No one had ever said that to her,

not about this. Not about a lot of things.

Chris had been so upset with her, but even he couldn't convince her to move back home. He still thought it was ridiculous that she chose to live in the terrible little apartment she did instead of her gilded cage.

“So, tomorrow night when you meet them, just be prepared that they're going to be terrible to you. They're going to judge you for not having as much money as them, and for working the job you do.”

“I can handle it,” he said. “But if I see they're upsetting you, I'm taking you away from there and we're never seeing them again. Understand me? I won't have anyone, not even your parents, making you feel bad about yourself.”

Something in her chest loosened. She should've known Jett would put her first, that he'd always protect her. But hearing him promise it eased her anxiety a bit.

“Thank you, Daddy,” she whispered, shifting onto her knees and wrapping her arms around his neck. He held her tightly to his chest, squeezing her until she thought she'd pop.

“I'll always take care of you, pretty girl. I don't care what anyone says or does to me, but I do care what they say and do to you.”

“I care what they say to you,” she said, pulling away. He smiled softly, brushing her hair from her face.

“I know you do, baby.”

“You're not upset with me for not telling you sooner?” she asked, and he shook his head.

“It's a lot to trust someone with,” he said. “Thank you for choosing to trust me.” He pressed a soft kiss to her cheek. “And for the record, I don't care how much money you have. If you're rich or poor, I don't care. It's you I want. It's you I love. Not money. Not material shit. Just you, Abbie.”

She gaped up at him, her lips parting as she tried to breathe through the pounding of her heart.

“You love me?” she rasped. His brows tightened, like he was trying to remember what all he said. Then his cheeks turned pink as he dipped his head.

“I was going to tell you tonight,” he muttered. “Way to ruin things.”

“You love me?” she repeated, her voice still croaky. “You love me. You, Jett. Love me, Abbie.”

“Yes,” he laughed. “I love you.”

She wasn't sure she was breathing. And knowing her, she likely wasn't.

She forced herself to take a deep breath. He loved her.

He loved her.

“I love you, too,” she whispered. A slow grin spread across his face.

“Yeah?” he breathed, sliding his hand against her cheek, cupping her face.

“Yeah.” She nuzzled into it, savoring his safe warmth.

“Say it again, baby,” he whispered, pressing a kiss to her lips.

“I love you, Jett.” His breath hitched, then his mouth descended on hers again, kissing her harder. Heat filled her body, coiling her lower stomach tighter as he gripped her waist and pulled her tighter.

“Fuck, I love you.”

“Show me,” she breathed against his lips, and he grinned.

“You don't make the rules, pretty girl. And you can't fuck up my plans for tonight.”

“We're still doing it?” she asked excitedly, pulling away.

“Yeah, baby. If you still want to.”

“Yes!” she cried. “Don't change your mind. I'm ready.” He grinned, nipping her lips again.

“I hope so.”

# twenty-seven

. . .

He smoothed his hand over his head, making sure his hair wasn't sticking out in weird directions. He needed a haircut desperately, but he'd been too preoccupied with Abbie to take the time to do it. But he had made time to trim his beard tonight, shaping it closer to his square jaw.

Nerves tightened his stomach as he stared at himself in the mirror. Despite eating together a million times, this would be their first official date. He would've counted the first time they met as their first date, but Abbie didn't want that to be it. She'd been too nervous.

At the time, he'd thought it was cute, if not a bit silly to be nervous for a date. He'd been on a million dates and had never been anxious about it. Never thought it wouldn't go well.

But now he understood.

Because he was more nervous for tonight than he'd been for anything in his entire life. Not even when he was sentenced to five years in prison was he this anxious. But tonight was about more than just a date with his girl. He was taking her virginity, something he didn't take lightly.

She was special, and deserved something soft and sweet and special. And he wanted to give her that. He wanted to give her the whole world.

But knowing where she came from, the money she had growing up, he couldn't help but feel a bit inadequate. He'd never be able to give her a mansion, or take her on a five-star

vacation. He'd never have more in his bank account than the few grand he currently had in it.

Could she live that kind of life forever? She thought she could now, but she was young. She didn't know what she wanted. What if one day she woke up and changed her mind? Realized she'd wasted her time with some poor ex-con mechanic when she could've been married to some guy with more money than he knew what to do with.

Maybe he was nervous about tomorrow night, about meeting her parents. Maybe it was a mix of everything that was driving him insane. That was likely it, but even knowing what the source of his anxiety was didn't help him squash it.

He'd be anxious until they were wrapped around each other in his bed tomorrow night after dinner.

Taking a deep breath, he readjusted his shirt, making sure it was still tucked in tightly. He didn't have a lot of nice clothes, mostly jeans and some cheap button downs. Tonight, he was wearing dark gray slacks and a black button down with the sleeves rolled to the elbows. He felt uncomfortable and like he was wearing a costume, but he knew he'd feel even more uncomfortable tomorrow night in his monkey suit.

The bathroom door opened and he turned away from his reflection, his breath catching in his throat as he stared at Abbie.

She was...breathtaking.

Her dark hair was picked up with pieces falling around her face. She slathered a light pink lip gloss on her full lips, and painted dark eyeliner around her eyes. He didn't know if it was makeup that caused the blush on her cheeks and across her nose, but she was fucking gorgeous.

His eyes traveled down her body, taking in the light green dress with gold sparkles on it, all the way down to the little heels she wore. Thin gold jewelry lined her wrists and a dainty necklace he'd never seen before sat around her neck.

"You look incredible," he breathed, still reeling. She always looked beautiful, but right now, he didn't know if

they'd make it to dinner.

“You do too,” she told him shyly. “You like it?” She held her hands out to her sides, and he nodded.

“Do a little twirl for me, pretty girl.” He circled his finger in the air, and she grinned as she turned around, letting him see her from every angle. “Fucking gorgeous.”

“Thank you, Jett.”

He loved hearing her call him Daddy, but there was something about the way she said his name that made his hard as a fucking rock.

“Ready for our date, baby?” he asked, holding his trembling hand out to her.

He hoped she couldn't tell how badly he was shaking, how nervous he was. When she slid her hand into his, he could feel the slight tremors working their way through her body, and his anxiety eased knowing he wasn't alone in feeling like this.

“Ready,” she said, smiling up at him.



THE RESTAURANT WAS SMALL AND DIMLY LIT, AND FAR MORE intimate than anything she'd expected. She stupidly expected something casual, despite the way they were dressed. Jett wasn't a fancy guy, and she hoped he wasn't bringing her here because he thought it's what she expected. Or wanted.

Because she didn't. She liked eating at diners and ordering greasy pizza to his house for a movie night. She liked making instant ramen, and gorging herself on grilled cheese with pickles.

She didn't like the fancy places with tiny portions and food that tasted weird. What she'd had with Jett, she loved. But now that he knew the truth, knew where she came from, she hoped he wouldn't start treating her differently.

She shifted in her seat, watching Jett do the same as he scanned the dining area before glancing at the paper wine menu in front of him. The server hadn't come to their table yet, giving them time to decide what to drink.

"I don't know if I've ever had wine," he muttered, his dark brows bunched as he read the words. "What do you like?" She shrugged, swallowing thickly.

"I don't really drink." He knew that.

"Right," he breathed.

"But I will tonight." She smiled tightly as he lifted his gaze to hers. She knew he probably needed it more than she did.

The server approached their table, a bland, pleasant smile on his face as he stopped in front of them, his hands clasped in front of him.

"Good evening," he said, his voice silky smooth. "I see you've already looked over the wine menu. Did you find something you'd like?" Jett's throat bobbed as he swallowed, glancing at her.

"I like Sauvignon Blanc," she blurted. The server nodded, that same smile on his face.

"A bottle of Sauv—Sauv—" Jett cut himself off with a shake of his head. "What she said." The server dipped his chin before taking the menu from him and hurrying back to the kitchen. "How do you say that?"

"Sauvignon Blanc," she repeated slowly, and watched as he mouthed the words.

"Fuck." He smoothed his hand over his head. "Remind me not to try to order that tomorrow night."

"I think they have beer here," she said, and he shook his head.

"Too late now."

"They have beer at Enchanted, too," she told him. "You can order that—"

“I’ll be fine, baby,” he said gently. “Don’t worry about me. Will you be okay with wine? I should’ve gotten you a Sprite.” He turned, looking like he was about to wave the server down.

“It’s okay,” she whispered. She didn’t like alcohol and rarely drank, but she liked wine. Kind of. Not really.

Jett took a deep breath, looking uncomfortable as he shifted in his seat. She didn’t have the heart to tell him this place was way too fancy for her. He’d planned this for them—for her. She had to be grateful for it.

And she was. But she kind of wished he would’ve done something else, something that was more...them. Something that reflected who they are as people, as a couple.

And this place, no matter how nice and fancy it was, just wasn’t them.

He turned his attention to the menu in front of him, his eyes scanning it before his brows bunched. She didn’t need to look to know she wasn’t going to like anything.

But she looked down at it anyway, if for no other reason than to do something other than sit awkwardly in her chair, twisting her hands together. She skimmed the words, knowing she wouldn’t find anything.

She’d come to places like this her entire life, and it always ended with her pushing her food around on her plate and waiting until she got home so she could dive into her secret hoard of snacks in her room.

Jett cleared his throat and she glanced up at him. “So, see anything you like?” he asked, still reading.

“Umm...” Panic surged through her. She didn’t know what to say. She couldn’t lie, but she couldn’t tell him the truth, either. “Did you?”

“The...um...” He trailed off, clearing his throat again. “Maybe the—I don’t know. I’m still looking.”

“I wish they had grilled cheese,” she muttered, and his head lifted. Shoot. She shouldn’t have said that. “I mean—I’ll

find something. It all looks good.”

“I wish they had steak,” he said, and her shoulders slumped as she let out a long breath.

“And fries.”

“And fucking beer,” he grumbled under his breath. They stared at each other for a moment, then he set the menu down and slowly leaned forward, resting his forearms on the table. She mimicked him, bringing their faces closer. “What do you say we just get out of here? Find something else?”

“Oh my God, I’d love that,” she groaned. “Please.” He grinned as he stood, holding his hand out to her. She slipped her hand into his, and he helped her stand before wrapping his arm around her waist and holding her close to his side.

The server walked back to them holding the bottle of wine, looking confused. “Is there a problem?”

Oh, bullfuzzies. She didn’t think about the stupid wine.

But Jett just pulled money from his wallet and set it on the table. “We need to leave,” he said smoothly. “That should cover it.”

Abbie’s eyes widened as Jett steered her toward the entrance to the little restaurant. She peeked over her shoulder as the server picked up the money, then looked at them, still looking confused. Lifting her hand, she wiggled her fingers in an apologetic wave, then Jett was gently pushing her out the door.

After he helped her into his truck and buckled her seatbelt for her, he made his way around it and into the driver’s seat. She glanced at him, then at the window, her stomach twisting with a new set of nerves.

“So, where are we going?” she asked. When he didn’t answer, her gaze slid back to him, finding him grinning at her.

“You’ll like it.” He paused as he turned the truck on, letting it rumble to life under them. “Probably.”

Yeah, that didn’t make her feel better.

# twenty-eight

. . .

“**W**hat are we doing?” she asked again. “Where are we going?” He didn’t say a word, just smiled.

They’d stopped at a grocery store and picked out a few of their favorite snacks, then were back in the truck, heading down the road. But he wouldn’t tell her where they were going.

“Do we need to stop at home so I can change clothes?” she asked, and he shook his head, then froze. He stopped at a red light and looked over at her, the light illuminating the side of his face. “What?”

“You said home,” he muttered, reaching for her hand. “You think of my place as your home?” Her face flushed. Idiot. She shouldn’t have said that, but the look on his face told her maybe it wasn’t a mistake.

“I think so,” she said softly, dropping her eyes to their hands. “If you want me there.”

“Of course I do,” he breathed. “I’ve wanted that since...” He trailed off, and her gaze lifted to him. “Since the first day I met you.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

She couldn’t help the cheesy grin that spread across her face, warmth settling deep in her chest. It was one thing knowing he wanted her, that he loved her—which she still couldn’t freaking believe—but it was different knowing he

wanted her around all the time. That he wanted to live with her.

Bringing her hand to the back of his mouth, he pressed a lingering kiss to it. Their gaze's held as he kept his lips on her skin, and that warmth in her chest traveled lower, pooling in her belly. The promise of what was to come when they got home shone in his eyes, making her press her thighs together.

But then someone behind them honked, and the spell was broken.

Chuckling, he lowered their hands to her lap as he rolled forward. She looked out the window, still shifting in her seat, excited and nervous about tonight. As they drove along the quiet street, her brows began to bunch.

“Where are we going?” she asked again, but unsurprisingly, he stayed quiet. “Daddy?”

“Patience, pretty girl.”

She didn't have any patience, though. None. There wasn't a patient bone in her freaking body. She wanted to know what was happening, and she wanted to know now.

Instead of throwing a tantrum she knew would only end with her over his lap, she took a deep breath, forcing her curiosity and suspicions down. But it was hard, especially when she recognized the area.

In the back of her mind, she had an idea but didn't want to get her hopes up by being wrong. So instead of letting herself get excited about the possibility, she tried to sit still.

It was impossible.

She bounced as they got closer to their destination, the faint lights used to line the park already illuminated. “The park?” she asked, and his smile broadened. “We're going to the park?”

He chuckled as he pulled into the same parking space his truck had been in the first day they met. “I should've brought you here instead of that stuffy restaurant,” he said as he turned to face her.

“It’s okay.” She shrugged. “I thought it was where you wanted to go.”

“I thought you’d want princess treatment tonight,” he said.

“I get princess treatment every night.”

Reaching out, he cupped the side of her face, letting her melt into his touch. “And you’ll get it every night until I die.”

“Die?” Her eyes widened in panic. “I don’t want you to die, Daddy.”

“Not anytime soon,” he reassured her, his big thumb stroking her soft cheek. “Ready?”

She blinked at him. “For what?”

“For our picnic.”



WITH HIS HAND WRAPPED AROUND HERS, AND THE BAG OF snacks weighing down his other one, he felt a sense of rightness settle over him as he led his girl from his truck to the bench she’d been pacing in front of the first day they met.

It was only weeks ago, but it felt like a lifetime between now and then. So much had happened, they’d gotten so close, and he’d fallen face-first head over heels for her.

She was buzzing with excitement beside him, her big eyes wide as she took everything in. He knew she wanted to bounce around like she always did when she couldn’t contain her emotions, but she couldn’t while they were walking. So when they got to the bench and she stared at it, then up at him, bouncing on the balls of her feet, he wasn’t all that surprised.

“This is where we’re eating?” she asked, and he dipped his chin in a slight nod. She glanced at the empty playground, and his lips twitched.

“You can play afterward, if you’re a good girl.” Her eyes darted back to him as she shook her head.

“Oh, it’s okay. I don’t wanna—”

“Abbie,” he said in a low, warning voice, and her mouth snapped shut.

“Okay, I wanna play a teensy tiny bit.”

“What I thought. Eat first, play later.”

“Or,” she drew the word out, “I can play while you eat.”

He snorted as he sat on the bench and began pulling their food from the bag. “Nice try. Sit.”

“But *Daddy*—”

“Sit, pretty girl. Or you won’t get to play at all.” She leapt to the bench, planting her little ass firmly on it, a giant smile on her face as she wiggled around excitedly.

He chuckled to himself, shaking his head as he pulled out her little container of mac and cheese, then his deli sandwich. Wasn’t fancy, but from the way she lit up, you’d think it was fine dining.

She took a few bites, then a sip of her juice, before looking out at the playground. “Did you come here a lot as a kid?” he asked.

Her shoulders fell as she shook her head. “I moved here when I was too old to come to the playground,” she muttered. He realized he didn’t know that this place wasn’t her hometown. He’d just assumed it was.

“Where’d you move from?” He took a bite of his sandwich as he watched her.

“New York.” His brows rose.

“City?” he asked, and Abbie slid her eyes to him as she nodded. “I’m from there, too.”

“Really?” She turned more toward him. “You grew up there? I thought you were from here.” He laughed, her words echoing his thoughts from moments ago.

“Moved here a decade ago. When did you move here?”

“Um, about twelve years ago,” she said. Yeah, so she’d been here about as long as he had. But he was freshly out of prison and thirty-years-old, while she was...fuck. She was nine.

He never thought about their age gap until he was slapped in the face with a reminder of how many years separated them.

“My dad was a lawyer there,” she explained. “He worked a lot of hours, and one day, he collapsed. Just fell on the floor of his office. They said it was stress, but my mother had been so worried he’d had a heart attack. It must’ve freaked him out too, because he left the city for this place.” She waved her hand around.

He couldn’t help it when his stomach twisted. Had her father been a lawyer when he was on trial? Probably. But the likelihood of him even knowing Jett existed was slim to none.

“I think Mother likes it here more than the city,” she muttered. “We’re wealthy, but wealthier than the other families, so she’s always been the one on top. When we were in New York, she was just another rich wife. Nothing special. But here...she thinks she’s someone special.”

He could understand that. Knowing the little bit he did about her mother, that seemed to be the main thing she ever worried about. Her image. Her family’s image.

“And you?” he asked softly, and she glanced at him.

“Me what?”

“Do you like it here more than the city?” She shrugged, looking back at her bowl of mac and cheese. “I’ll take that as a no.”

“I missed my friends in the city,” she said quietly. “It was hard for me to make friends, so the few I had there, I really cherished.”

“Did you make friends after you moved?” he asked, scooting closer to her.

“Not really. My parent’s status, their money, made it hard to connect with people. Some people wanted to use me, others were too intimidated to want anything to do with me. A lot of them judged me before they ever got to know me. So I kept mostly to myself.”

His heart ached for her. He wrapped his arm around her, tugging her into his chest. “I’m sorry, baby girl.”

“It’s okay,” she muttered, wiping her face. “I have a few friends now.” He’d never heard her talk about any of them, other than her brother and Wes, but he didn’t want to say that.

“And you have me,” he told her, and she nodded, tipping her head back to peer up at him. He lightly kissed her lips, and felt her smile against him. “Done?” He pulled away, stroking his finger down her cheek. “Wanna play?”

Her bottom lip went between her teeth as she looked away. Even under the dim lighting, he could see the faint blush creep along her cheeks. “What is it, baby?” he whispered, pulling her lip free with his thumb.

“Can we go home?” Her voice was so quiet, so unsure, he almost didn’t hear her. But then her words settled inside him, and all the blood he had in his body rushed to his dick.

They both knew what was going to happen when they got home.

“You sure?” he asked, and she nodded against his hand. “You’re ready?”

“I’ve been ready since the second you messaged me,” she told him, reaching up to kiss him. “Are you ready?”

“Fuck yes, I am, baby.”

Pressing his lips to hers again, he scooped her into his arms, pausing only long enough to grab their trash. He tossed it in a bin on the way to his truck, her arms and legs wrapped tightly around him as she kissed and sucked on his neck.

He didn’t know if he was going to make it all the way home.

## twenty-nine

. . .

Nerves twisted her belly as she walked into the bedroom, Jett behind her. She didn't know how to start this. Did she just get naked? Or did she wait for him to tell her what to do? Maybe she should just drop to her knees. Guys liked that, didn't they?

But once she was standing by the bed, she couldn't make herself move. She stared at the blanket, her hands clutched tightly together in front of her.

A massive hand landed on her upper back and she jolted. "It's okay," Jett soothed. "Nothing happens you don't want it to. You can change your mind at any time."

She took a deep breath as she nodded. She knew that, but she was still nervous and didn't know why. She wanted this. She loved Jett.

But...

"You wouldn't be mad if I changed my mind?" she asked, and he sank onto the bed. Gently, he tugged her around and pulled her between his spread legs. He stared at her, his hands resting on her hips.

"Of course not, pretty girl. I'm here to give you what you want and need, and if you don't want to have sex with me tonight, that's okay. I can wait."

"I'm just so nervous," she muttered, resting her hands on her belly.

"I know. I am too." Her eyes widened.

“Really? You are?” He nodded, his thumbs stroking the fabric of her dress.

“I don’t want to mess anything up,” he muttered. “I don’t want to hurt you or scare you.”

She sucked her bottom lip between her teeth, chewing slightly on the skin as she flicked her eyes between his.

“Will it hurt?” she whispered anxiously.

She thought that was one of the main things she was worried about. Everyone made it seem like losing your virginity was super painful, and she didn’t want the pain to take away from this special moment with Jett.

“Maybe a little bit,” he said softly. “I’m not sure how much. But I’ll get you as ready as I can.” She continued chewing on her lower lip, nodding. “We can wait.”

Did she want that, though? It didn’t matter long she waited, she’d always be worried about the pain. But she was ready for everything else. She was ready to feel Jett inside her—she wanted it more than she could breathe.

She took a deep breath as she slid her hands onto his broad shoulders. His hands flexed on her hips as she leaned forward and pressed her lips against his. He stayed still, letting her explore his mouth with hers. But there was only so much control the big guy could give up before he took over again, wrapping his arms around her and clutching her to his chest.

He swallowed her whimper as his tongue slid between her lips, tasting her. Abbie’s fingers dug into his shoulders, gripping him tightly as her knees went weak.

“*Daddy,*” she breathed, feeling heat course through her entire body. He growled softly against her mouth, and gripped her waist tighter before pulling her onto the bed beside him.

Her back rested on the mattress as he hovered above her, kissing down her jaw to her neck. She tipped her head back, giving him more access to lick, bite, and suck his way over her throat.

“You’re so fucking perfect,” he said against her skin, his voice guttural. “Can’t believe you’re mine.”

His hands slid over her body, touching and caressing her like he had so many times before, but it felt different this time. His touch was slower, more purposeful. It brought something to life inside her, something she didn’t know was even there.

Slowly, he kissed down her neck to the exposed area of her chest. He moved lower, pressing his face between her breasts. “Can I touch you?” she breathed, and his eyes lifted.

“Of course,” he murmured. “Tonight, you can touch me all you like. And you can come as many times as you want.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” she whispered. She wanted to press her thighs together to alleviate some of the pressure building inside her, but with him between her legs, she couldn’t. The corners of his eyes crinkled as he grinned, like he knew what she was thinking.

“Such a polite little girl,” he murmured, kissing between her breasts, and her face flushed.

His hand skimmed down her body to the hem of her dress. Guiding it slowly up her legs, he bunched it around her waist, settling himself more firmly against her pussy. She lifted her hips, grinding against his firm stomach, her breath catching at the pleasure that shot through her.

“Let’s get you out of this pretty dress,” he said softly, kissing her neck again. She swallowed thickly as she nodded, her head feeling floaty as he helped her sit up. “You’re sure?” He hesitated, his fingers toying with the delicate zipper at her back.

“I’m sure,” she whispered, nodding. Even if she felt nervous, she was still ready for this. For him.

Slowly, he dragged it down before he pushed her back onto the bed. “Hips up,” he commanded, and she lifted them, letting him pull her dress the rest of the way off, leaving her in her heels, bra, panties, and jewelry.

He folded the dress in half and set it on the chair in the corner of the room before turning back toward her. She

squirmed as she watched him prowl back to her, slowly unbuttoning his shirt as he went.

“Lay all the way back,” he said, jerking his head at the pillows. “I want you to be comfy.” Her eyes widened at his words, but she quickly scrambled to obey.

He tossed his shirt to the floor before sliding his undershirt off, letting it land on his dress shirt. Her chest heaved with each breath as she watched his hand move to his black dress belt and slowly undo it, then slip it through each loop.

His movements were slow. Agonizingly slow. All she wanted was to touch him, for him to touch her. She didn't really care. She just wanted to get off, and watching him strip in front of her was torture.

“Please hurry, Daddy,” she whined, rubbing her thighs together, squeezing her muscles, driving herself more wild.

“Oh, is my baby so horny? Does she need to come?” he crooned, and she nodded, her bottom lip rolling out in a pout.

“So badly, Daddy.” He grinned as he slipped his pants and socks off, leaving them in a heap on the floor. His briefs stayed on as he climbed onto the bed, kneeling in front of her.

“Spread your legs, baby. Let Daddy see you.”

Her breath caught as she let her legs fall apart. He scanned her body, taking in every curve, the shallowness of her breaths, the way she squirmed under his full attention. She couldn't take it.

“Take your panties off,” he said, his voice low. With shaky hands, she slid her panties down her legs, dropping them off the side of the bed. “Legs open.” She spread them, feeling the cool air hit her wet pussy. She knew he could see how soaked she was. “Bra.”

His hand moved to his boxers and he guided it over the hard bulge underneath it, groaning as he watched her reach under herself and unhook her bra. It slid down her arms as she dropped it to the floor with her panties.

“Such a good girl,” he grunted, squeezing his cock through the thin fabric. Her mouth watered as she watched him, her hips lifting, silently begging for it.

“Can I taste you?” Her voice was near-silent, and she was worried she’d only said it in her head, that he hadn’t heard her. But he paused, his eyes boring into hers.

“You want to suck my cock, pretty girl?”

“Please.” She looked up at him, finding his eyes hooded as he watched her. “Please, Daddy. *Please.*”

His head fell back, his wide chest expanding as he took a deep breath. When he finally looked back at her, his jaw was tense. “Arms above your head. Don’t move them.”

She blinked but did as she was told. He effortlessly took his boxers off, letting her see his full, hard length she desperately wanted inside her. Stroking himself, he watched her warily.

“You’re sure?”

“I’m sure.” She nodded firmly, not wanting him to change his mind. He watched her for another moment, then dipped his chin.

“I’m going to straddle your chest. Don’t move. Just open your mouth. Understand?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

She laced her fingers together above her head, gripping her hand tightly as he climbed over her body, his knees on either side of her chest. He looked massive from that angle. Like a fallen god, so big and hard and perfect.

“Open wide, pretty girl.” He stroked his fingers through her hair, gently gripping it at the root as he led his cock to her lips.

Her mouth fell open, her heart racing as he pressed himself in, and let her get her first taste of him. She moaned around him, her eyes rolling back. She loved how soft and warm his skin was, how hard he was. She loved the taste of his precum as it leaked from his tip onto her tongue.

She wiggled under him, rubbing her thighs together, wanting to relieve some of the pressure building. One hand stayed in her hair, the other around the base of his cock as he slowly fed it to her.

“Fuck, you look so pretty with my cock in your mouth,” he grunted. “That’s it, baby girl. Look at Daddy. Let me see those big pretty eyes.”

Her tongue stroked the underside of his cock in a way he must’ve loved, because his hand in her hair tightened, the veins in his neck straining. She did it again, and he bared his teeth, feeding her more of his cock.

“That’s such a good girl.” Her legs moved faster, her hips lifting and grinding against nothing as she tried to get off. “Is this turning you on? Daddy’s dick in your hot little mouth is making you want to come? Fuck. You’re such a good little cocksucker.”

She nodded as much as she could, whining around him as he pulled back. She could feel her saliva smeared around her mouth and chin, the way it dripped down her neck.

And she loved it.

Loved feeling messy and dirty for Daddy.

His hips thrust forward again, fucking her mouth slowly and gently, letting her get used to his size. She didn’t know if she was doing anything right, but she liked this a lot. She liked him above her, holding her down while he used her mouth the way he liked. She liked feeling helpless under him, and liked knowing she was making him feel good.

His hand released his cock and he reached behind him. Rough fingers probed at her pussy, and her eyes widened. “Oh, you’re such a wet little girl, aren’t you?” He rolled her clit between his fingers, rubbing against her until her eyes rolled to the back of her head. “Look at you, so desperate to come.”

She nodded frantically, her legs opening wider as his thrusts became faster. She gagged, and he immediately pulled out, staring down at her worriedly. “You okay?”

“More,” she panted. “Don’t stop. Please.”

He hesitated before sliding his thick cock back into her mouth. His fingers slipped lower, and he slowly slid one inside. She cried out around his cock, and his hand in her hair tightened.

“If you keep making sounds, I’m going to come down your throat,” he grunted. “And you don’t want that, do you? You want Daddy’s come in your little pussy?” She whimpered, her eyes pleading with him. His thumb rubbed against her clit as he slipped another finger inside her, stretching her. “Stay nice and still for me, baby. No more sounds. It feels too fucking good.”

He curled his fingers, and she spread her legs as wide as she could make them go, her hips lifting and grinding against his fingers. He pressed further into her mouth and stopped, letting her suck on him as she whined and whimpered, drool spilling from her mouth and soaking into her hair.

She tried so hard not to move, to not make any more sounds, but it was impossible. Especially with him touching her the way he was, the way his cock was still leaking into her mouth. She couldn’t handle it.

“You’re going to come for me, aren’t you, pretty girl? You’re going to come on Daddy’s fingers?” He moved his hand faster, driving her pleasure higher. “Fuck. You look so good like this. Covered in drool, with your makeup running, and a cock stuffing your mouth. I think we should end every night like this, don’t you? You on your back while Daddy uses your tight little throat?”

Her hips lifted, pressing his fingers deeper. He fucked her with them harder, pushing them in as deep as they’d go.

That’s what did it.

Her mouth slackened, her eyes crossing as she exploded, clamping her thighs together as she pulsed around his fingers.

She barely felt him dragging his cock along her tongue, wiping the beads of precum on her lips. Her body convulsed as he slowly pressed it back into her mouth, his fingers still moving inside her.

It was too much. Too much stimulation. She couldn't think, couldn't breathe, couldn't do anything but come and lick Daddy's cock. That's all she wanted to do for the rest of her life.

Finally, she collapsed back onto the bed and blinked up at him, her gaze unfocused. He pulled his fingers and cock out of her mouth and pussy, then lowered his mouth to her forehead for a gentle kiss before lying beside her.

"You okay, baby girl?" he asked, stroking up her stomach to her breast. "Was that too much?"

"No," she breathed. "I want more."

"More?" His brows lifted as he huffed out a laugh. "Insatiable little thing." She nodded, smiling dreamily up at him. "You still want me inside you tonight? We can just play."

"I want it all," she said softly. Turning onto her side, she stared up at him. She took a deep breath, resting her hand on his hard, warm chest as she whispered, "Please fuck me, Daddy."

# thirty

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His body stiffened as he stared at her, his dark eyes widening only a little before he recovered and pressed his lips to hers. She froze. He knew she just had his dick in her mouth, right? She didn't think guys wanted to kiss you after you gave them a blowjob, but he didn't seem to care. Especially not when he slipped his tongue deep into her mouth, kissing the breath and worries from her.

Slowly, he rolled her onto her back again, situating his body above hers. His hand slid between her legs, gently stroking and rubbing at her clit until her breath caught.

"No more playing," she whined. She was already so sensitive and needy, she just wanted him inside her already.

"I have to make sure you're nice and wet, pretty girl," he murmured, his breath ghosting along her skin. "I don't want to hurt you." Her stomach flipped as he slid two fingers in again. "Gotta make sure you're ready for Daddy's big cock." There was a slight sting as he scissored them, but it didn't hurt much. It was just enough to make her feel full, to stretch around him.

And she wanted more.

His mouth lowered to her peaked nipple, and he ran his tongue around and around it. Her eyes rolled back as she pressed her chest up into his mouth, silently begging for more. Roughly, he sucked it between his teeth, biting down enough for a zap of pain to shoot through her body. She tightened around his thick fingers, moaning at the ache.

“Please,” she whimpered, her head thrashing back and forth as he tortured her nipple with his tongue. “Please, Daddy. Please.”

“You want Daddy’s cock so badly, don’t you, baby girl?” he rasped, his deep, rumbling voice vibrating against her skin. “You want to feel me stretching you? To feel me fucking into you until you come?”

“Yes!” she cried, her hands bunching the blankets at her sides tightly. “I want it!”

“Ask me nicely,” he said softly. “Ask Daddy to take your virginity.”

Her breath caught at the words. He patiently waited, his thumb mindlessly rubbing her clit back and forth. She couldn’t think, could barely breathe, but she forced the words out.

“Please, Daddy, will you take my virginity?”

A low, possessive growl rumbled through his chest, and his thumb moved faster, his fingers inside her curling and fucking her harder. “Daddy!” she screamed, sliding her hand up his hard biceps. “Please!”

“I’ll give it to you, baby,” he grunted. “Right after you come on my fingers again.” She groaned, her thighs trembling as he lowered his mouth to her nipple once more. “That’s it, pretty girl. You’re being such a good fucking girl. Come for me one more time, then you can have Daddy’s cock. You want that, don’t you?”

She whined again, her mouth slackening as he drove her pleasure up. There was no way she could come again after this. He’d have to use her like a ragdoll, she was nearly spent.

“Look at me,” he muttered, his warm breath hitting her cheek. “You know I love seeing your pretty eyes.”

Whimpering, she forced her eyes open and stared up at him. His lips parted as he stared down at her, mimicking her expression. “You can do it, baby girl. I know you can come again.”

She felt her orgasm right there, teetering on the edge. She wanted it so badly. “Give it to me, baby. Make Daddy proud.”

She didn't know why those words made her come so hard, but she swore she blacked out for a second. Her entire body went taut, the muscles in her thighs trembling as she tried to clamp them around Jett's hand. But he kept them apart, his gaze flicking between her face and his hand.

Finally, she collapsed back to the bed, her chest rising and falling with her deep, rapid breaths. Her entire body was flushed, a fine sheen of sweat had broken out along her forehead, and her heart was pounding.

But as she looked at Jett, the heat in his eyes made her pussy clench around his fingers again. He slowly dragged them out, and she watched as he brought them to his mouth and he sucked them in, licking them clean.

“Fucking delicious,” he groaned, his eyes rolling back. “Taste yourself, pretty girl.” Before she knew what was happening, his mouth was on hers once more, his tongue plunging into her mouth, letting her get a taste of herself. She stiffened for a moment, then sunk into his kiss.

Her taste wasn't unpleasant—it didn't taste like much. And he seemed to like it enough that his body had slid over hers, his thick, aching-hard cock rubbing against her inner thigh.

“You still want this?” he asked against her lips, and she nodded, her eyes fluttering open to stare up at him.

“Please.”

His throat bobbed as he swallowed, his jaw tensing under his beard. They'd already talked about him fucking her raw, and she loved the idea of it. She didn't want anything between them, especially not for her first time. She wanted to feel every inch of him, every hard ridge.

Sliding his hand between their bodies, he gripped his cock, stroking himself a few times as he lined up. “Fuck,” he breathed. “I hope I don't embarrass myself.”

She couldn't help the small giggle that left her. His gaze snapped to hers.

“Don’t laugh,” he mock-growled, and she forced herself to stop laughing, but couldn’t wipe the grin off her face. His lips twitched as he shook his head. “What am I going to do with you?”

“Maybe you can fuck the laughter out of me?” she suggested, batting her lashes up at him. His brow rose in that way that made her squirm.

“Or maybe I can jack myself off and make you lick up my cum,” he countered. “You don’t call the shots here, baby girl.”

“But—”

“Just lay there and take what Daddy gives you, understand me?”

Her mouth snapped shut, and she nodded frantically. Yeah, she’d stop while she was ahead. She desperately wanted him inside her, and if he didn’t want her to rush him, then she wouldn’t.

But the anticipation was killing her.

Abbie gasped as the blunt, thick head of his dick brushed against her swollen pussy. “Relax,” Jett soothed, his head rubbing against her clit. “It’s alright. I’ve got you.”

Slowly, he slid lower, and she held her breath as he pressed forward. “Breathe, baby.” He stroked her hair with the hand by her head. “Breathe for me.” She forced a shuddering breath out, and he pushed deeper. She felt herself open for him, stretching around him. “Ready?”

Nervously, she nodded, swallowing thickly. He hesitated before his hips drove forward, his cockhead slipping in. Her mouth fell open at the stretch, at the fullness of him.

“Fuck,” he breathed, his eyes as wide as hers. “Fuck.”

“Mhm.” She nodded again. She totally understood what he meant. It was...a lot. His cock was thick and hard, and was stretching her pussy with every inch he pressed in. But she wanted more.

Needed it.

“You feel so damn good,” he grunted. “Almost there, baby. You okay?”

“Yes,” she hissed. “More. Please. Please, Daddy.”

He dragged out before pushing forward again. The veins in his neck popped as he stopped himself from fucking her how she knew he wanted to. Again, he pulled back a bit, then pressed the rest of the way in, bottoming out completely.

“You took all of me, baby. Such a good girl,” he praised, still stroking her hair. Her face flushed, and her pussy tightened, making him groan. “You really like that, don’t you? Like Daddy praising you?”

She nodded, unable to speak. He grinned as he dropped his mouth to hers, kissing her deeply as he pulled his hips back, then slowly drove them forward again.

“Daddy,” she breathed, pulling her face from his. “Faster. Please. And harder.”

“Yeah? You want it harder, baby?” His eyes gleamed, the hand by her head clenching into a fist. She nodded, spreading her legs wider for him. His teeth sunk into his bottom lip as he pulled almost all the way out, then slammed forward.

She couldn’t hold her scream in, and he froze. “Fuck. Did I hurt you?” She frantically shook her head, her breath lost. “Abbie. Fuck. Say something. Fuck.” He moved to pull away, but she gripped his shoulder, stopping him.

“No,” she said. “More. I—I liked that. A lot. More, Daddy. I want it hard, just like that.” His dark eyes were wide as he stared down at her.

“I didn’t hurt you?”

“No!” she cried. “Again! Please!”

This time, he was more hesitant as he pulled out and pushed back in. That wouldn’t do. She wanted it hard and rough. She wanted more.

“Daddy, please!” she whined. “Hard. Like you did before.”

She knew he didn't want to hurt her, but he wouldn't. Not if he gave her what she wanted.

Taking a deep breath, his cock dragged out of her pussy, then he slammed back in, harder than before. She cried out, raising her hands above her head and resting them flat on the headboard. "Like that," she breathed.

Whatever he saw on her face, heard in her voice, must've made him believe her, because he stopped holding back. Sinking back onto his knees, he gripped the backs of her knees and held them to her chest. In quick, hard thrusts, he fucked into her, her back arching as he pinned her knees to her chest.

"My baby likes it hard," he grunted. "She likes when Daddy's rough, doesn't she?"

"Yes!" she screamed, her eyes rolling back as he pounded into her, the bed creaking with every hard thrust.

"Play with your nipples for me, pretty girl," he panted. "Make them nice and hard."

Her hands shook as she lowered them to her chest, groping her breasts as she stared up at him. His lips were tight as he watched her—something about feeling like she was putting on a show for him turned her on even more. Knowing she was making him feel good, that he thought she was this sexy, it made her feel like that. It made her want to give him any and everything he wanted.

So she rolled her peaked nipples between her fingers, lightly playing with them. Her eyes on his face, she pinched them roughly and gasped at the zap of pain that mixed with her intense pleasure.

Her pussy fluttered around his cock, and she felt his fingers flex on the back of her thighs. "Again," he ordered.

She didn't know if he meant squeeze his dick again, or pinch her nipples again, so she did both. His grip on her legs tightened, his hips snapping back and forth with more force.

A fine sweat broke out along his hair-covered chest, his stomach flexing with every movement. Her pleasure peaked,

and she felt herself barreling closer to another release, but, suddenly, he pulled out.

She froze, shocked he stopped so soon. Was he already done? Had he come? But she hadn't felt anything, and he hadn't said anything. A pang of disappointment hit her chest as he lowered her legs to the bed.

"Roll over," he said breathlessly. "On your hands and knees. Put that ass high in the air."

She blinked up at him. "What?"

"Don't make me say it again, Abbie. Do as you're told."

Her stomach twisted as she got into position. "Face down in the pillows, baby girl," he ordered, his voice a weird mix of firm and gentle. Slowly, she lowered her head, forcing her ass higher. "That's it, my pretty girl. Such a good girl for Daddy, aren't you?"

She nodded, and his hand came down hard on her asscheek. "I can't see your face so I'll need you to talk," he said. "You're Daddy's good girl, aren't you?"

"Yes, Daddy," she whimpered. He brought his hand down on her ass again, smacking her hard enough to leave a stinging warmth in its wake. It made her pussy throb even more than it was before, and she swayed her hips side to side, silently begging him to fill her again.

Both his hands gripped her ass and spread her apart. Her eyes widened—what the heck was he doing?

Was he—he wasn't looking—

"Uhh, Jett?"

"Shh." His breath was warm against her asshole, and her body stiffened. Why was he so close?

"Jett—"

Her words cut off as his warm tongue slid against her hole. She jolted forward, a mix of shock and taboo pleasure shooting through her. He should not be doing that, but jeez it felt so good as he lapped at her.

Her clit throbbed, and a moan ripped from her throat as she bunched the pillow in her fists. His mouth moved lower, his fingers digging deeper into her flesh as he pressed his tongue inside her. It was unlike anything she'd ever felt before, and she cried out, pushing back against his face.

His growl vibrated against her clit, adding to everything she was feeling. She felt herself getting closer the more he flicked his tongue, working it against her clit, sliding inside her, back up to her asshole.

She wanted to come again—she needed it. Desperately.

But he didn't give it to her.

Instead, he pulled his face again and she let out a pathetic-sounding whine, somewhere between a plea and a demand for him to come back. But he slid his rough hand along her back, keeping her head pressed onto the bed as he lined up.

His thick cockhead slid easily inside her, forcing her body to stretch and accommodate his size. From this angle, it felt different. He was pushing on spots he hadn't before, and when he slammed all the way in, he felt deeper than he had earlier.

She screamed as she felt him grind his hips against her ass, forcing himself as far as he could go. It was different from anything she'd ever felt before, the feeling of him filling her so completely, stretching her so much she could barely take it, that she felt like she was about to split in half.

“Daddy!” she cried into the pillow, digging her face in more. Her eyes rolled back, her mouth open as she gritted her teeth, bracing herself for his pounding.

“You okay, baby girl?” he grunted, slowing down enough for her to catch her breath.

“Okay, Daddy,” she breathed, rubbing her cheek against the pillow as she nodded. He ran his calloused hand along her back, soothing her.

“I didn't hurt you?”

She could hear the hesitation in his voice, how unsure he sounded, and she pushed up to her hands to look over her

shoulder at him. "I'm okay," she said again, softer. "You didn't hurt me. I liked it." His eyes searched hers, his dark brows bunched as his chest heaved.

Not looking like he believed her, he smoothed his hand over her back again. "If you're sure," he murmured, and she nodded.

"I'm sure."

His wide chest expanded as he took a deep breath. "Then get back into position." Her belly somersaulted at the command, and she dropped back onto the bed, pressing her face deeper into the pillow. "Good girl."

God, she loved when he called her that. Not as much as she liked when he called her *pretty girl* or *baby girl*. But it was up there on her list of things he said that made her melt.

Her body tightened as his hand slid from her hip to her stomach, then lower. Thick fingers pressed against her sensitive clit as he stroked into her, his hips snapping forward with each thrust. She bunched the blanket in her fists, widening her hips more, letting him hit a deeper angle that had her seeing stars.

"This little cunt is milking Daddy's cock," he said under his breath, his voice guttural. "Such a pretty little slut for your daddy, aren't you, baby? Letting him fuck you the way he needs. You make me feel so damn good, you know that?"

Moan after moan ripped from her as he worked her body back and forth on his cock, his fingers moving in tandem with his thrusts. She felt another orgasm barreling towards her, and she couldn't hold it off. Even if she wanted to, she felt herself about to explode.

"Daddy! Daddy, please!" She felt it teetering on the edge, so close she was desperate for it. "Please!"

"Give it to me, baby," he growled, moving his fingers faster. "Come on Daddy's cock. Then I'll fill you up. You want that, don't you? You want to feel me fuck my cum into your tight pussy?"

God, yes, she wanted that. So badly.

Her eyes squeezed closed, and, as if he knew she was about to fall over that blissful edge, he slammed into her harder.

She exploded.

Coming while Jett continued fucking her felt different from any orgasm she'd ever had before. She understood why people became sex addicts—she could become a sex addict if he made her feel this good every day.

“Fuck yes,” he groaned, moving both hands to her hips. He pushed and pulled her, using her body the way he needed to get off. She was a boneless mess as he fucked her faster, his cock thickening inside her. “Here it comes, pretty girl.”

Her mouth went slack, still riding the waves of the most intense orgasm of her life as he slammed into her a final time and stilled. Hot cum flowed from his cock, deep inside her. She stayed on her knees, letting him catch his breath before he pulled out and laid beside her on the bed.

His heavy arm draped across her, pulling her to her side to face him. Burying her face in his chest, she breathed him in, savoring this moment. “I’ll get a rag in a second,” he breathed, stroking her hair from her sweaty forehead. “I just need this right now.”

Her heart stuttered. He needed this? She didn’t know he’d want to cuddle after sex, but she was happy he did. She felt raw and exposed, even if she felt loved and treasured.

“My precious, sweet, baby girl,” he whispered, his fingers massaging her scalp. “Are you sure I wasn’t too rough on you?”

“I promise,” she said, her fingers gliding along his chest. “I feel good.” He kissed her forehead, letting his lips linger.

Suddenly, he slipped off the bed, and she immediately reached for him. “I’ll be right back. Roll onto your back and open your legs.”

Yeah, she didn’t want to do that. Didn’t he know she was spent? She couldn’t do anything else. Give her a few minutes, then maybe she could recover.

He walked from the bathroom holding a cloth and kneeled on the bed between her spread legs. She jolted as the warm fabric connected with her pussy, then he was gently stroking her—not to get her off, but to clean her up.

Pushing up on her elbows, she gaped down at him. “I can do that,” she squeaked, reaching for the cloth, but he pulled it back.

“Lay down and let me take care of you,” he growled, leveling her with a firm look. Swallowing thickly, she did as she was told. She stared up at the ceiling as he cleaned her up, then got off the bed and disappeared back into the bathroom.

She must’ve drifted while he was away, because her eyes snapped open as he slid onto the bed beside her, covering her with the blankets. They were still naked, but instead of feeling self-conscious or embarrassed, she felt safe. Secure.

“I’ll check on your pussy in the morning,” he said. The words were enough to wake her up, and she pulled back to stare up at him.

“What?”

“To make sure I didn’t hurt you,” he explained, resting his big hand on the side of her head. Gently, he tugged her back to his chest, and she snuggled against him, his hair brushing against her cheek. “You’ll tell me if you’re sore or if I hurt you, understand?”

She barely refrained from rolling her eyes.

“Aye aye, captain.” His other hand came down in a hard swat on her blanket-covered ass. “Hey!” She glared at him, but his brow just rose in that way that meant his spanking hand was getting itchy.

“Lay down, pretty girl.”

Grumbling under her breath, she laid back on his chest, sighing as he ran his fingers through her hair again. Then, to her shock, he began softly humming. It was a song she didn’t recognize, but she didn’t need to know it to love it.

Slowly, she began drifting, her eyelids getting heavier and heavier. She relaxed into his body, letting his massive arms cradle her, protecting her from the world.

“I love you, Abbie,” he finally said, rousing her enough for her to tip her head back and peer up at him. Stretching her body as much as she could, he met her halfway and pressed his lips to hers.

“And I love you, Daddy.”

# thirty-one

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**S**haky hands smoothed over her silky black dress, such a contrast to the one she wore last night, but tonight was different. It wouldn't end with a picnic at the park because the restaurant was too stuffy for their liking. She knew it would end with her wrapped in Jett's arms, but everything that happened before that was out of her control, was out of Jett's control.

They were at the mercy of her parents.

Swallowing thickly, she turned toward Jett, and not for the first time tonight, panic rose in her chest. He'd been nothing but incredible to her, and she was taking him into the lion's den? No, it was worse than a lion's den.

It was dinner with her family.

"You really don't have to go," she blurted again. It had been something she kept telling him, and his answer was always the same—

"I'm going."

Her chest rose as she took a deep breath. Looking forward, she ran her hands over the dress covering her thighs once more. She couldn't stand the thought of her mother being cruel to Jett.

She could handle her hatred being spewed at her, but at Jett? It would be too much. She couldn't—no, she wouldn't handle it. She wouldn't have a choice but to stand up for him, right? There was no way she'd allow her mother to be

anything but amazing to her boyfriend, and she knew that would be impossible.

*Another deep breath.*

“Are you really that anxious about this?” he asked, his big hand sliding over hers. Her gaze slid to him, her heart skipping a beat at the tenderness in his eyes. He always had a way of calming her nerves, even when she felt herself on the brink of a spiral.

“Yes,” she admitted, her voice barely a whisper. “I’m terrified, Jett. My parents...they can be difficult. Especially my mother. I just don’t want her to ruin...” She trailed off, not wanting to finish the sentence.

She didn’t want her mother to ruin them. She didn’t want Jett to change his mind after meeting her.

He gently squeezed her hand as he turned into the parking lot. Her stomach twisted tighter, and her heart lurched into her throat.

“Listen to me.” He turned toward her, the dim lights from the restaurant illuminating his face. Reaching out, he stroked his thumb down her cheek, and she leaned into his touch, savoring him. “I love you, pretty girl. No matter what happens tonight, we’ll face it together.”

She took a deep breath, letting his comforting words sink in. Closing her eyes, she let this moment of safety linger for a bit longer. Jett pressed his lips against her cheek before he pulled away and her eyes fluttered open.

His eyes searched hers, his fingers flexing around her hand. Leaning closer, he rested his forehead against hers as he whispered, “Ready?”



THE ROOM WAS DIMLY LIT, WITH FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS and white tiled floors. It was far too fancy a place for Jett to be in. What the fuck was he thinking?

Straightening his suit jacket with one hand, he squeezed Abbie's with the other and took a deep breath as they strolled through the museum-esque restaurant. The hostess in front of him, wearing a black pencil dress and the highest heels he'd ever seen, sauntered toward a table near the back.

Buttery potatoes and the rich scent of meat floated through the restaurant, mixing with fruity wine and smoky whiskey. His stomach would've growled if he wasn't so nervous about this evening.

He could feel Abbie's anxiety wafting off her in waves, and he tried to soothe her by running his thumb along the back of her cold hand. Glancing down at her, the expression he saw was unlike anything he'd seen before.

She was detached, cool and calm on the outside, but he could feel her. Feel the slight tremble in her hand, hear the way her breathing was harsh, see the way her pupils were pinpricks.

Maybe he should've told her to cancel. He didn't realize she'd be like this.

"Baby?" he whispered, but she just swallowed thickly as she shook her head. She gave him a guilty look, pressing her lips into a thin line as if to say, "I'm sorry."

"Here you are," the hostess said brightly, smiling as she extended a long, elegant arm toward a table. His eyes followed the direction, and he straightened his shoulders as he readied himself.

He met her mother's gaze first—blue and icy, so unlike Abbie's he wondered where she got her warmth. She was tall and rail thin, with voluminous hair he couldn't tell was really hers or not, and a tight dark emerald dress that fit like a glove.

His eyes slid to the man standing beside her, and narrowed. He wore a plain black suit, but Jett knew that plain black suit cost more than his mortgage. Something about his face was familiar, but Jett couldn't place him.

"Hey, squirt!" A man, about as tall as Jett but not nearly as broad, stepped forward and scooped his girl into his arms. She

laughed as he swung her around, her arms wrapped tightly around his neck.

Jett took a step back, watching who he assumed was Abbie's older brother, Chris, set her on the ground. She grinned up at him, her eyes glittering for the first time tonight.

He wouldn't lie, a pang of jealousy filled him at the sight. He wanted to be the one that made her look like that, but if he was being totally honest, he was just glad she felt something other than anxiety.

"Please, Christopher," her mother hissed. "People are staring."

Abbie's smile immediately fell, and her shoulders rolled back. Gone was his happy and free baby girl, and back was the cold, detached woman he didn't recognize.

Chris gave Abbie's shoulders a final squeeze before turning a scathing glare to their mother, then turned toward him. Jett straightened to his full height, readjusting the arms on his jacket to make sure his tattoos were fully covered before he reached his hand out.

"Jett," he said before Chris had a chance to say anything. "I'm assuming you're Chris? I've heard a lot about you."

"Wish I could say the same." He clapped his hand against Jett's, and for a moment, shock rendered him speechless. He quickly recovered and glanced at Abbie before forcing a smile to his face.

She hadn't told Chris about him? Why not? Was she embarrassed? Ashamed?

He didn't blame her. He would be, too.

"Jett. What an...interesting name," her mother said. It was like a bucket of ice water washed over him. He'd never felt as out of place as he did right now.

"Jett Carver, ma'am." He held his hand out to her and she stared at it, her lips pursed tightly together. Alright, so she didn't want to shake his hand. Great. Ignoring her obvious

disdain for him, he moved his hand toward Abbie's father and braced himself for more rejection.

"Jett Carver," her father repeated. A surge of panic shot through Jett's body as he recognized where he knew this man from. He wasn't just some random man who had a familiar-looking face, a face recognizable to everyone. This was the lawyer who'd sent him away all those years ago.

Jett's hand shook uncontrollably as the other man reached out and all the blood drained from Jett's face as their skin touched. Her father gripped his hand tightly, saying something that couldn't break through the deafening roar in Jett's ears.

This was the man who knew every detail of his case. This was the man who'd sent him to prison for so long he forgot who he was before.

This was the man who destroyed his life.

Fear coursed through him, twisting his insides until he thought he might puke all over these fancy floors. He could do nothing but stare at the man in front of him in utter disbelief, at the man who was solely responsible for ruining his life.

But through the fear, another emotion simmered to the surface—rage. Resentment. Everything and everyone around him fell away, and all that was left was the man responsible for wrecking everything just feet from him.

How many times had he promised to kill this motherfucker if he ever saw him again? Jett knew he'd done wrong and was deserving of punishment, but this man had gone above and beyond to ruin him and everything he was. To destroy any chance he had at getting off easier.

He'd wanted the full sentencing, no chance for parole. He was a shark, but in the worst way. Luckily, Jett's lawyer had been good, and the jury was somewhat on his side after hearing his story. But the words this man had spewed in the courtroom still haunted him.

*A hulking monster.*

*A brute.*

*Too big, too burly.*

*He was dangerous. A menace to society.*

*He'd hurt someone again, and next time, what would happen?*

*Next time, he'd kill someone.*

Jett clenched his fists, his knuckles turning white as he fought to contain the rage simmering within him. He could almost taste the bitterness as it coated his tongue.

But then a small hand slid onto his forearm, and he felt himself fall back into reality. Everyone was staring at him, but he turned his gaze down to his pretty girl, finding her watching him with wide eyes.

Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to calm down enough to get through this dinner. Maybe he'd get lucky and this man wouldn't even remember him. And afterward, he'd take Abbie home, and before he bathed and fucked her, he'd sit her down and tell her the truth. He'd tell her everything about his past and who he was before.

He'd tell her about the man she'd fallen in love with.

# thirty-two

. . .

The knife easily slid through the perfectly cooked chicken breast, the juices flowing out onto the plate as Abbie stabbed her fork into it. Bringing it to her lips, her gaze slid back to Jett.

He sat rigidly, his steak barely touched, his fingers clutching the water glass in front of him. Her mother prattled on about everything and nothing, but Abbie knew she was hyper-aware of Jett and the way his eyes kept snapping to her father. She knew she'd hear about it later, knew her mother would have nothing but terrible things to say about her boyfriend.

“So, Jett,” Chris said, interrupting her before she could really get into her next story. “Abbie says you’re a mechanic?”

“What a...special little job,” her mother cooed. Abbie swallowed the words she wanted to scream. She knew what her mother meant, and judging by the way Jett shifted in his seat, she could tell he caught on, too. She hated that her mother was making him feel small. His job was important, and he worked hard—harder than anyone else she knew.

“That’s right,” he said tightly, barely dipping his chin in a nod. “It’s not much, but I love my job. It’s incredibly rewarding.”

Her mother scoffed dismissively, her polished facade crumbling for a moment. “Rewarding? Fixing cars? Please, I’m sure there are far more prestigious careers you could

pursue.” Her gaze flitted over him and her lip curled back. “Or perhaps not.”

Jett’s fingers tightened around the water glass until they turned white. Abbie slid her hand onto his thigh under the table, hoping to calm him. His muscles were more rigid than she’d ever felt, like he was ready to pounce across the table.

And she didn’t blame him.

He took a deep breath, his jaw clenched tightly as he fought to maintain his composure. She knew her mother was trying to provoke him to see him crumble under her scrutiny, to see what kind of man he truly was. Would he put up with her antics? Or would he retaliate? Would he prove to be as lowly as her mother believed all working-class people to be?

Abbie opened her mouth to change the subject, to soothe the rising tension at the table, but Jett cut her off before she could get a word out. Leaning forward, he met her mother’s gaze head-on, and she held her breath.

“You know, I’ve come to realize the importance of a job doesn’t lie solely in its prestige or societal status. What truly matters is the impact we make on people’s lives.”

His eyes slid to her father and held. She glanced at Chris, finding him watching Jett closely as her father stared back calmly as he brought his wine glass to his lips. She waited for her mother to say something, for someone to say something, but everyone stayed silent.

Tension grew thicker, and panic clawed at her chest. She needed to calm down. Her mother hated when she had panic attacks, but she especially hated when she had them in public where people could see. She took a deep breath, rubbing the center of her chest, trying to breathe through it.

Usually, Jett would’ve turned toward her to check on her by now, but he just continued glaring at her father, and she didn’t understand why. There was more hatred in his gaze than she thought possible, but it was never her father that was the problem, always her mother.

“Have you lived here your whole life, Jett?” her father asked, leaning forward to set the wine glass on the table. She glanced at Jett, finding him swallowing thickly.

“No, sir. I’m originally from New York.”

“Oh, yeah? We are, too,” Chris said, trying to calm everyone down. “When did you move here?”

“I’d say, what? About ten years ago?” Her father’s gaze was steady and unwavering as he stared back at Jett. Abbie’s head snapped to him. How did he know that?

“Ten years and three months,” Jett gritted out. Chris forced out a laugh, his eyes finding hers in a look that said, “What the fuck?”

“That’s pretty specific.” He looked between Jett and their father, his throat bobbing. “We’ve been here for—”

“Twelve years,” Jett interrupted. “Abbie told me.”

“And did you tell Abbie where you lived before you moved here?” her father said casually. Her eyes narrowed as she looked from him to Jett.

“New York,” she said slowly.

“So, you do recognize me?” Jett leaned back in his chair, his fists tightly clenched in his fists.

“What?” She looked back at her father. “You know him?”

“Not at first. Your name was familiar, but it wasn’t until you glared at me that I knew for sure who you were.”

“Who he is?” She turned back toward Jett. “What’s he talking about?”

“That’s the same look you gave me every day in court.” He waved his finger at Jett. “Wouldn’t forget it.” Her head whipped around.

“Court?” Abbie and Chris blurted at the same time.

“Ah, so you haven’t told her, then?” Her father grinned, and it was a slimy grin, one she’d never seen before.

“Told me what?”

“I put Jett away for...how long was it again?”

Jett’s jaw tensed so much she thought he’d break a tooth. “Seven years,” he gritted out, like the words pained him.

“Put Jett away...” She stared at him. “What does that mean?”

“You were in prison?” Chris asked, his face shifting from confusion to anger.

*Prison?*

Jett was in prison?

Her mind spun as the words sunk in. Her gaze darted between her father and Jett, searching for the truth in their expressions. Surely this was a misunderstanding. She knew Jett, knew his past, but...did she really?

Her voice trembled as she spoke, the words barely audible, but she knew everyone heard them. “Is it true?”

The table fell into an uncomfortable silence, only the faint clinking of cutlery against plates and the distant murmur of other diners filling the air. Her mother’s face shifted into a smug grin, like she was relishing in this new information. How could she be so vile?

Jett cleared his throat as he turned toward her. When he finally spoke, his voice was thick, his face twisted in an expression she couldn’t understand. “Yes,” he choked out. “I was—but—”

“Prison,” she breathed, her lips parting. Tears filled her eyes as she shook her head. No, this was a bad dream, a nightmare. It wasn’t real. She’d wake up at any moment.

*Wake up.*

*Wake up.*

*Wake—*

“Abbie?” He reached for her, but she pulled away. Her heart pounded in her chest, echoing in her ears. Abruptly, she shoved her chair back and stood, staring at the faces around the table. All she wanted was for Daddy to wrap his arms

around her, comfort her and protect her from everything she was feeling, but how could he do that when he was the reason for her emotions? He was the reason she was on the verge of the biggest panic attack of her life. It was his fault that betrayal and embarrassment burned in her chest.

Cautiously, Jett rose, his shoulders rounded in. “Let me explain,” he breathed, his voice strained. “Abbie, please—”

“I can’t—” She shook her head. “I can’t do this.” Her mother let out a bright laugh as she grabbed her wine glass and swirled the contents, watching her and Jett like she was enjoying the show.

“I think you should go,” her father said as he stood, straightening his suit jacket. But she didn’t want that, did she? She knew she should want that, to be far away from a criminal, but she just wanted him. Needed him.

The words wouldn’t come, though. No matter how hard she tried to force them out, they stayed in. So she stared at him as he looked around the table before his gaze landed on her again.

“Baby,” he rasped, and her chin trembled. “It’s not what you think.”

Her father laughed loudly, sarcastically. “If I would’ve known my daughter was seeing you, I would’ve never allowed it. You’re a dangerous man, capable of putting multiple men in the hospital, nearly killing one—”

“What?” she cried, stumbling back a step.

“No.” He reached for her, but she moved back another step. Her back ran into a hard chest and she glanced over her shoulder, finding Chris standing behind her, glaring at Jett. Slowly, he shifted his body between them, blocking Jett from her. “That’s not it—”

“You should go,” Chris growled. “If you contact Abbie again, we’ll have a problem. Understand?”

Jett stared at her, his face pleading. But she couldn’t think past the whirring in her head. Jett had...nearly killed someone? *Killed* them?

The rational part of her mind told her there was more to the story. Even if she didn't know this about him, she knew him well enough to know he'd never do anything without a good reason.

But there was that time at the shop when he yelled at Wes and was cold to her because he thought she'd been cheating on him. So she knew he had a temper.

No.

No.

She wouldn't believe anything about him until she got the full story. But by the time she calmed down and looked around the room for him, he was already gone.

# thirty-three

. . .

Abbie stared at her phone clutched in her hand, rereading the texts she'd sent Jett over the last few days. Tears burned her eyes at the lack of response from him. Where was he? Was he okay?

She'd never felt so alone. So lost.

After he'd left and she was aware enough of her surroundings again, she'd sunk back into her chair, Chris at her side. He'd wrapped his arm around her, making sure she was okay, but she wasn't. She'd never be okay again, not if Jett wasn't in her life.

But then she'd heard her mother's shrill, condescending voice, and her sadness morphed into a fiery anger she'd never felt before. She'd been mad and upset with her mother, but this was different.

It was rage.

"I'm not surprised," her mother had said as she took a sip of her wine. "A man like him? It shouldn't be such a shock that he's a criminal, darling." Abbie had stared at her mother, her fingers turning white around the arms of her chair. "I'm sure he was...*skilled*," she looked over Abbie, her lips pressing into a thin line, "but he had no money. He had nothing. He wasn't someone you should've ever associated with."

"How did you two meet, anyway?" her father interrupted. "I'm sure he's not someone to frequent the museum, and I

doubt he's in college." Both he and her mother laughed at that.

"He could be," Abbie snapped. "He's smarter than anyone I've ever met. And kinder. And—and—and—"

"It's okay," Chris had soothed, running his hand down her back. It usually comforted her. It usually calmed her. But in that moment, it did nothing but infuriate her even more.

"He's not dangerous!" she'd shouted, and her mother's smile fell.

"Please, Abigail. You're causing a scene."

"He'd *never* hurt me—and if he hurt anyone, it was for a good reason." She was sure of that.

Her father's brow quirked. "Is there ever a good reason for hurting someone?"

"Yes," she ground out. Right then, for instance, would've been the best reason to stab someone in the neck with a fork.

A knocking pulled her from her thoughts and she blinked, the screen on her phone having gone dark again. She stared at her reflection in the glass and took a deep breath.

She didn't want to get up. Didn't want to move. Didn't want to do anything other than cuddle close to Jett, soak up his warmth, inhale his scent. But after the dinner, she'd driven by his house to find it dark and empty. Then she went to the park, but he wasn't there either.

She had no idea where he'd gone, and that was killing her more than anything. She just wanted to know he was safe.

More knocking sounded, and she swung her legs off the edge of her bed. Shuffling through the messy apartment, she made her way to the front door. Not bothering to look through the peep hole, she pulled the door open and stared up at her brother.

"What do you want?" she sighed, too tired to fight with him.

She was mad at him, too. The way he'd looked at Jett like he was a monster, the way he'd positioned himself between her and the love of her life...it wasn't right. Chris should've trusted her and her judgment enough to know she'd never be with someone who could hurt her.

"I come bearing gifts." He smiled tightly, lifting two brown paper bags up. Her eyes narrowed as she looked between them, then up at his face again. Then the smell hit her and her mouth watered.

"I'm only letting you in because you brought General Tso's. Otherwise, the door would be in your face." She glared at him to really emphasize her words.

"Trust me, I know," he said dryly. "It's getting cold. Can I come in?"

Stepping out of the way, she held the door open long enough for him to rush inside, not letting her change her mind. He set the takeout bags on the kitchen counter, shoving stuff to the side as he took the styrofoam containers out.

"I got enough for leftovers, since I'm assuming you haven't been eating." He sent her an accusatory look, but she just folded her arms over her chest.

"I had grilled cheese."

"It's been three days since I last saw you."

"I had chocolate too," she mumbled, pushing herself up onto the counter. She swung her legs back and forth, letting her heels slam into the cabinet below. Chris sighed and shook his head, going back to distributing the food. "Why are you here? I'm still mad at you."

She watched his throat bob, his eyes glued to the food inside the bag. Neither of them said anything, and tension grew in the little kitchen, suffocating her. Was she too harsh on him?

No, she wasn't. She had every right to be upset. Upset at her father for embarrassing Jett, and upset with her mother for gloating and being happy at her downfall, and Chris for...for choosing her parents over her.

Even if he'd been protecting her, in her parent's eyes, he'd sided with them. He thought Jett was bad, too, even though he was the furthest thing from it.

"I'm sorry," Chris finally said, his voice low and breathless. A lump formed in her throat as she stared at him. She tried to swallow past it, but it was hard. When was the last time she'd ever seen Chris look like this? Sad? And almost as lost as she felt?

"He's not a bad person," she muttered. "He's a good man. He's—he's everything to me." Chris shifted his head to look at her, his gaze burning her alive.

"You love him?"

"Very much." She said it without any hesitation. Maybe that was what made Chris believe her.

He let out a long breath, dropping his head forward as he gripped the edge of the counter. "General Tso's isn't the only reason I'm here," he finally said. "I found some information about your...friend." He glanced at her, and she glared at him.

"Boyfriend," she corrected, even though she wasn't sure about that anymore.

He cleared his throat as he nodded. "Right. Boyfriend." Scrubbing his hand over his jaw, he turned toward her. "I went to Dad's office and found the case files. I was also able to call and get the rest of the files from New York."

She went totally still. All the information was there. She could learn what really happened, but... "Have you already read it?" He hesitated before dipping his chin.

"I came to show you everything I found. Abbie, Jett's—"

"I don't want to know," she breathed, closing her eyes. "I want to hear it from him." Reading the files, coming to conclusions and learning about this huge part of himself felt wrong. It felt like she was betraying his trust. He hadn't told her for a reason. A reason that wasn't to hide it and manipulate her.

“You’re sure he didn’t know you were Dad’s daughter before you started a relationship?” he asked, and she shook her head.

“It would’ve been impossible for him to know.” She rubbed her forehead, feeling a headache coming on. “He had a reason for not telling me.” Chris searched her eyes, and whatever he saw there made him nod.

“I know you’re not a baby anymore,” he said suddenly, shocking her. “I know you’re a grown woman and can make your own decisions.”

“Chris—”

“Let me say this.” He held his hand up as he took a deep breath. “You know I’ve always protected you.”

“Understatement,” she said under her breath, and his lips twitched.

“But if I didn’t, who else would? Mom and Dad? They didn’t know if you were alive or dead half the time.” She winced at the words. He wasn’t wrong, but hearing it like that made her realize how awful her parents truly were. “But I wasn’t there a lot of the time, either.”

Abbie looked up at him, finding him staring intently at her. “I left you alone when I shouldn’t have. I should’ve taken better care of you—”

“Chris—” He shook his head, and she swallowed thickly.

“I was wrong to think I was protecting you,” he said, and she opened her mouth to argue, but he went on. “You’ve been protecting yourself all this time, squirt. It’s made me feel better to think it was me, but it wasn’t. You were the one who pulled yourself out of that place, not me. I didn’t even help you move your stuff out, for fuck’s sake.” She jolted at the curse. He rarely cursed, and when he did, she usually laughed. But right then, it wasn’t funny. Because right then, she realized he was right.

She’d protected herself her entire life. She’d saved herself.

“I should’ve trusted you to make the right decision,” he muttered. “I should’ve trusted that you’d only end up with a good man, not the man Dad tried to convince me Jett was.”

Hot tears blurred her vision, and she slipped off the counter. “You mean that?” She stayed close to the counter, watching him warily.

“I do,” he whispered. “I’m sorry.” Her chin wobbled, and she roughly wiped at her cheek.

It was like he couldn’t hold back anymore, because he grabbed her and wrapped her in his arms in the tightest bear hug he’d ever given her. She clung to him, letting herself break for the first time in days.

She’d cried, but not like this. She hadn’t let herself shatter so completely. “I don’t know where he is,” she sobbed. “I don’t know if he’s okay. Or if he’s—if he’s—” She couldn’t bring herself to say the words out loud.

What if he was dead?

She sobbed harder at the thought.

“What if he got into an accident while he was driving home? Or what if—”

“It’s okay,” Chris murmured, his breath tickling the top of her head. “Does he have any friends or family you can call?”

She almost said no, but then she paused. Wes.

Pulling away, she stared up at her brother. “I have to go.”

“Wait—what? Where?”

“Be right back.”

“Abbie!”

But she was already in the hallway and sprinting next door. She banged on the door. “Weston!” she shouted. “Let me in!” She was vaguely aware of Chris coming up to her side, looking uncomfortable as he watched her throw herself at the door, as if she could break it down. “Wes!”

The door flung open, and a half-naked Wes stood in front of her, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. “What the fuc— Abbie?” He immediately looked more alert as he scanned the hallway. As soon as he saw Chris, he wrapped an arm around her and pulled her closer. “You okay?”

“I don’t have time for this caveman bullfuzzies!” she cried, and both men paused.

“Caveman bullfuzzies?” Chris repeated, sounding strangled, but she ignored him.

“Wes, my bestest friend in the entire world—”

“Oh God, what do you want?” he groaned.

“Jett. Have you heard from him?” She stared up at him, hope swelling in her chest. He froze. His throat bobbed as he glanced at Chris. Then he cleared his throat.

He was about to lie.

“Nope.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “No?” His lips tipped down as he shook his head.

“Haven’t heard from him.”

“So, you haven’t seen him at work?”

“I mean, yeah, yeah. Of course I’ve seen him at the shop—”

“So, he’s been working then?” Chris asked as he stepped to her side. “He’s in town?”

Both she and Chris moved closer to Wes, cornering him against the wall. He looked so panicked, she nearly laughed. But then she shook herself. She could laugh later. Right now, she needed to interrogate this motherfluffer.

“So, you’ve seen him at work,” she said, slamming the front door shut.

“What—”

She pressed her hands to the center of his chest and shoved. He stumbled back a few steps, looking shocked as he

glanced at Chris.

“Hey!” She reached up and snapped her fingers in his face. “Don’t look at him. He’s not your friend. Look at me.” Wes’ eyes snapped back down to her. “Sit.” She pointed at the black leather recliner and Wes immediately sat.

“Wait. This is my house—”

“Where were you on the night of—” She paused. Wrong question. “Give me your phone.”

“My phone?”

“Abbie—”

“Phone!” she shouted, and Wes jumped up to grab his phone from the coffee table. She grinned to herself. She quite liked this—bossing someone around. Hm. Maybe she could convince Jett to be her servant for a while.

Not now, stupid brain. You have to find him first.

Wes hesitated before holding his phone out. “You’re not going to go through my pictures, are you?”

“What? No. Why would I? Wait. What do you have in there?” She excitedly grabbed his phone, but his fingers tightened.

“Nothing for you to see,” he huffed. “No pictures, Abbie-girl. Just call Jett.”

“How did you—”

“Oh, was I supposed to pretend I didn’t know why you wanted my phone?” He lifted his brow, and she rolled her eyes. “I’ll tell him about that.”

“Tattle-tell.” She stuck her tongue out at him, and Chris cleared his throat. “Right. Back to business.”

She waited impatiently as Wes unlocked his phone and brought Jett’s name up. She couldn’t help but laugh at the name—Giant Grumpy Bastard. It was fitting.

Her thumb hovered over the call button, and she looked up, her eyes flicking between the two men. “I can’t,” she

rasped. “What if he hangs up on me? Or worse—”

“He wants to talk to you,” Wes said quietly. “He’s been blowing me up all weekend, making sure you’re okay.”

“Really?” Chris slid his hand onto her back, soothing her. Wes nodded, and jerked his head at the phone.

“Call him, Abbie-girl. We’ll give you privacy.”

Chris looked reluctant, but she gave him a reassuring smile as she nodded. He followed Wes into his bedroom, and then she was alone. She stared at the call button, unsure if she should do it or not.

What if he rejected her?

Or what if he missed her as much as she missed him?

That made her find the courage to press *call*.

# thirty-four

. . .

Jett twisted the beer bottle in his hand as he stared at the TV. He wasn't really watching what was on it, not when his mind was on Abbie.

Was she okay? He hadn't been able to bring himself to text or call her back. He'd reread her messages a million times, typed out a response just as many times, but never felt brave enough to hit *send*.

He'd done this, ruined their relationship. Again.

And he loathed himself for it. He should've been honest with her from the beginning. Even if she told him she wasn't upset, he knew she would be when she found out the whole story.

He brought the bottle to his lips and took a deep drink. The other night, when she'd looked at him like she was scared, that had been his undoing. His final straw. He couldn't handle seeing her look at him like that, couldn't handle the rest of her family looking at him with triumph. But he couldn't blame her father for any of it. It had been his fault, his decision to keep this from her, and he shouldn't have.

He'd had so many opportunities to tell her the truth, and he'd chosen not to. Not because he didn't trust her, but because he loved her. Loved her too much to lose her. And maybe that was selfish and manipulative of him, but he hadn't cared.

Now he did.

Now he wished he would've just told her.

He sighed as he looked around, taking in the floor-to-ceiling windows and bustling New York streets beyond. He hated the city. After he'd gotten out, he'd promised himself to never come back.

Of course, he'd broken that promise to himself a few times since Beck lived here. He couldn't not visit his brother. But he never went to Brooklyn, never ventured to their old stomping grounds. He stayed in and around Beck's apartment.

Which was where he was now. While Beck was off traveling the world, he was holed up in the apartment, drinking himself sick. Or trying to.

The first night, he'd driven straight here. He hadn't even realized where he was going until he was standing in the massive apartment. So, he raided the bar and drank himself stupid. It had taken all he had not to drunk call Abbie.

Then the next day, he was too hungover to drive hours back home, so he did the only thing he could think of: drink some more. It wasn't until this morning that he'd decided to lay off the hard liquor and switch to beer. He needed to get sober eventually—he couldn't hide out here forever.

Even if it would be easier.

His phone vibrated, and he ignored it. It was probably a notification that his food had been delivered. But then it vibrated again, and didn't stop.

Sighing, he grabbed it. Looking at the screen, he saw Wes' name. Why was he calling? Dread pooled in his stomach. If something had happened to Abbie, he'd never forgive himself.

Pressing answer, he brought the phone to his ear. "Is she okay?"

Silence greeted him, and instead of getting more annoyed, his anxiety grew. If Wes wasn't immediately busting his balls, it meant something was terribly wrong. Fuck.

“Is Abbie okay?” he asked again, and a choked sound came from the other end of the phone. He paused, his mouth going dry. That sound...he knew that sound. Hesitating, he rasped, “Abbie?”

“Jett.” Her voice came out in a soft whimper, like she was scared to say it. He squeezed his burning eyes shut, pinching between them.

“Where’s Wes? Why do you have his phone?”

“Because you wouldn’t answer me on mine.”

Okay, that was fair.

He sighed, unsure of where to start. How did he apologize? Worse even, how did he end things with her? He thought when her father dropped that bomb she wouldn’t want anything to do with him anymore. But her messages to him have said otherwise.

There’s no way she truly meant it, though. As long as he was with her, he knew her family would be in her ear constantly reminding her of how big of a mistake he was.

“Are you okay?” she asked quietly.

The question caught him off guard, and he cleared his throat. “Are you?”

She huffed out a choked laugh, sniffing hard. “No,” she said truthfully. He inhaled sharply, his stomach twisting. He should’ve known that’s what she was going to say, but it still made him hate himself even more knowing he was the reason she wasn’t okay.

“I’m not either,” he admitted, glancing at the beer bottle in his hand.

“Where are you? I’ve been looking for you, but—”

“I’m in New York.”

More silence.

“New York?” she repeated warily.

“At my brother’s place.”

He didn't know why he was being so short with her. Was he protecting her or himself? Both, maybe. He didn't want either of them to get hurt. But it was too late for that, wasn't it?

"Oh." She sounded sad. Broken. And why wouldn't she be? He'd done that to her. He'd broken her, broken them.

"Look," he sighed, not wanting to say the words that were about to come from his lips. "I think it's best if—"

"You're not breaking up with me," she blurted. His mouth stayed open, but nothing came out. Not a breath. Not a word. He was too shocked at her fierce, final tone to do anything. "When are you coming back home?"

He didn't have an answer for that. He didn't know, and if he was being totally honest, he didn't know if he wanted to. He couldn't handle living in the same town as her, knowing she was only blocks away from him. He knew being so close to her, yet not being able to see her, to touch her, to love her, would slowly kill him.

But would being somewhere else, somewhere further away, really be better? He honestly didn't know what would be worse. Either way, he knew she'd be constantly on his mind.

"I don't know," he finally said, his voice thick. His eyes burned, and he roughly rubbed one then the other with the heel of his palm.

"I'll be here." Her voice sounded strong, stronger than he'd ever heard before, and a part of him was proud of her for it. Another part hated that she felt she had to be strong. Whether for his sake or hers, he didn't know. "But, um..."

There she was.

"Well..."

She sounded softer, more shy now, and his curiosity piqued. "What is it, pr—" He cut himself off before he could call her pretty girl. Pain shot through his chest. Fuck, he missed her so much.

“Well, my stuffies are at your house, and I can’t get in,” she muttered. “I haven’t been sleeping well without Ottie—”

“Fuck,” he breathed, scrubbing his hand over his face. How much more of a bastard could he be? “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” she said quickly. “I just—I wanted Ottie, and Sealy—”

“I’ll be home tomorrow.” He’d give her her stuffies, then head back to New York, or maybe he’d go to some secluded cabin to wallow in his self-loathing a bit longer.

She was silent for a few long moments. “I miss you, Daddy,” she whispered, and it felt like she’d ripped his heart out and stomped on it.

“I miss you too, pretty girl.” His voice was choked, nearly inaudible as he spoke. “But—”

“No buts.”

“Abbie,” he sighed, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his knees. “You don’t want someone like me. You want someone else—someone with money, and without a record. Someone—”

“Don’t tell me what I want,” she said firmly, and his brows rose. “I want you. Only you. Stop being such a stubborn rat.” Despite himself, a smile spread across his face.

“A stubborn rat?” he repeated, unable to keep the humor out of his voice.

“A big, old stubborn rat. Stop being one. Or I’ll—I’ll—”

“You’ll, what?”

“I’ll spank you!”

He couldn’t hold the laugh in this time. God, he missed her so fucking much. Slowly, his smile fell, and sadness bloomed again. He didn’t know what he’d do without her.

“I don’t think this is a good idea anymore,” he muttered. She didn’t say anything, and his throat tightened.

“That’s such bullfuzzies.”

He blinked. “What?”

“Bull. Fuzzies.”

He could almost see her stomp her foot and cross her arms. But this wasn't a conversation she could cut her way out of. Even if she thought he was what she wanted, he wasn't. Not really. She was defying her parents, but one day, and he thought it would be soon, she'd realize she liked the life of luxury they'd provided her and she'd want that. And then she'd go back to them and marry some respectable man, and he'd just be some guy from her past. A fun time in her early twenties while she figured out who she was.

“You don't love me anymore?” she asked, and the hurt in her voice gutted him.

“Of course, I do. But—”

“And I love you,” she interrupted. “It's not so hard.”

“But it is.” He took a deep breath. “Your parents will never approve of me. And I'll never be rich enough to give you the life you're used to—”

“In case you haven't noticed, I live in a little, run-down apartment. I'd hardly say I'm used to much.”

“The way you grew up, in that house—”

“That prison.”

“I'd never be able to give it to you.”

“Who said I even wanted a life like that?” He paused at the words. She hadn't ever said it, hadn't ever even implied it, but...

But that's what Mandy had wanted. Money. Fuck, sometimes even he wanted it. But he was fine with a subpar house, subpar car, subpar life for himself. But for Abbie? She deserved so much more.

“Who said I want to live in a sterile home? Or hire people to clean for me, or have a million cars that cost way too much, or—” She cut herself off with a deep breath. “I don't want any

of that. I just want to paint. And I want you. That's it. That's all I want in life."

He let her words sink in. He guessed he'd never truly asked her before, and hearing her words eased something inside him. But doubts still played in his mind. What if she changed her mind one day?

"Just..." her voice broke as she trailed off. "Just don't say no yet, okay? Promise me you'll think about what I said, not what you think I'll want. I know you want what's best for me, but you're what's best."

How could she say that when she didn't even know the whole truth? When she didn't know what all he'd done?

"You don't know everything," he rasped. "And after you do, you won't want anything to do with me."

"Why don't you let me decide that?" she said softly. "Tell me tomorrow, when you're home."

Yeah, he thought that was probably a good idea too. That way he could read her face and know if she was lying or not. Even though he didn't want to have this conversation, it was for the best.

"Okay," he said, his voice raspy. "Tomorrow."

# thirty-five

. . .

The wooden porch creaked as she paced back and forth, her hands twisting together in front of her. She hadn't been able to sleep last night, too anxious about seeing Jett today, so she decided to come to his house as soon as she saw the first slivers of the sun.

Abbie had been too nervous to call or text him, so she'd just stared at her phone all day, waiting for him to call first. He never did. But with the sun high overhead, she was starting to wonder if he wasn't coming home today after all. He'd have to come home eventually, and when he did, she'd be on this porch waiting for him, but when would that be?

Gravel crunched and she whirled around, her hands reaching out for the banister to steady herself. She stared at his truck as he crept toward the house, and even though she couldn't see his face through the tinted window, she imagined him with a stoney expression, like he usually had when he drove.

His truck stopped in the driveway, right behind her little car. She felt like she was going to throw up, and she pressed her hands into her belly. She could feel his eyes on her, staring at her, watching her. No matter how much she wanted to run to him, she couldn't move. Her legs didn't seem to work anymore.

The front door swung open, and a long leg appeared, his booted foot landing heavily on the ground. Then the other came into view, then he was there, standing at his full height,

his broad shoulders straight and shirt tight across his biceps and chest.

God, she'd missed him.

She shuffled forward a small step, the banister still guarding her from taking off in a full sprint to him. She just wanted to be wrapped up in his arms, wanted to feel his lips against hers, feel his body slide against hers.

He hesitated, still standing beside his truck. They stared at each other, the air thick between them. Then he started moving.

Each step was quicker than the last, like he couldn't contain himself as he hurried across the lawn to her. He stopped in front of her, his hands at his sides, his chest heaving. Her head tipped all the way back, and finally, their eyes met.

"Hi," she breathed, and he let out a long breath, his lips barely tipping up in a smile.

"Hi," he said. She wanted to touch him, but would wait until he made the first move. "You're here already."

"I missed you!" she wanted to scream at him, but she twisted her lips to the side instead, trying to keep the words in.

"You wanna come in?" He awkwardly threw his thumb over his shoulder toward the front door and she nodded eagerly. He stayed staring at her for another long moment before he turned and unlocked the front door, shoving it open and stepping aside so she could enter first.

It smelled the same, looked the same, but felt different. Instead of feeling like coming home, she felt like a guest. An unwelcome one. He flicked the lights on, bathing the open layout in a golden glow. She clasped her hands together, squeezing tight to keep from shaking.

It did nothing to help with the threat of a panic attack clawing at her chest, the restlessness in her legs as she tried to stay still instead of fidget. She didn't know what to say, where to start, what to do. So she did nothing. Said nothing.

She kept her back to him, staring at the kitchen table where she'd abandoned her art project before getting ready for dinner with her family. Had she known that would've been the end of everything, the worst night of her entire life, she would've cleaned up more. She would've done things differently.

She would've never agreed to dinner in the first place.

That was the thing she was most upset at herself about. Why had she agreed? She knew her mother was awful, and her father, while usually passive, could be just as bad. She guessed she hoped Chris would be the saving grace of the night, like he usually was. But she could've never foreseen what had happened, happening.

With a deep breath, she turned around, finding Jett with his back against the wall, watching her carefully. He kept his face neutral, not giving anything away.

“How was the drive?” she asked, her voice raspy. He cleared his throat roughly and shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

“Good.”

They were less awkward the first time they met.

“I don't—”

“How have you—”

They spoke at the same time, and she laughed. Waving her hand at him, she said, “You go first.”

He smiled softly, his eyes gentle. “How have you been?”

“Oh, I've been...” She nearly lied and said she was fine. “Not great.” His smile fell, the lightness in his eyes dimming as he dropped his head forward.

“Yeah, me too.”

“Can we just skip all of this?” she blurted, feeling her face redden. He glanced up at her, his brow raising in that way that made her knees go weak.

“Skip what?”

“Skip the awkwardness. The small talk. Can we just...” She waved her arms around helplessly. “Go back to how it was before.”

“You know we can’t,” he muttered.

Her shoulders dropped. Yeah, she knew they couldn’t, but she wanted to. Desperately.

“Then let’s talk and get past all this.”

Jett looked guarded as he pushed off the wall, jerking his chin toward the sofa. Her legs felt like jell-o as she walked toward it, each step wobbly and unsure. She felt his gaze on her the entire way, watching as she sank onto the end of the couch, curling herself into the corner.

He made his way to the other end, seemingly trying to make himself as small as he could. She wanted to reach for him, wanting to feel his rough, warm hand around hers. But she didn’t. Instead, she gripped her hands tighter, settling them in her lap.

“I don’t know what to say,” he breathed, running his hand over his head. “Where to start.”

“From the beginning, maybe.” His eyes shifted to her, and she gave him what she hoped was an encouraging smile.

He cleared his throat and settled more into the couch, getting comfortable. “It was about fifteen years ago,” he began. “Beck and I were living in this shitty apartment in Brooklyn. We’d grown up in New York, but had always lived in Queens. But when he was a kid we learned he had a real talent for playing guitar. So, I did everything I could to get him to lessons. Then he got older, and he started auditioning for bands.

“When he was nineteen, we moved to Brooklyn. I couldn’t stand living around our family anymore. They were dragging him down, making him feel like a joke because he wanted to pursue his dreams. So, we packed up and moved. Anyway, one day, we were rushing through Manhattan to get him to this club so he could audition for a band—Roxy’s band. She was

just starting out, and needed a guitarist. I promised that I'd get him there."

She didn't dare make a move or sound as she listened to him speak. He wasn't with her anymore, he was lost to the memories.

"I'd spent our rent on this guitar for him—nicest thing I'd ever seen. Most expensive thing I'd ever bought, or held. I almost didn't do it, but he needed something nice, something memorable for that audition. I had a good feeling about it, so I bit the bullet and bought it. We were rushing through the streets, dodging people left and right. Then I had the brilliant idea to go down an alley. I don't know why. It was fucking stupid

"We almost made it out when these guys came out of nowhere. They saw the guitar case, saw how Beck was dressed and thought—I don't know what they thought. I don't know if they thought we had money, or if they just wanted to mess with us. I don't know. But one of them hit my brother, and he let go of his guitar and when it hit the dirty ground, it was like something snapped."

He turned toward her, his eyes red. "I snapped, Abbie. The man who'd hit Beck—I started with him. I beat the shit out of him, all the while screaming at Beck to take his guitar and make it to that audition. But he didn't want to leave me. So he fought one of the other guys until I took over.

"It was so bad they were nothing but bloody heaps by the time I was done with them. Then we saw these people at the end of the alley watching. I grabbed the guitar, shoved it in his hand and told him to run. Told him to go to that audition and make it. And he did. Then I was arrested, and, well, you know the rest."

Jett looked more vulnerable than she'd ever seen him before. He looked raw and open, but also like he was scared of her response.

"So, you did it for your brother?" she said quietly. He swallowed thickly as he nodded. "You didn't do it because you're a monster, or any of the other stuff my father said."

“But he was right,” he said, his voice tight. “I was a monster. The things I did—” He shook his head, cutting himself off.

“Did you enjoy it?”

His expression turned horrified as he stared at her. “What? Did I—did—”

“Did you enjoy it? Beating those men up?”

“Of course not.” He shook his head firmly, still looking at her like he thought she was crazy. It was a look she was more than used to.

“Then you’re not a monster.”

He blinked. “But I did something awful—”

“For your brother.”

“I hurt people.”

“For your brother.” He just stared at her and she sighed. “You didn’t do it for some malicious reason. You did it to protect Beck. You did it so he could have a good life. Do you regret it?”

He hesitated like he was weighing his words, then he let out a long breath. “No,” he admitted. “If I hadn’t done it, Beck wouldn’t have made it to that audition and he wouldn’t be where he is now.”

“You did it to protect someone, not because you wanted to do it. I knew you had a reason for whatever you did. I knew you’d never do it just for the fun of it. You’re a protector, Jett.”

His throat bobbed as he swallowed thickly. He stared at her like he was letting her words sink in.

“No one’s called me that before,” he admitted, his voice barely audible. “I’ve always been a monster. Too big. Too scary. Too intimidating. Never a protector.” Her heart broke at that confession. She scooted closer, still not touching him but wanting him to feel her comfort.

“It’s why I feel so safe with you,” she told him honestly. His jaw clenched, like he was trying to hold in his emotions.

“I’ve always felt safe with you. You’ve never scared me—maybe a bit at the shop, but it was just the yelling, not you.”

“I’m so sorry,” he rasped. “I’m so fucking sorry, baby. I’ll never be able to apologize enough for that.”

“It’s okay,” she said, her hand sliding against the couch until her fingertips rested against the side of his hand. “It’s okay.”

He didn’t look like he believed her, and she knew it would take time and a lot of work before he started seeing himself as anything other than what he’d always been told he was. But she’d do it—she’d make him see himself the way she saw him.

“Do you still want to be with me?” she asked quietly, unsure if she wanted to hear the answer.

“You still want to be with me?”

“More than anything.” His eyes flicked between hers, like he was weighing the words, seeing if there was any truth to them. Whatever he saw in her face must’ve convinced him, because he slid his hand over hers and squeezed.

She couldn’t take it anymore, she leaned closer and pressed her lips to his. He was stiff for a moment, unsure, then she ran her tongue along the seam of his lips and it snapped him out of it.

Jett took control, like he always did, and she melted into him. Gripping her waist, he pulled her to his lap, and she spread her legs wide to straddle him. His hands dropped to her ass, groping her as he kissed her deeper.

She whimpered into his mouth, grinding against the hardness growing in his jeans. “I love you,” she whispered between kisses, and his grip tightened.

“I love you.”

“Tell me you’re never leaving again,” she breathed. “I thought I was going to die without you.”

Yeah, it was dramatic, but she was dramatic.

“I won’t leave again.” He rested his forehead against hers, and she wrapped her arms around his neck. “You really want this? Want me? Because if we do this, there’s no going back.”

“I’ve been all in since the moment you messaged me,” she told him. The corner of his mouth tucked up in a small grin.

“Yeah?”

She nodded, her forehead sliding against his. “I told my parents off,” she blurted. His eyes widened and he pulled away, but kept his grip on her ass.

“You did?”

“I told them I never wanted to talk to them again.” She didn’t know how it worked, but she’d give up her inheritance, too. She wanted nothing to do with them ever again.

“But—”

“I didn’t like the way they treated you.” He searched her eyes again, his lips parting like he couldn’t believe it.

“You’re incredible,” he breathed, then shook his head. “But I can’t ask you to cut your family off for me.”

“You didn’t ask.” He sighed and opened his mouth to say something, but she spoke before he could. “I did it because I wanted to. I did it because I chose you, Jett. I always will.” His jaw flexed, his Adam’s apple bobbing.

He closed his eyes, breathing deeply for a moment. His hands flexed, and he pulled her closer. The look on his face made her heart squeeze, and she wrapped her arms tighter around him. Gently, she leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the tip of his nose.

“I love you,” he rasped. “Fuck, I love you.”

She grinned as she kissed him again, waiting until he took control again. It didn’t take long for him to flip her onto her back on the couch. Her chest heaved as she stared up at him, her legs wrapped around his waist.

Leaning forward, he nipped at her lips as his hands slid down her body to her jeans. Effortlessly, he unbuttoned and

took them off, letting them fall to the floor.

“I choose you, too,” he said, kneeling and resting her legs on his shoulders. “Always will.”

She reached out, running her fingers through his short dark hair. “Just you and me.”

“And Ottie and Sealy and—”

“And all the stuffies, yes,” she interrupted, scooting further down. She wiggled her hips, silently begging. He huffed out a laugh and ran his hand between her legs. A gasp left her as she arched her back, letting her legs fall open wider. But this isn't what she wanted. She didn't want to play. She just wanted him inside her, fucking her until she couldn't remember her own name.

Reaching for him, she gripped his shirt. “What is it?” He leaned closer, worry creasing his brow. Her lips crashed against his until they were both breathless. Slowly, he pulled away, staring at her.

“Please just fuck me, Daddy,” she breathed, and his eyes darkened.

“That's what you want?”

“Please.” She wasn't above begging—she'd probably do nothing but beg him for this for the rest of her life. And she was totally okay with that.

Hands moving to his belt, he undid it and his jeans, wasting no time as he shoved them down his strong legs. Instead of taking her panties off like a normal person, he gripped the flimsy fabric and ripped it, leaving the waistband secured around her waist, but a gaping hole exposed her to him.

He rested one hand on her thigh while the other wrapped around his thick cock. He roughly stroked himself as he guided his cock to her entrance. A trail of spit left his lips, landing on her pussy. The blunt head of his dick rubbed against her clit, spreading his spit toward her opening as he pushed inside.

It burned as he stretched her, but she welcomed it, was desperate for it, and spread her legs wider. His hands moved to her shirt, and he roughly lifted it before yanking her bra down, exposing her breasts. A big, warm hand covered her breast, and his thumb ran over her peaked nipple as the other rested on her lower stomach.

“Feel me stretching you?” he ground out. She could do nothing but nod and breathe heavily as he slowly slid all the way in, only stopping once his body was pressed flush against hers. “God, I missed this.”

“Me too,” she breathed, bunching her hands into tight fists at her sides. “Hard. Fast. Please.”

He let out a breathy chuckle as he pulled back, then slid forward again, not quite hard or fast enough. Shifting his hand, he rested his thumb on her clit, not rubbing, not doing anything but pressing on it.

“Who’s in charge, baby?” he asked quietly, his body vibrating with restraint.

“You are, Daddy.”

“We’ll go at my pace, understand?” She wanted to roll her eyes, wanted to tell him exactly what she thought of that, but was a good girl and nodded, batting her lashes up at him.

Her body was on fire, her nerves alight with pleasure, and she forgot everything except for the hot thrust

He smirked, obviously pleased by her submission. “That’s my good little girl,” he whispered, punctuating the end of the sentence with a swift, firm smack on her breast. She gasped, not expecting it. It wasn’t bad—actually, she really freaking liked it and wanted him to do it again.

This time, he thrust into her with more force, forcing a soft cry from her lips. His hand continued to rub circles around her clit, sending an electric current of pleasure through her body. As he moved, the pace quickened, his breaths becoming more ragged, and she felt her own pleasure rising to match his.

“You like that, don’t you?” he growled, his voice low and seductive. “You love having me in control.” She could only

nod, her voice caught in her throat as he continued to pound into her, their bodies moving together in a perfect rhythm. “Say it. Tell me you love when I fuck you. Tell me you love having Daddy dominate you.”

“I love it,” she gasped, her words barely audible. “I love when you dominate me, Daddy. Please don’t stop.”

He smirked, his eyes dark and hungry. “You’re a dirty girl, aren’t you?” He moved his hands to her hips, and she moaned as he adjusted the angle, hitting a spot deep inside her that made her toes curl.

“Harder, Daddy,” she pleaded, her words hanging in the air between them. “Fuck me harder, please.”

He laughed, a low, throaty sound that sent shivers down her spine. “Anything for my little slut,” he growled, and with that, he increased his rhythm, slamming into her so hard, she swore she could see stars.

Her back arched off the couch, her nails digging into her palms as her orgasm washed over her in waves. He continued fucking into her, his eyes never leaving hers. She could feel a second orgasm building, and she knew it would be even more intense than the first.

“Fuck!” he roared, his body shaking with the force of his release. She moved her hand to her clit, rubbing furiously as he slammed into her one last time before collapsing on top of her, his breaths ragged and uneven.

She felt him spill into her as her pussy contracted around him, milking his cum from his thick cock as aftershocks coursed through her body. Finally, she dropped against the couch again, her breath hitching as she felt him soften inside her. She loved the way he filled her, the way he owned her. And she knew she would do anything, anything at all, to have him do it again.

“I love you,” he said again, pressing a kiss to the center of her chest. Suddenly, his eyes lifted, meeting hers, and the weight of whatever he was about to say made her hold onto him even tighter. “And thank you for choosing me.”

# epilogue

. . .

Six Months Later

Abbie chewed on her bottom lip as she shifted her weight from one foot to the other, wringing her hands together in front of her. “What if she hates it?” she said again. Jett’s hands landed on her shoulders, and he dug into the tight muscles.

“She won’t.”

“But what if—”

“She won’t,” he said again, more firmly. Yeah, she wasn’t so sure about that. What did he know about art anyway? Nothing.

Well, that wasn’t true. She’d taught him a lot, and surprisingly, he’d retained most of it. He still couldn’t draw to save his life, but he understood it. Mostly.

Leaning down, he pressed a kiss to the top of her head. Footsteps sounded from somewhere in the massive house, and she brushed him away. Now was not the time for PDA, she had to be professional. Even if Roxy and the guys watched her nearly cry at losing Candyland last night, that was different. She wasn’t in business mode last night. Right now, she was.

She had to be a total boss. And bosses boyfriend’s didn’t kiss them to calm their nerves. No, bosses just didn’t have nerves because they knew they were bosses.

Jesus, that was starting to sound like a fake word.

She shook herself as Beck strolled closer, his hands in the front pockets of his dark jeans. He gave her one of his famous

lazy grins, his dark, messy hair pushed away from his face.

“You ready?”

“Yeah,” she lied, her voice high-pitched. “Totally ready.”

“She’s about to puke, she’s so nervous,” Jett grumbled, and she turned to glare up at him. How dare he?

“Watch it,” she growled. “Sharing secrets is not nice.” He just stared back at her, his brow raised. He loved doing that, and she had a sneaking suspicion because he knew how weak it made her.

Not now. He could make her knees weak later. Probably from a mind-blowing orgasm and not from lifting his brow, but she’d take what she could get.

“Want me to call her in here?” Beck asked, flicking his hazel eyes from her to his older brother. She chewed on her lip again. Maybe she shouldn’t have agreed to this. It was a stupid mistake.

Jett reached down and pulled her lip free, running his thumb along the abused flesh. “You ready, pretty girl?” he murmured.

Was she ready?

No.

She’d never be ready.

Maybe she could run and hide before Roxy saw it. That way she wouldn’t have to see the utter disappointment in her face. Yeah, that was a good idea.

But before she could make a run for it, Beck shouted over his shoulder, “Roxy!”

Her face burned, and her chest tightened with more anxiety, as if that was even possible. But it did. So much she thought she was having a heart attack instead of a panic attack. Could a panic attack lead to a heart attack? She didn’t know. Didn’t really want to find out.

She wouldn’t have to find out if she hid really fast. “If you’ll excuse me—” She turned to sprint away, and slammed

straight into Jett's solid chest. "Let me go past you."

"No."

"But I have to potty," she lied, dancing around. He just stared at her. "Okay, not that. I need Ottie. It's his snack time."

"He can have a snack later."

"But if he waits, he gets low blood sugar. And you know how he gets when that happens." She twirled her finger in a circle by her temple, widening her eyes. His lips twitched, but otherwise, his face stayed blank. How did he do that? She'd have to ask him for lessons.

"Later."

"But Sealy—"

"Is fine," Jett said, his voice calm. How was he so calm? She was freaking out!

"Do you hear that?" She cupped her hand around her ear. "I think that's Ottie calling for me."

"I don't hear anything."

"Hm. That's weird. I definitely hear him—"

"I do too," a cool voice said from behind her.

*Roxy.*

She dramatically gulped, and Jett grinned as he put his hands on her shoulders and spun her around to face the famous rockstar. Her hair, not blue anymore, but pink, was twisted in two buns on top of her head. They'd been at Roxy's estate for two days, and being around her still hadn't gotten easier. Being around any of the guys hadn't gotten easier.

"Ottie can hang out with Sir Hugglesworth later," she said. Abbie still couldn't believe that Roxy—the Roxy Bandera—had a stuffie, too. But she did, and he was the cutest little guy ever.

"He'd like that," Abbie said shyly, digging the toe of her sneaker into the hardwood floor. Roxy grinned before turning toward the tarp-covered canvas.

“Now, what’s this?” She looked toward Beck, who smiled indulgently at her, then at Abbie.

“It’s, um...it’s...”

“It’s my birthday gift to you,” Beck said casually.

“Is it?” She stayed staring at Abbie. She didn’t know what to say, or what to do with her hands. Why were hands so freaking awkward? They just hung there, doing nothing. “You okay?” Roxy grabbed her arm, and Abbie jolted.

*Stop being such a weirdo.*

“I, well—Beck—he—”

“Beck hired Abbie to paint you something,” Jett said, cutting her off.

“Really?” Roxy beamed at her. “I’m obsessed with the pieces of yours Beck has shown me. You’re so talented.”

Abbie’s face flushed. “You think so?”

“Oh yeah. I think all my friends would love your work, too. If you’re ever open to selling them—”

“Let’s just see if you like this piece first,” Abbie muttered.

Jett’s hands returned to her shoulders. His breath was warm as he leaned down, whispering, “No putting yourself down, little girl.”

“I wasn’t.” She glanced up at him, but he just hummed in a way that told her he didn’t believe her in the slightest.

“I’m excited!” Roxy clapped her hands together, bouncing on the balls of her feet. “Can you take that cover off? I wanna see it!” Beck laughed under his breath, sounding so much like Jett Abbie had to look over her shoulder at him to make sure he hadn’t been the one to do it.

Her stomach was in knots as Beck gripped the cover. His eyes met hers, a wider grin spreading as he yanked on it. The cream-colored fabric fell to the floor, pooling along the baseboard.

Then there it was. Her painting.

She took a deep breath as she stared at it, at the strokes of colors, the highlights and shadows—everything that made it up. It was...better than she remembered. Probably her best work ever.

It was an overgrown garden, flowing with all of Roxy's favorite flowers and plants. Bees buzzed, birds chirped—well, she imagined they did that inside the painting. There was a stone path that led to a small pond, and there, crouched beside it running her fingers through the water, was Roxy.

Not Roxy Bandera the rockstar, but Roxy the woman. Roxy the human. She didn't wear her bright makeup or skin-tight clothes. Instead, she wore something similar to what she was wearing now. A loose-fitting dress that swayed around her knees, and she was barefoot.

Her bandmates stood in various places around the painted garden, all facing her, all watching over her. Beck had told her they were like a family, and they all loved Roxy more than life itself. When he'd told her that, she knew she had to add them all to the painting.

She knew Roxy's paradise wouldn't be complete without her men. It was a surprise even to Beck, and he stumbled back a step, his lips parting as he stared at it.

When no one said anything and the silence stretched on longer than she would've liked, she cleared her throat, shifting uncomfortably. But Jett's hands were a comforting weight on her shoulders, grounding her. Kind of.

She still wanted to bolt and hide, but watching Roxy and Beck take everything in made her smile. She didn't think they hated it, not with the way Roxy swatted at her eyes and Beck wrapped his arm around her.

"It's beautiful," she breathed, still staring at the garden. Jett's hands tightened encouragingly, and Abbie smiled up at him. She'd never seen him look so proud. "You really painted this?" Roxy turned toward her, her eyes red and cheeks blotchy.

“I did,” she said softly. “I—um—I know we didn’t talk about adding people—”

“It’s perfect,” Beck interrupted, looking at her. “Perfect, Abs. Thank you.”

A smile curved her lips and she dropped her gaze to the ground. She was still freaking out that her work would be hanging in Roxy’s house for any and everyone to see. But she was proud of it—despite thinking she’d panicked herself into a heart attack.

Roxy threw her arms around Abbie and hugged her close. Jett let her go just enough to hug the other woman, squeezing tightly. “Happy birthday,” she said, and Roxy let out a breathy laugh.

She pulled away, keeping her hands on Abbie’s shoulders. “I hope you know you’re about to be working nonstop.” She tilted her head, confused. “Once everyone sees this, they’re all going to want their own pieces by you.”

“Oh, I doubt that.” Abbie waved her off, smiling shyly. But Roxy’s hands tightened, not letting her go.

“I mean it,” she said firmly. “Take a deep breath, because your career is about to blow up.”

She stared at Roxy for a long moment, then she let go and moved to Beck. They stared at the painting together, pointing out things they hadn’t noticed before. Turning, she looked up at Jett.

“Hear that, pretty girl?” he murmured, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her closer. “You’re about to blow up.”

A mix of excitement and anxiety twisted her stomach. She didn’t know if it would even happen, and even if it didn’t, she was just happy someone thought her art was good enough to blow up.

She smiled up at Jett, and he brushed her hair away from her face. “Think you can handle that?” she teased.

“When it comes to you, I can handle anything.”

She wrapped her arms around his broad waist and rested her head on his chest. His hold on her tightened, and he leaned down, pressing another long kiss to the top of her head.

“Don’t know what I did to get so lucky.”

“You answered an ad on Gregslist,” she told him, and she felt him smile against her hair. “Love you.”

“Love you, pretty girl.”

THE END

**the end**

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