

STALKED

BY THE

Convict

DEARLY DEVOTED SERIES

CASSI HART

Stalked by the Convict

Dearly Devoted Series

Cassi Hart

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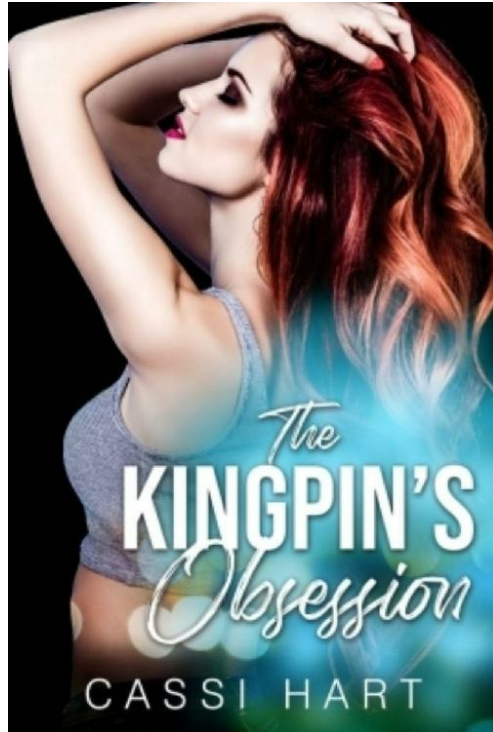
First Edition

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*Dedicated to the man that keeps his girl close and her enemies closer.
WARNING: Dark themes, Age gap, violence, safe stalking, Kidnapping
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Cassi H   nt

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Prologue

Adam

I walk into the Warden's office with long, eager steps, my heart thumping in anticipation and my erection already pushing hard against the rough material of my prison-issued coveralls. I ignore the harsh throb of my cock, my eyes running around the office with the need to catch a glimpse of her but I come up with nothing. She isn't here.

Why the fuck isn't she here?

I turn to the other people in the room. They flinch at my glare. There is no missing the fear in their eyes and the tension that fills the space. A room that was bustling a few seconds ago with activity is now dead silent.

"Y-Yuri—I mean, Miss Wright—is running a little late," one of the cameramen offers, his eyes going to the cuffs locked around my wrists and feet to see if they're properly secured. He must realize that chains are not enough to keep me from causing harm, because he takes a step closer to one of the guards in the room.

I'm a scary motherfucker. It's not just because of my permanent scowl, which looks even worse because of the large scar on my cheek. My reputation as a dangerous man scares even the worst criminals, and they have every right to be terrified. Every rumor they've heard about me is true and then some.

"Where the fuck is she?" I ask through clenched teeth.

"We just told you."

My eyes jump to the man holding the tripod stand like a weapon and his words die before they can reach his throat. I take a step towards him, but the light click of heels stops me in my tracks. My eyes shoot to the door.

Everyone else in the room fades into the background as I stare eagerly at the door, not unlike a puppy awaiting its master. I wet my lips and swallow hard, holding my breath in anticipation.

I hear her voice before I see her. It's soft and mellow with the slightest accent. It's just one of many of her charms.

"Oh my, I'm so sorry for keeping you waiting, sir," she says to someone, I assume the warden, just outside the door. When she finally makes her way inside, my world tilts off its axis.

She's perfect.

Scratch that, she's unreal. Her beauty and grace are unmatched by anyone else I have ever encountered.

Yuri has been front and center in my world since the moment I met her, a mere two weeks ago. When Channel Five news first reached out to do a three-part docuseries about my life, I refused. I wasn't interested in sharing my life with a bunch of strangers. For what? Laughs and clicks? I'm good, thanks.

But then they sent her to ask me.

It was as if they knew I couldn't say no to Yuri. Perhaps they knew my world would change when I set my eyes on her. They were right, because I was enthralled by her instantly.

"Hi Brute, sorry that I kept you waiting. Traffic was nuts," Yuri says as her eyes connect with mine.

Only she gets away with calling me by my nickname, Brute. Hell, she can

call me whatever the hell she wants as long as she keeps looking at me. Her perfect brown eyes are so dark, they're almost black.

Yuri raises a perfectly trimmed brow, waiting for me to say something. I have nothing. I can't summon a single thought. All I can think about is how much I want her. How much I need to break these chains binding me, draw her into my arms, and kiss every single inch of her perfect body.

But I can't have her. Not yet, at least.

She clears her throat, her sultry voice breaking into my thoughts. "So, uh, Brute ... Today's interview has been canceled."

"What?"

"I know I said we were doing a three-part docuseries about you, and that we've only done two so far, but there's been a change of plans."

My mouth runs dry and my heart hammers in my chest. I knew that one day she would walk out of my life, but I never thought it would be this soon.

"Why? Did you decide to interview someone else?" My vision blurs with jealous rage at the thought of Yuri even talking to another inmate.

I'll kill them. I'll first kill anyone that even thinks they have a chance at sitting for an hour staring at my flower.

"No, I—" Yuri's brows draw, confused by the dangerous look on my face.

"You don't know, do you?"

"Know what?"

"Brute, you got a state pardon," she says, her eyes shifting to the other people in the room. They seem just as shocked as I am. "I got the call on my way here. I thought your lawyer got in touch with you already, but I guess not."

"What?" I whisper. My head is spinning as I try to make sense of her words.

Yuri steps forward, unafraid, unlike all the men in the room with us. For the most part, even the guards are scared of me. Yuri has never been like that. My precious flower has never been afraid of me.

“You got a state pardon,” she repeats. She’s close enough that I can smell her perfume. “We’ve only aired two episodes of your interview and it got very popular. If you ask me, the governor is probably using your release for the polls but who cares, right? You’re getting out.”

Murmurs rise in the room. Everyone seems shocked, even displeased by the news.

Who can blame them? Ten years ago, I killed two men who’d come to my bar to use drugs to prey on innocent women. However, it’s not the why but the how that horrified people, because I was hellbent on making an example out of them and it showed.

They started to call me Brute because of how cruelly I went about punishing the scumbags. They said I should rot in jail, that I was too dangerous to be let out. They thought I should be caged like all the other dangerous animals in the world, and perhaps they were right. But as I look into the eyes of the woman I have fallen deeply in love with, I see the chance at freedom for what it is.

It’s a chance to be with her.

“Congratulations Adam,” she whispers, speaking my name for the first time. “I hope you live a good life when you get out.”

Yuri pats my shoulder, her touch burning a trail through my clothes, all the way down my skin. My body tenses up. She draws her hand, panic flitting over her face for a second, before changing to offer me an awkward smile. With a small wave, the woman of my dreams walks out of the room.

I don't make a single sound of protest as guards lead me back to my cell. I don't take notice of the cuffs falling away from my sore wrists. The only thing on my mind is Yuri.

Once alone in my cell, I slip my hand into my coveralls and take my throbbing erection into my palm. She's all I see as I fuck my fist with the intensity of an animal, imagining her warm, wet pussy in the place of my fist. For days, she's been all I've dreamt about, her dark eyes glazed over, long black silky hair firmly gripped in my fist, chest heaving as I pound into her, and lips crying out my name as I fuck her into oblivion.

Soon, she'll do more than star in my dreams.

A snarl breaks through my lips as my head clouds with thoughts of her, awakening something feral and dangerously possessive within me.

I vow to find her. As soon as I get out of this hellhole, I'm coming for my little reporter and I won't stop until she's mine.

Chapter One

Yuri

“Have a nice evening, Miss Wright,” Hendryx, the ground floor janitor, calls out to me as I exit the elevator. I wave brightly back at him.

Normally, my trip to the parking lot would take five minutes, but instead, it takes twenty because I stop to make small talk with my colleagues. I accept invitations to two weddings and even a bar mitzvah on my way out.

This is a typical evening for me. While it takes me a while to get used to new people and places, once I do, I can’t help trying to light up every room I walk into. I can’t help wanting to make people’s days better when I can.

The smile stays even as I cross the parking lot. It’s not until I’m in the safety of my car that the smile falls away. I drop my forehead against the steering wheel and force myself to take in long, deep breaths, counting each one. My phone starts ringing before I get to number five.

I already know who it is before I even answer the call.

“Hello,” I say once she’s on speaker.

“Hi Yuri, I just called to see how you’re feeling.”

Shit. I feel like shit.

I’ve felt like this for days, but I can’t bear to let anyone see that I do. I keep wearing my usual smile so that no one at the news station thinks something’s wrong with me.

“Not good,” I tell my therapist.

“Have you been practicing those breathing exercises we talked about?”

“Yeah.”

“Yuri?” she prods gently.

“They’re not helping, okay?” I snap. “How the hell are breathing exercises going to help me overcome the fear of running into my failed kidnapper? He gets out this week and the breathing exercises aren’t going to stop that.”

“Yuri—”

“I know it’s been ten years and I’m probably overthinking it, but you know what he told me when they arrested him? He said he was coming for me and that I won’t get away next time. I’m not a little girl anymore. He’s probably forgotten about me. B-but what if he hasn’t? What if he meant every single word he said?”

By the time I’m done speaking, I’m out of breath. I have to close my eyes to curb the panic attack threatening to overwhelm me.

“Have you talked to the cops?”

“Of course I have, but I was assured that Jim wouldn’t come near me. He’s getting out on parole and any contact with me could get him sent back to jail but—I-I just—I’m still scared.”

“Yuri, is there someone you can call to stay with you for a few days?”

“No,” I whisper. “My parents are in Tokyo to visit a sick aunt. I can’t worry them about this.”

“What about friends?”

I shake my head before realizing she can’t see it. “No,” I whisper.

I can’t bother anyone with this. I can’t be anything but sunshine to my friends, family, and colleagues. I don’t want to see the pity in their eyes when

they realize that ten years later, I'm still terrified of the man that tried to kidnap me.

“Have you considered getting a pet? You know that ...”

I tune her out. Perhaps it's wrong of me to do, seeing she's trying to help me. That and the fact that I get billed for every minute she stays on call. I just can't get myself to focus on a word she's saying. I don't even bother pointing out that I am allergic to pet dander and barely have time to take care of something anyway.

Years of talking to therapists, and I'm still as scared as I was when I was twelve. Nothing has changed.

I sit for a few more minutes in the car after the call has ended, waiting for the tremble of my fingers to stop before heading home. Halfway there, I take a turn and head instead for the grocery store because I'm out of coffee, and will hate myself in the morning if I don't pick some up before getting in for the night. There're probably other things I need too.

My movements are sluggish as I walk into the nearly empty store. It's half past nine on a Wednesday night, so it's not surprising that there's so few people in the building. As I stand in line and wait to check out, my mind wanders ten years back to the moment I was grabbed from right in front of my home and shoved into a car.

The car was disgusting, smelling of piss and sweat. Seared into my mind is the mean smirk on Jim's face as I begged him not to hurt me—

“Miss,” I jump when the cashier asks for my attention. “Do you need a bag with these?”

I plaster on a weak smile and nod. I pay and flash her another smile I don't feel before grabbing my items and leaving. I'm so distracted that I don't even

notice the kid running ahead of me until we've bumped into each other, which makes me drop my shopping bag. A woman mutters an apology as she runs after the kid, but I barely even hear her.

I stand, rooted to the ground, and watch my oranges roll away. Panic spears through my throat as I stare at the spilled items. It feels like a bad omen. Soon, everything will fall apart, and I'll be back in the clutches of the man who tried to hurt me.

My throat closes up and my eyes well with tears at the thought of reliving the horror. This time, he'll probably finish what he started. This time, he'll plan better and will hurt me before someone—

“Breathe. Breathe for me, baby.”

But I am breathing. The tight feeling in my chest is from trying to breathe, right? The lightness in my head—

“Deep and slow Yuri. Breathe for me, sweetheart.”

“I c-can't,” I choke out.

“Follow my voice and do as I say, alright?” The voice is firm, warm. “Now breathe, deep and slow.”

I reach out blindly and grasp an arm, digging my nails into the skin and fighting my instincts to do as the deep voice asks, but nothing's happening. It's not until I feel the soothing motion of a hand on my back that I am able to start inhaling gulps of air.

“That's it. Breathe for me, baby. That's it ...”

I follow his directions, and the pressure on my chest starts to fade. I recognize the panic attack for what it is, I've just never had one like this. My tears finally fall as everything registers.

Shit, this is embarrassing.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, horrified at the idea of looking up to meet the stranger’s eyes. It’s okay for me to break down where no one’s watching, but to do so in public? Burdening someone with my problems is just unacceptable.

“You have nothing to be sorry about.” The voice is deep and so oddly familiar that my eyes shoot up. I am struck mute when my eyes lock with a familiar cobalt-blue gaze. I blink at the mountain of a man towering over me.

“Brute?” I whisper in shock. That isn’t his real name, but he doesn’t correct me.

“Hi, Yuri,” he says. I fight gasping. The sound of my name on his lips should not sound as good as it does.

It’s been less than a month since I last saw him, but it feels like a lifetime ago. His hair is a little longer at the top, but his eyes are just as intense and the scar on his cheek makes him look devilish in all the right ways. He’s dressed in a black t-shirt that threatens to tear at the seams and well-fitting dark jeans. He looks better like this, even if the orange coveralls weren’t a bad look on him. My heart beats just as rapidly as it did back then, when we were surrounded by cameras and guns.

Our worlds are crashing into each other.

I swallow hard when it registers that he’s looming over me. There’s no ignoring the need building up in my stomach. I shouldn’t feel this way about a convict—an ex-convict, a man that has killed before—but I can’t help it. I was drawn to him then, and I’m still drawn to him now.

Adam is a very dangerous man, but it only adds to his appeal.

Chapter Two

Adam

Get a hold of yourself.

Easier said than done. I can't focus on anything but Yuri. I run my eyes over her hungrily and there's no stopping the harsh throb of my cock from being this close to my flower.

I should step back. I should give her space and pretend to be chivalrous like those pretentious assholes she works with. I should pretend to be a gentleman instead of a man that has lusted over her for six weeks, jerking himself raw at the memory of her scent. I bet she wouldn't let me get close like this if she knew the thoughts I harbored for her, some of which would probably send her running for the hills.

"Adam," she whispers. I clench my fists. It feels like forever since I last heard my name on her lips. I have to fight my desires and ignore the hard-as-hell erection pressing against my fly. I've waited this long; I can wait a little longer.

I've been out for three weeks, which is also how long I've been following her. The second I was released from prison, I was on her tail, stalking her everywhere and watching her every move. I thought about approaching her like a normal person might but there's nothing normal about me or my

feelings for Yuri.

What I feel for Yuri borders on unhealthy and it's for this reason that I've dealt with every man that dared flirt with her. Yuri belongs to only me.

"Are you okay?" I whisper, tucking a loose hair strand behind her ear.

"I-I ..."

My brows draw as I watch her. She looks shaken; all I want to do is draw her into my arms like I've dreamed about for weeks, but I fight the urge. Even under my careful watch, my precious flower has been fighting unseen demons. The image of Yuri frozen in the middle of this parking lot, struggling to breathe ... It's never going to leave me.

I'm determined to make sure it doesn't happen again.

"Yuri, do I need to take you to the hospital?" I ask, studying her pale cheeks.

"You look shaken up."

"No, I'm fine, I just—you."

"What about me?" Confusion sets in before I finally make sense of her words. Then my heart cracks into two. "I scare you. I'm sorry, I should have —"

"No, you don't scare me," she hurries to say, tightening her grip on my arm to stop me from moving. "I can't believe you got out. I mean, I knew you would but seeing you out here feels surreal."

Oh. "I feel the same way."

"What are the chances that we would run into each other so soon?" she chuckles.

"I'm glad I ran into you, Yuri," I whisper. There's no keeping the need out of my tone. "I have been meaning to thank you for my release. Thanks to you, I

don't have to spend five more years wasting away in a prison cell.”

“I wouldn't exactly say you were wasting away,” Yuri murmurs, running her eyes over my massive arms as a pretty flush stains her cheeks. “But you don't have to thank me, Adam. The women you saved from those creeps were the ones who went public with their story. People wanted to hear your side. I just helped tell it.”

I smile at her before leaning down to collect her groceries back into the bag. “I'm glad it was you who did.”

“It's nothing.” I get up just in time to catch Yuri's blush deepen. “So ... How are you adapting to life outside? It must be hard, catching up with everything.”

I start walking and Yuri falls into step with me. “It hasn't been easy. There's a lot I have to re-learn. The fact that they replaced my favorite diner with another chain restaurant pisses me off.”

“Which one was that?”

“Big Phil's diner.”

“Oh, there was a rat infestation a couple of years ago. The station covered it.”

“That's a shame, the rats were part of the thrill.”

Yuri turns to me with a stunned expression bending over with laughter. It's the most beautiful sound I've ever heard. I want to hear more of it. I want to be the one that makes her laugh.

“There were rumors that the rats helped prepare the food. Phil never denied the claims, so I'm inclined to believe the rumors.”

“If that was the case, then they made a mean burger. I still haven't found a place that makes food like he did.”

“Oh, really?” Yuri chimes. “There’s this place my colleagues and I go to for lunch. They really make great burgers, but they are, fortunately, not made by rats.”

“That’s a little disappointing, but I can make do. Maybe you could take me there sometime. I haven’t found a place that makes them how Phil used to.”

Yuri stops and turns to look at me. She chews at her full bottom lip as she stares up at me. “I guess you’ve been having a hard time adjusting to the changes huh?”

“You could say that.”

“Well, I would like to offer my help with finding great dining spots,” she murmurs.

I tilt my head to the side and watch her carefully. “Are you not afraid of me, Yuri?”

“Why would I be afraid of you?”

“You know why I was in prison. People I’ve never met are scared of me because they know what got me there. Most people still don’t believe I deserve to be out of—”

“Well, most people haven’t felt powerless like those girls have,” Yuri says, trying to mask her pain before I catch it. “I know why you were in prison, Adam. I know what you did to those men, but the why is more important to me. As someone who’s felt powerless at the hands of a creep, I only got away because someone else stepped in and saved my life. You saved three women that night. You willingly paid the price for that so no, I’m not afraid of you.”

I should be relieved by her words but all they do is ignite a dangerous fire in me. All I can think about is that someone hurt Yuri.

Someone hurt her.

Someone who better be dead or will be, soon.

“Anyway, if you need any help adjusting, I’m happy to help.”

I stare at the woman I have fallen irrevocably in love with and push down my dark thoughts. Sure, I want to find the man that hurt her and punish him, but I can’t ask her about it just yet. Instead, I force on a smile.

“What do you say about tomorrow?” I ask.

“Huh?”

“I haven’t had a good meal since I got out.” Mostly because I can’t make myself stay away long enough from you to dine. “I could use your help finding a good place.”

“I don’t get off work until nine.”

I shrug. “I can wait.”

Yuri stares up at me. “It might be even later before I finish work and head home to freshen up. Are you sure?”

I’ve been following her to and from work for close to a month, not leaving until she’s settled in both. Waiting for her to get ready is nothing.

“I’m sure.”

Chapter Three

Yuri

I raid my closet for the blue dress I wore to my cousin's wedding last year. I got a lot of compliments when I wore it and I bet Adam would like—

My train of thought stops when I realize what I'm thinking.

The man simply asked me to show him a nice place to eat. It's not a date. I shouldn't care this much about what to wear. He wouldn't care if I show up dressed in a sack, as long as he gets a nice meal.

Despite my thoughts, I let out a satisfied squeal when I find the dress I'm looking for. Seconds later, I let out a frustrated noise when I realize it's shrunk two sizes. Either that or I gained weight.

My phone rings just as I'm about to dive back into my closet for something else. My heart jumps in my chest and I nearly sprain an ankle as I rush to get it. I expect to see Adam's number, but no, it's my therapist calling instead. Disappointment surges through me.

I know why she's calling. Ever since I told her about Jim getting out, she's been calling every day to check in on me. While her calls help calm me down, I don't especially want to talk to her about Jim most of the time. Especially not tonight. I don't want to meet up with Adam feeling down like that.

Even so, I don't want her to worry about me, so I pick up the phone, intending to make the call short. Suddenly, it dawns on me; I could use her advice on something else.

"What do you wear on a date?" I ask after picking up the call.

"A ... a date?"

"Well, not a date exactly, but I am meeting up with a friend. I'm not sure what to wear."

"Um, something nice?" she says, clearly confused. "Yuri, are you alright?"

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't sound good yesterday. I wanted to check if you're doing better—wait, did you say date?"

"I guess I did," I say, putting her on speaker and walking back to my closet. I dig around for something casual to wear, but the search is fruitless. "I met up with an old friend yesterday and he's taking me out to eat."

"That's nice," Sandra says. "I've been telling you to get out and about but you're always talking about how busy you are."

It's not just Sandra. Most of my friends have been pushing me to go out and meet people, but I have a hard time trusting strangers. Ever since that incident in my childhood, it's always felt safer to just let them pass me by. It's pretty ironic considering Adam is as strange as they get. Everything I know about the man is from a police report, which I doubt my therapist would like to hear.

With her help, I manage to find a nice dress, but not so nice that it'll seem like I'm trying too hard. Adam probably won't even notice, but at least I'll feel good about what I'm wearing.

The doorbell rings just as I finish. I wipe my damp palms over my skirt as I open the door to reveal Adam. My heart skips a beat when our eyes meet.

This is not a date, I remind myself.

“You got a haircut,” I say, oddly pleased that I’m not the only one worried about making a good impression.

“I did,” Adam rasps, running his eyes over me. His gaze is hot, leaving little trails of sparks everywhere it rests. “You look breathtaking, Yuri.”

“Thank you.” We’ll leave out the fact that my therapist helped.

“Shall we?”

He holds out his hand, and I take it. Warmth pools my stomach when his much larger fingers weave between mine. The flutter in my chest shouldn’t be there, but it won’t give up.

This is not a date.

“You’re going to love this restaurant,” I say to distract myself from his touch.

“They make the best pasta in town. My parents won’t eat anywhere else when they visit.”

“Such high praise,” he comments as he opens his car’s passenger door for me.

I wait until he’s settled in the driver’s seat before carrying on. “I hope you like pasta because your mind is going to be blown. The chef moved here from Italy a few months ago and everyone is singing his praises.”

“Don’t you need a reservation to get into a place like that?”

“You do,” I beam. “Luckily for us, I know people who know people that know people closely linked to the owner, so I was able to get us a table.”

When we arrive at the restaurant, all eyes turn to us the second we walk in

and get shown to our table. The murmurs start up immediately and phones light up as people try (and fail) to take covert pictures. I forget that people know his face, largely because of the docuseries. My face was rarely on the camera during the interview, so I doubt anyone would recognize me. That's not the case for Adam.

Of course, they know who he is. Even with a fresh haircut and civilian clothes, Adam is a huge man with distinct features. He easily towers over everyone in the room, including the security men walking towards us.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but we are going to ask you both to leave," one of two security men says.

I splutter. T-they're kicking us out?

"What the hell do you mean? Do you have a reason for asking us to leave?" I ask, stepping closer to Adam and placing a hand over his arm. Faces all around the restaurant darken with disapproval.

"There have been a lot of complaints about—"

I roll my eyes at his words. "We just got here. We haven't been here long enough for someone to complain."

"We don't want trouble."

Oh, I'll show them trouble.

Adam places a hand over mine, stopping me from launching myself at these bouncers. His face stoic, but he shakes it just slightly. I sigh and relax my shoulders. He just got out, the last thing I need is to cause him trouble.

"Fine, we're leaving," I hiss, glaring at the two men. "And never coming back."

With an annoyed huff, I drag Adam out behind me. Once we're at the car, I

completely deflate. I can't believe I spent hours looking for the right dress only to get kicked out of the restaurant. What was the point of all this? He's been pardoned! Why are they worried about a guy like him getting out of prison not people like my kidnapper, a man who preyed on the innocent? If I weren't so angry at the moment, I'd probably be more worried about what that means.

"Their pasta isn't even that good," I mutter. Adam breaks into a laugh. I turn to him with a frown.

"You spent the entire drive here gushing about how they had the best pasta in town," he smiles.

"It heals the mind and soul," I say bitterly. "Now it's going to taste like elitism and shitty attitudes. Do you want to go eat someplace else?"

Adam shakes his head, but the smile remains. "I'm probably going to get the same treatment anywhere I go." His smile falls when he turns to look at me. "I'm really sorry for ruining your night, Yuri. I know I'm not accepted in most places, but you don't have to share my fate."

His words make me want to storm back in and cause a scene, but I can't bear the thought of it backfiring and making his life more difficult. I may be a green news reporter, but I could recover from something like that. Adam, though? There are so many people that don't think he should be free. I can't give them a reason to gloat.

My head drops back against the headrest as I sigh. I really wanted Adam to have a nice meal. Damn it. "Is the reception better at the restaurants closer to your place?"

"I, uh, live at a hotel."

I perk up with surprise. "What do you mean?"

“Leases usually involve background checks,” he shrugs. “Landlords don’t want to rent their space to a convict, so I’ve been living at a hotel until I find a place I can go. I can’t go back to work either, my face is too familiar, so I’ve been having my nephew run all my businesses to keep from chasing away customers and investors.”

My eyes widen in horror. I can’t imagine feeling so unwanted by the world. It’s like they don’t even see the man. They only see the criminal record.

I reach over and take his hand in mine. “I can’t believe how stupid everyone is being. I’m sorry.”

Adam chuckles, but I wasn’t trying to be funny. Something about this massive man makes me want to protect him, even though he’s far bigger than me.

“Come live with me,” I say without a further thought. Adam’s eyes shoot to mine, his brows going up in shock at my words.

“What?”

“I live in a three-bedroom house. I haven’t done anything with the third room yet, but it’s better than a hotel, right? I can rent it out to you until you find your own place.”

I have no idea what’s come over me, but I can’t stop myself. Everyone’s being so cruel to Adam. I want to show him that some of us don’t actually believe he’s a bad guy.

That I don’t believe he’s a bad guy.

“Yuri ...” he whispers, his eyes wide. His throat bobs as he swallows nervously.

I’ve never seen him look vulnerable before. He’s always looking at the world with an impassive stare. Even a few minutes ago, when we were getting

kicked out of the restaurant, he seemed unmoved, but now ... He seems shaken by my offer. "Are you sure about this?"

"Yes," I say, without hesitation. "You can live with me, Adam."

His stare goes from vulnerable to something darker, more heated. The air in the vehicle thickens, making it feel like we're crowding each other, even though neither of us have moved. I have to look away before I do something I'll regret.

He's my roommate now. My very big, ruggedly handsome, kind of dangerous roommate. Even if something is urging me to make a move, I can't do that to him. We're going to live together; I don't want to make it awkward for either of us.

Shit. I doubt this is what my therapist meant when she said I should get a pet.

Chapter Four

Adam

I have iron-clad self-control.

Or so I thought.

Ten years ago, three men walked into my bar, one of the many businesses I owned. The three men were loud, obnoxious, and entitled. They thought they could get away with drugging a group of women that were minding their own business.

I could tell this was not their first time doing it, because of the ease they had as they went about slipping drugs into the women's drinks. No one else in the bar seemed to be fazed by the sight of two women passing out while the third was carried out the door. No one but me.

I followed the men out to the parking lot. Three men against one was not the best odds but I'm a big guy. I took all three of them on with no issues, putting one in a coma while leaving the other two in a bloodied mess of broken limbs on the pavement.

I didn't flinch when I was arrested. I didn't plead, beg, or make a sound as everyone called me a monster for beating two men to death and putting one in a coma. I didn't react when I was sentenced to fifteen years. The "victims" of my manslaughter were villains, but I'm the one that lived in infamy; it was

a small price to pay for keeping those women safe, one that didn't bother me at all. I've always had control over my emotions, every reaction from me has always been sober and calculated.

Yuri ... Yuri blows that all to hell.

The moment I saw her, she crashed through my carefully lain walls and made herself the center of my universe. I live and breathe for her and it would be nothing for me to kill again on her behalf. I'd do it gladly.

"... And this is my office," she says, breaking through my dark thoughts. "I'm a new reporter, so I don't really have any sensitive information to hide. Feel free to use it whenever you want. The computer's password is on the sticky note."

I stare at her as she shows me around, fighting to suppress the need to push her against the door and take what I want. My desire for Yuri has been building. Every second I spend close to her like this makes it soar to greater heights.

I am barely holding it together.

"Alright, your room is down the hall. The bed in here's a little smaller than mine because it's older but I think you'll fit."

I follow her down the hallway, but I'm not really paying attention. I'm too entranced by the scent of her perfume, wafting from her long, dark hair. It makes me want to bury my nose in her neck while I bury my cock in her c—

"It's not much but I hope it's better than where you currently stay," Yuri says, looking up at me so hopefully that I have to respond with a little nod. I don't have the heart to tell her that I've actually been staying in a hotel I own. When she offered this spare room to me, I couldn't say no. I'd give up everything if it meant spending time with Yuri in her space.

Anything to be with her.

To touch her, to take her, to erase the memories of whoever hurt her.

“Adam,” Yuri whispers.

I blink. I’ve backed her to the wall without realizing. Her hands have dropped to my chest. Her fingers spread over my muscles, as if feeling how solid they are. Heat blasts through me and I have to fight groaning.

Fuck, I want her.

“Yuri, I—” My iron-clad self-control, a thing of the past it seems. I make the choice to lean into it. “I need you so bad, baby.”

The need to drown myself in her deepens as her eyes flash with heat. Does she want me as well?

“Adam—I think—I mean—”

“You want it too, don’t you sweetheart?” I ask, finally leaning in and teasing my lips softly against hers. “There’s no one here. No cameras, no guards, no pissed-off patrons. Just me and you.”

“I—but I’ve never ... I wouldn’t know what to do, Adam.”

My brain stutters to a screeching halt.

“You’re a virgin?” I growl. The thought that I’ll be the first man to touch her at all is intoxicating. Heat pools in my cock, making it twitch.

“Yeah, and I’m not ashamed of it.” Little liar. Her embarrassment is plain on her face, but she doesn’t need to feel it at all.

“Fuck, baby.” I drop my forehead to hers. What little control I have threatening to snap under the weight of my urge to take her. “You’re perfect. You have nothing to be ashamed of.”

“You ... you like that?”

Like it? I almost scoff at the thought. I'd like her regardless, but this makes me desperate for her in a way I didn't know I had in me. I thought my want had already peaked, but this just makes it clearer to me that she's mine, and mine alone. I want to fill her with my seed and show her that she owns me. That she's owned me for weeks and will have me for the rest of my life.

I wrap an arm around her waist and pull her flush against me. She gasps, her beautiful brown eyes widening when her stomach presses against the hard ridge of my erection. Her chest heaves and she leans into my touch when I run my fingers from her jaw and caress my way down the hollow of her neck. "A-Adam," she stammers, her fists taking up handfuls of my shirt.

My lips hover over hers, but only for a second before I give into my desires and kiss her. Her lips part for me, opening up to deepen the kiss. She tastes better than I could have ever imagined. She tilts her head back and allows me to fill her mouth with my tongue, kissing her hungrily until we're both gasping for breath.

"I've been thinking about this since the moment I first saw you," I pant. "You were a pretty little thing, all nervous to meet me. Were you scared to be locked in such a place with animals such as myself?"

She quivers when I brush my fingers against her shoulders to drag the straps of her dress down. I step back to watch the dress drop to the floor, revealing her matching bra and panties.

My breath turns ragged when I reach back to unclasp her bra, letting her breasts slip out and nipples pop free, begging for the soft touch of my lips. I'm helpless against her. Utterly fucking helpless.

"Did you look at me and wonder what it'd be like to have me at your mercy?"

Her head falls back against the wall with a moan, eyes fluttering closed as I tease her nipples to peaks with my fingers, and soaking in every single expression and sound she makes under my touch. But even these sweet sounds aren't enough. I need to taste her. I gently steer her to the bed. I nudge open her legs before kneeling between her parted thighs.

“I would have dropped to the floor and eaten you out in front of everyone in that room if you demanded it of me that afternoon. You want me to do that, don't you? To show them the power you have over me?”

I don't wait for her answer as I lean down and close my mouth over her nipple to rub my tongue over the stiff bud. Her cry is the answer I need. I bite the peaked bud gently before soothing the sting with my tongue.

“Oh—” She grips my shoulders. “I've never felt like this before, I—”

My eyes shoot to hers. I want to fuck her until she's feeling every inch of me inside that tight pussy, screaming out my name at the top of her lungs. Get her on her hands and knees, fuck into her with the intensity of a starved man but my time will come. Right now, my flower needs gentle.

“Good, baby,” I growl, my needs be damned. I've been celibate for ten years, I can wait a little longer. “You're perfect. Just let it happen, just keep feeling.”

“Okay,” she whispers, her eyes meeting my heated gaze. “I ... I like it. It feels good.”

“I can make it feel even better,” I rasp, grabbing her thighs and drawing her to the edge of the bed. I tear her panties from her body. She tries to close her thighs self-consciously, but I keep them open, fingers pressing into her skin as I stare hungrily at her perfect cunt.

Yuri cries out when I drag my tongue over her wet slit, collecting all the

moisture to my tongue and committing her scent to memory. Her hands thread into my hair, pulling me closer as she bucks her hips into my face.

“Adam,” she whimpers.

Her thighs tremble as I nudge my lips against her wet valley to expose her to me even further. She whimpers when I drag my tongue up and down, lapping up every drop of her wetness. I have never tasted anything this intoxicating and I own a bar. Not even close.

Her knees widen as she trembles, allowing me better access. Her sobs urge me to work twice as hard, twice as hard if only to feel her come apart under my tongue.

My cock throbs hard, desperate for stimulation, so I drop my hand to my fly and yank down the zipper of my jeans. I let out a deep groan as I finally wrap a fist around my throbbing cock. My lips close over her swelling bud as I jerk my shaft roughly, our moans mixing with one another to fill the room.

“A-Adam ... I feel so ...”

I wedge my tongue into her entrance. She feels so impossibly tight that I almost spill into my hand. I won't last long, not with her beneath my mouth.

“Fucking perfect,” I growl against her sex, sucking her swelling bud between my lips. Her hips buck and her pussy starts to spasm against my mouth, even as I eat her up with reckless abandon, chasing her pleasures like they're my own.

“Oh ... Yes, Oh fuck—”

Yuri screams as her body seizes up, tightening around my tongue. I take her clit between my lips again with slow suction that has her shaking as I drag her orgasm longer. Her cries turn into whimpers as I soak up the dredges of her orgasm.

When I feel the familiar twinge in my spine, I stand and thrust into my fist a few times before finally spilling against her glistening pussy. My growl is loud and hoarse as I come, trembling as I empty myself. I look down at Yuri to find her eyes fixed on mine and I am overwhelmed by the need to confess my feelings.

I want to tell her just how much I love her. How these feelings I have for her go beyond love, verging on obsession. There is nothing I wouldn't do to make her happy. I would kill for her to keep her safe. I would trade every penny of my hard-earned wealth if that's what it took to keep her in my life.

When I meet her fucked-out gaze, warm and softly smiling up at me, I am overwhelmed by the need to confess that I am nothing but a servant to her needs. She owns every last bit of me like no one else ever has or ever will.

I want Yuri like I need my next breath. She holds my very existence in her hands.

Chapter Five

Yuri

“Are you hungry?”

I could have sworn Adam was going to confess his undying love for me given the way he'd been staring at me earlier, but it seems I was wrong. I must be out of my mind to think a man like him would fall for me after that but ... I want it to be true.

Is it illogical to think that someone can fall madly and irrevocably in love after such a short time?

Yes. The answer is yes. It's downright delusional and my therapist would tell me to snap out of it, but I can't help it. I can't help how he makes me feel.

“Does the chicken taste bad?” Adam asks, snapping me back to the present. I look up to meet his gaze, swallowing hard at how sinful and dreamy he looks. His hair is damp and he didn't bother to put his shirt back on after his shower, so he's sitting on the floor of my living room shirtless while we eat the food we just had delivered. He even smells like my soap too, which is so domestic that I feel like I'm going to lose my mind.

“No, it tastes great. Why do you ask?”

“You're frowning. People don't usually frown that much when eating chicken.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, I was just lost in thoughts, the chicken tastes great. Where did you order it from again?”

Adam names a restaurant I have never heard of before but then again, I can’t claim to know every single restaurant in the city.

“Are you originally from the city?” he asks. His look lingers for just a hair too long and it makes heat crawl up my neck.

“Uhm yeah. Born and raised here,” I say. “My mother is originally from Tokyo and my dad was born in Boston before they moved here to start a family. They moved away a couple of years ago and left me the house. I have an older sister, but she’s married with kids and lives on the west coast now. What about you?”

“My parents were both from the city. They passed away when I was young, so I was raised by a much older sister alongside her son. There’s only five years between us so I was able to leave my businesses to him when I got incarcerated.”

“Do you miss it? Working at the bar?” I ask, leaning back against the couch.

“Not really,” he murmurs. “I thought I would but now that I’m out, I don’t. I started it because it felt like a good investment at the time, and I was right. I went over everything as soon as I got back, but it seems my nephew is running the place better than I ever could, so I probably won’t go back.”

I frown. “Then what will you do? Everyone gets bored after a while.”

“Not me,” he rasps, heat flashing in his eyes. “I’ve found something I want to do more than anything in the world.”

“What’s that?” I ask, leaning in eagerly. Adam doesn’t give me an answer, choosing instead to flash me a maddening grin. “Oh, c’mon, now I want to know.”

“Soon,” he smiles.

“Fine,” I say with a yawn. Everything feels so cozy with him, I can’t help feeling relaxed while he’s around. I tap my phone with my pinky, and it lights up to show that it’s a quarter to midnight. I stretch my arms over my head, letting out another yawn as the day’s exhaustion finally hits.

“You should get some rest, Yuri,” Adam says. I nod in agreement, watching him with half-lidded eyes as he cleans up after us.

“I like this,” I say. He stops to give me a confused look, so I rush to clarify.

“I mean, having dinner on the living room floor and not in that stuffy restaurant with pasta that tastes like paper.”

“You said the pasta would heal my mind and soul.”

“Ugh, you’re right,” I whine. “Their pasta is so good it would definitely send you into another world, but I like this way better. It feels ...”

“It does,” Adam agrees. He doesn’t need me to even finish my thought to get what I’m saying. He just gets it. He even declines my help when I ask, instead flashing me a smile as he finishes cleaning up.

I don’t utter a word when he follows me to my room, despite showing him the guest room earlier. I don’t make a single sound of protest when he joins me in bed. It’s hard to protest something I was hoping for so earnestly.

Neither of us says a word when he draws me into his arms, his massive body making me feel protected and safe, for the first time in years. As I fall into the abyss of sleep, I realize that I haven’t once thought about my troubles all evening. Not since Adam walked through my door.

Even now, I can’t think of anything beyond what’s in this room. His presence chases it all away. I sigh sleepily when he leans in and kisses my neck, his hot breath fanning over my skin and luring me deeper to sleep.

I'd kill for you, Yuri.

My eyes snap open and sleep clears from my head in an instant as the words register.

What the hell is wrong with me? I must be going out of my mind. One night with Adam and I am already making up scenarios in my head. Maybe the stress of my would-be kidnapper, Jim, getting out and everything get to me. My therapist says people sometimes do the weirdest things to self-soothe; maybe this is me doing that to help myself feel safer.

I probably need coffee. Yes, coffee will help me think a little more clearly.

I freshen up before heading to the kitchen to brew myself a cup, but stop short when I am met by a wide back. I stop and stare in confusion at the wall of muscle before me, tattoos snaking up from beneath the collar of the t-shirt. Right, Adam's here. It's almost like I forgot. From the sizzling noise and the smell permeating the air, he's cooking, so I walk closer to inspect what he's doing. But when he turns around, I suddenly forget what it was I was going to do.

"Good morning, Yuri. Did you sleep well?"

Better than I have in months, actually, but I can't gather my wits long enough to answer him. One would think I've never seen a man before. I mean, just a week ago, I covered a story on divers and they'd all been in wet suits. A t-shirt, tight fitting as it may be, isn't a wet suit.

To be fair, none of them were built like Adam is. None of them made me feel safe like he does.

"Yuri?" My eyes shoot up to his and I blush at being caught staring. I shake my head as if to clear it of my thoughts and step closer to the kitchen counter.

He hands me a mug of coffee, and I thank him before sitting at the counter.

He finishes preparing breakfast and serves it before joining me. Adam tucks a loose strand behind my ear, his dark blue eyes digging into mine, watching me like the moon and stars hang over my head ... It's confusing.

"You look beautiful this morning Yuri," he murmurs. Heat floods my cheeks and he smiles.

"I could say the same about you," I reply. When I look at the clock, my heart sinks. I have to be at work in—oh shit.

"What?" Adam asks when he notices the panicked look on my face.

"I'm late," I groan, stuffing my face with eggs that taste so good I wish I could spare the time to savor them. I barely manage to slip a strip of bacon between my lips before I scramble back to my bedroom. I just want to spend my morning with him, but there's no way I can get out of this shit at work.

"So late. I have a meeting at eight and I have to leave in like five minutes. I haven't even grabbed a shower yet."

The words come out muffled and from the humored look on Adam's face, he didn't make out a word I said. I just urge him to eat while I rush around. A short time after, I rush out the door, barely managing to wave goodbye to Adam before I'm out the door.

It's a toss-up between time and luck as I tear onto the highway. What are the chances that I'd be pulled over for speeding? To be honest, my boss is far scarier than the traffic police, so I'll take my odds.

Minutes later, however, I find myself stuck in traffic. I pull out my makeup bag to make use of the downtime. After a moment, I reach up to adjust the rear-view mirror so I can check my lipstick when something catches my eye.

I blink, just to make sure I'm seeing what I think I see. It's still there.

The black SUV two cars behind mine shouldn't really matter except I was in

that same car just last night. I can't make out the person behind the wheel, but something doesn't feel right.

Surely Adam didn't ...

"No way," I say with a grimace. "You're going crazy, Yuri."

Despite my best efforts to convince myself that I'm just being uselessly paranoid, the car follows me closely, but not too close. It follows even when I change lanes in the dense traffic. My heart pounds faster with every mile we cover.

There has to be an explanation for why Adam would be following me, right? Perhaps he forgot to tell me something ... but then, he has my phone number. Maybe I forgot something, but then I don't get why he wouldn't text me about that either ... Maybe I'm just worried about being scared again, like I was ten years ago.

When I exit the highway, the car follows me. I park in an empty parking space in front of the station and watch as Adam drives a block down and parks on the street but doesn't get out.

My stomach drops to my toes. I have no more excuses. The truth is staring me in the face.

I have a stalker.

What's worse is that I've let him into my home.

Chapter Six

Adam

After everything that has happened between us over the past twenty-four hours, I am now more convinced than ever that Yuri was made for me. I need to make her mine, and soon, but I need to get through this day first. My flower's having a rough start to her day, so I want to make sure no one makes it worse.

Suddenly, Yuri pulls out of the station's parking lot and drives off.

That's odd.

I give it a few seconds before slowly following after her. It takes me an additional five minutes to process where the hell she's taking us and when I do, my heart threatens to stop. Alarm blares through my head at what this could mean for us if she knew ...

No, she can't know.

Fuck.

I punch my fist against the steering wheel as I follow her car to my old bar and when she parks outside, I'm tempted to run. But ... I can't. I can't run away from what I've been doing. If she's figured it out, then we need to talk about it.

She gets out of her car and walks to the door, and waits, shooting angry

glances at me as I park a ways away. I have no choice but to go to her. Yuri's expression is livid when our eyes meet. Whatever is running through her head is only confirmed by my presence.

I swallow the heavy lump in my chest before walking over to her, keys jingling in my hand. I select the right one and go to unlock the bar's front door. "Follow me."

Yuri doesn't say a word as she falls into step with me and follows me back to the office. Her silence is unnerving, and I can't help but wonder if she'll understand me. Understand this.

The second we're in the office, the door clicking closed behind me, she turns at me and starts spitting words out. "Who the fuck are you?"

"Yuri—"

"You lied to me," she hisses, pacing around the room. "Everything I know about you I know from a police report and court records. I thought you were just a guy looking out for people who needed it ... I can't believe I was so stupid to believe that!"

I wince at her words. "Yuri ..."

"Have you done this before? Is this something you do, following unsuspecting women around? How the fuck did you even get out if you do shit like this?" Her face pales as something dawns on her. "If I look at the donation records, am I going to see a campaign donation from someone who knows you to the governor?"

"No, Yuri, listen to me," I shout. She jumps, so I drop my voice to a more soothing volume. "I don't follow people, not before you. I—"

My words catch in my throat as I watch fear contort her face as she registers that she's in a room in an empty building with me. She stops pacing and

whips her head in my direction.

I step closer to her as one would approach an injured animal, but I risk it. I can handle the bites and scratches from my little wild cat, but I can't handle her leaving me. She needs to hear the truth from me. "Yuri, you're the only thing I live for. I can't let you out of my sight, because my world was nothing before you came into it."

Yuri doesn't move away when I snake my hand around her waist and pull her flush against me. Christ, even when she's furious with me, she's the only woman I see. The only woman that fucking matters.

"Before I was locked up, I had no purpose," I say, tugging her tightly against me. "I had nothing to live for, Yuri. I went to work, ate, slept, and repeated the same shit for years. Nothing I did with other people filled the void I was feeling."

"Then why the hell did you—"

"My life was an empty shell, Yuri," I declare. "That's the only way I can describe it. When I was sent to jail, I didn't feel like I was losing out on much. I didn't fight the system or appeal for another trial. I probably would have gotten out sooner if I'd tried but I had no reason to."

"What does that have to do with me?"

I pull back from our embrace and stare down at her, heat and disbelief flooding through me, leaving my head swimming. How is it that this woman can't see how desperate and weak I am for her?

The feelings I have for her border on unhealthy. I know that. I live and breathe for her. I follow every move she makes, run checks on everyone she interacts with for more than five minutes, and have security cameras installed in every corner of her neighborhood that points at her home. I do it to protect

her, to see for myself that she's safe and cared for.

I can't hide this part of myself from her any longer.

"Yuri," I whisper. It's a losing battle to rein in my desire, but I try, even if just to get out what I need to say. "The moment I laid eyes on you for the first time, I knew I had to get out. I had to be with you. Fate has a funny way of making things happen. I don't know if someone pulled strings to get me out, but I can't say I'm sorry about it."

She's silent. The longer she doesn't speak, the more my fear grows. The thought of losing her just as I found her has unwelcome weight settling on my lungs.

"How long have you been following me?" she finally asks. "I saw you this morning, but I also found the tracker in my car when I got to the station."

"The moment I got out. It started with just wanting to know you were safe, but then I started getting curious. I wanted to know everything about you." I cup her jaw with my hand and tilt her face so that her pretty eyes can look straight into mine. "I still do."

"This is so fucked up," she whispers, her breath hitching when I lean in and brush my lips over her jawline. "But it's also fucked up that I don't want to report you. The thought of sending you back to jail makes my heart ache. Why do I feel like that, Adam?"

I take her hand and guide it down to the heavy bulge of my cock. "I feel the same way, Yuri. We were made for each other."

I groan when her hands cup my erection, fighting the urge to push into her hand.

I'm desperate for more, but Yuri leaves me craving her. I am determined to make her mine. The longer I stare down at her, the more possessive my

feelings grow.

“This is fucked up,” she whispers, blinking up at me. “I shouldn’t want you the way I do, Adam.”

“You’re thinking too hard.” I can’t have that, not when I myself can barely string two thoughts together. “Let me fix that.”

I push away from her hand with a growl and move past her, bending down to sweep everything off the office desk with one arm. I turn back to Yuri and tug her toward me, closing my hand tightly around her ass when she starts to squirm in my arms. And then I’m bending her back onto the desk.

“What the hell, Adam?” she rages, pushing her long black hair back from her face.

“Strip.”

“What?” Her face twists with confusion. Her eyes widen as she watches me grab the hem of my shirt and draw it over my shoulders.

“I said strip, Yuri.”

My tone leaves no room for argument; she must see it because she swallows and begins to unbutton her silk blouse. My eyes stay on hers as I unbutton my jeans. My cock is as hard and heavy in my boxer briefs. I grit my teeth at the sight of her dusky nipples taunting me as she strips off her bra. I yank down my jeans to show her more fully the result of my desire for her.

“You want to know what’s fucked up, Yuri?” I ask, stepping out of my jeans and leaving them on the floor. Her eyes widen as I stalk towards her as a wolf would prey. Since she’s already unzipped her skirt, I grab the hem and drag it down her thighs before tossing it behind me. I don’t turn to look where it falls.

“Adam ...”

I slip between her legs before settling over her and flattening her beneath me. Her eyes are wide, lust mixed in with the lingering anger. I would worship the ground she walked on if she asked me to.

“Want to know what’s more fucked up than stalking you and planting a tracker in your car? My sick desire to be close to you. So much so that I broke into your house.”

Her eyes widen in shock before glazing over in pleasure as I lean down and take a nipple into my mouth and suck gently at the tight bud. I roll it between my tongue and teeth until she’s whimpering and thrashing beneath me.

I kiss a trail to her other breast, looking up to see that her head is thrown back, exposing her throat. “I wanted to see if your house was secure, but I also wanted to feel close to you. To see how you lived, what your space looked like, smelled like ...”

“Adam!” she cries when I reach between her legs and drag my thumb along her soaking wet slit before rubbing it over her swollen bud.

“Fuck, baby, you’re dripping,” I growl. “You like that, don’t you? The thought of me walking in your space. Getting hard just at your scent.”

“Oh my god—”

“Sometimes I would take a pair of your panties home with me and spend the night buried in your scent, jerking off to your—fuck—” I practically snarl when I press a finger to her wet hole and feel how tight she is.

I can’t wait any longer.

I haven’t had sex for more than a decade. I had no desire to be with anyone, even long before I was arrested. With Yuri, the dry spell has led to an uncontrollable blaze. Every single moment before she was in my life has led to this.

I draw my finger away and replace it with my cock, positioning the head at the entrance of her wet pussy. I look down to meet her eyes and I am overwhelmed by love, lust, and adoration, all wrapped in one.

“Take me Adam, please,” she breathes.

I lean down and take her lips in mine, swallowing her whimpered moan as I carefully slide my cock into her. Her thighs tremble and her body draws taut with anticipation of being filled for the first time.

“Relax for me baby,” I whisper, dragging my lips over hers wetly, sliding inch after inch into her tight hole. It’s all I can do to keep myself from coming on the spot.

“Adam—oh. It’s so big,” she whimpers into my arms as I stretch her further. “I don’t know if you’ll fit.”

“It will sweetheart, trust me, okay?” I don’t miss the irony of my words. I have done nothing but test the limits of her ability to trust me, and yet, it’s what I crave the most from her.

“I trust you.”

That’s all the permission I need to bury myself in her completely.

“Shit, baby. You’re so fucking tight.”

Impossibly tight. Every bit of me is pulsing and it takes everything not to lose it.

“I’m sorry, baby,” I whisper leaning down to kiss Yuri’s sweat coated forehead. “I’m sorry for hurting you.”

“It doesn’t hurt. I feel so full,” she whimpers. When I push back to look at her, it’s to find her eyes glazed with need. “I want more. Please give me more.”

I bring our lips together, kissing her fervently as my hips begin to pump into her tight hole. Yuri cries out against my lips, her nails scraping down my back, no doubt leaving scratches behind, but I can't bring myself to care. It feels too fucking good to be inside her for anything else to register.

Nothing matters but bringing her pleasure and showing her just how much she means to me. That no one holds a place above her in my life.

"Only you," I growl, working my cock furiously into her. The desk creaks underneath us, but it holds, even as I pick up my speed. "I'll only ever love you, Yuri."

"Adam," she pants, spreading her knees further and allowing me to angle my cock and hit her sweet spot. Her eyes spring open when I grip her throat in my hand, but I read only trust in them. "Oh my god, yes."

"I'm so close, baby," I breathe as I stare deep into her dark eyes, working my hips furiously. I drive into her faster and harder, each thrust becoming almost aggressive.

Suddenly, Yuri wordlessly screams, her thighs trembling and back arching as she comes. Her tight pussy contracts, pulsing against my shaft and pushing me to the edge. I come with a loud growl, burying my cock into her clenching pussy. It's so hard I see stars. It's like nothing I have ever experienced.

"I love you, baby," I gasp, thrusting one last time into her drenched pussy, pushing my seed deeper and making her mine. Marking her mine. And then I collapse over her, just barely holding myself up to keep from crushing her with my weight.

"Adam, that was ..." Yuri blows a raspberry as words fail her.

"I know," I whisper, planting a kiss on her forehead before standing to clean up.

Chapter Seven

Yuri

I love you.

The words swim in my head as I drive home. I probably should have tried to go to work, but ... I need space. I even asked Adam to stay out and about for a while, just to give me some time to process.

I should be angry that he started stalking me the second he got out of prison. Hell, I should be downright horrified and scared ... But the fact that I am not feeling either of those things scares me more than anything. This is not a normal reaction to finding out someone has been in your home, jerking off to your lingerie.

It should feel fucked up. Instead, it's a fucking turn-on.

The thought of Adam in my home, doing things while I was at work, shouldn't send an enticing tingle down my spine, but it does. It's for that very reason that I need space from the man.

When I look into my rearview mirror to see if he's following me, he isn't there. Why am I disappointed? I should be glad. I asked for space and he's giving it to me, so why the fuck am I disappointed that he listened to me?

"Snap out of it, Yuri," I scold myself as I park in my driveway. The street feels weirdly quiet, but I'm used to coming home from work when everyone

else on the street is already in for the night.

I climb out of my car, wincing at the soreness lingering in my body. It's a reminder that even if he isn't here at this moment, Adam is still in my life one way or another. I probably like it more than I should. I lock my car behind me, head in the clouds as I think about what to do while Adam's not around.

I push open the door and walk inside, realizing too late that I hadn't unlocked the door. The door was already open and unlocked, as if—

Suddenly, a hand closes over my mouth and a thick arm wraps around my chest to pull me into a massive weight. It happens so quickly that I don't even get the chance to think about screaming, about leaving and calling for help.

“Hello my little Yuri, miss me?”

My body grows rigid with tension. I know that voice. It's been ten fucking years, but I still remember it like it was yesterday. A handful of basic words and I'm immediately reliving the moment I was grabbed from my front lawn at age twelve.

My eyes well up with tears as my greatest fear is realized. He fucking found me. I told the cops that he'd come back for me, but they wouldn't believe me. They said I was just being paranoid.

I fucking told them. And now I'm here. He's here.

“You're going to come with me, little girl. We'll finish what I couldn't start ten years ago.”

Ice trickles down my spine as I gag at the thought of going anywhere with Jim. Even as I urge myself to act, I can't move. I can't make my muscles strong enough to fight a three-hundred-pound man. I can't get my mind out of the cycle of fear gripping my heart.

Jim starts dragging me outside. If he takes me away, no one will ever find

me. No one will know I am gone until it's too late. My body awakens at the thought, and I try to fight him but it's hopeless. He is bigger, stronger, and taller than I will ever be.

“Shut up and stop fighting or I'll hurt you,” he hisses as he pulls me along.

Suddenly, he trips and falls, taking me with him, but I don't hit the hard ground. A hand catches me right on time. I look up to see familiar cobalt blue eyes, filled with fury.

“Are you hurt?” he whispers, helping me up and pulling me behind him.

“No,” I whimper. I watch as he stalks towards the man sprawled out on the ground.

I've never seen Adam angry like this. He grabs the man by the collar of his jacket. For a moment I wonder if he's going to help him up, but instead, I watch in horror as Adam slams Jim's face into the concrete of the driveway with a sickening crunch.

“Oh my god,” I scream when Adam slams his fist into the bleeding man's face. The sound of blood hitting the pavement propels me forward and I grab Adam's hand before he can land another blow. “You're going to kill him, Adam! Stop!”

But he doesn't. Adam's heavy fist lands on the man's face until he's limp and even then, he doesn't stop and for the first time, I see the Brute I read about weeks ago. I didn't really believe someone could be punched to death when I first learned of Adam's case but now I see it. I see firsthand what landed this man in prison ten years ago.

I see the man that said he'd kill for me except I don't want him to. I couldn't bear it if he was sent back to prison because of me.

Suddenly, I throw myself in front of Adam and just as suddenly, he stops. He

lets go of the man, who drops into a crumpled mess of broken bones and bloodied clothes.

Tears blur my vision and my throat tightens as I stare up at the man so willing to sacrifice his freedom for me. The distant sound of sirens, no doubt called by one of my neighbors after the loud commotion, is not enough to take my attention from Adam.

“I asked you not to follow me,” I whisper, dropping my forehead against his chest as a sob wracks my body.

“I live and breathe for you,” he rasps, hugging me tight. “You can take all the time and space you need, but I will be there to watch you while you do. I’m not leaving your side as long as I live, Yuri.”

“You could have killed him. How can you stay by my side if you’re arrested again?”

“I would have been out before dawn, Yuri,” he whispers. “Now that I have something to live for, nothing short of death will keep me from you. I’m not leaving you, ever.”

I shouldn’t like hearing this. It should scare me. Instead, I feel warmth welling up into my chest. I can’t help it, I like it. Probably too much. He makes me feel cherished in a way I’ve never felt before.

I bury my nose into his chest as cops flood my home and first responders rush to help the man I desperately hope is still alive. Once the paramedic confirms that Jim’s breathing, I stop listening, choosing instead to bask in Adam’s warmth and strength.

Honestly, I don’t need time to make sense of our relationship. Adam is all I need. I don’t care if his attention borders on obsession. It doesn’t matter to me; his arms around me make me feel secure and loved enough that nothing

else matters.

“I love you, Adam.”

Epilogue

Yuri

Eight Years Later ...

I never thought I would spend my one weekend off work with my therapist. Well, former therapist. I guess it helps that this time, we're in a club sweating to "Single Ladies" even though half of the people in our group are happily married with kids.

My mouth falls open and I cackle when Sandra, who's typically calm and collected, grabs the champagne bottle from the bucket and jumps up on her chair to sing along to the music, using the bottle as a microphone. The other women in our group join her and soon, everyone is screaming at the top of their lungs.

When a co-worker invited me to her birthday party, she asked me to bring along more company and I decided to invite Sandra. She and I have developed a very close friendship over the past few years, now that she's no longer my therapist. And I don't have to pay for her advice anymore!

"Yuri, come up here!" she calls out to me, clearly several sheets to the wind. I wave up at her, before glancing at my watch. When I see the time, I gasp. Shit.

I excuse myself from the group and rush out of the club. The leather mini-

skirt that Sandra insisted I wear rides up my thighs as I run outside. Once I'm outside, I find a quiet spot to video call my babies.

"Mommy, hi!" Lydia, the youngest of my two kids, screams out as soon as the call connects. Between her and the music in the club, there's no saving my eardrums.

"Hi baby, are you and your brother having fun at Aunt Meg's place?"

"We love it here, Mommy," Levi calls out. His face is out of the frame, but there's no missing the excitement in my son's voice. "They have a new dog and Auntie Meg said Pixie the cat is going to have kittens soon."

I smile at the excitement in their voices. There are so few people I trust to look after my kids, but my sister is one of them. She's been doing it for years, and it helps that she moved her family back here. Luckily for my kids, Meg doesn't have my pet dander allergy, so the kids can visit anytime to see her pets.

I talk to my kids a little more until I notice Lydia's eyes start to droop. I wish them a good night and end the call with a promise to pick them up tomorrow morning. I start to head back to the club when someone steps in my path.

"Hey there, beautiful," the man says. I look up at his face and wince. He's pretty, but he won't be for long if he keeps this up. "Were those your kids?"

"I don't think you want to talk to me," I say, lifting my wedding ring for him to see before trying to make my way past. I sigh when he blocks my path.

"So what?" he smirks. "I don't see your husband here."

Oh, he's here all right. I don't have to see Adam to know he's around. He's always around.

"You really don't want to do this," I say with a sigh, staring at the man pityingly. If he wants to keep that pretty face of his, he'd better step aside

before—

“What the fuck!” the man yells as someone grabs him by his jacket from behind. Soon he’s flying through the air. I wince when he lands on the pavement with a loud thud, no doubt bruising something.

I watch with horror as Adam stalks towards the man. I rush forward to stop him before we end up with another “Italy incident” on our hands. There’s no forgetting the moment a few months ago where a man wouldn’t quit trying to flirt with me. It took four men to restrain my extremely jealous husband from going completely psycho on him. The three of us were banned from visiting the vineyard ever again.

“Enough of that, babe,” I say, grabbing Adam’s arm, mouthing “run” to the pretty man staring at my husband like he’s the devil incarnate. The poor guy scrambles to his feet and makes his escape before Adam can get any closer.

I wait until he’s left before turning to my insanely possessive husband and brushing my fingers lovingly over his jaw. “The boy was only saying hi, dear husband.”

“Odd way to say hi,” he grunts, his eyes flaring with heat as his hands drop to my leather-clad ass.

“What are you even doing here anyway? This was supposed to be an all-girls night. Definitely no jealous husbands allowed.”

“I got the message with how loud the bunch of you were announcing your single status.”

Ridiculous.

My husband is a ridiculous man, but I can’t say it surprises me anymore.

Eight years ago, when we made our vows to each other, Adam promised he’d spend every second of his life protecting me. He’s doing an excellent job, and

I have few complaints, if I'm being honest.

"We can't control the music that comes on, Adam," I say, blinking up at him innocently. "Surely you don't expect me not to sing along to such an upbeat song."

"For a moment there, I could have sworn that you forgot I exist," he growls deep and low, lifting my fingers to his lips and kissing my wedding ring.

"Perhaps I should remind you that you are not and will never again be single."

I fight to hide my smirk. Adam has to know he has my love and devotion. I have never looked at another man the way I do my husband. Definitely haven't wanted anyone as much as I do him, but I don't say anything as he pulls me into a dark alleyway nearby.

"Adam, someone could pass by and hear us ..."

"Let them."

You'd think that Adam would cool down a bit after we got married and had kids, but he seems to be getting worse. His obsession grows deeper by the day. I shouldn't like it as much as I do but when he gets like this, my pussy always throbs with heat. Over the years, his jealousy has led us to having sex in questionable places, but it just adds thrill to our marriage. There's never a dull day spent as Adam's wife.

My palms slap against the cool concrete wall as Adam steps behind me. I moan out his name as he pushes my hair aside and drops his hot lips to my neck.

"I love you," he whispers roughly against my skin. "Eight years ago, I was a lost man, Yuri. You gave me a reason to live and then some. You gave me two beautiful children that brighten my life every single day. You could have

rejected me—”

“Impossible,” I choke out.

“You could have turned this dark and twisted man away,” he rasps against my skin. I gasp when he slips his fingers under my skirt and past my thong. “I was so sure someone as precious, rare, and beautiful as you would never want a beast like me.”

“Adam, I—oh, god!” I cry when he thrusts his fingers into my wet pussy. I fight to gather my thoughts long enough to remind my husband that I fell for him the second we met, but I can’t focus on anything but his touch.

“I love you, Yuri,” he growls. “I love you so fucking much I can’t think straight when you are away from me. Every time someone tries to come near you, I want to rip them in half for even daring to think they can approach you.”

I cry out at his ministrations, his fingers thrusting furiously into my wet hole as he tangles his other hand into my hair and yanks hard. A thrill shoots down my spine and my sex quivers hard around his fingers. My knees begin to tremble with the need to feel more of him inside of me.

“Adam, please,” I beg. He yanks at my hair again. “Please fuck me.”

His breath is hot and heavy against my neck as he removes his hand and replaces it with his cock. A loud moan tears through me when he thrusts into my pussy with a grunt. God, I hope the music from the club drowns our voices out.

“You’re mine, Yuri,” Adam growls, digging his fingers into my thigh. “No one gets to have you but me—say it.”

“Yours,” I whimper once I realize he won’t move until I do as he commands.

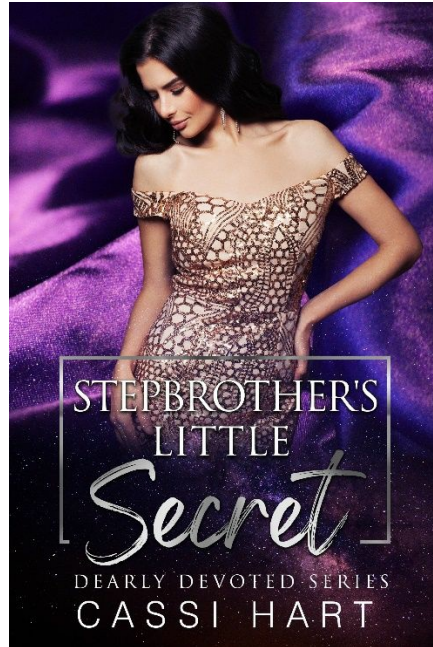
“Will only ever belong to you, Adam.”

The music echoing out from the club changes to “Crazy in Love”, and it drowns out the sounds of our lovemaking. My wedding ring glitters in the dark, reminding me of the man that owns my heart, mind, and soul.

Eight years ago, I vowed to belong only to Adam, and I intend to keep my promise. For the rest of our lives, I will only ever belong to him.

~The End

Up Next...



Allie

As soon as my mother marries my new stepdad, I'm told that I need to be careful around my stepbrother, Killian. He has a criminal history, they say, so he's dangerous for me to be around. And yet, when someone invades my space at the first college party I've ever been to, Killian is right there. He stepped in to save me without batting an eye. I'm not even sure where he came from, but no one has ever made me feel safe like he has. Something about that moment has me wanting to learn more about him. He can't be all that dangerous to be around, can he?

Killian

My father has always been obsessed with appearances. That's why we hardly ever talk. He doesn't want to associate himself with a criminal, even if that criminal is his own son. He hasn't even bothered to look and see that I've changed since I was young and reckless. When he invites me to dinner to meet his new wife and step-daughter, I wasn't expecting to feel that reckless streak of mine act up. I can't help it—meeting Allie, my new step-sister, has changed my life. I'm feeling things I've never felt for another person before, even though feeling them for her is forbidden. But even if she's now a part of my family, I will stop at nothing to protect what's mine. And that's what she is, even if she doesn't know it: *mine*.

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The Kingpin's Obsession

Alice

I saw something I shouldn't have, and my life is in danger.

The police won't listen, and I have no choice but to seek help at Benedetti's, a bar known for its criminal clientele. But I'm barely inside the door before a dark eyed devil drags me back out and demands to know why I'm there. I shouldn't trust him, but I don't have a choice when he's the only one willing to help me.

Too late, I learn who he really is, and now I'm left to wonder... when this is all over, will he save my life only to break my heart?

About the Author

Cassi lives to write brazen OTT, insta-love, short stories, about possessive alphas and the women they love. Stories that will leave you satisfied, and maybe blushing a little. Cassi loves pedicures, being pampered in any way possible, her darling golden Princess, amazing coffee, and traveling to anywhere warm.



Cassi H  *rt*