



Three NIGHT
STAND

A REVERSE HAREM ROCKSTAR ROMANCE

REBEL BLOOM

Three-Night Stand

**An Age Gap Reverse Harem Rockstar
Romance**

Rebel Bloom

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1

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Layla

“Oh, yeah! Eat me, Matty!” The woman screaming for my boyfriend was the lead singer of a moderately popular band called The Homewreckers. It was an aptly named band, apparently. Of course, she sounded amazing as she screamed. I always felt like a choking chimpanzee when I came out loud.

I stood in the doorway of The Homewreckers’ dressing room and took a deep breath. Unfortunately, it was scented with weed and sex. “Hey, Matthew?”

Matthew, who’d always told me he hated being called Matty, yanked his head out of Miriam Dark’s pussy and spun around to face me. It was almost comical how fast he spun and how wide his eyes were. He was white collar handsome. His hair was always perfectly cut, his eyebrows were never too long or bushy, and he shaved his face twice a day. He had nice blue eyes and a nice smile. Nice body, nice dick, nice guy. Well, maybe not a nice guy. After all, his face was covered in another woman’s vaginal fluids.

“Layla! What are you doing here?” He climbed to his feet and I watched in disgust as he shoved his flaccid dick back into his nice dress pants. Then, as an afterthought, he wiped his face and stumbled closer to me. “This isn’t...”

I rolled my eyes. “It isn’t what it looks like? God, Matthew, at least be original.”

Miriam took her time closing her legs and gently patted Matthew’s shoulder. “Are we done here, Matty? Or do you think you’ll be finished soon and want to finish here?”

Laughing, I rolled my shoulders and leveled a hard stare at *Matty*. “We’re done. Whatever we had is over, so feel free to finish playtime with whoever and whatever. I’m on vacation for a few days, so don’t call me.”

He rushed after me and grabbed my arm. “Wait a second, Layla. I’m sorry. I messed up. Just give me a second to explain.”

I yanked my arm free and scowled at him. “Don’t touch me.”

“Come on, Layla. Don’t be like this. Talk to me. I feel like shit.” He tried to take my hand again. “Please, baby.”

I wasn’t going to let him see that I was upset. No way in hell. He didn’t deserve that. Instead, I stepped away from him and snarled. “Touch me and I’ll break every one of your fingers, *Matty*. Go and finish fucking your client. I believe she’s still waiting.”

“Jesus. You work for me, Layla! How do you think this is going to go?”

I backed away from him. “I think it’s going to go just fine. Like I said, I’m on vacation. Don’t call me. Don’t message me. Don’t think about me. As my ex-boyfriend or my boss.”

“People fuck up! Maybe not you, the perfect Layla, but normal people fuck up. You have to accept that.” He followed me. “I fucked up. I know that. I shouldn’t have started anything with Miriam, but when I’m on the road with the band, it’s hard. I miss you and she’s there.”

My heart hardened and I took a deep breath. “How long have you been fucking her?”

He swallowed so hard I saw his Adam’s apple bobble. “Come on, Layla. None of this will matter. I’ll stop. I’ll stop and we can get engaged. You want that, right?”

I gagged. “Ew, Matthew. There’s not a chance in hell that I’m getting engaged to you! I’d rather stick my nipples in a truck winch and turn it on.”

Miriam sauntered out of her dressing room topless and looked me over. “We’ve been fucking for a year. Matty eats pussy like a champ.”

A real smile stretched my lips. “Now I know you’re full of shit. He might get an orgasm, but a champ? Hardly. Anyway, enjoy him. I hope him not having a girlfriend doesn’t ruin your lady boner.”

“Dammit, Miriam, go back inside! Layla, just stop and talk to me!”

Miriam and I both answered Matthew in unison. “Fuck off!”

I looked at her and shrugged. “Maybe you’re not *all* bad.”

Without waiting for either of them to say anything else, I turned around and walked away, ignoring Matthew as he called my name. Eventually he stopped and I walked faster. I needed to get out of there before I cried. I wasn’t about to cry backstage at a music festival. Someone would probably jump out and tit punch me as some anti-crying ritual.

As I walked faster, I couldn’t fight the way my eyes filled with tears. No matter how lackluster Matthew was, I’d devoted years of my life to him. I’d just wasted my vacation time on him, too. I thought sneaking out to meet him on the road would be fun and lend some much needed excitement to our relationship. Things hadn’t been good...ever...but I’d hoped that we could at least get back to a place where I didn’t dread seeing him at work every day.

I wiped at my eyes and felt the mascara I’d coated my eyelashes with earlier. *Stupid*. I swore and stomped my way farther away from Matthew and the ugly end of our relationship. The image of his ass in the air while he happily ate Miriam Dark’s hoo-hah like a pig in slop would forever be burned into my memory.

I couldn’t wait to get back home to my apartment and destroy everything of Matthew’s that he’d left behind. I needed to update my social media. I didn’t do much on it anymore, but I couldn’t stand the idea of people thinking I was still with the loser. I’d have to call Grandma. That thought made me want to sob. She hated Matthew, but she liked that I

wasn't alone in LA. Knowing I was single again was going to worry her. And if she told Jagger, my older brother, about me being single, Jagger would call and demand to know what'd happened. Then, he would try to fly out and kick Matthew's ass. It was just a mess.

Growling out a frustrated sound, I looked down to make sure I stepped over a big mess of cords. I couldn't believe someone had left the stage like that. It was a hazard. Not to mention, it would be so easy to fuck up the show if someone tripped over the wrong cord.

I should've been paying attention because when the crowd's wild cheering broke through my self-pitying stupor, I looked up to see how close I'd gotten to the main stage. Unfortunately, a man with a guitar was coming off the stage, looking back at another man behind him. I was moving too fast to stop in time and he wasn't looking. It happened so fast that I didn't even make a sound as I smacked right into the man and felt pain before bouncing off his hard body and going down hard. Those fucking tangled cords.

“Fucking hell!”

I heard a deep voice growl above me, but I reached up to feel my forehead and felt something wet. I knew my eyes went as wide as softballs and when I pulled my fingers down and saw red, I groaned. Blood was my kryptonite. My vision darkened and I gagged on my way down.

2

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Mack

“Well, shit.” By the time I realized what was happening, the curvy brunette was flat on the ground. I dropped to my knees next to her and swore when I saw the blood on her forehead. “This is a new form of falling for me.”

Xavier squatted on her other side and frowned. “Not really a great time for joking. You knocked her out.”

Jones sighed and ran his hands through his hair. “Where’d she come from? Also, maybe look where you’re going from now on. You ran the poor thing over. Big time.”

I brushed her hair out of her face and had a completely ridiculous moment of feeling like I was staring down at Sleeping Beauty. She was gorgeous. I gently patted her soft cheek. “Ma’am? Hello?”

“Great work. She’s jumping right to life.” Jones looked over his shoulder. “You’ve got about thirty seconds to get her on

her feet and out of the way before the crowd beats back security and runs back here.”

I could hear the commotion he was hearing and ground my teeth. We’d just come off an amazing show. I had planned on going to a bar and getting shit faced. Taking care of a Disney princess hadn’t been in my plans, but it didn’t look like I had an option. I couldn’t just leave her on the ground and I didn’t know any of the stage hands enough to trust them with an unconscious woman.

“Fine.” I stood up and lifted her body over my shoulder. Her head and arms hung limply and bounced off my ass, but I figured it was better for her than getting trampled to death. “Let’s get her to our bus and get the medics to check her out. She’ll be safe there until she can wake up and go.”

Xavier nodded once and charged ahead, clearing a path. He was a giant of a man and no one was dumb enough to stay in his way. They didn’t understand what a gentle soul he was. I was thankful for that when they jumped out of our way, though. Especially with a crowd of rabid fans chasing after us.

Jones barked at security to make sure no one followed us out into the artist lot and slammed the heavy metal door shut behind us. He swore and scowled at the door like *it* was the problem. “What the fuck do we even pay security for if they can’t keep people away?”

The woman over my shoulder groaned and grabbed my hips. I waited to see if she would say anything else, but she didn’t.

Her arms fell limp again and I released a breath at not having her scream and freak out while dangling over my shoulder.

“I’ll call the medic.” Xavier hurried ahead to the bus.

“This puts a damper on my plans.” I sighed and glanced over at Jones. “We put on a good show and I was planning on drinking my face off to celebrate.”

“The medics are quick. We’ll get her taken care of, apologize, and then send her on her way. With the medics, hopefully.” He ran his eyes over the full ass over my shoulder. “Too bad you knocked her out before seeing if she wanted to drink with us.”

I laughed. “She sure is pretty. I doubt she’ll be in a forgiving mood, though. I should’ve been looking at where I was going.”

“Why change now? Forget what I said earlier. We’re in our forties. Let’s not waste our time. Old dogs and new tricks, you know.” He reached the bus before me and opened the door. “Shit. You put your guitar down.”

I winced. “I’ll send a text to Shane as soon as I put her down.”

“I’ll do it now. They’re going to have to chase down whatever fan saw it and took it, probably. I highly doubt it’s still sitting where you left it.”

I didn’t want to think about my baby being in someone else’s hands so instead, I focused on the woman in my arms. I climbed the steps and entered the bus, letting the cool AC

wash over my overheated skin. The first space on the bus was a living room with four comfortable couches and I eased the unconscious woman down on one of them.

Stretched out on the couch, her curves were even more noticeable. She was wearing tight black jeans and a low-cut top that was black and mostly straps and lace. I didn't get it, but I liked it. It was shitty of me to notice her body, but the top curves of her breasts were spilling out of the shirt deliciously.

I forced my eyes to her forehead and frowned. The cut was definitely from my baby. It looked like either a cord or a corner of my guitar had hit her just perfectly to leave a small cut. The skin around the cut didn't look too angry and overall, she looked okay. Besides being unconscious. I ran my hands under the back of her head and felt around to see if I found a lump from her hitting her head on the ground, but there was nothing.

“The medics are tied up at another stage.” Xavier growled in frustration and stared down at the woman. “Cut looks fine. Anything along the back of her head?”

I shook my head. “No. She seems fine, honestly.”

“I don't like that she passed out.” He sat down across from her and rested his elbows on his knees. “Go ahead and shower. I'll watch over her until you're back.”

Xavier, Jones, and I had served in the military together. We'd each done enough time to know how to take care of basic medical emergencies and several other things we'd never need

in civilian life. It'd been a long time since any of us had to do first-aid in the field, but we could still hold our own.

“Sure. I'll be fast.” I winced. “I'm the one who plowed her over. I should be the one that has to explain it.”

I showered as fast as possible in the small bus bathroom but I still wasn't fast enough. By the time I shut the water off, I could already hear a husky female voice I didn't recognize ranting away. I wrapped a towel around myself and rushed out to apologize and get her to stop chewing out Jones and Xavier.

What I found wasn't her chewing them out, though. She was pacing back and forth in front of where they sat on their own couches with her hands on her hips and fury on her face. She wasn't angry at us, though. Nope. It seemed another man had pissed in her cereal that morning.

“This is just the cherry on the shit cake. Why not get a scar to memorialize the day I walked in on my boyfriend cheating on me? I'm so angry I could punch him in the dick.”

I swear all three of us males cringed. I also had to rearrange my thinking. She was no Disney princess. She had spunk, to say the least.

“She had the nerve to brag about his oral skills. *Please*. I literally have had better orgasms humping my hand. Either her needs are rock bottom, which is great for her if that's the case, or she was just lying to try to hurt me. But I don't give a fuck. I'm embarrassed, sure! It's not everyday you walk in on your boyfriend motorboating Miriam Dark's vagina lips, but whatever. I'm just pissed. I came all the way here. I shaved. I

put lotion on every inch of my body. Even the backs of my knees. Did I care that they're going to get sweaty faster now? Nope. I wanted to be smooth."

I leaned against the doorway and let myself really look at her. She was taller than I'd thought and had legs that stretched on for miles. The black jeans hugged her full ass and hips in a way that made my mouth water. Her waist clipped in just enough that my hands would fit in the notch perfectly if I was taking her from behind. Her shirt made her full breasts look even more delicious while she was standing and I was at half-mast almost immediately.

Her body, as stunning as it was, barely touched on the beauty that was her face. Her big blue eyes were surrounded by dark eyelashes and her pouty mouth was stained red. She had dark brown hair down to her shoulders that curled wildly. If she hadn't been swearing, her creamy skin would've really made her look like a Disney princess. She could've probably gone down to Florida and got a job playing one of them right then. I'd never been attracted to a Disney princess before, though.

"And you want to know the worst part? I work for the stupid asshole. And no, before anyone has the jackass assumption that I'm sleeping my way into my position, I'm not. I'm better at his job than he is and I've been sticking around for even longer than I should've because he kept promising that he'd put in a good word with his boss for me. Because I deserve it. I do his work. I can't remember the last time he's had to do a single thing. At least he chose to fuck Miriam himself. Although, I'm pretty sure I'd be better at that, too."

Jones snorted and held up his hands when the little firecracker spun on him. “I’m not disagreeing with you, honey. I’m just enjoying hearing you eviscerate this dickhead.”

She stared at him and slowly her face darkened and she brought her hand up to cover her mouth. She looked absolutely distressed and I hated it.

“What’s wrong?” I made myself known and was rewarded with watching her eyes trail down my bare chest. The way her eyes got all bedroom heavy and she licked her lips turned that almost solid erection into a full blown erection. I had to shift to hide it from her curious eyes.

She glanced back at Jones and then at Xavier. “Oh, shit.”

Xavier stood up and inched towards her. “Are you okay? Your head... Is it hurting?”

She looked up at him and I saw the way her body naturally swayed towards my giant of a best friend. Something about that made me want to hug her. Some women treated Xavier and his size like a threat and it hurt him. “Oh, shit. I can’t believe I didn’t realize before now. You’re JAX.”

Jones sighed and nodded. “Yep.”

She pushed her curls back from her face. “Don’t worry. I’m not going to fangirl. I’m just mortified. I work for your record label and this is now the most unprofessional vacation I’ve ever taken. I have to go. Can you just forget you ever saw me?”

3

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Layla

Mack Stone frowned at me and grunted. In his state of undress, I couldn't handle any noises from him, much less grunts, so I kept my eyes elsewhere. "Who do you work for?"

I planted my hands on my hips and tried to remember how to be professional. Everywhere I looked, there was another member of the band, though, and I couldn't regain my composure. Jones Alridge and Xavier Leeds were just *there*, staring at me. Xavier was standing close by and my ovaries very much weren't in a mourning phase. He was so big. I was taller than most women I knew and the same height as Matthew. Xavier made me feel tiny. I could've probably climbed him like a tree and the idea interested me more than it should've.

Jones stood up and I realized he was also a lot taller than me. My ovaries sang again, stupid things. I looked up at him and swallowed when his pale gray-blue eyes landed on mine. From a few feet away, his eyes were so much more intense than in

the pictures I'd seen online. His pitch black eyelashes against the paleness of his eyes made his gaze almost haunting. I wanted to look to the side and shy away but my stubbornness wouldn't allow it. Instead, I tilted my chin up slightly and held his gaze.

He reached up and rubbed his stubble of a beard and then worked his hand through his short light brown hair. "Who do you work for, Firecracker?"

I crossed my arms over my chest and watched his eyes lazily drop to my chest before moving back up to mine. My normal reaction would've been to correct a man's wandering eyes or to just cover myself if the situation didn't allow for a correction, but I did neither with him. I cocked my hip out to the side and raised an eyebrow. "My name is Layla Morgan. I work for Matthew O'Brian. He's the manager for The Homewreckers. None of what I said leaves this bus, though. Understand?"

His lips lifted on one side in a smirk that made women across the country throw their panties at him. He flashed perfect white teeth at me and a flash of a tongue ring. "You sure *you* work for *him*? Because I met that O-Brian dick once and I highly doubt he can handle you."

Dammit. Whether he knew it, or not, that was flattering as hell to my wounded ego. I smiled and uncrossed my arms. "You heard what I said about having better orgasms with my hand."

Their laughter filled the bus around me and when Xavier shifted even closer to me, it was with a warm smile instead of the concerned look he'd sported before. He lifted his giant hand towards my face and when I didn't flinch or shift away, we were both a little surprised. I normally wasn't a huge fan of being touched by people I didn't know.

That hand was as gentle as a breeze when he cupped my face and tilted my head so he could look at my forehead. From that close, I could see the flecks of gold in his light green eyes and the scar through his left eyebrow. His olive skin glistened with sweat and when I inhaled deeply, I could smell a mixture of his deodorant and sweat. It shouldn't have sent a buzz of electricity straight to my core, but it did. The man had to have pheromones as big as him.

"Sorry. Still need to shower after the show." He shifted back a step but I surprised us both again by reaching up and putting my hand over his thick forearm.

"You're fine." My voice was huskier than normal and I had to clear it before I could continue. "So, what do you think? Will I live?"

He caught his tongue between his teeth as he looked me over again and the sight of it made me flush like he'd just propositioned me. With his long dark brown hair hanging down his back in waves and his strong jaw, he was a dream. "It's just a scratch, but you passed out."

I laughed easily. "I saw the blood. I'm not a fan."

“Are you sure? You hit the ground hard.” He ran his other hand over the back of my head and his fingers confidently searched for any signs of damage. “I don’t feel anything.”

I was feeling plenty. I had to stop myself from leaning into his chest and asking him to keep looking for the next thirty minutes. When he pulled his hands away and stepped back, I wanted to pout. “Thank you.”

He looked towards the back of the bus. “I should shower.”

Or not. I was fine with him smelling like he smelled. Instead of voicing those bizarre thoughts, I nodded a little too aggressively and took a step back. “Well, I should go. I’m sorry I invaded your time. I’m sure y’all have things to do. I have an ex to forget, so I’ll be on my way. Thank you for taking care of me while I was out. That was kind.”

Mack, still too underdressed for my poor eyes, spoke up again. “Stay. We’re going to celebrate a show well done at a bar in town. There’s no better way to forget.”

I hesitated and looked around at the three of them. I had nothing else to do. The motel room I’d booked wasn’t anywhere I wanted to be anymore, as it was the Honeymoon suite. My overnight bag was in my rental car so I could grab it easily to change into something for the bar. Then I could just grab a ride to a different hotel for the night. Plus, if I had a drink with JAX, my brother Jagger would die of jealousy. He was a massive fan.

I shrugged. “Sure. Why not? I just need to go get my bag.”

Mack walked closer and I had to press my toes into my shoes as hard as I could to keep from scooting away from all of his bare muscles. “We’ll have someone grab it for you. In case your head is worse than we think.”

So. Many. Bare. Muscles. I licked my lips and looked down at my hand as it extended to drop my keys into his palm. What the hell was my body doing? “It’s in my rental car.”

He looked at the tag on the key with the make and model of the car. “We’ll take care of it. You need anything else?”

I leveled a look at him as shock overpowered my lust. “My job is literally to run around and assist a band manager, which usually means my job is doing things for bands. I’m supposed to be asking you if *you* need anything else.”

He stepped even closer and I saw that he was just as tall as Jones and towered over me. His eyes were as dark as the others were light. Dark, chocolatey brown eyes that matched his hair and thick beard. Only his beard had a little salt and pepper in it that I found incredibly attractive. His head was shaved on the sides but the top of his hair was longer and messy after his shower.

Then my eyes landed on the tattoo over his heart and I realized I didn’t know enough about the band to know if staring at Mack’s bare chest was wrong. There was a woman’s name over his heart, entwined in the vines of a beautiful flower. *Emily*. If Emily was a girlfriend, or more, I wanted nothing to do with staring at his naked chest, lusting away. Not after finding Matthew with Miriam.

“You’re not at work. If you’re going to stay and drink with us, you’re simply Layla and we’re just a few random guys. *Understand?*” He threw that word back at me and when I lifted my eyes to his face, I found him smirking. He lifted his hand to his chest and tapped it. “Your eyebrows give away every one of your emotions. It’s my mother’s name. I didn’t want *Mom* across my chest.”

I took a deep breath to fight the emotion threatening to squeeze my chest. So what if he loved his mother? Who cared if it was hot? Not me. “I don’t need anything else. Just my bag.”

He smiled. “Good girl. That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

I wanted to hiss at him even as my panties disintegrated into a puff of smoke. I settled on rolling my eyes and turning my back to him. When he laughed, I had a feeling he’d won whatever battle we’d just had.

4

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Layla

While I sat quietly on one of their couches, the guys took turns taking showers and getting ready. I canceled my hotel room for the night and tried to book another, but everything was full. I decided I'd just sleep in my rental car that night and leave for the airport as soon as I woke up. I could clean up there and catch an earlier flight back home without having to wait too long, if I was lucky.

A knock on the door came a little while later and I got up to answer it without thinking. I was used to doing everything for Matthew and that attitude just extended to other parts of my life, it seemed. I *was* hanging out with the biggest band at the record label. No matter how many ways or times Mack suggested I look at them as regular guys, that wasn't going to happen. They were all over the place in the Bingham office building. How I hadn't immediately recognized them at first showed how angry I'd truly been.

I almost had my hand on the door handle to open it when Jones' fingers closed over my wrist and pulled me away. I

stumbled from the surprise of him suddenly appearing out of nowhere and he righted me with his hands on my hips.

“You don’t know who’s knocking. You don’t answer the door unless you know who it is.” He eased me back a few steps and opened the door himself. A few seconds passed before he closed it again and turned to me with my bag. “Are you sure this is all you need?”

I took the bag but I couldn’t help myself. “You answered the door without knowing who it was.”

He shrugged. “Yeah?”

“But you just said I couldn’t.” I dropped my bag on the couch and crossed my arms over my chest.

He inched closer to me and I was immediately aware that we were the only two people in the front of the bus. “You’re tiny. If someone had bad intentions, it would be a lot easier to hurt you than it would be to hurt me.”

I scoffed. “I’m not tiny. I’m bigger than most of the women who were trying to climb up the stage at your concert tonight, I bet.”

He stepped even closer. “You’re tiny compared to me.”

“I can open doors, Jones.” I tipped my head back slightly to hold his gaze as he moved closer.

His hand curled around my waist and I got another flash of his tongue ring when he licked his lips. “You *can* do a lot of things, I’m sure, Firecracker. That doesn’t mean you should. That piece of shit ex of yours might’ve let you do all sorts of

things by yourself, but just consider that maybe that's because he isn't a real man."

I flushed as his words sank in. My natural instinct to argue was there, but I swallowed it down and smiled instead. "Maybe you're right."

He glanced over my shoulder and took a step back. "Bathroom's open. Go, get changed."

I looked over my shoulder and saw Mack standing in the pathway that led to the rest of the bus. He was dressed, thankfully, but it didn't exactly take away from his hotness. I grabbed my bag and walked towards him. "I got my bag. Thanks, again."

He nodded and moved sideways, but not out of the way. The three of them on the bus didn't leave a lot of extra room to move around, especially towards the back half of the bus. When I moved past him, my chest brushed against his and I watched his eyes narrow on me. I held my breath and then bumped right into Xavier. He wrapped his arm around me to keep me steady and I found myself plastered against his chest.

"Not a lot of space back here. Sorry." Xavier gently moved away and smiled. "Let me get out of your way."

I shook my head and nodded back at Mack. "Mack didn't. I'll just squeeze by."

Squeezing past Xavier was an even tighter fit and it wasn't just my chest that rubbed against him. I felt a bulge in his

pants against my stomach and fought the need to look down and see if it looked as big as it felt.

He grunted when my bag hit him after I made it through but when I turned to check on him, he held up his hand. “I’m good. Go on.”

I was slipping into the bathroom when I heard Mack laughing. “Put that thing away before you poke someone’s eye out, X. Jesus.”

I pressed my back against the door and covered my face with my hands. I was pretty sure I wasn’t living in reality anymore. Working in my job meant I’d seen several famous musicians, but whatever was happening with JAX felt different. I was sure they were just flirts, but I was picking up big energy.

I opened my bag and looked at the things I’d brought and made a split second decision. My anger at Matthew directed my hands as I pulled out the outfit I’d planned to seduce him with. A corset top that made my boobs look out of this world and a skirt that flirted around my thighs with every move I made weren’t things I’d typically wear out in public, but I was going out for a drink with one of the biggest bands in the country. I wanted to look as good as they did. Or, at least try to.

Both the top and skirt were black, as were most of my clothes. I nearly died trying to get on the corset, but with a little maneuvering and a nipple almost lost in the battle, I got it on. I slipped my feet into black strappy heels that I only wore on special occasions so Matthew didn’t complain about the

way I towered over him. I spent a few minutes darkening my makeup for a night out and put a gloss over my red lips to make them pop.

It was as I was working my hair into a cute half-back style that I realized I was primping like I was going out on a date and maybe doing too much. I was suddenly embarrassed and horrified that I would walk out of the bathroom, just to have the guys look awkward about how much effort I'd put into simple drinks. My heart hammered and I pulled my cell phone out to quickly send a picture to Jagger.

Do I look like I'm a desperate groupie?

He called immediately. "What the fuck are you wearing? Are you going out with that piece of shit, wearing *that*?"

To say that my brother hated my recent ex would be an understatement. "Just tell me that I look okay. I'm nervous. I'm not going out with Matthew. I found Matthew cheating on me a few hours ago and dumped him."

"I'll murder him." Jagger growled out the words and I heard the sound of his screen door slam shut.

"Look, we can do the fuck Matthew dance later, but I'm about to go out for drinks with JAX right now, Jag. JAX. Do I look desperate?" I stared at my reflection and frowned. "I think I look desperate."

"What did you say?"

Groaning, I accidentally stomped my foot and then glared at the appendage like it'd wronged me. "You heard me, Jag."

“You look fine. You’re going out with JAX? As in my favorite band? I don’t believe you. Send me a picture.”

“I’m not sending you a picture, Jag!” A knock on the bathroom door made me yelp. “Just a minute!”

Mack’s low voice came from the other side of the door, clear as day. “Why don’t you come out here and let us tell you that you don’t look desperate?”

5

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Layla

“**W**as that one of them? Holy shit. Put them on the phone. Right now, Layla Rose Morgan!”

I shoved the phone out of the door and pressed my forehead against the wall. It would've been good to know the bathroom wasn't sound proof before I'd taken Jagger's call.

Mack reached into the bathroom and wrapped his arm around my waist, easily tugging me into his arms and towards the front of the bus while he spoke with Jagger. “So, Jagger, huh? Who are you to Layla?”

I couldn't hear Jagger's reply but whatever it was made Mack grin. I swallowed my nerves and looked up to see Jones and Xavier's eyes heat when they saw me. I barely resisted the urge to tug my skirt down and moved out of Mack's arms instead. I put my hands on my hips and stared up at him. “He's my brother.”

“Layla Rose, huh?” He listened to Jagger and smiled wider. “She is a little prickly, now that you mention it.”

I swore. “Do not listen to him. He’s a sorry liar and whatever he’s saying is bullshit.”

Mack looked over my head at Jones and Xavier. “Layla was named after the Eric Clapton song and her middle name, Rose, is from the Poison song.”

“Every Rose has its Thorn?” Jones let out a laugh. “Wow.”

I shook my head. My entire childhood, every time I got angry, one of my parents would sing the song at me. They’d said they doomed themselves to a sassy kid when they named me Rose. It was something I’d pretended to hate but I secretly loved it. Grandma and Jagger were the only people in my life who still sang it at me when I acted spicy with them.

“Well, Jagger, thank you for giving me that information, but I’m in desperate need of a beer.” Mack looked back down at me and his smile was devious. “And don’t worry, Jagger. Your sister doesn’t look desperate.”

I took the phone and turned away from them while pressing it to my ear. “Happy now?”

“Are you hooking up with them? I swear to god, I recognize the sound of a boner and that man had one when he said that last bit.” Jagger didn’t sound angry, like he normally would’ve. He was the stereotypical big brother and loved threatening men who looked at me. “Wait. Let me talk to him again.”

“No!” I lowered my voice and tried again. “No. Not a chance. Goodnight, Jagger. I love you. Talk to you later,

okay?”

He grumbled. “Take pictures. I love you, too. Even more now.”

I hung up and turned back towards the guys. I took a big breath in and blew it out slowly. “One picture. Please, take one picture with me so he’ll shut up about it.”

Mack grinned and nodded. “Let’s do it at the bar. We can have someone take it for us.”

“Thank you. He’s a huge fan. I didn’t know he was going to word vomit, though.” I patted my hips and sides while I spoke, trying to find a pocket for my phone and credit card, but I quickly realized I had no pockets. I frowned until Xavier gently took my phone and card from my hand and slid it into his own pocket. Smiling up at him, I put my hand on his arm and squeezed. “Thanks, Xavier.”

He nodded and shifted away again. “Our ride’s outside if you’re ready.”

“I am. As long as this is okay to wear wherever we’re going.” I scanned their faces and saw so much masculine approval that my body heated. “Okay, I’ll take that as a sign that I’m good to go.”

Their ride was a blacked out giant SUV. A driver held the back door open on the side parked closest to the bus and waited. He was a lot smaller than the guys, but I saw a bulge under his jacket that told me he was armed. Being from a small town in Tennessee, I easily recognized the shape of a

gun under a jacket. You couldn't throw a rock back home without hitting someone holding a gun. So, maybe don't throw rocks in small town, Tennessee.

“Gary, this is Layla Rose. She's with us tonight.” Jones patted the driver on the arm and motioned for me to climb in. “Ladies first.”

I looked at the step up from the ground to the backseat and then down at my skirt. Before I could work out how to get in the car without flashing my panties, Jones wrapped his hands around my waist and lifted me in. I gasped and grabbed his hands, but then I was in the car. I twisted around to face him and he winked before motioning for me to scoot over.

To be nice, I moved to the back row so they didn't have to wedge themselves there. As I buckled myself in, though, I watched Jones wedge his large body into the seat next to me. I smiled as I looked away, flattered that he'd chosen to sit with me.

Xavier and Mack got in and then Gary was behind the wheel, driving us to whatever bar we were going to. I was sure I was going to lose them when we got to the bar, after the bar patrons saw the members of JAX had just walked in.

“Hey, in case we get split up at the bar, do you think you guys could just put my bag outside the bus when you get back tonight? I should've brought it, but I didn't think about it.”

They each turned to me with confused expressions on their faces but it was Jones who spoke first. “We're not getting split up. You came with us, you're leaving with us. Does that shit

normally happen when you go out? Do your friends just split up and leave you behind?”

I grinned and crossed my legs. “What friends? I work eighty hours a week, at least. This is the first vacation I’ve taken since I started working for Bingham. It’s been months since I’ve been to a bar. I just meant that I’m sure y’all are going to get swarmed by adoring fans, rightfully so. I’m not fighting anyone to stay close to y’all. Sorry, but it would be too easy for a boob to pop out and that’s one of my biggest fears. I watched it happen to a lady on Beale Street in Memphis one time and I’ve never been the same.”

They all just stared at me.

“What? You don’t understand. There would be nothing more humiliating to me than a video coming out showing me getting my ass beat with one titty hanging out. I would never recover.” I shuddered. “That poor woman. I think about her all the time. I hope she’s okay.”

They erupted in laughter at the same time and it really showed how bonded they were. Their laughter almost harmonized. I loved the sound of it and knowing that I’d caused it.

Mack recovered first. “You’re not going to have to fight anyone. We’re too old for the typical bar scene. This is just our chance to unwind, but do it someplace that doesn’t smell like the three of us when we haven’t showered in a few days. There won’t be anyone at the bar except us and the bartender.”

I scoffed. “Did you just say you’re too old? Are you serious?”

Jones grunted. “We’re in our forties.”

I looked each of them over again and somehow, knowing they were older just made them even hotter. They were aging like fine wine. Or George Clooney. I didn’t want to be obvious about my attraction to them, so I tried to compliment them in a different way. “Have the panties and bras thrown at you slowed down any now that you’re in your forties?”

None of them said a thing.

“That’s what I thought. You’re not too old for anything.” I looked out the window when the car stopped. There was a small crowd of people, but it wasn’t anything like I’d been dreading. “I really do appreciate not having to fight a mass of people to share a drink with y’all. Let me just say that.”

Xavier had his hand on the door, ready to open it, but he hesitated and looked back at me. “How old are you?”

I felt like there was a wrong answer. “I’m twenty-four.”

All three of them groaned. Xavier cleared his throat and nodded. “Too goddamn young for us.”

“Says who?” I didn’t know why I was arguing with him. It wasn’t like I could really hook up with one of them. I *just* got cheated on and dumped Matthew. I just didn’t like being excluded from their possibilities, I guessed. “Never mind. Let’s just go get our drink. It’s been a long day.”

6

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Jones

“**A**t what point does this cross over into torture?” Mack threw back another shot and wiped his mouth with the back of his arm. His eyes were glued to the same spot they’d been glued all night. “We should take her home and call one of the women we usually see here.”

We each knew we weren’t doing that. There wasn’t a chance in hell we were sending Layla away before she wanted to go. He was right about it being torture, though. She was standing at the bar, leaning over it to talk to the bartender, and the bottom curve of her ass was showing. I knew the color and style of her panties, which was a problem.

“How’d a fuck like O’Brian get her?” Xavier stretched his legs out and rested his beer on his thigh. “She’s too much woman for him.”

“Truer words have never been spoken, brother.” I raised my own shot glass to him and then threw it back. The whiskey burned all the way down, but I welcomed the pain. Anything to distract my dick from the sight of Layla’s bare legs.

“I swear to god, if she bends over any farther, I’m walking over there to spank her. She has to know she’s torturing us.” Mack growled when Layla looked back and sent us a finger wave before turning back to her best friend. “I thought she wanted to have a drink with *us*.”

Xavier stood up. “I’m going to-”

Whatever he was going to say was cut off by the speakers around the bar crackling on. Music that I didn’t recognize came on and I looked over at Layla to see her fist bump the bartender. The other woman grinned and said something before nodding at us. Layla turned around to face us and narrowed her eyes on Xavier.

“Shit.” Xavier knew he was about to get pulled into something. He couldn’t take his eyes off Layla, though, and I had a feeling he wasn’t going to deny her whatever she wanted.

The music had a gritty beat that Layla’s hips swayed to naturally as she approached the table. She moved right up to Xavier and pressed her hand to his chest. “Dance with me?”

Mack and I watched in amazement as our best friend, a man who neither of us had ever seen even attempt to dance, went to the middle of the dance floor. The music was slow and the lucky sonofabitch didn’t hesitate to pull Layla into his arms. In her heels, she wasn’t more than six inches shorter than Xavier.

They moved together and I shot Mack a wide-eyed look. Xavier was dancing like he’d been doing it his whole life. I watched as Layla, the little minx, turned in his arms and

pressed her ass right against him. She held his arms around her stomach and stretched one arm over her head to tangle her hand in X's hair. The slow grind of her hips was pure sex and my dick was instantly hard.

“Fuck.” Mack gripped the edge of the table in both hands. “How the fuck am I supposed to walk out of here with my dick attempting to act as my third leg?”

I watched as Xavier flattened his palm over her stomach and stroked it down over her hip and back up, almost to her chest. “My brain is going to catch on fire soon if she keeps this up.”

As if she heard me, Layla focused her eyes on me and bit her lip. She motioned for Xavier to stay where he was and then she walked straight up to me and leaned down, eye to eye with me. Her breasts were damn near spilling out into my hands as she smirked and then straightened, threw back my shot of whiskey, and strolled right back to Xavier.

I let out a pained laugh as I looked over at Mack. “I would sign over my house to fuck her.”

He pressed his fist to his mouth and nodded. “Why can't we?”

Layla was with Xavier again, rolling her hips and looking over her shoulder at him. Whatever she was saying to him made his jaw tighten and his mouth lift in his own pained smile.

“She's young.” I leaned back in my chair and poured myself another shot. “Too young for us.”

“She doesn’t seem to think so.” Mack swore as Layla turned her ass to us and dipped her body down Xavier’s until she was head level with his dick and then slowly swayed herself back up again. “I’m dying here.”

“You? How do you think X feels right now?” I looked out at Xavier and whistled. “There’s no way he isn’t hard right now.”

Mack snorted. “He was sporting major tent earlier when she brushed against him. That was just a second of touching. I’d be surprised if his dick isn’t unzipping his pants by now.”

I threw my shot back and let out a sigh of relief when the song ended and both Xavier and Layla came sauntering back to the table. X was as stiff as we expected, but Layla was liquid. She slid into her chair and crossed her legs before reaching forward to snag the bottle of whiskey from Mack’s hand. She took a pull straight from the bottle and then licked her lips.

“This is great. Matthew only drank martinis. When I offered him a shot of Jack once, he blanched and acted like I’d insulted his mother. I should’ve known then and there that he was a loser.” She reached up and rearranged her hair so it was pinned up. Showing off that much more skin, she took a piece of ice out of her glass of sweet tea she’d insisted on ordering to go along with her whiskey and rolled it over her chest. “It’s hot in here. Are y’all not hot?”

I might’ve whimpered like a fucking puppy if I was a weaker man. As I watched a drop of melted ice run down her chest and disappear into her cleavage, my entire body melted and

rearranged itself into a being solely focused on wanting and needing Layla.

“Pretty fucking hot, yep.” Mack cleared his throat and stood up. “I’ve gotta call about my guitar. I’ll be right back.”

I laughed as he walked away. “Coward!”

Layla shifted closer to me. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright. “It’s your turn to dance with me, Jones.”

I shook my head. “I don’t dance.”

“Neither does Xavier, according to him, but he did a damn fine job.” She stood up and put her hands on her hips. “If you don’t dance with me, I’ll be forced to dance alone. Do you want that?”

I could picture it in my head and I was pretty sure I did want that. I smirked up at her and she leaned over to rest her hand on the back of my chair. The move put us close together and I had to look up to avoid staring straight into her tits. “Can I help you?”

She smiled and moved even closer until her mouth was next to my ear. “I’m a little tipsy already and I really love dancing. Are you sure you don’t want to dance with me?”

I gripped her hips and held her tighter than I should’ve. “I don’t dance, honey. And if you rubbed against me like you did X, we’d both leave the dance floor a little embarrassed.”

She let out a breath that ghosted over my neck. “I doubt you’d be embarrassed.”

“You’re right. I don’t want to scandalize you, Firecracker.”

She leaned back and held my stare. “It seems Mack isn’t the only coward.”

I ground my teeth together as she stood up and spun around, letting her skirt fly up around her thighs as she did. She had thicker thighs. I wanted to sink my teeth into them and she was pushing me. I looked over at Xavier and shook my head. “Goddamn.”

He nodded back. “Yeah. I almost fucking came in my pants. She’s a weapon of mass destruction.”

Layla strolled out onto the middle of the dance floor and did another spin to face us. Then she proved to me that she didn’t need a dance partner to make me harder than stone. She moved sensually all on her own, running her hands up and down her body as she twisted and dipped low. X wasn’t wrong. She *was* a weapon of mass destruction. It just happened to be my control that she was making a joke out of.

7

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Layla

I stumbled onto the bus ahead of the guys and laughed when I lost my shoe and went down on one of the couches. “Shit. I’m fine. That’s not being drunk. That’s just clumsiness. Promise.”

Xavier helped me sit up and settled on the couch next to me. Without needing me to hint that my feet hurt, he pulled them into his lap and began massaging them after taking off my one remaining shoe. “You were limping.”

I groaned as his giant hands dug into my arches and let my head fall back. “How has no one snatched you up yet, Xavier? You’re a god.”

He chuckled quietly. “Now I *know* you’re drunk.”

“I’m tipsy. There’s a difference.” I let him massage my feet for a little bit longer and then I sighed. “Okay. I should get my bag and head back to my car.”

“You’re not driving in your state.” Jones looked up from where he was shuffling a deck of cards. “Not an option.”

“I wasn’t going to drive. I’m going to sleep there. I canceled the room I’d booked for my weekend with Matthew but there were no other rooms left. It’s fine.” I pulled my feet off of Xavier and stood up. “I’m a strong, independent, slightly tipsy woman. I can do anything I set my mind to. Plus, I was raised in the country. I can hogtie a man while blindfolded. Probably. It’s been a while since I tried. Grandma put me in the 4H club after my parents died and I also raised a pig named Bimbo, so I don’t know how well those skills translate to real life for me.”

“That’s a lot of information at once.” Mack drank from a cold bottle of water that suddenly looked better than any of them. “You’re not sleeping in your car, though.”

I inched my way towards him. “Yeah, yeah, whatever you say. Do you have another bottle of water?”

“Depends. Are you going to sleep in your car tonight?”

I frowned. “I could say no, but I’d be lying. I don’t like to lie, Mack.”

“You’ll stay here. We have the extra space for you. You’ll be safe here.” He saw me start to argue and waved the water in my face. “We have water.”

“And cards. We can play poker.” Jones did an impressive bridge shuffle and winked. “We might even let you win a few hands.”

I snatched Mack’s water and downed it. I was sure I looked a little wild when I finished and wiped my mouth with my hand.

“Fine. I’ll stay, but only because you have water.”

Mack grinned down at me and reached out to run his thumb over the corner of my mouth. I sucked in a sharp breath and licked my lips, barely containing the urge to chase his thumb. He moved closer and his lips tipped up in a slow smile. “Your lipstick smeared.”

I grunted and spun away from him. “Thanks... Am I really staying here?”

Xavier raised his eyebrows at me. “Were we not clear?”

I pointed at him and wagged my finger. “I’m starting to think the three of you are all very bossy. If I’m staying here, I’m going to change into my pajamas. You may all be rockstars but not even y’all are worth wearing this corset for a moment longer.”

In the bathroom I changed into one of my parents’ vintage band t-shirts that I wore nightly. The cotton was worn and soft, with enough holes in it to make it impossible to wear in public. My sleep shorts were too short to wear around strangers, but I wasn’t putting my jeans back on. I washed my face and put my hair up in a better bun before brushing my teeth. Then, I just stared at myself in the mirror and laughed.

“What’s so funny?” One of the guys called from the front of the bus.

I walked out of the bathroom still laughing. “It’s just ridiculous. I just did my nighttime routine on a tour bus. I didn’t even think about it. I just did it. Weird.”

The three of them had moved one of the couches away from the wall of the bus and had it set up with a table and another couch to make a place to play cards. They were all sitting around the table, waiting for me. When none of them responded to me, I realized they were staring at my shirt and looked down at it. I hadn't bothered with a bra and I groaned.

"Is it going to be a problem?" I climbed over the arm of the couch and settled next to Xavier. "Get it together. They're just boobs."

Jones grunted and shook his head. "They're not, but okay. Is that a Poison tour shirt?"

I ran my hand over the faded graphics lovingly. "Yeah. My parents were big into the music scene. They went all over the country to see their favorite bands before Jagger and I came along. Then, they took us with them while they managed a couple of smaller bands. Jagger was already too big for their t-shirts when they passed so I got them all."

"Who all did they manage?" Mack used the side of the table to open his beer and took a long pull from it.

I watched Jones deal us each a hand of cards and smiled. "While I was alive and old enough to remember, there were two bands. One called The Walkaways and another called The Drunk Tanks."

"No shit? I remember The Drunk Tanks." Jones tapped the cards on the table. "They were wild. Their shows are still pretty famous with the older guys still playing. Your parents did that?"

Pride washed over me and I nodded excitedly. “They were amazing. They would put me and Jagger in a corner backstage and then make magic happen. They were at venues that had nothing, too. Hole in the wall places that considered lighting a guy named Jimmy holding a flashlight. They would’ve been huge. Matthew doesn’t have an ounce of their talent.”

“Why were you with him?” Xavier locked his molten chocolate eyes on me. “You have passion for the business. It must’ve been hard to watch someone like O’Brian do the job with no heart.”

I sighed. “I moved to LA when I was twenty-one. I had to beg for the job I got with Matthew. I just wanted to get in somewhere and prove myself. Instead, I ended up working to prove Matthew was good enough. He kept promising me he’d put a good word in for me but it was all bullshit. I was just hoping I hadn’t hooked myself to a true loser, I guess.”

“He’s a piece of shit.” Gripping the back of my neck, Xavier’s intensity didn’t ease. “Say the word and I’ll kick his ass.”

I leaned into his side and laughed. “Let me think about it.”

8

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Layla

I didn't tell them that I'd learned to play poker on the road with my parents, or that I played regularly with Jagger when we were together. I never would've mentioned that Grandma made us play her all the time for practice so she could take all the money from her Saturday night games. She would murder me, or Jagger, if we told that secret. Her poker buddies would never let her live it down. I let Jones explain the rules to me and smiled sweetly as I pretended to listen. I even pretended to be scandalized when Mack playfully suggested strip poker.

"I'm wearing two items of clothing! That's not fair!" I pouted. "I'll only agree if every two hands lost count for one piece of clothing for me."

They foolishly nodded along, probably thinking they would easily get me out of my clothes. I could see the hunger on their faces at the realization that I wasn't wearing anything under my shirt and shorts. I was playing a dangerous game, but I didn't care. I was having fun.

When I won the first hand, I acted shocked and cheered for myself like an idiot. “Yay! That’s amazing! Take something off, y’all!”

They each lost their shirts and I’d be lying if I said them all being shirtless didn’t make it harder for me to win the second hand. Jones had an impressive amount of tattoos. His entire right arm was covered and most of his left, too. He also had defined muscles, nipple bars, and a happy trail that I wanted to explore for a few days. I’d already eye-fucked Mack halfway to pregnancy and back, but that didn’t stop me from looking again. Then there was Xavier. The man put off so much body heat that I wanted to crawl into his lap to play the rest of the game. He was massive, with a wide chest dusted with hair and a hard stomach that seemed like a perfect spot for me to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner off of. Still, I won the second hand.

Jones narrowed his eyes at me as he took off his belt. “Beginner’s luck?”

I twirled a piece of hair around my finger that’d escaped my bun. “Must be.”

The third hand had them kicking off their shoes and frowning at me. The fourth and fifth cost them their socks and their pants. With them down to just their briefs, I didn’t bother pretending to be lucky anymore. I gloated.

“You guys are pitiful. It’s like stealing candy from a bunch of babies.” I stole glances at muscular thighs and grabbed the

front of my shirt to pull it out and fan myself with it. “It’s warm in here.”

Mack laughed. “Try taking something off. You’ll cool right off.”

“No more special rules for the poker shark. You lose a hand, you lose your clothes.” Jones shook his head at me. “It’s always the sweet looking ones.”

“Fine. You guys are about to lose your last stitch of clothing. I almost feel bad for you.” I picked up my hand that Jones dealt me and laughed. I had two aces. “I think Jones just wants to get naked.”

Xavier shifted next to me on the couch. “I think I’m kicking someone’s ass later.”

I glanced over and saw the hand of cards he wasn’t even bothering to hide from me. A wild idea came to my mind and I lowered my cards to my lap, out of view from Jones and Mack. I reached over and pressed them against Xavier’s thigh. He looked down at my hand and then up at my face, confusion clear.

“Did you guys like that band The Switch?” I looked down at the cards. “The Switch put on great shows, too, I heard.”

His lips stretched in a wild smile and he lowered his cards and handed them to me. “I thought they were pretty good.”

“What the fuck are you two going on about? The Switch? That’s not a real band.” Jones looked suspicious but then Mack folded his hand and groaned, distracting him.

When it was my turn, I looked down at my cards and pouted. “I thought I had something, but it looks like my beginner’s luck just ran out.”

The table was silent as I folded my hand. No one said anything as Xavier won the round. They were quiet as church mice as I shrugged and lifted my hips slightly to slide my shorts over my ass and down my legs. My shirt was long enough to cover me as I sat back down and smiled.

“Next hand?”

Mack slapped Jones’ arm. “Deal the cards, asshole.”

My next hand was truly horrendous. My good fortune had run out. No amount of skill was going to make up for the cards I was holding. Unless each of the guys folded before I did.

I looked over at Xavier and found him smiling down at me. “What?”

He flashed me his cards under the table. Three aces. “Should’ve put your shoes back on, sweetheart.”

I tossed my cards down on the table, not even bothering to wait for my turn to fold. “I regret that last hand, just so you know.”

He grinned even wider. “That makes one of us.”

I yanked my shirt over my head and folded it neatly before covering my chest with my arm. “Alright. I lose. My grandma would be so ashamed of me right now.”

“For being naked on a tour bus with three men?” Mack wagged his eyebrows at me.

“Nope. For losing to a bunch of shitty poker players. She’d completely understand being naked on a tour bus with three men. She’s wild.” I looked around the table and watched the way they both strained to not stare right at my breasts while also seeming to strain to see just a bit more. Seeing them struggle made me feel hotter than I’d ever felt in my life. I’d been turned on all night and I was terrified when I stood up, there would be a wet spot on the couch.

Mack stood up and grabbed a new water. When he turned back to us, I could see his very obvious bulge in his briefs. He’d been blessed. It looked like they all had been. Holding the water out to me, he winked. “What did you say earlier? Get it together, it’s just a dick?”

I snorted and covered my face in my hands as a rare moment of shyness came over me. “I wasn’t trying to stare!”

“Honey, we’re all staring. You being naked right now is the only goddamn thing I can think about, so don’t be embarrassed that you’re looking back.” Mack bent down and pulled my hands away from my face. “Feel free to keep these hands busy, though. The view is much better when they are.”

Xavier made a noise of agreement. “So much better.”

I took a deep breath and looked around at them. They all looked like they were ready to pounce on me, but I wasn’t sure. If I was reading them wrong, I was going to be

thoroughly humiliated, but I didn't care. "Do y'all do this often?"

Jones met my eyes. "Invite a woman back onto our bus and get our asses kicked at poker? Nope. But if you mean do we get a woman naked between the three of us often? Sometimes."

"Sometimes?" I couldn't look away from him. "What does that mean?"

"It means that every once in a while, we all want to fuck the same woman. If she wants it, too, we fuck her. I can't say that it happens all the time, but we've made sharing a woman something of an art form." He ran his eyes down my body. "You wouldn't walk away saying you came better with your own hand."

I pressed my hands into my thighs hard and sat up straight, letting them see me. "Do you all want to fuck the same woman now?"

Xavier surprised me by reaching over and grabbing me. He pulled me onto his lap and settled my naked sex over his very hard dick. When I gasped and curled my fingers over his shoulders, he nodded. "What does that tell you?"

He was the quieter one out of the three of them and there was something so painfully hot about him making the first move. His hands dropped to my ass and he filled his hands with both cheeks before squeezing and rocking me forward.

I didn't have a chance of keeping my moan inside. It felt like it came from the deepest part of me, like Xavier was reaching a part of me that no one else had before. He wasn't even inside me and I already felt more pleasure than I ever had with Matthew. I tipped my head back and rolled my hips. "This doesn't make me a groupie. Just so we're clear. I think your music is good, but it's your bodies that I want. If you look at me differently after this, I'll throat punch you. You're offering me pleasure that I will probably never have again and I'm taking it."

Mack gripped my chin from behind the couch and pulled my face forward until my breasts pressed against Xavier's face. "Say it with less words."

Xavier ran his tongue between my breasts and his fingers tightened on my ass. I was already in heaven, but I gritted my teeth and held Mack's gaze. "I want to be fucked."

"Good girl."

9

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Mack

Layla was as far from a princess as she could get in that moment and I'd never seen anything hotter. Her eyes were heavy with desire and she had her bottom lip held captive between her teeth as she clung to Xavier. The little minx wasn't shy about her body or her needs.

Standing behind the couch, I lightly wrapped my hand around her throat and watched as she rolled her hips over X's dick. He swore and turned his face to take as much of her breast into his mouth as he could. I groaned as he reached up and cupped that full breast, squeezing it firmly before taking her nipple in his mouth and sucking.

Layla's throat worked under my hand while she gasped. Dropping her head back, she exposed more of her long neck to me. She was so soft under my palm that I had to touch more of her. When I stroked my hand down her neck and over her shoulder, she snapped one of her hands out to press against my stomach. That small hand created chaos in me as her fingertips

pressed into my skin harder. I could feel her need in that simple touch.

Jones shoved the table out of the way and moved behind Layla, capturing a handful of her hair. He tugged her head back so she was looking up at him and then he took her mouth in a hard kiss that shocked both me and Xavier. I stared on as he stroked his tongue past her lips and devoured her. Jones never kissed the women we hooked up with. He just wasn't into it. He was obviously into it with Layla, however.

When he pulled back, he flicked his gaze to us and then ran a hand down her chest to cup her breast. "Tell me how I'm supposed to say no to this mouth."

I shook my head. "I wouldn't know where to start, even if I wanted to."

Xavier placed bruising kisses up her throat until he reached her mouth. Then, he pinched her chin and slowly ran his thumb over her lips. "Open."

Layla parted her plush lips and moaned as he pushed his thumb past her lips and into her mouth. She met his gaze and held perfectly still, waiting for his order.

The energy in the bus crackled with tension as Xavier stood up, still clutching Layla to his body with one hand under her ass. He moved over to the small peninsula countertop in the kitchen and put her down on it. "Suck, honey."

Layla closed her lips over his thumb and her cheeks hollowed as she followed his command. Her eyes stayed on

his as she dipped her head forward, taking the full length of his thumb into her mouth. The corners of her lips tipped up and her eyes crinkled.

“Enjoying yourself?” Xavier growled while pulling his thumb free. “You’re a tease, aren’t you?”

Licking her lips, Layla shook her head. “Not tonight.”

Jones stood on the other side of the counter and tugged Layla back until she was on her back, stretched out for us. He planted his hands on either side of her head and leaned down to kiss her again.

Xavier stared down at her naked body and ran his hand down her stomach. She was soft all over and he gripped her hips in his big hands and squeezed. “So fucking sexy.”

I stood at the edge of the counter and gripped the edge of it hard as I took my time and just watched. It wasn’t easy. I wanted to drag her under me and drive my dick into her, but the wait would make it all the sweeter.

“Fuck.” X groaned and leaned back just to stare at Layla’s pussy. He licked his lips and glanced up at me. “Prettiest pussy I’ve ever seen.”

Gritting my teeth, I looked down and nodded. She was shaved smooth and so wet that her pink lips were shiny. I reached down and stroked my fingers over those pretty lips. “Yeah, I’m going to enjoy my snack tonight.”

X ran his fingers over her sex and then pulled her lips apart and grunted. “We’re going to ruin her.”

I watched as he slowly pushed one finger into her and saw Layla's back arch. Her moans filled the bus and I knew Jones had lifted his head to watch, too. Layla's walls clung to X's finger and when he pulled out, it was like her body didn't want to let go.

"Your ex must've had a pencil dick, sweetheart, cause you're as tight as a virgin." X pushed his finger in again and swore. "Fucking hell."

Layla's head snapped up. "Did you really just say that?"

Jones gripped her hair and pulled her back down. "You offended on your exes behalf?"

She shifted to rest her feet on the edge of the counter and spread her legs wider. "Just surprised to be talking about Matthew's dick, I guess."

I leaned down and pressed my mouth to her ribs. "Are you sure you can handle us?"

She cried out and I looked down to see that X had pushed two fingers into her. Both of her hands gripped the countertop until her knuckles turned white. "Yes!"

"What are your limits, Firecracker?" Jones kissed her again. "Is there anything you're uncomfortable with?"

Layla panted as X shifted his hand to press his thumb over her clit. "I don't know!"

Needing to know what we could or couldn't do to her, I gripped her chin and turned her face to mine. "The list of things I would do to you if given complete control is vast,

honey. You'd better help me narrow it down. Let's start with the basics. Oral. In a few minutes, X is going to bend down and he's going to eat your pussy like you've never been eaten. You're going to scream and come all over his face. That good with you?"

Her eyelashes fluttered as she nodded. "Yes."

"And if Jones wanted to tip your pretty head back and slide his dick down your throat?" I loved the way her nostrils flared as she heard my crass words. "What if he wanted to keep fucking your mouth while I slid my dick into your tight pussy?"

Without a moment of hesitation, she nodded. "Yes."

My dick throbbed painfully. "Your ass."

She took a breath and nodded. "I want everything."

"Everything is you speared between two of us with a cock in your ass and pussy while the other is stuffing your mouth, sweetheart. Everything is a lot." I saw her tongue flick out to wet her lips. "Everything is a little rough and will leave you with a limp for a few days, but you'll come like you never have before. That's a promise."

She held my gaze and then the corner of her mouth lifted. "You only live once. I want it all."

"Just tap one of us if you need a break." I ran my hand down her stomach and dipped the tip of my finger into her navel. "Scream as loud as you want, Layla. We're not going to stop until you wake up the neighborhood."

10

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Jones

Layla looked up at me with her blue eyes heavy with lust. “Are you going to fuck my mouth now?”

My control was about as strong as tissue paper. Shoving my briefs down, I cupped her face and tipped her head over the counter. Instead of driving my cock past her lips like I normally would’ve, I leaned down and kissed her. She tasted like whiskey and mint and her mouth was so fucking soft. I couldn’t get enough. The thought of that soft mouth caressing my dick had me shifting back and gripping myself, though. “Open up for me.”

Her mouth sprang open and her tongue stuck out so prettily that I had to rub my tip over it. She was warm velvet against my sensitive skin. I groaned and slowly fed her more of my length. A couple of inches in and she closed her lips around me and sucked. My eyes nearly rolled back in my head at the suction she created.

“Sonofabitch.” I growled and pulled out until she had just my tip, then I pumped in again, giving her a little more.

Watching her closely for any signs that I was pushing her too far, I found a rhythm fucking her mouth. With just half of my length, I thrust with slow strokes.

X pulled his fingers out of her dripping wet pussy for long enough to add a third. Watching him force three of his thick fingers into Layla was a headrush. She moaned on my dick and the feeling was otherworldly. With his three fingers stretching her, he rolled his thumb over her clit and we all watched her thighs shake.

Mack leaned over to capture her nipple in his mouth and when X began fucking her with his fingers, Layla came like a freight train. She screamed around my dick and her body flushed and vibrated wildly. It was fucking beautiful and seeing X's fingers slide in easier made me even harder, somehow.

“I think Firecracker could be a squirter. With the right touch...” X brought his other hand up to strum over her clit fast while he hammered his fingers into her faster and faster.

I watched Jones suck her nipple harder while he pinched the other one and sank a few more inches of my length into her mouth, until I felt the back of her throat and the instant gag. She sucked harder until X's finger fucking took her to a different level of pleasure. Her jaw relaxed and her mouth opened, letting me fuck her mouth with abandon as she cried out and moaned around me. I hit the back of her throat over and over again and she took it beautifully

“Fuck, yes. Come all over me, honey.” X pulled his fingers out of her pussy and stroked her clit faster until she released a flood of come that splashed out against his stomach. Pumping his fingers into her again, more of those juices sprayed out around his fingers until Layla was trying to crawl off the countertop. With my cock in her throat and his thick fingers hooking into her, she couldn’t go anywhere, though.

Her muffled screams were constant and then her hands grabbed Mack’s arm, the only thing she could really reach. Her blunt nails dug into his skin as X forced another flood of liquid out of her. Her body had turned the most beautiful flushed shade and when I pulled out of her mouth, she took a big gulp of air and then opened her mouth for me again. She was fucking perfect.

I pulled back, despite wanting to continue fucking her mouth. Watching her pout up at me made me want to marry the woman right then and there. She was hungry for me and it was sexy as hell. I tapped Mack on the shoulder and let him take my place. There was no way I was going to come early and if I stayed in her mouth, I was going to come fast.

X pulled his fingers free for the final time and then buried his face between Layla’s thighs. She arched her back so tight that she lifted her shoulders off the counter and locked her hands in X’s hair. He growled and licked her from top to bottom. He was in heaven as he ate her completely, devouring her pussy and ass like a starving man. The man loved good pussy.

Mack pulled her back down and leaned over so he could meet her gaze. “Your mouth was made to tempt men, baby. These lips have been calling to me since I knocked you on your ass earlier. I only wish you still had that red lipstick on so you could smear it up and down my dick.”

She gasped and slid up the counter a few inches, earning a deep chuckle from X. Her wild gaze and panting didn't stop her from moving back down so X had full access to her body. Then she looked up at Mack. “Are you waiting for an invitation?”

His eyes darkened. “That does sound nice. Ask me if you can suck my cock.”

I watched as X lifted her hips and fucked her ass with his tongue. With him focused lower, I moved my fingers over her clit and watched her chest heave.

“Can I please suck your cock, Mack?” Layla was nearing another orgasm and every word took her more effort than the last. She moaned and then gagged when Mack thrust deep into her throat.

He groaned and pulled out just to pump deep again. Holding her head, he truly fucked her mouth while X leaned back and pushed a finger into Layla's ass. She came hard again, her body twisting as the pleasure became too much. I slowly eased my fingers off her clit and pulled back enough to watch her spread out and vulnerable to us.

I loved the way her silky skin flushed and the thickness of her thighs as they cradled X's giant shoulders. Her body

welcomed us and her soft curves under my fingers and hands felt like a siren call. I needed access to her full ass before I lost my mind from craving it.

Xavier could read me just as well as I could him and he planted one last kiss over her clit before shifting to let me take my position between her thighs. Only I wanted her on her stomach.

“Over. I want to feel this ass while I sink into you for the first time, Firecracker.” I nodded up at Mack who pulled out of her mouth and bent down to roughly kiss her before helping me flip her over. He immediately gripped her head and sank his full length into her throat. Both X and I stared in awe as she gagged once and then relaxed her throat and jaw for him. “Fuck.”

“Sonofabitch.” Mack pulled out and bent over to look her in the eye. “I can count on one hand the women who’ve been able to take all of me. You are by far the best. I get the feeling that you’ve been a very bad girl, Layla. That sweet as pie southern accent gave me no indication that you’d be a pro at deepthroating.”

I grunted as I pushed three fingers deep into her wet core. She was hot and tight and I knew she was going to feel like heaven. “We know you weren’t deepthroating your shithead ex. So, tell us, little minx, what have you been up to?”

Layla had the tips of her toes on the floor, holding herself up, and when pushed off the counter, I had no option but to slowly move out of her way after letting my dick feel the curves of

her ass. She walked around the counter and went to one of the couches. Kneeling on one of the cushions with her arms braced on the back of the couch, she made a pretty picture. “You’d like to know my secrets, but I think I’ll keep them to myself. Now, is anyone going to have their way with me or should I take care of myself?”

“Hardly seems like the attitude of a woman who just came multiple times.” I stalked across the bus and gripped her hair while kneeling behind her on the couch. Lining our bodies up, I pressed my tip into her small opening and paused. “I think a lesson on manners would be helpful.”

11

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Xavier

Jones' grin was wicked as he pulled Layla's hair tighter and forced her body to arch into his. "Mack and X are going to sit in front of you and watch as you learn to be a good girl."

I growled impatiently, but I still sat next to Mack on a couch he shoved right in front of where Jones would be fucking Layla. From my angle, I could see the way her full breasts swung and the softness of her belly and thighs. When Jones pulled her upright, I could see where his dick was poised to impale her.

Layla's nipples were bright red from need and the attention they'd already been given and her pussy lips were swollen and dark pink. Her juices coated them and leaked down her thighs. She was so turned on for us. Her teeth sank into her full lips and her big blue eyes moved down my body to where I'd grasped my dick in my hand and was slowly pumping it.

"First lesson. What should you say when I've got my dick at the entrance of your pussy?"

She reached up and cupped her breasts. “Fuck me.”

He ran his mouth up the side of her throat. “You’re not the boss of me, Firecracker. You teased me so much earlier. I want to remind you who’s in charge here.”

Her cheeks flushed. “*Please*, fuck me.”

In one hard stroke, Jones filled her with his entire length. The sight was vulgar, her pink lips stretched around his girth and her sex stretching to accommodate his size made it seem like he never should’ve been inside her. It was hot as fuck and I couldn’t wait to see my own dick stretching her out.

Layla’s mouth was open in a silent scream and her hands had tightened on her breasts until the flesh of them turned a deep red. He’d knocked the breath from her lungs with that one thrust.

Jones tilted her head to the side with his grip in her hair and pressed his mouth to her ear. “Now you’ll remember who’s the boss here. It’s not you, Firecracker. Tell X and Mack what it feels like to have my dick buried all the way inside you.”

She gasped in several gulps of oxygen and gritted her teeth. “Full. So full. I can feel him deeper than anyone has ever been. I’m stretching. I’m stretching around his width and it feels like losing my virginity all over again, but good.”

Mack leaned forward. “Before the night is over, you’re going to have that fullness in your pussy and another cock in your ass. Have you ever done that?”

Shaking her head, Layla whimpered when Lones pulled out. Her inner walls clung to his cock and he let out a deep growl of pleasure before thrusting deep again. She screamed up at the ceiling and dropped one hand so she could rub her clit. “Never! I’ve never done that.”

“Have you ever taken anything in your ass?” I felt a wave of satisfaction as I added the next part. “Besides my tongue and finger?”

She grunted when Jones pulled out and cried out when he thrust home. Her head dropped forward and her breasts swung as she dropped her hands to the back of the couch. “No! I never...”

Jones forced her head up so she was staring directly at us. “Lesson two. Let them see your beautiful face as I fuck you.”

She ground her teeth when he moved faster. Her body swayed and she stared hungrily at our bare dicks. I was dying to feel all of her curves moving under me.

“How do you want me to fuck you, Firecracker?” Jones paused with his dick barely inside her.

“Hard! Fuck me hard!”

He pulled back and spanked her ass hard. “Manners!”

She growled. “Please, fuck me hard! I want to come!”

He fucked her hard for a few strokes and then stopped again. “I think you can ask nicer than that.”

Her desperation showed through. “Please, fuck me hard, Jones! Please use me and make me come! I’ll do whatever I need!”

Mack stood up and sent Jones a pained gesture. “I’m going to lose my shit if I don’t get my dick into her mouth soon.”

Jones spanked Layla several more times before a brutally fast pace that left her mouth hanging open with small squeaks spilling out. He pushed her forward on the couch and nodded to Mack. “Let’s see if she can be the perfect little plaything for us.”

Desire ripped down my spine. I could feel the pleasure and hunger radiating off Layla and knew she was possibly the best match for us out of any woman we’d ever taken together. Her desire burned as hot as ours and while Jones’ thrusts should’ve had her telling him to slow down some, she strained to thrust back against him and meet his pace.

Mack offered his dick to her and she opened her mouth while looking up at him, offering herself to him. He growled low in his throat and stepped forward, slowly sinking his dick into her throat. I could see the bulge of it in her throat as she swallowed it. “Fucking hell.”

I stared in amazement as she was spitroasted between my two best friends and still reached for me. Her hand wrapped around my length and she stroked as best as she could. Her fingers couldn’t meet around my girth but she tried her best.

“You’re a natural, Firecracker. Your body was built to take the three of us, wasn’t it? This pussy was built to take a

pounding. That throat was made to swallow our dicks and take our come. And this ass. Jesus, this ass is going to feel so fucking good stretching around us.” He slapped her ass hard, leaving a deep red hand print. “If only your piece of shit ex could see you now. Taking three real dicks so beautifully, being fucked like an animal, and loving every second of it. He’d understand he never had a chance at pleasing you.”

Mack pulled out of her mouth and held his dick up. She immediately stretched her tongue out to stroke his underside and then down to his balls. He shouted as she took his balls into her mouth, one by one, and sucked at them. His eyes were wild when he stepped back and looked down at her. “Jesus fuck, woman. You like thinking about your ex seeing you like this?”

Jones slammed his dick in and out of her. “Her pussy is fluttering with every mention of it.”

I leaned down and held her gaze. “Say the word and I’ll find him. He can sit back and watch you come like he could never make you. He can sit right where I was just sitting and watch your face up close as you scream for us. I’d love to watch his face while I force every inch of my dick into your pussy and make you scream. Does he even know you squirt?”

She shook her head and gasped when I gripped the back of her head and kissed her. I didn’t give a shit that she’d just had both of their dicks in her mouth. I just wanted her. I stroked my tongue over hers and felt her moan before sucking on my tongue. She stroked my dick with the hand not holding her up

and cupped my balls, squeezing them gently before stroking me again.

Her mouth went slack suddenly and I leaned back to see that Jones had two of his fingers in her ass, pumping them into her. Her strangled cry was lost to Mack filling her mouth again and thrusting in and out with short, quick strokes. The sounds coming from her mouth were lewd.

“One more lesson, Firecracker.” Jones lifted one of her legs up and back, wrapping it around his waist in a way that spread her pussy open and left her clit vulnerable to my fingers.

Mack pulled out of her mouth and we all watched as she panted and teetered on the edge of a powerful orgasm. She hung her head and cried out as Jones pushed a third finger into her ass. She clung to the back of the couch and hovered at the edge of coming.

“Good girls beg to come.” Jones’ words hung in the air between the four of us. “Prove how fucking good you are for us. Just for us.”

After a second, Layla tipped her head back and cried out. “Let me come, please! Please, god, let me come! I need it. I need it so bad. I’m begging you. Let me come and-”

Jones nodded to me and Mack. He hammered away in her pussy and ass and I rubbed her clit in tight little circles while Mack took her nipples in his hands and pinched them hard even as he sucked at the skin under her ear. With every part of her stimulated, she screamed at the top of her lungs and came

like a firehose. Her body shook and vibrated as she just kept coming.

“Now.” Jones pulled out and we all shifted positions.

I settled on the couch under Layla and held her over my length, letting her slowly sink down, even while her orgasm tightened her walls and made it hard to get my dick all the way inside. Mack knelt with one knee on the couch behind her and I felt her walls clamp down even tighter as he very slowly pushed his dick into her tight, virgin ass. I could feel him moving through the thin wall that separated our dicks and knew that Layla would feel every vein and pulse.

She dug her nails into my shoulders and screamed, feeling her body accept two cocks at once. She panted next to my ear and her nipples dragged across my chest with every heaving breath. “Too much. So much!”

Jones stood behind the couch and positioned himself in front of her face. “Do you need a break, baby?”

Mack was already starting to pull out of her ass, but she whipped her arm around and grabbed his waist. He paused and looked up with gritted teeth. We were both in agony with her body squeezing us like a fist. “Let me pull out, honey. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“I can take it.” Pushing her hair out of her face, Layla licked her lips and looked up at Jones. “I deserve this. I’ve been having mediocre to bad sex for three years. If it’s going to be this good with y’all, I’m not taking less than everything. Fuck me.”

Jones gripped her chin. “While I’d love to show that fucker what it means to pleasure a woman, if he were actually here, I’d break his fucking jaw. Seeing you like this, stretching to take three dicks at once, it’s too good to share with anyone else. You’re going to take so much come soon. And the rest of the night. Once won’t be enough. It won’t be enough even when we’ve come in each of your holes more than once each.”

Mack pushed back deep in her ass and swore. “In a perfect world, I’d have evidence of taking this virginity from you.”

Layla moaned and tipped her head back. “In a perfect world, I’d let you video it.”

I growled. “That video would get so much play.”

“Lean forward, Firecracker. Taste yourself on my cock.” Jones pushed his shaft into her mouth and swore. “Tap if you need a break.”

Mack moved first. His first few thrusts in and out of her ass were slower and gentler. I worked with him, lifting her and then letting her sink back down on me. Jones took his time reaching the back of her throat. Then, all hell broke loose. Our thrusts got faster and harder until we were fucking Layla between us like a doll, holding her in different positions until she came with a scream. I lost track of her orgasms but our skin was slick with sweat and her come coated my balls and thighs as we continued to use her body.

Jones, who’d been fucking her throat without mercy came first. He shot her mouth full of his come and growled in approval when she swallowed. Without his dick in her mouth,

her screams of pleasure filled the bus. Mack came next, burying his cock deep in her ass and shooting his load deep into her ass. He slapped her ass and then slumped backwards on a different couch.

I flipped Layla over on the couch and settled over her ass. Sliding my dick into her dripping pussy from over her, I braced my hands on either side of her head and rutted into her. She spread her legs wider and shoved her hand between her legs to rub her clit. The sound of my body slamming into her ass filled the bus. She turned her head to the side and sank her teeth into my forearm as I drilled my dick into her pussy and forced her clit to rub down on her hand each time I did.

I was ruthless as I fucked her like the beast I felt like and when she came hard on my length, her teeth broke the skin on my arm. My vision blurred as I slammed deep and shot my seed directly against her cervix. Her pussy clamped down on me in time with her heartbeat, milking every drop of come from my balls. She went limp under me and I pressed open mouthed kisses down her spine as I pulled out of her and sank back on the arm of the couch. On her stomach, completely exposed, she didn't try to close her legs and hide the way our come slowly pooled and leaked out of her. It just made me want her all over again.

12

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Layla

I woke up in bed and stretched. Instantly, my muscles all revolted against that idea. My entire body was sore, but my core made sure to remind me that it'd taken a beating the night before. I wiped my eyes and sat up, unsure of where I was for a moment. Until I looked around. There were toned and bare asses all around me. I smiled to myself as I captured the image in my mind for rainy days in my future. Mack, Jones, and Xavier were all tangled in the different blankets they'd brought with them to bed the night before. Earlier that morning, really.

The back of the tour bus was a bedroom, fitted with one massive bed that took up the entire room. The normal tour bus accommodations existed between the bathroom and large bedroom, but no one had volunteered to sleep in their usual bed. They'd each found a way to wrap around me in the big bed and didn't miss the chance to take me once more before we passed out for good.

The blinds were drawn tight so I couldn't tell what time it was, but when I moved to the end of the bed and sat up, I frowned because I thought I felt movement. Being in the dark bedroom was messing with my senses, I figured. Before I could stand up, a large arm snaked around my waist and tugged me backwards.

I found myself under Jones in the blink of an eye and blinked up at his handsome face. He was unfairly sexy in the morning, with his hair unkempt and his haunting blue eyes heavy with sleep. He dipped his head and slowly kissed me, stroking his tongue past my lips, and letting his tongue ring brush over them. All worries of morning breath and the time of day slipped from my mind as he settled his weight between my thighs and threaded his hands through my hair.

“Trying to sneak away?” He peppered kisses down my chin and roughly sucked the skin at the base of my throat, drawing a quiet moan from me.

I dragged my nails down his back and wrapped my legs around his waist. “No. I wanted to see what time it was. I have to return my rental car and change my flights at some point today.”

He growled and lifted his head so he could meet my gaze. “I'll have someone return the car for you. As for flights, every city we stop in has an airport.”

Before I could reply, he kissed me again and I felt his heavy shaft nudge my core. It didn't matter that I was sore. My body

reacted instantly. I spread my thighs even wider and gasped when his head pushed inside.

“Are you too sore, baby?” He stroked his thumb over my cheek and searched my face for signs of discomfort. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

I gripped his ass and pulled him into me, taking his dick inside my swollen sex. It was a little uncomfortable, but when he tilted his hips and his pubic bone ground into my clit, I saw stars. “Not too sore.”

He kissed me while slowly stroking his length in and out of me. With his hands in my hair, my body was held in place, so even when his thrusts grew harder, I couldn’t slide up the bed. He stroked into my mouth at the same pace he stroked into my core and I was coming in barely any time. He pressed his forehead into the mattress next to my head and then slipped his hand over my mouth. “Let’s play a game.”

My heart rate sped up and I raked my nails up his back. I couldn’t speak so I just nodded.

“Let’s pretend you didn’t spend the night with all three of our dicks stuffing you. It’s just you and me who fucked like rabbits last night. We’re passed out next to my bandmates, though, and I just can’t keep my dick to myself.” He pumped once to reiterate his point. “I promise you I can be quiet and still. I won’t wake them up and let them see you. I still want you to strip naked for me, though. You’re nervous, but you go along with it, because you’re needy for this dick. You’re

letting me fuck you on the same bed that my bandmates are sleeping.”

Butterflies erupted throughout my body and I squeezed my pussy muscles around him to let him know I liked what he was doing.

“I’m holding you in place and I have your mouth covered so you can’t scream. You keep looking over to make sure they’re not waking up.” He thrust deep a few times and then growled into my ear. “I quietly tell you that if they woke up, they’d want to fuck you, too. They’ve always wanted to fuck you. They tell me about it all the time. They even watch us sometimes. You’re not mad and I catch it. I know you and I know your pussy. So I fuck you harder. Until your head is pumping against Mack’s side each time I drive my dick into you.”

I moaned and planted my feet on the bed so I could try to drive my hips into him. He pinned me to the bed, though, and all I could do was whimper for him.

“I tease you. You’ve always been a good girl. Only a naughty little slut would let her boyfriend’s bandmates fuck her, too.” He searched my face and groaned when he saw my eyes practically roll back in my head. Fucking me harder then, his thrusts did drive me up the bed until my head knocked into Mack with each thrust. Mack grunted his sleep and Jones growled low. “I think they’re waking up, baby. They’re going to see us fucking and demand their turn. You want it, though. You’re wetter than I’ve ever felt you. I see you, baby, My

girlfriend is dying to spread her legs for my buddies. If you want it, reach out and grab his arm. Hold his arm while I fuck you harder and harder, baby. Let's see what happens.”

The images he planted in my head left me nearly drunk with desire. I reached out and latched onto Mack's arm while Jones fucked me against him. Harder, like he'd promised, until the bed shook with it and both Mack and X were woken up by it.

Jones, with his hand over my mouth still, looked at each of them. “Oh, shit. We tried to be quiet, but I told her. I told her if my buddies woke up and saw me fucking my girlfriend, they were going to want a piece of her, too.”

X rolled onto his back and looked down his body at me. “I've never fucked a friend's girlfriend, before, but why don't you come over here and suck my dick so I can get a feel for it.”

Mack grinned and leaned up on one arm. “I could get used to this.”

Jones, really into his role, grunted. “Don't think you're going to fuck my girl whenever you want. Just this one time. Okay?”

He let me crawl up the bed to lower my mouth over X's big dick. I wiggled my ass in the air, hoping one of them would take the hint. Not a second later, big hands gripped my hips and Mack thrust himself deep inside me. I cried out around X and he gripped my hair to control how I moved over him.

“How’s her pussy? Her mouth is fucking amazing.” X swore. “I think I’ll let her drain me dry like this. I’ll fuck her later.”

“Her pussy is top of the line. I’m going to want this pussy every morning. Once is never going to be enough.” Mack squeezed my ass cheeks and fucked me hard. “God, she can take a pounding, too. Yeah, I’m going to fill her with my load and then do it again every morning.”

Jones reached under me and slapped my clit. “Are you going to let them fuck you every day, baby? You seem to love it. You’re not a good girl for me, at all, are you?”

Mack swore. “Her fucking pussy just tried to squeeze the life right out of me. I’d say she likes it.”

X was pumping my mouth up and down his dick faster. “Jesus, yes, she likes it. She’s letting me fuck her throat. Your girlfriend is our girlfriend now.”

“Oh, fuck. I’m coming inside your girl, man.” Mack thrust deep once more and I felt his come filling me. He growled my name and then moved out of the way.

Jones wasted no time in taking his position behind me. He fucked into me harder than before and his dirty talk got even dirtier. “Fuck, baby, I can feel his come inside you. Your pussy is messy with it. Is this what you want? You want to be fucked full of come by me and my buddies? You want it leaking out of you? I shouldn’t let you shower after this. I should make you wear a short skirt and take you on stage with me so everyone can see what a dirty girl you are. Say it. Say you’re a dirty girl and you want our come.”

I gasped for air when X lifted my face but didn't hesitate to say it. "I'm a dirty girl and I want all of your come all over me!"

"All over you?" X stroked himself fast. "Close your eyes, dirty girl."

I did as he said and opened my mouth. A second later, I felt him coming all over my face. It felt like it kept going for forever, all the while Jones was pounding his length into me harder and faster.

"Jesus. Look at you. You're covered in my best friend's come. Dirty fucking girl. Scoop it up and rub it into your clit." Jones slapped my ass and growled. "Faster. I want you to suck the come out of me with your orgasm."

I scooped X's come from my face and reached down to rub my clit. Rubbing fast, it didn't take much for me to explode and cry out as I did. My body pulsed and every nerve ending felt like it was having its own orgasm. Dots danced along my vision but the pleasure was so great that I forgot to breathe.

"Breathe, Firecracker." Jones gripped my hair and tipped my head up. "Breathe."

I gasped and shook as I came harder than I'd ever come in my life before meeting them. Jones buried himself inside me and I felt his come hitting my cervix and filling me. It was hot and I loved the feeling of it. I loved how crazy they seemed to go over me.

“Fuck, Firecracker. You’re going to be the death of me.” Jones collapsed next to me on the bed and we all just laid there for a few minutes, catching our breath. Finally, Jones reached over and held my hand. “Obviously, it doesn’t need to be said that you’re not only a good girl, you’re the best girl. Nothing dirty about you.”

I snorted. “Every part of me is dirty right now.”

“Yeah, well. Not in any way that we don’t like.” He looked over at me and I saw warmth in his gaze that made me feel something funny in my chest. “I just want to be clear that role play is one thing. Name calling during it, as long as you’re okay with it, is just that. Play. You’re not a slut. I should’ve made sure that was okay before I lost myself during that. I’m sorry.”

I rolled my tired body over until I was able to cuddle into his chest. He kindly found a corner of blanket to clean my face with and I thanked him. “You don’t need to apologize. I liked it. That was fun. I know you don’t think I’m a slut. Even if you did, I just spent the night and morning getting fucked to a hundred different orgasms. I don’t have the energy to care. Plus, our time last night was enough of a sign to give you the green light. We weren’t exactly romantic.”

He groaned. “Don’t say that. Don’t make us feel the need to show you we can be romantic, too.”

X sighed. “Too late. Guess you have to stay for a little while longer.”

Mack sat up and frowned at me. “Were you trying to leave?”

I rolled my eyes and relaxed into Jones' hold. "You boys are high maintenance, aren't you?"

There was silence and then multiple hands grabbing me and tickling. Mack's voice filled the room. "High maintenance? High maintenance! You brat!"

13

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Layla

When I left the bed after another sleeping spell, I stumbled and gasped. That sensation of moving was back. I fumbled to open the door and had to pee before I could do anything else, but it was mid-pee that I looked up and saw that the sky was dusky. How long had we been in that room? I washed my hands and was brushing my teeth when I suddenly fell forward and then backwards. That motion had definitely been movement.

I burst out of the bathroom, toothbrush still in my mouth, and rushed back to the bedroom. I slapped Mack's leg since he was closest. "We're moving!"

He blinked up at me and smiled. "Where to? Is this another role play thing? I don't think I understand this one yet."

I smacked his leg again. "No! We're *moving*! The bus is moving!"

Xavier sat up and yawned. "Yeah, buses do that."

“Not with me on them, they don’t! Why are we moving? Go, stop it! I don’t have my clothes or I’d do it myself.” I accidentally swallowed the mouthful of toothpaste and gagged. “Oh, god.”

“Really? *That* makes you gag, but not a foot of dick down your throat?” Mack laughed easily and stood up. “Okay, don’t freak out.”

“You know what really helps people not freak out? Telling them not to freak out! Most helpful thing ever.” I poked him with the end of my toothbrush. “Stop the bus.”

Jones sat up and groaned. “Have you ever seen the movie *Speed*? This bus doesn’t stop once it’s rolling.”

“Um, that’s a problem for me, seeing as how I’m still on the bus! I’m not a part of your band!” I paced in the tiniest circle ever. “Why is no one moving to stop the bus?”

X stood up and wrapped himself around me. The feeling was instantly calming and the sound of his heartbeat against my ear was so peaceful that I found myself taking deep breaths that matched his and holding him back.

He stroked his massive hands down my head. “We didn’t tell the driver not to take off first thing this morning and if we were going to leave without you, we barely would’ve gotten any time with you. You said you’re on vacation, right? Our next stop is in Austin tomorrow. You can fly out from there, if you want.”

I thought about it. I could fly out of Austin without a problem. What was supposed to have been a one night thing with the guys was stretching into a two night and two day thing, though. I wasn't sure I could even take that much more sex with them, considering how we couldn't keep our hands off of each other. My body already felt like I'd been hit by a truck.

Then another thought occurred to me. "Did y'all know you were going to just take me on the road?"

Jones shrugged. "Worse things have happened, Firecracker."

I put my hands on my hips and narrowed my eyes at him. "I should be pissed."

"But you're not?"

I sighed dramatically. "I'm not sure I'm capable of being angry right now. Too many orgasms."

Mack tugged me into his chest and raised his eyebrows at me when his erection got trapped against my stomach and I rolled my eyes. "What? You're still naked and my dick has gotten very familiar with all of your fun parts. I can't help it."

Smiling up at him, I bit my lip and wondered if spending extra time with them was smart. They were too charming and sexy for my own good. I was too intrigued. "Someone better feed me soon, I guess."

He gripped my ass and lifted me so I was wrapped around him and, of course, his erection was pressed right against my center as he walked towards the front of the bus. "The door

between the drivers and the rest of the bus stays closed unless we open it. So, we can keep you naked for as long as we want.”

I played with his hair and licked my lips as the sensation of his dick rubbing against me slowly drove me crazy. I tried to think of anything else. “No one else I’ve ever had sex with has ever been able to carry me. I’ve got to say, I’ve been missing out.”

He scowled. “Who the hell are you having sex with? I could carry you for hours.”

Laughing, I shook my head. “Let’s not get crazy.”

“I could definitely hold you like this long enough to get us both off.” He leaned down and kissed me. “Also, how many men have you had sex with?”

I tugged his hair harder than I meant to. “You did not just ask me that.”

He put me down on the same counter they’d defiled me on the night before and grinned when he saw the way my cheeks warmed. “I did ask you. I’m curious. I wasn’t expecting you to take your clothes off last night and become a fucking sex explorer. You shocked me.”

“A sex explorer? Really?” I had to stop myself from pouting when he moved away from me. “Before last night, I’d had sex with three men. The first and third weren’t good, but the second guy was a great teacher.”

Mack spun around with a look of horror on his face. “He was your teacher?”

I laughed and shook my head. “No! He just taught me to be comfortable with my body and showed me that orgasms can be reached by someone else’s hand. He was a little older, too.”

“Okay, stop talking before I get jealous.” He walked back to me with something in his hand and rested that hand on the counter between my open legs. “This is going to be cold.”

I screamed when he stroked the ice cube through my lower lips and then pushed it inside my sex. “Mack! What the hell?!”

He held the ice inside me and grinned. “You’re swollen and sore from being fucked by a bunch of animals. Don’t even say you’re not sore because it’s written all over your face. This will help.”

I wasn’t sure if it was helping, but it was having a different effect than he meant, I was pretty sure. His fingers were hot against the cold ice and the tornado of sensations were making me want to forget food and everything else.

“Stop looking at me like that, honey. You need a break.” He groaned and tried to take a step back, but I caught his hand and held it against my sex. Rubbing myself against the rough skin of the heel of his hand, I rocked my hips back and forth and drew a loud growl from him. “You’re going to end up crawling back home if you’re not careful.”

I caught his other hand and pulled it to my mouth. Sucking two of his fingers deep, I held his gaze and then pushed his

hand into my breast. Using his hands to get myself off, I bit my lip and grinned. “Best. Vacation. Ever.”

14

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Mack

I grimaced and shoved my phone into my pocket. I wanted to throw it but I didn't want to look like an ass in front of Layla. Nodding at Jones and Xavier, I tried to keep my voice even. "The stage set-up is shit. Billy is in there, trying to figure shit out, but it's taking too long."

Layla finished pulling her jeans up over her ass and buttoned them. "What's wrong with it?"

I felt a little piece of my happiness crumble away as she covered her body for the first time in days. The Austin show had been canceled because of weather so we'd driven straight through to Vegas. We'd kept her naked for almost a full three days and I was pretty sure I'd found Valhalla. I sighed and rested my chin in my hand as her beautiful breasts vanished under a band t-shirt. It wasn't even one of ours.

"Mack?" Layla bent down to lace up a pair of boots that looked made for kicking ass. "What's wrong with the stage? I know a little about setting up a stage, so I might be able to help."

“It’s a small venue. We’re doing this for a friend. The stage is unorganized and not even completely built. We’re supposed to go on in an hour, but Billy thinks it’ll take another three hours to get everything set up, just to make it workable.” I shook my head. “It’ll be fine. We’ve played in places that didn’t even have sound systems before. It’s just frustrating.”

Layla shook her head and gave me a look I hadn’t seen on her face before. She looked fierce as she grabbed her phone and shoved it into her back pocket. “Introduce me to Billy. I can help.”

“You’re on vacation, Firecracker. You’re not working for us.” Jones sounded just as sad as I felt about her being covered.

She turned on the three of us with her hands on her hips. Gone was the woman who’d crawled across the floor on her hands and knees that morning. In her place was a goddess of fire. “There’s nothing that pisses me off more than poor stage management. Introduce me to Billy and I’ll have you ready to do sound checks in no time.”

My dick hardened and I groaned down at it. “Stop being hard! I just need a couple of hours.”

“Fine. I’ll just find him myself.” The sound of the door slamming shut triggered us all into action.

Xavier was out the door and stalking after Layla before I could even get off the couch. Jones stood at the door and looked back at me. “Well? Come on. I guess playtime is officially over for right now.”

I groaned. “Do you think we could convince her to move in with us permanently? Am I crazy or is that the best idea I’ve ever had?”

“You’re not crazy.” Jones ran his hand through his hair. “Or maybe we’re both crazy. I don’t fucking know.”

When we reached the back door to the venue, one of our security guards was standing by it with a smirk on his face. I had a feeling seeing Xavier chasing after a woman would be amusing to most people. The big man was typically very stoic, but Layla had a grasp on him.

The guard, Nick, tried to hide his laugh when he saw us but it was useless. “Sorry. I just... I think I just saw Xavier blushing.”

I clapped the man on his shoulder and shrugged. “You saw the woman he was chasing after, right?”

The smile widened before he shook his head. “No, sir. I’m a happily married man. I don’t see women.”

I laughed and felt a sense of relief. Even the idea of Nick, who I knew was a nice guy, looking at Layla got under my skin. “Good man.”

Jones went in before me and when I walked in, I bumped into him because he’d stopped short. He was staring at the stage with his head cocked to the side and a smirk on his face. “I’ll be damned.”

I followed his gaze and cursed my dick again as it hardened as the sight of Layla. She was in the middle of the stage,

barking orders at the men around her. They seemed to be in a big hurry to do what she said. Even Billy, our manager, was bent over with a length of cord in his hand. Layla turned to Xavier and stretched up to press a kiss to his lips before saying something to him that sent him striding over to us.

She didn't even notice us. She was in her element, building a pretty good stage in hardly any time. I watched as she pointed up at the lights and said something to Billy that had him scuttling away.

Xavier stood next to us, the bulge in his pants far too noticeable to be on stage. He looked down at it and groaned. "She told me to get off her stage before I tripped someone with my stiffy. Her word. Not mine. Not since I was twelve."

I snorted. "I think we should just marry her. Or kidnap her and force her to stay with us forever. Have you ever seen anything so fucking hot?"

Jones groaned and blew out a harsh breath. "I've been locked on the bus with her naked for days, so yeah. What is she doing to us? We've never wanted more than a night with a woman."

"She's magic." Xavier glanced over at us and shrugged. "Call me crazy, but I swear there's something different about her. She's special."

"Are we all just pussy-whipped?" I laughed awkwardly, feeling like we were getting too close to feelings or something equally dangerous for men who toured most of the year.

Jones nodded and cleared his throat. “Must be that.”

Yet, when I looked back at the stage and saw Layla pointing at a messy pile of cords and directing a man three times her size to do it over, I couldn’t help thinking that maybe X was right. She was special.

When she had the stage ready for us forty minutes before the show was supposed to start and it was organized better than most shows we’d done in years, I swore to myself because I knew X was right. She was beyond special. She was something else entirely.

She came marching over to us as we prepared for our soundcheck in her ass-kicking boots. She looked proud as she rested her hands on her hips and did a bow. “You’re welcome, boys.”

I grinned and wrapped my arm around her waist to pull her closer. When she shielded her head from my guitar, I couldn’t help laughing. “Hey, this guitar knocking you out was the best thing that happened to us. Also, thank you. You are a powerhouse. I truly don’t understand how you’re working for O’Brian.”

She tried to kiss me on the cheek but I turned my face and stole a kiss on the lips. She glanced around and I swear her cheeks went red. “I’m going to hang out backstage and watch the show. Kill it, tonight.”

“Throw your panties at me?” I wasn’t really joking. I was just already missing her being naked and all ours.

She rolled her eyes and walked over to the other guys to give them a kiss and then she disappeared off the side of the stage. I stared after her and then exchanged glances with X and Jones. There had to be some way we could get her to stay around for a little while longer. Then, surely, the spell would be broken.

15

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Layla

You are a powerhouse. Mack's words circled around my brain while I watched the first few songs of their set. They were talented and I was enjoying the show, but I was also floating on cloud nine from that compliment. Being recognized for my talent was such a good feeling. I was missing that at work. I hadn't thought about Matthew in days, but my vacation would end soon and I'd have to go back to working for him. He had me doing all of his work and pretended to be grateful for it, but he'd never said anything so kind to me.

I'd already stayed with the guys for longer than I'd ever meant to but they'd given me the best sex-cation a woman could ever dream of and I'd be going back home a different woman. I felt bolder in my skin and sexier than I'd ever imagined possible. I also felt proud of myself for being brave enough to take a chance with the guys. I'd never have another experience like the one I'd had with them and I couldn't regret that. I wouldn't.

I'd known the moment I put my clothes back on that I had to start thinking about leaving, but I didn't want to. I genuinely liked the guys. That was probably a sign that I needed to go, though. I had no business liking them.

At some point during the show, a small crowd of barely dressed women had appeared next to me backstage. I hadn't noticed them at first because I'd been lost in thinking about the guys and how soon I could get back on the bus and get naked. When I finally did notice them and hear their whispered words, I knew my time to leave was much closer than I'd expected.

"God, they're so hot. Look at them. The sweat, the tattoos and muscles... I would lick them clean every night for the rest of my life if they wanted me to." A blonde wearing a scarf as a shirt moaned and nudged her redheaded friend next to her.

The redhead was in the tightest leather skirt and bra I'd ever seen and she was rocking it. "I swear to god, I'm going to fuck one of them tonight."

My stomach clenched with discomfort and I tried to shift away to avoid hearing more, but it was useless. There was nowhere to go.

Another woman laughed. "I want Jones to sing to me while he fucks me senseless."

"I heard that sometimes they'll all three fuck the same woman. I want to be the middle of that sandwich."

Some of the other women agreed. Then, a woman with black hair and more tattoos than I'd ever seen moaned. "When they were here last, they took me back to their bus and fucked me. I've never come so hard in my life. I saw stars."

"You fucked all three of them!? You lucky bitch!"

"They're all hung. I mean, they almost split me in half. I didn't care, though. I begged for it." The tattooed woman fluffed her hair and smiled. "I'm betting I get a replay tonight. They were begging me to stay for another night or two last year."

My stomach didn't just clench. It soured and the lunch I'd eaten on the bus with the guys threatened to come up. Tears peppered my eyes and I turned away from the group of women before they saw me. I stood there until I got control of my silly emotions and then I turned to leave the venue.

I was a fucking idiot. Of course, they fucked hundreds of women. I wasn't special. They were rockstars in their prime. What had I been thinking? They'd given me a good time and helped me get over Matthew's cheating. They'd done more than enough for me. I had no right getting my feelings hurt over hearing that they'd done the same thing with another woman. Of course, they had.

I needed to leave, though. I was clearly getting too attached if I had feelings that could be hurt. That was the exact opposite of what I was supposed to be doing. I was getting over Matthew and letting my hair down for a few days. That was it. I'd done it, thanks to a few good days with the guys of JAX.

“You okay, ma’am?” One of their security guards smiled at me when I exited the back door of the venue.

I forced a smile and nodded back at him. “Yeah. I’m good. I’m going to get my things from the bus. Is that okay?”

He nodded. “Of course. You’ve been given clearance to go wherever you want to go.”

My smile felt pathetic but I kept it in place as I gave him a thumbs up and turned away. It was silly but since I’d decided to pack my things and leave, I felt like the hounds of hell were nipping at my heels. I packed my bag as fast as I could and made sure I hadn’t left anything behind before I tore a sheet of paper out of my small purse notebook and jotted down a note for the guys. I didn’t want to be rude and leave without a goodbye.

I ordered a car from my phone and then hurried back out of the bus and over to the guard. I handed him the folded piece of paper and smiled, probably an even more pathetic smile. “If they’re not busy later, will you give this to them?”

He frowned. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

I nodded. “Yep. I’m fine. My vacation’s over, though, so it’s time for me to go home.”

He took the paper and put it in his front pocket. Patting it, he stepped back against the door and smiled once more. “I’ll make sure they get it. Be careful on your travels.”

I lifted my hand in a wave and went around the side of the building to get to the street out front. Within minutes, my car

was there and I was on my way to the airport.

When I got there and managed to catch the next flight out without any delays, I knew it was meant to be. I was supposed to be going home. No other time in my life had I ever been able to just show up at the airport and get on the flight I needed without having a ticket or having to wait. I was already in the air by the time the guys were nearing the end of their show.

I landed at LAX and knew that they were finished with their show and probably already knew that I was gone and had other women in my place. I just hoped they washed the sheets for the new women.

I'd left my car in long-term parking at LAX and I had a hell of a time finding it. After walking around the entire parking lot, I finally found my car, just to realize my key fob was missing from my purse. Feeling close to tears, I ordered a car from right where I was standing in the parking lot and sighed. I told myself that I was just feeling the post vacation blues, despite never having been on a vacation as an adult. It wasn't the guys. It was just the real world.

It was during the ride to my apartment that I had a moment of clarity. The driver glanced back at me through the rearview mirror and laughed. "Girl, you look like someone just stole your dog. You okay?"

I looked up at the older woman and nodded. After a beat, I shrugged. "I don't know. Yes? I guess."

“It’s about a man, isn’t it?” She laughed boisterously when I nodded. “That sort of frown usually is about a man.”

I leaned forward in my seat. “I’m going to be honest with you. I spent the last few days with someone sort of well-known. The sex was on another level. Super nice guy.”

She clucked her tongue. “Ah. He’s married?”

I nearly choked. “No! No. Well known commitment avoider, actually.”

“So, you caught feelings?” She met my eyes for a beat and nodded. “Yep. You caught feelings.”

“He’s nearly twice my age.” I was not going to admit to her that there were three men. Not in a million years. “It’s not like I’m actually having thoughts of tying him down, you know? I’m too young for that, anyway. I only met him after finding my boyfriend cheating on me. Clearly, I’m not in a good space. He was just a moment in time that felt perfect. That’s hard to not want to capture.”

She sniffed and swore. “You’ve got me feeling emotional, girl! Also, screw your boyfriend.”

I laughed, feeling better for some strange reason. “I think I just needed to talk about it. I feel better already. I was crazy to think that I, a woman barely in her mid-twenties, could hold his attention for very long. Women who are much more experienced and way wiser than me have been trying for years. It was fun while it lasted, though.”

“Age doesn’t always equal wisdom.” She turned onto my street and turned to face me once she was parked in front of my house. “Who knows? Maybe something will happen with your man. The world is a wild place.”

I tipped her on the app and grinned. “It is. I, however, live in reality. Nothing like that happens here. Reality is the place your boyfriend cheats on you after being shit in bed for three years.”

She high-fived me. “That’s my reality, too, girl. I’m just hopeful for you. You’re still perky; you’ve got hope.”

I grabbed my bag and nodded at her. “I already tipped you. You and I both know that perky is a stretch.”

She threw her head back and laughed. “I hope I see you again, girl. In the papers with your man.”

I waved goodbye to her and walked up to my apartment. I didn’t have the heart to tell her that she was more likely to see me in the paper for murdering Matthew if he wasn’t careful.

16

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Layla

Monday morning Layla was a whole different person. She was professional as hell with a pencil skirt and respectable heels. She had her coffee and fruit before making it to work and she was always on time. Her hair was in a perfectly neat chignon and her makeup was subdued. She was efficient and could control an office while pretending the orders were from her boss without breaking a perfectly professional nail. Monday morning Layla and vacation Layla were the angel and devil.

As I walked into my office with my blouse buttoned up to my throat, I missed vacation Layla terribly. That was behind me, though. I had to put on a professional face and pretend I didn't want to stab Matthew when I finally saw him. I couldn't waste anymore time daydreaming about three perfect dicks. That wasn't professional, at all.

A sticky note was stuck to the middle of my desk and when I saw the scribbled note, I swore under my breath. "Asshole."

Ms. Morgan, report to my office ASAP.

“Report up my ass, you dick.” Sighing, I tried to adjust my attitude. Matthew was just my boss. I had to be respectful to my boss.

The moment I strolled into his office, however, I felt my fingers twitch to punch him. He looked up at me with a deep frown on his face and jerked his hand at the door. “Shut it.”

I took a deep breath and counted to ten as I shut the door and crossed to sit in the chair across from his desk. “You wanted to see me?”

“Where the fuck have you been? I’ve been trying to call you for nearly a week, Layla!” His face was red with anger as he leaned across his desk to hiss at me. “That was fucking childish.”

I thought about Xavier squeezing Matthew’s head until it popped off and a serene smile crossed my face. “I was on vacation. It was scheduled on your calendar.”

“You know what I mean, Layla. Where were you?”

“I was out, Matthew. I don’t see how where I was pertains to you.”

He stood up and glared down at me. “Did you see my calls?”

I shook my head. “I blocked your personal number. I don’t think you should contact me on that line again. If you need me, it would be a professional matter that occurred during working hours. Your office line isn’t blocked.”

He slammed his fist down on his desk. “Stop fucking around, Layla. I’m not doing this shit with you. If you want to

act like a child and do whatever the hell you're doing, you can quit."

A bolt of fire stole through me. "I'm not quitting."

"You either forget all this shit and we go back to the way things were or you won't work for me." He looked smug, like he'd backed me into a corner. "I said I was sorry and you had your week away, doing god knows what. Let's just put this behind us."

I stood up. "I spent the week getting railed, Matthew. It was fan-fucking-tastic and I wouldn't change a thing that happened. I'm glad I caught you. I'm sick of doing your work and watching you get all the credit anyway."

"What the fuck?" He stepped closer to me and gripped my upper arms. "We've been together for three years. You're just going to throw that away? You're going to throw your job away?"

I stepped out of his grasp. "You threw those three years away. Not me. I'm just glad you did. Being happy doesn't make me responsible, though. As for throwing my job away, if you think you can fire me for not fucking you, I'd like to see you try."

He laughed bitterly. "I'll just write up the list of tasks I've asked you to complete over the past few months and note how you didn't complete them. With your most recent attitude and disappearing act when I didn't approve your time off, your termination won't be questioned."

I swallowed and nodded as I made my decision. “It sucks to have wasted three years, but I’d rather that than lower my morals by sleeping with you to keep my job. Fire me.”

“You’re being an idiot, Layla.” He sounded like he was trying to warn me away from hurting myself, but we both knew the truth. Without me, he’d be forced to work. His life was going to suck without me.

I smiled. “And I’ll still be an idiot five minutes from now if that’s how you’re deciding, Matthew.”

He went back around his desk and sat down. “Fine. You’re fired. Fuck off.”

I laughed, suddenly ridiculously happy to be away from him. “Fuck you very much, too.”

Doing an about-face, I walked out with my head held high and had a giant smile on my face as I got in the elevator. By the time the elevator reached the ground floor, the smile had vanished. I no longer had a job.

I avoided a group of people getting on the elevator when the doors opened and squeezed myself out, feeling numb. I didn’t have much of a savings built up. If I didn’t find another job right away, I’d have to give up my apartment. I’d be going back home to Tennessee to live with Grandma in the blink of an eye, just another LA failure.

I was halfway across the lobby when a security guard I hadn’t noticed lightly took my elbow in his hand. I gasped and flinched away, causing him to apologize.

“Sorry, ma’am. I thought you heard me. You’re needed on the top floor.” He motioned with his thumb towards the ceiling. “I got orders to catch you before you left the building and bring you up right away.”

My stomach felt like it was still on the elevator, dropping a hundred floors. “Oh? Um... Do you know what this is about?”

He shook his head. “No, ma’am. Will you come with me, please?”

I cleared my throat and nodded. “Of course. Sure.”

He led me past the main elevator bank and to the private elevator that Mr. Bingham used. “Mr. Bingham’s orders.”

My panic grew muscles and sniffed protein powder at that point. It was bigger than ever. I thought of the reasons Mr. Bingham could call me to his office and the first thing that came to mind was my recent vacation activities with the guys. I’d known sleeping with a band under the record label was unprofessional, but under the shadow of Mr. Bingham, it felt dark and wrong. I’d already been fired, so he couldn’t fire me, but would he be able to do worse than fire me? Would he blacklist me in the industry for my behavior? How would he have found out, though?

My mind was racing and I didn’t notice when the elevator stopped moving. The guard touched my shoulder and motioned me forward. I rushed to follow him down the hallway to Mr. Bingham’s large office. I’d only been inside once, during the welcome tour, but I remembered the windows that looked out over LA. I’d thought the view was stifling.

Back home, the views of mountains and trees stretched on, into the blue sky for forever. It was magical. The view of LA was busy with people and buildings. I felt like I could smell the smog from inside the office. His office didn't even take in the water.

The door to the office was open and I could hear Mr. Bingham. "I don't know what the fuck is going on, but if they walk, I'll fire each and every one of you."

The guard all but pushed me into the office before hurrying away. He clearly understood the wrath of Mr. Bingham and didn't want to feel it. It left me standing in the open doorway, feeling like throwing up.

"Are you Layla Morgan?" Mr. Bingham stormed over and looked me over when I nodded. "You're the new tour manager for JAX. Congratulations."

17

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Layla

My brain couldn't make sense of what he was saying. Lucky for me, I didn't have to look like a fool because Matthew was there to do that. He snorted loudly and shook his head. I wasn't sure what was happening or how he'd gotten to Mr. Bingham's office so fast, but I just knew I was glad I wasn't him when Mr. Bingham swung a hard glare around on him.

"Is there something funny, Mr. O'Brian?" Mr. Bingham walked closer to him. "Do you have something to add to the conversation?"

"No, sir. Well... It's just that Layla has been working under me for three years. I don't understand why they would ask for someone who has no experience." Matthew shot me a dirty look and folded his arms over his chest. "I'd be happy to take the job if they want someone with some experience."

I straightened my spine and met Mr. Bingham's hard stare. "Actually, I have experience. I've done several important projects for Matthew over the last three years that I'd be happy

to talk about. I also toured the country with my parents when I was growing up, watching them set up and break down stages nightly. Most importantly, however, is the fact that I set up a stage for JAX a few nights ago. I happened to be in the area and saw that it was a wreck. I stepped in and I guess they were impressed.”

Matthew’s face went even redder than it had in his office. “You set up a stage for JAX?”

Mr. Bingham studied me. “They didn’t ask for you.”

I deflated, despite not having had enough time to fully inflate yet. I was even more confused than ever, though.

“They demanded you.” He nodded when he saw my surprise. “We’re coming up on the end of their current contract and they threatened to walk if they don’t get you as their tour manager. They said you were an expert and handled setting up the stage better than anyone they’d ever seen. You impressed them, Layla. I don’t appreciate being threatened, however.”

I held my hands out in front of me like I could block his ire. “I had no idea this was going to happen, sir. I apologize if something I did was out of line and-”

“Relax. You’re not the one making threats.”

I let out a quick breath and nodded. Then I thought about the repercussions of taking the job. Did they think they could hire me and just have me around to fuck me when they didn’t have time to find another woman? They would expect vacation Layla. That couldn’t happen. If I got the chance to do my

dream job and impress Mr. Bingham, I wasn't going to waste it on partying and sex.

“I don't like what your face is doing.” He narrowed his gaze at me and waited for me to speak.

“I'd like to speak to the band first. I want to make sure our expectations align.”

Mr. Bingham let out a harsh laugh and pointed at me. “You can speak to them all you'd like, Layla, but you're taking the job. I'm not losing one of our biggest bands because you're not sure your expectations align. Do you understand me? Get on a plane and get out there right away.”

I nodded, properly chastised by his dark tone. “Yes, sir. I understand.”

He looked at Matthew and grunted. “If she's as talented as JAX says she is, why haven't you recommended her for a promotion in the three years she's worked under you?”

While Matthew stuttered and seemed to collapse in on himself, I smiled sweetly. “Actually, Mr. Bingham, I was just let go-”

“Layla was hiding all that talent, I guess. I'm glad someone from my team can take this job. I tried to train her well.” The snake stood up and moved towards me. “I'll ride down with you to clean out your desk, Layla.”

Mr. Bingham gestured at me. “Jax signs their new contract or you'll never work in this business again, Layla Morgan.”

I swallowed down a ball of pure fear and nodded before hurrying out of his office. I never wanted to go back there again, I decided. I rushed to the elevator and nearly tripped when Matthew gripped my arm and pulled me past the private elevator and down to the normal ones we took. Pulling my arm away from him, I straightened my shirt and forced a smug smile to my lips. No way was I going to show him I was terrified.

He stood too close to me and whispered harshly down at me. “What the fuck did you do?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

The door slid open and he pushed me in. “I’m just supposed to believe that a band as big as JAX saw you set up a stage and decided you’d be a great tour manager? Bullshit.”

He was striking a little too close to my insecurities, so I ignored him and kept smiling. I tried to imagine what the new job meant, but I couldn’t get past the why. Why the hell had they done what they’d done? I’d left with a pretty solid feeling that I’d never see them again.

“You fucked one of them, didn’t you?” Matthew laughed like he’d solved the puzzle and clapped his hands together. “Jesus, you’re going to fail horribly.”

I turned to face him. “It has to be hard to watch me rise higher than you in the company you’ve been at for over a decade. How long have you been managing Miriam Dark? When’s the last time she sold out a venue or had a chart topper? Hmm? Yeah, I can’t recall, either. You managed to

keep her at a mediocre level *with* my help, *Mattie*. Without me, you'll be lucky to still have a job in six months. You'd better hope Miriam has a stroke of inspiration and releases a few hits so you can ride on the coattails of yet another woman's hard work."

The doors opened on the floor we'd both worked on until that morning. Matthew walked off and put his hand over the doors to hold them open and openly glared at me.

I smiled. "Oh, this isn't my floor anymore. Didn't you hear? I'm the new tour manager for one of the biggest bands in the country. Get fucked, Matthew."

That ride down to the ground floor felt a little better because I wasn't jobless, but I was still so nervous that I wanted to curl up in a corner and hide. I didn't have time for that, though. I had to catch a flight to wherever the guys were and set them straight. If I was going to be their tour manager, I was going to be their tour manager and nothing else.

18

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Layla

“Hey, Grandma. What’s up?” I held my phone between my ear and shoulder while tugging my suitcases out of the car while the driver watched me from the side view mirror.

“I got your text message, Layla! You took a new, fancy job? I’m so proud of you!” Grandma’s thick southern accent was a breath of fresh air anytime I heard it, but right then, it was almost enough to make me want to cry.

“Thanks, Gran. It’s a big change and I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t nervous.” The moment I managed to close the trunk, the driver took off from the curb. I flipped him the bird and shouted after him. “Thanks for your help!”

“Stop yelling at people, girl.” Grandma laughed. “You’re just like your momma.”

“And you, so I hear.” I pulled my suitcases onto the sidewalk and wheeled them both over to the side of the club I was meeting JAX at. My heart skipped a beat knowing they were

inside but I ignored it. “I looked at the rest of the tour dates and guess what. The band is playing in Nashville in a couple of months. I could drive down and see you and Jagger for a day or you two could come up to see me. I could get you into a free rock concert.”

Grandma cackled at the idea of her at a rock concert. “Yeah, right. And ruin what little hearing I have left? No, thank you! Your brother has been talking about this band nonstop, though. I think he has a boy crush. Is that what the kids call it?”

I laughed at the idea of Jagger hearing that. “It’s definitely called a boy crush. You should *definitely* talk to Jagger about his boy crush.”

“You’re trying to get me in trouble, aren’t you? You’ve always been a little troublemaker. Now, tell me about this band. Are they handsome?” Grandma interpreted my silence correctly and sighed. “They’re painfully handsome, huh? Way better than that ex of yours?”

I hadn’t gotten around to telling Grandma about Matthew so I knew Jagger had been gossiping. “Yeah. Way better. It doesn’t matter, though. I’m working for them now.”

“It didn’t stop you with Matthew.” Jagger’s voice joined the background noise and Grandma began teasing him immediately. “I’m talking to your sister about your boy crush. Which one do you like the best, Jag?”

The door next to me opened and the same security guard I’d slipped my goodbye letter to walked out and grinned when he

saw me. He planted himself on the other side of the door and ran his eyes up and down the street.

“Your brother wants to talk to you about his boy crush, but this is my time. So, tell me how handsome they are and which one’s your favorite.”

I looked at the guard and then down at my shoes. “I think I’ll pass.”

“What? Why? Is it because they’re all three handsome? Let me tell you... When I was your age, I followed this tiny band around for a while. They weren’t famous, but they were hot, hot, hot. I couldn’t pick just one, either.” She let out a low whistle. “Best summer of my life.”

My mouth dropped open and I felt my cheeks heat. “Grandma!”

I could hear Jagger gagging in the background. He was probably getting visuals of whatever Grandma said. She was known for talking with her hands and she’d traumatized us more than a few times.

“What? Those were the good days with free love and everything. Everyone was doing it.” She sighed longingly. “I kept the whole band entertained that summer and they played their best concerts with me waiting for them in the wings... Maybe I should look them up.”

“Are you telling me that you were involved with all three of them, at the same time?” I watched the guard’s head whip

around to me and I pressed my phone to my chest while blushing. “My grandma... I come from an interesting family.”

He laughed and nodded. “Sounds like it. No judgment from me, ma’am. Just glad to see you back.”

I studied him. “Why?”

He smiled and continued looking around. “You’ll figure it out.”

“Who are you talking to? Is it one of the hotties? Let me talk to them, Layla!” Grandma shouted so loud that her voice carried to me and to the guard.

I groaned. “Sorry. She’s crazy.”

“She sounds fun. I’m Nick, by the way. I’ll be your personal guard. As your guard and the person responsible for your safety, I suggest you get back to your grandma.”

“Grandma? I’ll call you back. Love you.” I hung up and frowned at Nick. “What do you mean, personal guard? Why would I need a guard?”

He shrugged. “I don’t make the calls, ma’am. When you go in, I’ll put your suitcases away so you don’t have to haul them around.”

I took a deep breath in and ran my hand over my hair to straighten it. I’d taken my time in the airport bathroom to be sure to look as professional as possible. My pencil skirt and full coverage blouse made clear that I was there to work. Nothing more. I nodded to Nick and thanked him when he opened the door for me.

“Good luck.” He shut the heavy door behind me and then I was in the low-lit club, staring across the large room at the stage.

Soft guitar strumming filled the room and I saw Jones and Mack sitting on stools while they played. When they added vocals, my skin erupted in chills at the low timber of their voices. I’d never heard the song they were singing and my entire being had an instant reaction to it. Slowed down and soft, their voices were haunting together. They leaned into their mics as they played their guitars and even from across the room, I could see the way they each felt the lyrics as their eyes closed.

My heart raced and my body reacted like nothing had changed. It was still lost in lust for them and wanted to get out of my stifling clothes so it could be ravaged already.

Xavier stood up from behind his drums and the movement drew a stop to Mack and Jones’ singing. They all turned and faced me from across the club. There were other staff members from the club walking around but I suddenly felt like we were all alone and my morals were weak. The idea of ripping my skirt down my legs might’ve crossed my legs.

I was stronger than that, though. I had a job to do. I repeated that to myself over and over again as I walked across the room on my nice and professional kitten heels. If it all felt like a costume as I stood in front of the guys, that feeling would pass.

Jones raised his eyebrow at me as he ran his eyes down my body. “Was it dress up day?”

I planted my hands on my hips and hardened my resolve. “I think we need to talk.”

19

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Layla

Mack put his guitar down and sat on the edge of the stage. His long legs nearly touched the floor on my level and it would've been so easy for him to step down and then scoop me up. "Good to see you again, too."

I licked my lips and looked down at my shoes. Swallowing down my personal feelings, I squared my shoulders and looked back up at them. "I'm not sure why you wanted to hire me on as your tour manager. I know I can do the job and I'll kill at it, but if you think that paying me to act as your tour manager is just a way to keep an easy fuck close by, you're way off. I take my job very seriously. I know that you three didn't get a chance to see that while I was on vacation, but it has to be different when I'm working. I'm not here to be your call girl. I'm here to manage the shit out of your stage and help you put on amazing shows."

"So, you think we hired you as our tour manager because we want to fuck you." Jones had a look on his face that I hadn't

seen before. He was angry at me. “I guess it’s good to know what you think of us.”

“I’m sorry, but I just wanted to make everything clear before I accepted the job.” I crossed my arms under my chest and promised myself that if I stayed strong, I’d buy myself a giant tub of ice cream that night.

“You didn’t accept the job?” Mack shook his head. “You’re here with your luggage and your work uniform, though.”

I cringed at how ridiculous he was making my outfit seem. “Mr. Bingham didn’t give me much of a choice, but I told him that I was coming to speak with y’all before I accepted. I want the job but only if it’s a real offer.”

“And if it wasn’t?” Standing from the stage, Mack walked closer. “What would you do then?”

I held strong. Somehow. “If it wasn’t a real offer, I’d walk. I’d go back home and tell Jagger that his favorite band sucks and start over. It wouldn’t be easy, but at least I’d have my dignity.”

Xavier jumped down from the stage and walked over to stand in front of me. “It’s a real offer. You were honestly the best we’ve ever seen when you were setting up the stage in Vegas. We’re playing an arena in two days. If you can pull that off, the job will be yours for however long you want it, Layla. We’re not giving you a pretend title so we can fuck you. Business aside, we’re still interested in you.”

I ground my teeth together and dug my nails into my palms. “You can’t. It was unprofessional of me to sleep with you when I wasn’t directly connected to your band. Now? It would tank my career just as fast as walking away would. I won’t throw away my chance to make it in this industry because my hormones or whatever react to yours. I can’t do it.”

Jones shook his head from where he still sat on stage. “I’m still trying to make sense of your goodbye letter. *Thanks for helping me recover?* That was shitty, Layla.”

I took a deep breath and took a few steps back. “I think we should keep it professional from here on. I’m going to and I’d appreciate it if you three would, too. If you want me to do the job, it’s the way it has to be.”

Jones shook his head. “Fine. Professional, it is.”

Xavier slowly nodded. “Whatever you need, Layla.”

Mack smiled as he backed towards the stage. “Professional. Sure.”

I forced a smile that felt brittle and nodded. “Great. So, I just need a few details about the arena show.”

“Talk to Billy.” Jones started playing his guitar then, gesturing to the sound engineer to turn the volume up so it would drown out whatever I said next.

I spun around and hurried towards the exit. I was feeling the overwhelming sense that I was in over my head and that accepting the job was a giant mistake. No matter how professional I pretended I could stay, feelings were involved.

Seeing Jones mad at me made me want to fix it, but I couldn't. I just had to let them stay upset with me so they got over the urge to screw me. I doubted it would take them long.

Before I could leave, I heard Mack's voice over the sound system. "Nick goes everywhere you go, sweetheart. Don't try to make his job any harder than it already is."

I lifted my hand in silent acknowledgment and hurried out the front door. Nick was right there, waiting on me. He saw my face and his eyebrows climbed his forehead until they were almost in his hairline. I shook my head and looked around. "Where are my bags?"

"You're not leaving already, are you?"

I shook my head. "No. I probably should be, but I'm not."

"Okay, well, your bags are on the bus." His smile was easy even as his eyes constantly moved around to check out the area. "I was considering holding your bags hostage there for a moment. You have no idea how cranky they've been since you left."

"You make them sound like toddlers."

"You said it. They lost their new favorite thing and they haven't been taking it very well. I'd hoped that you being back meant less of their wrath, but I guess not."

I sighed. "I'm just here to do a job. Speaking of which, I need to see Billy. I have an arena show to look into."

"I can take you to him." He motioned me towards a large black SUV waiting at the curb. "Also, if you hear me telling

my wife that you're their girlfriend, you're just going to have to forgive me. She's got a jealous streak and I've never done private security for a woman before for that exact reason. She was okay with me watching out for you when I told her you and the guys are together. I'm not changing my story now."

I shrugged. "Tell your wife that she's safe from me. Even if I'm not their girlfriend."

"If they had their way, I'm pretty sure you would be."

I didn't want to get into it so I pretended to not hear him. "Why are they having you guard me?"

"They're big on safety. I think you'll be surprised by them when you get to know them better. They don't actually need us for real attacks, but more like crowd control typically. You know, they were all three in the army and are highly trained to kick ass and take names. Any attack that came their way, they wouldn't struggle to handle it."

I thought of the muscles and graceful way they each moved their large bodies. Yeah, it didn't surprise me that they would know how to use their bodies to protect themselves and others. I wanted to scream as it was just another thing that made them attractive to me.

"They're protective over you, especially, it seems. I got a two hour long debriefing from them about how to protect you and what I could or couldn't do. They won't let anything happen to you."

I growled. "Nick?"

He grinned. “Yeah?”

“Stop talking.”

He just laughed easily. “They’re not even paying me extra to talk them up. They probably wouldn’t want me talking to you more than necessary, but if I have the chance to play cupid, maybe I will.”

“*Great.*”

20

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Xavier

I sat in the oversized camping chair I kept in the bus storage for nights we didn't have a show and watched Layla navigate her way across the gravel in her heels. She almost fell over more than once and each time I gripped my beer bottle so tight that I almost shattered it. I didn't want to waste a drop of the alcohol that night so I went ahead and finished the rest of the bottle while waiting on Layla to get closer finally.

God, what a fucking day. I stretched out my legs in front of me and groaned. It would've been nice to take a shower, sink into Layla for a quick fuck, and then fall asleep holding her. I'd been hoping maybe that was something that would happen, but she'd crashed and burned my plans. It would be another night of a cold shower and restless sleep.

When she was standing in front of me, Layla put her hands on her hips and frowned. If she thought her little business attire hid her sexiness, she was wrong. I'd always had a thing for the librarian trope and in that skirt, she was ticking all of

my buttons. Her ass looked edible in it. She didn't seem to know that, though.

I put my bottle down beside me and rested my hands on my stomach. "You seem upset."

She took a deep breath and motioned towards the bus. "Imagine my surprise when I tried to get on the other bus, the bus for the rest of the crew, and I wasn't allowed to step a foot on it. I was outright informed that if I climbed onto that bus, their ass was grass and since they all like their asses, I needed to fuck off."

"They told you to fuck off?" Anger wasn't a common emotion for me, but when it came to Layla, I was quick to it. The idea of anyone hurting her made me want to break things.

"Not in so many words." She nodded to the chair next to me. "Can I sit there?"

I shrugged. "Sit wherever you'd like."

Her eyes landed on my lap and I groaned. I was only so strong and despite her speech, the energy between us was strong enough to hurt. Staying away from her was torture.

Sitting in the chair next to me, she took the beer I handed her from the cooler between us and cracked it open using her teeth. She noticed my raised eyebrows and her cheeks darkened. She didn't blush all that often, but when she did, it was stunning. "I know I shouldn't use my teeth but I watched my dad do it and Jagger does it... I just wanted to be like them, I guess. I was barely seven or eight and Dad would let

me open his beers for him so he could show me off to his friends. He loved it.”

My chest warmed for her and her loss. She spoke about her family in the most loving way. “Sounds like a good man. My dad raised me alone and he was helpless. He passed along many, many weird and embarrassing habits that Mack’s mom helped me unlearn when I was an older teenager. If I’d come to her house opening beers with my teeth, she probably would’ve thrown a party. Instead, it was like I was raised by a pack of wolves.”

She turned to face me and took a long pull from her bottle. “I’ll tell you my weirdest if you tell me yours.”

My own cheeks heated at the thought, but I shrugged and just spilled the beans. “I didn’t know that sitting back with your hand down your pants and letting one rip wasn’t the way you acted in front of other people. That was pretty embarrassing.”

She giggled and nodded. “Yeah, that’s rough. Your dad didn’t set you up for success with that one. Is he still around?”

“Yeah. He shows up on the tour with us every so often. He’s semi-retired and when he gets lonely, he comes out with us.” I thought it might be time for him to join us soon. He was predictable like that. “Even though he set me up for failure, he’s still one of my best friends.”

“That’s really special. I look forward to meeting him.”

“Okay, your turn. What’s your weirdest?”

She tipped her head back and finished her beer. “I spent the first ten years of my life falling asleep backstage with rock music blaring. After my parents died and I moved in with my grandma, I couldn’t sleep. She thought it was because I was upset at first and figured it would pass. She finally understood what it was when Jagger cranked his music up one night to tune out the sound of my crying and she found me passed out right outside of his door. It’s easier now, but I still would always prefer to fall asleep with music at a deafening volume.”

I wanted to hold her, but I knew she didn’t want that so I gripped my knees instead. “That must’ve been so hard for you and Jagger.”

“Yeah. Of course. Our parents were the best. They loved us so much that I sometimes wonder if the world just couldn’t let it exist. With just ten years of their love, Jagger and I were able to become exactly who we wanted. If we’d had a full life of it? We definitely would’ve taken over the world by now.” She grinned but it slowly faded. “Your mom?”

“Nothing like your parents. She left us when I was only a year old. She just didn’t want to be a mom. My dad wouldn’t give me up, so she didn’t want to be with him, either.” I looked out at the park we were staying at and sighed. “Mack’s mom was the first mother I ever knew, really. She saw the way I was living and took me in. She gave me and Dad lessons on taking care of ourselves and other things Dad didn’t know to teach me. She was also my first crush because of how sweet she was to me. Something the guys still fuck with me about.”

Layla rested her chin in her hand and watched me closely. “She sounds like an amazing woman.”

I nodded and then forced myself to redirect the conversation. She wanted professional and there we were, talking about our families and shit. Even though she seemed interested in the conversation, I wasn’t going to take more than she wanted to give. “So, the guys wouldn’t let you on the other bus?”

Sitting up and clearing her throat, she shook her head. “No. Apparently, they were told to never allow me on that bus or it would be their asses. They’re just doing what they were told. I came over here to find out why I’m not allowed to sleep on the bus meant for staff and where the hell I’m supposed to sleep.”

I reached back and knocked on the side of the bus. “I’ll let Jones explain it to you.”

She frowned. “So, it was his idea?”

“Nope.” I smiled. “It was a group decision.”

“Then why does Jones need to explain it?”

I glanced up when the bus door swung open and nodded at the scowl on Jones’ face. “That’s why. He’s ready for a good fight and I think this will be one. Go at it, you two.”

21

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Layla

“**W**here do you expect me to sleep, Jones?” I finished my beer and stood up to put it in the recycling bin the park provided. “Why am I not allowed to stay with the other staff?”

“You want us to let you stay on a bus with ten to twelve men? Where you’d be the only woman?” Jones stomped down the small steps to the ground and walked closer. “No. We know and trust most of the guys, but no one ever really knows. It’s not happening. You’ll stay on the bus with us. You’ll be safe.”

I gasped. “What the hell? No. I’m not doing it. I told you, I’m not going to be the hole you land in at the end of the night.”

“Is that how you categorize what we did together?” He worked his jaw muscles and then ran his hand down his face. “You made it clear that you’re not interested in being with us, Layla. If you think we’re the kind of men who would push that on you, maybe you shouldn’t be here.”

“It’s not that I think that! Why make it harder?” I hurried after him when he walked away. “Jones! I’m just trying to do my job. Living in the same bus as y’all would be hard. I don’t want to see the women you bring home and I don’t want to be in your space, constantly being reminded of what we did.”

He spun around and boxed me in against the side of the bus. His fists pressed into the bus on either side of my head and his eyes were hard as he lowered his face to be level with mine. “You think we’re bringing women home? That’s what you’re worried about?”

“It’s part of it. I know your reputation. I saw it the night I left. There were women lined up, waiting to be taken back to the bus to get fucked. There was even a repeat visitor that y’all apparently really liked last year. Even asked her to travel with you on the road while you all took her.” I squeezed my eyes shut and cursed myself for sounding like a jealous idiot. “That doesn’t matter. I just mean that you’re rockstars and women want you. It’s normal for you to bring people back to the bus. I just don’t want to see it.”

He growled next to my ear. “We haven’t brought anyone back to this bus since you and none of us want to. We’re interested in one woman but that doesn’t seem to matter. Think what you want, but you’re the only woman who will be on this bus. And you *will* be on this bus. You don’t have to want us for us to still take care of you. You’ll be safe with us. Or you can go back to working for Matthew. We won’t jeopardize your safety.”

My panties were soaked and it made me want to punch him. How could he be so frustrating and so hot at the same time? I'd never been into bossy men before them, but they made me want to listen when they demanded. I let out a frustrated sound and stomped my foot, which made me want to cut the thing off, especially when Jones smirked at it.

“It's good to know this uptight look didn't take away your brattiness.” Jones lowered his voice even more and when he spoke, his breath warmed my neck. “As far as whatever you heard that night you left us with a shitty note? In all the years we've been touring, we've never had a woman stay over more than one night. We've never asked anyone to stay with us on the road before you. Whatever you're telling yourself to bolster this distance you seem to need, it's bullshit.”

I couldn't think of anything to say that wasn't just me begging him to forget I'd ever said anything. When he pushed off and stalked away from me, I just watched and then let my head thump back against the bus. With my heart in my throat and my vagina attempting to grow legs and chase after Jones, I groaned. “What a fucking mess.”

I wanted to be stubborn that night and refuse to sleep on the bus with them, but I saw that the longer I stayed away, the longer Nick had to stay away. He looked tired and I felt guilty, so I finally gave in and made my way onto the bus. Jones was still out, but Xavier and Mack were sitting on the couches, watching a game.

I just wanted to take a shower and crawl into bed so I could pretend things weren't going to be miserable. I held up my hands and shook my head when both men stared at me. "I'm just going to shower and go to bed."

Mack nodded. "Your suitcases are in front of your bunk."

"Did you eat?" Xavier stood up and walked around me to get to the fridge. He pulled out a yogurt bar and a bottled water. "Here. We got more of the bars you liked."

I braced myself against the counter and hung my head. I couldn't help doubting myself and I was terrified that I was going to make the wrong step and lose everything. The guys would be so easy to fall into. It would be everything to come back to the bus after a long day and fall into bed with them. The moment they were bored with me, though? I'd be crushed and I didn't want to know what that pain would feel like.

"Layla?" Xavier gently touched my shoulder. "What's wrong?"

I cleared my throat and forced the emotion back down into the depths of my guts. "Nothing. It was just a long day. Nothing to worry about. Thanks for this."

Before they could question me again, I hurried back to my bunk and focused on my breathing as I yanked out the things I needed and then rushed through showering and my nighttime routine. Just as I was crawling into my little bunk, I heard Jones come in. I jerked the curtain closed that was supposed to give me privacy and then I rolled over to face the wall and shoved my earbuds into my ears. The playlist I always listened

to at night filled my ears at a volume that should not have been comforting and I did my best to fall asleep.

I closed my eyes and the next time I opened them, I realized I'd slept straight through the night. I was shocked. Instead of giving it too much thought, I hurried through getting ready for my day and ate a quick breakfast before I rushed out of the bus to get started on my day. I was going to make sure the arena show went off without any hitches and it was so much bigger than anything I'd ever done before that I wasn't going to feel good about it until it was finished.

I poured myself into the work and stayed closer to their manager, Billy the rest of the day. I could tell he thought I was a joke, despite having me step in and save his ass before. It didn't matter, though. Nothing mattered. I just had to do the job and do it well. I lost track of how many times I told myself that throughout the day.

That night I went to the bus as late as possible, showered, and climbed into bed with my earbuds to have another night of sleeping like the dead. I didn't see the guys and I was grateful for it.

The day of the big concert, I ran around all day and worked my ass off to make sure everything was perfect. I learned as I went with some things and by the time the show started, I felt like I'd had a crash course in putting on big shows and had made it out the other side alive. The show was amazing, and not just because I'd handled organizing every aspect of it, but because the guys were so good.

While I sat backstage and watched to make sure everything went okay, I listened to them perform and it was hard not to lose myself in their voices.

It was clear that I wasn't the only one who thought so when the final song ended and women rushed the stage. I turned away and walked to where Nick was standing and waiting for me.

“Ready to go already?”

I nodded. “Yep. Get me out of here, please.”

22

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Layla

I'd made an art form out of avoiding the guys. It shouldn't have been possible, considering the size of the bus and how much time we were on it, but I was talented. When we were parked to prepare for shows, I stayed away as much as I could. When we were on the road, I stayed in my bunk. The guys didn't try to draw me out and I stayed focused on work so I didn't get bored or lose my mind. I'd made it two weeks and I'd barely spoken to them.

I was miserable, but I never would've admitted it. I was doing my dream job. I had what I wanted. I loved the work. Being close to the guys and not having them, at all, was brutal, though. More brutal than I ever could've imagined. Almost every night I laid in bed and strained to hear through my blaring music. Was *that* the night they'd bring someone home? When we were at practice or shows, my eyes tracked every interaction they had with other women. Jealousy had become my closest companion.

I'd even managed to convince myself that I'd pushed the guys away enough that they hated me and didn't care what I did until one night during a show in Seattle. I'd wanted to watch the more intimate show from the audience to make sure there wasn't anything I was missing while planning for them. Sitting at the bar, I'd been focused on watching the guys and noticing the lighting when someone tapped me on the shoulder.

I glanced up and saw a guy who instantly made me think: nice. Not nice like *nice*, but nice like Matthew. Nice hair, nice polo shirt, nice chinos. Just nice. Nick was a few feet away from me so I wasn't worried about the guy. I just smiled and gave him an inquisitive look.

He leaned down to say something and before he could, Mack's guitar playing screeched to a stop and his deep voice rang out over the crowd. "Leave her the fuck alone, kid."

Nick appeared next to me and scowled at the guy. "Get lost."

I looked up at the stage and saw all three of the guys staring right at me. My body went through a whirlwind of emotion as I felt fury at them for embarrassing me but also lust over the way they'd been watching and paying attention to me, enough to notice such a small interaction from across the bar.

The crowd was looking around, trying to see what was happening while the guy who'd approached me disappeared into that same crowd. I looked up at Nick and then up at the guys. Frustration got the best of me and I stood up to leave. I could handle myself. I didn't need them stopping the entire

show I'd worked hard to make sure went off without a hitch to keep men away from me.

“Sit back down and enjoy the rest of the show, sweetheart.” Jones winked at me and the crowd cheered as they started playing again. He was still watching me so I flipped him off.

“I'm ready to go.” I looked at Nick and saw him grinning. “Don't encourage them. And don't make me dislike you.”

He led me away from the bar and didn't try to hide that he was still grinning like an idiot. “I'm sorry! I can't help it, though. I've never seen them so possessive.”

I grunted. “It's gross.”

He opened the back door and looked around before letting me follow him out. “Why don't I think you actually find it gross? I've been talking to my wife about this and she's got theories.”

“Oh, god. Nick, no.” I could only imagine what he'd told her. “Keep it to yourself.”

“Fine. The only thing I'll say is that she's a romance writer and she has hope for you.” He laughed at my reaction. “I'll shut up now.”

I said goodnight to him at the bus and went straight to the fridge to get a yogurt bar and a bottle of water. I was going to grab my earbuds from my bunk and call Grandma before I went back to hiding but when I turned towards the hallway, I nearly peed on myself out of fear when I saw a woman at the end of the hallway. A naked woman.

I gasped and clutched my yogurt bar so hard that it squeezed out all over my hand. I still wasn't concerned about it as I had a stare down with the woman. "Who the hell are you?"

She cocked her hip to the side and I noticed that she had much smaller hips than I did. She also had small perky boobs and a flat stomach that looked defined. She was also beautiful. Of course, she was beautiful. "I'm an old friend of the band. Who are you?"

A lump formed in my throat but I didn't dare acknowledge it. Instead, I nodded like her being naked made perfect sense. "I'm their tour manager. I sleep in that bunk right there."

She nodded back at me. "Cool. Is it okay if I stay? This is kind of a tradition with the guys and me. I don't know if they mentioned it. I always sneak on the bus and wait for them. It's a good time. They've never had a tour manager staying on the bus before, though."

That lump got bigger. "It's fine. You just scared me. I'm going to take a shower and then get in bed, so I won't be in your way. Go wild."

She looked embarrassed. "Do you have earbuds or anything? I'm...loud with them. They're just really, really good. I can't help it. God, I'm so nervous and excited. This is my favorite day of the year, every year."

Yogurt was dripping from my hand to the floor, but I couldn't stop thinking about her screams filling the bus. "Um...yeah. I have earbuds. I'll put them in."

“Thank you! I’m not normally like this, but when you get a chance like this, you take it. You know?” She grinned suddenly and stepped back into the bedroom. A moment later she was right in front of me, still naked, but holding a band t-shirt up. Not just any band t-shirt, though. It was one of my parents. Only she’d cut the bottom off of it and when she pulled it on, it only covered half of her boobs. “What do you think? I found one of their shirts in the bathroom and knew they wouldn’t mind. Not when they find me like this. They’re men after all. Right?”

I was going to be sick. Or I was going to cry, which was worse in my book. I was staring at one of the only things I had left from my parents and it was riding up on the nipples of a woman who’d snuck into my temporary home for her yearly fuck session with the guys. It was too late to do anything for the shirt so I just walked to the sink and washed my hands, trying to tell myself that leaving wasn’t the answer.

“Shirt or naked? I can’t decide.”

I turned back to her and knew that I couldn’t stay. I couldn’t be in the same bus while they pulled that shirt off of her perfect body. “Um... I don’t know. Whatever makes you feel more comfortable, I guess. I just remembered that I’m supposed to be somewhere... You’ll have the bus to yourself tonight. Be as loud as you want.”

She pulled me into a hug and squeezed me. “You’re so nice! Thank you! That bedroom gets kind of stuffy so we normally end up with me over the counter anyway. I’ll feel much better

knowing I won't scar you if you walk out to get a drink. Don't worry, though. I'll clean up after myself."

I grabbed my purse and a change of clothes without even looking at what I was grabbing and stumbled back towards the front of the bus. I just had to go. I didn't care where.

"Have a good night wherever you're going! Nice to meet you!" The woman hugged me again and then stepped back and pulled the shirt over her head. "Naked is better. I'll just wear the shirt after so they get the vibe still."

I waved goodbye and nearly fell out of the bus in my hurry to leave. I looked towards the second bus and saw that Nick wasn't there. Sending a small thanks his way, even though I knew he wouldn't appreciate it, I took off down the street. It was dark and I wasn't a huge fan of the setting, but anything was better than being in that bus.

I walked a few blocks before I stopped and ordered a car to take me to the closest motel. It arrived fast and the driver was silent the entire drive, thankfully. The roadside motel had vacancies and I checked in without a problem. It'd taken less than half an hour to get away from the bus and into a safe space where there were no naked women waiting to have loud and wild sex with the guys. On the counter, the same way they'd fucked me. While she possibly wore one of my parents' shirts.

I made sure I was locked in tight, turned out all the lights so I didn't have to see the state of the motel bedding while I curled up on top of it, and then I sent a text to Nick. I told him

I was safe but I'd needed to get some JAX free air for the night and that I'd be back first thing in the morning. Then I turned my phone on airplane mode and went to my same old playlist.

Only I didn't fall asleep right away. I didn't feel as safe as I always did on the bus so I kept one earbud out to listen to the night sounds. More than that, though, I stared at the clock and played the scenario out in my head. I knew when they'd finish their set and what time they'd finally reach the bus. I knew what time they'd step onto the bus and see the naked woman. My stomach turned because I didn't know if they'd take the time to make sure I wasn't there or if they'd just drag her to the bedroom and have their way with her. I knew the way they'd smell and how they'd look when they held themselves over her. It was torture.

I wanted to scream to stop the images in my head but I knew it wouldn't help. Just like I knew sewing the bottom of that shirt back on wouldn't help. It would never be the same and I'd never touch it again. I'd lost a piece of my parents and that was the thought that had me dialing Jagger's number.

"Are you drunk or in danger?" Jagger didn't sound like he'd been sleeping when he answered. "Are you okay?"

I sniffed and blew out a big breath. "I'm okay. Physically. Something happened and there's no one else I can talk to about it."

"Go."

I told him a censored version of the story with the t-shirt, one that didn't involve me being upset about anything other than the shirt. "It was too late to do anything and I knew she wasn't trying to hurt me so I just left. Screaming at her wouldn't have helped anything. I needed space for the night so I checked into a motel."

"Shit, Lay. I'm sorry." He seemed to be thinking about something and finally he cleared his throat. "I kept a box of their shirts back then. I knew you'd wear the ones you got until they fell apart so I wanted to make sure you always had at least a few. I'll mail you a new one."

My eyes burned and my chest felt like someone was sitting on it. It took me a minute to be able to speak around the emotion clogging my voice. "You're the best brother in the world, Jagger. I don't know what I'd do without you."

His voice sounded suspiciously wobbly when he replied. "You'd be fine without me. You're a fighter. You're smart and tough and smart as hell. You don't need anyone to be okay, Layla Rose."

I sat up and hugged my knees to my chest. "Is everything okay, Jag?"

He let out a quiet laugh. "Yeah. Just worried about my baby sister. Do I need to come crack some heads?"

"No, but you could come and see me soon. I miss you. You could hang out with the band when you got tired of me, too." I knew I sounded desperate if I was offering up the band to get him to come and visit, but I didn't care. I just needed comfort.

“I don’t know if I can get away from work right now, but I’ll look at my calendar, okay?” He sighed. “Things have been busy around here.”

I nodded even though he couldn’t see me. I just didn’t know if I could handle more disappointment in that moment. “Sure. Of course. Hey, thanks for answering. I just needed to talk for a minute but I feel better.”

“Layla...”

I ignored the hesitation in his voice and rushed on. “I love you, Jagger. I’m going to sleep this mood off and tomorrow will be better. Get some sleep, big bro.”

I hung up before he could say anything else and saw I had a dozen texts from Nick after turning airplane mode off to call Jagger. I quickly turned it back on and didn’t read a single message. I just wanted peace. At least for a few hours.

I shoved both earbuds deep in my ears and hugged my purse to my chest. The music screamed at me but I never managed to fall asleep. I just pretended I was sleeping while doing my best to not imagine what positions the naked woman could get into that I couldn’t.

23

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Layla

The sun coming up was a blessing. Without sleeping for even a few minutes, I'd just been over trying. I wanted to leave the motel and figure out if I could get through a day of travel with the guys before I jumped out of the moving bus. I didn't have high hopes.

I took a shower that left me feeling dirtier than when I'd got into it somehow and then got dressed. I'd grabbed leggings and a sports bra. Nothing else. Frustration and the need to cry were still right under the surface, bubbling away inside me, and the sports bra really pissed me off. The last thing I wanted was to have my tits shoved inside something that felt eight sizes too small and made them look like a uniboob.

The moment I turned my phone on to order a car, it started ringing. I saw it was Jagger and answered. "Up late and early, huh? Aren't we a tired sack?"

"What are you doing, Layla? I got calls from every member of my favorite band last night, asking me if I knew where you were. That was weird, let me tell you. Then, I get a call from

your security guard. When the hell did you get a security guard? He made clear that if I knew where you were and didn't tell him, he'd drive his happy ass to Tennessee to knock my two front teeth out. If I even had them to begin with."

I gasped. "Nick said that?!"

"Oh, yeah. Your boy was stressed. I could hear JAX shouting in the background. Tell Nick when you see him that it's so cute that he tried to play tough, but I've flossed with stronger stuff than him." Jagger snorted. "You scared the shit out of me, though. Their fear was too real."

I grabbed my purse with my clothes stuffed inside and decided to walk and talk. "I'm sorry, Jag. I didn't mean to scare you. I'm sorry they called you. I don't know why they did. I guess they didn't last all that long with scissor girl."

"Oh, no. Scissor girl had a bad night, too. She was escorted off the bus by security, apparently. When I got on the phone with Jones Aldridge last night, I ripped him a new one for letting people near your things and Jones Aldridge informed me that he'd been made aware of the great shirt debacle and that he'd let naked girl know that she'd fucked up. He also tried to order a shit ton of authentic, vintage concert shirts last night. He only didn't because I informed him that that wasn't the important part. Unless he could order them to have been worn by our dead parents, they didn't matter. I really played up the guilt for you." He took a deep breath. "But Jones Aldridge... I'm still a little starstruck."

I was stopped on the sidewalk, stunned by the words coming out of Jagger's mouth. "Wow."

"Yeah. I'm glad you finally answered, though. I knew you were fine, but I let their fear get the best of me." He grew silent and I knew whatever he said next would suck.

"What'd you do, Jag?"

"Well, after a while I got worried. I just needed to know you were safe for my own sanity. I remembered that we did that fun thing with that app before so we could track each other..."

"I wasn't a part of that! You did that to me so you could make sure I wasn't sneaking down to the bad parts of LA!"

"Let's not split hairs. I'm trying to tell you that I located you and when the guys were still panicking this morning, I might've told them I found you and that you were probably still sleeping." He laughed awkwardly. "They were very convincing and you have to take into consideration the power dynamic before you murder me. They demanded the location and I cracked. I think they're into you. Normal bosses don't act this way."

"Sonofabitch." I glanced up and saw a giant white demon bus speeding down the road in my direction. "They're coming. Thank you for this. Truly, Jagger. Thank you *so* much for selling me out."

"Hey! You scared them, Layla. Go kiss and makeup with them or whatever it is you do. They didn't want the naked girl."

They wanted you. Good luck with being in trouble.” He hung up on me just as the bus stopped next to me on the road.

I put my hands on my hips and tilted my head back to let the morning sun soak into my tired body while I waited for the door to open and the guys to come out and do whatever they felt the need to do. Shout at me, I assumed.

Instead, I found myself engulfed in a tight embrace that took my breath away. Xavier picked me up and, while still hugging me tight, carried me onto the bus. “You scared the shit out of us. Fuck, honey. Don’t ever do that again. You never blow Nick off again. Do you understand?”

Mack pulled me into his arms next and he breathed in the scent of my hair while holding me tight. “You don’t even smell like yourself. I don’t like it. I don’t fucking like any of this.”

Then, I was standing in front of Jones. He didn’t try to hug me. His face was strained as he looked me over and nodded. “We owe you an apology. None of us knew that woman would sneak onto the bus last night. That was bad enough, but her cutting your shirt... I’m fucking sorry, Layla.”

“What’s her name?”

He frowned. “I don’t know. I didn’t think to get it. I don’t know if you sue for-”

“She’s been sneaking on the bus to surprise y’all when you play at this venue for years. Besides what she did to my parents’ shirt, she was really nice. Nervous and excited about

seeing the men who make her scream like no other once a year. She was even worried about me having to listen to her. Or walk out and see her spread all over the kitchen counter, like y'all seem to enjoy doing to all of your women." I looked away and swallowed. "As stupid as this is going to sound, I'm offended for her that you don't even know her name."

Xavier sank onto the couch and rubbed his temples. "Fuck."

"Do you know any of their names? Do you even ask?" I dropped my purse on the couch next to me and sat next to it, fully exhausted.

Mack sat across from me. "Maybe we knew their names at some point, Layla, but it was never more than one night of sex with them."

"Or a repeated date each year." I pulled my hair up in a bun and sighed. "Have any of them ever mattered?"

"No." Jones shrugged. "It sounds harsh, but it's the truth. Not a single woman who crossed paths with us has mattered. Before you. You're different, whether you believe it or not."

"You'll have to forgive me if I don't believe that out of the hundred, if not thousands, of women who y'all have fucked, I'm somehow this magical unicorn that changed the game. There have been far better and far prettier. Naked girl last night was a great example. She was stunning." I rolled my lips inward and then blew out a heavy sigh. "Not a single woman has ever mattered and somehow I'm supposed to put my career on the line on the belief that I'm different."

“We can’t make you believe something if you don’t want to believe it.” Jones crossed his arms over his chest. “You’re not a fucking unicorn, Layla, but you *are* special to us. Maybe to someone else, there are better or prettier, but not to us.”

“He’s right.” Mack held my gaze. “You’re different. But Jones is right about us not being able to make you believe it, too. Our actions sure as hell aren’t doing anything to show you.”

“None of us would touch your career. You’re talented and we’ve been getting the benefits of that talent.” Xavier rubbed his hands down his thighs and then stared down at his palms. “Maybe it’s more than that, though. Maybe you just don’t want us.”

I opened my mouth to argue with him and realized that I couldn’t. It didn’t matter that I wanted them or that the idea of them finding me special made my heart race. I had to stay professional or I risked losing my chance to ever work in the industry again. Mr. Bingham’s threat played over and over again in my head.

Jones grunted. “Perfect.”

“It’s my entire career. If I mess up, I’ll be blacklisted. Mr. Bingham didn’t seem like he was in a joking mood when he made that threat. It’s the career that I’ve wanted since I was five-years-old, watching my parents set up stage lights and shout at drunks to fuck off. I left everything back home to give it a shot in LA.” I stood up and moved towards the hallway.

“What I feel doesn’t matter. I’m sorry I scared y’all last night. I just needed a break.”

Xavier looked like he was going to say something else, but Mack put his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “Let’s take a walk to find food. It’s early enough that not many people will be out.”

“Do you want anything?” Jones looked at me and it sucked to see his face go back to looking annoyed.

I shook my head. “I think I’m going to sleep. Thank you, though.”

He turned to leave and then stopped and turned back to me. “Don’t run away again. You scared the hell out of us and you scared the hell out of your brother. You’re fucking lucky we didn’t wake your grandma up in the middle of the night. I can’t imagine your career going all that well if you get yourself kidnapped and murdered. And when Nick gets back from his suspension, you owe him an apology, too. There’s a lot of people that care about you, Layla. Even if you don’t seem to understand that.”

“Nick got suspended?” My stomach sank through the floor.

“Yeah, Layla, he did. He had one job and he didn’t do it. He’ll be back in two weeks.” Running his hand through his hair, Jones stared at me for a few seconds more and then just shook his head and left.

I sagged against the kitchen counter and just stood there for a few minutes. I was so tangled up inside that all I could think

was that maybe I'd made a mistake, not in accepting the job,
but in sleeping with them in the first place.

24

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Xavier

I stood next to Jones and Mack in a hallway inside an arena in a town I couldn't think of off the top of my head. It was time for a meet and greet. The tour manager we'd had before Layla had loved to book us for those kinds of things, even though he knew I fucking hated them. Without my drums to hide behind, I was miserable in front of people. I hated the camera flashes and the talking. Even the sounds. Everything was too fucking loud. I was already sweating and we hadn't even gone out to face the crowd.

“You're good, X.” Jones squeezed my shoulder. “We'll handle most of the questions, like always. You just sit there and look pretty, okay?”

I appreciated my best friends more than they knew. We'd gone through everything together. From growing up to war, we'd been together for so long that we didn't even have to put words to our feelings anymore. I knew they both knew how I felt about the meet and greets. It was just part of the job, though. I had to do it.

I looked around for Layla but couldn't find her. She'd kept to herself since the morning after she ran away. She'd kept to herself before then, too, but it was even worse after. She barely showed her face unless there was a group of people around us. That's why it would've made sense for her to be around then.

"Give it a rest, X. She's not interested in us. Even if she was here, she wouldn't be." Mack leaned against the wall and groaned. "I'm beginning to think we'll just wake up one morning and she'll have just been a dream."

I frowned. "Are you high?"

He looked at me like I'd lost my mind. "No, I'm not fucking high. I'm sad over a woman for the first time since I was a teenager and it fucking sucks. I've been writing sappy love songs and they all suck because what the fuck do I know about love? I would love to be high instead of sad. Yet, here I am."

Jones snorted. "Wow. We're pathetic."

I heard Billy announce our names and my hands began to shake. "Yep. Pretty fucking pathetic."

The sound of cheers erupted through the arena and I flinched. Walking out towards what felt like hell wasn't natural and my body fought me every step of the way. The set up made everything even worse. The table we were supposed to sit at was on the stage and there was a line of people at the steps leading up to the stage that snaked around the arena for longer than I cared to see. We would be on display the whole time. There was no escaping.

I balanced on the edge of the metal folding chair, listening to it creak under my weight. I wanted to run. The screams filling the room echoed through my brain and twisted into screams from a different time. My leg bounced and I felt like my vision started to blur. The air was too hot, too still. I couldn't get enough of it, yet my lungs felt like they were too full, overflowing my chest until the pressure made me hurt. Everyone was watching, everyone could see me. I couldn't lift my eyes from the table, couldn't make myself look at all the bodies, all the-

“Come with me, big guy.”

Layla. She stood next to me on the stage, her smile strained as she grabbed my arm and tried to physically lift me from the chair. I stood on shaky legs and felt myself sway. She stood right in front of me and put both of her hands on my chest, bracing me.

“Sorry, folks. Just couldn't keep my hands off this one.” Layla smiled at the crowd and then looked up at me. Her voice reached me even as she whispered in the deafening room. “Breathe, Xavier. In and out. Now, let's get you out of here.”

I managed to stumble after her and followed her out of the arena and down the hallway we'd come out of. Her hand was on my arm, pulling me along the whole way. When we were away from the sound of the arena, she turned and shocked me by wrapping her arms around me and holding me. I didn't understand what she was doing in my panicked state but the longer she held me, the easier breathing felt.

“I’m so sorry, Xavier. I just kept the appearance schedule that was already in place. If I’d known, I would never have let you go out there.” She pulled back and ran her hands over my face. “Never again. Okay? Mack and Jones don’t seem to mind the face to face stuff. They can do it, okay? I’ll go through the promotion schedule and fix it. No more.”

I stared down at her, feeling her hands stroking my face and hearing the pain in her voice, and I didn’t understand how the guys thought she didn’t want us. I cupped the side of her neck. “I’m okay. I... Thank you. I’m sorry. Having a panic attack isn’t exactly the rockstar look you were probably hoping for.”

She turned her face into my hand and kissed my palm. “Shut up. You’re the badass drummer of a top rock band. That’s rockstar enough. It’s not anything to be embarrassed by. I hope you know that. If you ever want to talk about it, I’m here. I’m not putting you through that ever again, though. Billy and Mr. Bingham and everyone else can go fuck themselves. I can’t watch you suffer.”

I licked my lips and watched as she kissed my palm again. Then, she shocked the hell out of me by standing tall and pressing her lips to mine. Before I could react, though, she pulled away and backed up a few feet.

“Shit. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that.” She pressed her fingertips to her mouth and glanced at my lips. “I was just...”

I grabbed the back of her head and pulled her mouth to mine. When she arched into me, I was lost. Everything else was forgotten and all that mattered was her. I spun her around and

pinned her to the wall, kissing her like I'd been dying to for weeks. She immediately wrapped her legs around my waist and moaned when I rocked into her.

Her hands were all over me, touching and grabbing my hair, my beard, my shirt. She finally locked her hands in my hair and held on tight while rolling her hips and moaning into my kiss. "Xavier, please, yes."

I rocked my dick into her and growled. My world had narrowed until it was just her. She was the center of everything and I needed to be inside her. Our hold had worked her sexy little pencil skirt up her thighs a good ways and I shoved it up higher. Jerking her panties to the side, I felt her wetness coat my fingers as soon as I grazed her slit. She was ready for me.

"Xavier!" Her eyes focused on mine and she reached between us to fumble with my pants. "Inside me. Now."

I freed my dick from my pants in a matter of seconds and covered her mouth with mine as I thrust deep, filling her completely. Her pussy pulsed around me, so hot and wet that I wanted to cry.

25

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Layla

After not being with Xavier for weeks, the way his dick stretched me was intense. I clung to him, desperate for him like he was my oxygen. He kissed me, taking in my screams of pleasure, and released his need on me. He fucked me against that wall with what felt like every bit of his strength. I clawed at his back as his dick pummeled me against the wall. Faster and harder, the sounds we made faded to animalistic grunts and cries.

When neither of us could focus on kissing, he pressed his hand over my mouth to silence me and swore when I bit his palm. He met my gaze and bared his teeth while driving my ass into the wall with his powerful thrusts.

There was something almost feral about him like that and I lost my mind. I tilted my head to the side, exposing my neck to him. I wanted his teeth on my skin. I wanted to bear his mark after I washed his seed from inside me.

He dropped his mouth to my neck and did just what I wanted. His teeth pinched but it was the way he sucked my

tender skin that made my head spin. I screamed into his hand and started coming instantly. He drove his cock into me faster and then he let out a strangled growl and filled me with his come. He kept thrusting, pushing me through my orgasm and into something that made my legs shake violently and my eyes roll back in my head.

When I could breathe normally again, Xavier eased out of me and knelt down in front of me to watch his come flood out of me from the sheer amount of it. He scooped it back into me, fingering me so more leaked out and then pushed it back inside. Then, he stood up and met my eyes.

“Open your mouth, sweetheart.” When I did, he grunted. “Good girl. Stick that tongue out and lick my fingers clean.”

I did as he said, licking them clean and then sucking them into my mouth to make sure. My heart raced at the filthiness and at his gentle domination. He fingered me again and pushed those fingers directly into my mouth, feeding me our combined come. His gaze was an inferno as he did it once more and then kissed me, licking my lips and stroking his tongue over mine. I whimpered, knowing he was tasting us together just as I had.

Clinging to him, I’d forgotten the world around us and hadn’t even cared that we’d just fucked out in the open. I knew when my orgasm high faded, I’d care, but I didn’t want to go back to reality. I wanted to stay right there with Xavier.

He kissed down my jaw and paused at my ear. “Say what you want, Layla Rose, but you’re mine. You asked for this

mark because you know it. You may have fooled Mack and Jones into believing you, but I know better. You're just as lost in this thing as we are. You feel how right it is when I'm inside you. There has never been anyone and there will never be anyone who fits us like you do. Because you were made for us. From this smart mouth and big brain to your pussy that cries for us and your legs that can't help but open for us. The sooner you accept that, the sooner you'll realize it means you own us, too."

My breathing sped up as I looked up at him. "Xavier..."

He tucked himself away and took his time fixing my panties and pulling my skirt down. He helped me stand when my knees threatened to buckle and then he stepped away and smiled at me like he hadn't just told me he owned me. "Yeah, I know, Layla. This doesn't change anything for you. It changes everything for me, though."

I stared after him as he walked towards the exit, his hips moving with just a bit of extra confidence. He didn't look back at me and then he was gone, leaving me standing in a hallway that was so open and exposed that I wanted to scream. I looked down at myself and swallowed. I was ruffled. There was nothing professional about the way I looked and felt right then. There was nothing I could do, though. I needed to meet with Billy to make sure Xavier wasn't ever put through another promotional event again.

Even if the jerk had just blown my mind and left me reeling, I couldn't forget the sight of him sitting at that table, looking

like he was under attack. It was something I never wanted to see again and I'd make damn sure that Billy understood me when I told him that Xavier was off limits.

Thank god I stopped by the bathroom before I went to be a boss on Billy, though, because I didn't think the massive hickey on my neck would make for a good impression. Swearing, I hurried out of the bathroom and to the exit. Sprinting across the parking lot once I was outside, I saw my temporary bodyguard running after me. Realizing I'd had no idea where he was during my hallway tryst was so mortifying that I nearly tripped. I caught myself last second and managed to get onto the bus without any other mishaps. I marched past Xavier sitting on the couch and growled at him.

"I'm not sure I meant leave a mark the size of California on my neck, Xavier! I have to go meet with Billy and I look like a skanky high schooler." I stomped to my bunk and grabbed my makeup. "It looks like I fought with a fucking deep sea octopus and lost!"

Xavier appeared in the bathroom doorway while I started doing my best to cover up his mark. "I think it looks good. Maybe even a future tattoo idea."

I glared at him through the mirror. "You're a little too pleased with yourself."

He stood behind me and looking at us in the mirror showed me how much bigger than me he truly was. He made me look small and when he grabbed my hips, his hands were the most flattering thing I'd ever put over them. He smiled at me and

pressed a kiss to the back of my head. “I am very pleased with myself. I’m also feeling a little bit like a princess now that I’ve had time to think for a few minutes.”

I grinned, forgetting about my anger. “Excuse me?”

“You rescued me.” He shrugged. “I think that makes me the princess.”

“And I’m what? Prince Charming?”

He laughed. “Fuck no. There’s been nothing charming about you for weeks.”

“Oh, my god. Get away from me.” I tried to stop myself from laughing but I’d missed light and silly Xavier. I just wanted to revel in his smile for a few more minutes.

His phone ringing broke the moment and he stepped out of the bathroom to answer it. “I was just talking to your sister... Oh. Not your sister, then. Your granddaughter.”

I nearly broke my neck whipping my head around. “Did you just say what I think you said?”

“Yes, ma’am. That’s her you’re hearing in the background. I think she disapproves of us chatting.” Xavier listened to whatever Grandma said and then threw his head back and laughed like she was Adam Sandler. He looked back at me and his eyes were bright with mischief. “Your grandma just said that you’ve got a stick up your ass about us for some reason. Says she’s been telling you about her summer romance with the men of The Lanky Johns to try to get you to loosen up.”

“Bad Grandma! No!” I tried to take his phone from him but he just held it over his head and I was helpless. “Grandma, I will call every person in Petal County and tell them you’re a terrible cheat at poker!”

Xavier shook his head at me as Grandma hung up on him. “You just bullied your grandmother. I can’t believe you.”

“Believe it, jerk. No one’s safe when it comes to me being forced to hear about her sex life.”

He smirked. “You’re a lot like your grandma, huh?”

I screamed in shock and horror that he would say that and tugged at his beard. “Men have been neutered for saying much less, drummer boy.”

“You’re thinking a lot about my nuts for a woman who keeps saying she doesn’t want them.” He leaned down and brushed his lips over his mark, leaving me shivering. “Also, I’m hardly a boy. In case you forgot, I’m nearly twice your age.”

“In case you forgot, I’ve seen you drink milk straight from the carton in nothing but your birthday suit. I hardly think you being nearly twice my age means anything.” I gasped when he spun me around and spanked me. “Hey!”

“Just reminding you that I’m your elder, little girl. Now, go do whatever you need to do and be careful.” His spanking turned to caressing. “And don’t cover my mark. I want it known that you’re taken.”

“But I’m not.”

“Baby, my come is leaking down your thighs right now.” When I gasped and leaned down to look, he laughed. “I’m kidding. You’re keeping it all inside like a good girl.”

I closed my eyes and leaned against him. “Why do I like that so much?”

He ran his hands up and down my arms and cradled me against his chest. “Who doesn’t like being praised a little? You deserve it, especially.”

“Thank you.” I sighed and slowly pulled myself away from him. “Okay, I have to go back to being professional. You make me wish I was passionate about any other field, though, Xavier. Mack and Jones, too. Even if Jones does hate me right now. I gave you such mixed signals today and I should be sorry. I just...can’t.”

He smiled and sat back on the couch. “You didn’t give mixed signals, Layla. They were perfectly clear.”

26

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Layla

On my hands and knees on the stage, I had taken over running the cords from a few guys that worked for the arena. Their work was shit and I could do it better myself in less time than it would've taken them to complain and do it slightly better two more times before I just did it myself anyway. I crawled forward and grumbled to myself the whole time. The stagehands that traveled with the band were amazing. They were hard workers who listened and respected me. Working with them was a dream. It was the venue employees that I often wanted to strangle.

I finished the last of the cord and looked back to see my work. Instead I saw the two assholes who didn't know how to run cord standing behind me, pretending to smack my ass while thrusting their hips. I shot up, seconds from laying into them when Xavier stormed up the stage, his face a mask of rage. His eyes were on the two guys and I knew he'd witnessed what they were doing.

By the time my body caught up with my brain, he was already at their throats. All I could do was watch and hope he didn't murder them.

“You think that's fucking funny? A woman is trying to do her job and somehow you think that's a good time to mimic what? Fucking her? Is that what you two pencil-dicked motherfuckers were doing? Mimicking fucking her? I'm going to tell you something that your parents should've told you a long time ago.” Xavier got even closer to their faces. “You keep fucking around and one day you're going to mess with the wrong person. You're going to come across someone that much crazier than you and then you're going to understand what it means to be fucked. Do you understand me? Now, fucking apologize before I kick both of your asses.”

Both men stammered apologies to me, but I didn't need their apologies. Seeing them cowering in shame with their shame coloring their faces was enough for me.

Xavier wasn't done, though. “Now get the fuck out of here. Tell your boss that you've been dismissed for sexual harassment and if I see you hanging around, I'll make you both understand just how sorry you are.”

They hurried off the stage and the rest of the crew went back to work like nothing had happened. I wasn't as used to seeing that side of Xavier, though, so I just stood there, gaping at him.

He was wearing a worn flannel shirt that stretched tight over his shoulders and when he rolled the sleeves up, his

movements were jerky, like his anger still had a hold over him.
“Put me to work, boss.”

I stepped closer to him and put my hand over his wrist.
“Thank you.”

He took a deep breath and blew it out. “I’m doing my best not to go after them. They have no idea how close they just came to me losing my shit.”

I smiled up at him and stroked my thumb over his inner wrist. “Fuck them. They don’t matter. What does matter is that you made the mistake of calling me boss and it’s gone to my head. I’m a tyrant. You can ask anyone. Now, keep breathing so I can get some use out of you. Got it?”

He licked his lips as he stared at mine and nodded. “As long as you don’t forget who’s really in charge.”

I swore at my blushing cheeks and pointed him in the direction of Mark, the man setting up the platform for his drums. “Go, help Mark. I don’t want to see you back here until that platform is built and your pretty little drums are on top.”

He shook his head and his smile was pure sex. “Now you’re just asking for me to bend you over and spank you right here and now. Pretty little drums... The disrespect.”

I swatted him on the ass when he walked by and then hurried away so I didn’t feel his revenge. Setting up the stage was a whole different kind of fun that day.

The show was great that night, as it always was. The guys were on fire and with all the brooding Jones was doing, he

looked even hotter than normal on stage. How that was possible, I didn't know.

After the show, I had to break down the stage right away because we were leaving before the sun came up to drive for twenty-four hours straight. Someone had booked shows halfway across the country, back to back. It was going to be a rough turnaround but I really did love the work.

While the audience filed out and the guys went away to shower and do whatever they were planning, I went up on the stage and started taking up all the cords I'd meticulously laid. I realized I should've waited until the arena was completely empty when a handful of people lingered in front of the stage, watching me. Feeling snarky, I rolled up the end of the card and then held out jazz hands like I'd just done a trick.

“Ta-da!”

One of the guys stepped forward and grinned up at me. “Beautiful magic trick. Got any more?”

I put my hands on my hips. “If I knew how to make people disappear, I'd show you a great one right now.”

His friends laughed and he was even a good sport about it. His grin stretched wider and two dimples appeared. They turned him from nice to gorgeous. He had golden retriever energy and I wondered why I felt nothing.

“I've never been so glad to watch a woman fail. Your unsuccessful career as an illusionist is my lingering chance to ask you if you're from around here.” He nodded at the cords.

“Want some help? I was a stage manager during all four years of college. I can’t do much else useful from that time, but I can roll cords with the best of them.”

I shrugged. “If you have nothing better to do than roll cords, go for it.”

One of the girls from his group looked up at me. “Do you think JAX is going to come back out here?”

I forced a smile. “I don’t know. They don’t normally.”

As if my saying that was a freaking signal for him, Jones walked out onto the stage and frowned at me. It was his go-to those days.

The girl squealed and then slapped her hand over her mouth. “I’m so sorry! I’m just so excited right now!”

Of course, he smiled at her. The dick.

Golden Retriever joined me on the stage and smiled. He seemed to not care that the lead singer of the band he’d just watched perform was on the same stage as him. “You didn’t answer my question.”

I thought back to what he’d asked and laughed. “No. No, I’m not from here. Have I lost my accent? How else would you not know?”

He knelt in front of me to start on a cord and when his eyes moved up my legs and slowly reached mine, he had those dimples on full display again. “No, your accent is right where it should be.”

I heard female giggles and glanced over to see Jones smiling down at the girl who'd been so eager to meet him. The other guys were around him, too, but he seemed extra smiley with the girl. I glared at the side of his head and then went down on my hands and knees to start working.

“What’s your name?” Dimples looked over at me and I realized we were a lot closer than I’d meant to be. “I bet it’s something cute. Some kind of flower, maybe?”

I gasped. “What the hell?”

“I’m great at this.” He studied me and snapped his fingers. “It’s not something plain, like Daisy or Rose. I bet it’s something like... Violet or Iris.”

I grunted. “Wrong and you’ve insulted my name. Way to go.”

He groaned and sat back. “Well, I shit the bed on that one, huh?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Fine. Your turn. Guess my name and feel free to rip into me.”

I tried to ignore the steady sound of giggling from across the stage. “Hmm... I’d guess you were named after a patriarchal figure in your family. Something nice and WASPy. John? Paul?”

He laughed and held up his hands. “Okay, this is a terrible game. I’ll just type it into your phone instead.”

I let out a belly deep laugh at the attempt and reached over to give him a friendly shoulder punch. “Nice try, John or Paul, but Daisy or Rose isn’t accepting punches on her dance card these days.”

He groaned and held the cord out to me. “Then I’m not doing manual labor anymore. I only work for dance card punches.”

Jones’ laughter drew my attention and when I looked over, he was all smiles at the girl. They were alone, somehow they’d lost the other guys from their group. She was beaming up at Jones and he seemed so nice that it made me clench my teeth. He wasn’t nice to me anymore. He never smiled in my direction. Seeing him act that way towards her made me want to dropkick him.

“You okay?”

I tore my gaze from Jones and nodded. “Yeah! Sorry. I just got lost in a thought for a second. Anyway, manual labor. Dance card punches. What kind of dance gets cord rolling?”

John or Paul dropped his cord and jumped to his feet. He grabbed my hand and pulled me up. “I could tell you. Or I could show up.”

He’d just put his hands on my hips when Jones cleared his throat and took my elbow, pulling me away. “Show’s over, kid. Your girlfriend’s waiting on you.”

John or Paul looked back at where his friend was frowning at Jones. “She’s not my girlfriend. And I’m not here for the show

anymore.”

I raised my eyebrows at his boldness and smiled. “My dance card is opening up, John Paul.”

He winked at me. “It’s Lee. Call me when that card is open. I’ll be the first one punching.”

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Layla

I took the card he handed me and watched as he walked away. I still didn't feel anything, but I was impressed. I wanted to find someone great for Lee and watch him blow her mind.

I was still lost in that fantasy when Jones plucked his card out of my hand, shoved it into his pants pocket, and tried to walk away like he hadn't just been a dick. My anger was close to the surface with him after seeing him flirt with Lee's friend so it was easy to rush after him and grab his arm. "Wait a minute, Jones. Give me that card back."

"No."

I tugged on his arm until he turned to face me. "It's mine. Give it back to me."

"What are you going to do with it?" He stepped closer to me. "Slip into your bunk tonight and call up the schoolboy so you two can giggle over the phone together?"

“Maybe I’ll ask him to come over and he’ll bring his friend so you can drool all over her some more. Would you like that?” I pushed past him. “Keep the card. He put his number in my phone, anyway.”

It was a lie but Jones didn’t know that. He followed me backstage and growled. “What the fuck is wrong with you? I wasn’t drooling over anyone. I was being nice to a fan.”

I rolled my eyes. “Nice Jones was being a nice guy to the pretty girl? Is that it?”

He was seething as he stared at me. “Layla, I’m not going to keep telling you that I’m not interested in other women. Not that I understand why you give a shit when you’re flirting with other men right in my face.”

I scoffed. “I wasn’t flirting with John Paul!”

“His name is Lee!”

I stomped my foot harder than I’ve ever stomped it and screamed at him. “I don’t fucking care what his name is, Jones! I wasn’t flirting with him and I have no intention of calling him! Even though I should. I should take that card from you and I should call him up. I should meet him for coffee and eat a fucking muffin with him while I listen to him talk about his dog or cat or pet bird named Polly. I should go on three dates with him before I let him fuck me and then I should be perfectly happy with vanilla sex until he proposes and we get married and stop having sex completely! I should want all of that with John Paul because that would mean I could get you, Mack, and Xavier out of my head and I could

just be normal. Instead, I felt nothing for him and wanted to stab you in the eyeball with a dirty stick for being *so* fucking nice to her. You're nice to every Tom, Dick, and Sally, but you just scowl at me. That's all you do. Scowl, scowl, scowl. Well, I'm sick of it. Stop scowling at me, asshole!"

I stomped off stage and made it a few feet towards the exit when Jones grabbed my arm and tugged me into an open doorway. I barely had the chance to notice we were in a bathroom before he slammed the door shut and locked it.

"Keep yelling at me. Tell me how much you hate me right now, Layla. Keep talking to me about some asshole fucking you. Go on. You have my full attention." He inched closer to me, still scowling.

"You want me to talk about someone else fucking me? I think I could do it. I think I could pretend to come twice a week with a guy like John Paul. If it meant I wasn't being scowled at every second of the day, I could spread my legs for a guy like that." I didn't even know what I was saying anymore. "And you can pick up his friend out there and continue to fuck faceless women every night for the rest of your life. Everyone wins!"

"You sure are jealous for a woman who says she doesn't want me, Layla."

"I'm not jealous."

"Then why are you throwing such a tantrum right now? If you're not jealous, why are you stomping your foot and threatening me with the idea of you pretending to come for

some guy whose name you can't remember?" He stepped closer. "You're a jealous brat right now."

I wanted to break things. He was pushing all my buttons and I hated how right he was. "You're the one who ran John Paul off! That wasn't jealousy?"

"His name is fucking Lee, Layla! And that's the difference between the two of us. I'll admit that I'm fucking jealous. I'm raging on the inside at the idea of him touching you. Seeing his hands on your hips, the same hips I held while I fucked you, made me want to rip his hands off and stuff them down his fucking throat. I'm not the one pretending here. That's all you, baby." He moved even closer so that every time our chests heaved from the anger, they brushed together. "And if I'm scowling at you, Layla, it's because I'm constantly reminding myself that even though we fit together like two fucking puzzle pieces, you don't want me. I'm sorry if that doesn't make me want to smile."

"Fine. You want to hear me say it? I am jealous. I've been jealous since the night I left Vegas and heard women gossiping about getting screwed by you. I was jealous when naked girl proved to me that the position y'all took me in for the first time wasn't unique or special. It was just more of the same. And I've been jealous every time you smile at other women and treat them kindly. And for my final confession? I never said I don't want you. I'm just trying to keep my job and that doesn't seem to matter to you." I clenched my jaw and tried to calm down but it was useless. "And the idea of stuffing two hands down someone's throat is asinine."

“You take multiple feet of cock. I don’t see the difference.”

I shoved past him, done with the conversation. “That’s hilarious, Jones.”

“It’s not hilarious. It’s fucking haunting. It’s in my head constantly and between that and you making googly eyes at the boys who come in here, I’m going to lose my fucking mind.”

“Join the club. The coffee sucks and no one laughs at your jokes.”

“You’re a giant pain in the ass, Layla.”

“Back at you!”

He grabbed my arm and spun me into his chest, slamming his mouth down on mine in a kiss that was full of our anger at each other. I bit his lip and he spanked me, hard. He yanked the clip out of my hair and fisted it and I dug my nails over his shoulders. It was hard and punishing but I wanted all of it. When he ripped his mouth away from mine, his lips were red and swollen from the harshness of it.

I yanked at his shirt and bent down to bite his chest as soon as he finished ripping the shirt over his head. He gripped my hair and tugged my head back before he ripped my nice shirt right down the middle and then completely off me. He pinned my hair to the wall in his fist and lowered his mouth to suck at my nipples until they were just as red and swollen as his lips. I fought to stay quiet, wanting to stubbornly withhold my cries from him, but I had no choice when he yanked my skirt up and

ripped my panties off. My cry of pleasure was raw and full of curses.

He strummed my clit at a breathtaking speed and right before I came, he pulled his hand away and sucked at the skin around my nipples. “Good girls come, Layla. That’s not you.”

I shoved at him, angry and emotional. “If you won’t do it, I will.”

He grabbed my ruined panties from the floor and set my 4H club record to shame when he knotted my wrists in the panties over a part of the bathroom frame. In seconds, he had my hands bound over my head and me at his mercy.

I fought against the bind but quickly realized I wasn’t going anywhere unless he wanted me to. “You asshole!”

He spun me around so my ass was exposed and then I felt his teeth on me. I cried out his name and he growled his approval while working my skirt off completely. I was naked except for my kitten heels and I couldn’t even remember if I’d managed to unlock the bathroom door when I’d tried to leave.

I heard his zipper inch down and whimpered. I needed him. I opened my mouth to tell him as much when his hand landed across my ass. The sting was instant and a beat later came the pulse in my core. I pressed my ass out farther and screamed when he rained several hard slaps down on the bottom curve of my cheeks. The sting was more intense and then the throbbing started. I panted his name over and over, not even sure what I was asking for.

“This is what you need, Layla. Not some nice guy who thinks wild sex is when he pretends to be the pizza guy. I can smell you. You’re dripping all this sweet honey down your thighs because I’m spanking you. You need a bite to your pleasure. Pretty boy will never bite.” Jones sank his teeth into my shoulder to prove his point and laughed when I rubbed my ass against him, trying to find some kind of release. “What do you need, Layla?”

I was close to tears as I rubbed myself against him. “I need to come. Please, Jones!”

He ran his nose up the side of my neck and spun me back around so I was facing him. Running his fingers down to my nipples, he pinched them until I screamed his name and then he sucked them into his mouth, one by one, and sucked me right to the edge of my sanity. But then his fingers were on my clit and I was so close so fast. Just as I was about to crest that pleasure, he pulled his hand away again. “What did I say? Only good girls get to come.”

I pressed my thighs together, trying to get any friction at all, but he stepped between my legs and kept them apart. “Goddammit, Jones! You’re torturing me!”

He slowly finished undressing and nodded. “Now you know what it feels like. Seeing you giggling with another man is torture.”

I stared at his cock and at how hard it was. I wanted it inside me desperately. I bit my lip and whimpered. “*Please.*”

“You think you deserve to come?” He stroked himself and brushed his knuckles over my lower stomach. “Maybe I should just come on you and go.”

I sobbed his name. “I need you! I’m sorry, Jones! I need you! I don’t want anyone else. I don’t want to be away from you. I want you and I miss you. Please, I need you to touch me. I need you to erase the other images in my head. *Please!*”

He swore and pulled me into his arms as much as he could. “There you go, baby. That’s my good girl. I’ll take care of you. There’s no one else, Firecracker. Only you.”

28

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Jones

My chest cracked as I twisted Layla around and thrust into her from behind. I wrapped one arm around her waist and dropped my hand to her clit and with my other hand, I gripped her hair and tugged her head back until her back arched and she pressed her ass out even farther. I could feel her full ass resting completely on me and I growled before letting her feel everything I'd been feeling.

I fucked Layla with all the anger and frustration and jealousy I'd felt for weeks, feeling her ass bounce off my stomach with every thrust, hearing the clap of our skin meeting over and over until it consumed me and I chased that sound. Like a man chasing his accolades, I fucked Layla and growled my pleasure into her ear when our bodies clapped for me.

I no longer teased her clit. I stroked it with purpose, demanding she come for me and then continue coming. When she screamed through her first orgasm turning into a second, I tugged her hair tighter and drank in the sounds she made as

she came a third time and then a fourth. I was a monster, determined to ruin her for anyone else. She was mine. Ours.

“Over my dead body will you marry some vanilla douche and fake your orgasms when you can come like this, baby. No man would ever make it to the altar to even try to do that to you. It’s us. You deserve more than pretending.” I let go of her hair to wrap my arm around her and hold the front of her throat. Her pulse hammered against my palm. “You deserve men who will fight for you. You deserve men who will fuck you the way you need it and then hold you because we fucking care. You belong with us.”

Layla screamed my name as another powerful orgasm rocked her and her come splashed on the ground between my feet. I still wanted more, though. I didn’t slow down. She squirmed and tried to twist her hips to dislodge my fingers from her clit but I was a greedy asshole. I fucked her until tears leaked down her face and she’d come so many times that the floor under us was soaked.

“One more. Just one more for me, baby.” I pressed soft kisses up her neck and turned her face to mine so I could kiss her. I kissed her slow, the way vanilla guy would’ve when he told her he loved her. I worked my hips into her slower, dragging out my pleasure. “Come for me one more time like a good girl.”

She looked at me through sex-drunk eyes and nodded. “For you.”

I pressed my forehead to hers and watched her beautiful face pinch as she drew closer to another orgasm. I stopped fighting the need to come and when I met her gaze again, her blown out pupils nearly covered all of her pretty blues. “You’re ours, baby. The way your body drinks in our come and the way this feels so fucking right? It means something.”

She was breathless as she hovered between the pleasure and the pain of her orgasm. Still, she managed to speak so clearly when she spoke what felt like a promise. “Yours.”

That one word triggered my orgasm and she came with me, trembling in my arms and chanting my name as she cried out. Her body went limp in my arms after that final orgasm and I sank to the floor on top of my jeans with her in my arms, rocking her and taking the panties off her wrists. I stroked her face, wiping away sweat and hair that stuck to it. I held her while she seemed to hover somewhere between consciousnesses. Watching her, I knew that I loved her. I’d never even felt love until Mack’s mom took me in and I’d never known it since, but I knew what I felt when I looked at Layla was love.

I didn’t know how to love someone and it scared me to think that my love would be measured in screaming matches and long fucks that could be too rough. Her body bore the brunt of my love in fingerprint shaped bruises and red wrists. I didn’t know if that was okay. Wasn’t love supposed to be gentle? I didn’t feel gentle things for her, though. I felt tsunamis and hurricanes for her. Could you love someone wrong?

“You’re singing to me?” Layla’s tired voice snapped me back to reality and when I saw the sleepy smile on her face, my chest loosened a bit.

I stroked her hair back and kissed her forehead. “I guess I was.”

She yawned. “I liked it. You could sing to me every night. It’d be better than how I fall asleep now.”

“I’ll sing to you every night, Layla. Every night you want me to.” I drank in the way she looked up at me and knew that I would do what I could to make it work, to be good enough for her. “I was rough on you. I’ll learn to be gentler.”

She had closed her eyes for a moment but one of them popped open. “The hell you will.”

I cupped her face and stroked my thumbs under her eyes to wipe away the black smudges. “I’m not sure I’m supposed to fuck you like that every time, sweetheart. I left marks.”

Huffing, she wiggled farther into my embrace and tucked her arms into my chest. “You told me I deserve to be fucked the way I need it. You promised.”

“I don’t remember promising.”

She sat up slightly and took my hand. Pressing my palm to her throat, she swallowed. “Do you feel my heart racing?”

I nodded.

She moved my hand over her heart and then down past her soft belly to her pussy. With her hand over mine, she pressed

my hand into herself and her eyes fluttered when I growled. “I know you feel how wet I am. You did that to me, Jones. I think I died and went to heaven. I don’t think I want gentle. Maybe sometimes, but I don’t know. I like what you do to me. Obviously.”

I eased two fingers into her, feeling the mess I’d left inside, and leaned forward to rest my forehead against hers. “We were always safe with the women before you. I know after that first night and morning, we talked about being clean and birth control, but the pull between us was so strong, Firecracker. I couldn’t *not* come in you. It’s primal. Feeling you like this, messy with my come, I feel so fucking accomplished. I want a picture of you sitting on the stage at our studio back home, completely naked with your legs spread and my come leaking out. A picture just for me, X, and Mack.”

She stared at me, the wheels turning between her eyes. “Do you have your phone?”

I grunted. “I do. I don’t need you to do that, though, sweetheart. I’m taking enough from you.”

“It’s not just for you.” She took my phone when I found it under a pile of our shirts and then held it up to me. “Password.”

Instead of typing it in myself, I just told her the code. I smiled at the way she perked up as she typed the password in and then sat back and met my eyes. “Don’t get my face.”

“Layla...”

“I want you to have it. I want to know that this is on your phone, that *I’m* on your phone. The idea that you could just pull it up and look at it whenever you want makes me hot, Jones. I trust you.” She gasped when I gripped her hair and took her mouth in a wild kiss.

“Goddammit, baby. Don’t turn away from us again. Trust us to take care of you, not just with this picture.” I slid the phone away from us and gripped her face. “If it’s a trade, I don’t want the fucking picture. I want the real thing. I want you.”

She searched my face and took her sweet time thinking about her answer. “I don’t think I can stay away. I’ve been miserable and all I wanted the whole time was to be with y’all. I don’t want to mess up my career, Jones, but I don’t want to torture myself.”

“No more avoiding us?” My chest thumped happily. “No more flirting with random dickheads in front of me?”

She crawled off my lap and grabbed my phone. “I wasn’t flirting with him. Unlike you and that girl.”

I growled. “I’m not sure you can handle getting fucked again so soon, Layla.”

She hurried back into my lap and shook her head. “No, you’re right. I know my limits. I just have to say one last thing. Okay?”

I grabbed my shirt and spread it out on the floor next to us, fighting a grin. “One last thing, huh?”

“Take my picture first, Jones.”

“No. Say your last thing.”

Her face made me think she might refuse but then she bit her lip and met my eyes with a heart-stopping amount of vulnerability showing in her own. “Seeing you smile at everyone else and not me hurt my feelings. I don’t want to be the reason you stop smiling. I want to be the reason behind a few of those smiles and I always want to be on the receiving end of them. I know that I hurt you, too. I caused those scowls. I just...I don’t want to be outside of your bubble.”

I swallowed as a wave of emotion surprised me and I had to clear my throat before I could speak. “You’re meant to be as far inside that bubble as you can be, Layla. Honestly, I don’t think I smiled so much before you showed up. You make me happy when you’re not pushing me away. So, let’s make a deal. You don’t push me away and I promise I’ll always smile for you.”

“Deal.” She pressed her lips to mine and smiled into the kiss. “Now take my picture.”

She sat on my shirt without needing my instruction and leaned back on one hand. Spreading her legs wide, she reached down and spread her lower lips, showing me everything. “Is there enough of your come? Or do you need to add more?”

The question was asked so innocently, yet when I looked up from her beautiful pussy, her eyes gave her away. The little tease. I settled between her legs on my knees and gripped my dick. Stroking my length in hard, long strokes, I slowly jacked off over Layla’s naked body. I watched her pussy flush and her

nipples pebble before I saw her eyes had taken on that half-lidded lust haze.

“You just stay there and rest, sweetheart.” I flashed her a wicked grin when she shot me a disbelieving look. “I’ve got this.”

She whimpered. “I love your cock, Jones. I don’t want you to waste it not inside me.”

I grabbed my phone and opened the camera. While I desperately wanted a shot of her face as she begged me, I made sure that no one else would be able to recognize who the perfect pussy belonged to. Only Mack, Xavier, and I would. I closed the phone and tossed it aside. “You love my cock, huh?”

She’d absently begun circling her clit with her fingertips. “Yes. So much. I’m not too sore. I want you, Jones.”

I loved the sound of her begging so much. “Your pussy needs a break, Firecracker... Your ass doesn’t.”

Without missing a beat, Layla rolled onto her hands and knees and arched her back to give me her ass. “Promise me we’ll never talk about the time I let you take my ass on a bathroom floor.”

“Fuck no, Firecracker.” I leaned down and spit against her puckered skin, drawing a moan from her at the dirty action. “This shit is what Mack, X, and I are going to talk about when you’ve got your period and need a break or any other time we can’t get our hands on you.”

She let her head drop and gasped when I scooped my come out of her pussy and rubbed it into her ass. Pressing my finger in, I stroked my hand over my back, distracting her from any discomfort.

“Why would you talk about this? Talk about a time we had sex on the bus.” She tossed her hair out of the way as she looked over her shoulder at me. “I’m still a lady!”

I watched her face as I pushed another finger into her ass. I loved the way her nose scrunched with each new stretch. “Of course, you’re a fucking lady. This, though? Layla... I’m seconds from fucking your ass on a dirty bathroom floor and it’s that dirtiness next to how fucking sweet you are that gets us hard. You have the face of an angel, but you want to fuck like the devil, baby. There’s nothing sexier. So, yeah, I’m going to sit down with Mack and Xavier and I’m going to make them painfully jealous when I tell them about this.

“Now rub your clit for me because I can’t wait anymore. Relax your ass like a good girl, and take my dick.” As I sank my dick into her ass, I listened to her grunts and moaned her name. “Good fucking girl, Layla.”

She groaned out my name and proceeded to show me yet again just how perfect she was for us.

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Layla

I nearly fell out of the bathroom in my hurry to step into my skirt. “Shit. Stupid skirt. Come on, Layla. One leg at a time. Just like every other idiot in the world.”

I was disoriented. After Jones and I had exhausted ourselves the night before, I’d panicked and worked through the rest of the night to break down the stage. Jones helped, but we didn’t get finished until the sun was coming up. The driver was already waiting on us when we exited the arena and the moment we set foot on board the bus, we were moving. I’d sat on my bunk to grab my toothbrush and had apparently passed out. Then, I’d proceeded to sleep through most of the day.

I woke up to a text from Xavier letting me know that they’d stopped for dinner and they were inside a roadside diner eating. He’d invited me to join them and I was starving so I desperately wanted to, but in my rush to shower and brush my teeth, I felt like I was moving slower than ever. I wasn’t sure I’d ever moved so slowly. I was sore from my activities with

Jones, but also from working on the stage. I wasn't coordinated in any way at all after the night before.

Halfway into my shirt, with my arms in the air, I heard movement at the front of the bus. I'd left the bathroom to finish dressing so I spun away from whoever was coming inside, just in case it wasn't one of the guys.

"No, ma'am. I would never." Mack's voice calmed my nerves and before I could panic that he'd brought someone onto the bus, I turned and saw he was on the phone. The panic came back when I saw him watching me with a shit-eating grin on his handsome face. "That life is behind us, it seems."

I finished pulling my shirt on and inched closer. I didn't trust that smile.

"You helped raise a wild child, ma'am. I hear she comes by it naturally, though." Mack winked at me and sat down on a couch like he didn't have a care in the world. "Does she talk about us a lot? I wouldn't normally ask such a pitiful question, but she's been ignoring me for weeks. Just call me needy."

My eyes widened and I shook my head. He was *not* talking to Grandma. I closed the distance between us a lot faster and whispered down at him. "Is that my grandma? It'd better not be my grandma, Mack."

"No, ma'am, I wouldn't lie about something like that. My poor feelings are crushed. Rockstars feel things, too, you know?" He laughed at whatever Grandma said back to him. "Thank you. I'd appreciate that. I don't know what's gotten into her."

I held out my hand for his phone, hoping he'd just cooperate and give it to me. Of course, he didn't.

Mack blushed and stammered, shocked by Grandma's response. "I... Well... Wow."

I could only imagine what Grandma had said to embarrass him and everything I imagined left me blushing just as furiously. I leaned forward and desperately tried to take the phone from him, sure that I needed to get it from him if I was ever going to be able to look him in the eyes again. He grabbed my hand and tugged me forward so I fell into his lap. I grunted and then froze with my hands on his chest and my ass over his lap. The feeling of his warmth under me short circuited my brain.

Mack tapped a button on his phone and Grandma's voice filled the room suddenly. "I can't wait to tell Brenda that I made a rockstar blush! She's always bragging about Victor Frank like I should give a damn. It's not all that impressive to make a bag of bones like that blush."

I shook my head and put my hand over my eyes. "Grandma, why are you on the phone with Mack?"

"Oh! Hi, Lala. I wasn't doing anything." She stopped for a minute and cursed with so much flair that it made Mack's eyebrows raise. "If I'd known you were close by, I would've prepared a lie."

Mack laughed and leaned his head back to study me. I looked back at him and bit my lip, my mind a blender of thoughts on how to proceed. I wanted to blurt out my

confession that I'd slept with both Xavier and Jones again. I had Grandma to focus on first, though. "If you *were* doing something, what exactly were you doing?"

"I just like chatting with the young men, Lala. Is that so bad? Honestly?" She sounded annoyed at me. "Brenda's granddaughter is dating a doctor, Layla Rose. A doctor. It's so boring, but it's all Brenda wants to talk about. I'm dying here. All I could say for the last three years was that you were still dating that bitch, Matthew, so now that I have something to say, I need the tea!"

Mack snorted. "She called him a bitch. I love her."

"That's right, you do. What's not to love?"

I winced at her going back to using my full name. Her calling me Lala meant she was happy and lighthearted. Her calling me Layla Rose meant she was ready to tell me off. "Grandma, there is no tea."

"That's not true, you little liar. I talked to Xavier yesterday and he gave me lots of tea. Jones sounded a little giggly this morning, too. You're not playing favorites, are you?" She made a negative noise at me. "You can't do that. You have to love them equally or not love them at all."

I grabbed his phone and took her off the speaker. "Dear god, Grandma! Stop it. Are you trying to embarrass me? This sure as hell feels like prom night all over again."

"I'm trying to get you laid and maybe even married and me a few grandbabies! I love them, Layla Rose Morgan, and if

you're smart, you'll stop showing your ass and show those boys your southern charms. Start with the two up top and then turn around and show 'em your ass, too, actually. I thought I taught you better on how to catch a man?"

Mack's eyes lit up. "Thank you for speaking loud enough for me to hear, Gran."

"She's already got y'all calling her Gran?" I shrugged and resigned myself to a life of shame. "Well, I should just leave now and save myself at least a little bit of my dignity."

"Oh, stop being so dramatic." Grandma laughed happily. "They're great men. Do you know that they answer their phone every time I call? You don't do that. Jagger sure as hell doesn't do that. Xavier even offered to fly me out to join y'all at a show. When's the last time you offered to fly me somewhere? Never."

"Did he offer a commercial flight? I'll fly you out private, Gran. I'll find the guys from that band back in the day and have them waiting for you on board. Don't let Xavier win you over to his side. I'm the favorite, remember?"

Grandma was over the moon with herself. I could practically see the smile on her face through the phone. "You'll be the favorite as soon as you give me a grandbaby."

I slammed my finger on the red button to end the call and tossed his phone on the couch away from us. Mortified and thoroughly convinced Grandma wanted me to die of embarrassment, I rubbed my temples to hide some of the flaming that my cheeks were doing.

Mack rested his arms along the back of the couch and grunted. “That was rude.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me that my Grandma is calling y’all? Is she bothering you? Are you just talking with her?” I cringed at what they could’ve been talking about. “Is she telling you things?”

“What kind of things would she be telling me?” He raised his eyebrow and smirked at me. “Are you keeping secrets from me, honey?”

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Layla

I swallowed. I hadn't considered the things I'd done with the guys to be a secret *from* Mack, but if he felt like that's what it was, my intentions wouldn't keep his feelings from being hurt. "Not on purpose..."

He grunted when I moved so I was straddling him. His arms stayed along the back of the couch, though, and his face stayed passive. "Go on."

"I did something." I rested my hands on his chest and let myself feel the muscles there for a moment before continuing. "I was so sure that I wasn't going to chance losing this job so I stayed away from y'all for so long, but I slept with Xavier again. And Jones."

"Together?" His jaw tightened and he lowered his hands to rest on my thighs. When I shook my head no, that I hadn't slept with Xavier and Jones together at the same time, he relaxed. "Okay. Thanks for telling me."

I gripped his shirt tight in my fists. “I didn’t choose them over you, Mack. It just happened with them. I’d been fighting it for so long and I just cracked.”

“And any cock would’ve gotten the job done, or...”

I leaned closer. “Any of y’all’s cocks would’ve gotten the job done. Because it’s y’all that are driving me insane, not cock.”

“So, what now?”

My stomach flipped. I didn’t really know. “I acted wholly unprofessional. If you’re uncomfortable or disapprove of the things I’ve done, I will resign. I still take my job very seriously, Mack, but I know that I messed up.”

His face transformed into an expression of shock. “Are you kidding me, Layla? Honestly, have you not been paying attention at all? Why the fuck would I want you to resign? You’re the best tour manager we’ve ever had. Our stages have never been more organized *and* you pulled Xavier off of the publicity bullshit when no one else ever would. Whether or not you’re putting out for us, you’re our tour manager. Nothing changes that unless you suddenly forget how to do your job.”

I stared down at his hands on my thighs and moved my hands to rest on top of them. Tracing the shape of his fingers, I took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. “I didn’t mean to do it. I feel like a joke. I made such a big deal out of staying professional and then I just threw all my standards out the window. I’m no better than Matthew.”

“Fuck yeah, you are. First of all, you’re not cheating on anyone to be with us. Second of all, you’re damn good at your job, Layla. You make it look easy.” He turned his hands over so he could hold mine. “Third of all, and most importantly, the chemistry between us can’t be ignored. You tried. You succeeded for much longer than I would’ve liked. This thing between us doesn’t care about your professionalism or our previous fear of commitment. It just wants.”

I looked deep into his eyes. “It’s terrifying.”

He pulled me forward so I was curled into his chest. “Don’t do anything you don’t want to do. Like I said, you have a job here whether you put out, or not. I’d prefer you put out, but who wouldn’t?”

“Of course, I want to put out! Y’all make me crazy.” I turned my head slightly so my nose pressed into his throat. “I feel lost. I know what I’m supposed to do, but that’s not what I want to do.”

“Should I move so this conversation is a little easier for you?”

I sat back and placed my hands over his chest again. “No. I want to be here. I can’t do it, Mack. I can’t stay away. I already proved that with Jones and Xavier. It’s no different with you. I’m tired of missing you from ten feet away.”

“Okay.”

I frowned. “Okay?”

He smirked. “Yeah. Okay. That ball’s still in your court, sweetheart. I don’t want to steer your decision to walk away from these high morals.”

I pouted, not even concerned that I was being a brat. “You’re mad at me.”

He laughed easily and shook his head. “I’m not. Not even a little bit. I just don’t want to push you into making a choice you might regret.”

“I think there’s only one choice I would regret right now.”

“And what choice would that be, sweetheart?”

Biting my lip, I cupped his face in my hands and ran my thumb over his bottom lip. “Not taking a chance on you and the guys.”

His slow grin was breathtaking and the way he nodded at me like he thought I’d answered correctly made my heart race. He ran his hands up my sides and held me closer. “So, you’re going to take a chance on us? No more avoiding us and hiding?”

I nodded. “This can’t change the way I do my job, though. I love what I’m doing now and I don’t want to lose it. It’s really important to me.”

“Baby, we’re not going to touch your job. You’re so fucking good at what you do. None of us are stupid enough to think that taking you away from something you love so much would be okay. Or fun. You’re feisty at times.”

“Okay. Cool.” I sat back and cleared my throat. “So.. Are we dating? This is weird.”

He slid his hands down to my ass and pulled me flush against him. “You’re asking me? I haven’t dated since I was fourteen, Layla. I’m not the best source for information here.”

“Do you want to date me?” I watched his face and searched for any warning signs.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, baby, but you’re really slow on the uptake at times.” He laughed when I slapped his shoulder. “We haven’t made our position clear, yet, huh? I don’t know about dating, but what we want is you at our side. I know that I want to go to sleep with my dick in you and wake up with it in you and spend the day doing my best to get it back in you. I like the other stuff, too.”

I rolled my eyes. “Like when I suck your dick?”

He growled. “Yes, but I also like when you talk to me. Those first days we spent together weren’t just sex. I liked playing cards with you and talking about shit. I like when you smile at me and when I make you laugh.”

Warmth encompassed my being as his words slowly took root in my mind. Pressing my mouth to his, I kissed him slowly, desperate to show him how much his words meant to me. No one had ever said anything like that to me before.

My stomach growled loudly between us and Mack pulled away to look down at it. I crossed my arms over my waist and sighed. “You’re not supposed to acknowledge it.”

“I was going to have my wicked way with you, but I guess there’s time for that later. Come on. There’s a waitress inside that might be trying to seduce Jones and Xavier by now.” He laughed at my frown. “She can’t be a year under eighty, honey. You have nothing to worry about.”

I grunted. “I wasn’t worried.”

“Sure.”

31

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Layla

“Normally we don’t play covers at these big shows, but tonight, there’s just something we have to say to someone.” Jones glanced over at me where I stood off to the side of the stage, waiting for them to get finished so we could go back to the bus as fast as possible. “If you know the words, sing along. Help us close this show in a special way tonight.”

The first few chords brought up a lifetime of memories and just as much emotion. When Jones leaned closer to the mic and sang the opening line, I knew I was a lost cause. They had my heart.

Mack joined at the chorus and their voices harmonizing raised goosebumps all over my body. “Every rose has its thorn. Just like every night has its dawn. Just like every cowboy sings his sad, sad song. Every rose has its thorn.”

I wrapped my arms around myself and held on tight as I let the song wash over me. All it took was closing my eyes to see my mom and dad singing it to me. I felt like I was standing in the sunshine as I watched Mom and Dad dance around me

with giant smiles on their faces. They'd always been so happy that being around them had made life magical.

I opened my eyes and looked at the guys. They'd made life magical, too, in their own way. I'd never felt so full of happiness with anyone else. Even during the weeks of torture when I'd been so determined to stay away from them, I was still happier than I'd been with Matthew. They noticed things about me that Matthew never had. They did things to take care of me, even if it was frustrating at times. They were protective and they'd remembered the song. The song was the thing that pushed me over the edge of whatever hesitation I had left.

Mack winked at me as they finished the song. They closed with their normal goodbye and my heart beat faster and faster as they closed the distance between us. I couldn't contain myself and jumped into Mack's arms when he was close enough. He gripped the back of my head and kissed me hungrily while walking us farther backstage. Locking my arms and legs around him, I ran my hands over his sweat-soaked hair and tugged.

His hands gripped my ass and he growled against my lips before pulling back enough to look at me. "I want that welcome after every show."

"You guys sang the song." I bit my lip and looked up at Jones and Xavier. "I-"

The sound of screaming grew closer and I watched their faces transform from happy to intense and stern as they swung away from me and put themselves between the space where

Mack held me and a swarm of fans. Seeing so many people rushing towards us with excited expressions was terrifying when you weren't expecting it, or used to it. I let out a startled cry and tucked my head into Mack's shoulder.

"Get her out of here!" Jones' shout was barely audible over the crowd of screaming fans, but Mack held me tight and ran.

As soon as the cool night air filled my lungs, I lifted my head and saw that security was closing the back door to the venue, shutting Jones and Xavier inside. Panic struck me and I instantly struggled to get out of Mack's arms. "You can't just leave them in there! They're going to get mauled to death."

He held me tight. "The worst they'll get is smothered by the tits of all those women. Stop fighting, Layla."

I glared down at him. "You think women are taking their tits out right now? Go, get them, Mack!"

He charged across the parking lot, nodding to security as he went. "Jealous?"

I struggled harder. "No, I'm not jealous! I'm just... That's dangerous. Women shouldn't throw their tits at them. I keep a clean stage, but you never know. A cord could've come loose. They could trip and lose a nipple... I just... Dammit, Mack! Why are you so strong?"

He slowed down as he laughed but his grip didn't loosen. "You're nuts. They're fine."

"Do they like getting tits shoved in their faces? Do you? Is that just something that happens?" I stopped fighting because I

realized we were at the bus and I wasn't getting away. "How did those women even get past security?"

"Baby, you were raised on the tour circuit. You know tits are just a part of it. I can't imagine your parents were able to hide everything from you and Jagger." Mack went straight to the bedroom at the back of the bus and dropped me on the bed. "Security sometimes get distracted by tits, too. Most of the security slips that happen are because a security guard gets flashed. Or more, depending on the determination of the crowd."

Sprawled out across the mattress, I watched as he reached back and ripped his shirt over his head. I was almost lost in the shine on his muscles and the way they flexed when he unbuttoned his pants. "I... I saw things, I guess, but I wasn't involved with those rockstars. It's different."

He left his pants open and leaned forward to drag mine over my ass and down my legs. "Involved? Is that what you're calling this?"

I felt my cheeks flush. "I don't know."

He grabbed the hem of my shirt and pulled it off, leaving me in just my panties and bra. I'd lost my shoes somewhere between the door and the bed. He frowned at my bra before taking it off with the ease of a man who'd done it way too many times. Then, he stepped back and just stared down at me. "We passed involved a long time ago, baby."

I pressed my legs together, refusing to give him what he wanted most right then. "You didn't answer my question. Do

they like it? Do *you* like it? The tits, I mean.”

His eyes were wild as they touched every inch of my body. “We’re men, baby. We like tits. Before you get all cranky with me, let me finish.”

I sat up. “Please. Go on and tell me about how you like all the tits you see.”

He knelt on the bed at my feet and groaned. “I know you think you’re doing something right now, but let me tell you a secret. Seeing you get jealous and bratty over us is such a fucking turn on. All I can think about is ripping these ridiculous panties off and fucking you with my mouth until you come all over my face.”

I pressed my foot against his chest to stop him from coming closer. “You were saying something about liking tits?”

He pressed his mouth to my ankle. “Tits are great. Yours are the only ones I want to see or touch, though. I know it’s the same for Jones and Xavier, too. You’re in deep, Layla. All of your thorns are buried so fucking deep that all we can do is get used to them.”

My breath caught. “I think you just called me a pain, but that was really sweet.”

He laughed while moving my foot and settling between my thighs, his hips spreading my legs wide. “Some people love a little pain.”

The sound of the door slamming open and shutting preceded Jones and Xavier loudly complaining about getting trampled.

Mack smiled as he met my gaze. “See? Nothing can help us.
We’re yours, baby.”

32

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Xavier

Sitting in my chair outside, I watched as Layla laughed happily while listening to something her brother said over the phone. Her eyes lit up and she doubled over, so full of life that just looking at her made me feel more alive. I rubbed my thumb over the top of my beer and shook my head. I was addicted to the woman. I wasn't complaining, though. Since she'd come around to the idea of being with us, I'd never been happier. None of us had.

"This was a good idea." Jones settled in his chair next to me and tapped his beer against mine. "I'm getting too old to tour this much."

Mack scoffed. "Fuck you. If you're too old, I'm too old, and I don't remember getting too old."

Jones nodded at me. "You?"

"I've been too old. I'm ready to retire the tour bus and settle somewhere. Been ready." I looked back at Layla. "That's a conundrum now, though. No tour means no tour manager."

“I guess I could always tour for a few more decades.” Jones grinned. “I like listening to her talk to Jagger or Gran. Her accent gets thicker.”

She looked over at us and I watched her cheeks go red before she spun away. Her short skirt twirled around her thighs when she moved and I’d been holding my breath to catch a glimpse of her ass during her entire conversation.

“Look who’s back.” Mack grunted. “I’m trying to remember that it wasn’t his fault that she snuck away from him.”

I tore my gaze away from Layla to see Nick getting out of one of our security’s SUVs. Taking a deep breath, I reminded myself of the same thing. I hadn’t been sure we should bring Nick back at all. His two week suspension had led to his firm temporarily assigning him to another location but Layla had asked about him enough that we’d given in. He was a nice guy, sure, but something terrible could’ve happened to Layla because he’d just trusted her to stay inside the bus.

“She’ll be happy he’s back.” Jones didn’t sound like he was happy that she’d be happy. “One wrong move and he’ll lose this job and any other job in the field.”

“Fucking hell.” Mack stood up as we watched Layla spot Nick and take off running towards him. She stopped right in front of him and said something before throwing her arms around him and hugging him. “Nope. Not happening.”

I had a death grip on my chair, chanting to myself to stay put. I’d never felt possessive over a woman before but

something about Layla made me feel like a fucking caveman. I knew I couldn't let that shit out, though.

Mack stalked across the park and Jones handed me a new beer while shaking his head. "He's going to make a fool of himself. Do I want to rip Nick's arms off and toss them to a bear? Sure. Will I show that shit? No fucking way. I don't want Layla seeing how insane I am over her."

We both watched as Nick saw Mack and took a step back. Layla turned to Mack and put her hands on her hips. I couldn't hear what she was saying, but it looked like Mack was getting an earful. Then, Mack turned around and walked back over to sit back down next to us.

Jones cleared his throat. "Did that go how you thought it would?"

Mack grabbed a beer. "I didn't even get a chance to say anything but she already knew. She called me a Neanderthal and told me that if I interrupted her apology to Nick, I could forget what she promised me earlier."

I raised my brows. "What'd she promise you earlier?"

"She knows I'm still a little sore about you two sneaking around with her before I was involved again." He gave us both a dirty look. "So she promised me that tonight she would make it up to me."

Jones glanced at me and then up at Mack. "How was she going to do that?"

“She wants me to fuck her in front of you two.” He saw our expressions shift to confusion. We always fucked her in front of each other. That was kind of our thing. “You wouldn’t be able to touch her.”

I glared at him and then over at her. “That’s fucking mean. It’s not my fault you were being slow about shit.”

“Yeah, I don’t know why I’m getting punished because you came in third.” Jones crossed his arms over his chest and then seemed to realize that he was pouting. “Shit.”

Mack grinned like an idiot at us. “I love this moment in time, right now. You two are both throwing tantrums like toddlers over a woman. I never thought this day would come.”

Layla walked up next to us with Nick at her side. She looked at each of us and put her hands back on her hips. “I don’t even want to know what you’re pouting about, do I?”

I tugged her onto my lap and wrapped my arm around her waist so she was snug against my chest. “We just heard that you’re planning on being very mean to us tonight.”

She swatted at my arm but didn’t try to move off me. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I came over here so we could have a little talk about you three being nice to Nick. What happened wasn’t his fault. I snuck out. I ran away. Nick thought I was inside for the night, like every other night. He’s good at his job and we’re all going to move past this. Especially since I invited Hilary, Nick’s wife, to join us for a barbeque tonight.”

Nick looked surprised. “What? When?”

Layla stroked her hand over the spot she'd swatted on my arm like she was worried she'd hurt me. “When I heard you were coming back today. We have the day off and the land here to ourselves. I've been experiencing some jealousy lately and I want to make sure Hilary doesn't feel the same. Plus, I feel really bad about you being punished for something I did. You're not starting back for another couple of days, because someone made a call and did some sweet talking. I flew Hilary out so you can enjoy a couple of days with your wife before you get back to work.”

Nick's face hung open in surprise. “You didn't have to do any of that, Layla. I messed-”

“I'm not listening to that. You didn't mess up. I did.” She kicked her legs up and snuggled even closer to me. “I'm not letting Hilary sleep on that bus with everyone, either. I got you guys rooms for the next two nights. Here, and in New York. There's a rental car being dropped off soon, too. After that, we'll be closer to even after I got you in trouble.”

As I watched Nick struggle to contain his emotions, I found myself having to fight my own. Layla hadn't told us she was doing any of those things for Nick and his wife. She'd just done them and it was clear that she didn't think it was that big of a deal. Her heart was so big and ready to give love that it made my own chest ache. It also occurred to me that I could empathize with Nick after being with Layla. He was away from his wife for long chunks of time and he was a stronger

man than I was because I couldn't imagine not seeing Layla for longer than a day. If that. I'd never felt that way before. It never would've occurred to me before Layla that Nick being away from his wife would be hard. I wasn't sure I liked what that said about me.

I held Layla tight as Nick thanked her. She'd changed us so much in so little time. She had no clue.

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Layla

I sat on Jones' lap and took a giant bite of the burger he held up for me. Moaning in delight as the taste of it filled my mouth, I leaned back and planted a messy kiss on his cheek. "You make a mean burger, Jones. If I hadn't already thrown my professionalism out the window, this burger would've done it. I would've slept with you in a second for this burger."

He wiped his cheek while laughing. "I somehow feel complimented and cheap, all at the same time."

Rolling my eyes, I wiggled happily. The food was delicious, the company was even better, and I'd hit it off with Hilary before Nick stole her away. It was an amazing night. The only thing that would've made it better would've been Grandma and Jagger being there. I missed them but we were getting closer to our Nashville stop of the tour.

"You're close to getting bent over this table and fucked, honey. If you keep wiggling, it's going to happen." Jones fed me another bite of burger and then put it down so he could take a long pull of his beer. "It'd be a real inconvenience

because then I'd have to murder all the other men here for seeing you like that.”

“I'd better stop wiggling then. Especially considering you don't get to touch me tonight.” I felt him harden under my ass and bit my lip hard to keep from moaning.

“That's not a real thing. You're not going to do that to us.” He hesitated. “Right?”

I met Mack's gaze from across the picnic table and saw him abandon his conversation with one of the stagehands to pay closer attention to me. “Not only am I going to do it, I'm going to love every second of it.”

Jones slid his hand under my skirt and moved his fingers under the band of my panties and into my wetness in one smooth motion. “Then I'd better take advantage while I can.”

Mack's jaw hardened as he stared at the table like he could see Jones thrusting his fingers into me through it. “I'll let this slide since it's going to be fun to watch.”

I frantically looked around to make sure no one was watching us and my eyes landed on a vehicle pulling into the lot next to the tour bus. I gasped when Jones' thumb circled my clit and then scrambled to get off his lap when I saw who was climbing out of that car. My entire body flooded with horror and I ended up hanging off the table, nearly landing on my ass. Jones catching me was the only thing that stopped it from happening.

“What the hell are you doing, Firecracker?” He tugged me back up on the bench and licked his fingers clean. “I’m not finished with you.”

For the first time since meeting the guys, my body didn’t immediately respond. It was too busy being cold-cocked by seeing Matthew. My stomach cramped with the need to throw up, that delicious burger making its way back up.

I never thought I’d be able to avoid seeing Matthew forever, but I wasn’t prepared to see him while I was getting fingered in public by Jones. I cleared my throat and stood up. I didn’t know why Matthew was there, but I didn’t want him anywhere near the guys. Him just being as close as he was felt like ruination. “I’ll be right back.”

The farther I got from the guys, the more the shock wore off and in its place was anger. I didn’t know why he was there but I wanted him gone. I was stomping by the time I was halfway to him and when he looked up at me and smiled like nothing was wrong, I had to stop because the urge to throat punch him was severe.

He closed the gap between us and moved to hug me, but I shifted away from him so he couldn’t. He laughed like we were the best of friends. “Oh, don’t be like that, babe.”

“What the hell are you doing here?” I crossed my arms and glared at him. “And don’t call me babe.”

He waved me off. “We’re going to be seeing a lot of each other. I wanted to come see you and check in before I get settled in for work.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Bingham agreed with you about The Homewreckers. They need a new influx of fans. I managed to talk him into letting The Homewreckers open for JAX. He’s excited about the direction.” He glanced over my shoulder and I saw his eyes tighten. “God, they all look like a bunch of cavemen.”

I didn’t need to look back to know he was talking about the guys. They *were* cavemen, but they were *my* cavemen. Then his first words sank in. The Homewreckers were coming on tour with us. Miriam Dark and Matthew were coming on tour with us. My brain struggled to figure a way out of the situation as panic set in.

“You’re excited, huh? I figured you’d miss me. I was great compared to tour life, huh?” He laughed and then stood up straighter. He didn’t get a chance to say whatever he was going to say next, though.

Xavier appeared at my side and had an expression of chaos on his face. “What the fuck do you want?”

Matthew took a step back but kept his smile in place, despite it appearing strained. “Xavier Leeds. Nice to see you again. It’s Matthew O’Brian.”

“I don’t recall anyone by that name. Must not have been a memorable meeting.” Xavier rested his hand on my lower back and stared Matthew down. “You didn’t answer my question, though.”

Big hands landed on my shoulders from behind and I breathed in Jones' scent before I felt Mack at my other side. They each glared down at Matthew, whose smile had faded completely. I cocked my head to the side and a slow smile stretched my lips. Having backup was everything, even if I didn't need it.

"Mr. Bingham and I decided that The Homewreckers should join the tour as your opening act. He's very excited about the idea." Matthew looked back at me. "He also thought it'd be nice if I could do a little more hands-on training with Layla."

My back stiffened. "Excuse me? Will you be learning from me? If not, I find that idea utter bullshit. I haven't been doing this for as long as you Matthew, but just look at the state of the tour since I took over. I would be more than willing to accept guidance from someone with more knowledge than me, but I don't see that person in front of me."

His eye twitched. "I can't speak on what Mr. Bingham was thinking. Maybe he hasn't been completely happy with part of your work. Not that he said anything to me, of course."

"Get fucked, dickhead. Layla is the best there is right now. She doesn't need you and we don't need The Homewreckers." Mack gripped my elbow. "Go on back to wherever you came from."

"That isn't going to be possible." Matthew took a step back when Jones growled. "Look, we're all adults here. Let's just act like it. We don't need to work that closely together. You'll

be doing the stage work for The Homewreckers as well, Layla.”

“The fuck I will. Are you not here, acting as their tour manager?”

“No, Layla. I’m their *real* manager.” He winked at me. “You’re looking good, babe. Miriam and the band will be flying into New York for the next show. We’ll meet then and figure out how to work out their stage.”

Mack stepped forward. “She’s not your babe, asshole.”

Matthew held up his hands and plastered a good guy smile on. “Whoa, pal. I didn’t mean anything by it. Layla and I were together for several years, though. You can’t just turn all that off right away. I’m sure she understands.”

I snorted. “I understand that you have no reason to be here. You can do your job from anywhere. You’ll just be in the way here. Go home and find another assistant to do your job for you, Matthew. I don’t want you anywhere near me.”

He stepped closer until all three guys moved in front of me, creating an immovable barrier. Xavier’s hands balled into fists and I knew I needed to keep him from smashing Matthew’s face in.

“O-okay. This was fun. How about you get the hell out of here, though? I’ll work The Homewreckers in. Thanks for stopping by.” I gripped the back of Xavier’s shirt and tugged lightly. “Come on, guys. We’ve got burgers to eat.”

“Stay away from Layla.” Xavier spit out the words before letting me tug him away. He looked down at me as I glanced back to make sure Mack and Jones were following us. “That fucker has a lot of nerve.”

I stopped walking and rubbed my temples. “He’s a piece of shit. One I don’t particularly want to work with. It looks like we’re all just going to be one big happy family, though.”

“We can call Bingham and throw our weight around again. Get The Homewreckers *and* O’Brian away from us.” He cupped my face and waited until I looked up at him to continue. “We won’t let him hurt you again. No one will hurt you while we’re around.”

I hugged him and pressed my face into his chest. “Him being around is going to change things. I’ve been enjoying being with y’all in the open. With him around, though, we won’t be able to. He would run straight back to Mr. Bingham and insinuate that sex is the only reason y’all wanted me and the only reason y’all kept me around. I’d never get another job.”

“Like I said, honey, we’ll call Bingham.”

I shook my head. “No. You can’t chance Bingham losing his mind and cutting your contract. It’ll be okay. It won’t be that big of a deal.”

Mack and Jones walked up and both swore when they saw my face. Jones ran his hands through his hair and sighed. “Fuck.”

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Jones

“Well, look what the cat dragged in.” Miriam Dark stood up from her stool at the bar and smiled coyly up at me. “You’re a sight for sore eyes.”

I saw the way Layla glanced over at me, like she was judging me for knowing Miriam. Cringing, I leaned down and tried to lightly hug the woman, but she clung to me like a squid and the next thing I knew, she had her legs around my waist. I leaned away from her face and gently pried her off, but I knew the damage was already done. The tips of Layla’s ears were red and I could feel her brain spinning.

“Good to see you, too, Miriam.” I stepped away from her and crossed my arms over my chest to put a stop to whatever else she planned on doing. She had already moved on to Mack, though.

“Mack Stone! God, you get hotter each and every time I see you. Ginger is going to cream herself when she sees you.” Rubbing against him in what might’ve been a hug, she

moaned. “God, I was always so jealous that you fucked Ging over me. Maybe we’ll fix that.”

Shaking his head, Mack stepped back. “Nope. I’m busy.”

She pouted but once again, she was quick to move on. Except when she stood in front of Xavier, he crossed his arms over his chest and frowned at her. She reached out to touch him anyway and he grunted.

“No.”

Miriam rolled her eyes and looked him up and down. “No real loss there. I prefer my men a little more *man* and a little less *beast*.”

I saw the shuttered look click into place over X’s face and growled. No one fucked with Xavier that way. Before I could stand up for him, Layla stepped forward.

“Excuse you? Last I saw, you prefer your men a little more... Well, shit. There’s nothing *more* about Matthew, is there? Turning into an insulting bitch because a man doesn’t want you throwing everything in his face is beneath even you, Miriam. Insult Xavier again and I’ll make sure you never have a working mic during your shows.” Layla scowled at her. “Or lighting that’s fully screwed in.”

Xavier opened back up as he smiled down at Layla and gripped the back of her neck. “You’re fighting for me?”

“Of course, I am.” Layla blew out a rough breath and stepped away from his grip. She was trying to appear as

professional as possible, but she'd already called someone a bitch, so I wasn't sure how it was going.

“I guess I know which one you're fucking.” Miriam shrugged the interaction off and looked towards me again. “So, Jones. Are you going to be a square like your buddies or are you going to go out with me? We had some fun in Austin once, didn't we?”

I shook my head. “I don't think so.”

“We totally did! Oh, man. We were at the music festival and it was the hottest part of the year. We both got messed up and missed our shows. We rocked that tent, though.” She licked her lips. “I've never loved anything quite like cocaine and a big dick. Too bad I'm clean now.”

The fucked-up part was that I didn't know if she was full of shit, or not. In our earlier years, the drugs and sex part of rock and roll had really taken over. It'd been an easy way to forget a lot of shit we didn't want to remember. Over the years, I'd had too many situations like the one I was standing in then. If I'd ever fucked Miriam, I didn't remember.

Matthew walked into the bar right then and he smiled when he read the tension in the room. I had no doubt that the little fucker knew what he was doing. Having Miriam around was the weapon he'd chosen to hurt us. “Alright. Sorry to keep you guys waiting. How is everyone? Getting reacquainted? I heard all about how Miriam knows you three and I've got to say, you guys are wild.”

Layla stepped forward and showed him her phone screen. “This is the stage setup they’ve had, but I was thinking-”

“Cute.” Miriam rolled her eyes and circled me. “Do you still hit those party tents at the festivals?”

Matthew shook his head. “You’re doing too much. Leave the setup like it was. It works. Just do your job, Layla. Nothing more.”

“You’re not my boss, Matthew. I was asking as a curtesy, but I think their setup is stale and boring and if you want to create new energy on stage, it has to change. Unless you brought your own tour manager along, I’ll be building the stage I want.” Layla shoved her phone back into her purse and took a deep breath. “They have forty-five minutes and not a minute more. I’ll drag them off the stage myself if I have to. I’ll switch over the setup in fifteen minutes and then the guys go on.”

“Forty-five minutes? Are you fucking kidding?” Matthew snorted and shook his head. “No. No way. They don’t play less than an hour and fifteen.”

“No one is coming to see them. People bought tickets to see JAX. Not an hour and fifteen of The Homewreckers and JAX. Take the forty-five or fuck off.” Layla tossed her hair over her shoulder and leveled a glare at Miriam. “You show up on time, you play on time, you get the fuck off my stage on time. Am I clear?”

Miriam shifted closer to Layla and grinned. “I like this new version. It’s so much better than the mousy little thing crying

over seeing her boyfriend fucking someone else.”

Layla smiled back and the temperature in the room dropped ten degrees. “If you saw a tear, it was for you, Miriam. I can’t imagine you’re very happy if Matthew is the man you’re aiming for. Thanks, though.”

Matthew frowned. “It didn’t take you long to give up that professional facade, did it?”

“Watch how you’re speaking to her.” Xavier stepped forward, ready and willing to knock Matthew’s teeth out. It was wild to think that he was usually the calm one out of the three of us.

“You’re going to be one of those girls who loves the drama, aren’t you?” Miriam popped a bubble with her gum and rolled her eyes. “You don’t need to stress so much. I don’t want to steal your boyfriends. I just want to fuck them.”

Layla turned around and walked away a few feet. When she turned back around, her face was set and any emotion seemed to be gone. “Back to business. I’ll be working tonight and tomorrow to make sure the stage is ready. I’d like to do a run through of the show with The Homewreckers tonight, if that’s possible. I’ve never seen y’all perform and I want to make sure I get everything right to highlight what needs to be highlighted.”

“I’m busy tonight.”

I growled. “It would take one phone call to end your career, Miriam. A rumor about being kicked off the tour would spread

quickly and who knows what would get spread around. I suggest you work with Layla.”

If I was expecting a grateful look from Layla, I was going to have to keep waiting for it. She didn't even glance at me before she rushed on. “Be on stage at seven. As for everything else, I think that's it. I need to get to work.”

I watched as she rushed out of the bar, leaving us all to chase after her. I wasn't looking forward to the conversation we were going to have to have when we caught up with her. As it turned out, however, catching up to her was a lot harder than I could've imagined.

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Layla

I t'd been five days since the she-devil had shown up. Five days since I'd had to watch her rub herself all over the guys and brag about fucking Jones in a tent. Five days since I'd stopped and talked to the guys about how I was feeling. It wasn't good, but I assumed they knew that.

We'd hit a different city every day and I spent my days building sets and getting them perfect for two different bands and then I spent my nights taking the sets down before I crawled onto the bus and slept wherever I landed first. We'd barely talked and we'd barely touched. The jealous part of me wondered if they had better options around since The Homewreckers had shown up. The women in the band were all stunning, all five of them. They weren't all horrible like Miriam, either. It was easy to imagine them with the guys, making perfect little rockstar babies.

My mood had taken a sharp dive into a disaster area. Everything had been going so well before Matthew showed up with Miriam and ruined it. Even Jagger sounded different on

the phone when I did have the time to talk to him. The whole world felt a little greyer and I was pissed about it.

I'd never imagined my job feeling so...draining. It hadn't felt that way when I was just working with JAX. Being around Matthew and Miriam so often just left me exhausted, though. I didn't feel excited to get up and work. I knew that the day would just be another day of pretending like the guys and I weren't together so my professionalism wouldn't be called into question. Pretending like I wasn't with them meant I was free for the woman of *The Homewreckers* to talk about JAX when I was just trying to do my job. I'd been forced to hear so many things that I'd never wanted to hear about the guys. Rumors about their dicks and their sexual history went right under my skin because the amount of life they'd lived before me made me feel inconsequential.

We didn't have another break for four more days, but I was coming apart at the seams already. I wasn't sure I'd make it four more days. When I saw Matthew coming my way, I wasn't sure I'd make it another half a day.

He sat next to me on the floor and started coiling the cords with me. He never helped me so I was automatically suspicious. As if sensing my mood, he smiled. "I come in peace. Promise."

I grunted. It was late and I was too tired to do much more.

"You seem tired, Layla." He cleared his throat and when he looked back at me, he looked worried. "Part of the reason I didn't want you in this job was because of how much I

worried about you, Layla. People hear that country accent and see your sweet face and they just take everything from you. I did the same thing, I realize now. You're so giving and kind that you don't question people when you should. Like me. You should've told me to go fuck myself three years ago. I'm sorry I wasn't good enough for you."

I squinted at him. "Are you drunk?"

He laughed. "I'm buzzed. I wish I was drunk. Maybe it'd make this next part easier."

I leaned away from him automatically. "What are you talking about?"

"At the bar with everyone... I saw Jones go into the bathroom with Miriam." He sniffed. "I shouldn't cry to you about this, Layla, but I thought she cared about me. She talks a lot to make herself sound wild, but she's not like that. At least, I thought she wasn't. She said she was loyal to me, but she wasn't."

My chest tightened. "Maybe you didn't see what you thought you saw."

He let out a bitter laugh. "No? Look at this and tell me what you think."

I closed my eyes and turned my head. I didn't want to see whatever he was going to show me. I didn't want him to be there, talking to me. I wanted it to be the guys. Instead, they were at a bar and I was listening to my ex cry about the woman he cheated on me with. I tried to remind myself that

they'd offered to stay and help me, but the offer sounded hollow in my head.

“Look at it, Layla. You need to see who he is.” Matthew gripped my chin and the feeling of his skin on mine made me want to scream. “Look.”

I glared at him, begging my brain to not look down at the picture he was trying to show me on his phone. I didn't want to see. I wanted to go back to a time before Matthew and Miriam showed up. The morbid part of my brain that stared too long at car wrecks won out and my eyes flicked down to the picture. There it was. In full color. Jones holding Miriam's wrist and pulling her into the bathroom after him.

My chest cracked but I refused to cry. I swallowed the ball of emotion in my throat and forced my shoulders back. I was stronger than that. Making myself be objective, I looked at the picture again and studied the two of them. Miriam looked dainty next to Jones and it made him look even larger. I could only see their side profiles, but they looked good together. I knew the media would eat them up. Their couple name would be carved in stone before the ink on the tabloids was dry. Joriam? Mones?

Matthew heard my snort of laughter and pulled his phone away. “What's so funny? I know you've been sleeping with him, Layla. He's cheating on you, just like she's cheating on me.”

I leaned back against the wall behind me and smiled. “I was thinking about their couple name. Mones. It's a little on the

nose, but they're rockstars. They can get away with it."

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

I turned my head to look at him and sighed. Matthew and I were cut from similar cloth. Not the personality type, but the average person type. We weren't rockstars. We were average people. Nice people in nice clothes, driving nice cars with nice kids in the back. "Maybe it's not them."

"It was them, Layla! I watched it with my own two eyes."

"No. I mean... Maybe they're not the problem. Maybe people like them are just sucked towards other people like them. The beautiful people gravity field, or something. Maybe we're the problem for trying to hold onto people too big for us." I let my head rest on the wall and looked up at the ceiling. "Some nights I just want to go home and see the stars again. In the sky, instead of on a stage, far enough away that they don't hurt."

Matthew leaned against the wall next to me and put his hand over mine on the floor between our legs. We were just two idiots thinking we could tame the stars. He was still an asshole, but knowing he could hurt over the same things as me made him feel more human. In my heartache, I must've been delirious because I even found myself thinking that maybe we could be friends after everything settled down.

"You're one of the beautiful people, Layla. I'm sorry I made you think otherwise when I hurt you with Miriam." Before I could inform him that he hadn't made me think anything, he was grabbing my face and leaning in to kiss me.

I panicked and swung my arms to get him away from me. The back of my wrist connected painfully hard with his face and we both gasped in pain at the same time. My wrist throbbed but I ignored it as I shoved him away from me and climbed to my feet. “What the fuck, Matthew?”

He held his nose and swore. He no longer sounded like he was heartbroken over Miriam. “Jesus, Layla! I think you broke my fucking nose!”

“Was this all just some ploy to fuck with me?” I hated the way I sounded hopeful. It was so easy to hear how much I didn’t want it to be true that Jones had taken Miriam into that bathroom.

Of course, Matthew saw blood in the water. “No, you bitch! Your boyfriend is balls deep in Miriam Dark right now. I just figured we could have some fun while they did. I can’t believe you hit me!”

I let my anger get the best of me and I hit him with the end of the cord I was holding. “Don’t call me bitch, you dumb shit! I wouldn’t want to have sex with you again if every man I ever loved slept with Miriam Dark. You’re lucky I don’t have my brother come here and beat your ass. If you think I hit hard, you’d cry just looking at his fist. Don’t ever touch me again! Don’t ever come near me again!”

He ran away from me as I kept trying to hit him with the cord. When he ran past Nick and didn’t slow down, I stopped and leaned against the wall next to Nick.

Nick, to his credit, didn't say a word about Matthew or my chasing Matthew with a cord while screaming like a mad woman. "Almost ready to go?"

I laughed but it sounded pathetic. "Call in whoever covers the shift after yours or get comfortable. It's going to be a long night here."

"How about I help you and we talk about things?"

Running my hands through my hair, I shook my head. I didn't want to talk. I wanted to work and pour myself into something other than thinking about Jones and Miriam fucking in a bathroom, the exact same way he'd fucked me. Just as I was wondering if he'd tied her wrists up, too, my phone rang and I sighed.

I walked back towards the stage to answer the call. "Hello?"

"Am I speaking to Layla Morgan? This is Officer DJ Milton. I think I have something that belongs with you. A few somethings, actually."

"What happened?" I rushed back towards Nick, my body shaking.

"No one's hurt or anything, ma'am. There was a noise complaint at a local bar and your boys here got a little mouthy. One of them had cocaine on him. I brought them down to the station, but I'm not going to book them. They've been nicer since the cuffs came off." He sounded like he was having a good time, not understanding that my entire body was on fire

with panic. “Come on down and pick them up and we’ll forget about this.”

“O-of course. S-sure.” I stood next to Nick, trying to force myself to stay in the present. “B-be right t-there.”

Nick immediately gripped my upper arms and lightly shook me. “What’s happening, Layla?”

“Um... The guys...” I took a gasping breath and blinked up at the ceiling. “Sorry. The... The guys are in jail. We need to pick them up.”

“Fuck. Are you okay? I’ve never seen you so pale.”

I wasn’t okay. The last time I’d answered a phone call like that one from a cop, a rookie cop had somehow mistaken my ten-year-old voice for an adult and he’d informed me that my parents were dead. My brain kept trying to slip back to that place but I knew I couldn’t let it. I rubbed at my eyes and forced myself to take regular breaths. “I’ll be fine.”

“Let’s go get these idiots then.”

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Layla

I kept the window down on the way to the police station and let the fresh air ground me. Removed from the panic attack, I was able to process what the officer had said to me on the phone. Cocaine. I didn't know anything about them. They'd mentioned living hard and fast during the first years of their career, but they'd never mentioned using hard drugs currently. I still had Miriam's words in my head about cocaine and big dicks, so it wasn't hard to paint a picture of the night they'd been having.

When Nick parked in front of the police station, I had to force myself to get out of the car. When I managed to make myself get out, Nick had to help me up the steps to the front door. I didn't want to see them. I just wanted to go home. More than ever, I wanted to run into Grandma's arms and be held. I wanted my brother.

Nick opened the door for me and gently pushed me inside. "It's okay, Layla. This won't take long."

He was right. The officers were quick to let the rockstars go after getting their autographs. The guys walked into the foyer and they each looked so normal. I'd expected them to look different, somehow. I didn't know what I was expecting, but they felt different to me after their night out, so it was weird to see they looked just like the men I'd spent so much time with.

I didn't know what to say. My feelings were twisted up and I wasn't sure there was anything worth saying. Not if they weren't the men I thought they were.

When I turned and walked out of the station, they all followed after me. I could hear the three of them talking amongst themselves and wondered if they were trying to get their story straight. I climbed into the car and slid into a corner. I rested my head on the headrest and closed my eyes, desperate for a break.

They smelled different after a night out. Cigarette smoke and beer clung to them, along with something sweeter. I was sure it was Miriam's perfume. I hated it. I hated everything in that moment. Them, the job, the entire fucking industry.

"Layla,-"

"I don't want to talk right now." The strain in my voice told them I was serious and thankfully, they each listened.

Nick parked in front of the bus a little bit later and the guys slowly got out. When I didn't budge, they each looked back at me and frowned.

“Come on, Layla. You need to rest. Even if you are pissed at us.” Mack nodded to the bus. “I think there’s a bag of popcorn left. I can make it for you.”

I squeezed my eyes shut and held out my hand to make him stop. “I have to finish breaking down the stage.”

Jones shrugged. “We’ll come help you.”

“No!” I took a deep breath and lowered my voice. “No. I don’t think I want to be around any of you right now.”

“What the hell, Layla?” Xavier crossed his arms over his chest. “We didn’t get in any real trouble. The cops were really nice about everything. It was just a misunderstanding.”

“A misunderstanding? Cocaine is a misunderstanding?” I scrubbed my hands over my face and shook my head. “Was Miriam a misunderstanding, too?”

Jones’ face hardened. “What are you talking about?”

“You know... I thought I was having a shit night when my ex wanted to have a heart to heart about cheating. He even had a cute little picture of you dragging Miriam into the bathroom. He’s crushed, by the way. Then, I get a call from the police about you three.” I dug my nails into my thighs to keep the emotions at bay. “For a moment, the cheating didn’t matter. My heart fucking stopped. The last time I got a call from the cops, I found out my parents were dead. I thought there’d been another accident.

“Nope. Just a cocaine misunderstanding, apparently. I had to stop doing my job to come pick y’all up from the police

station. Because of a fucking cocaine misunderstanding. I've had a long night. I'm angry and I'm not in a place where I want to listen to men lie to me. I'd rather do my work alone."

"I didn't sleep with Miriam, Layla." Jones growled out the words. "And the cocaine wasn't ours."

I turned so I was facing him completely and folded my hands in my lap, doing my best to stay composed. "Do you want to know how I talk to guys at the bar, Jones? After a few drinks, I like to grab them by the hand and tug them into the bathroom with me. It's just so much nicer in the bathroom, where people are shitting and crying about their boyfriends cheating. It's the perfect fucking atmosphere for talking. I'm guessing you're the same way with your female friends?"

Mack put his arm across Jones' chest and shook his head. "Let's all calm down first and we can talk in the morning."

"I've been fighting to be with you for months now, Layla! When are you going to fucking get that? I don't want Miriam or anyone else. I don't know how else to get it through your head!" Jones pushed Mack's arm aside and leaned into the car. "I didn't fuck her. If you really think I did, you're crazy. If you'd let us explain, you'd understand what that photo really shows. Also, mighty convenient of your ex to get such a perfect picture, isn't it? And he just happened to come running to your side with that photo, just so you guys could be buddies and cry together? Or did you ever consider he's still trying to fuck you? Did he make a move tonight? After telling you that I'm a cheater? Did he?"

I stubbornly kept silent.

“Of course, he did. Of fucking course.” Leaning even farther into the car, Jones met my gaze with fire in his eyes. “Well. Did you fuck him?”

I slammed my hands into his chest to shove him away. “Fuck you for asking me that! I’m not a cheater! When I love someone, I love them with every part of me. How dare you ask me that!”

He caught my hands and pinned them to his chest while I fought against him. “When you love someone, huh? When you love someone, you just accuse them of the worst shit and believe the worst shit about them?”

Tears filled my eyes but that just made me struggle even harder to get away from him. “I don’t love you! I hate you. I hate you for making me feel like this!”

Mack sighed. “Liar.”

“You know I didn’t fucking cheat on you, Layla. Jesus, I can’t think of anything but you.” Jones dragged me across the seat and into his arms. “The cocaine was Miriam’s. I saw her take it out and wave it around like a goddamn nutjob. I took her into the bathroom to force her to give it to me away from prying eyes. If she was clean like she said she was, I didn’t want to stand by and just let her use. I shouldn’t have gone in with her alone. I’m sorry. But I didn’t cheat on you, Layla. I wouldn’t hurt you. And I wouldn’t hurt me by making you hate me.”

I fought my tears and clung to his chest. I was mixed up, but I wasn't so mixed up that I didn't believe him.

From behind the guys, shouting broke the silence we'd fallen into. "I told you to fuck him, you idiot. You had one job!"

I saw red as the voice and the words lined up. I forced my way out of the car and yanked my hair up in a bun. If I hadn't broken his nose the first time, I was going to make damn sure I did that time.

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Layla

On the other side of the parking lot, The Homewreckers' tour bus sat the opposite way of ours so I had to go around it to find Matthew yelling at Miriam by the bus door. She saw me first and her eyes went wide.

“Nothing happened, Layla!” She held up her hands but I wasn't concerned about her.

“You sonofabitch!” I pulled my fist back and let it fly, hitting Matthew across the cheek. My hand instantly throbbed and I tried to shake out the pain, but watching him hold his face and bend over in his own pain made me feel better. “First of all, don't shout at her like that!”

Miriam frowned. “You're sticking up for me?”

“You deserve a better manager than this piece of donkey shit. Him telling you to fuck someone for his own personal gain is disgusting. You may not be my favorite person, but you should fire his ass.” I looked back at Matthew. “Back to my points. Second of all, setting up a guy to cheat on me is just weird

behavior. Do you get off on me being cheated on? That's some bullshit version of sadism if I ever heard it. Third of all, if you gave those drugs to Miriam as a part of your stupid scheme, I'll hit you again. Harder."

Matthew swore as he glared at me while still holding his face. "You fucked your way to this job and you think you've got it all figured out, don't you? I just want you back where you belong. Under me, doing my work and putting out when I call you. You had to go and fuck it all up, though. I was going to propose and give you a few kids. You ruined all of that, though."

I scoffed. "I hit you hard, but not that hard. You're not making any sense. Propose? Kids? That never would've happened."

"You'll never get to the top without me. You need me. You're just too stupid to know it." Sounding like he'd gone into full villain mode, he laughed. "You think Bingham doesn't know you fucked your way into this job? Everyone knows. You're a joke. I was trying to do you a favor and let you come back to me while you still could."

Xavier moved next to me and began rolling up his sleeves. "You've crossed so many lines tonight, asshole. You don't get to fuck with Layla anymore. She's ours. You don't get to use her or call her names or manipulate her into being with you. You've earned this beating you're about to get."

Matthew looked at me like I was going to help him. "Call your dog off, Layla."

I looked up at Xavier and shook my head. “Some people can be staring up a horse’s ass and still want to spook it. I think I’d be a little nicer to the man wanting to bend me into a pretzel and toss me into the next county.”

Jones moved closer to Matthew. “You made her think I cheated on her. You hurt her and then you tried to gain from that hurt. You knew she was ours and you still tried to put your hands on her.”

Miriam stood next to the bus and stared at me hard enough that I could tell she had something to say. I looked up at Xavier and Jones. “Don’t actually hit him. You can’t get in trouble.”

Mack had Matthew by the collar and slammed up against the bus while I focused on the two I thought would be more likely to resort to violence. “You’re lucky I’m not willing to go to jail and leave her on her own with fuckheads like you all around.”

One of their security guards, Jason, showed up finally. He nodded at me when he saw my concern. “I’ll keep it in check, Ms. Layla.”

I trusted that the guys wouldn’t murder Matthew, even if Jason wasn’t there, so I moved closer to Miriam and raised my brows in a silent question.

She wrapped her arms around herself. “I’m sorry.”

Before I could respond to her, Nick was at my side, my phone in his hand. The look on his face made my knees go

weak. “It wouldn’t stop ringing and when I saw who it was from, I knew it was important.”

I saw Grandma’s name on the screen and grabbed it. Walking away from the noise on legs that felt like rubber, I pressed the phone to my ear too hard. It was so late, too late for Grandma to call. Something was wrong. My earlier panic about the police calling returned with a vengeance. “Grandma? What’s wrong?”

I’d heard my grandma cry one time in my life before that call. Her voice broke and she struggled to get her words out. “Jagger was in an accident, Lala. He’s in bad shape, but the doctor says he’s going to be okay.”

I was already running across the lot towards the car. “Is he okay? What happened?”

“You need to come home, honey.”

My body froze mid-run and I stood absolutely still as I felt my world crashing down around me. “What is it? What happened, Grandma?”

“He passed out behind the wheel.” A sob rattled her and when she could speak again, her words were ground out. “He has cancer. He’s known for over a year and never said anything. His doctor started talking about it like I knew, Lala. It’s bad.”

Her words didn’t make sense. Jagger didn’t have cancer. “Grandma... The doctor has to be wrong. Jagger would’ve told us so we could help with the treatment. He would’ve-”

“It’s rare.” Those two words said it all.

I dropped my hand down to my side and stared up at the sky. There wasn’t a star in sight because of all the light pollution. That black sky felt as empty as I did, just a bottomless pit of nothingness.

Forcing myself to lift the phone to my ear, I told her I was coming home. Her broken cries begging me to be safe haunted me as I ended the call and made my legs move.

Nick took my arm and helped me. “Airport? I can tell the guys and we can all be ready in less than half an hour.”

I looked up at him and shook my head. “I need to go now. I can’t wait.”

He nodded immediately. “Understood.”

I was numb as Nick sped to the airport. I didn’t even realize he was going with me until he was sitting next to me on the plane. I looked over at him, noticing him for the first time, and tears burned behind my eyes. Only there was nothing I could do to stop them that time. “He can’t leave me.”

Nick swore and put his arm around my shoulders, hugging me as I cried in the same way Jagger did when our parents died.

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Mack

“I finally heard from Nick!” Jason charged onto the bus, looking just as grim as I felt.

After losing my shit on Matthew and having to be dragged away, we hadn't been able to find Layla. Searching the parking lot and arena had been useless. We knew Nick was with her, but we didn't know where they were or why she'd left. I thought she'd believed us about everything in the end.

Xavier looked like shit after pacing the parking lot all night. None of us had slept at all. “Where the fuck is he and why did it take him this long to reach out?”

Jason handed the phone to Xavier and then left the bus. I didn't like that. It was like he didn't want to be around for the bad news. My stomach dropped through the floor even as Xavier swore and sank heavily onto the couch.

Jones had been on a call but he hung up when he saw Xavier's face. “What?”

“They flew her home to Tennessee last night.” Xavier rubbed his hand over his mouth and then read the message. “Between getting a flight, finding a car, and doing a shit job at trying to keep Layla from losing her mind, I’m just now able to reach out and explain. Her brother was in a wreck last night. As if that wasn’t bad enough, the wreck was caused by him passing out from being so sick with cancer that he told no one about.”

My heart hammered against my chest painfully. “I’ll get us on the first flight out.”

Jones gripped his hair and stood up. “I’ll... Jesus. I’ll call Billy and tell him to cancel the shows for the next two weeks, at least. Then I’ll call Bingham and make damn sure he understands her job is safe for as long as she wants it.”

Xavier cleared his throat. “I don’t know what to do.”

“You stay in touch with Nick and get the details about where they are.” I walked over and squeezed his shoulder. I could feel him slipping back into the same scared kid who was paralyzed with fear because he’d never learned how to interact with people. “You helped get me through my mom passing, X. You just being there was what I needed.”

He blew out a shaky breath and wiped away a tear. “He’s not going to die. We didn’t have the money to pour into your mom, but we do now. If there’s a way to get him through this, I’ll find it.”

“We’ll take care of her.” I nodded. “We’ll take care of all of them. Jagger and Gran, too.”

The phone in his hand vibrated and he looked down at it before choking and swearing. “Fucking hell, Jason!”

I looked down and seeing the giant dick pic on the oversized screen startled me enough that I gasped. I was one clutched strand of pearls from being a southern lady. “What the fuck?”

Jason came back onto the bus. “Did you call me?”

Xavier thrust the phone back to him. “Just have Nick text me directly.”

Jason’s face went blood red and he quickly tapped to make the picture go away. “I’m sorry. That wasn’t supposed to happen. My boyfriend is in the navy and he-”

I patted him on the arm. “You’re good. I think I might’ve needed that jolt to kickstart my brain.”

Xavier nodded. “Congratulations.”

Jason and I looked at Xavier, confused. “Congratulations?”

“What else do you say to someone when you find out their boyfriend has a big dick? I don’t fucking know. I’m stressed out right now.” He was silent for a few seconds and then he shook his head. “Just forget I said anything.”

“I’ll have Nick text you directly.” Jason walked back to the door and stopped. “Congratulations was the best thing you could’ve said, man. Some people wouldn’t be that cool.”

Jones joined us from another phone call. “There will be a private plane fueled and ready to go at the airport in an hour. Also, did I hear you tell Jason his boyfriend has a big dick?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Xavier held up his phone. “I’m going to make sure Nick knows to keep us updated about everything.”

“I’ll call Bingham since you took care of the plane, J.” I grabbed my phone and headed outside.

I called Bingham’s direct line and looked across the lot just in time to see Matthew following behind Miriam, looking as pathetic as ever. It was unfortunate timing for him because he was fresh on my mind when Bingham answered.

“How’s my favorite band doing, Mack?” The older man answered the line that way every single time, no matter what time of day we called.

“Not good, sir. I have two things I need to address with you.” I flipped Matthew the bird when he looked over at me. “I’m sorry I don’t have time to catch up, but they’re both time sensitive.”

“Go on, then.”

“First, Layla Morgan had a family emergency come up last night and had to fly home. It’s serious. We’re actually pausing the tour to go after her and make sure she’s okay. Her job is safe for as long as she wants it. She’s the best damn tour manager we’ve ever had.”

He sighed. “Poor fools. I knew the moment you called about her, you were already lost. I thought you were out of your minds at first, but you’ve never gone wrong before. She is

good. She's got a hell of a right hook, too, from what I hear. She'll give you assholes a run for your money."

"Seems like you already heard from my second issue." I growled. "O'Brian is a power abusing piece of shit. He had her working under him, doing all of his work, for three years. You see for yourself how talented she is. I don't say this next part lightly. Somehow, he managed to get worse. He gave Miriam Dark cocaine last night. Tried to pimp her out to get what he wanted, too."

"Motherfucker!" Bingham slammed something in the background and I heard him shouting at his assistant. "Get that fucking rat, O'Brian back here right now!"

"He earned those punches from Layla. I'm only sad she won't get to see her handiwork."

"The hell she won't. He set up a video call and I took screenshots of the prick. I didn't know why at the time, but now I do. When you get to Layla and things settle down, you let her know I'll have the picture blown up and framed in gold for her." He sighed. "Have her take whatever time she needs, Mack. Her job's always safe here. Unless you idiots don't resign with me. Then, I'm canning everyone."

"You know we're not going anywhere. We just have to make threats every so often so you don't go soft on us." I looked up and saw Xavier and Jones coming out of the bus, bags in hand. "Thank you for understanding."

"Go on. Take care of your lady and then come back and make me a few millions more." Before he even hung up the

call, he was already shouting orders at his assistant. “Fly that
tool back economy! Put him in with the cargo if you can!”

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Layla

I was so angry at Jagger. He'd known about his diagnosis for so long. He'd taken the opinion of one doctor who said there was nothing to be done and just let it go. He hadn't bothered to get a second opinion or push them to try a treatment, no matter what. He just accepted that he was going to die. Knowing that Grandma and I would fight him, he kept it a secret. I wanted to strangle him and hold him at the same time.

Staring down at my big brother in his hospital bed, I wanted to look away. He looked smaller than I remembered him, almost frail. Even without the injuries from the wreck, I would've known he was sick. I should've seen it. Maybe I hadn't wanted to in the times I'd seen him on video calls, just like I didn't want to in the hospital. I didn't want to see him looking so weak and helpless. I wouldn't look away, though. I couldn't. Not even for a second. I wouldn't waste a moment.

Losing our parents had happened in an instant. We hadn't had time to grab onto certain memories and tuck them safely

away. They were just gone and so were the parts of them we hadn't gotten a chance to entomb in our minds. It was brutal to think of watching Jagger get worse, but I would have time to tuck every part of him away inside myself so I wouldn't forget a single thing.

He'd been awake for a little while earlier that morning, but he was banged up from the wreck and the pain meds he was on were keeping him knocked out for the most part. Each time his eyes fluttered open, even for just a second, my heart reacted like a gun had gone off.

When they stayed open that time, I felt nervous and unsure of myself. I had so much I wanted to say but I didn't know where to start. I also didn't want to push him or stress him out. I felt tongue-tied.

Of course, Jagger was still Jagger. "Stop fucking watching me like you're Norman Bates and I'm your mummified mother, weirdo."

I rolled my eyes and moved my chair closer. "You do kind of look like someone's mummified mother, now that you mention it."

He groaned. "Don't make me laugh."

I grabbed his hand and held on tight. "What do you need?"

"For you to stop squeezing my hand." He gave me a weak smile. "I'm fine, Layla. I'm sure I'll be dancing by this time tomorrow."

“You know I’m going to kick your ass as soon as you’re out of here, right?” I wiped away a stray tear and forced a smile. “You scared the shit out of me. I was in the middle of beating up Matthew when I got the call.”

He looked at his pain pump and grunted. “This thing must be better than I thought because I thought you said you were beating up Matthew.”

I brushed his hair off his forehead and frowned. “Do you think we both have big foreheads? Or just you?”

He laughed and his face immediately pinched in pain. I grabbed his pain button and jabbed at it until he grabbed it back. “Jesus, Lala, you’re going to have me high as fuck.”

“It’s there for you to use. Stop trying to be stronger than broken bones, idiot.”

His speech was already starting to slur. “Wait, dammit. You beat up...”

I smiled at him and brushed his hair back over his big forehead. I didn’t have the heart to tell him that it was just him. He had our dad’s forehead. If anything happened to him, that would be one more part of Dad gone from the world.

Nick walked into the room and passed me a large cup of coffee. It matched the one he’d gotten himself. “I heard you talking to him so I waited outside. He sounded pretty awake.”

“Until I drugged him.” I tapped the pain button that was still clasped in Jagger’s hand. “He was hurting and I didn’t like it.”

“Let the man control his pain pump, Layla. He’s probably bored senseless from being asleep for so long.”

I traced my finger over his nose. “He didn’t get a family nose. This nose matches no one in the family, on either side. That’s weird, right? I used to tell him he was part alien. Before I understood what I was saying, I’d tell everyone that an alien had come down and put a baby in Mom.”

“I’m sure you were a fun sister.” He sank into a plastic chair and groaned. “You have my wife smitten. She’s flying out to help around the house with anything you or Gran need.”

More tears filled my eyes and I swiped them away as fast as they fell. “She doesn’t need to do that, Nick.”

“She’s from the south. You know how it is. She doesn’t feel useful until she’s invaded your home and left twenty freezer meals and a pie.” His phone pinged and he looked at it and smiled before putting it away. “You’re a very loved woman, Layla Morgan.”

I didn’t know which part of Jagger the cancer was in, I realized as I scanned his body for more injuries the doctors might’ve missed. I hadn’t been able to make sense of half the words the doctor said when he talked about the cancer. Looking over at Nick, I frowned. “Did you hear where they said the cancer is?”

He winced and shook his head. “I didn’t. Why don’t you sit down for a bit, Layla? He’s sleeping. You should rest while he does.”

“I don’t want to look away from him for more than a second.” I swallowed another ball of emotion. “We used to play this game when we were kids. We made it up and it was just dumb kid stuff, but we loved it. One of us would be it and the other person would have to copy everything that person did. It lasted until the copier messed up. Sometimes it would go on for hours. Everyone around us hated it. If our parents happen to ask us what we wanted for dinner while we were playing, the person who was being copied would always say something they knew the person copying hated. Then, we’d fight and change the rules a million times before going back to the original, which was just keep your eyes on the person who was it and don’t miss a thing.”

“It sounds like you had a magical childhood with him.”

I laughed quietly. “I’ve never told him this but when he moved out and I still had a few years left before I could, I cried like a baby. I snuck into his room every night and just sat on his bed crying. I remember it felt so final. I thought I’d never see him again.”

“I’m sure he knew. Between a big brother’s intuition and Gran’s mouth, I can’t imagine anything was much of a secret.”

I lost track of time while I stood there. Grandma came back at some point and then she left again to grab dinner. I just stood there through the nurses’ shift change and every slurred word that Jagger spoke when he woke up. The world just kept moving around me and it made me want to scream. How could

everyone just keep living like nothing was wrong when the world felt like it was so clearly ending?

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Xavier

Backtop, Tennessee took too long to get to. The last thirty minutes of the drive, I thought I was going to lose my mind. When we finally got into town, I was amazed the place even had a hospital. Then I saw the hospital and was less than amazed. It was the size of a house. Immediately, my mind raced with people I could call to get Jagger into the best hospital in the country. I didn't want to shit on the small hospital, but I couldn't imagine their oncology department was doing anything other than keeping people alive for as long as they could.

“Is that Gran?” Jones parked the truck in the small lot and we all looked into the car next to us and saw a woman who looked just like the Gran we'd all fallen in love with through the calls she made to us daily.

The woman was curling in on herself, her shoulders shaking as she cried. My stomach clenched and I was out of the truck in a beat. I knocked on her window and watched as she jumped. Feeling terrible for scaring her, I started to apologize

but then she was out of the car and hugging me so tight I wondered if she'd ever competed in any strong person competitions.

“It’s good to finally meet you, Gran. I’m sorry for the circumstances, though.” I hugged her back and I realized with a start that she smelled similar to Layla.

“You found us. Just in time, too.” Pulling away to hug Jones and Mack, Gran dabbed at her eyes. “I finally found something that my granddaughter can outstubborn me in. I haven’t been able to get her to shower or even sit down.”

I frowned. “Has she eaten?”

Gran shook her head. “She won’t do anything but watch him.”

“She may not like us for it, but we’ll get her to take care of herself.” Jones rubbed the back of his neck. “How do you feel about us making a bit of a scene, though? Your granddaughter is a bit of a fighter.”

“Everyone around here knows Layla and the shit she pulls. They all watched her go through puberty, so you won’t surprise anyone.” Gran tucked her arm through mine and smiled up at me. “If only I’d met you before Lala. I would’ve tried to steal you. I love a big man.”

I felt my cheeks burn and knew Jones and Mack were laughing at me. “Well. I am that, if nothing else.”

She stopped and turned to face all of us. “I’m so glad you boys came. She needs someone. Three someones, it seems.

Those two kids have always been as thick as thieves. I don't know what she'll do if she loses him."

"We won't let him go without a fight. We have access to different doctors and treatments. If there's an option, we'll make it happen." Mack took her hand and held it between his. "We lost my mom before we had the money to make a difference. Things are different now."

"Oh, shit. Here come the tears." Heaving a big sigh, Gran wrapped us each in a hug and then pulled out a handkerchief to blow her nose. "If it was for me, I wouldn't take it. It's for Jag, though, so I'll accept all the help I can get."

"You wouldn't have a choice, Gran. You mean just as much to Layla as Jagger does. That means we fight for you, too." Jones shrugged. "Plus, I've gotten kind of used to you calling me."

"I knew you liked it!" Gran swatted at him in a move that was so similar to Layla it made my chest ache. "Okay, come on. If you don't get her out of there soon, she's going to fall over. You boys can stay at my house, of course. If Layla refuses to show you where it is, just ask anyone you see on the street."

I didn't like the idea of everyone knowing where Layla would be sleeping, when she was at her most vulnerable. I lost myself for a moment, thinking of finding a hardware store as soon as I could to install a security system for them.

"Alright, come on. If Jag's awake, you can make his year by saying hello. Layla keeps pushing his pain button, though, so I

doubt he'll be awake. She's so worried he'll feel an ounce of discomfort that she won't even let the man open his eyes without reaching for that button. They've been arguing about it already. She wins by default because he passes out, but I don't think that's fair."

Mack laughed. "At least we know she's not just bratty with us."

Just down a tiny hallway, we saw Nick sitting next to a closed door. When he spotted us, he stood up and looked like he was about to face the firing squad. Before any of us could say anything, he started talking. "You can fire me if you want, but I'm not sorry for how I handled things. You didn't see her. She didn't have time to wait. You should know that even if you fire me, I'm not going anywhere. She's my friend and I'm going to be here for her. Hilary's going to be here tonight to help out with things, too."

Gran shot the three of us a look. "Nick doesn't need to worry about that, does he? He was amazing in getting Lala here so fast and he hasn't let her out of his sight. If anything, I think he deserves a raise."

Jones groaned. "You and your granddaughter are painfully alike. We aren't firing anyone. Stick around, Nick. We'll be with Layla from now on, though, so if you want to spend time with Hilary, consider it a paid vacation."

Gran nodded approvingly. "And that's how you build employee loyalty."

"I'll be back with Hilary later tonight. Let Layla know."

“I don’t know where all the men built like y’all were when I was young and eager, but I just have to say, it’s not right. That man is fine. Y’all are fine. Everyone these days is a fucking model. In my day? I was lucky if I found a guy with a higher IQ than tooth count and considering I married a man missing several of his teeth, let that tell you something.”

The door in front of us opened and a nurse stuck her head out. She had to be older than Gran by twenty years, which was impressive. “Everyone in this hospital just heard what you said, Louis. Watch your mouth because we both know you ain’t repenting at church on Sundays.”

“Nope. I’m too busy taking all your hard earned money from your loser husband. It’s no wonder you look like you’ve been sucking on a lemon your whole life.” Gran rolled her eyes and looked up at us, somehow making us co-conspirators in her fight. “Ignore Gertie. She’s a pain in the ass, but she’s a good nurse.”

Gertie made the mistake of looking a little too proud, apparently.

“Unless you catch her trying to lap up the holy water at the church like a dog in the summer sun. Then you know she’s been eating those special seeds with Bill Nethers. I wouldn’t let her nurse a hangover on those days.”

I shocked myself and everyone else when I let out a loud laugh. I tried to cover it with a cough but it was useless.

Gertie gave me the stink eye and Gran high-fived me. “You better hope you don’t get sick while you’re here, though.

That's one vindictive bitch. She's got a memory like an elephant. An ass like one, too, if you ask me."

Jones made a pained sound. "We can't hang out with you, can we? You would get us sent to jail. I can feel it in my bones."

"That's just arthritis. Take a couple of ibuprofen and you'll be fine."

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Layla

“Jesus, Gran...” I shook my head at hearing her swearing in the hallway. “You can’t take her anywhere.”

Jagger glared at where I held his pain button. “I swear to god, Layla, if you hit that before I get to talk to Gran for a minute, I’m telling Gertie on you.”

I glanced over at where Gertie had her head sticking out of the room and shuddered. “Don’t you dare.”

He looked down at the button and held out his hand. “Give it here or I’m telling.”

“What are you? Five?” I gave it back and frowned. “Snitch.”

“When are you going home? You look like shit.”

“One more word about how I look and I’m taking the button back. You can’t tell on me if you’re unconscious.” I didn’t just look like shit. I also felt like shit. “And I’m not going home until you do.”

“Layla...”

I glared down at him when I felt him start to say something morbid. “Shut up, Jagger. You’re going home.”

“Layla. I love you.” He stared up at me with eyes that looked so similar to my own, to our parents. “I’m sorry.”

“Stop. Don’t do that, Jagger. Don’t apologize like you’re trying to let me down easy. Don’t fucking apologize like you’re not going to try to do anything about this.” My chest heaved with the weight of the world as I scanned his face. “You promised me. You promised that you’d always be with me and I know that this isn’t a choice you made, but not fighting, Jagger? Not fighting is a choice. I can’t let you do that. I can’t let you leave me all alone, not when you promised. So don’t you dare apologize.”

In true Jagger fashion, he smiled after managing to get me worked up. His eyes moved towards the door behind me and that smile grew even larger. “I don’t think you’d be all alone, Layla Rose.”

“She’ll never be alone. That’s the benefit of there being three of us.” Jones’ voice felt like a figment of my imagination. “It’s good to finally meet you, man.”

I gawked with my mouth open when I saw Jones, Mack, and Xavier all standing at the foot of Jagger’s bed with Grandma at their side. With a growing sense of horror, I felt the lump of emotion in my throat growing and coming closer to the surface until I couldn’t control it anymore. Seeing them there, at my brother’s hospital bed in Backtop, Tennessee, was so shocking

and knowing they'd made the effort just destroyed the last barriers I'd been able to keep up.

"You're here." My voice cracked and I lost it. I dropped into the chair behind me and buried my face in my hands as I cried like a baby. Big, gasping sobs shook my body hard enough that I didn't feel Mack's hands on me until he was lifting me out of the chair.

"We'll bring her back in just a bit." Mack carried me against his chest and tightened his hold when I tried to get down.

"I can't leave Jagger."

Jagger cleared his throat. "Yes, you can. Hurry up and get your shit together, kid. You're hogging all of their attention and I'm going to need some kind of gain from this bullshit hospital stay, so their attention will have to be it."

"Jagger..." I choked on another sob. I couldn't leave him. I was terrified if I blinked, he'd be gone.

Grandma swatted at Mack. "Get her out of here. It's time for Jagger to get his ass kicked at poker. We'll be here when you get back."

Jagger cleared his throat. "Wait... I'm going to ask that y'all take her to Gran's and force her to take a shower and eat, but don't leave before you come back. I have questions to ask about JAX."

Xavier smiled. "We're not going anywhere."

"What? You're on tour. Not that I'm a stalker, or anything, but aren't you supposed to be playing in Boston tonight?"

Jagger's cheeks went pink under the spots of bruising.

Jones shook his head and glanced at me before he looked back at Jagger. "The tour is on hold for now."

"What? Why?" Looking at me, Jagger grunted. "Don't get me wrong, I love my sister, but you can still tour without a tour manager."

"Even if we could tour without *this* tour manager, we can't right now. There's a family emergency." Xavier walked closer to Jagger and shook his hand. "We're here if you need anything."

Jagger's eyes widened. "*I'm* the family emergency?"

"Yeah. You come with Layla."

"It's that simple?" Jagger met my gaze. "Is it too soon to make a joke about you waiting until I'm dying to bring my favorite band into the family?"

I buried my face against Mack's neck and cried harder. Even through my heartbreak, I still managed to lift my hand and flip him off.

"Okay, okay. This is too much." Grandma groaned. "Take her home and put her in the shower. I keep the good booze in my dresser. Feed her a few shots before you let her come back here. Top right drawer. If you go in the top left drawer, what you see is on you."

Mack grunted. "Yep, yep. Top right drawer, it is."

“Stop by Yankee Joe’s on the way to the house. They sell Lala’s favorite pizza. Joe will know what she wants.” Grandma patted my head. “I don’t think y’all have anything to worry about but watch this one around Joe. She was always a sucker for that man and he’ll carry a torch for her until he dies, I swear. Everyone in town still talks about the time they got caught at the bowling alley. Hell, even I learned a new position from those rumors.”

I choked on another sob as I jerked my head up to glare at Grandma. “What the hell?”

“Jesus, Gran. That’s some shit I don’t need to hear about my baby sister.” Jagger faked a gag and then made a show of holding up his pain button and pushing it. “And on that note, I think I’ll go back to sleep.”

“What? What’d I say?” Grandma shrugged. “Anyway. Joe will take care of y’all. Handsome man, that one. He’s got nothing on y’all, but for Backtop, he’s a twenty.”

“We’re not getting pizza from Joe, Gran.” I sniffed and turned a watery gaze on Jagger. “I’ll be back soon. Don’t do anything stupid.”

He smiled. “Love you, too.”

“I think we should get pizza.” Jones growled out, still stuck on the topic of my ex. “We can take the time to show Joe that his services are no longer needed.”

“Can you make pizza?” Grandma asked it so sweetly that Jones answered with an honest negative. “Then his services

are needed, singer boy. The man is a god with pizza. When you have a slice, you'll understand why Layla acted so easy for him.”

Jagger snorted. “At this point, I think Layla might just be easy.”

Xavier leaned closer to him. “Nothing about your sister is easy.”

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Mack

I carried Layla out of the hospital and settled in the backseat of the truck with her still in my arms. She'd stopped crying, but every breath she took was shaky with emotion. I could tell she wanted to talk but every time she opened her mouth, nothing came out.

Seeing her cry felt like getting slammed in the chest over and over again with a sledgehammer. I'd seen Layla strong, bold, sexy, and so many other things that reflected her power, but I'd never seen her cry. I could see her heart breaking all over her face and there was nothing I could do. There was no one I could punch or scream at.

"Y'all came." She pressed her face to my chest and sobbed again. Her hands fisted in my shirt and she clung to me like she was in physical pain. Her body shook in my arms as she cried.

"Of course, we came, Firecracker." Jones sounded as panicked as I felt about her tears. "You couldn't keep us away if you tried."

I stroked her back and held my lips to the top of her head, just breathing her in and out. “We should’ve been paying more attention right away and we could’ve been here with you last night. I’m sorry.”

“You paused the tour, too?” Her voice gave away how surprised she was. It showed how little her ex had done for her that she would be surprised that we’d come running to be with her.

“Yeah, sweetheart, we did. We’re here with you. Nothing else matters.” Xavier tapped Jones on the arm and pointed at the pizza place coming up.

Jones turned into the lot and parked. “Do you want anything besides your favorite pizza, Firecracker?”

“I’m not hungry.” Layla lifted her head and saw where we were. “Oh, god. Don’t go in there.”

“I’m getting you your favorite pizza and you’re going to eat it. We’re not letting you waste away.” Jones stepped out and smiled in at Layla. “I won’t make a scene. Promise.”

I hummed the chords to a new, different song we’d been working on and gently rocked Layla. Her exhaustion was evident in how quickly her body went limp in my arms. I held her head to my chest and didn’t dare budge. Even after Jones came back with a stack of pizzas, I barely breathed, not wanting to disturb her.

When Jones followed the directions Gran had given us to her house and then parked in front of a small farmhouse, I felt like

we'd stepped back in time. The deep front porch held a couple of rocking chairs and I could see from where we'd parked that the front door was open, just a screen door separating the outside world from what would be Layla's home for a little while. I made a note to install a security system for Gran.

"Do you have her?" Xavier looked like he was dying to take Layla from me, but I wasn't ready to let her go.

"I've got her." I met his eyes. "I'm just not sure how I'm ever supposed to let go."

Jones went into the house first and held the door open for us. Pointing to a floral patterned couch in the living room just to the right of the entrance, he watched as I tried to ease Layla down on the couch, but she whimpered and clung to me. "Just sit with her. I can't handle that sound again. I feel like I should be fighting someone to make her feel better, but there's no one to fight."

I settled on the couch and held her tight. "I'm seconds from allowing you to knock me out. I need a break from all these fucking feelings."

Xavier came into the living room with plates and bottles of beer. He handed out pizza and gave me an extra slice for Layla. We ate in complete silence, devouring more pizza than we'd ever admit to Gran after everything she'd said about Joe.

I held a slice out and lightly pressed the tip against Layla's lips. "Open up, baby. It's your favorite pizza."

She turned her head and groaned. "Not hungry."

“That’s fine, but you need to eat something.” I brushed it against her mouth again and when she opened her mouth to complain, I pushed it inside.

Her eyes flew open and she frowned up at me as she chewed. “I don’t want it.”

I forced her through eating the slice and then put my plate aside. “Good job, baby. I have to make sure you’re okay and that means you eat. Plus, Joe made it special, just for you.”

She grunted. “Shut up. I haven’t spoken to Joe in four years. I doubt he even remembers my name, much less how I like my pizza.”

Jones sat forward on his floral printed chair. “Joe almost lost every tooth in his mouth because of how he remembers you.”

Her cheeks flushed. “That’s embarrassing.”

“For him.” Finishing the last of his beer, Jones rubbed his jaw. “When he found out he was talking to your man, he turned bright red and tripped over himself apologizing.”

Shifting so she was fully embraced in my arms again, she rested her hands over mine. “My man?”

“Well, we’re not boys.” Xavier reached over and stroked her cheek. “But we are yours.”

She sniffed and the three of us froze in fear of there being more tears that we couldn’t fix. “I’m just so tired. The last time I saw y’all, I was accusing you of cheating and now we’re here. I don’t know why y’all came. I’m not sure I deserve it.”

I tugged her around so she was facing me. “You deserve it. You deserve the world, baby, and we’re far from that.”

“What happened because of O’Brian wasn’t your fault, or our fault. He messed with your head and had Miriam walk us into a situation that made us look bad. That doesn’t change how we feel about you, though. You’re family, Firecracker. When you go through something, we all do.”

Xavier nodded at what Jones said and took her hand. “We’re here with you for as long as you need us.”

“I don’t know when I’ll be able to leave again...” She stood up and walked over to the fireplace mantle that was filled with photographs. “Mr. Bingham will have every right to fire me. I left without notice and I’m not coming back until Jagger is better. I love my job and I love...being with y’all, but I can’t leave Jagger. I won’t.”

“Okay.” I shrugged. “That’s fine.”

She frowned at me. “What do you mean?”

“I mean that I talked with Bingham and your job is secure, no matter how long you take off. We’ll pause the tour for as long as we need to because we’re not leaving you if we can help it. We love...being with you, too, Layla Rose.” I smiled at the way her cheeks flushed when I used her own words back at her. “You’re our family. That means something. We’re not going to let you face this alone. We’re going to help.”

Tears filled her eyes again and she looked back at the photos on the mantle. “Thank you. I... I know I’m not supposed to

say this, but I don't want to do this without y'all. I don't know if I can. I should tell you to go back to work and take care of the band, but I need you."

Xavier held out his arms and she hurried into them. "You've got us."

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Layla

“Come on, Firecracker. Let’s get you in the shower. We’ve got our orders.” Jones motioned me towards the bathroom with a gentle smile on his face. “Gran thinks you stink. I’d be more than happy to bury my nose in any part of you and inhale as deep as possible but I have a feeling you wouldn’t let me.”

I felt like I was moving through quicksand but Xavier was there to pick me up and carry me. “I don’t know if I stink, but Gran was pretty confident in saying that I did.”

Xavier buried his face against my neck and grunted. “Nothing but the sweet smell of our woman.”

Mack beat us to the bathroom and stepped into the walk-in shower to turn the water on. He adjusted the temperature and shook his arm off before stepping back out and meeting my gaze. “Alright, baby, let’s get you clean.”

They took off my clothes and helped me into the shower. The hot water hit my back and my aching muscles instantly

released some of the tension they'd been holding. I let out a bone deep sigh and then frowned when I saw the guys weren't joining me. I reached out and caught Xavier's hand. "Please, don't go."

"You want us to stay in the room?" Xavier watched me shake my head and nodded. "You want us in the shower with you."

"Please. I don't want to be away from y'all."

They each stripped down and joined me. The shower wasn't big enough for us, but they squeezed in around me. I let out a surprised gasp when I felt Jones' penis pressing into my ass. I immediately realized that I could also feel both Xavier and Mack's erections against my hips.

Jones grabbed the bottle of shower gel and squeezed some into his hands. "Ignore it, sweetheart. We're just going to take care of you tonight. My body is always going to react to yours, but I just want to wash you and put you to bed."

Mack cupped my cheek. "He's right. Just let us pamper you tonight."

They each took shower gel into their hands and lathered it between their palms before they stroked their hands all over my body. They cleaned me, not leaving a single spot untouched, and then they rinsed my body and moved on to washing my hair. I kept my eyes closed and reveled in their attention and focus.

I didn't want them to stop touching me. Feeling them close to me felt like living. After being consumed with the idea of death, living wasn't anything I wanted to take for granted. When they rinsed the conditioner out of my hair, I shifted to brush my knuckles down their lengths.

Mack grunted at me. "Watch those hands, baby."

I turned to face him and lifted my face to his. "Make me feel okay again. Even if it's only for a little while."

He cupped my face and pulled me closer. "What do you need from us, Layla?"

I reached between us and cupped him. "I need to lose myself for a few hours. Touch me. Please."

They each moved closer at once, letting their hands roam over my trembling body. Mack pressed his mouth to mine, kissing me slowly as Jones and Xavier stroked their hands over my waist and up to my back.

My heart sped up when Mack slipped his tongue past my lips. He stroked my tongue and kissed me deeper, tilting my head back as he did. Water rained down on us and he moved his kisses across my jaw, to my ear.

"We've got you, baby." Mack cupped my head in his hands. "We'll take care of everything."

I gasped as I felt fingers at my core, testing and exploring. They were quickly replaced with Jones' tip. His mouth at the back of my neck, kissing and harshly whispering my name, preceded him slowly pushing his length into me.

I pressed forward into Mack and blinked back tears. They were giving me exactly what I needed. Feeling them around me, in me, was the connection I needed to feel alive and real again, if only for a little while. I locked my arms around Mack's neck while Jones held my hips and slowly took me. The shower was so tight that there wasn't room for much movement, but the shallow thrusts were somehow exactly what I needed.

Xavier stood beside me, his hands running all over me. He cupped my breasts and tugged at my nipples, all of it somehow soft and almost comforting. I turned my face to him and found him watching me with something exceptionally warm in his eyes. Needing to touch him, I lowered one of my arms and stroked my hand down to his shaft. He swore under his breath when I gripped him in my fist and stroked.

Mack turned my face back to his and kissed me again. With his mouth against mine, he held my gaze and I felt him smile. "This isn't going to be a marathon, baby. We know you need sleep. Xavier and I will be okay. Come for Jones and we'll get you to bed so we can hold you."

I shook my head. "I want all of you. I need to feel all of you."

Xavier shut the water off and gently pulled my hand off him. "Let's get you to your bed, then."

They dried me off in a blur of never-ending touches and carried me to my childhood bedroom with the tiny bed shoved

in the corner. I pulled Xavier to me and he lifted me into his arms as he sat on the edge of the bed.

He entered me in one fluid thrust and swallowed my moans. His hands cupped my ass and he slowly worked my body up and down his length. Feeling him inside me, stretching me, was what I needed. I buried my face into the crook of his neck and clung to him while he filled me up.

“Lay back, X.” Mack was behind me and after some repositioning, I felt him pressing into my ass. “Good girl. Let me in. Feel us, baby. We’re here and we’re not going anywhere.”

My heart pounded harder as they moved. Slow and deep, they filled me with a patience I didn’t understand, but I loved. I lost myself in being caught between them, held so securely in place while they worked to make me better. Pleasure built slowly, different from ever before. It wasn’t just physical. There was a bone-deep pleasure that grew from knowing they’d come for me.

Jones knelt on the bed next to me and he turned my face to his. “Open for me, Firecracker. Take us all.”

I did as he said and my eyes fluttered closed as he fed me his shaft. I moaned and braced my hands on Xavier’s chest. I had them. It was what I needed. My body instantly reacted, growing hotter between them and focusing the sensation of my pulse directly in my core. My orgasm grew like a flower, opening one petal at a time until it was fully bloomed. Every

part of me came alive against them, my nerves rolling in pleasure.

My mind went mercifully blank as I came for them and I only existed as a ball of pleasure. I floated, tethered only by their touch, happy in that blissful alternate reality.

Somewhere at the back of my mind, I felt my guys coming and smiled. They were right there with me. I was okay with them. There was peace in the knowledge that pleasure could still exist in my world.

“Come here, baby.” Xavier tugged me higher on his chest and held me while Mack and Jones managed to wedge themselves around us on the tiny bed.

“We’re right here, Firecracker.”

“Always.” Mack stroked my wet hair out of my face.
“You’re not doing any of this alone.”

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Layla

“**Y**ou looked in the left drawer, didn’t you?” Grandma looked at Mack and grinned. “You haven’t been able to look me in the eye since you got back. You’ve got the shifty gaze of a young man who’s seen the inside of his mother’s diary.”

I was sharing Jagger’s hospital bed with him, sitting by his feet while we played cards. I nudged his foot and nodded at Mack. “He screamed like I’ve never heard a grown man scream.”

Jagger laughed and then groaned. He’d caught on to my movements, though, so he was able to grip his pain button before I could. “If you keep pushing that button, the news is going to start referring to *you* as the opioid crisis. Leave some for the other folks, Lala.”

Mack stammered across the room, where he and the guys were losing at poker to Grandma. “N-no. I didn’t see anything. I wasn’t even looking. What drawer are you even talking about?”

I laughed silently at Mack's expense. "He accidentally touched something and then spent twenty minutes washing his hands."

Mack heard me that time and groaned. "You're on my shit list, sweetheart."

"Well, now that you've seen my unmentionables, I figure I can ask y'all some personal questions." She laid out her cards and took the pot again. "First question. Who taught y'all to play poker?"

"Sorry, Lala, but I'm out. I need to hear these answers." Jagger tossed his cards to me and got comfortable. "Can you come closer to answer?"

With Grandma and Jagger deciding it was story time, the guys pulled up chairs around Jagger's bed for themselves and Gran. I stayed at the foot of Jagger's bed, happy to be close to him.

"We learned on the road. An old roadie taught us when we were fresh out of the military, just starting out. He had a drinking problem and I'm beginning to think he wasn't that good at poker." Jones shrugged. "He was a nice guy otherwise."

"What about your families?"

The atmosphere grew thicker and I wanted to save them from having to answer. "Gran, they can keep some secrets if they want."

Xavier shook his head. “You know most of my story, Layla. I don’t mind.”

Jones and Mack shrugged. Grandma took that as a reason to stick her tongue out at me, like she’d won.

“My dad raised me by himself.” Xavier smiled at me. “Dad’s been busy with stuff at his house so he hasn’t been to see us on tour for months. Layla hasn’t gotten to meet him, but he called me earlier to ask about the family emergency that canceled our tour. He’ll be in town in a couple of days.”

I rested my hand over my chest. “Really?”

“Yeah. He wants to meet you. Jagger and Gran, too.” He looked back at Grandma. “My mom left us when I was a baby. Dad did his best but I was a feral child until Mack’s mom took me in and started helping out. She trained me and Dad at the same time. Dad and I have always been close, but if it hadn’t been for Mack’s mom, Emily, we would’ve killed each other after the pizza ran out in the house. Dad and I were a mess.”

Jones rested his elbows on his knees. “Emily saved me, too. Mack’s family did. Emily was the only reason I didn’t end up dead on the streets, though.”

My chest immediately ached for the pain I could see in his expression and I couldn’t stop myself from slipping off the bed and into his lap. I wrapped myself around him and hugged him while he continued.

“I never knew my dad and my mom was a drug addict. The shit I saw before the age of six was fucked. She overdosed

when I was ten, though, and I realized just how much I missed living in a piece of shit shack with men coming in and out at all hours. I lived on the streets but I'd met Mack when I was eight and I think Emily knew something was up. She would spot me walking down the street and drag me into their van to make sure I was fed and bathed."

My heart swelled for the little boy who'd been given such a shitty hand, but also for Mack's mom. She sounded like an angel.

"I have a learning disability that makes reading and writing difficult but as a kid, it was brutal. I dropped out of school as soon as I'd been able to find enough food to not need school lunches. When Emily found out later, she helped me study for my GED and didn't let up until I had it. She had me stay with them as much as possible. I honestly don't know where any of us would be if she hadn't found us."

Grandma had listened to both Xavier and Jones with an intense focus and as soon as Jones finished talking, she got up and pulled both of their heads to her chest. "You poor babies. Thank god you have your own personal angel watching out for you."

I slipped off of Jones and onto Mack's lap to avoid getting Grandma's boobs in my face, too. I wrapped my arm around his neck and looked down at him. "Your mom was amazing, huh?"

He swallowed hard and nodded. "She was."

Grandma looked at him. "Your turn."

He'd wrapped both arms around me so I felt the way he shook. Before I could tell him that he didn't need to tell anyone anything he didn't want to, he spoke. "I was so much luckier than Jones and X... I'm the youngest of five boys. Mom and Dad were happily married. My mom was the best fucking person. We were poor, but she never hesitated to take care of the guys as much as she could. She loved them just as much as she loved her own kids."

I cupped his face. "It's okay if you don't want to share, Mack."

He turned his head and kissed my palm. "No, it's okay. It's good to share, right?"

Grandma made a noise of agreement. "Sure is."

"Yeah, so, life was good until I was fifteen. My dad was in a wreck and received a traumatic brain injury. He recovered from the wreck, but he was different afterwards. My brothers were already out of the house so it was just me and Mom taking care of him. He was angry all the time, though, and the man who'd raised me was gone. Whatever of him that was leftover was mean and loved to dig into people as deep as he could to hurt them." Mack cleared his throat and forced a smile. "When Jones said he was joining the military at seventeen, I saw it as my chance to escape my dad. The three of us ran together."

"Not all of us were cut out for soldier life, either." Xavier grunted.

Grandma looked them over and pointed at Mack. "You?"

He snorted. “I was fine. By that point, I had enough anger to fight in a war, so I was good. Xavier is a gentle giant, though. The government took one look at him and figured they could turn a man his size into an elite killing machine. They didn’t give a shit to understand that Xavier had never raised his hand to another person in his life. They nearly got him killed.”

Xavier smiled like the memory didn’t hurt him after so many years. “Thankfully, I had my best friends there to save my ass. I managed to escape with a few scars and that was all.”

“And your mom? Emily?” Grandma was just as invested as I was.

“She died of a stroke while we were in the service.”

I plastered myself to him and held him tight. “I’m sorry, Xavier. That’s not fair.”

“What about your dad and brothers?” Jagger pushed the button on his bed to lift himself slightly higher. “And how the fuck are you writing the songs you write if you haven’t such a hard time with reading and writing?”

“Jones does the verbal part of song writing. X or I will write his lyrics out or read things back to him.” Mack’s grip on me loosened with the questions moving away from his mom. His face still remained dark as he spoke about his dad. “I’ve never gone back. I pay for his care. My brothers can handle the rest. It’s not like they did anything to help when our dad was screaming at me and Mom for days on end. They think I think I’m too good for them and that’s why I don’t visit. They still refuse to believe he was abusive.”

I stroked his face and gently kissed him. “Oh, Mack. I’m so sorry that happened.”

Jones grunted. “Hey, I was a homeless kid. Where’s my kiss?”

Xavier just grinned when I looked at him. “I used to eat worms in front of everyone at recess because Dad took me fishing so much that I thought worms were just food you bought at the grocery store and ate. I hadn’t realized he was baiting his hook. No one even dared me. I just saw worms and ate them.”

I cackled, the somber mood lifting almost instantly as the guys went back and forth telling us humiliating stories about their childhoods. Jagger threw in a few of mine so I got him back with some of his. We laughed and for a while, I forgot why we were all there together.

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Layla

The nights spent at Grandma's house were cramped. The four of us didn't exactly fit in my full-size bed. We tried to make it work, though, because Grandma was in her bed and Jagger's old room had become a temporary home for Nick and Hilary. With everyone there at night, there wasn't room for me to crumble. I wouldn't have traded it for anything. It felt like family. Loud and chaotic, it would've been perfect if Jagger was home.

I spent my days with Jagger. Every day he was stronger from his injuries in the wreck. His ribs were severely bruised and would be painful for a while, but even they were better. His broken leg and arm had been casted and the neon pink I'd slipped the doctor a twenty to use made Jagger look like a shiny, plastic toy.

We dealt with people who stopped by to check on him and Grandma panting at her soap operas during the day, but the guys weren't there, so it was marginally quieter. Nick and Hilary wouldn't stop cleaning the house and cooking dinner

for everyone, even when I made it clear that I didn't expect anything from them. It really felt like this big family I hadn't known I could have had circled around Jagger and I was more grateful than I'd ever been.

The guys had to deal with Bingham and other business during the day but as soon as they were done, they came to the hospital to hang out with Jagger for a while. The way the town and nurses reacted to seeing them, it was clear that they'd already won Backtop over.

Another interesting development that filled me with hope was Jagger's stubborn disinterest in his night nurse, Cammie. She was his age, so pretty that it almost hurt my feelings, and had heart eyes for my dumb brother. I could tell that he felt something for the woman from the way he refused to even admit that he found her pretty. He was fighting it and I enjoyed watching him squirm as the clock ticked closer to Cammie's shift. No matter how often I tried to talk to him about it, though, he clammed up. Deep down, I knew the reason why. He'd accepted what he thought was the end for him. I couldn't.

“What the hell has gotten into this town?” Grandma stomped into the room, her eyebrows clamped together in the middle of her forehead as anger twisted her mouth. “I nearly got run over three times trying to park in that piece of shit parking lot. I swear to everything sweet in this world I almost just punched a teenager. Little shit just took my spot and then flashed me some gang sign.”

“What?” I stood up, startled by the idea of Grandma getting flashed gang signs. I wasn’t even sure if I was more concerned about her getting hurt by a gang member or her somehow joining their gang. “Are you sure?”

She held up a peace sign with her fingers. “It was a damn hippie gang sign.”

Jagger laughed full out and clutched his stomach. “God. No more laughing.”

“You scared me, Gran. Jeez.” I sank back into my chair next to Jagger and stretched my legs out. “Did you see the guys while you were nearly getting run over by hippies?”

Shaking her head, she walked over to Jagger to kiss his forehead. “I didn’t see them. I was a little busy, though. I’m serious. The whole town has lost its mind. I didn’t know a single person I passed on the road coming here. Are we being invaded? I think we’re being invaded.”

Jagger snorted. “By hippies?”

There was a heavy knock on the door and we all looked up to see a small group of men and women in white coats, holding clipboards. The doctors on staff at the hospital didn’t knock. The strangers looking at us were an anomaly.

I stood up and plastered a brittle smile on my face. “Hello. Can we help you?”

An older woman with solid silver hair stepped forward and shook my head. “Hi. I’m Doctor Fairity. These are my colleagues.”

I waited while she introduced the others and frowned. “I’m sorry. Are you new at the hospital? It’s not typical that we don’t recognize faces around here.”

Dr. Fairity smiled and shook her head. “No, no. I’m sorry. Let me start over. I’m Dr. Fairity and I work as a research oncologist. Each of us are oncologists. We’ve been called in to look at Jagger’s case.”

Grandma gasped. “You have?”

I glanced back at Jagger and saw his eyes on Cammie. She was standing just behind the new doctors, her eyes on him, full of hope. My heart filled and I crossed my fingers that things were going to get better.

“There’s nothing to look at.” Jagger’s harsh sentence made me flinch. His face had turned hard and he refused to look back at Cammie. “I’m dying. The doctor here told me there’s nothing that can be done. I won’t spent the last of my life being treated like a fucking lab rat.”

Cammie’s face fell and I swore I saw tears in her eyes as she turned and hurried away. Frustration bit at me and I turned to my brother, scowling. “What the hell, Jagger?”

He knew I’d seen the exchange between him and Cammie. “She needs to accept it. I’m no one to start caring about.”

“I didn’t realize you were put in charge of her emotions and feelings. You ass. I’ve never known you to be a quitter, Jagger Morgan, but it’s almost like you want to die.” I crossed my arms over my chest and glared at him. “Now, shut up and

listen to the doctors. And later? You need to apologize to Cammie for being a horse's ass."

Dr. Fairity cleared her throat gently. "Jagger, if you'd just give us a moment to explain what we do, I think you might feel differently about us."

Grandma moved closer to him, ready to slap his head. "He'd love to listen."

"Thank you. Our practice is very selective in who we help. Our work is expensive and not often covered by any insurance companies. Unfortunately, until something changes, our services are very elite. We charge a lot of money for what we do and because of that, we're very selective about the cases we take. We have no interest in taking money to watch someone die. We study a patient before we offer our services. If we didn't think you had a fighting chance, we wouldn't be here, Jagger."

My legs buckled and I would've hit the ground if not for Hilary slipping in at that exact moment. She eased me into a chair and fanned me while looking around. "What's going on?"

Jagger seemed like he was fighting with himself. "It doesn't matter. I don't have anything to give you. I can't afford your services."

Grandma tapped her foot anxiously. "I'll sell the house. We can sell everything. Your life is more important, Jagger."

“Actually, ma’am, that won’t be necessary.” Dr. Fairity stepped farther into the room. “A very generous donor has already covered whatever experiences we’d incur while treating you.”

My head spun. “Oh, my god.”

Grandma suddenly pretended she was a church lady and threw her hands up while offering up an excited shout at god. Jagger just stared blankly at Dr. Fairity, confusion on his face.

Hilary, bless her, she nearly tripped over herself in her eagerness. “Yes! Yes! He’ll do it!”

Dr. Fairity smiled knowingly at Hilary but nodded at Jagger. “It’s up to Jagger. Some of the treatments wouldn’t be comfortable, of course, and you’d have to move for a few months while we treated you. We just don’t have the facilities here to do what we need.”

Jagger remained quiet but then Cammie stepped back into the room, her eyes red and angry as she looked at my brother. “Do you *want* to die?”

We were all silent as the tension built between them. Jagger glared back at her. “No, of course not!”

“Okay, then say you’ll do it.” She inched closer. “Say you’ll get the treatment and choose to live.”

He ground his teeth and glanced away. “I don’t want to spend the last of my life tied to machines.”

“And I don’t want to spend the last of your life wondering what could have been! I care about you, Jag. I know I’m not

supposed to get involved, but I can't help it. You're special. But if you aren't going to try, I can't do this. I'll quit."

Everyone's head swung back and forth between the two of them and we all paused while staring at Jagger, our breaths frozen as we waited. I felt like I would throw up at any second, but then my brother remembered he wasn't a complete moron, thankfully.

"You're not quitting. If I have to do this to keep you from ruining your career, fine." Jagger watched Cammie's lips stretch into a bright smile and he fought his own. "You're going out with me, though. A real date."

She nodded quickly. "Just as soon as you sign the papers on this treatment plan."

Jagger groaned. "Fine. Whatever I need to do, I'll do."

My heart was on my sleeve and leaking down my cheeks as she rushed to Jagger's side and pressed a sweet kiss to his cheek before hurrying away. Jagger's cheeks were bright red and I felt like pinching them. "Awww."

He glared at me. "Shut up, Layla."

Dr. Fairity looked at me and smiled. "You're Layla?"

I nodded, feeling confused. "Yeah... Why?"

"I'm not supposed to say anything, but you have some very caring men in your life. They worked hard to get us here." She looked back at Jagger. "We won't treat you like a lab rat, Jagger. You'll see. We care about our research, but we care more about our patients."

He was staring at me, his eyes wide. “The guys from JAX paid for this?”

I held up my hands. I had no idea. I realized I didn’t know what they’d been up to during the day and I wanted to rush to their side more than anything right then. I wanted to tell them what they meant to me. Life was too short not to.

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Layla

Nick shifted into the room that felt much too small for the amount of people standing inside. “If everyone would look at me, your dutiful announcer for the evening’s festivities, I’ll get this show started.”

Dr. Fairity and her group backed out of the room. “We’ll be watching from a closer view point. We’ll be in touch tomorrow.”

I frowned at Nick. “What are you talking about?”

Grandma sighed. “This whole place is going crazy today. Just go with it, girl.”

Hilary grinned brightly at me as Nick moved the chairs from in front of the window. “You’re so lucky, Layla.”

Cammie came back into the room and instead of helping me make sense of what was happening, she went over to the window and cranked it open. “If anyone asks, I didn’t do that.”

Nick and Cammie worked together to move Jagger’s bed and prop him up so he was looking right out the window. As soon

as he could see out, he gasped. A beat later, when a loud roar came from outside, I gasped, too.

“Tonight, we have special box seating for a one night only performance by the band JAX. Hilary? The swag?” Nick motioned towards his wife and she appeared with her hands full of merchandise. “On this limited edition JAX merch, you’ll see a very interesting and stolen photograph of two kids flipping the bird. I believe you’ll recognize yourself, Jagger, and that little tot is our very own Layla. Notice the wholly original quote that tells cancer to fuck off. All profits from tonight’s show are going directly into paying for whatever continued treatment you need, Jag. You’re covered, man.”

Jagger’s eyes were wide and full of tears as he held one of the shirts and stared at our younger selves. He looked up at me and laughed. “Mom and Dad would’ve loved this.”

I was a blubbering mess. The picture, the effort, the crowd of people cheering for my brother’s health... My heart was overflowing with love and happiness.

Nick and Hilary both hugged me and then stood behind Jagger’s bed as Jones’ voice filled the evening air. Grandma gripped my hand and wiped at her own tears while she watched the men who’d been strangers not too long ago make the biggest effort for her grandkids.

I inched closer and watched as my guys stood on a makeshift stage in their own fuck off, cancer shirts. The crowd was shockingly large, which explained Grandma’s traffic complaints.

“We just want to thank everyone for coming out tonight to celebrate our friend Jagger with us. We don’t normally talk too much or get into our feelings and shit, but tonight is special.” Jones stared up at our room, but I didn’t think he could see me until he continued. “Stop crying, baby. You have no idea how much it kills us when you cry.”

Cammie sighed from next to me. “Wow.”

“You see these two sweet little faces on these shirts? This one with the diaper is the best thing to ever happen to us. And the bigger one with the forehead? That’s her big brother, Jag. He’s a special guy. Not just because he’s a big fan of JAX, but because of the way he loves his sister.” Jones smiled and shook his head. “The three of us up here on stage tonight haven’t always gotten to see happy families who love each other. Shit. JAX has been my only family for more than a decade. Until Layla, I was okay with that.”

Mack gently strummed his guitar as he stepped up to his mic. “Being here, seeing Layla and her brother’s love for each other, seeing how wildly their grandma loves them both,... It’s different. My mom loved us like that, but she’s been gone for as many years as I got to have with her. Seeing the family here, feeling their love, it made me realize that my ability to be loved and to love like that didn’t die all those years ago. Watching this family love each other has just shown me how special it is. The world needs more of it. Letting Jagger slip away isn’t an option for us. We’ve been called a lot of things over the years, but one thing that I’ve always been proud of is how headstrong we are. We fight for what we want and what

we think is right. Sorry, Jagger. You're about to get all that stubbornness focused right at you, man."

More tears escaped when I watched Xavier take a mic and bring it to his mouth. "Um. I hate public speaking... I just want to tell a story about Jagger, to show the depth of his character. When he first got the idea that we were interested in his sister in a real way, he called me. I've spent my whole life being avoided because of my size, but Jagger went straight to me. He let me know that it didn't matter that we were his favorite band. He told me he could still listen to our music after kicking our asses if we hurt his baby sister. He outright threatened me, but he also told me that he loved and supported his sister and if she wanted us, the unconventionalness of it didn't bother him, as long as she was happy. Jagger is a man who's as fierce in his love for his sister as he is his protectiveness of her. He's a good man, with a big heart. He deserves every chance at kicking our ass if we ever make Layla cry. Cancer is bullshit and unfair, but it can't have Jagger."

Jones grinned back at Xavier. "Goddamn, X. Who knew that you just needed love to become a public speaker?"

Jagger cleared his throat and when I looked at him, I saw his eyes were just as wet as mine. "Only you, baby sister, could've gone into the touring rockstar world and found three good men."

"I love you, Jag. You're not going anywhere." Looking back at the stage, I watched as my men began their concert and I

felt so secure in knowing they would help me take care of everything.

“Love you, too, Lala.”

The next time I was able to tear my eyes away from the guys, I saw Cammie and Jagger were holding hands at the edge of his bed and both of them were blushing furiously. A feeling of peace settled over me and I knew that everything was going to be okay.

Grandma rested her head on my shoulder. “Maybe it’s time I really started trying to date again.”

A knock on the door sounded and I turned around, just to have my mouth fall open. Filling the doorway was an almost exact copy of Xavier. The man had gone gray and had the wear of a man who’d lived his life under the sun, but he had the same handsome features as Xavier. He didn’t need to introduce himself, that’s how similarly the two men were built.

“You’re Layla. Xavier sent me a picture of you but you’re even prettier in person. I’m Alex, his dad.” He held out his big hand and I was so emotional from the guys’ speech that I bypassed his hand and wrapped my arms around him in a tight hug. He grunted in surprise and laughed. “Of course, you’re a sweetheart. Anyone who captured my son’s heart has to be very special.”

I smiled up at him. “You raised a good man.”

Alex’s eyes grew moist and he cleared his throat before speaking again. “I could say the same to your grandmother.

She helped raise a great woman. Xavier told me all about her, too. He's a big fan."

Grandma stepped forward and batted her eyelashes at Alex. "I'm a big fan of Xavier, too. Don't tell the others but he's my favorite."

I slowly backed away as Alex's cheeks turned pink under Grandma's attention. Watching them for a moment, I saw that my absence wasn't even noticed.

Standing next to Jagger again, I saw him look over at Grandma and then up at me with a questioning gaze. I shrugged. "I think love is in the air."

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Layla

The concert finished and I paced the room while everyone else talked excitedly about it, the treatment plan, Alex and Grandma, or whatever else. I couldn't think of anything except seeing the guys walk into the room. I knew they were coming soon because they'd explicitly told Nick to not let me go off in search of them. They were worried about the crowd gobbling me up, but they should've been worried about me gobbling them up. I had a million feelings going through my body and only one thought banging around my brain.

I shoved my hair behind my ears and licked my lips. Glancing up at the clock, I watched the hands move to make sure it was still working.

Hilary lightly gripped my shoulder. "Keep breathing, Layla."

I nodded but I couldn't open my mouth. I knew the second I did, my thought was going to explode out.

"Nick and I got you something for all that you've done for us. Take these." She pressed two plastic cards into my hand

and then slipped away.

I saw the logo of a hotel on the cards and recognized it as a nicer one a few towns over. I flipped them over and saw a sticky note. *California King, babe. Get it.*

The door to the room opened then and my guys walked in, still sweaty from the show. Their eyes moved directly to me and I felt the world shift for us. Whatever we needed, they'd make it happen. No matter what, they were mine and I was theirs.

My brain did exactly what I thought it would. That thought, louder than any I'd ever had, it wanted out. My lips parted and I shouted at them like they were standing in a room across town, instead of the same room. "I love you!"

Everyone around me went quiet and ping ponged their heads between me and the guys. I couldn't hear or see anything other than my guys, though.

My brain wasn't finished, apparently. "I love each of you so much. I didn't know it was possible to feel this way about another person, but I feel it. I want to spend the rest of my life with y'all and I want everything. I want an off-white wedding dress, kids, a bunch of dogs, and a house with a front porch like Gran's. I want to be your family and I want to love each of you enough that it fills whatever holes others left. Most of all, though? Right now? I just want to go to this hotel with you and-"

"Jesus, Layla!" Jagger's voice was strained with laughter as he cut me off. "Not in front of your brother and grandmother.

Please.”

I blushed. “Oh, yeah. Sorry.”

Xavier moved around everyone, patted his dad on the shoulder and then did a double take when he saw his dad and Grandma holding hands, but he didn’t stop on his way to me. When he got to me, he bent down and pressed a kiss to my mouth that stole my breath. Then, he tossed me over his shoulder like the caveman he was. “I love you, too, honey, and that hotel might be too far away.”

“Oh, my god. I’m a sick man in a hospital bed. I can’t escape. Grant me some mercy, here!” Jagger groaned into his hands.

“Get used to it, Jag. We love your sister and have to start the work of giving you nieces and nephews. You heard the woman. She wants babies.” Mack’s voice was full of humor but his hand on my ass was as serious as anything ever had been.

Jones grunted. “Love your sister and have to go now. We’ll turn the shirts inside out before anything happens, Jagger. There’s your mercy.”

The sound of Jagger gagging faded fast as Xavier carried me out of the hospital and right into a crowd of lingering fans. My face burned hot with embarrassment as I heard cameras clicking around us. My ass was right in the air!

Xavier’s hand landed over it, probably making the pictures even worse. “If you’ll just move out of our way, we need to go

talk with our woman about how much we love her.”

I heard laughter over my groan but a few seconds later, it seemed as if people had moved for him because he was practically running and then we were at a car and he was dropping me inside. I didn't get a chance to see how big that crowd had been because Xavier was immediately on top of me on the bench seat of the limo.

Cupping my face, he kissed me deeply and stroked his tongue past my lips to explore my mouth. I could feel his hardness pressing into my core and wrapped my thigh around his hip to get closer. We hadn't had sex since the tour bus and I was suddenly ravenous. I moaned into his mouth and dug my fingertips into his back.

He lifted his mouth from mine and stared at me with wild eyes. “Say it again.”

I knew what he meant instantly. “I love you, Xavier.”

He rolled his hips into me and kissed down my jaw. “I love you, Layla. I love you so goddamn much.”

“It's a twenty minute drive to the hotel. Another three minutes to get inside the room. One minute to get you naked and spread out. That's twenty-four minutes until we can have you.” Jones slid onto the seat next to my head. “That's too long.”

Xavier kissed down my chest and stomach. He growled at the multiple buttons of my jeans. “New rule. No pants. Only

skirts for you. Unless you're going to be around other men when we're not there. Like that's going to happen."

I would've laughed at his insanity but he jerked my jeans down my thighs and left them at my knees before flipping me over so my ass was in the air again. I gasped when he yanked my panties to the side and then pressed three of his thick fingers into me. My face was in Jones' lap and my arms were tangled under my chest, trapped against the seat, but nothing mattered when those fingers stretched me.

Mack knelt next to the seat and reached under me to stroke my clit. "I love watching your body flush when we touch your clit, baby. You light up like a firework and it's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

I waited for the usual fast pace that we came together with, but Xavier was almost reverent as he stroked his fingers in and out of me. Something about the slower pace made me feel their love even more intensely. Tears peppered my eyes and I couldn't help saying it again. "I love you. I love you each so much."

Jones brushed my hair out of my face and wiped my eyes. "I love you, Firecracker. We're going to show you just how much tonight. You're everything to us, baby."

"Everything. I love you, Layla." Mack kissed my shoulder. "Marriage, babies, pets, the house, and all."

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Jones

It took twenty-two and a half minutes to get to the hotel room and naked. The rush ended once we were naked. Something about the idea of forever with Layla gave us a peace when it was time to take her. I knew there would be plenty of times that were still rushed and wild, but that night, it was different. She loved us and wanted a family with us. She wanted to be our wife. How could we not slow down and live in that sunshine for a while?

Xavier stretched her out across the bed and took his time kissing every part of her body while Mack seemed to lose himself in her mouth, kissing her deep until they were both out of breath. I moved a chair near the foot of the bed and sank into it, content to watch Layla writhe under their touch.

She cried out when Xavier settled himself between her thighs and slowly licked her dripping pussy. He used his tongue to spread her wetness to her ass and used his tongue to fuck both of her holes at a lazy pace until she yanked at his

hair. Still, he didn't rush. He took his time bringing her to orgasm and when she did come, she screamed his name.

There seemed to be an understanding that night that we each needed our own moment with her before anything else happened. Mack and I settled back and watched as Xavier moved up Layla's body and kissed her with her wetness coating his mouth. She braced her feet on the bed and lifted her hips to take his length. He planted his fists on either side of her head and took his time sliding himself deep inside her.

Layla moaned his name and clung to him while he eased his length out and then thrust deep again. Over and over again, he filled her at a pace that seemed to make them both desperate for each other. Their moans were broken by the sounds of their kissing and legs twisting on the blanket under them.

As she got close to another orgasm, her movements became jerky and the way her fingers dug into his shoulders started to leave marks. Xavier growled and rolled them into a sitting position with her straddling him. Wrapping his arms around her, he moved her up and down his dick until they were both clinging to each other and coming hard.

I couldn't take my eyes off Layla as she laid out on the bed, chest rising and falling fast as she smiled at the ceiling. She was so beautiful that it was hard to catch my own breath for a moment. That was why when Mack looked at me, I nodded to him that I was fine with waiting as he took his time with her. I wanted to watch her and just know that she was ours. I needed that comfort after everything.

Mack laid next to her and I watched him pull her on top of his chest so he could hold her while he kissed her. They lost themselves in each other and only broke that kiss when he lifted her enough to slide inside her welcoming body. She curled herself over him so she could continue kissing him even while slowly riding his length.

I watched as they rocked against each other and their kisses became open-mouthed pants. Even in their hungry drive for each other, their pace stayed the same. Even when their cries and groans became chaotic and loud, it was the same. It stayed slow and deep until they both came together.

My chest ached with love and pride as I watched my best friends and the woman I loved take care of each other in the most basic way. If I'd ever had any doubt that what we had made sense, that moment would've quieted it. I'd never felt that kind of peace. And when Layla stumbled on weak legs to stand and walk over to me, I knew that my future was set and it was going to be fucking good.

She climbed onto my lap and sank her tight core over my length in one steady stroke. When her knees rested on the chair outside of my hips, she wrapped her arms around my neck and smiled. "I love you, Jones."

Each time I heard her say those words another piece of me felt like it healed. Knowing she loved me was a high unlike any I'd ever experienced. I cupped her face and pulled her closer. "I love you so fucking much, Firecracker. I will love you forever."

Her eyes filled with tears and she kissed me, letting me taste the saltiness of those tears. “Forever might not be long enough.”

Running my hands down to her hips, I lifted her almost completely off my shaft and then pulled her back down until her thighs rested on mine. I repeated that motion, fucking her in long, slow strokes that threatened to break me. “You belong to us, baby. You’re ours. Say it. Tell me that you’re mine.”

She moaned and tightened her grip on my neck. “I’m yours. I belong to you. I belong to each of you. I always have.”

“I’m going to spend the rest of my life taking care of you, Layla. We all are. You’re going to be cherished and cared for, the way you were meant to be.”

She dropped one hand to her clit when she watched the way my jaw clenched. “Come inside me, Jones. I want to feel you in me with Mack and Xavier. I want to spend forever like this.”

I pumped her up and down my shaft harder until we both came. Instead of the normal body slam type of orgasm, it was a whisper that promised everything to come. It was gentle and quiet, a purposeful moment to show her that we would love her in every way.

After I caught my breath, I was still hard and I stood up with her in my arms so I could walk to the bed. With the slow and easy part of our needs met, I could feel the desperate hunger rising again, like always. The part of me that wanted to love

her sweetly was overcome with the part of me that wanted to love her so hard she passed out and couldn't move.

Xavier and Mack had waited and watched, their animalistic need growing as they did. We all knew that our sex would always come back to that base place of fucking like animals, rutting to mark her as ours.

I laid back on the bed and pulled Layla's arms over my head so she would grip the headboard. With her body arched over my head, I tipped my mouth up to bite her nipples and suck hard enough to distract her from Mack settling on the bed behind her.

She screamed out when Mack pushed his length into her ass, stuffing her full. Her throat bobbed over me as she tried to catch her breath but then Xavier was sliding his dick into her throat. I watched as her chest flushed and her eyes rolled back in her head. That was the look I craved. She liked being fucked by one of us at a time, probably even loved it just as much, but there wasn't anything like the three of us stuffing her full at the same time and it showed in the way her body went pliant for us and burned hotter with each stroke. She needed it.

Xavier stood over us, feeding his cock to Layla, and watching as Mack and I drove our cocks into her ass and core, forcing our previous come out of her with loud, wet sounds. He growled. "We'll all have to come in that sweet pussy again to make sure we give your body time to drink us all in and start growing that baby."

Without warning, Layla came like the firecracker she was. It was explosive and her body went as stiff as a board between us while she screamed around Xavier's dick. She kept coming, kept flooding my balls with her juices as she did, and cried out each of our names the whole time. She was ours. Soon her growing body would prove that to everyone else.

With thoughts of that baby and her body changing to grow it, we all lost it. Possessive assholes that we were, there was nothing hotter than our come staking that kind of claim over her body in such a huge way. When we all came, it was with the promise of forever and more.

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Layla

When I walked into the hospital room the next morning, it was with a limp. The idea of putting a baby inside me had turned the guys into rutting beasts and I'd happily taken them deep time after time until I'd been covered in their attempts to knock me up and my body's eager receptiveness to the idea. I wasn't sure I'd gotten any sleep at all, but I didn't care. I'd needed to be with them that way.

I hadn't realized that not having them touch me with that wild need since before our fight the night I'd flown home was affecting me. A scared little corner of my brain had quietly been conspiring to make me believe that the guys were there not because of wanting me, but because they were really great men. The night before had shown me that while they were great men, they wanted me maybe even more than that. They'd each tried to stop and let me rest, but their need had been too much. My own need had been too much, but seeing theirs...I felt like I could breathe easier.

They were taking care of Jagger, they knew I loved them and they loved me, and I felt hope. Things were going to be okay.

That was why, when I walked into the hospital with a limp, I didn't feel all that concerned when I saw the TV in the waiting room playing a clip of Matthew sitting down for an exclusive interview. I hadn't thought twice about him since I'd heard about Jagger's wreck.

I felt the guys stop walking behind me and glanced back at them to see them scowling at the TV. I smiled at their protective nature and walked back to them to kiss each of them on the cheek. "I'm going ahead to see Jag. Don't get worked up over whatever nonsense he's spouting."

A few people in the waiting room watched me kiss each guy and quickly looked away. The sensation of being judged threatened to get under my skin, but I ignored it. I was in an unconventional relationship and people were bound to have thoughts. I wasn't going to worry about it. Not when I was so loved.

Despite it being so early in the day, Jagger's room was full. Grandma was sitting with Xavier's dad, something I felt the need to investigate further, especially when I noticed the way his hand rested low on Grandma's back. Cammie was standing next to Jagger, her hands wrapped around his. Even Nick and Hilary were already sitting in one corner of the room, with her in his lap. They all turned to me when I walked in and the expressions on their faces gave me pause in a way that the people in the waiting room hadn't been able to.

“What?” I hurried over to Jagger’s free side and looked him over. I brushed his hair off his forehead and checked him over, looking for new damage or any kind of sign that things were worse. “Are you okay? What is it?”

Jagger’s frown was deep as he took my hand. “I’m fine, Lala. The new doctors have already been in today, checking me over.”

I let out a breath I hadn’t even realized I’d been holding. “Thank god. Y’all scared the shit out of me.”

He scowled at the TV and shook his head. “Matthew has been on TV all morning, Layla. He’s saying shit.”

I didn’t even bother glancing at the TV. “And? I don’t care what he says, Jag. As long as you’re okay, I’m okay.”

Grandma growled angrily. “That little fucker is saying things about you, Layla Rose. He’s saying things that aren’t true.”

My stomach tightened at the tone of her voice. Grandma got pissed plenty, but she didn’t sound that furious very often. If ever. I saw Alex’s face darken and watched him stand to his full height.

“Layla, I think you should find the guys and sit down together to hear this shit. You shouldn’t have to hear it alone.” He looked out towards the hallway. “Are they out there?”

I nodded and looked over at Nick and Hilary. They both looked just as angry. “Okay, y’all are freaking me out. Matthew is a piece of shit, but how bad can it be?”

Xavier appeared in the room in front of his dad, eyes blazing. He glared at everyone in the room, including his father. “You’d all better know that shit isn’t true. If a single one of you questions Layla for a second, you need your heads checked. Understand me?”

“Whoa, Xavier!” I hurried over to him. “Just breathe for me. Okay? Whatever it is, it’s fine. You don’t have to hulk out on our family, though.”

Jagger let out a humorless laugh. “He’s right. People are going to think Matthew is telling the truth. Anyone who knows you at all will know better, though. Unfortunately, not enough people know you that well.”

I held up my hands and swore. “Okay, I need to know what the hell Matthew is saying. Y’all are acting like he accused me of murder.”

Hilary handed me the remote to the TV and squeezed my hand. “Bitter men, Layla. We all know better.”

I unmuted the TV with a sinking feeling deep in my chest. Matthew’s voice filled the room instantly as the news replayed his interview with a popular journalist.

“My entire life has been ruined by this. I trusted the wrong person and I feel like such a fool for it. This is all my fault, really. If I hadn’t been so eager to believe her and everything she told me, I wouldn’t be where I am now.” Matthew’s head hung low and when he looked up at the interviewer, there were tears in his eyes. “I loved her. I thought I knew her. I devoted

my entire life to her and made plans. If I'm being honest, I still love her. I'm sick. I can't turn it off."

The interviewer, Susan Hess, passed Matthew a tissue. "This is all coming out after a video was released last night of the members of JAX playing a charity concert to raise money for her brother, right?"

"Yes. I couldn't keep quiet anymore. She's a con artist. She told me her brother was sick when we first met, too. She was trying to get a job at the record label I worked at and when I tried to help her out by telling her that she didn't have the experience or education to land the higher jobs that she was aiming for, she started crying. She told me her brother was sick and that if she didn't get him treatment, he'd die and she was just trying her best to hold her family together. Her parents had both died of drug overdoses, supposedly, and she made it feel so real that I went against my better judgment and I hired her on the spot."

A red haze came over my vision. I could feel my blood burning hotter and my scalp tingled all over as I felt a raging fire inside me.

"I did my work and hers for three years. I paid for everything. I've gone into debt and will probably have to file for bankruptcy because of all the money I gave her to help her brother. I'm ruined, Susan. I just wanted to help her and I'll never recover because of that choice."

Susan shook her head dramatically. "After she started working for you, you said a romantic relationship was initiated

by Ms. Morgan?”

Matthew looked down and nodded. “I’m not proud of that fact. As her boss, I should’ve known better. It was wrong and I’ll never forgive myself for it. I’d just gotten out of an unhealthy relationship, though, and Ms. Morgan was determined. She showed up at my apartment multiple nights a week. She put me in situations that I was afraid to remove myself from too quickly, for fear of upsetting her. I’m aware that some men will poke holes in what I’m about to say and imply that if a beautiful woman kept coming onto me, I had to have reacted positively, but it’s not true. I said no.”

Susan’s gaze turned to the camera and she seemed to look directly into my soul as she said her next words. “Unfortunately, sexual harassment and assault on men go underreported, in large part because of the very stigma that Matthew speaks on now. Statistics on this show a disturbing amount of men face this kind of vile treatment and just deal with it for fear of becoming the butt of a joke. We’ve come a long way as a country in how we treat female victims, but I worry that our male counterparts are greatly suffering in silence because of our refusal to accept that women can also be predators.”

I staggered back a few steps and put my hand over my mouth. The anger was gone and in its place was pure horror and shock. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

“I can’t talk about the first time she came onto me. I can barely think about it. Every time with Ms. Morgan was painful

for me, but that first time... I'm ashamed that I didn't stop it. I'm embarrassed. Some days I think this is all my fault. I should've done something." Matthew shook his head and held up his hand to stop Susan from comforting him. "Let's just move on. Please."

"Whatever you need, Matthew."

"It was three years of hell for me. I worked painfully long hours to make sure I did both of our jobs. I was under constant pressure from her to continue giving her money and then the pressure shifted to getting her a higher job at the label. She was tired of being under me. I didn't want to subject anyone else to her vitriol so I tried to put it off as long as I could." He rubbed his temples and looked exhausted. "She beat me, though. She got around me. She followed me to an event and while I was working, she set up a meeting with JAX. The rest is kind of a blur, honestly. One minute, I was in a relationship and I was so sick that I'd bought a ring and was planning on proposing, even though she made me miserable. The next minute, I hear from Mr. Bingham at the label that JAX wants Ms. Morgan to manage their tour."

"That's a very large leap from assistant, isn't it? Would that typically happen?" Susan leaned closer to Matthew. "And how did this affect your relationship with Mr. Bingham, the label owner?"

"That jump has never happened, that I know of. Mr. Bingham was called and threatened, however, that if he didn't give Ms. Morgan the job, the label would love their highest

grossing band. He had no choice.” Matthew’s voice got quiet. “That was the beginning of the end for me. Mr. Bingham was made to think that I was a terribly incompetent manager who’d kept Ms. Morgan hidden away. I was painted as a lazy worker with no real skills. I became useless to Mr. Bingham in that moment. My days were numbered. I was just too dumb to know it.”

“I know this is getting to the hard part, Matthew, but please tell me what happened next.”

“Ms. Morgan demanded I find a way to be placed near her on JAX’s tour so I could continue doing her work. I did it. I talked the band I managed into touring with JAX and I planted myself at Ms. Morgan’s side.” He shuddered. “Then I was forced to watch a series of events that haunt me to this day. I had to watch the woman I thought I was going to marry be intimate with three other men at the same time. She made me watch. When I refused, she told the guys from JAX that I did or said horrible things to her and they tried to defend her by threatening me. They became her new pawns.”

Susan covered her mouth with her perfectly manicured hand and reached out with her other hand to gently pat Matthew’s. “I’m sorry to have to ask you to finish this, Matthew. If it wasn’t pertinent, I wouldn’t.”

“Everything blew up last week. I was done being abused and treated that way. I stood up for myself to Ms. Morgan for the first time in over three years. And I was punished for it.” He reached beside him in his chair and pulled out a pack of

makeup wipes. “This is humiliating for me. I know I will never work in this industry again, but I’m also going to be a laughing stock. All because I said no to her.”

I watched in even more horror as Matthew slowly wiped his face, wincing as he did.

“She was so angry. I... I was scared of her. I’d never seen her *that* mad at me. When she hit me, I was so stunned that I didn’t react.” He lifted his face to the camera and under the shine from the moist face wipe and studio lighting, large bruising across his face was revealed. Even I gasped. “She never liked when I didn’t react so she hit me again. And again. And again. I think she only stopped because she could hear people coming. I thought she wasn’t going to and I’ve never been so afraid for my life.”

“I am so sorry that happened to you, Matthew. Did you see a doctor?”

“I should have. I was too embarrassed, though. I got beat up by a girl. I could already hear the taunts.” He sniffed. “And then I got a call from Mr. Bingham the next day. He’d been informed of all these things I’d been accused of and he fired me on the spot. No severance, no conversation about options, no anything. I’ve been blacklisted. I’m so far in debt that I can’t think about it. My face is in constant pain. People inside the industry believe the worst things about me. All because I made the mistake of trusting that a woman as pretty as Ms. Morgan would be equally pretty on the inside. My life is over. I have no prospects.”

“Why come out and tell your story? Why now?”

Matthew looked into the camera and dabbed at his dry eyes. “I believe that the men of JAX are in danger of being abused and used by this woman, just like I was. She’s never going to stop. Maybe it won’t just be hitting them this time, though. Maybe she’ll go farther and really hurt someone. They don’t know the woman they’ve let into their hearts. She’s a monster. She’ll ruin them the same way she ruined me. She’s already doing it. Without me doing her job, they canceled the rest of their tour. It won’t be long until something terrible comes out. They’ll be accused of something terrible or they’ll end up dead. I believe that with all my heart.”

Susan Hess gave one last dramatic look to the camera. “You heard him, ladies and gentleman. There’s a snake amongst us and danger lurks around the corner for one of America’s favorite bands. Let me know what you think in the comment section, ladies and gentlemen. Do you fear the worst for JAX? What should be done about this? Personally, I think it’s past time that we protected the vulnerable people in our society, both men and women.”

The TV went black as someone turned it off and silence filled the room as everyone watched and waited for me to respond. My mind raced but one thought had blared through my skull louder than most.

Turning to where Xavier, Mack, and Jones stood close to me, waiting to scoop me up and rescue me if they needed to, I

straightened my back and lifted my chin. “You need to leave me.”

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Layla

The room erupted around us, but I kept my gaze steady on the guys. Their faces twisted in anger and refusal, but I was right. “If you don’t distance yourselves from me right now, the band will be damaged. Everything you’ve worked for will be overshadowed by this. You can’t let that happen. I *won’t* let that happen.”

“You think we fucking care about the band right now? We care about *you*, Layla. We’re not going anywhere.” Mack shook his head at me. “I can’t believe you’d even suggest it.”

“No.” Xavier folded his arms across his chest. “I’m not going anywhere.”

I looked at Jones. “Please listen to me and talk some sense into them. Matthew is going to drag me through the dirt until he can’t gain from it anymore. I’m done. You know it’ll be impossible for me to come back from the stuff he’s putting out about me. If you guys stand by me, you’ll lose everything. You can’t do that. Jones, you know I’m right. I care about the band and the band’s success. I don’t want to be the reason it burns.”

He put his hands on his hips and glared at me. “You want us to leave you. The day after you told us you love us.”

Grandma whistled. “I’d say we should clear the room for this fight, but one of us is a little stuck in his bed. I can tell this is going to be a doozy, though, so maybe you four take this outside?”

Jagger grunted. “Doesn’t seem like there’s going to be much of a fight. Layla’s wrong. The guys aren’t leaving. End of story.”

I tossed him a dirty look. “It’s not like I want this. I woke up this morning thinking I was going to get rid of my birth control and start the rest of my life. I’m not selfish enough to pretend like getting what I want wouldn’t hurt everyone else, though. Matthew just put a nail in whatever public relationship we could’ve had. Until he’s proven wrong, which... I don’t even know where to start... Until he’s proven wrong, though, I’m a liability. He just painted me out as someone so evil that standing by me after what he said would hurt anyone. It can’t happen.”

Alex rested his hand on Xavier’s shoulder. “Let’s just take a minute and talk about it. Nothing needs to be decided right away. Who knows? With the way the media is, Matthew’s story might fade out and die pretty much right away. This could all be for nothing.”

Grandma sniffed. “You’re going to start trying for a baby?”

Nick and Hilary stood up and moved towards the door. Hilary sent me an apologetic expression. “I’m so sorry this is

happening to you, Layla. Don't do anything in a hurry, though. Just think on it."

Nick nodded. "It isn't selfish to love and be loved, Layla. Don't let Matthew sentence you to a life of pain. We're going to head out. This seems like something you need privacy for."

Cammie inched towards the door next. "They're right. I just met most of y'all, but I know enough already to know that y'all love each other. That's too special to throw away."

Jagger caught her hand. "Come see me later."

Mack rubbed his hands over his face. "I think we need to settle down before we have this talk."

Jones shook his head and stared down at me. "You're not going to back down, are you?"

My stomach tightened. "I'm not. I love y'all so much, *too* much to let you suffer because of me. I would never forgive myself. I don't want to lose y'all. You know that's not what I'm saying. You just have to take care of your career for a while. When this is fixed, we can make it official again."

Xavier looked away. "When this is fixed... So, maybe we can be together in six months? A year? Two years? How long does it take public opinion to sway towards the truth? A decade?"

Tears peppered my eyes. "I don't know."

"No." Mack growled. "We walk away from you like this and there's nothing to guarantee we can fix it. It's a risk I'm not going to take."

“You don’t have a choice!” I shouted and jabbed my finger at the door. “You have to go.”

“The hell we do.” Mack swatted my finger away. “I love you, Layla. That’s not something I’m willing to walk away from.”

Jones dropped his head and let out an angry laugh. “You’re killing us. You still don’t get how much we love you. If you did, you’d know that we don’t give a shit about the band compared to the way we feel about you. You would never ask us to walk away if you understood the way we care about you. You’re so fucking stubborn, though, Layla. You think you know the right way, but you’re wrong. Standing here, arguing while Jagger needs to rest and heal isn’t going to convince you that you’re wrong, though.”

I kept my head held high as I fought the urge to sob.

“I’m going to go and fix this. When I do it, you’re going to owe me big, Layla. You’re going to have so much to make up to me for pulling this the day after you told us you love us. You have no idea.” Jones grabbed my arm and tugged me into his chest. Planting a kiss on top of my head, he sighed. “I love you, Firecracker. When this is done, we’re going on a vacation and your ass is mine.”

A tear escaped but I wiped it away in a hurry as he let me go and shook Jagger’s hand before leaving the room. My heart broke, despite it being my idea.

Mack gripped my arms and gave me a gentle shake. “Never again. I love you. If you so much as suggest something like

this again, I'll chain you to the bed.”

I closed my eyes after he walked out and I was left with Xavier. I stared up at him, unable to stop the tears from slowly falling down my cheeks. “I'm sorry, Xavier.”

He growled at me and took a step back. “If I touch you, I'll never leave. Since that's what you want so bad, I'll go. This isn't willing, though, Layla.”

Alex hurried to follow Xavier out and Grandma rushed after Alex. I was alone with Jagger, something that would've brought me so much pleasure before everything else, before I'd forced the guys I loved to leave me.

Jagger looked up at me calmly and raised his eyebrows. “Well. You played the martyr. Congratulations.”

I closed my eyes and sank into the chair next to his bed. “It was the right thing to do.”

“You're an idiot, Layla.” He sighed. “There were other ways to handle this. I don't doubt that they'll be back, but you owe them. Leaving just broke each of them and when they're alone tonight, they're not going to blame you. They're going to blame themselves. You forced them to leave you here. I love you, sis, but you fucked up.”

I swallowed and told myself he was wrong. “It'll be okay. It's better for them this way.”

“And if they don't come back?”

I felt like my chest was ripped open. I couldn't form words as that possibility settled over me. Life without them long

term?

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Mack

I tapped my foot nervously and looked at the clock for the hundredth time. There were still two minutes until we were live. I looked over at Xavier and Jones and frowned when I saw that Xavier looked completely at ease. “How are you so calm?”

He looked at me and shrugged. “I’m determined.”

Jones blew out a harsh sigh. “I’m going to leave my handprint all over her ass when we get back. I’m not kidding. She needs a good spanking. Maybe then she’ll learn to listen.”

Xavier and I raised our brows at him.

He swore. “Yeah, I know. She’s never going to listen. She’s as stubborn as a mule and I’m going to figure out the secret to getting around her stubbornness someday.”

A producer motioned us forward and a light above the studio door flashed to *LIVE*. The set was silent until on the stage, Delilah Brooks introduced us. Walking onto the stage in front of a live audience, knowing everything was being broadcast

across the nation in real time, it made me want to vomit. I didn't mind doing the press tour bullshit, but going live? I was going to swear. Especially given the topic of conversation.

Delilah Brooks was a popular news anchor turned TV host and her current show covered all things news. Bingham had decided to give the interview to her after seeing her rankings. Her close relationship with the news station she'd worked at got her a prime time spot for our live interview. It'd happened overnight and we'd flown into New York last minute. The interview was unlike anything we'd ever done and I knew nothing else would've gotten me on that stage, if not Layla.

The three of us settled on a low couch across from Delilah and she quickly introduced us more thoroughly while we tried not to squirm. "If there was anyone who didn't know who you guys were before this, they definitely know now. After that bombshell interview Susan Hess did with Michael O'Brian, the whole nation is talking about you guys. I've never seen anything quite like it. The subject matter is intense, but no one has shied away from it. We certainly won't tonight."

Xavier shocked me again by sitting forward and speaking first. "We don't want to shy away from it. We want to set the record straight in front of as many people as possible and then get back home."

Delilah nodded. "Home to Layla Morgan?"

He nodded and frowned when the audience started whispering to each other. It wasn't hard to imagine what they were saying. "Yes. Home to Layla. It's where we should've

been last night and where we should be right now. Instead, we're having to correct a bunch of lies that should've never been allowed on air to begin with."

"A bunch of lies? Are you suggesting that everything Mr. O'Brian said to Susan Hess was a lie?"

Jones grunted. "I'm sure there were a few truths in there. Like his name and where he worked."

Delilah's eyes lit up and I could practically see the prey drive activate in her. "That's a big allegation. Susan Hess has been a reputable journalist for over a decade. What you're suggesting implies that Susan didn't do any homework to corroborate Mr. O'Brian's story."

"If she'd done the least bit of digging into O'Brian's story, she would've found out within minutes that he's full of shit." Jones took a breath. "We weren't reached out to for comment. Layla wasn't. Mr. Bingham wasn't. Miriam Dark, the band that O'Brian mentioned, wasn't. The only source for that story was Matthew O'Brian. Our lawyers are handling it. Retractions will be made or we'll own a few broadcasting companies soon."

Delilah crossed her legs towards us and leaned in. "What are you alleging the real story is?"

Fed up and ready to be back with Layla, I nodded to Jones and Xavier to let them know I had that one covered. "The truth is that we pursued a relationship with the best damn tour manager we've ever had. Layla Morgan is brilliant. She learned from her parents, who died in a tragic car accident,

when she was still a kid. Susan Hess and her team didn't even bother to do the most basic research. They just allowed O'Brian to lie about the way Layla's parents died on national television. That was meant to hurt Layla, nothing more.

"Layla is the best person I know. She's the hardest worker and never took advantage of our interest in her to push work onto others. She stayed the latest and got to work the earliest. You can ask anyone who worked with her building stages and they'll tell you that. She's smart and funny and she takes care of the people around her. At the first sign of trouble back home, she left her dream job without a second thought. It never occurred to her that she wouldn't fly right home. She's an amazing sister, granddaughter, and friend.

"When she saw what was happening to her reputation and name yesterday, she forced us to leave her." I laughed bitterly. "She was terrified that if we didn't leave her, all of this would ruin our reputations, too. She gave up the men she loves so we wouldn't be tarnished by this bullshit. And that's the woman people are believing to be a villain. It makes me sick."

Delilah was wide-eyed when I finished, but she recovered quickly. "You can't possibly know about the state of her private relationship with Mr. O'Brian. His allegations--"

"His allegations are disgusting." Xavier shook his head and scowled. "We've always said believe every victim. We've donated time and money to survivor advocacy programs. It brings me no pleasure to expose an accusation of sexual

harassment and assault as a lie, but I won't pretend like I don't know his story is a lie."

"How can you know that, though?"

Jones' voice was a growl when he spoke. "Miriam Dark is willing to testify to the events that occurred between herself and O'Brian. She was forced to listen to him rant about punishing Layla for leaving him for hours. He was her band manager and he threatened her into a plot to force Layla away from us and into his arms. When he tried it, though, Layla rejected him. If he got punched for not having consent to put his mouth on her, that's on him."

"Miriam Dark from The Homewreckers is alleging all that?" Delilah sat back in her chair. "Will she be pressing charges?"

I shrugged. "If she wants to. Not everyone is comfortable going through the legal system. She's happy enough to have a new manager now. Mr. Bingham is also taking the time to investigate everything O'Brian has ever touched. There's talk of multiple lawsuits."

Xavier ran his hands down his thighs. "Layla saw me have a panic attack during meet and greet one time and she took me off the press rotation after that. She flew her security guard's wife out to spend a weekend with him and then became good friends with his wife. She won each of us over. Contrary to what O'Brian seems to want people to believe, we're adult men who think for ourselves and can be headstrong. We wouldn't have fallen in love with Layla just because she waved some magic wand and put a spell on us. We fell in love

with her over poker games, beer, and listening to her and her family talk to each other, and us, in that southern twang of theirs. She's a good woman. With a huge heart. A heart that's hurting right now because her brother's sick and she had to send the men she loves away to protect them."

Jones winked at the camera. "She didn't realize that we only agreed to leave for long enough to make a very public statement. We're flying back to her as soon as this is over. The lawyers can handle the rest. And if people choose to believe O'Brian and we lose them as fans because we stay with Layla... Fuck 'em."

Delilah blanched as her producer waved his arms wildly at the F-bomb. "Don't forget we're on live television, gentlemen."

"I didn't forget. I'm just too pissed off to care." Jones shook his head. "We love Layla Morgan. We're going to marry her and knock her up a dozen times if she'll let us. She doesn't deserve what O'Brian was allowed to do."

"You think she's completely innocent?" Delilah frowned. "Of everything?"

I laughed. "Of everything? Hell no. She's a hellion who made us fight for a chance with her. She's stubborn as the day is long and we've already gone over how she kicked us out. We're not blinded by love, Delilah. O'Brian and Susan Hess and whoever else believes him are blinded by their own desires. Revenge, a good story, whatever it may be."

Xavier cleared his throat. "Now, we have a flight to catch."

Jones smiled at Xavier and then at me. “We have one more thing to say before we leave and we want to say it directly to Matthew O’Brian. The Homewreckers installed security cameras on their bus for safety reasons when their manager didn’t take their concerns seriously about where he was sending them to play. That’s you, by the way. One of those cameras captures the area to the side of the bus, the area you were in when you made those comments to Miriam Dark that night before you got fired. Another captures the living area, the area you were in when you slipped that bag and your plan to Miriam. You should’ve paid more attention to your band, asshole. See you in court.”

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Layla

I couldn't believe they'd been so blunt on live television. They'd almost been rude to the host. It was so clear that they were sick of everything and furious about it. I'd watched the guys' interview on my computer in bed, hours after they'd been live. I hadn't been able to watch them live. I'd felt sick with nerves about what they were going to say. I'd felt sick with worry since they walked out.

Jagger had been frequent in his reminders that I was an idiot for sending them away. Grandma and Alex both acted worried about me and hovered like I was the sick grandkid, instead of Jagger. Nick was acting as my bodyguard with the guys gone so Hilary had flown back home, and I felt guilty about that, too. Watching their interview was the first time I started to feel anything but stressed. They were coming home. I hadn't ruined everything.

I tried to count the hours since the interview ended and figure out where they were, but I knew I was missing too many variables. Still, I tried. I wanted them home. I wanted to

apologize and hold them. It was only two days and I'd missed them like crazy. I needed to talk to them about Jagger's treatment and tell them he would be leaving to go to Dr. Fairity's treatment center in two more days. I needed to thank them. I needed them.

I had my bedroom window open and the night around Grandma's house was silent. The only sound was a frog singing but even it was far enough away that when a vehicle drove up Grandma's driveway, the sound carried clear to me.

I didn't wait to see who it was before I ran out of my room. Nick was asleep on the couch but when I sprinted out of the front door, he woke up and stumbled after me. Grandma and Alex were out, but when I saw that the vehicle coming closer wasn't Grandma's, I ran faster down the dirt driveway towards the truck. It stopped in the middle of the road and the passenger side door opened. The headlights blinded me, but I knew it was them.

Jones closed the distance between us and grabbed me. He lifted me off my feet and locked his arms around me. "What the hell are you doing out here, running towards trucks?"

I clung to him. "I knew it was you."

He strode up the driveway, taking one look at Nick and grunting. "You're off. Take the truck and go home to your wife. We're not leaving her side for a while."

Stroking my hands over his hair and neck, I kissed every spot of him I could reach. "I'm so sorry. I was wrong. I

shouldn't have sent y'all away. I knew I was wrong as soon as you left and I was terrified you weren't coming back."

He took the steps up to the porch and into the house without breaking his stride. "Is Gran a heavy sleeper, baby?"

I shivered. "She's out with Alex still."

"Thank god." He pinned me to my bedroom door and cupped my breasts hard before shoving his hand into my panties and thrusting his fingers into me. "You ran around in front of another man with no pants on. I could see your panties when you ran towards us. No other man gets to see you, Layla."

I cried out at the feel of his thick fingers and clawed at his shoulders. "I didn't mean to. I just needed to see you."

He pulled his fingers out and yanked his pants down enough to free his shaft and then he was thrusting into me, hard and deep. He watched my face as I screamed and then he reached under me to slap my ass. "Never again."

I gasped as he slapped my ass again and growled against my neck. His hips hammered me to the door and the feeling of being taken so roughly by him had me coming that fast.

"That's right. Come on my dick, Firecracker. Remember who makes you come like this and don't ever send us away again." Jones kissed me hard and then tugged at my hair. "I love you, Layla Rose. Now wrap your arms around my neck and hold on."

My eyes flew open when I did as he said and then felt my panties yanked even further to the side. Instead of the wall at my back, I felt a broad chest and hot flesh. Looking back, I saw Xavier and cried out. He'd never taken my ass but the look of determination told me he was set on doing it. I felt his thick head against my hole and panted. "Oh, god!"

He sank his teeth into my shoulder and growled. "I thought you maybe hadn't gotten fucked good enough and maybe that was why you thought you could get rid of us. We're going to change that."

I screamed his name as he drove his dick into my ass in one hard stroke. When he was fully inside me, I lost my breath and realized I was pinned in the air, between the two of them. They were holding me up with their shafts inside me and I knew they were going to pour all of their frustration into fucking me.

Mack walked into my room and shut the door behind him, his eyes drinking me in. "I'm glad she's already learning her lesson."

I moaned and reached for him. He walked straight to me and when I tugged his mouth down to mine, he kissed me like he wanted to devour me. His hand lightly gripped my throat and then moved down to squeeze my breasts.

"She's ready. She's so fucking wet, it's dripping down her thighs." Jones nodded to Mack and before I could figure out what I was ready for, I felt it. Jones watched my eyes go wide and growled as he lifted one of my legs higher. "Tell me what you feel right now."

My mouth flapped uselessly as sensations slammed through me. They were... I cried out as I felt more and dig my nails into one of their backs. “You’re... He’s... He’s pushing into me!”

Xavier growled into my ear. “You’re going to take all three of us, baby. Let Mack into your sweet pussy next to Jones. Let them fuck your pussy together while I own this ass.”

I couldn’t catch my breath as I felt Mack force inch after inch into my core, next to Jones. The stretch burned but there was something else, some depraved part of my brain, that wanted it. I wanted to take them inside me together and I wanted to feel them both come inside me at the same time that Xavier came in my ass.

Mack thrust the last couple of inches inside me and then they let go of their control and restraint. Mack and Jones thrust as one inside my core and I could feel every inch of them stroking me. Xavier took my ass hard, just as hard as Mack and Jones were fucking my sex. The three of them thrust hard and slowly increased the speed of their thrusts until they were driving into me like pistons with blurry hips.

I screamed as I came but they didn’t stop. Their hands groped and squeezed, their mouths sucked and bit, and their hips never slowed down as they fucked me between their bodies like a ragdoll. That first orgasm crashed into another one and another one until my voice was hoarse and my body ached. I cried out as another orgasm slammed me and stole my breath, but then they were all coming inside me at the same

time, their grunts and swears against my skin ragged. My body
milked their come from them and I cried their names even as I
went limp between them.

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Layla

As fast as it started, it ended with the four of us in my small bed, trying not to fall out of it. My body ached all over and I wasn't sure my body would ever be the same, but I was so satiated that the smile didn't budge from my lips.

“We're not leaving you again. You need to understand that right now, Layla. We love you and we intend to marry you. There's not going to be anymore sending us away. We're a team.” Jones held my throat and stroked his thumb over it. “You can't do that to us again.”

I breathed in their scents and nodded. “I was wrong and I won't do it again. I was miserable without y'all. I missed you so much and I couldn't sleep. I'm sorry. I thought I was doing the right thing for y'all, but I should've trusted you.”

“You should've. This is new for all of us, though. We're all bound to fuck up at times. I don't ever want to lose you, though, sweetheart. I'd give up everything if it meant I got to be with you.” Mack kissed my forehead. “I love you.”

Xavier stroked his hand up and down my thigh, his eyes closed as he smiled. “I think you should get rid of your birth control. I want to see your body growing with our baby.”

I laughed quietly. “Okay.”

They all looked at me with wide eyes. Xavier’s hand stopped moving as he smiled wider. “Okay?”

“Yeah. My parents made it work with kids on the road. I can have it all.” I stroked my hand down to Xavier’s half-hard cock. “I want it all now. Life is so short and I don’t want to waste anymore time. I stopped taking my birth control days ago. It’ll probably linger in my system for a while, but who knows?”

Xavier groaned as I stroked him hard. “You need rest, baby.”

“I want your come in me here, too. I want it to be a fair race for all the little swimmers.”

Jones groaned. “You didn’t just say that.”

Mack grunted. “She did. She called our come little swimmers.”

Xavier hauled me to my feet and positioned me over the side of the bed with my ass in the air. “Pretty sure her mouth isn’t sore and that she can’t say mean things to us if it’s full.”

I laughed and reached back to slap his leg but the sound of a vehicle pulling down the driveway through the open window made me feel like a teenager again, about to get caught fooling around. Before I could say anything, Xavier was in me, though, and all that came out of my mouth was a loud moan.

He reached around to my clit and grabbed the back of my neck with his other hand, already taking me hard. “Forget what I said. Unless you can chase her mouth down, you’re going to have to wait.”

Jones leaned closer and watched my face. “I’m happy to watch our woman getting railed.”

Mack growled his agreement. “Jesus, I love to see your tits sway with a good fucking.”

“This pussy is still as tight as the first time I slid home. What kind of magic is that, baby? You just took two dicks at once like the good girl you are and you’re still clamped down around me like a vice.”

“She is a good girl, isn’t she?” Mack moved closer and lowered his voice. “You love being our good girl, don’t you?”

I heard that vehicle getting even closer and cried out. “Someone’s coming!”

“Yeah, they are.” Xavier was lost in fucking me, his thrusts harder and faster than ever.

I gasped each word out around my pleasure. “Down the driveway!”

Jones leaned back and looked out the window. “Sonofabitch. She’s right. You’ve got maybe ninety seconds.”

Xavier took it as a challenge and drove into me hard enough that my arms gave out and I went flat on the bed with my legs dangling off. He followed me, rutting me like a bull with one hand over my mouth to quiet my screams of pleasure. His

thrusts forced my clit into the bed and the friction was just the edge I needed to come hard. I bit into his palm and he drilled his dick into me a few seconds more and then he was coming hard, grunting into my shoulder as he did.

“Holy shit.” Jones’ voice was a mix of horror and humor, like he didn’t know which way to go. “Ho-ly shit.”

Mack shifted and let out a surprised bark of laughter. “Well, this is interesting.”

“If they get married before us does that make Xavier and Layla related?”

Xavier slowly pulled out of me and picked me up from where I immediately slid to the floor. He propped me up against his chest on the bed and held me close. “What are you idiots talking about?”

“I think you two could’ve kept going. The couple in the car outside seem to be preoccupied.” Mack leaned over and kissed me. “How soon do you want to get married?”

Jones gasped and moved away from the window. He looked like he’d seen a ghost. “I think I might be blind now.”

Xavier growled and shifted over so he could glance out the window. He recoiled instantly, nearly tossing me out of his lap. “What the fucking fuck?! Why did you let me look?”

“What is it?” I moved to look and Xavier tossed his leg over mine to hold me down. I struggled against his hold but he was too strong. “Why can’t I look?”

“I’m doing you a favor, woman. You don’t want to see that.”

Mack shuddered. “You really don’t. I’m serious when I say I think we need to rush the wedding. Those two outside look serious.”

Things started clicking in my brain. “Oh, god. Oh, my god. It’s Gran and Alex, isn’t it?”

Xavier groaned. “I saw my dad’s bare ass and I don’t think you’re ever old enough for that to not fuck you up.”

I screamed. “It’s bare? What are they doing?”

Jones shook his head like he was trying to get water out of his ears. “They’re fucking, Firecracker! What do you think they’re doing? A prostate exam? Last I checked, Gran isn’t a doctor!”

I screamed again. “No!”

Mack nodded. “Yeah.”

“If my dad marries your grandma, that would make me... your brother-uncle? Jesus Christ, let’s go to the court house right now. We need to beat them to it.” Xavier stood up and searched for his clothes. “I’m serious. We can fly to Vegas and get married right now. I’m not marrying my sister-niece, Layla, so you’d better get your ass up and get a move on!”

I bit my lip. “Can we be back early enough that I can spend some time with Jagger tomorrow?”

He finally stopped moving. “You’d really marry us right now?”

I smiled. “Yeah, I would. I love each of you and I want forever. Marriage is just a part of that journey. Why put it off?”

Dropping his pants, he came over and wrapped his arms around me. “We don’t deserve you. We can’t get married without Jagger and Gran there. We’ll just have to figure out how to make sure those two don’t beat us to the altar.”

Jones shuddered. “I think I just heard them finish.”

Mack pouted. “You did.”

I held up my hands and tried not to freak out over what Gran had just done right outside. “We can’t live in the same house. Can you bring the bus here? We can live on the bus. I just can’t chance witnessing what just happened out there.”

“We’ll buy a house. I don’t want to live on the bus if we’re not touring.” Mack rubbed his eyes. “I need to piss but there’s no way I’m running into Alex or Gran when we’ve all just finished fucking. Not each other. God. I’m traumatized.”

“You can’t just buy a house. That’s wild.”

“Fine. We’ll build a house.” Jones shrugged.

“What? You can’t just build a house, either!” I froze when I heard giggling from inside the house and the unmistakable sound of Gran’s door slamming shut and her bed bouncing. I stood up and started grabbing clothes. Tossing them at the guys, I didn’t even bother pulling any on before I slid my window open all the way and practically dove out of it.

They were all staring out the window at me, shocked that they’d just watched me dive out naked.

I yanked on one of their shirts and whisper-yelled. “Build a damn house. I’m not listening to that! Not a chance in hell. I’d rather be eaten by mosquitos or Big Foot.”

Jones nudged Xavier. “She already has.”

“Where are you going?” Mack shook his head at me. “Get back in here, baby. It’s late. We can just sleep through it.”

“I’m going to Joe’s. He has an extra bedroom.” I turned and started marching away, knowing they’d be out the window and chasing after me in no time at all. When I heard footsteps coming after me, I laughed and took off running.

Jones grabbed me and we both tumbled to the ground, him on bottom after twisting so he didn’t crush me. “That was a bratty thing you did.”

I locked my legs around his hips and nodded. “I wanted to motivate you to come faster.”

He rocked his hips into mine. “You motivated me, alright. Now, where are we going?”

I smiled sweetly. “I was hoping you’d figure that out once I got you out here.”

“I should spank you.”

“You totally should.”

He sighed. “You’re lucky I love you so much. Come on. I’m pretty sure Xavier’s stuck in the window.”

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Epilogue

*****Xavier*****

*O*ne Year Later

I glanced up as Jagger walked out onto the porch and sighed. He was just as dramatic as his sister some days. I smiled to myself and took the bait. “What’s up?”

He groaned as he stretched his legs out in front of him. “Cammie’s position got extended another two weeks.”

Mack looked up from where he was strumming his guitar. “So? Go there. You’re back at a hundred percent, man. You’re missing your lady, so just go to her.”

“I can’t.” He shifted in his rocking chair and cleared his throat. “I’ve been planning something and it has to happen here. If I go to her, it’ll happen there and it won’t be as good.”

I frowned. “What are you talking about?”

Jones snorted. “Sounds like a goddamn show. What do you mean, it won’t be as good there?”

“Whatever it is, I’m sure she’d just be glad to see you.” Mack shrugged. “You should go.”

“We haven’t had sex!” Jagger lowered his voice and said it again. “We haven’t had sex. I was in treatment before and then she took that short term position in Dallas. It just never happened. Now, she knows I’m healthy enough and we’ve talked about it. I mean...we do stuff over the phone.”

I sighed. “This family overshares.”

He rolled his eyes. “Anyway, it’s time now. We both are ready and the next time we’re together, it’s going to happen. I’m just... It’s been so long for me and my body went through hell. I just don’t know... I’m not sure I’ll be good the first time back at it. I love her and I want it to be perfect. I’ve got a plan, but I need it to happen here.”

Jones sat forward in his rocker and sent Jagger a look that told him he was being dumb. “You love her. She loves you. You’re both clearly excited to be together. Just talk to her.”

Mack held up his hand. “Wait. What kind of plan do you have?”

Jagger sighed. “Just a few things in place, in case I start to come too early.”

“Nope. You’re doing too much. Go call her and tell her how you’re feeling. Then, book your flight and get out of here.” I shook my head at him. “No wonder you’re so wired lately. You need to go make love to your woman.”

All three of them turned to stare at me. Jones broke first. “Make love? Who are you? Barry Manilow?”

I swore. “You know Layla’s got me reading those romance novels. They’re infecting my brain.”

“What brain?” Gran came strolling out of the house, a big smile on her face. “Son.”

I groaned and pointed my finger at her. “You’re a menace.”

Gran and my dad had eloped to Vegas three days before our wedding to Layla. The old bird loved to poke at me and rub it in. She also poked at Mack and Jones by telling them she loved me more, so none of us were safe.

“Should I fly out to Dallas to see Cammie, Gran?” Jagger stood up and offered her his chair. “She’s gotta stay two more weeks.”

Gran settled in the rocker and looked like a proper grandmother until she opened her mouth. “I heard you whining out here about being afraid to put your parts in her parts. Just do it. Women never expect men to be good the first time. Or the second. Just do it and learn how to do it better each time.”

Mack scoffed. “We did it great the first time.”

“And it took all three of you. Don’t boast, Macaroni.” Gran grinned and then caught sight of a ball of dust coming down our driveway. “That’d better not be what I think it is.”

We’d found the perfect land just outside of town and had the house that sat on the land updated and added onto so there was enough room for our large family. One of the things we’d loved was the mile-long private driveway. The privacy was perfect. We could sit on the porch and see who was approaching with plenty of time to run inside and pretend we weren’t home if it was someone we didn’t feel like seeing.

Right then, that view was allowing us to watch our wife speed down the driveway like she was in a NASCAR race.

Dust trailed behind her as she rocketed towards us. Each of us were on our feet and stomping down the steps to meet her.

We weren't touring, so instead of acting as our tour manager, Layla had decided that she'd work closely with Billy, helping him with anything he needed. Billy, of course, was smitten with her, and had insisted we set up an office locally for him. Instead of spending our non-touring time with our wife, we got to share her with our manager. Layla loved it, though and she was gaining even more experience working with a real manager, unlike when she'd worked with O'Brian.

Layla slid to a stop in front of us and was out of the car, running towards us even as we marched towards her. "Something happened!"

"Why the hell are you driving like that?" We spoke over each other but when she understood what we'd asked, she rolled her eyes.

"I was driving just fine. Now, are you ready for my news?" She bounced where she stood, her smile brilliant.

We were intense about her safety, though. I shook my head. "No. You can't drive like that. It's not safe. What if you lost control and wrecked? Do you drive like that in town?"

Jones growled. "We're hiring a driver for you. You're a danger."

Mack nodded. "Yeah, there's no way you can drive yourself around if that's how you drive. This isn't fucking Mario Kart, woman."

She planted her hands on her hips. “I’m pregnant!”

We froze. Gran ran down the porch steps screaming, followed quickly by Jagger. Layla watched our faces and raised her eyebrows as she waited.

“Well? You don’t have anything to say now?” She narrowed her eyes. “One of you had better find your voice, real fast!”

I let out a loud *whoop* and nearly ran Gran over as I picked Layla up around her hips and spun her around. She was pregnant. We were going to have a baby. “We did it! Welcome to your mom, baby one of twelve!”

She cackled when I spoke directly against her stomach. “Put me down before I barf on you!”

“Barf on me! I don’t care! We’re having a baby!” I let her slide down my body and I stole a deep kiss, letting her know just how fucking happy I really was.

Jones and Mack each took their turn to hold Layla and show her how excited they each were. Dad came out to see what all the screaming was about and I told him the good news with tears in my eyes.

He shouted and hurried over to hug Layla with his own eyes suspiciously moist. “I’m going to be a grandpa! Oh, Layla, I’m so happy for you and so thankful for you coming into the boys’ lives.”

“Don’t make me cry!” She found her way into our arms and the three of us held her while she told us about going to the pharmacy to get the test. There was something about a bird

and a trip to Taco Bell, but I got lost in holding her, knowing that she was growing our baby at that exact moment.

Gran waited until the end of the story to drop a bomb on us. “This is crazy, but...I’m pregnant, too.”

My jaw nearly hit the ground. “How?”

Gran scowled at me. “Do I need to talk to you about how babies are made, son?”

Layla shuddered. “Are you serious? You’re pregnant? Gran! You weren’t using protection?”

“The protection should’ve been her age. She’s ancient!” Jagger wiped his suddenly sweaty forehead. “I’m not raising this baby, Gran. You’re going to have to do it yourself.”

“You ungrateful little shits. I’m not pregnant, but now I know you think I’m too old to get knocked up. I should do it just to show y’all.” She looked at my dad. “You want to knock me up?”

Layla groaned. “This is a weird level of hell no one ever talks about.”

Jagger threw up his hands. “I’m going to Dallas. This place is crazy.”

Without thinking, I just looked over at him and casually wished him good luck. “Your dick will work just fine, man. Don’t doubt him. He can sense that shit.”

Layla pulled away. “What the hell?”

Gran nodded. “Just put tab A into slot B and you’ll be fine.”

Jagger groaned. “I hate this place!”

Jones rolled his eyes. “So dramatic.”

Mack nodded. “The most.”

Layla looked like she was going to push to figure out what was happening, but decided better. Instead, she leaned into my chest and sighed happily. “This baby is going to be very strong, growing up in this family.”

Gran grinned. “Same thing your mother said when she caught you teething on Jim Bunk’s leather boots.”

We all groaned. Everyone knew Jim Bunk had been a disgusting rocker who was known for his stench.

Jones nodded suddenly. “Explains the morning breath.”

Layla marched off after Jagger. “Take me with you, Jag. I don’t want to be here with these fools anymore!”

Thank You for Reading Three-Night Stand!

If you need more sassy and steamy reverse harem action check out my most recent release: [My Brother’s Teammates](#)

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FREE Preview of My Brother's Teammates

Of course it was raining. Why wouldn't it be raining on possibly the worst day of my life? I took a deep breath and knocked on the large wooden door looming in front of me. Not possibly the worst day of my life, I mentally corrected myself. It *was* the worst day of my life. Worse even than the day I'd split my pants in front of the entire school during a forced performance about saying no to drugs. After that day, I'd needed drugs to get over my humiliation. Too bad no one ever got them for me. Maybe if they had, I wouldn't be in the position I was in right then. Which was waiting for someone to open the door to my older brother's house, completely soaked through.

I knocked again and bit my lip hard. I wasn't going to cry. I'd done enough of that. Although, if there was ever a time for me to cry and have it go unnoticed, standing in the pouring rain was that time. My throat burned and my lip wobbled. Yeah, I was going to do it. I was going to cry until the moment someone finally opened the door.

I tipped my face up to the sky and closed my eyes. How could I have been so stupid? Of all the ways to mess up, I'd done it in a way that had left me homeless. Homeless and heartbroken. I let my backpack drop to the ground next to my feet and groaned. I'd dropped a nuke on my own life and it was so unlike me that I wasn't sure what to do next. I wasn't someone who made dangerous choices. I was safe. Boring, a lot of people would say. Dull, meaner people might add. Yet, there I was, standing in the rain, hoping my brother was home and loved me enough to let me crash on his couch for a night or two. *Homeless.*

“Well, hello.”

I flinched, surprised by the voice coming from next to me. I recognized the deep voice easily. No one else on campus had that same Irish lilt to their voice. Axel Fitzgerald had been my brother's best friend for their entire college career and even if he hadn't spoken, the energy of his flirtation would have alerted me to his presence eventually. He probably slept around more than my brother, which was saying a lot.

“Selling Girl Scout cookies?”

Annoyance bit me. The last thing I needed was a complex about how young I looked or how flat my chest was after the day I'd had. I wiped my eyes and turned to Axel. He probably didn't know what Jason's nerdy little sister looked like.

It sucked that even in my heartbroken state I could still notice how attractive Axel was. Despite the rain, his thick black hair looked effortlessly perfect, his forest green eyes

were bright with humor, and he somehow managed to look like a sunny day. I didn't even know what that meant, but there it was, staring back at me. With his tan skin and shadow of a beard, he just looked like sunshine and fun.

I wanted to shove him down in a puddle and wipe the big smile off his face. The violent urge wasn't like me, but I blamed the rain. No matter how violent I felt, though, I'd never be able to budge someone the size of Axel. Tall and built for football, he was a wall I'd have more luck digging my way under than ever pushing through.

I sighed and squeezed my eyes shut for a moment. When I opened them again, I stared at my feet. My Crocs were squishy wetlands. Neon yellow squishy wetlands. "Is Jason home?"

"Jenny, right?" He reached down and grabbed my backpack. "He should be inside. Either way, you should come in and get out of the rain. You look like you're about to fall apart."

For some stupid reason, him knowing who I was became the final crack in my emotional dam. The whole thing crumbled and all I could do was sit down on their front step and bury my face in my knees as I sobbed.

"Jason!" Any other time, Axel's horror-filled voice would've been funny.

"What the hell are you yelling about? You- Jenny?" My brother's familiar voice filled with panic and then I was being lifted like I was a sack of potatoes. "What's wrong? What happened? Who do I need to kill? Why didn't you come in?"

I could tell he'd carried me inside by the scent of sweat and old pizza lingering in the air. It was rude of me to cover my nose, but I couldn't help it. I grunted as Jason dropped me on what I hoped was a couch and not one of their beds. Not that I thought the couch was probably that much better. They were four single guys living together in their senior year of college. I just assumed a blacklight would light the place up like a fireworks display.

I forced myself to open my eyes and found Jason squatting in front of me. Beyond him, I could see more mess than I wanted to think about. "It smells."

Axel laughed and I saw he was hovering beside the couch. He grinned down at me and nodded. "That would be Hudson. He's used to having a nanny and a maid."

"Jenny. What happened?" Jason rested his fisted hands on my knees and I could feel his stress as he waited for me to explain.

I couldn't tell him, though. I couldn't tell anyone. "Um... I lost my apartment."

He frowned. "You've had that apartment for the last two years. You had it locked in with the landlord, right?"

Fresh tears filled my eyes as I nodded. "Yeah."

"Jenny. Spit it out."

I shook my head hard enough to send droplets of water flying. "I can't, Jason. I can't tell you. I'm sorry. I just need a place to stay for the night. Please. I won't be in the way."

A door slammed somewhere else in the house and heavy footsteps pounded down the stairs. “Turn the music up already! We’re celebrating!”

Jason winced. “Jenny... Are you sure you can’t stay with one of your friends? We’re having a party tonight. It’s not exactly the place I want my baby sister.”

Desperation had me grabbing his hands and not bothering to hide the fat tears streaming down my cheeks. “Please, Jason. I don’t have anywhere else to go.”

Hudson DuPont strolled into the room, shirtless and flexing until he saw me sitting on the couch. “Whoa. Who hurt the baby Ramsey?”

[Continue Reading My Brother’s Teammates for \\$2.99 or FREE with Kindle Unlimited!](#)