



Silver **FOX**

A VALENTINE'S DAY NOVELLA

STEVIE SPARKS

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This book is a work of fiction. Any names, characters, places, and incidents are either a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual people living or dead is entirely coincidental.

Cover design: Yoly at Cormar Covers

Dedication

For those readers who, like me, use the search function before starting a book to ensure they don't get tricked into reading a clean romance. Stay smutty, queens.

Pussy: 17

Cock: 34

Cunt: 11

Nipple: 4

Dick: 3

Tits: 1

Fuck: 77 (maybe I should have calmed down on this one)

Shit: 15

Ass: 25

Arse: 0 (cries in British)

Cock Piercings: 6

Siamese Cat: 1

Trigger Warnings

What triggers are **not** in the book?

There is no mention or appearance of abortion, attempted rape, baby loss, cat death, child abuse, childbirth, claustrophobia, dog death, drug abuse, dub-con, guns, homophobia, incest, miscarriage, misgendering, needles, paedophilia, prostitution, racism, rape, self-harm, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, slavery, stillbirth, suicide, terminal illness, torture, transphobia, or war.

MAJOR SPOILERS BELOW



What triggers **are** in the book?

Silver Fox includes the FMC (female main character) walking in on her boyfriend cheating on her (and then

proceeding to dump him). After this, she meets the MMC (male main character).

There is also a scene where the FMC is tracked, as well as a scene in which her ex shoves her against the wall and puts his hand around her neck. The MMC quickly steps in. There is also another scene where her ex is verbally abusing her over the phone (including for her weight). Again, this is brief. *Silver Fox* focuses on the FMC loving and accepting herself for who she is, not the fatphobia her ex spews at her.

Skye

When I open the door to my apartment after a shitty day at work, the last thing I expected was to make direct eye contact with some random woman's asshole.

Or to see my boyfriend lapping at her pussy just below.

Strangely, the only thought that came to my head was *I bought the fucking couch they're 69ing on.*

The pain came after, little knives hitting me just as the sound of the woman *gawk gawk gawking* over Brett's cock filled my apartment.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I hiss, my voice blazing with barely restrained fury.

Realizing he and the woman were no longer alone, Brett rolls off the couch, vaulting the woman onto the floor in a tumble of limbs. He stares up at me, with all the elegance of a surprised gopher.

My keys jingle as I deposit them onto the kitchen bench, sucking down a few breaths to steady myself. Bryaxis, my

little Siamese idiot, winds himself around my ankles, and I bend to collect him in my arms.

Why does it upset me so much more that Axi had to witness this?

And then I see the woman's face, and my heart *shatters*.

"Sara?" I croak, swallowing down the rush of emotion clawing up my throat. My shoulders judder in their attempt to keep everything in, to not break down in front of the two people before me.

My sister stares back at me, and she has the gall to look just as shocked and broken as I do. The only family I have left. "Skye," her lashes flicker as they blink furiously. "It's not what it looks like."

I laugh, but it's so high I think the windows might shatter. "Oh I'm sorry, was he checking you for a *fucking hemorrhoid*?"

And then I realize, without a doubt, that this is the worst day of my life.

The worst day of your life so far, that stupid Simpsons meme reminds me.

"Skye," Brett begins, holding his discarded boxers in front of his groin. "Fuck, Skye, I can explain—"

Three years.

Three years of my fucking life I wasted on this prick. I supported him through everything. I supported him through his

drinking, his anger issues, his insecurity. I worked extra shifts to pay for his community college. I even paid for his goddamn anger management therapy, and for what?

So he could turn me down in bed this morning only to fuck my sister this afternoon.

That's when I realize what's around me. It's early in the afternoon on Valentine's Day, but there are candles burning. *My* Indian jasmine candles. There's rose petals on the floor too. A balloon bobbing against the ceiling, and even a box of chocolates on the coffee table.

And I was supposed to be at work until five o'clock.

The unshed tears burn the back of my eyes. Was he just going to leave all this Valentine's shit out for both of us?

"Get out," I whisper. "Both of you get out."

Brett shakes his head, his sandy curls waving with the movement. "Skye, you haven't given me a chance to—"

"I saw what you did with your first chance, Brett," I hiss, wildly gesturing at my sister. "Why the fuck would I give you a second?!"

Sara weeps behind me, her soft gasps of emotion doing nothing but fueling my anger.

"You're pathetic," I tell her coldly, and the little love I had for her is burning to a crisp in my soul. Sara and I have never been close. Hell, she didn't even stick up for me after Brett bought me a weight loss program this Christmas. Even though

the holidays are usually the only time we see each other, I never expected her to do something like this.

Wait.

Did... did they start fucking at Christmas?

I'd gotten real sick over Christmas, and the three of us were isolating together, turning the holidays into a full-on coronacation. It hit me like a freight train, but Brett and Sara were irritatingly unaffected, meaning the two of them were stuck in this apartment together caring for me and snarling at each other. For over a week.

And then by the time I was better, they seemed to have worked out their differences.

Brett's talking, begging for a second chance, and Sara's sniveling has gotten louder, but I'm not listening to either of them. I'm staring straight into the middle distance, feeling Axi purr in my arms and his cold, wet nose against my collarbone.

When I finally make eye contact with Brett, he lights up like the Christmas tree they probably fucked next to. "I need some time," I say, my voice faint.

His nods are desperate, but I can see the frustration in his eyes.

"Just give me a couple of days here by myself. I can't..." I swallow, "I can't look at either of you right now."

Brett's stupid curls jingle again. "I'll go stay with one of the boys and you, you let me know when you want to talk. I'm not going anywhere, alright?"

He takes my blink as acceptance, and they finally leave me alone. Sara seems to have gathered what little shit she brought with her whilst Brett was begging. She tries to catch my eye at the door, but I'm staring resolutely ahead, focusing on nothing except the cat in my arms.

Brett, on the other hand, is in our bedroom. I can hear the drawers opening as he presumably gathers what he needs for a couple of nights away. Axi leaves my arms to settle on his cat tree, nuzzling into his favorite furry cushion.

A few minutes later, he comes back out into the living room—now fully dressed in one of his wrestling championship hoodies—and stares at me with remorseful eyes. “Text me. Call me.” He moves to come closer but thinks better of it, and for that I'm grateful.

I don't want his face near mine. I know where it's been.

When he finally closes the door, I move quickly, dashing to throw the deadbolt before he has a chance to change his mind. As soon as the metal *clanks* into place, my emotions run free, and my face twists into a mess of emotion and betrayal.

I clap my hand over my mouth, staggering towards the bedroom. The bed appears to have remained untouched since I left it earlier, thank god.

The bed swallows me whole as I land in it, my shoulders shaking with the force of my sobs. Bryaxis lands on my squidgy hip a moment later, slinking into his favorite little spoon position between my arms and curling those dark toe

beans. “I know,” I sniff. “I just need to get it out, then we can sort our shit out.”

When my tears run dry, I pull my suitcase out from under the bed.

After shoving a random assortment of clothes, make-up, and toiletries into the suitcase, I glance at my bookshelf. It’s packed full of special editions—from stalker romances to meet cutes to brother’s best friend galore, I have them all.

And right now, I have to leave them behind. I pick out a couple of my favorites and stash them in my suitcase, wrapping them each in a thick layer of clothes to protect those edges.

My final scan of the bedroom has an aching finality about it. I’d need to come back at some point to collect the rest of my belongings, but it was an empty feeling, losing my home in a single night.

Because I was the one who had moved in with Brett. He was the head tenant—and the landlord was his uncle.

I was out on my sizeable ass.

Axi’s stuff takes longer to pack than mine does. His food. His treats. His toys. I can’t fit his favorite bed in the suitcase, but then a genius idea strikes me.

Brett has some of his old stuff in a vacuum-packed bag, so I dutifully turf that out into a pile on the bed, feeling like a Strong, Independent Woman as I neatly put Bryaxis’s vacuum packed bed into the suitcase.

My final walk through the apartment is tinged with sadness. This apartment was where we brought Axi home. All his kitten photos are taken here. And now I'm going to leave it all behind. Because I can't stay here for another second. My sister and Brett have well and truly tainted this place for me.

For some stupid, *stupid* reason, a line from a poem I studied in high school comes to mind.

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang, but a whimper.

Or when you fuck your girlfriend's sister on Valentine's Day. Same thing, right?



Seven o'clock finds me sitting in a hotel room, listening to the buzzing of Axi's baby monitor and wondering what I'm going to do with the rest of my night. The first thing I'd done after checking into my hotel room was go to buy Bryaxis the cat tree of his dreams with the money I've saved for Brett's birthday next month... before I realized I didn't have a goddamn address to send it to.

Depressingly, the next thing on my list had been some emails from work. Kenneth, my boss, had sent me home early at the last minute—unaware of the sliding doors style consequences *that* decision would have on my life. Then the bastard had the

gall to call and ask me to log into his computer remotely to sort out some invoices he ~~couldn't be fucked to deal with~~ was too busy to upload himself.

If ever there was a job to take betrayal off my mind, logistics was *not* one of them. The company designed and manufactured mobility equipment, but I was the personal assistant to the logistics director... and *god* it was dull.

Without a doubt, my job would be one of the first to be replaced by AI because, in all honesty, it could be done by a computer. It was simply inputting invoices onto the system, which I would then send over to my boss Kenneth to sign off, plus attending to any number of mind-numbing administrative tasks he needed done.

It was so monotonous that I was able to listen to audiobooks all day without missing a beat. The only awkward part came when my coworkers asked me what I was listening to.

“The etymology of the word bucket,” I would reply, with an engaging smile on my face, as Zade Meadows tells Addie to run whilst they’re in the House of Mirrors.

Thankfully, they learned not to ask pretty quick.

Axi’s purring catches my attention, and I smile, despite everything. He’s out for the count, courtesy of his calming plug-in and literal chill pill. Not knowing how he’d react to being in a new place, I’d plugged that sucker in the first chance I got.

And then he'd spent a half hour racing around the hotel room, ecstatic at the new playground he'd been given. The plug-in and the tablet had taken effect right around the time he'd finally run out of energy, and now I'd made an exhausted cat, well, catatonic.

On my work laptop, I click on the latest email from my asshole manager, Kenneth, my eyes rolling. *URGENT*, the subject line reads. I've only been working at Silver Mobility for a couple months, but it took me less than a week to hate this man.

My last employer—and the one before that—all did things by the book. Doing everything by the book suits me perfectly. Cutting corners is not something I'm emotionally equipped to handle. I record everything I do at work on a spreadsheet; every invoice, every shipment, every conversation, every phone call, every appointment, every meeting, every instruction, *everything*. I can't help it. I'm a spreadsheet gal, and I won't apologize for it.

But Kenneth takes *laissez-faire* to the next level. I'm supposed to be a normal PA, but what I really do is clean up after him. My first week I caught a shipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars about to be sent out to the wrong address.

Who approved it? Kenneth.

It wasn't a one-off incident.

Missing orders? Deliveries sent to the wrong place?
Transportation that was never organized? Uncatalogued stock?

Budgets that are so outlandish they're laughable? Coming into work smelling of booze?

Kenneth's done it all.

By the third week, I was so concerned that I sent the HR manager, Helen, an email. Did I feel like a snitch? Yes. Did I want to be fired for that man's half-assed attitude? No, but apparently that's standard practice at Silver Mobility.

All I know is I'm trawling through online job listings, looking for a way out of this sinking ship.

But when the *URGENT* email opens, it takes me a second to understand what I'm seeing.

NOTICE OF DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Dear Skye Davis,

I am writing to inform you that you are required to attend a disciplinary hearing on February 15th at 8AM. The hearing is to consider and discuss disciplinary allegations of misconduct.

You are entitled to bring a fellow worker or representative to the meeting in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the attached Disciplinary Procedure, and be chaired by Kenneth Youngblood. Helen Locker will also be present.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email and confirm that you will attend the hearing as scheduled. You are reminded that failure to cooperate in a disciplinary process, including failure to attend a hearing without good reason, may itself be a disciplinary offence resulting in further disciplinary action.

*Kind regards,
Kenneth Youngblood*

I choke out a laugh. Is he serious?

After everything he's done over the last few weeks, all the times I've saved his ass, and now *I'm* the one who has to attend a disciplinary meeting. The indignity rages white-hot in my gut, and I tap out a terse acknowledgement email and hit send.

I don't even put *kind regards* at the end. That's how angry I am.

Because tomorrow I'm going to attend that meeting armed with my spreadsheet, and give him the hearing of his fucking life.

You know what, *fuck it*. Fuck Brett. Fuck Sara. And fuck Kenneth. I'm not going to spend my entire evening moping in my hotel room. I'm going to hop in the shower, get dressed to the nines, and then head to the hotel bar and find whatever

entertainment I can on my way to the bottom of the nearest bottle.

By the time I walk into the bar, I'm dressed in a *gorgeous* black mini dress that Brett never let me wear. The soft Bardot sleeves expose my shoulders and my ample curves fill out the pleated fabric. My stomach isn't flat or smooth, but tonight I don't care. I'm not here to impress anyone; I'm here to enjoy myself. The bar's warm pink lighting washes over my skin as my heels click across the marble floor to the packed bar to order a drink.

That's when I realize I've made a mistake.

Couples fill the tables around me, whispering to one another over scarlet cocktails. A single rose adorned each table, and bunting was draped across the ceiling, trailing the most sickeningly adorable fat red hearts around the room.

And lining the opposite wall was a long, low electric fireplace, the flames within turned the brightest of pinks.

It was Valentine's Day.

"Your Bellini," the short blonde bartender says, pulling me from my realization.

"Thank you," I reply automatically, but she's already gone, taking another order from further up the bar. A low buzz fills the room as the conversations of the people around me merge into a single organism. I hear none of it, draining my Bellini far too quickly.

My phone rings, and I grimace. It's Brett.

I press the green button and lift it to my ear. “What?”

“Where the fuck are you, Skye? I came back to the apartment and you and the cat are both gone.”

The cat.

That was what he always called Bryaxis. When I’d adopted little Axi, Brett had turned his nose up, protesting he was a dog person. “And not like those little rat dogs either,” he’d assured me.

I let out a sigh.

Might as well have this conversation now, I guess. I wasn’t trapped in an apartment with him this time.

“It’s over, Brett.”

“No,” he says vehemently, and I imagine him swiping his hand through the air. “Absolutely not. You said you’d think about it. It’s been a few hours; you haven’t had *time* to think about it.”

“I don’t need your goddamn permission to break up with you.”

The scoff he huffs out makes me want to puke. “Did you know I was looking at freaking engagement rings for you last week? This isn’t just a relationship for me. I want you as my wife.”

Taking a sip of my Bellini, I sigh, jostled by a woman behind me. “Looking at engagement rings last week, fucking my

sister this week. You've been a busy boy. Go fuck yourself. Or will Sara do it for you?"

"You don't need to be so goddamn dramatic, Skye. Call me in the morning once your hissy fit has finished and we can have a proper conversation."

"I'm not calling you back in the morning."

"*Goddammit*, Skye, where are you? I'm comin—"

Rolling my eyes, I press the end call button.

He calls back immediately, but I'm already blocking his number.

The breath I let loose is one of frustration, because all I want to do is throw my phone out of the window. It's then that my gaze lands on the chalkboard declaring that they're serving 2 for 1 drinks in honor of Valentine's Day.

A slow smirk spreads across my face.

Oh I'll be having that, thank you very much.

When the bartender next comes within reach, I hail her down. "Can I get two peach Bellinis? They're 2 for 1, right?"

"Right," the bartender smiles. "You need a table? We're starting beer pong over in that corner in a few minutes, so that's all being cleared away in a sec."

My eyebrow jumps. "Beer pong?"

She nods. "Boys versus girls. Every drink you win is free."

Huh. Maybe tonight wasn't going to be dead after all.

Sure enough, staff are soon reorganizing the empty tables and laying out cups. A crowd starts to form, but I remain on the bar, watching as they're split by gender. It's entertaining enough to watch, even if I'm not in the mood to get involved.

The music's pumping in my ears and I let myself get lost in the music. By my fourth Bellini, I have to admit, I'm feeling pretty good. Good, but my bladder is crying out at the sudden downpour. I hop off my seat, smiling as the bartender puts my drink behind the bar to watch. Dammit, I'm going to give her a good tip.

I follow the restroom signs down a quieter corridor of the bar.

Oh god.

I knew there was something wrong with this place. Instead of simple *Men* and *Women* signs on the restroom doors, they decided to get creative.

The men's door says *BLA*.

The women's door says
BLABLABLABLABLABLABLABLABLABLABLA.

My lips twist in disgust. Have I been transported back, *Outlander* style, to the 1970s? Is Jamie Fraser with Bee Gees style hair about to pop out and—?

I yelp out in shock as someone grabs me from behind, and suddenly there's a punishing grip on my wrist and Brett's white-hot rage staring down at me. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

He shoves me up against the wall, and I'm reminded of the start of our relationship, where I refused to move in with him unless he went to anger management classes. Grimacing at the alcohol on his breath, I try my strength against his, but there's no competition.

It's on the tip of my tongue to ask how he found me, but the answer comes just as quickly. We installed the Find My Friends app *ages* ago so he could put dinner in the oven for me when I was leaving work and vice versa.

Goddammit. Those dinners were *not* worth it.

"I told you before. It's over."

He gets in my face, and I hope to god that he's showered. "I say it's not over."

"You fucked my sister. What did you expect? I'm not going to take that lying do—"

Brett shakes me against the wall, his enormous hand wrapping around my throat and my skull bouncing off the brickwork. "I said you are *not fucking leaving*," he spits, clenching his jaw.

Rage contorts his face, and it's then that fear starts to seep into my pores. Brett won a wrestling scholarship to go to freaking college—and he has his hand around my neck.

"Okay," I whisper, my panicked voice rasping. "If you take your hand off my throat, then we—"

Suddenly, Brett's bulk is wrenched away like he weighs nothing. His touch vanishes from my skin, and I can breathe

again. There's a tussle before my eyes, but there's no chance Brett is going to win.

The newcomer is taller than him by a head, wearing a suit—of all things—that accentuates the broad, muscular frame beneath. Judging by his graying black hair, he must be twenty years older than either of us, but shoves Brett against the brick wall like a ragdoll, and I can't help but notice the thick thighs encased in his pants.

“She said,” the newcomer snarls, pressing Brett's face against the exposed brick, “get your fucking hands off her.”

Silas

Red hot rage burns through me, and I embrace it. The kid in front of me is drunk, but that doesn't stop him from trying to break free of my hold. I know his type. Young. Self-centered. Arrogant. They'll throw their strength around with anyone except a fair opponent.

Judging by the fight he's putting up, the little bastard knows what he's doing—but *so do I*.

Shoving him against the wall, I twist his hands up behind his head, locking him into position. The girl next to him looks terrified, her bright eyes wide—a far cry from the confident expression she'd worn upon sashaying into the bar.

I pull my brows down, empathy flooding through my chest. “Are you all right?”

She nods, swallowing as she gives him a nervous glance. Fuck, but she's even more gorgeous up close. “I'm fine.”

“Let me take care of him,” I tell her, eyeing the women's restroom she was standing outside of. “Is there anyone out

there you'd like me to send in for you?"

She's been sat alone at the bar all evening, but I feel like I have to ask.

The drunk prick tries to speak, but I press him harder into the wall, smiling at his pained groan.

"There's no one, but thanks. What are you going to do with him?"

He makes another noise—before I quickly silence him. "What do you *want* me to do with him?" I was thinking castration, but what can I say? I aim to please.

"Can you just get him thrown out?" she whispers, as if he can't hear her. "And not let back in."

My eyelids lower as I look at her, keeping my eyes on her face and trying to pretend she's not the most gorgeous woman I've ever seen. Trying to pretend that barely-there black dress isn't going to live in my memory for the rest of my life. And those *curves*.

I'd give anything to have those pillowy thighs around my head.

"Anything you want." I heave the drunk bastard off the wall. "I'll be just out in the bar if you need me, all right?"

I wait until she's entered the restroom before turning my attention back to the asshole in my grip. He groans as I frog march him down the hallway, leading him further away from the bar.

“Are you fucking kidding me with this white knight bullshit, man?” he mumbles, spitting breath stinking of cheap booze back in my face. “Where are you taking me?”

When I reach the security office, I bang my fist on the door.

Ellis answers, his dark hair as messy as ever. Surprise flares in his eyes when he sees me—quickly followed by confusion when he sees the drunk asshole with me. “Silas,” he frowns, one dark brow hitching up towards his hair. There’s movement behind him, and I see another security guard I don’t recognize, a younger one. “What are you doing all the way down here?”

“I found this little bastard cornering a young woman near the toilets,” I grimace, twisting the drunk’s arm a *little* further than necessary. “Get him barred and put in the drunk tank for the evening, will you?”

Ellis’s lips twist into a grimace of disgust, taking his handcuffs off his belt. I brandish the drunk, allowing Ellis to snap the cuffs around his wrists. “We still on for an MMA bout this week?”

Ellis nods his approval, leading the drunk over to his desk and securing the cuffs to the ring bolted to the desk. “Sure thing. Time to break your winning streak, old man.”

I snort. Ellis hasn’t beaten me for months, but he was welcome to try. “Not a chance.” I give the handcuffed drunk one last look. “Don’t be too gentle with him. He wasn’t being gentle with her.”

“Scumbag,” Ellis grumbles.

Saying goodbye to Ellis, I quickly make my way back up the hallway, the bar's soundtrack pumping in my ears. I slide onto one of the barstools, giving a friendly smile to Charlie behind the bar. She sends my usual my way—a 1975 Dalmore that they keep on hand especially for me.

It's not every day I stop by for a drink after work, but when I do I know what I want.

I savor its full-bodied, smoky taste, surveying the bar around me. There's no sign of the woman from the corridor, and it eats at my chest. Perhaps I should have asked Charlie to check if she was okay. She might still be in there, sobbing her heart out.

The thought almost cripples me, and I try to catch Charlie's eye—

“Hey you.”

And there my mystery woman is, standing next to me. There's a shy smile touching her face, and I'm relieved to see her eyes are neither reddened nor wet. Did she just put perfume on, or does she always smell this good? There's something exotic and floral in her scent, and I can't help but want to breathe it in.

My lips curve softly. “Hey. I was worried about you.”

“That's sweet of you, but I'm okay—thanks to you. I was wondering if I could buy you a drink as a thank you, but uh...”

I pause, my whiskey halfway to my lips.

“...it seems like you already have one.” She looks around, her gaze jumping from person to person. “Is he still here?”

“He’s gone. You’re safe.”

The sigh of relief she lets out sinks her shoulders. Her whole body seems to relax, and I hate how on edge she must have been. “Thank you for that. Can I ask... before you found us, how much did you hear?”

My throat jumps in a quick swallow. “Nothing you didn’t want me to.”

She purses her lips, pulling them to the side with a knowing glance. “Enough to know how friendly he and my sister have become, in other words.” She jumps up on the sleek leather seat next to me, flagging Charlie down and folding her hands on the marble bar. “Can I get another Bellini, please?”

“Put it on my tab,” I tell Charlie.

“You don’t have to do that.”

I hold my hands up. “It doesn’t come with any strings.”

There’s a tantalizing quirk in her eyebrow as she stares me down, draping her long brown hair across her shoulder. “It better not.” A smile breaks out across her face a moment later, and I don’t know which expression I love more. Her stern stare gave me strict teacher vibes, but that smile has me readjusting my sitting position. “Are you waiting for someone?” she asks. “I don’t want to get caught by some woman thinking I’m trying to steal her man.”

Ha. I wish. Dating as a man in my position comes with its own set of hazards. Like when I'm trying to build an actual fucking connection with someone, hoping to eventually settle down and build a life together—and she's just looking at me as a meal ticket.

The third time it happened, I called it quits. I'd rather be alone than with someone who only wants me for my money.

But even I have to admit it's getting lonely. I've thrown myself into my work, into building the company up even more, but it's getting old fast. A company doesn't keep a man warm at night, and shares offer little in the way of companionship.

The Valentine's Day celebrations are in full swing around us, but I shake my head, nursing my glass of whiskey. "Aren't I a little too old for you?"

She takes a sip, her eyes locked onto mine. "Somehow I think you could keep up with me. Don't you?"

I let the question linger, the air thick with tension. "Somehow I think you might be right," I said softly. "What brings you here tonight, pretty girl?"

"Aside from the cheating boyfriend?" There's humor in her tone, but her eyes tell a different story.

"Any man who could look at you and want to stray is a fucking idiot. Don't waste another thought on him."

Her jaw almost drops, and I wonder if her shithead of a boyfriend was even shitter than he appeared.

“Has no one ever told you that?”

She opens her mouth, but closes it after a moment’s deliberation.

Fuck, maybe no one *has* ever told her that.

I lean in, my nostrils flaring at her heavenly scent. “You see that guy over by the pool table? Blue NFL jersey? And the guy over near the entrance, blond hair, white t-shirt?” I give her a moment to get them in her sights. “Neither of them have taken their eyes off you since you walked in here.”

She turns back to me, suspicious. “How do you know when I walked in here?”

There’s electricity crackling in the air as we share an intense glance, practically close enough to kiss. “Because I haven’t taken my eyes off you either.”

Her lips bite into her pillowy bottom lip, failing to hold back her small whimper. “I didn’t see you.”

“I was sat over in the corner. Wasn’t much feeling like joining in the Valentine’s celebrations after finishing work.” Especially after a long day of trying to deal with auditors on the hunt for a rat.

“No,” she smirks. “You were just in the mood for sitting in a darkened corner, watching a woman who didn’t know you were there.”

“You know I’m here now,” I challenge her.

She lowers her eyelids, but makes no effort to hide her smile. “How could I possibly miss you?”

Leaning against the smooth marble bar, I move closer to her, slow and deliberate. “Tell me this, pretty girl. Because I’m desperate to know the answer. You walk in here looking like a million bucks and smelling like heaven.” I pause, choosing my words carefully. “Did you come to the bar tonight looking for a drink... or for revenge?”

It’s been months since I’ve been interested in a woman—and even longer than that since a woman has been interested in me for something other than my goddamn money.

And yet here was this woman, dressed in the sexiest outfit I’d ever seen, looking at me like she wanted to swallow me whole.

Oh just you wait.

“Revenge,” she breathes, the word barely audible above the bar’s low, sensual soundtrack.

Without breaking eye contact, I swallow the last of my whiskey, clink it onto the bar, and hold out my hand. “Then take it.”

Triumph sings in my blood when she places her small, soft hand in mine. Her skin is silky smooth, and I lift her knuckles to my lips before pulling her with me.

The more of her I see, the more I want. I want to hang onto those plump hips as she rides my cock. I want those thighs around my ears as she squeals with pleasure. I want her small,

silky hands squeezing my cock. I want to come with her ample tits in my face and her pussy *milking* my dick.

What is this woman doing to me?

On the outskirts of the bar, I turned to go left towards the apartment tower, but she aims right towards the hotel tower. She's a guest of the hotel, then. The building's mood lighting has been changed to pink for the night, and it's though desire is in the very air. There are couples around us, sharing furtive whispers or, like us, hurriedly on our way upstairs. "Your place or mine?"

I keep it simple. I don't say that my place is a penthouse. I don't want an excuse to suspect this woman. I want her to want me for *me*.

She considers for a moment, wincing slightly. "Probably yours. My cat is drugged off his ass and I don't want him to wake in the night and attack you."

I narrow my eyes, looking down her body. "Is that a euphemism?"

Her snort is outrageous, drawing a few looks from the people around us, and I love it. "A hundred percent literal. He's a Siamese. He can be crazy at the best of times."

Pulling her towards the apartments, I lower my voice as we walk past the fountain full of wish pennies. The mood lighting carries through here too, giving our reflections in the elevator doors a lustful tenor. "Any other pussy cats I should be aware of?"

Our eyes connect just as the elevator chimes, the heavy, well-oiled door silently sliding open. “None that I don’t think you can tame.”

I watch her walk into the elevator, her hips swaying. She throws a flirty look over her shoulder. “You coming?”

“Oh I’m coming.” I hit the penthouse floor, seeing the confusion on her face. I don’t give it a chance to fully bloom, stealing her attention by cupping her cheek and holding her close. “You will too.”

She cocks her eyebrow up at me. “Just the once?”

The lighting in the elevator is dark, plunging us both into a shadowed intimacy that I never want to leave. There’s something about this woman that I can’t stay away from; the tension brimming between us, that heavenly scent, the way she bites into her bottom lip, even the way she looks at me.

I’ve never felt like this before, and somehow I know she hasn’t either.

“Only if you’ll be a good girl for me,” I whisper, backing her into the corner of the elevator.

The wide flare in her eyes was one of shock, followed by a stutter in her breathing.

“Has no one ever called you that before?”

“No,” she chokes out, an almost drunklike quality entering her gaze.

“And do you like it?”

“Having an older man tell me to be a good girl for him on Valentine’s Day?” she bites her lip. “What’s there not to like?” The elevator stops, but when the doors fail to open, a panicked look seizes hold of her. “Are we stuck?”

Taking out my wallet, I slide my entry card into the illuminated slot. “No need to panic. I need to scan my entry card before the door will open, otherwise anyone can get into my apartment.”

The elevator chimes sounds, and a moment later the doors open, unveiling my foyer. It’s not much compared to the rest of the apartment. It’s spacious, sure, with a large circular table in the middle of the marble floor. A white-and-pink bouquet rests on the table, filling the air with the scents of flowers I don’t know the names of. They’re past their best, if I’m honest. I need to remember to write a note to my cleaner asking him to get rid of them.

“This is a really nice apartment,” my companion says, glancing up at me with a puzzled expression on her face.

She still hasn’t moved from the elevator, and I turn back to face her. “Would you like to see more of it?” I grin, holding out my hand.

There’s that snort again, and something in my chest jumps when she takes my hand. “I don’t even know your name,” she whispers.

“Silas.” The name she’d soon be screaming out in ecstasy.

“I’m Skye.”

I back up further into my apartment's foyer, my eyes never leaving her. "And are you going to be a good girl for this older man tonight, Skye?"

Finally, she leaves the safety of the elevator, taking her first steps onto the marble floor. "Yes."

"Yes, *sir*," I say slowly, my breathing heavy and my cock leaking in my pants.

Skye lets out a little moan as I pull her against my body. "Yes, sir."

Fuck, that's as sweet as sugar.

I can't wait any longer. My mouth crashes into hers, taking hold of the current sparking between us. It's hot and heavy and fucking magical. Her hands grapple around my broad shoulders, pulling at my salt-and-pepper hair in desperate grabs.

I'm no less eager, stealing the air from her lungs as she moans into my mouth. I lift her into my arms, spreading her thighs over my hips—

I freeze at the sound of her outraged squeal. "Put me down, put me down."

"Jesus, did I hurt you?" My hands search for an injury, but she pushes them away.

Embarrassment floods her features. There's a twitch at the corner of her lip—downwards, not up. "You shouldn't pick me up. I'm a whale. You'll snap your spine."

“Skye,” I begin, my frown growing. “How weak do you think I am?”

“What?”

“Who told you that, your scumbag ex?”

Skye can’t even look at me, focusing on the bouquet next to us. “My ex. My sister. My mom.” She chuffs out a laugh. “The world at large.”

Slowly, I move towards her, tilting her chin up to take her lips in a slow, comforting kiss. “Don’t ever talk about yourself like you’re not the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. Do you understand?”

Her eyes are wide again, her brows drawing together. “Yes.”

My head tilts to the side, waiting for the rest.

“Yes... *sir*.”

That’s what I was looking for. I bend again, lifting her into my arms. There’s panic in her eyes, as though she expects me to drop her, but she remains silent as I walk her through the living room. “You’re perfection,” I murmur, quietening that knot of worry in her brow. “And you’ll be treated like such.”

And then my past experiences with dates intrude on the evening, and I can’t let the issue go unanswered. “I have to ask. Do I need to wear a condom tonight?”

The understanding in her expression is so sincere I clutch her tighter. “I’m clean, sir. I’m on birth control too; I have a little implant in my arm if you wanna feel it. I’m not going to kick

up a fuss if you want to wear a condom though. Are *you* clean?"

"I'm clean," I assure her. "And there's no way in hell I'm wearing a condom if I don't need to. I want to feel every inch of you, pretty girl."

My bedroom is my favorite room in the house, and the automatic lighting flicks on immediately. There's floor to ceiling windows on three sides, giving us an expansive view of the twinkling lights around us. For now, though, I lay Skye on the rich burgundy bedding, savoring the way her dark hair spills across the comforter.

"Your bedroom is stunning," she whispers, glancing around at the backlit artwork at the head of the bed. It's an intimate painting of a woman, her heavy breasts on show and her hand inching down towards her thighs.

"Mmm," I agree. "It's never looked so good." I kneel at the side of the bed, the fabric of my suit pressed against the thick rug beneath me.

That gets her attention.

Skye brings herself up on her elbows, watching me as I bend her leg up. Her heels come to rest on my collarbone, but not before I see the red marker on the outsole.

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"Do these hurt your feet?" I ask quietly, carefully undoing the miniscule buckle at the ankle. Before she answers, I suck in a breath when I see the red outlines left by the shoes.

“A little,” she admits.

I bring the other one up and repeat my actions. My head is between her ankles, and in my peripheral vision I can see the dark red panties between her legs. My chest heaves with the effort to resist, and my cock is practically screaming at me.

Nevertheless, I keep my eyes on her face, watching her just as closely as she’s watching me. She lets out a low, quiet moan when I begin to massage her feet.

Her head falls back onto my bed, but then I hear a giggle.

“Ticklish?” I ask, continuing to roll my thumbs against the ball of her left foot.

“No, this is just *not* how I expected to end the day.”

I bark out a laugh. “The day ain’t over yet, pretty girl.”

Skye

This is insane. Utterly, completely, *ridiculously* insane.

I woke up this morning in my twenty-five dollar Walmart bedding, next to my insane rescue cat. The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was Brett wearing his ancient gym shorts, the elasticated waistband barely attached to the rest of the fabric—the brand new ones I got him for Christmas sitting untouched in his underwear drawer.

And now I'm in an Instagram-worthy apartment, with a guy that aged like fine wine rubbing my feet?

Insane.

A gasp chokes out of me when I feel the unexpected press of Silas's lips against my ankle, followed by the rough graze of his stubble across my skin. The differing sensations only heighten my desire—but not as much as the way his lips return, this time a little higher up my leg.

And again, and again, and again, until he's brushing against my knee and I'm whispering, "Silas."

Silas smirks, the cocky bastard, but I see his eyes flick between my legs.

Thank goodness I'm wearing my sexy, fuck-you-Brett panties.

You know what, after this I should call them my sexy, fuck-me-Silas panties.

His kiss reaches my mid-thigh, and my pussy is lighting up like dynamite, arousal drenching my panties. No one has ever touched me like this; the slow, teasing crawl upwards. I roll my hips, trying to entice him further, but Silas takes his time, those predatorial blue eyes never leaving me.

“Please, sir,” I whisper, letting my hand burrow into his greying black hair. The strands are silky soft, and I resist the temptation to yank him to where I need him. “Please go higher.”

“But you've been such a naughty girl.”

I moan, my pussy clenching around nothing. My reaction is visceral and unexpected and unstoppable, and I feel like a rabbit in the clutches of a wolf, waiting to be devoured.

A smile spreads across his face like wildfire, hot and intense. Silas runs his fingers up the outside of my thighs, hooking them into my lacy panties. My legs close, allowing him to slowly roll the fabric down.

“You're soaking,” he comments, his attention on the panties scrunched up in his hand. He presses them against his face,

deeply inhaling and letting out a groan. “You smell so fucking good.”

“Do I?” I whisper, enthralled.

Silas hums. “I wish I didn’t have to punish you.”

“What... what are you going to do to me?”

There’s that intense grin again, and he slips a large, strong hand in between my legs, pushing them apart to expose the gleaming wetness within. My pulsing clit is on display, and I whimper, expecting stimulation to come.

With a devilish look, Silas simply bends and blows a cool, teasing stream of air towards it. I can feel his warmth, so close it’s almost stimulating in itself.

“I need more,” I beg. “Please, sir.”

“I know exactly what I’m doing.” He blows again, sensitizing me like crazy, my hips rocking towards him in search of *more*. He edges a finger around my pussy, *just* outside where I need it.

Another gust of air. He’s driving me crazy, and I twitch, desperate for more. “Then why aren’t you touching me?”

“Because you’ve been a naughty girl,” he whispers, blowing air towards my entrance and smiling as I writhe. “Because you called yourself a whale.” A sharp gust of air to my clit has me crying out. “And so you need to be punished.”

Soon, I was half out of my mind with arousal, panting like a cat in heat. “Silas,” I moan. “Silas, please just touch me. I

don't know how much more of this I can stand.”

And there it was, the first tap against my clit. I mewl. Nothing has ever felt so good, and another follows it. His touches are fleeting, promising more pleasure than they offer. “Yes,” I whisper. “There, there, there.”

“Yes what?”

“Yes, sir,” I say quickly. “Yes, sir.”

“Does my naughty girl like this?” he asks, kneeling between my thighs, his cobalt eyes rapt with attention.

I nod, and suddenly his touches start lasting a little longer—long enough for me to enjoy them. I'm building quickly after so much teasing, and before long I'm going to explode. “Yes, sir.”

“Are you going to be a good girl from now on?”

My eyes close, the intensity between my legs growing with every touch. “Yes, sir.”

“You're not going to say anything negative about your body again?”

“No.” My voice is almost dreamlike, and I spread my thighs wider as my orgasm approaches. I would have promised to jump over the moon if he asked; anything for that next touch. Every breath comes out as a cry of pleasure, and I can barel—

Silas's touch disappears.

“No!” I whine, my eyes opening wide to see him smirking down at me. “Wait, Silas, I was nearly the—”

“What did I tell you to call me?” he snarls, his deep, smooth voice turned into something savage.

“Sir.” God, why does saying that make me so wet? If any other man insisted on me calling him ‘sir’ I’d tell him to go and fuck himself, but *Silas* saying it gets my panties in a twist. A soaking wet twist. “Please, sir.”

He bends down once more, blowing a tantalizing wash of air onto my clit.

I sob, so desperate to come I want to crawl out of my skin. But he starts the whole routine again. Everything is worse this time. The arousal more intense. The desperation sharper. The pleasure heightened. I hope his apartment is soundproof because I’m begging him by the fifth time he does it, writhing and whimpering and held on the edge of an orgasm so long I want to scream.

“Sir, please,” I beg him, my mind possessed by desire. His fingers are on my clit, but I know it won’t last. His brows are drawn down, watching my every move with calm detachment. “Sir, sir, sir. I’ll never say anything bad about myself again. I’ll be good. I’ll be your good girl.”

As expected, he pulls his fingers away *just* before I’m about to explode. I knew it was coming but I can’t stop myself from whining in frustration, pulling my hands up over my face—

Just as a hot, wet mouth encloses my clit and *sucks*.

I barely have time to register what’s happening. *Silas* is groaning against my clit, primal and dominant, and I can’t

even catch my breath before my orgasm yeets me onto the next plane of existence. It's instantaneous and brutal and unexpected. The pleasure is agonizing, my muscles so tightly locked they're in danger of snapping. A raw cry tears from my throat, my back arching up off the bed, my thighs locked around Silas's head—I'm lost in pleasure, and I never want to be found.

When my faculties return to me, Silas has gotten to his feet. He slides his thumb against his stubbled jaw to mop up my excess wetness before licking it off. Sighing, he undoes his tie and shirt buttons in well-practiced, decisive movements. His cheeks are still wet with my arousal, and I've never been so attracted to a man in my life.

"Did my good girl like that?" he asks, shouldering out of his shirt to reveal a muscled torso covered in tattoos. That's a surprise—not the muscles, but the tattoos.

"Yes, sir." My eyes open wide. A dragon claws its way around his torso, sitting on a bed of flames and smoke, so lifelike I could swear I see its brilliant golden eyes twinkling in the light. The rest of it is as black as night, and it's so detailed I can count every individual scale. It's huge, with its head snarling over his left shoulder, and its back legs and tail disappearing beneath the waistband of his pants.

Silas watches me taking him in with grim amusement, the sharp lines of his stubble twitching as he smirks. The metal clasp of his belt tinkles as he unclips it, but that's as far as he goes. "Take my cock out for me, pretty girl."

“Yes, sir,” I sigh, splayed out before him.

I sit up, breathing in his dark, spicy scent. This close, I can see the detail on the dragon. Its claws look like they’re digging into his skin, its leathery, batlike wings tipped with equally sharp claws of their own, grappling into him.

Biting my lip, I run my hand against the outside of his pants—and stop when I feel rows of something hard and bumpy on his cock.

That isn’t normal. Does he have a growth of some sort? Surely he’d warn me beforehand.

“Carry on, Skye. I didn’t say you could stop.”

Whatever. I’m an equal opportunities kind of gal. I can deal with a growth.

I clench my thighs together, eager to unveil him but curious to see what the bumps are.

I tuck my fingers underneath the waistband of both his expensive black pants and dark boxers. His rough hair grazes against my skin as I pull downwards, uncovering both more tattoos and more *Silas*.

But when I get to his cock, my jaw drops.

The bumps aren’t growths.

They’re *piercings*.

There’s five bars running up his dick, one after the other, with little silver balls securing either end. The final bar is

vertical instead of horizontal, piercing just under the head and exiting at the very tip.

“Take it in your hand.” Silas looks down at me, his chest heaving.

Tentatively, I curl my hand around him, wary of the piercings through his length, but it’s only then that I realize what I thought were veins on his cock aren’t veins at all.

They’re tattoos.

Delicate blue and purple lines wrap around him, and they almost remind me of tribal tattoos. They’re more feminine somehow, more purposeful. And I kind of want to run my tongue along them.

Softly, I stroke him. It’s difficult with all the bars, and I avoid them as much as I can, but Silas wraps his hand around mine, squeezing way harder than I would have ever done.

“Touch me normally,” he croons. “They’ll move with you.”

I swallow, trying it. I can feel the piercings shifting with my grip, and it’s slightly unnerving, but he’s right. The piercings are mobile, to a degree, and with every stroke my confidence grows, until Silas lets out a heavy exhale, his head falling backwards to expose his throat and his eyes closing.

While his eyes are closed, I let my intrusive thoughts win.

I lay my tongue against the base of his cock and lick all the way up to the head.

“Fuck,” Silas growls, his hand coming to rest against my cheek. He sucks in a breath as I lap up his taste, groaning out my satisfaction. His cock is as hot as a brand against my tongue, but I need more, swirling around his tip, teasing the piercing as I do. The metal is smooth, but his sharp intake of air stops me.

“Did that hurt?” I ask, wide-eyed.

He shakes his head. “It felt good. More than good. The piercings increase my sensitivity.”

Emboldened, I take him in my mouth once more, bringing my hands up to work the shaft whilst I lavish attention on the head. He’s too thick to take much deeper, but that doesn’t stop me trying. My cheeks hollow with every enthusiastic suck.

“Look at me.” His voice is deeper than it was before, raspy and labored.

I do what he says, because with Silas I can’t help but obey. There’s something in this connection between us, as my dark eyes meet his cobalt gaze, his hand in my hair and his piercings against my tongue. He’s panting, his mouth opening and his brow drawing down, until—

“Stop,” he groans, his lungs hauling in air like there’s no tomorrow. “When I come, it isn’t going to be in your mouth.”

I bite my lip as he bends to take off my dress, peeling the fabric off my skin, revealing every inch of me.

Every roll.

Every stretch mark.

And all the lights are on.

“Can we... can we turn the lights off?” I ask tentatively, holding my arms across my stomach.

Silas pauses, staring at me with something I think is pity. It’s embarrassing as all hell, but I can’t help it.

“I’m not saying anything negative about myself,” I start, remembering his punishment earlier, teasing me until I was begging to come. I’d agreed to it in the heat of the moment, but I’ve got a lifetime of weight-related insecurity to deal with. It isn’t going to disappear overnight, as much as I might want it to.

And for some reason my brain decides this is the moment to whirl into action. Doubt floods my bloodstream, and I realize that Brett and Sara were fucking in *broad daylight*.

Something Brett and I never did. We hadn’t slept together more than a few times in the last six months, but when we did he always made sure it was in the dark, and now I’m wondering whether that was because he never *wanted* to see me.

Fuck, the only reason I wore the black dress is because Brett never let me wear it, arguing that it revealed too much of my fat. He always insisted on floatier, looser dresses, saying that they hid my flaws. And now I’m questioning every interaction we ever had.

Silas suddenly bends down before me, his knees against the floor and his hands cupping my face. “Whatever you’re

thinking about—stop it.”

My little pity party isn't over, and I look away. “I don't want you to see me.”

I leave the rest unsaid. *I don't want you to see me and change your mind.*

And I definitely never want him to meet my goddamn sister.

“I've already seen you. I'm kind of offended you've forgotten the mind-blowing orgasm I gave you. Your thighs were squeezing my head so tightly I thought it was going to burst.”

I laugh shyly. “I was clothed then. The only things you'd removed were my heels and my panties.”

Silas pins me with an intense gaze, and I get the feeling he's undressing me mentally. “How about this?” he says, pulling out his phone. After a few seconds, the ceiling light turns off, plunging us into darkness. The only sources of light are from Silas's phone and the town's lights outside—but then pinkish strips illuminate the ceiling recesses, under the bed, and behind the headboard, spreading a romantic hue through the room.

He puts his phone away, ridding us of the last of the harsh lighting. “Better?” he asks softly, his voice lowered to a rasp and his form an outline in the dark.

Somehow the change in lighting calms my mood. The soft pink is soothing. It's not static, I realize, watching it intently. It moves like the ocean, softly undulating across the room. I let

my breathing slow once more, and my mind along with it. Suddenly I never want to leave this bedroom. It's a haven in an ocean of worry and self-pity. "Better. It's gorgeous."

Silas leans forward, pressing his lips against my cheek. His warmth brushes against me as he moves. "So are you, pretty girl. I wish you could see yourself through my eyes. You're stunning, and you don't even know it."

I blink slowly, my eyes lowered with desire.

His touch returns. As my eyes adjust, I can see him in the pink-hued darkness, lifting my hips to allow him to finally rid me of my dress. And then I'm glad he didn't turn off the lights entirely, because I would have missed out on seeing his expression as he sees my body.

The abject *hunger* on his face sends a shiver down my spine. "Fuck," he snarls, rapidly undressing before pressing me back against the bedsheet. My thighs spread once more as he settles between them, giving my neck a sharp bite, and I gasp at the sudden pain. "If only you knew the things I wanted to do to you."

"If you want me," I say, biting my lip. "I'm yours... sir."

Silas

Skye yelps as I flip her, dragging her up onto her hands and knees. “You sure about that?”

“I’m sure,” she pants, moaning into the comforter as my tongue delves between her folds, desperate to taste her again.

“I can’t get enough of your wet pussy, Skye.” I gather her essence on my tongue, eagerly swallowing it down. It heats my blood, hardening my cock until it’s all I can do not to spill. Drips of pre-cum collect at the end of my shaft, and I give it a teasing pump with my hand. “Fuck, I knew you’d be sweet, but this?”

Skye cries out when my lips close around her clit, sucking rhythmically.

“This is ambrosia,” I growl, spreading her with my thumbs and mapping her pussy with my tongue. “I want to wear your scent on my face all fucking day. I want your thighs clamping around my head again, holding me to your addictive cunt whilst you ride my face.”

I fuck her with my tongue, mining deep to get as much of her sweet cream as I can. “You’re so tight, baby,” I say, sliding a finger inside of her, and then two. “You’re going to be stretched to your limit around my cock.”

“What about your piercings?” she gasps between moans.

“Mmm,” I hum, adding a third finger into her slick heat. “You’re going to feel every rung on my ladder, massaging your g-spot.”

“I think they might be a myth.”

“G-spots?” I switch back down to two fingers, curving them down against her inside wall, rhythmically stroking until I find what I’m looking for. “This g-spot, you mean?”

Skye moaned into the Egyptian cotton on my bed. “More, more, more.”

“You want to feel my Jacob’s ladder rippling against your g-spot?”

“I don’t even know what that means,” she said breathlessly.

“The bars across my cock are called a Jacob’s ladder. And the one at the top is called a Prince Albert. Those metal beads are going to feel so good inside you. You want to know the best part about those beads at the end?”

Her hips rock back against my fingers, meeting my arm as I pump. “What?”

“I can swap them out for bigger ones at any time. Fuck, I want to see how big you can go, stretched around my cock,

feeling my piercings rippling against your insides.” Her cunt gave a telltale squeeze around my fingers. “You like the sound of that, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Then get on your back.”

In the soft pink light, she presents herself to me, spreading her legs to welcome me home. Her nipples are tight, and I can’t resist sliding my hands over them, feeling those rucked pink tips scraping against my palm.

“You’re perfect, Skye.” I flick my thumbs over her breasts, savoring her whimper. Taking my cock in hand, I swipe it through her glistening wetness, notching it at her entrance before moving away.

“Please, Silas. Please, sir.”

I move down, sucking her nipple into my mouth, molding it into a stiff peak before nipping it with my teeth. “You don’t have to beg anymore.” I move to the other breast, adorning it with the same treatment, listening to her gasps and whines. “You know I’ll take care of you, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir. Please. Please take care of me.”

My cock is roaring at me to take her, to fuck her, to make her mine, and so I give in.

Skye’s eyes widen as I slowly begin to enter her. I draw it out, wanting her to feel every piercing, but I don’t even get that far before she begins to protest. “Fuck,” she pants.

“You’re so big.”

Her heat envelops me, and I groan. The thickest part was yet to come, but I knew the moment she hit the first rung of my ladder.

Her claws dig into my arm, as sharp as those on my dragon tattoo. “Wait, Silas. Oh god, you’re too big.”

Pausing, I slide my hand up her neck, coming to rest behind her ear. “I’m big, pretty girl, but you can take it.”

Her lips tighten, but she nods, letting out a cry as the next rung on my ladder slipped inside her. “Two down, three to go. You’re doing so fucking good.” Another moan as the next rung entered her, and the next. “Such a good girl as you take my thick cock inside that perfect cunt. Ain’t that right?”

“Yes, sir,” she mewls.

“Say it.”

Her eyes widen, but she opens her mouth. “I’m such a good girl as I take—*oh*—as I take your thick cock inside my perfect cunt.”

I move, Skye clenches around me, her eyes closing with relief. “Does that feel good?”

“Oh my god,” she gasps, her head falling back onto the bed.

I yank a pillow down and prop it under her hips, lifting her so my piercings hit her g-spot. “What about now?”

“*Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck.*” She doesn’t pause for breath, her hands grappling for my shoulders. Her eyes are desperate, but

there's an element of shock there too, as if she didn't know her body was capable of something like this.

I sink into her, groaning all the while. "Didn't I say I'd take care of you? I'm going to give you everything you never knew you needed." My pace increases, and I'm angling my cock deeper inside her, hitting her inner walls until she's a shaking, sobbing mess. "I *own* this pussy now, Skye. Do you understand?"

Her *yes* is a cry of desperation, and it only makes me slam into her harder. She's nearly there, I can feel it. Clenching around my thick length, trying to squeeze my release from me. Her breasts are bouncing with the force of my thrusts, and I'm obsessed.

The headboard is thumping against the wall, but the noise only eggs me on. "You take my cock so well." I seize her lips, and she cries out into the kiss. It's hot and heavy, our breath mingling, until I'm holding back my own release. Her cunt is twitching around me, her orgasm teetering on the edge. I snarl at her, sweat sliding between my shoulder blades, "I've been hard since you walked into the bar, so be a good girl and come on this cock like you own it, Skye, cause it's all yours."

Every moan that leaves her is higher pitched than the last, and with one brutal thrust, my girl breaks, her orgasm roaring over her like thunder. Her back bows, putting those pink nipples on display for me, but I don't stop my rhythm, plunging into her with everything I have.

She's squeezing my cock tighter than a fist, and I can't hold back any longer, my sac drawn up tight beneath me, pulsing hot with my release. I groan as I come, shooting my seed into her perfect pussy, giving her all of me—and she takes it perfectly. The waves of pleasure are like no release I've had before, and I never want it to end.

But like all good things, it does. I collapse onto the bed, my chest heaving, my lungs burning, and my head filled with nothing but Skye. With the last of my strength, I pull her into my embrace. There's a warm sensation in my chest, and my hand tips up her chin.

“I may own your cunt, Skye, but fuck, you own my cock every bit as much.” I brush the tip of my nose against hers, my lips curving in contentment.



By the time Skye checks her phone, I don't think there's an inch of her body that my tongue hasn't visited. It's the early hours of the morning, in the black before the sunrise. We're on our sides, with her warm ass nestled up against my cock, and I'm pressing kisses against the side of her neck.

“Everything okay?” I ask.

“I'm just seeing if my cat is okay.” She flicks her thumb across the screen, pressing an app with a little pawprint as its

icon. It opens to show what is presumably her hotel room. There's clothes strewn across the bed, but she immediately tries to hide it from view. "About the mess... I was, uh, trying on different outfits before I went downstairs to the bar."

I snort. "Don't apologize." I nip at her earlobe playfully. "If that's what it took for you to look this good, I have no complaints. How's your cat?"

On her phone, she zooms in on the bed. The bedcovers are smooth, and it's clear it hasn't been slept in, but there's a small fort of pillows at the head of the bed, and nestled within lies an upside down cat. It's fast asleep, its legs stretched out above its head and its belly exposed. "Hasn't moved since I left."

I give a huff of amusement. "Boy or girl?"

"Boy," she says, a smile in her voice.

"What's his name?"

There's a pause before she answers, and I can feel her hesitation creep down between her shoulders. "He's called Bryaxis."

Frowning, I kiss just beneath her ear. It's unusual. "Is that a name you made up?"

She sighs in my arms, and I can feel her chest deflate slightly. "No, it's stupid, I know. It's from my favorite book series. There's this creature in it that lives at the bottom of a library and—"

My frown deepens, and I roll her onto her back. The pink lighting allows me to see her face, the rays rippling across her

bare skin. “You named him after something you love. How is that stupid?”

Her smile is radiant. “Really?”

“Really,” I nod, brushing her chestnut locks from her face. “Who made you think it was stupid?”

Her hesitation returns, but before she answers her phone begins to ring. It makes her jump, and her eyes widen. “He did,” she says softly.

I don’t recognize the contact name—*Brett*—but I sure as shit recognize the kid in the contact photo, holding up a golden trophy. “You don’t have to answer it, but if you do, I’m here for you.”

Steeling herself, Skye accepts the call and holds it to her ear. “Why are you calling me?”

The reply is a muffled barrage of words, and I can almost smell the stink of alcohol coming through the damn phone.

I motion to her to put the phone on speaker.

Brett’s voice fills my bedroom. “I just spent the last eight hours in a goddamn cell because of you, *what do you think I fucking want?*”

“That’s hardly because of me, Brett. You had your hands around my—”

“Don’t give me that bullshit. All I wanted was to have a civil conversation and you run the first chance you get. And where do I find you? In some bar trying to pick up guys, looking like

someone put make-up on a fucking pig. You have no right to ___”

I snatch the phone out of Skye’s hand, turning it off speaker before holding it to my ear. “The fuck did you just say about my girl, asshole?”

The silence before he speaks is golden. “Who are you?” he asks eventually.

“I’m the man who handed your ass to you earlier. I’m the man whose bed Skye spent the last eight hours in. I’m the man whose tongue and cock she spent the last eight hours coming on. I’m the man who spent the last eight hours caring for her as she deserves to be fucking cared for, not belittling and insulting her. You’re pathetic, *Brett*. The fact that you saw her tonight and thought of her as anything less than stunning speaks for itself.”

Adrenaline screams at me as I end the call, my lungs heaving and my hands desperate to wring his neck. My jaw’s ticking, but it all melts away when I feel her soft, delicate touch against my cheek.

“Silas,” Skye whispers, her eyes glittering.

I hold her wrist, keeping her palm against my jaw. My breathing is ragged, and rage runs red hot in my veins. “Don’t listen to a word he says, pretty girl. He’s pathetic. He’s *nothing*.”

“I wore that dress because he never let me wear it when we were together,” she admits, chewing on her lip and looking

away. “He always said I looked...”

“Perfect,” I snarl. “Perfect is the word you’re looking for. He never let you wear it because he knew you could do better. He tore you apart because he wanted to drag you down to his level.”

Skye looks up at me, her eyes heavy-lidded and her arms coming to rest around my shoulders. She pulls me over her, and I’ve never gone anywhere so willingly.

“You know you’re better than him, don’t you?”

She nods, gasping when she feels my erection between her thighs.

“Say it.”

“I’m better than him.”

I slide my cock into place. She’s slick with eight hours of our combined releases, and I glide right in. “Say it again, Skye.”

“I’m—*oh!*” Her eyes close at my first brutal thrust, her hands clawing into my graying hair to steady herself. She’s panting as she takes my cock, but she manages to get it out in a quick whimper. “*I’m better than him oh!*”

I rest up on my haunches, and her arms fall back above her head. Fuck, she’s a sight to see in my bed. “Damn right. He didn’t deserve you, did he?”

Her hands close around the bed’s headboard as I angle my cock inside her, ensuring the beads on my Jacob’s ladder rub against her exactly the way she likes it. “No, no—oh, oh, *oh!*”

“That’s it, baby.” She’s clenching already, and I slip my hand in between us, rubbing her sensitive, swollen clit.

“There, there, please.” Her eyes are closed, her brows so tightly drawn they’re almost touching.

The bed is slamming against the wall again, but her cries are louder, her volume increasing with every thrust. She’s nearly there, her walls tightening around my cock. The piercings increase my sensitivity, and I’m in fucking heaven inside her. My balls are braced tight, ready to explode.

“Come for me, Skye,” I growl, my voice rough and deep and commanding. She’s so close I can nearly taste it. “Come for me, *now!*”

Skye lets out a choke, frozen as I slam into her, our bodies slapping together with every thrust. But then I feel her hold on my cock tighten, and she cries out, spine arching, toes curling, pussy clenching—and she pulls me in with her. My orgasm was right there from the beginning, just waiting to explode. My balls are tight under me, and pleasure crests as I unload inside her, the waves hitting me *hard*.

“Look at me,” I snarl, pleasure constricting my voice into something primal. She obeys, and I hold her gaze as we come, our orgasms building and dying as one, and somewhere in the middle I claim her as *mine*, marking her out as *my* woman, and I know when dawn breaks I’m never going to let her go.

Skye

When I awaken, Silas is nowhere to be seen.

I get the feeling that I haven't been asleep for very long at all. Through the vast windows around me, the sun is only just rising. Few people are out this early, but Silas's penthouse is so high up that those that are out and about are nothing but specks on the ground below.

With a groan, I remember my eight o'clock *disciplinary hearing* with Kenneth at work. "For fuck's sake," I mutter, pinching the bridge of my nose. Yawning, I quickly open up my period tracker, clicking the little *Intercourse* box to add a checkmark—for the first time in weeks. I knew Brett and I hadn't been having regular sex, but I hadn't realized for how long. The last time we were intimate was before *Thanksgiving*.

Well that's depressing to think about.

Glancing back at the bed, I sigh. The sheets are crumpled, with random bedding strewn across the room like Valentine's Day confetti. A frown creases my forehead when I see my

little black dress folded on the dresser, my heels neatly set in front of it. When I go to dress, I get a whiff of fabric conditioner—and it's not the one that I use. Has this been cleaned?

The smell vaguely reminds me of Silas, but there's something missing. Something spicy and musky and warm that's entirely his own.

My panties are nowhere to be found, however. I shove my dress on, the fabric gripping my ass as tightly as a drunken frat boy at a bar. After five minutes of searching, I give up. My bare feet slap against the marble flooring, and I can't help but gawk at the sheer opulence on display.

I was too busy to notice all this last night, but now I'm being nosy. The kitchen is dominated by an island that seems almost too big to be functional. There's buttons set into the marble countertops that I assume must do something, but god knows what. I don't dare touch anything, but as I walk into the enormous living room my restraint is tested by the chandelier cascading down above my head. The sunrise twinkles in every crystal pendulum, and I reach my hand up, stopping myself at the last second.

If I break that thing, I'd probably have to sell my goddamn kidney to pay for it.

Where is Silas? Has he just left? He could have at least signposted the exit. This apartment-turned-palace is big enough to need it.

Attempting to find my way out, I accidentally walk into what I think is a gym. Most of the floor is covered with soft mats that remind me of being back in gym class, but there's punching bags too. Or at least I think they're punching bags—there's one shaped like a waterdrop, a normal cylindrical one, and even one that is fastened to both the floor *and* the ceiling, weirdly. I recognize some of the other equipment in here—mouthguards, shin guards, and various padded shields—thanks to Brett dumping his wrestling equipment all over our apartment.

It's not the exit I'm looking for though. I pass a home theatre with the comfiest movie theatre seats I've ever seen. But then I recognize the hallway next to it—and the foyer from last night comes into view. My heart jumps when I see there's a note next to the bouquet of white-and-pink peonies, and I snatch it up to read.

On your way out, could you drop the old bunch of flowers off in the garbage disposal downstairs?

Thanks

S

I read it twice over, my expression blank. My mouth falls open. Is he freaking serious? Is that all I get after last night? The bubble of happiness in my chest well and truly pops, deflating far past where it had been before I met him. What about everything he said to Brett on the phone?

The fuck did you just say about my girl, asshole?

My girl.

Clearly that was the drink talking, then.

I put the note back where I found it, spying the fountain pen next to it. Taking off the fancy leather cap, I touch the golden nib to the paper and write a reply.

Take your own goddamn garbage out

Thanks for a fun night... sir

Slipping my heels on, I wince at the way they irritate my blisters from last night, but they're not nearly as irritating as the note Silas left for me. Well fuck him, and fuck his peonies.

I may not have my panties, but I have my dignity, dammit.

I stab at the button for the elevator and, with a narrowed look at Silas's mind-blowing apartment, descend back down to the first floor, ignoring the almighty sinking feeling in my chest.



I feel... adrift when I eventually get into work, ready for my meeting with Kenneth. My work bestie Deanna and I usually text throughout the day, and a one night stand with a silver fox would certainly be dissected and discussed a thousand times

over. But she's off on her honeymoon, and I'm not going to shoehorn my crap into her life right now.

God I wish I was one of those people that can't see mental images in their mind. Because the sight of Sara and Brett together will be burned into my brain until the day I die.

We're isolated from the main office block down here in logistics. In contrast to the towering office next to us and the warehouses to the rear, the logistics office isn't large, containing only a few cubicles. Most of the logistics staff are working remotely today, and the only sign of the employees that usually inhabit the cubicles is the personal effects they've left behind. Gareth, for instance, has a small fish tank on his desk, and a lone betta swims amongst the plants, flaring his fins at anyone who looks too closely and patiently waiting for the auto-feeder to spit out a few pellets every day. Tom has a photo of his wife and kids, as well as some drawings his kids have done for him. There's even a dog bed under Vivian's desk, where her service dog Beau chills during the day. My desk, however, is located next to Inez.

"Hey Inez," I say, giving her a smile as I take my seat, depositing my laptop bag on the hard gray carpet.

Inez acknowledges me with a look over her rounded flower-patterned glasses. There's about three decades between us, and she's not what anyone would call *friendly*. "Morning."

I can't help but try again. "How was your Valentine's night?"

She looks at the calendar on the wall next to her. It's gardening-themed, and Inez's crowning achievement was that

her garden was chosen as the picture for October. This month's picture is a riot of pink peonies, and they immediately remind me of the bouquet in Silas's apartment. "I didn't even realize it was Valentine's," Inez observes, leaving my question unanswered and going straight back to her computer, slowly pecking at the keyboard in front of her.

Fine. I get the hint. Inez is *not* a morning person and I need to respect that.

With the exception of Deanna, all of the staff here are a good decade or so older than me. We're friendly, but we're not *close*. Do they know about my disciplinary hearing? I don't even know what it is I'm supposed to have done, but goddamn it I am not going into that meeting unprepared.

Silently, I take out my work laptop and fire it up. My meeting isn't for another half hour, so I've got some time to go through my spreadsheet with a fine-tooth comb. A few new emails have come in overnight from other departments, and I go through Kenneth's work calendar to ensure everything is correct across the different time zones. As much as I hate the bastard.

As I work, I realize that other than Deanna, there's no one I can really talk to. And I don't even want to *talk*. I want to vent. I *need* to vent. I have some trauma to dump. My sister fucked my goddamn long-term boyfriend, who had apparently been looking at engagement rings last week.

When I have a spare second, I log into my personal email account, shooting off an email to my therapist. I've never had

any significant therapy other than when I lost my mom, but I have a feeling Sara sleeping with Brett is going to fuel more than a single session.

Our dad had left before I turned a year old. With mom gone, Sara was the only family I had left.

And then there was the issue of Silas.

I couldn't get him out of my head. The way he snatched my phone from me and tore Brett a new one. The way he called me *my girl*. The way he made me beg for him to touch me. The way he moved inside me. The soft, gentle talk in between the filthier moments. God, every aspect of our night together runs through my head.

I didn't want it to just be a one night stand. I wanted more.

I thought he wanted more too.

"Earth to Skye." Kenneth plants his corduroy-coated ass on my desk, glaring down at me with a look of disapproval.

I swallow. "Good morning, sir. Apologies, I was... trying to work out a time zone in my head," I invent quickly. "Is it time for our meeting?"

He grunts, his gray moustache twitching. "Follow me," Kenneth frowns. "And bring your laptop."

My heels click on the floor as Kenneth leads me down to the warehouses, where they're quickly overwhelmed with the sounds of forklifts humming and pallet jacks squeaking along the warehouse floor. We don't stop, though, and soon we enter the offices proper.

Silver Mobility's main reception area is a world away from Kenneth's logistics department. It's honestly the prettiest reception area I've ever seen. At its center is a large, calming water feature, and it reminds me of a giant chocolate fountain. The movement of the water is smooth and seamless, and it's almost hypnotizing to look at.

We walk across the granite floor, parallel to the long planters lining the walls, out of which tropical plants burst, their enormous leaves sagging under their own weight.

I'm silent as Kenneth walks to the elevators, and we ascend all the way up to the top floor. I frown, wondering what the hell we're doing up here. With the exception of two closed doors and an enormous window, it's completely deserted.

After snatching a quick view of the vista from the window, I'm ushered into one of the two rooms, which turns out to be a large meeting room. It's nothing like the soulless meeting room in the logistics department. A large glass table takes up most of the space, with an enormous screen at its head. There's a screensaver of the Silver Mobility logo on it at present, casually drifting from corner to corner. Helen, the HR manager, occupies a seat, nodding at Kenneth and I as we walk in. There's a pile of papers in front of her, but I have no idea what they pertain to.

"Give me your laptop and take a seat," Kenneth advises me, pointing to a chair.

But when I do, I can't help but notice that Kenneth and Helen are both seated opposite me, leaving a vacant seat in

between them.

And suddenly I feel like I'm under a spotlight.

"Is there a problem, sir?" I ask, watching Kenneth link my laptop to the large screen at the end of the table. The Silver Mobility screensaver vanishes, and suddenly my desktop is there for all to see—including the background picture of Bryaxis. Normally, it makes me smile every time I see it. Axi is upside down in the Christmas tree, his wide eyes reflecting the multicolored lights around him.

But now I'm starting to feel sick.

"We'd like to ask you some questions, Miss Davis," Helen says, lowering her eyelashes to read the papers in front of her. Her mascara is so thickly coated on that her lashes are clumping together, sharply contrasting with her white blonde hair.

"But what is this about?" I gulp. "I haven't been given any reason for the hearing."

Kenneth glances at his phone, murmuring something to Helen, and I just about catch her response. "We can start without him." She turns to me, her pale blonde bob swishing around her ears. "We'd like to ask you some questions."

"Okay," I say slowly.

"Remind me how long you've worked at Silver Mobility, Skye."

I can't help but narrow my eyes. She was at my goddamn interview. She knows exactly how long I've worked here.

“Around two months now.”

“And what does your job involve?” Helen asks.

“I’m a personal assistant to Kenneth. I do a little bit of everything. I schedule Kenneth’s meetings, I coordinate his calendar, and I also deal with the invoices.”

Helen’s eyes light up at that last one. “Tell me about the invoices.”

There’s a pause before I answer. Where are they going with this? “What about them?”

“Walk me through your process of dealing with an invoice.”

“I transfer information from physical invoices onto the system. I’m also responsible for adding and maintaining vendor information and ensuring everything is correct when paying out and receiving invoices.”

Kenneth and Helen share a look, and I can’t decipher it.

“You add vendor information?” Helen repeats.

I nod, stuttering when I realize there’s a camera set up behind her, its red light flashing intermittently. “I add both the vendors and the invoices to the system, after which I send them over for Kenneth to approve.”

Helen hums, giving a little nod to Kenneth. The list of vendors is projected onto the screen, and I recognize all of them. Some of them are newer, whereas others have invoices going back more than a decade. Kenneth clicks on one of the newer vendors, and I recognize the name. They were one of

the first vendors I added after starting at Silver Mobility, but they've had regular invoices sent in since. "I can see you added this vendor."

"Yes, I did."

The look on her face is worrying, and she shares another look with Kenneth. "And you've added every invoice pertaining to this account?"

I glance up at the screen, nodding. "Yes, I have," I repeat.

Helen releases a long sigh, tapping the glass table with a freshly polished nail. "And you mentioned that you always get Kenneth's approval for every invoice?"

"That's correct."

She clears her throat once more, leaning back in her seat. "Over the past few weeks, the auditors have noticed a discrepancy in the P&L statements for the logistics department."

I blink. "Okay."

"After some investigation, we've narrowed down this discrepancy to a single vendor. *This* vendor, Skye."

My eyes are wide, and I suddenly realize what they're getting at.

"We've also discovered evidence that you've logged on to Kenneth's account remotely to approve invoices, the most recent of which was just last night."

My heart is thumping in my chest, my ears rushing with blood. “With *permission*,” I emphasize.

“I’ve never given you permission to access my account, Skye,” Kenneth says, with a subtle shake of his head.

My jaw drops. I’m speechless, and a rush of heat comes over me at the indignance of the accusation. “You’ve *always* given me permission to do so. It’s part of my job! I deal with the jobs that you aren’t able to complete—after being instructed to do them. I would never pay out an invoice without permission!”

“It’s not a single invoice we’re talking about,” Helen says, looking down her nose at me. “We’ve looked into this vendor—there’s no evidence that this company has ever existed, and yet invoices have been paid out to this vendor amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars. A vendor that *you’ve* added. That nobody has ever heard of. For a service Silver Mobility never received.”

I look desperately at Kenneth. This is all a mistake. It has to be. “You called me last night, sir,” I plead. “You asked me to log onto the system remotely.”

Kenneth’s lips press into a thin line. “I would never ask you to approve an invoice on my behalf, Skye. It goes against company policy.”

My expression twists into grim disgust, and I’ve never hated Kenneth more. We both know he’s given me approval to add vendors and invoices, and he’s lying through his teeth.

It’s my word against his, and my word means jack shit.

“You pathetic, spineless fucking weasel,” I spit at him, just stopping myself from diving across the table to wrap my hands around his neck.

“Miss Davis,” Helen exclaims. “Need I remind you of the seriousne—”

The meeting room door swings open.

“Apologies for my lateness,” the newcomer says casually, and I do a double-take. I know that voice. I know those lips. And I *definitely* know the shoulders my legs spent most of the night bouncing around on. He’s wearing a crisp suit, and I’m reminded of the feel of his body against me, *inside* me.

Silas.

Shock solidifies me in my seat, my gaze flicking between him and the empty chair between Kenneth and Helen. He’s clearly the elder statesman here, and anyone can see it.

But then he sees me sitting opposite, and his entire demeanor changes. Those muscular shoulders stiffen, and I can’t help the way my thighs tighten—Pavlov would have a fine day with me. Silas’s jaw begins to tick a furious beat, but he doesn’t break eye contact. “Everybody out,” he snarls.

Oh god.

I’m fucked.

Silas

I slam the meeting room door shut, and Skye and I are alone once more.

Fuck, she's even more beautiful in the daylight.

My shoulders heave with emotion—indignation, annoyance, outrage. I turn the lock, and it snaps shut, trapping her in the room with me.

“Why are you here?” she whispers, her eyes as wide as saucers as she watches me shut off the camera recording the hearing.

I don't want any evidence of this conversation.

“Because,” I plant my hands on the smooth glass table, letting my weight rest on my shoulders, “one of my employees is accused of embezzling money. And my logistics director has identified the culprit.”

Skye swallows, sinking in her chair. “One of your employees?”

“It seems so.”

Her focus slides around the room, landing on the Silver Mobility logo now drifting across the screen. “You own the company?”

My eyebrow ticks. “It has my name on it, doesn’t it?”

“Your name?”

“Silver is my surname.”

She lets out a laugh. “You could have mentioned that last night.”

“What?” I ask, towering over her. “That I own the company you’re embezzling from?”

Anger surfaces within her, bright and furious. “I haven’t embezzled shit, Silas.”

“Mr. Silver,” I say coldly.

Skye gets to her feet, mimicking my posture. “I think I’ve earned the right to call you by your name after last night, *sir*.”

She isn’t a pushover, this woman. But I guess I knew that after her little note this morning. Slowly, I make my way around the table. I can see she expects me to stop before I enter her personal space, but fuck that. I crowd her, moving her back against the wall. My footsteps stalk hers, and my cock hardens at the feel of her body against mine. “*Thanks for the fun night... sir*,” I recite, breathing in her scent.

Her little note for me, left beside the bouquet of flowers that had gone past their best.

“You asked me to take out your trash,” she hisses, her breath hitching when my hand skates across her hip.

“The note was for my cleaner, Skye. Not you.”

Her expression blanks. “*What?*”

“If you’d waited in my apartment a few minutes longer, I would have been able to tell you that myself.” I pull her closer, our lips inches apart.

“Where did you go?”

“To get breakfast for us.” I hold her chin. We’re so close I can see the amber striations in her eyes. “I didn’t want you leaving on an empty stomach.”

“Oh,” she whispers, her teeth sinking into her bottom lip.

I slide one hand into the dark hair at her nape, remembering how perfect it looks sprawled out against my bedsheets. “Tell me,” I say, dragging the tip of my nose against her neck. “Why are you embezzling?”

“I’m not embezzl—*oh!*”

She gasps as I bite into her neck, just short of breaking the skin. “Tell me the truth,” I snarl.

“I am telling you the truth.” Her voice is breathy, but she’s making no effort to get away from me.

But I guess I already knew she likes to be pinned down, didn’t I?

“I’m not embezzling,” she insists once more. “My manager, Kenneth, he’s lying. He’s saying I did things without approval,

but I had his approval every time.”

That gives me pause. Kenneth Youngblood has worked for Silver Mobility for more than a decade. “Do you have proof of this? In writing?”

Skye gives me a hard look, as though she’s the one assessing my guilt rather than the other way round. She looks away, deep in thought. “Believe what you will of me, but I am *very* good at my job, Silas. I do things by the book. Every time.”

I’m not sure where she’s going with this, but I nod.

“And I noticed pretty early on that Kenneth doesn’t have quite the same approach to his job that I have for mine.”

Another nod. I know the man pretty well. He’s a little rough and ready, but he knows how to handle the warehouse crew. “As long as the job gets done, I don’t question his working style.”

“Says the man whose company is being embezzled from,” she mutters snidely.

I do my best to take that on the chin. “Fair point.”

“I document everything I do. I always have. Somewhere on my cloud drive is a record of every period I’ve had since I was twelve, for example. I do the same with work. Clocking in. Emails. Invoices. Appointments. You name it, it’s on there. And when I realized there were consistent orders coming in from one particular company but no transportation being organized for those orders, I queried it with Kenneth *and*

Helen from HR. They both said it was for a virtual product, but after today...”

“You’re not so sure,” I finish for her, my attention rapt. “When you say you queried it, was that verbally or in writing?”

“Kenneth was verbally. I tried to get it in writing, but he never replied to the email,” she swallows. “Helen’s response was in writing though.”

I gesture behind her. “Is that your laptop? Can I look at the email?”

“Be my guest.”

I sit down, pulling her laptop towards me and opening it up. In my peripheral vision, the Silver Mobility screensaver vanishes. I’m immediately greeted with not a spreadsheet, but a desktop background of a cat in a Christmas tree. Despite everything, it puts a smile on my face. “Is this Bryaxis?” I ask, glancing up at her.

The tension dissolves from her expression. “You remembered his name?”

“Of course.” A minute of searching later, the email she spoke of is on the screen, with Helen Locker confirming that all orders are verified as legitimate.

“Can I go through the spreadsheet too?” I ask, my finger hovering over the touchpad.

She nods, leaning over me to bring it up.

Holy shit.

Skye wasn't kidding. The bottom of the screen is full of different worksheet names. I'm glad she directs me to the relevant one, otherwise I think I would have died looking for it. And once she's started, she doesn't stop, pointing out every invoice she's highlighted as dubious, noting everything she thinks is unusual, and there's more detail here than the last decade of Kenneth Youngblood's logistic reports.

I take my phone out as I search, verifying her data against my own. She's flagged up everything the auditors have done—and more. Orders and emails are linked within her spreadsheets, and I'm able to see that this goes back beyond two months.

Longer than she's worked for me.

When I'm finally done with the spreadsheet, I turn to her. “We're going to be conducting a massive internal investigation, Skye. The police will be too, and the amount embezzled is large enough to warrant a lengthy prison sentence.”

“I didn't do it,” she says immediately, getting to her feet. Her eyes are indignant. “I swear to god I didn't, Silas. Search my bank account. Search my cat's freaking litter box, if you need to. I didn't do it.”

“I believe you,” I murmur, my voice lowering to a deep rumble. I embrace her, running my hands up her arms. We're in the meeting room next to my goddamn office, but somehow it feels like we've been transported back to my bedroom.

Something changes in her expression. It's softer, somehow, and her eyes lower. "I'm sorry for leaving this morning, *sir*."

And just like that, my cock kicks into gear. Blood rushes to my groin, my skin tightening as it stretches around my growing erection. "You should be sorry."

Skye lets out a little moan as my length presses against her.

I bring my hand up to her throat, holding her gaze. "You're a naughty girl, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Say it."

"I'm a naughty girl, sir," she half-whimpers, her breasts rising and falling.

I pull up her skirt with my free hand, caressing her rounded thigh, but I give a grunt of annoyance when I feel lacy panties. "Did I give you permission to wear these?"

"No."

Clucking my tongue and shaking my head, I conceal a smirk, stepping away from her. "Take them off."

Skye's hands disappear beneath her skirt, and her emerald green panties come into view. She shimmies them past her knees, and they fall to the floor.

I back up further, until I'm perching against the edge of the glass table. "Now turn around. I want you facing the same direction I am." Waiting patiently, I watch with burning satisfaction as she follows my every order. "Spread your legs

and lift your skirt up. Your boss wants you to bend over for him.”

She bends, and the primal groan that leaves my chest is wholly unexpected, but I can't stop it. Her flushed pink lips are on show for me. I can see her slickness from here, glistening for me in the morning light. Evidence of her wetness has spread to her inner thighs, and my mouth waters at the sight.

And then she rises, her emerald panties in hand, hiding her cunt from me once more.

“Give them to me.”

Skye turns, placing them in my hand. They're still warm, and without breaking eye contact I press them to my face, deeply inhaling her scent. It's heated and musky, and so fucking arousing I want to bathe in it, filling my lungs to my heart's content. “Follow me.”

I lead her out. Our journey isn't far—my office is next door, and I usher Skye in before locking the door behind us.

She's taking in my office—the walls are paneled in dark mahogany, coupled with the vast desk directly in front of us. Artworks and awards are strategically placed on the bookshelf lining the wall to our left, whilst the right-hand side of the room is more casual. Armchairs crowd around a coffee table, and it's my preferred meeting place. The meeting room Skye and I just vacated is reserved for more formal matters, and I try to avoid it where I can.

“Come,” I murmur, taking her hand and guiding her over to my desk. Before I sit, I find the zipper at the side of her skirt, loosening it and yanking it down to the floor.

I sit in the high-backed leather chair, leaning into a gentle recline, and tap the desk, right over where my laptop would normally sit. “Sit. Put your feet on either side of my knees, *there you go.*”

Like the good girl she is, she follows my orders without question.

My eyes darkening, I spread her legs further to expose her pink slit, rolling the chair forward until her scent reaches me once again.

Skye is quiet, leaning back on her hands and biting her bottom lip, but it’s not enough.

“Arms up. I want you naked on my desk.” I pull her top off, quickly unhooking her bra and tossing it onto the floor.

I lean back to observe my handiwork. Skye is wearing nothing but her heels, and I can’t stop looking at her. “You’re so fucking sexy,” I tell her, gliding my hands up and down her rounded thighs. “Such a naughty girl, naked on your boss’s desk.”

Her eyebrow gives a spirited twitch. “You’re not my boss.”

“I’m your boss’s boss, pretty girl. I own the company you work for. Now are you going to be a good little employee or not?”

Skye's pussy clenches. She tries to close her thighs, but I stop her. "I'm going to be a good little employee, sir," she repeats.

That's what I wanted to hear. "Good. Then lie back."

As soon as her back meets my desk, I push her legs apart. "Do you want me to suck on your clit?" I run my thumbs up the sensitive creases where her thighs meet her cunt. A visible shiver runs down her spine, and I see goosebumps pop up on her skin. "Or do you want me to lick all of this arousal you're leaking?"

She clenches again. "I want everything."

Reaching over her thigh, I drag my desk phone towards us. "But you left my apartment without a word this morning. And I think that deserves a punishment."

Skye doesn't get a chance to reply. I quickly lift the handset and press speaker. A dial tone starts up, but it stops a half second later.

A voice fills the room—Marie's, my secretary downstairs. "Good morning, Mr. Silver. How can I help?"

"Morning Marie," I grin. There's utter panic on Skye's face, but she remains where she is, spread naked on my desk. "Can you put me through to the audit department?"

The audit manager, Jerry, answers almost immediately, but in the moments before he picks up, I cup Skye's mound, and her breath hitches. "Jerry speaking."

“Jerry,” I say easily, holding Skye’s gaze. “It’s Silas.” I trace the edges of her pussy, her wetness helping my fingers to effortlessly glide up and down. “Did you have time to start our meeting early?”

Skye’s mouth opens in a silent gasp when I delve between her lips, my thumb caressing her clit in smooth, rhythmic movements.

“Hey, Silas,” Jerry answers. “I was just going through your file, funnily enough. Sounds good to me. How have you been getting on at your end?”

I slide a finger inside her, and Skye claps a hand over her mouth to muffle her response. Her hips shift restlessly, but I don’t let up—adding another finger as I pump inside her. My cock is heavy, pre-cum dripping from the head as her walls clasp around my touch, relentlessly squeezing.

“We’ve identified the department, but not the individual responsible.” I reach up, plucking Skye’s nipples, and she clenches around me in response. “How are you getting on with tracing that bank account?”

“We isolated all the relevant transactions, but we’re in the process of tracing the receiving account...”

Jerry continues, and I’m half listening to him, half watching Skye approach her orgasm. Fuck, I need her like this every morning. The sight is mouth-watering; her thick thighs spread wide, her pussy pulsing around my fingers, her full breasts quivering with every breath.

The meeting goes on and on, and Skye is constantly moving, chasing down the climax I'm determined to keep from her—for now.

Whenever her breathing starts to judder in the run-up to detonating, I pull away. Over and over again.

Her eyes fly open, and she hoists herself up on her elbows to glare at me over Jerry's voice. I barely conceal my snort, because I suspect she's about a millisecond from throwing that desk phone at my head. *Please*, she mouths.

“Jerry,” I say, clearing my throat. “Remind me how your tracking systems work.”

When he starts his agonizingly long explanation, I hit mute on the phone.

“Promise me you'll never leave again, pretty girl.” My voice is low and throaty, my cock as hard as stone.

“I'll never leave again,” she vows, and I believe her. There's a sincerity in her gaze, one that I saw last night at the bar. This is different, this feeling, this *connection* between us, and we both know it.

I hold her gaze as I drag my tongue over her needy clit, savoring the way her expression changes to relief.

And then I stop holding myself back.

I'm ravenous, my fingers clenching into her soft thighs, the tang of her wetness coating my tongue. Her hips begin to move again, riding my face whilst her hands delve into my hair.

Over my licks and sucks and groans, she begins to pant, and I make no effort to stop her orgasm this time. No, this time I'm right there with her, driving her forward on her approach. The heels of her shoes are digging into my back, her hair hanging off my desk, her moans filling the office.

"*Silas,*" she chokes. "Oh, oh, oh. Right there, right there!"

Skye's thighs clamp around my head, muffling her cries as she detonates. Her hips briefly leave the desk before I pin her back down. She's writhing in my grip, her climax mercilessly wringing the pleasure from her.

She shudders out a laugh, ticklish as her climax recedes. I guide her limp form back down to the desk, wrenching my belt and pants open and taking out my pierced length, thick and veined and desperate, running it up and down her pretty pink cunt, grinding against her sensitive clit. Soon there's a layer of her slick release coating my cock, and I'm pushing forward.

We gasp as one as my cock slowly slides inside her cunt, piercing by piercing. It's been hours since we were last joined, but it feels like a lifetime. Ripples of her climax are still travelling through her, and they feel like heaven around my cock.

"You're perfect," I groan, my hips rocking into her. I slide my thumb down to her clit, tracing steady circles as I thrust. Her breasts bounce with the rhythm, and I'm obsessed with the movement, slamming into her harder and harder, angling my cock the way I did last night.

My efforts pay off, and soon she's making those panting noises again. I'm addicted to them. They fuel my lust, and my movements are primal and animalistic and rough, devouring her cunt as I slide home again and again.

"Come with me, baby," I say hoarsely. She's clenching around my cock so much I'm doing everything I can to hold back. "Come around this dick."

Fuck, I'm really beginning to love that choking noise she makes before she comes.

As soon as I hear it, I stop holding back.

I bury my thick cock to the hilt, my piercings hitting her exactly where she needs it. Skye's eyes roll backwards, and she stiffens in my grasp. Warm jets of my seed explode into her, my balls drawn up so tight I'm almost light-headed. My heart is hammering, my breath is frozen in my lungs... and through it all I know I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be.

When I can catch my breath, I pull Skye down onto me. I collapse in my leather chair, chest heaving. We're still joined, but neither of us are making any move to change that. There's a faint dial tone on the phone, and I realize that at some point Jerry must have put the phone down, but I honestly can't bring myself to care.

Lifting Skye's palm to my lips, I press a kiss to the center. "I'm not the only one that feels this connection, am I?"

Skye shakes her head, her shoulders relaxing. "No."

“Then you’re not going to protest me taking you back to my apartment for a few days, are you?” The reports Kenneth has been sending over are woefully inadequate against Skye’s spreadsheets.

I may believe that she’s innocent, but I still want to keep a close eye on her. And my apartment is covered in cameras.

And you want to keep her, a dark voice in my mind whispers to me.

“N—” She stops, her expression morphing from relaxed and well-pleasured to hesitation. “What about my cat?”

“Bryaxis?”

“I still can’t believe you remembered his name,” she says shyly, a soft smile on her lips.

“I may be older than you, but I’m not *that* old. He can come too. I won’t have him on the streets.” Our lips meet in a gentle kiss, unspoken emotions swirling around us like a whirlwind. “Let’s get you dressed, and then Bryaxis and I can be formally introduced.”

Her smile almost lights up the room.

“Because I’m going to need your help sorting out this embezzlement mess. If my logistics director is lying, I need to find out why.”

Skye

I don't know how many hours of security footage Silas and I have trawled through over the last couple weeks, but two things have become clear.

One: My manager, Kenneth, left the office every time he called me to give me permission to access his account remotely, meaning there's no audio recording of what he said.

Two: Bryaxis is as much of a traitorous little bastard as Kenneth.

Brett and Bryaxis were never close. He always complained that Axi was uncontrollable and unloving. Not to mention his name. "*I'm not going to call it that stupid freaking book name,*" he'd said after I first bought Axi home.

Maybe that was why I always thought Bryaxis was a one-woman cat.

Nope.

I just never had competition.

And now I look at Silas using his laptop one-handed, holding a purring Axi on his chest. The two have been inseparable, even after that furry little bugger smashed one of Silas's antique vases to pieces. If it were Brett, he would have demanded that we get rid of Axi, but Silas just seems to roll with the punches.

And I kinda love it.

That—and the sex.

Because holy fuck, that man is insatiable. I never knew my sex drive could be this high, but apparently your sex drive can change depending on who you're with. Whilst Silas was in a virtual meeting yesterday, I decided to take off my panties, change into a skirt, and sit opposite him, letting my legs fall open just enough for him to notice.

He was in the meeting for approximately three minutes.

We end up talking for hours after making love, discussing everything from our respective childhoods to the self-driving system on Silas's new car to cat training videos. Everything feels natural with him, and if Bryaxis is entirely in love with him, then I don't think I'm far behind.

On my laptop, I'm scanning through the security footage of the first fortnight of my employment at Silver Mobility. Using my phone records as a guide, I see that Kenneth called me just before midday on December 9th.

Just like clockwork, he leaves the office and goes out to the parking lot. It's the same routine every time, but I *need* him to

make the call in the office—because the security footage records audio and video round the clock. If there's an audio recording of Kenneth telling me to log into his account remotely to pay out fraudulent invoices, then I'm told there's probable cause for a warrant.

Only then is Silas getting the police involved, he says, and I'm grateful. If the police got involved now, I would be their number one suspect.

And Jesus, I wouldn't blame them. There's weeks and weeks of evidence of me paying out fraudulent invoices, and hundreds of thousands of dollars missing.

For now, though, Kenneth remains ignorant of what we're doing. He's placed me on *administrative leave*. And he has no idea I'm sleeping with his boss, or that I'm staying in Silas's apartment. Or that Silas and my cat are besties.

I narrow my eyes, looking over at Silas. I shake my head slightly, watching Bryaxis knead his claws in Silas's shirt and rubbing against his greying stubble. He's lacing his beard oil with catnip. He has to be.

My cell buzzes, and I brace myself. My sister has messaged me a few times since Valentine's Day, shoving endless apologies in my face. I confessed everything to my work friend Deanna a week after she got back from her honeymoon—and she really brought out the cavalry. A couple of girls in her friends group have been cheated on, and they've welcomed me into the fold like a little lost puppy.

It's nice. Between my new group of friends and regular therapy sessions, I'm feeling a lot more mentally stable. I've told people I'm staying at the hotel, but I'm keeping Silas to myself for now.

When I open the message, however, it's from an unknown number.

Come and get your shit out of my apartment. If it isn't gone by six o'clock this evening it's getting left on the curb.

Brett.

For fuck's sake, it's three o'clock now. He could have given me a bit more notice, but then I realize he probably wanted to give me as little notice as possible just to have an excuse to throw my stuff out. Asshole. I pause the security footage I've been watching, frantically searching for last minute removal companies. I quickly find a local one that looks as though it might be able to help, but my stomach drops when I see their website's calendar availability.

They're fully booked for the next six weeks.

And I don't even have anywhere to put all my stuff. My fingers fly over the laptop keyboard, searching for storage companies, and I'm so focused on the task at hand I don't notice Silas standing over my shoulder.

"Why are you looking at storage and removal companies?" he asks.

I pull my bottom lip under my front teeth, sheepishly holding up my phone. "Brett sent me a message."

Silas holds his hand out, and I give it to him. He frowns as he reads the text. “You don’t have to worry about storage companies. Or removals. We’ll go together.”

“Really?”

“Of course,” he touches my cheek, but Axi jumps up onto the pristine sofa, instantly wanting Silas’s attention to himself. Obliging, Silas scoops him up, and a wake of purring soon fills the room. “There’s more than enough space here to store all of your things, isn’t there Axi?”

Axi looks down at me, his eyes heavy-lidded as he lounges in Silas’s arms.

I’ve never seen a cat look so smug in all my life.



Nerves roll over me as Silas and I pull into the parking lot of my apartment. My ex apartment, that is. I lean my arm on the SUV’s luxurious leather armrest, avoiding the little buttons offering massage and heat options for the seat I’m sitting in.

“It’s that apartment over there,” I point. It’s right off the parking lot, with the front door a few steps off the sidewalk.

Even in my anxiety, I realize that Silas has set the mood lighting to be a soothing coral color, and it makes me want to squeeze him in affection. It’s not quite the pink of the lighting

in his bedroom—which has seen *heavy* use since Valentine’s Day.

Silas pulls into the space directly in front of my apartment, and I suck in a heavy breath. I haven’t seen Brett since he had his hands around my throat. What would he have done if Silas hadn’t shown up? How far would he have taken it?

And my conclusion is a frightening one.

I don’t know.

He’s always had anger issues, but before Valentine’s Day they were never directed at me. His phone has been shattered for more than a year after he threw it at a door. And he punched a hole in our bedroom wall one night after coming home drunk as a skunk. But he *never* laid a hand on me.

Just before he shuts the car off, Silas taps the touchscreen set into the dashboard, and I’m surprised to see that the SUV has cameras watching every inch of our surroundings, from the shoddily parked Corolla in the space behind us (minus its front bumper) to the NO TRESPASSING sign in old Mrs. Fuller’s window.

“Are they all recording?” I ask, my amazement briefly distracting me from my anxiety. My car is nothing but a beater with a heater.

“They are,” Silas nods. “Twenty-four seven.”

“Even when the car is off?”

“Even when the car is off.” He takes my hand, stopping the incessant tapping noise I hadn’t realized I was making. “So if

he tries anything out here, it'll be recorded. My phone will be recording audio too. If he tries anything, says anything, does anything, I'll be there for you, Skye.”

My voice is quiet. “Thank you.”

We get out of the SUV, but a gust of wind brings all the anxiety back as I realize what I'm wearing. It's nothing risqué—a sequined black dress that hugs my breasts, pulled in at the waist with a black belt. It ends at my midhigh, but I'm wearing a thick pair of tights beneath.

It's miles away from what Brett would have let me go out in.

He abhorred me wearing anything that emphasized my figure, insisting on shapeless, frumpy outfits that hid me beneath them.

But then Silas is there, holding his hand out, a stack of empty storage boxes under his other arm. “You ready, pretty girl?”

My shoulders relax, and I smile as I place my palm in his. “I'm ready.”

Silas knocks, and it takes Brett a minute or two to answer the door. He's dressed in joggers and an old wrestling hoodie, wearing a foul expression as he takes us in—and I notice the dismissive curve in his lip when he looks over my outfit.

Before I would have wilted, but today I glare right back. “I'm here to collect my stuff. As you so kindly asked me to.”

Brett's eyes flick to Silas. “Why is he here?”

“To protect my girl from the likes of you,” Silas bites back, his tone low and hard.

I half expect Brett to argue, but he steps aside, his hateful gaze landing on us both in equal measure.

My eyes are wide when I enter the apartment. The kitchen counter is full of dirty dishes, and I recognize the tubs of protein powder left out on the side. Before they would be safely stored out of sight, but now they’re left out in the open—in addition to the sprinkling of powder on the counter.

In the living room, I can still see the now-dried rose petals on the floor. The same ones that were scattered around the room on Valentine’s Day. Brett’s PlayStation is on the TV screen, paused mid-game. The controller is on the coffee table, nestled among a selection of empty beer cans and vape pens. Ah, and there’s the wrestling equipment dumped next to the front door. Wrinkling my nose, I wonder when he last washed his gym clothes.

Brett was always messy, but this is ridiculous. I turn to him, my eyebrows raised. “When did you last clean?”

“What’s it to you?” he sneers.

For some reason, that makes me smile, and then I realize why. “Nothing,” I say softly. “You’re nothing to me.”

Not waiting for a reply, I lead Silas into the bedroom Brett and I shared. The bed is unmade, but I note that the bedding hasn’t changed since I left. Stepping over the dirty socks littering the floor, I’m relieved at the sight of my bookshelf.

I was worried Brett would rip it to pieces in my absence, but it looks untouched, albeit dusty.

Silas and I work quickly, filling several of the storage boxes with books alone. I direct Silas around the apartment, and he follows me like a hawk, ever watchful. The sound of Brett's PlayStation drifts through the apartment, but it takes less than an hour to pack up all of my possessions.

The longer we stay in the apartment, the worse it gets. The spills of liquid down the front of the kitchen cupboards. The overflowing bin. The crumbs on the sofa. The bedsheets coming loose from the corners of the bed. The water stains all over the bathroom faucets.

The new toothbrush at the sink. The high heels next to the door that don't belong to me. The hair straightener I've never seen before.

Sara is living here, I'm sure of it.

Strangely though, I don't care. Brett and I were comfortable together, but I wasn't happy. Clearly he wasn't either. I don't forgive Brett or Sara, but in a way it makes my decision easier.

Silas brought me to life, and I know then and there that my new life won't involve Brett or Sara.

If Mom was still alive, perhaps it would be different. But at this point there's nothing tying Sara and I together but memories.

When all my stuff is packed, I stand at the front door looking inwards, with Silas propped up against the SUV's hood.

Brett looks over, not even bothering to pause his game. His eyes scan my figure, but he says nothing.

“You and Sara deserve each other,” I tell him, closing the front door with a decisive *thud*.

Silas and I are silent on the way back to his apartment, the boxes full of my possessions loaded into the trunk. His hand wraps around my thigh with a possessive edge, and I slide my fingers around his thick wrist.

While it’s true my new life won’t involve Brett or Sara, god I hope Silas becomes a permanent feature. He’s everything I didn’t know I needed, but does he feel the same?

I think about the life he’s led up to this point. Devoting his time and effort to growing Silver Mobility into the powerhouse it is today, living in a penthouse at the top of an apartment block. It’s about as far from a white picket fence as it’s possible to be.

He’s clearly happy as a bachelor, anyone could see that. The chances of him wanting *us* to become a long-term thing are low at best.

When we pull into the underground parking lot attached to Silas’s tower block, I find the courage to speak up. “Thank you.”

Leaning over the center console, he pulls me in for a kiss, his hand delving into my hair. “Anything for you, pretty girl,” he whispers in my ear, pressing a kiss on my cheek.

I lean my forehead against his, savoring the feeling of being taken care of.

Even if it's only for a little while.

Skye

When the last hour of available security footage comes to an end, I lay my head back against the sofa, staring aimlessly at the high ceilings in Silas's apartment. "Fuck."

The word is barely out of my mouth when a crash sounds from somewhere in the penthouse. I'm instantly on edge; Silas is still at work, and I am *nowhere* near qualified to take on an intruder. My eyes are wide as I silently get to my feet, abandoning my laptop and creeping towards the noise.

There's an enormous candle on the shelf next to me—a three-wick monstrosity encased in a heavy glass jar. It's almost a foot tall, and I hold it aloft, ready to defend myself.

And then hold it slightly less aloft, because I didn't realize how heavy this damn thing was.

I can still hear movement, and I creep down the corridor. It's coming from the gym, and my heart is thumping a crescendo when I look around the doorframe...

The room is empty, save for one mischievous little cat.

Bryaxis lurks beneath a wall rack that usually holds up an assortment of cables and straps. His tail whips from side to side—never a good sign—as he stalks the single item remaining on the rack, a cable with some sort of heavy pulley attached.

Just as I conclude that I've found the supposed intruder, Axi strikes. He springs upwards, grabbing hold of the cable with his teeth and grappling with it until it falls off the hook. The cable itself lands without much of a commotion, but the heavy pulley clatters against the smooth wooden floor. Axi doesn't mind, however, his attack continuing even when his opponent is down.

Rolling my eyes, I put my weapon down and cross the room, walking around the mats occupying the gym's central square. "You," I tell Axi, hanging everything back up, "are a noodle."

He makes a chittering noise, pacing beneath the rack and ignoring me in favor of the re-hung items. His little whiskers shake as he does, like the cute idiot he is. It's the same noise he makes when he sights a bird through a window, chattering away in his own little world.

I bend over to stroke down his spine, and his butt lifts up to receive a good scritch, tail swishing from side to side. "Are you my little weirdo?" I murmur to him, giving him a good two-handed scratch. "Yes, you are. You're my little weirdo."

I make a *pspspsps* noise, tapping my thigh. "Come on. Leave Silas's exercise stuff alone. I can't afford for you to be breaking shit."

“What’s he broken?”

The voice nearly has me jumping out of my skin, and my hand flies up over my chest as I glance at the doorframe.

Silas is leaning against it, dressed in a suit and looking effortlessly dapper. “My apologies,” he smiles. He holds up his large hand in surrender. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“You’re home early.”

“The meeting finished earlier than I thought it would. How did things go with you?” As I near him, Silas holds his arms out to embrace me.

I eagerly bury myself in his grip, that knot of worry in my stomach growing by the day. “My day was garbage. I finished going through all the security footage. There’s no record of Kenneth saying anything untoward on Silver Mobility premises.”

Silas does his best to conceal it, but I can see the disappointment beneath. “Regardless, I appreciate everything you’ve done,” he continues.

I shrug—as much as I can whilst being hugged. “I’m usually good at this sort of thing. And I do kind of have the incentive of proving my own innocence spurring me on.”

“True,” he concedes. “But even so, thank you.”

A loud *meow* sounds at my feet, and a moment later Bryaxis jumps onto Silas’s broad shoulders. It’s a move that Axi has perfected since he and I have been staying with Silas, and he butts his head up against Silas’s, purring contently.

“Hey Axi,” Silas murmurs, his voice a purr all its own.
“What mischief have you got up to today?”

“He undid an entire roll of toilet paper, didn’t you Axi?”

Bryaxis ignores me, rubbing his cheek against Silas’s beard and continuing to purr.

A laugh burbles out of me. I let my head fall forward against Silas’s shoulder. “Why does my cat love you so much?” I giggle. “He’s obsessed.”

Silas’s voice is a low murmur against my ear, sending a shiver down my spine. “What can I say? I’m an expert with kitties of all shapes and sizes.”

And don’t I know it. Silas took me out to dinner last night, to some fancy restaurant I’d never set foot in before, and he couldn’t keep his hands off me when driving us home.

Thankfully, his car has a self-driving mode, leaving his hands free for *other activities*.

It’s then that I blink. I sit up straight, thoughts racing through my mind. “Your car,” I say. “The self-driving mode on it...”

Silas freezes, feeling the atmosphere change between us.
“What about it?”

“It’s covered in cameras, right? I remember you saying when we went to my old apartment to pick up my stuff. It records everything around it.”

“Right,” Silas answers. “It has a twenty-four hour security system recording the car’s exterior.”

I remember the security recordings. Kenneth was often out in the parking lot, sitting on the bench...

The bench in front of Silas's car. I could see him from the security camera in the reception, but only through the windows—too far away for the camera's audio to pick him up. "Does it record audio as well?"

Silas follows my gaze, pulling in a quick breath when he realizes my train of thought. "It must do," he answers.

I give Bryaxis an absent-minded stroke. "Because if it's picked up Kenneth approving fraudulent invoices..."

"Then the police would have probable cause to obtain a warrant." Silas pulls out his phone, flicking through it.

"Except..." I swallow. "Where is the footage? And how long is it stored for?"

It takes Silas more than an hour to figure that out, but eventually we discover where the dashcam footage is stored. We sift through it together. The first few hours are of the last couple weeks, and I can't stop smiling as we rewind past our trips to the local natural history museum, as well as the concert he took me to the week before—and then there was the impromptu trip to the jewelry store after I said I'd never had a man buy me jewelry or flowers. Plus there's what I missed before; Silas going to the florist the day after to pick up a truly *gigantic* bouquet of roses to surprise me when I woke up that morning.

Watching it all back makes me smile, and I lean over to kiss to Silas's cheek.

Or his catnip-infused stubble, anyway.

The footage changes suddenly, and I recognize the gated parking lot at the Silver Mobility office. People race around on the accelerated footage, and I open up my phone, tracking my call history from Kenneth.

Silas hits pause, changing the speed back to normal. Kenneth slows down, his pace suddenly seeming glacial compared to what it was. Right on time, he pulls out his phone, and I hold my breath when his voice comes through the speakers, sharing an excited glance with Silas.

The beginning of whatever conversation I had with Kenneth is uninteresting, with him giving me tasks, but Silas pauses the footage again, looking over at me. "Did he talk to you like this the whole time?"

"Like I'm an idiot, you mean?" My eyebrow hitches. "Yes, the whole time."

His lips thin, and he lets out a lengthy breath, taking my hand and bringing it to his lips. "Let's find out if he's going to get fired for embezzling or for being an asshole."

Silas taps the 'play' button, and Kenneth unfreezes.

"One more thing—there's an invoice that needs to be put through." Kenneth says curtly. He taps onto his smart watch, and there's a few seconds of silence before he recites the

number. “Invoice #200386. Log into my account and approve it by two o’clock.”

I gasp, because since sorting through the footage I’ve looked over the fraudulent invoices enough to know them by heart now. “That’s it!”

“That fucking bastard,” Silas mutters, shaking his head and giving me a victorious grimace. He runs his finger under my chin, his eyes full of promise. “My clever girl.”

Silas

It's with a savage satisfaction that I watch the cops arrest Kenneth Youngblood.

It was worth all the sneaking around over the past few weeks, lulling him into a false sense of security. But once we presented all of the evidence we'd collected to the police, it didn't take them long to make a decision.

I'm down in the logistics department, leaning against the wall outside his office. He's protesting, bleating his innocence. The logistics team are all stunned as they watch us, and even Vivian's service dog Beau seems to be interested.

Kenneth is escorted out in handcuffs, and he does a double take when he sees me. The deeper the auditors dug, the more they uncovered, and with the footage of him personally approving fraudulent invoices the case should be open and shut. "Silas," Kenneth swallows.

The officer holding Kenneth's elbow pauses.

“I’ve never been so disappointed in an employee,” I tell him, and it’s true. Kenneth has worked for me for more than a decade, and I hadn’t had a single problem with him in that time. Going through the security footage has emphasized that Kenneth Youngblood was very much not the man I thought he was.

Giving the officer a grim nod, I watch as Kenneth is led out. The path they’re on will take him through both the warehouses and the main office, but he’s also not the only employee being arrested today.

Eleven floors up, Helen Locker is being led out of human resources in handcuffs. The police aren’t sure how deep her involvement ran, but they have enough evidence to charge both her and Kenneth with wire fraud conspiracy—the official title the police give to crimes such as this.

Saying my farewells to the shocked logistics team, I’m stopped by several people purporting to be polite, but I know they’re fishing for information about why the head of logistics and head of human resources were just taken away in handcuffs.

Before I leave, I stop off at the audit department to speak to Jerry about a matter I’d like to get settled, and then I’m ready for the short drive home.

It’s dark by the time the elevator doors to my penthouse open, unveiling my foyer like a pair of theater curtains. It’s silent on my way in, and I pause when I reach the room in which all of Skye’s possessions are being stored.

She's been talking more and more about apartments that are currently to let. There's a good one over on Maple Street, apparently, but I'd only given her a small nod in reply.

Because the truth is I don't want her to leave.

Because she's *mine*.

I eventually find her reclining on my bed—*our* bed—with her laptop on her knees, and a book lying beside her thighs, a bookmark sticking out at the top. She's wearing a knitted mini dress, exposing legs that I can't wait to get between. It takes her a minute to notice me, but she smiles when she eventually looks up, and I get a glimpse of what she was looking at on her laptop.

It's property listings.

“Hey,” she whispers softly. “How'd it go?”

“Kenneth Youngblood and Helen Locker are currently in custody,” I confirm, kneeling at the bedside and nudging the laptop off her.

Her eyebrow perks up, but she lets me turn her until her feet are planted firmly on the floor.

“And I spoke to Jerry over in the audit department. As part of the investigation, he's had a look at the records you've kept. He said if he didn't know better, he would have thought they'd been done by a qualified auditor.”

She gives a pleased little wiggle. “Well that's very gratifying. You know how much I like my numbers.”

“I do. God knows why, but I do.” Numbers were my idea of hell, but different strokes for different folks.

Skye playfully narrows her eyes. Heaven forbid I think ill of her beloved numbers.

I pause, smiling. “After this whole business with Kenneth, it’s become clear that we need to grow our audit team. The company has expanded significantly over the past decade, and the audit team needs to grow with it. As part of that... Jerry would like to offer you a job as an internal auditor practitioner.”

The humor leaves her face, leaving shock in its trail.
“*What?*”

“You’ll need qualifications, but Silver Mobility is happy to sponsor your education if you choose to accept. If you do, eventually you’ll be able to qualify as an auditor.”

She’s speechless, but there’s a slow smile growing over her face. “Really?” She claps her hands over her mouth excitedly.

“Really. He says your talents are wasted as a PA.” I grin, my hands running over her thighs. “If you choose to accept—”

“I’m accepting!” she shouts quickly. “Are you insane? Of course I’m accepting.”

I exhale a deep breath, relieved. “Good. You deserve this, pretty girl. Jerry will be forwarding over the formal offer letter this evening, and we can get the ball rolling from there.”

She lets out a happy little squeal, bending down to kiss me.
“Thank you.”

“You were the one who did all the hard work. Which reminds me... how is your search going for a new apartment?” My tone is measured.

There’s movement at the side of her lip, and I can only assume she’s chewing her cheek. “There’s a couple that I’m interested in. There’s an apartment block on the other side of Long Lake that—”

My eyebrows shoot up, because I know the exact apartment block she means. There’s only a single apartment block on the other side of Long Lake, and the town’s been trying to close it down for years. I don’t even think the tap water is drinkable there. “Fuck, Skye. Are you trying to get murdered in your bed?”

“I know it looks bad from the outside,” she concedes, “but the inside is surprisingly okay.”

“You have to go through the outside to get to the inside.” I take her hands in mine, my eyes tracing her face. “What if I asked you to stay?”

She blinks, as though she’s never heard that word in her life. “Stay?”

“Here. With me. In the penthouse.”

To my dismay, she shakes her head. “I’m not inconveniencing you like that. If you don’t like the places out by Long Lake, then I’ll find somewhere else. I saw a room to let not far from the office, I think it was above the—”

“I’m not asking you to stay because the apartments aren’t suitable, Skye. God knows they *are* unsuitable, but that ain’t it. I’m asking you to stay because I don’t want this to be temporary.”

Skye’s gaze shoots towards me. “You don’t?”

“It’s only been a few weeks now, but I’m happier with you than I have been in a long time. I want to keep you, Skye. I want you as mine in perpetuity. You’re kind and clever and sweet.” I push her thighs apart, my lungs drawing in deep breaths of her scent. “Sweeter than sugar and hotter than fire, and I need more, pretty girl.”

My lips trail against her inner thigh, and I savor the hitching of her breath.

“Silas.” My name is a sigh on her lips, but her hand delves into my hair, pushing me down.

Her heady scent is no less insistent, dragging me in like a lure. It’s rich with arousal that I’m desperate to taste. I push her backwards onto the bed and hook my fingers into those lacy panties, flinging them away and laying my tongue over as much of her as possible.

Skye moans as my tongue travels through her slick sweetness, teasing her clit until her hips are rolling against me, wordlessly begging for more.

“You’re so wet,” I groan into her. “So perfect.”

But then she’s pulling my chin upwards, until our eyes connect. “You want me to live here permanently?”

“That I do.” The corner of my lips jerks up, even as her wetness coats the bottom half of my face. “And what about you? Where do you want to live?”

A little smirk falls over her face, and I already know her answer. “Well the view from the apartment block out past Long Lake is pretty unforgettable.”

“It’s a garbage dump, you little tease,” I grin, pulling her off the bed, guiding her thighs to split over mine.

Skye giggles, her legs locking around my hips, and I catch her lips. My fingers bite into her ass, needing every part of this woman I can get my hands on. I groan as our kiss deepens, standing to my full height with her in my arms. She clutches me tighter as I do so, but unlike last time there’s no protesting.

Instead, her eyes lower, her teeth sinking into her bottom lip.

“You like being carried, don’t you?”

She effects a little shrug. “I like being carried by *you*.”

“Good, because I like carrying you.” I settle her against a wall, briefly holding her one-handed to shove down my pants and take my cock in hand, my thumb coming to rest in between one of the rungs of barbells. By now, I could trace the contours of her body blindfolded, but goddamn I want to see everything.

I slide the head of my cock up and down her pussy, teasing her clit with the piercing at the tip before notching myself at her entrance. My cock is screaming at me to thrust home, to *take*.

But more than anything, I want to *watch*.

We've spent weeks learning each other's bodies, and I love Skye's response when I enter her inch-by-inch.

Achingly slowly, I push forward—and pleasure pushes her spine back.

“Silas,” she sighs, ending in a little moan as the first rung of my ladder enters her.

“That's it, baby,” I say gruffly. Another moan as the second rung slips inside her. “Take me.” Another moan. “*Take me*. You're such a fucking good girl, stretching around my cock.”

Her responses reduce me to little more than a savage beast, snarling as my cock drives into her. I give her a few seconds to adjust to my size. And then I begin to *fuck*.

My hips move endlessly, slamming into her with long, hard thrusts as I angle myself *just right*. “I know exactly what you need, don't I?”

“Yes,” she cries, her arms clinging around my neck, her nails scraping at my scalp.

I've never needed a woman as much as I need her. In a few short weeks, she's become more vital than my next breath. A future without her would be no future at all.

“I want you,” I tell her. “More than anything. More than *everything*.”

Her pussy clenches around me, and she's climbing higher with every thrust. “Then take me,” she begs.

“Always,” I promise, slamming to the hilt, rough and primal. “There is no part of you that I won’t take, pretty girl. And you’re going to take *all of me*.”

“Yes,” she gasps, her voice reduced to a pleading whimper. She’s close, but that only makes me harder, our bodies slamming together. “I’ll take you.”

“Good girl,” I croon—and that’s all it takes for her to break.

Her pussy grips me like a vise, and Skye sobs out her climax. I pin her to the wall, her legs shuddering around me, but she never breaks eye contact.

“Just like that,” I whisper between her ecstatic moans. A bead of sweat rolls down my forehead, but I’m too far gone to care. She feels too good for me to give a shit about anything else—nothing exists but the connection between us, and we’re lost in the heaven of each other’s bodies.

Heat floods my groin, red hot and roaring for release.

“Give it to me,” she pleads, her eyes heavy-lidded. Her orgasm recedes, leaving her limp and sated in its wake. “I need you to fill me.”

A low, rough noise leaves my throat, every stroke more desperate than the last as my release pulses over me. Blistering waves of pleasure seize my body, and I clench onto Skye harder and harder, seizing her lips and moaning into our kiss.

We stay there for long moments, my body holding hers against the wall as we both catch our breath.

“You’re the best thing to ever happen to me, do you know that?” I say, our foreheads resting together. “I’d given up on love. On having *this*. And just when everything seemed darkest... you walked into my life. This precious, broken, *wonderful* woman. You saved me, and I love you for it.”

Skye smiles, one arm wrapped around my neck and her eyes glazing over. Her free hand cups my stubbled jaw, and I lean into it. “You saved me every bit as much as I saved you. Just as I love you every bit as much as you love me. You brought me to life again, Silas.”

I embrace her tightly, walking over to *our* bed and settling us both on it. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Axi knocking a comb off my chest of drawers, and the sight makes me grin. “You’re home,” I tell Skye, taking her lips in a slow kiss. “And so am I.”

With you.

She looks away, a soft laugh escaping her. “That day I walked in on Brett sleeping with my sister, do you know what I thought?”

“What?”

“I thought, *this is the worst day of my life.*” She kisses me, soft and gentle. “But that was the day I met you. Who would have thought walking in on my boyfriend cheating on me on Valentine’s Day would have been the best day of my life?”



Do you always look forward to the epilogue at the end of the book? Don't worry, so do I. **Skye and Silas's steamy epilogue is available to download on my website.**

Acknowledgements

You know how people impulse buy stuff? Chocolates or takeaways or holidays or whatever.

Well I impulse wrote a book. I decided to write this mid-December. And then I set the release date for the 9th February 2024. Because Silver Fox is set around Valentine's Day, so when else would it come out?

I remember my husband asking me at the beginning of December, "So the next book to come out is A Stone's Throw, yeah?"

"Well yeah," I replied. "What else would I be releasing?"

And yet here we are—so thank you to all of my readers. Without your support, I wouldn't be where I am today. As someone with a degenerative disease, being able to make a living doing what I love is something I'll never take for granted.

Thank you to Steph at **Rawls Reads Editing**, who helped me work out the storyline for my impulse book and without

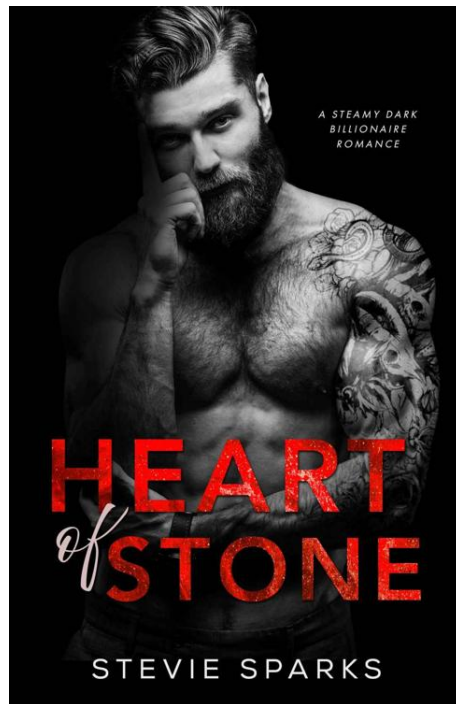
whom this book would be utter shite 🙄 Thank you to Grace and Treece for their respective help with promoting on Facebook and TikTok.

Additionally, a special thank you to the Smutzillas in my Facebook group (**Stevie Sparks: Smutzillas**). I actually had an entirely different name for Silas originally, but I put up a poll to name the eponymous Silver Fox and Silas *just* cinched it. I'm a woman of my word – so he's Silas.

Thank you to members of my **Patreon** for their continued support. A Stone's Throw is being uploaded there as it's written, so I hope you're enjoying reading it ahead of its release.

The biggest thank you of all goes to my husband. Thank you for everything you do.

Also By Stevie Sparks



**Warren was the boy Kate always had a crush on as a girl.
Her brother's best friend.
And his murderer.**

A decade after Warren was imprisoned, Kate's life hasn't quite turned out how she'd have liked. She works for her father's seedy nightclub-turned-casino, trying to outrun her suicidal

thoughts, knowing that eventually she'll run out of breath. But when her father loses the business—and their house with it—Kate's breathing finally begins to stutter.

**Kate was the little sister Warren had always wanted.
And the daughter of the man who framed him.**

Finally free, Warren's only goal is to enact revenge on the man responsible for ruining his life. A twist of fate made him a billionaire, but ruthless tenacity will ensure he gets what he wants.

Except he finds Kate where he left her all those years ago, and suddenly his feelings for her aren't so sisterly after all...

Read Heart of Stone by Stevie Sparks



His brother's wife. He loved his brother's wife.

After losing his heart to Emmeline, the one woman he could never have, Michael committed himself to a life in the army, fighting for King and country in the Great War.

...Until his brother died, and Michael returned to Scarlett Castle as the Duke of Foxcotte.

Fed up with her lack of grandchildren, Michael's mother hatches a plan to bring Michael and Emmeline together in a marriage of convenience. However, whilst Michael agrees to court Emmeline, they both secretly long for something more passionate than a business arrangement. But Michael could have never imagined that hidden trauma lurked beneath Emmeline's emerald eyes.

Michael and Emmeline soon ignite a flame that threatens to consume them both as they learn that all relationships come with risks both wanted and unwanted. *Will their marriage of convenience be successful? Or will Emmeline's traumatic past catch up to her and sweep her away?*

Read Surrendering to the Duke by Stevie Sparks



Sixteen years ago, Lady Annabelle Fraser broke him. Kit, the Duke of Aylesbourne, has been running from his demons ever since, be it journeying into the heart of the Antarctic or narrowly avoiding death in an avalanche on Mount Everest.

He would have rather faced death than Annabelle.

But when he finds her in bed with one of his old friends, he
snaps.

Because sixteen years ago, Annabelle promised to wait for
him. And this time he isn't going to let her escape.

**Sixteen years ago, Kit abandoned her when she needed
him most.**

Some might call her a spinster. Annabelle prefers to think of
herself as an independent woman. When Kit discovers her
affair, however, he does what she never expected him to do
again.

He ruins her.

Disgraced in the eyes of society, if Kit thinks Annabelle is
going down without a fight, he's got another thing coming.

Read *Despising the Duke* by Stevie Sparks

About the Author

Stevie Sparks is a British author and long-time copy editor from Windsor, England (where Windsor Castle is).

She suffers from a terrible medical condition that has left her incapable of reading books without smut. When it comes to books, she prefers the phrase ‘full steam ahead.’

Stevie writes both contemporary romance and historical romance. Because sometimes she wants to watch *Bridgerton* and see the Duke of Hastings rail Daphne in the library, and sometimes she’s in the mood for Zade Meadows.

She can be found on **Goodreads, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter**. She also has a **Linktree** if you don’t want to click on five different links.

She also wants to give you a high five for reading all the way to the end.

