



Wild  
Blooms

Blossom  
AND

BLISS

L.A. SHAW

*Blossom*  
AND  
**BLISS**  
L.A. SHAW

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Blossom and Bliss

Editor: Brandi at [www.mynotesinthemargins.com](http://www.mynotesinthemargins.com)

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*To all the dreams we never thought were possible...*

# BLOSSOM AND BLISS

A WILD BLOOMS AND RECKLESS HEARTS SERIES CROSSOVER



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# PLAYLIST

Music plays an important role in our writing process...

So, please enjoy our *Blossom and Bliss* playlist.



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## PROLOGUE

“Good morning, thank you for calling Cygnature Blooms, where bigger is always better. You’re speaking to Tee. We specialize in healing broken hearts worldwide. May I have your location, please?”

“Los Angeles, California.”

“Thank you, sir. I will transfer your call.”

“Hi, this is Cygnature Blooms on Melrose, Gabby speaking. How can I help you today?”

I clear my throat before I speak. “Hello, I need to order two bouquets to be delivered on Valentine’s Day, please.”

“Absolutely. You called the perfect place. What exactly are you looking for?” Her kind and cheery voice has me picturing a pretty girl with flowers all around her and even a few stuck in her hair.

“Well, first let me ask... one will be here in L.A. and the other in Vegas. Do I need to do a separate order for that one?”

Her voice remains friendly and non-judgmental. “No need, I can certainly type it up and forward the order to that location. I will send you a confirmation once it’s completed... First, tell me what you would like the cards to say?”

Guilt runs through my veins as I try to find the right words for my first note.

“Okay, for the Vegas bouquet please put... ‘Happy Valentine’s Day to the most special woman in my life. I miss you every day, but I understand you not wanting to come home yet. Just



know I'm here whenever you are ready. I love you -Dal'." The words sound depressing to my ears, but unfortunately, those are the cards we've been dealt.

"Awesome, and what type of flowers would you like for this bouquet?"

Without hesitation, I say, "Stargazer lilies." The thought of them takes me back to watching her walk down the aisle holding a huge display of them.

Even more self-loathing occurs when I get ready to place my second order—knowing that I can never give Blossom what she deserves.

"Can you make the L.A. bouquet peonies? I would like a variety of colors and a mix of different stages of blooming flowers in it. I want some that are just blossoming and some in full bloom."

"Of course, sir, that sounds beautiful. What would you like this card to say?"

"Okay, for the card can you please put... 'You consume my every thought, and I've quickly become obsessed with every inch of you. -Big D'."

"Perfect. Is that all, sir?" Her tone is still kind and bubbly.

I smile, thinking about Blossom receiving her arrangement... until the guilt returns and turmoil rushes over my body.

With a heavy sigh, I respond, "Yes, thank you."

## CHAPTER ONE



It's the Monday-est Monday I've ever had, and it's my first day at my new job. Driving along in my old beat-up Honda Accord, Helen, my phone rings, scaring my high-strung ass. But I quickly replace those feelings with a big smile when I see who's calling me.

"Hey girlie, whatcha doing up so early?"

"Hey babe... I miss you like crazy. I woke up early to work out and ended up scrolling TikTok and decided I needed to call you!"

It's so good to hear my old boss-turned-bestie's voice. Several months ago, she made the big move to New York City to open her very own exclusive club and to be with her insanely hot fiancé, Wes. I'm beyond happy for Sloan, but I miss her and my job so much.

"Miss you too Lo. Life in L.A. is not the same without you." That is the understatement of the year, but I don't want her worrying about me.

"Well, you know you're welcome in New York anytime. Your job offer still stands and we have an extra bedroom with your name on it. Plus, Wes has a few fine-ass friends I could offer as incentives for you to come here too."

I laugh at her. "Wes's friends can't handle all this ass."

"That's it Blossom Rivera! I'm coming to L.A. to kick your *perfect ass* right now. First off, most men would be all over you and your phenomenal curves. Did you not read the body

dysmorphia article you helped me promote a few months back? Maybe I should resend it to you.”

“No, no. I’m totally okay with my big, beautiful ass. I’m just saying, not all men can handle it,” I respond honestly. Working with Sloan has taken my confidence to new heights. I genuinely love my curves and know my worth. A huge part of that is from working at the Art of Seduction, a women’s sexual empowerment blog, and being a part of such an amazing team and environment.

*What the hell was that?* Helen-the-Honda is making stranger noises than normal.

She and I go way back and currently we are living on a prayer every time she starts up.

“Okay, okay, anywho—I really would love to be with you in NYC, but you know I can’t leave Ma, I’m all she has. But on a positive note, I’m actually headed to orientation today at the new job I got through that temp agency. I know it’ll never live up to working with you, but I’m happy to get my foot in the door somewhere else.” Leaving out the part that it’s at Sikes Industries because I know Lo worked with them when she bought the club in New York. I’m determined to earn something on my own and prove myself without having to throw my best friend’s clout around. Earning our own way has always been important to my family and is ingrained into my brain. It kills my mom to not be able to work anymore because of her MS.

“That’s so awesome, Bloss. I have no doubts they’ll love you and definitely make you a full-time employee before long. Proud of you, babe. Keep pushing and let me know how your first day goes!”

“*Pinche Mierda!* Helen is smoking like crazy. Let me call you later Lo, I need to pull over and check this out.”

“Oh shit, I’m sorry. Can I call someone to come tow you and get you to work on time?”

I appreciate all her generosity, but she has done so much for me over the years. I need to learn how to fix my own

problems.

“No, I’m fine. Don’t worry about me. I’m sure it’s no biggie. I have some radiator fluid in my trunk, so I’ll be back on the road in no time. Thanks so much, Lo. Love you and I promise I’ll tell you about my first day tonight.”

She rushes out, “Okay, love you too, be careful and good luck. You got this Bloss... Call me later. I want to hear all about it!”

I jump out of the car to check things out. Thankfully, I’m still on the outskirts of the city right now so I had room to pull over and not be in the middle of the road, blocking traffic in downtown L.A.

A bunch of pissed off people yelling at me is definitely not how I want to start this Monday.

Smoke explodes into my face as I pop the hood on Helen. Just as expected, she’s overheating. The guy at AutoZone told me my radiator is shot and sold me the fluid to use when it leaks out. He also told me how much it would cost to replace it, and then offered to do the labor for free if I did some labor of my own. *Barf*. No-fucking-thank-you. So needless to say, I left with the fluid and a temporary fix until I can get back on my feet with my new job. Between my apartment and taking care of my mom, I’m basically supporting two households. Thank God for the “*bonuses*” that Sloan insisted I take as severance pay. Even though I technically could have stayed on with her company, it was my decision not to.

As I’m going around the back to grab the fluid from my trunk, a black Aston Martin pulls up. Great... anyone driving a car like that probably knows less about engines than I do, which isn’t saying much.

But when I turn around and see the fine older man standing in front of me, I don’t give a damn if he doesn’t know a thing about cars. I could just stare at him all day and I know he could make this terrible Monday worth all my stress. He is a freaking Adonis. *Shit... I think he’s talking to me.*

“Sorry, what was that?”

His deep, sultry voice responds. “Do you mind if I take a look under your hood?” *No sir, not one bit, Daddy.*

If only I were truly that bold. This man would never give me the time of day. I’m way too broke and not nearly blonde or skinny enough for him.

“You don’t have to do that. I have some fluid right here. The guy at AutoZone told me it was a busted radiator, but I just haven’t fixed it yet.” He moves toward me. I’m so stunned and overwhelmed by his presence that I have no clue how to act, much less speak in clear sentences. I don’t know what to do, so I just stand here like a complete crazy chick looking at his chiseled face. He reaches for the fluid with a cocky smirk. *Fucking great. I just knew this Monday was trying to kill me somehow.*

“Okay, well, at least let me fill it up for you and take a quick look. Believe it or not, I know a thing or two about cars.”

His words surprise me, especially with his perfect hair and thousand-dollar suit that is most certainly tailored just right to fit his broad shoulders and biceps, but lean through the middle. *Hmm, I wonder what he looks like under that suit. Shit, snap out of it. He is talking to you again, Blossom!*

“What did you say? I couldn’t hear you from under there.” *Good cover up.*

He stands back up from under the hood. *Damn, how tall is this guy?* He makes me feel so small. I may be a shortie, but I’m definitely not lacking in the curves department, and his eyes seem to appreciate said curves. *Maybe he isn’t into tall skinny blondes.*

“I know a repair shop not far from here, on the outskirts of the city. An old friend of mine owns it, and I know he would take care of you. Why don’t you take it to him at the end of your day today? I’m sure he can fit you in,” hot-suit guy says as he slams my hood back down.

“Okay, that would be awesome. What’s the place called?”

I move to get my phone so I can look it up and when I turn around, I swear he’s staring at my ass, but I can’t say for sure

because of those damn aviator sunglasses he has on. He plays it off quickly and tells me the name of the body shop is Big Sal's Auto. I find it easily enough on Google and screenshot it for later. Luckily, it looks like the shop isn't far from where I live in Long Beach.

"Thank you so much for all of this, truly. I'm sure you have somewhere to be, so I don't want to take up any more of your time. Plus, I better get going before I get fired on my first day at my new job," I say with a smile.

"Of course, the pleasure was all mine. Tell Sal that D sent you."

He pauses and I find myself hanging on to every second in his presence... This guy is mesmerizing.

*Mmhmm, he goes by D; I think I like Big D for him instead. Not only is he a big guy, but I bet he has the bolas below the belt to back up the nickname too. Also, why does the word "pleasure" sound so good coming from his lips?*

D speaks up again. "Actually, I'll give Sal a call to let him know you're coming in today."

"That would be awesome. I get off at five, so I should be there no later than six. Thanks again. Have a good rest of your day. Maybe I'll run into you again sometime." *Hopefully.*

He smirks again, and I see the little dimple in his left cheek. Oh hell, I'm definitely picturing that face overtop of me tonight while I try out that new toy Sloan insisted I needed. Man, I wish I could see his eyes, but he can fuck me with his aviators on too. I'll take it any way I can get it from this man.

"I look forward to it, but I hope it's not with you on the side of the road again." He turns back to his Aston Martin and I'm stuck there staring at his ass. As he opens his door, I finally will myself to turn toward my poor Helen. But his words stop me.

"Hey beautiful, I didn't catch your name. You know, so I can tell Sal you're coming."

Blushing, I say, "It's Blossom."

“Blossom,” he repeats, almost with wonder in his voice along with something else I can’t quite pinpoint. Then he hops in his car. That may be the last time I see him, but it definitely won’t be the last time I picture him in my mind.



Thankfully, I made it on time this morning, and so far, I’m really liking Sikes Industries. Everyone has been super nice and welcoming. The orientation part of any job can be a bit boring, hence my need for coffee.

There is a cute little café on site, which is a huge perk to the job because I’m a certified caffeine addict. Walking into the coffee shop, I get behind Marissa, a sweet girl who started today as well.

“Hi Blossom, do you need a little mid-morning pick-me-up too?” Marissa asks.

Yawning, I say, “Yes, even though I was grateful to find a new job, I definitely haven’t missed waking up so early. I’m feeling it *hard* right about now.”

“Same girl. Same. At least the CEO of the company prides himself on keeping his employees happy and from what I’ve heard, the orientation is short and sweet, so after today it shouldn’t be too boring.”

“That’s awesome to hear. My last boss was one of my best friends, so this is a big change for me. But I’m excited.” I couldn’t bear the thought of staying on at the Art of Seduction once Sloan moved on to other endeavors. Even though I know Genevieve is the best choice for lead editor and manager, I knew it just wouldn’t be the same. She and I didn’t mesh well, at least not like Sloan and I did. Besides, it was time for me to start a new journey of my own.

“I don’t think our boss Lucas will be our bestie, but he isn’t hard on the eyes either, so I’m not complaining. I heard he doesn’t hold a candle to the current CEO, though. Apparently, he is ‘God’s gift to women’.”

With those words, my mind drifts to D from this morning. I just about guarantee he would put this CEO she speaks of to shame. Before I can respond, she says, “Oh my, thank you Jesus, I think I just manifested Mr. Sexy CEO into this coffee shop. Don’t look now, but damn, his pictures online do not do him justice.”

“Marissa, I can tell we’re going to be good friends. Tell me when the coast is clear so I can look at this sexy piece of man meat.” Her eyes are wide and silently willing me to shut the fuck up, which tells me one thing... my new boss is probably right behind me and heard every word.

But when I turn around, I find something even better... a very familiar broad chest. My eyes trail up his body, settling on his handsome face. Fate never works in my favor this way. Especially not on a Monday. I’m staring up into the deepest green eyes that seem to go on forever like the rolling hills of Scotland. *Don’t judge me; I’ve been watching too much Outlander with Ma lately.* This man is on another level, even compared to Jamie Fraser. I can finally see his eyes and they definitely do not disappoint; they just add to the fantasy of him.

“Well, hello Blossom. It’s a pleasure to see you again. I don’t think we carry any meat here in the café, but I know a spot down the block that comes highly recommended if that’s what you’re in the mood for.”

I’m positive that I look like an idiot right now, with my mouth hanging open, but I’m at a loss for words. D is Dalton, as in Mr. Layne... the *fricken* CEO of Layne Investments and apparently Sikes Industries as well. The same man Sloan met with in New York. I can’t even bring myself to be embarrassed by what he overheard or to respond to the gasp coming from Marissa because it seems like Mr. CEO knows me. Right now, all I can think about is how I bet he does know a place where the meat comes highly recommended, and *I most definitely want a taste.*



## CHAPTER TWO



I'm pretty sure I have thought about Dalton every other breath since the moment he stole mine in the cafe. Pulling up to Big Sal's, I try to clear my mind of all the dirty thoughts.

The marquee for the garage looks like the original one, showing this place's authenticity, but you can tell the shop itself has recently been rebuilt. Fresh red paint covers the sides of the building, and several friendly faces are standing out in front of the two huge garage doors.

An older gray-haired gentleman walks my way as if he was expecting me. His wide smile instantly makes me feel comfortable.

I hop out of Helen to greet him.

"Hey there, I'm looking for Sal," I say with a little wave.

Pointing to himself, he says, "You found him, and you must be the pretty girl Dalton sent my way. He said you were stunning, but wow, I don't think words could do your beauty justice."

My cheeks flush red, and I fake a swat at him. "Oh stop it, you're making me blush."

He chuckles. "Seriously, I only speak the truth. I'm too old to do otherwise. Now let me take a look for you. I know D mentioned it being the radiator, most likely."

I pass him my keys. "Thank you so much, Sal. I really appreciate you doing this on short notice."

He pats me on the shoulder as he gets in Helen. "Anything for a friend of my boy," he says with a smile. My mind shifts to

the sexy man who is at least ten years older than me. There is nothing about him that looks like a boy. *No, he is all man.*

“Ya know, it’s not often he sends beauts like yourself here. You must be special.”

“Oh... um, I don’t think that’s the case. We just met this morning while I was stuck on the side of the road.”

“Doesn’t matter the time frame, darling. He has a keen eye for people and knows a good one when he sees it. I should know, I’ve known that boy for most of his life.”

“Really?”

“Mmhmm, he used to work right here in this shop. He was very talented. Boy was like a sponge, learned the ropes real quick. Became one of my best mechanics by the time he was graduating high school. He could pick up anything and figure out how to fix it, and if he couldn’t repair it, he’d stay up all night researching how. Determined little shit he was.” He laughs with a smile on his face, seemingly lost in thoughts of the good ol’ times.

“Oh hell, look at me... old man reminiscing. Never mind all that, you go on in and make yourself comfortable while I pull her in and do a little assessment.”

“Thank you so much, Sal. I truly appreciate it.” With that I walk inside, again letting Dalton consume my thoughts. Imagining him working in this shop, sweaty and covered in grease, is a far cry from the polished man in a tailored suit I met this morning. Although it would explain why he actually knew what he was talking about when he was under the hood of my car. It appears there’s more to the sexy-as-sin CEO than meets the eye. Like he’s some sort of unsolved mystery... I, for some reason, am drawn to the idea of figuring him out.

As I sit there reading on my Kindle app, an unexpected feeling washes over me, like something or someone is coming. The door to the waiting room opens and in walks Los Angeles’s hottest man of the century.

When our eyes meet, he beams a smile that I swear touches every inch of my body.

Surprisingly enough, I managed to speak first. “Hey, I didn’t know you were coming by. Thanks for setting this up. Sal is looking at Helen now.”

He smirks at me while his eyes peruse my body. I’ve shed the silken blouse from this morning and am currently sitting here in my skin-tight bodysuit and high-waisted skirt. Not that I’m trying to hide or anything, it’s just a different look than he saw me in earlier. And from the look on his face and the way his eyes are on me, I can tell he’s enjoying the view.

The tension swirls between us, and I discreetly shift in my seat. “Yeah, I didn’t know I was coming by either, but somehow I ended up here.” Dalton shakes his head like he truly doesn’t know how he got from point A to point B. “Wait, who the hell is Helen?” he asks as if suddenly remembering the name.

That makes me laugh. “Helen the Honda. When you go back as far as I go with my car, you give the good old girl a name, ya know?”

“Fucking Helen.” He grunts with a lopsided smirk on his face, making that sexy little dimple on his left cheek show.

Sal walks in, wiping his hands. I’m hopeful the news isn’t too bad. When he sees Dalton standing in the waiting room with me, he eyes me for a moment, then focuses back on Dalton and grins.

“Ahh, you didn’t mention you’d be coming by,” he says as they give each other a friendly embrace.

“I didn’t know I had to give you a heads up,” Dalton says jokingly, patting the old man on his shoulder.

Sal turns back to me. “Well, it looks like she needs a new radiator for sure and I will have to order the part. I can have it in and done by Friday. Do you have a way to get around until then?”

*Welp there goes my savings.*

“I can take you to and from work. Seems like we come from the same side of the city,” Dalton rushes out with a look on his face like he’s surprised he just offered that. I have to admit I’m

quite surprised too. We just met this morning, and he's the CEO of my new job. Why the hell would he want to be my chauffeur?

As exciting as spending more time with him seems, I would never ask that of him, nor would I want to be such a burden. "I simply can't ask you to do that, Dalton. I can take the bus or Uber this week when I need to. It's totally fine."

Dalton's voice turns serious. "That's not going to happen. I'm volunteering because I want to, so just accept the help, Ms. Rivera." *How does he know my last name... did he look up my employee file?*

"Understood," he says, more like a command than a question.

His authoritative tone sends a thrill through me. *Hot damn, he's sexy when he's bossy. I wonder if he's like this in bed, too.* Knowing he means business, I don't push to refuse his offer any further. Besides, I find myself wanting to spend more time with him, so I just nod my head and say, "Thank you."

Then I look at Sal, not wanting to sound like a cheap ass, but I need to know so I can plan. "Thank you so much, Sal. Do you have an estimate for the cost and labor just so that I can plan for this unexpected expense?"

Sal peers at Dalton and then returns his gaze to me. "Yes, I can get an invoice prepared for you in a bit. The boys in the shop finally got my old-school self on QuickBooks. I can shoot you an email later, so you don't have to wait around."

I go over and give him a hug. "Thanks again, Sal. It was so nice to meet you."

"Likewise sweet Blossom." Then he glances at Dalton. "You should bring her to the BBQ at the end of the month. Anne Marie would love her."

I give Sal one last wave before walking out the door in front of Dalton, not wanting to hear his response.

*I get the feeling Dalton Layne doesn't keep anyone around for very long.*

2

DALTON

She smells so fucking good, like flowers in full bloom... like passion. Her scent, her presence, and definitely her ass has me wanting to bury myself deep inside her.

My phone buzzes with a text before we pull out of Sal's.

KELLY

I need you to get over to the club and discuss the plans for the event this weekend with Cory. He's stressing out about neither of us being there.

ME

Ok, I'll take care of it. Call you tomorrow.

KELLY

Thanks Dal, miss you!

ME

You too, see you soon.

I keep it short and sweet, which Kelly knows is my style. I don't do feelings and I normally don't let women consume my thoughts... until today, apparently.

"How would you feel about running an errand with me if I promise food and a good show?" I ask the beauty sitting in my passenger seat.

Without hesitation, she says, "Okay, that sounds good. After all, you are doing me a favor. What's your errand?"

I don't want to give the shock factor away, so I keep my answer vague. "I need to stop by one of our newer properties. Shouldn't take too long, but my partner is out of town and needs me to handle a few things."

"Oh cool, is this a property I'll learn about at work this week?"

Now that makes me chuckle.

“No, this one is more of a... private endeavor between my partner and me. Only a select few handle matters regarding this facility. So it will be our little secret.”

Her next words make my cock throb, especially with the fuck-me eyes and the seductive way she says, “I can keep a secret, Big D.”

I look over at her and raise my eyebrows at the little nickname she’s given me. Her face morphs into shock, most likely at her forwardness.

*Fuck, I need this woman on my cock... pronto.*



As we walk into the club, I can see the intrigued look Blossom has on her face as she takes in every detail of the erotic club.

“Do you want anything to drink?” I ask her as we approach the bar.

“I’ll have whatever you’re having,” she says, taking a seat. I hold up two fingers to the bartender as she approaches us, knowing she knows my order without having to ask.

Blossom takes the food menu I pass her, finally moving her gaze from the stage to look at me with her big brown eyes. “You own this place, too?”

“Yes, partly, and the stuffed mushrooms are amazing if that’s your thing.” I almost laugh at the look she gives me. But then I worry I read her wrong, and she’s actually pissed I brought her here.

“Really Dalton, you bring me in here all nonchalant and want me to order stuffed fucking mushrooms while I’m still trying to wrap my head around the sexy ass woman dancing on stage.” *Beautiful... and Sassy.*

Okay, so not mad. Noted. Also, her calling the dancer sexy puts a whole other image in my mind. I need to handle business first.

“I just thought you could look at the menu while I go speak with our manager. Then when I come back, I’ll take you somewhere with some privacy and tell you about this place. If that’s okay with you?”

She nods. “Okay, we can do that. I mean, at this point, you have my kinky girl brain intrigued, and I need to know more.”

I put my hand on Blossom’s thigh, wanting to feel the skin where her skirt has slid up. “Now I’m the intrigued one. I need to know more about this kinky girl brain of yours. A question for a question when I get back?”

She blushes. “Okay, D.”

Standing and moving my lips to her ear, I say, “Don’t go anywhere.”

The shivers that rack over her body let me know I’m affecting her, too.



Cory is having one of his usual freakouts, so I try my best to bring him back down to earth. He is a great manager but tends to overreact when he’s overwhelmed. Our sister location in New York recently went full-time masquerade, a theme created by its new owner. So, upon popular request, we decided to implement a similar event quarterly at our Vegas and newly acquired L.A. locations. Our inaugural masquerade event is this weekend, and Cory will be the manager on duty. We discuss the plans Kelly laid out and I assure him with the proper scheduling and attention to detail, everything will work out perfectly. I agree to call in one of my connections for extra security since this event will bring more people into the club than usual.

Crisis averted... Now, back to the real business I want to handle tonight.

*Beautiful Blossom.*

As I head back over, I see Blossom must have taken my advice as she puts a stuffed mushroom in her mouth, but what sets me



on edge is the motherfucker sitting a little too close to her. Eyeing her plump lips as she puts the food in her mouth, he says something to make her laugh, but I can tell she's uncomfortable.

Walking right up to her, I bend down to growl in her ear. "I don't fucking like the way he's looking at your mouth. I'm normally not a jealous man, but I didn't give him permission to look at you like that. I need you to come with me before I go and do something stupid." She looks up at me with a bit of shock in her eyes and a whole lot of something else. It's exactly what I've been wanting to see all night... lust.

As she gets up, I see the man eyeing us, but lucky for him, he doesn't have the nerve to say anything.

"Hey Cara, can we get another round?"

Our bartender Cara nods, "Of course, Sir."

Blossom comes up beside me and interlocks our fingers. Her small hand fits so perfectly there. I can't wait to see it around my cock.

As Cara hands me the drinks, I say, "We're going to the VIP section. Just let whoever's running the floor know that I'll call for them if we need anything, please."

"Sure thing. You guys enjoy the show."

Blossom lets go of my hand to grab the plate with the rest of the mushrooms on it. I smile at her. "See, I told you they were good."

Looking up at me with a smile on her face, she says, "Yes, you did, and you are the only one I want watching me put them in my mouth. I'm kinda digging your jealousy, Big D."

*Fuuuck me... this woman.*

## CHAPTER THREE



The VIP section is elevated above the main floor, but sits at the back of the room with big navy curtains around it that give it extra privacy. Luckily, since it's a Monday, no one had it reserved. It's the perfect spot for us to talk but still watch the show.

We take a seat on the chairs that are situated toward the front railing so we have a better view of the stage. There's a couch and chaise lounge strategically placed toward the back of the space for privacy from the rest of the club if desired.

Blossom starts with the questions immediately.

"So, is this a burlesque club?"

I nod. "Yes, it's a high-end burlesque club. Most people here are members because that comes with more privileges and discretion. Have you ever been to anything like this before?"

Blossom hesitates for a second before she speaks. "Yes, actually. I just got back from the grand opening of the New York location."

With a shocked look on my face, I say, "You did?" Jealousy thrums through me that I wasn't the first person to bring her to something like this. "Who did you go with?"

"So... Sloan Barton is my best friend. I actually used to be her personal assistant when she was running her blog here in L.A. Small world, but I was the person who corresponded with you and Mrs. Sikes's personal assistants when you guys were setting up meetings with Sloan to buy the club from you."

*I did not expect that answer.*

“If you two are so close, why didn’t you move to New York to work with her? A young, gorgeous single in the city sounds like something most people would be all over.”

“The offer was on the table, but I can’t leave my mom. Her health isn’t the best and family is everything to me. I also didn’t want to work for the new lead publisher at Sloan’s blog, so I decided to find a job on my own. The temp agency set me up with your company.”

“I respect that. Earning things on my own has always been important to me as well.” I shake my head. “Damn, here I was thinking I was introducing you to a whole new world here at the club.”

She smiles, running her hand down the length of my arm. “Unfortunately, the grand opening was strictly me celebrating my friend, so I didn’t get to experience any of the fun that the club offers.”

“Well, we need to change that then, don’t we?” I smirk at her before taking another sip of my drink.

“I don’t recall there being an L.A. location when Sloan was discussing the business opportunity. In fact, she traveled to Vegas one weekend to see how that club ran and to discuss the buyout.”

“This location is new. My business partner wanted to get out of New York for personal reasons, so instead, we invested here in our hometown. It was already a burlesque club—we just added the members only feature.”

“What does members only status involve?”

“Basically, anyone can come to the club, but only members have access to the VIP section and private rooms. Including private sessions with the performers who choose to make themselves available for that.”

She smiles, looking toward the stage where the main performance will start any minute. “I love that places like this exist. Where people can explore their fantasies and desires at their own pace.”

Gripping the back of her neck, I pull her attention back to me. “You seem noticeably intrigued by all of this. Earlier you mentioned the word kinky... tell me more,” I say as I run my thumb across her pouty lips. “You’ve had my mind all over the place since seven-thirty this morning, but that term has me *needing* to know.”

I love the pink tint that mars her tan skin from my question. “Well, I don’t know if it’s the two glasses of bourbon I’ve had or if it’s just you and your effect on me, but I’ll answer your question.” She gulps her drink, then lets out a deep breath. “I talk a big game, but the truth is I haven’t done half of what I really want to try. Probably because I haven’t found someone I trust enough to experiment with.”

Blossom finishes her drink, crosses her legs, and leans in a bit closer. “For a long time, I’ve known that I crave something different. I even have this one recurring dream of having sex in public places where people can catch me. It’s with a faceless man, and we get caught occasionally, but every time I wake up, I’m on the brink of orgasm.”

She pauses and looks at me. I tilt my head to encourage her to proceed. It’s all I can do not to grab her and be that no-faced man she just mentioned. She has me hanging on every word. What I would give to bend her over right here, right now, and watch her perfect round ass bounce on my cock. Her moans drowned out from the performance on stage.

Blossom continues. “The relationships I’ve had were plain vanilla sex, and that just doesn’t do it for me. I want all the things... toys, ass play, voyeurism, exhibition, handcuffs, and probably some other freaky things I don’t even know about. Part of my problem is probably all the smutty books I read. They give me more and more ideas and things I want to try. Working for such a sexually positive blog for so long really opened my eyes to so much.”

Before I can speak, she rushes out, “I can’t believe I just told you all that... You’re my freaking boss, and we literally met for the first time less than twelve hours ago.”

I grab her chin and make her look into my eyes. “First off, I’m your boss’s boss, so if I don’t give a fuck, you shouldn’t either. Second, and more importantly, I’ve wanted you since the moment I saw you, but you just confirmed that I *have* to have you, or I will literally go crazy.”

I can’t hold back anymore. My lips cover hers and her mouth immediately opens up for me, allowing me to devour her as I pull Blossom onto my lap pushing her skirt up in the process. I let out a grunt when she sits down on my rock hard, pants-clad dick. I don’t want to come up for air, especially when she grinds herself down on my lap. She lets out a moan into my mouth. Grabbing onto her round ass, I say, “You feel so fucking good, Beautiful.”

Before Blossom can respond, the show starts. I turn her around in my lap so she can see the performance but don’t take my hands off her. The featured dancer for the night makes their way out to center stage. Her main prop, which is a half-naked man, joins her. Blossom looks back at me for information.

“This is all part of the evening’s events. She dances for him, and he gets to enjoy the show and touch her when she lets him. Having them both up there gives the audience the ability to imagine they’re either the man she is dancing for or the woman who holds that man’s full attention while she teases him.”

As I grab her full breasts through her dress, I ask her, “How about you? Are you imagining you’re her... dancing for a man and having his full attention, with him drooling at your feet?”

She grinds down on me reverse cowgirl. “Their performance is hot and turns me on, but honestly I can’t think about anything except having you inside me. I’m shocking myself by saying this to you right now... but I have never been so immediately attracted to another person in my life. And I am trying to learn to dive into my desires instead of hiding from them.”

Her words throw any inhibitions I had out the window. I pull Blossom’s skirt up even higher and push her bottoms to the side. My fingers slide through her dripping sex. “Fuuuck Bloss, you are soaking. You have no idea how much I want

you right now.” She grabs hold of my wrist, pushing my fingers inside her. She moans out as she rides my hand like she can’t get enough.

“I have to taste you. I’ve been thinking about your pretty pussy all day.”

She pants out, “Yes please, I’ll beg if I need to.” I move to stand us up and pull her over to the chaise lounge, unzipping my pants to let my dick have more room. “You won’t ever have to beg me for it, baby.”

She lies back but keeps herself up on her elbows so she can watch. I fucking love that she wants to see. Hooking up with someone after just meeting them is normal, but I usually never go down on them. With Blossom, I don’t even question it. There is no other option. I have to know what she tastes like and what her body feels like squirming under the touch of my tongue. I eat her like I’m starved for her. Licking her from her ass to her clit. I pause on that sweet bundle of nerves to circle it and go all the way back down, driving her crazy. She is writhing under me. “*Cojeme!* Feels so fucking good... Yes, just like that.” With that, I apply just the right amount of pressure to her clit with my tongue and she comes, calling out my name. Just like I expected, the music from the performance is loud enough to drown out her sexy moans.

“You taste as good as I knew you would... like nectar from a flower,” I whisper, letting my breath skate over her pulsing pussy.

Once Blossom’s body stops shaking, she sits up like a woman possessed. Pushing me back as she pulls my pants down. She’s already on her knees in front of me and it’s by far the hottest damn thing I’ve ever seen.

“Now it’s my turn...” she says, licking her lips. “I’ve been daydreaming about this.” Her words cause my dick to jerk.

When she pulls down my boxers, she immediately grabs my length, not timid at all. “I knew you would be big... and feeling you through your jeans, hard for me, had me salivating to wrap my mouth around your cock.”

With those perfect dirty words, she takes the tip in her mouth, swirling her tongue around it, then pulling back. She spits on the shaft and puts her lips on me to spread the wetness all around. She leaves no one out, taking both of my balls in her mouth and licking my taint area.

I can tell she is just getting started when she twirls her long hair into a messy twist behind her back. Then she pulls her top and bra down exposing her gorgeous breasts. *Damn, those are the best fucking tits I've ever seen.*

Unable to help it, I reach out and grab one in my hand. They are much more than a handful. "I want to bury my face and my dick in these perfect tits. Fuck, they spill out of my hand. You are so motherfucking sexy Blossom."

A wide, seductive smile spreads across her face and she takes my dick back into her mouth, getting it nice and wet again before bringing her tits up and rubbing the tip of my dick and her spit all over her hard nipples. "There's that kinky girl."

"Speaking of... I just thought of another fantasy that we can fulfill tonight on top of the near exhibitionist I'm being right now. I want you to come all over my face and me. You good with that?" she says as she grabs her breasts and squeezes.

I move my hand to the back of her head and pull her toward my dick. "I am more than okay with that. Now be a good girl and put those pretty plump lips back on my cock."

She does just as I ask, giving me better head than any fantasy I've ever had. Within a few minutes, I'm pulling my cock out. Stroking it as I stare between her mouth, smeared with pre-cum, and her ample chest as I blow my load all over her.

Honestly, it's the best damn orgasm I've had in a very long time.



An hour later I'm doing something I never do... taking a woman I just met to my home.

I feel the immediate need to have her, all of her, and I want to take my time when I do.

Thankfully, the workflow traffic has died down now as we leave L.A. and head down 710 toward Long Beach.

“So how was your first day at Sikes Industries?” I ask as I run my free hand along Blossom’s exposed thigh.

“Orientation was a bit boring, but the coffee shop and eye candy were a plus,” she responds with a smirk on her face.

I squeeze her thigh, causing her to squirm in the passenger seat.

“But in all honesty, and I’m not just saying this... I can tell it’s a great company to work for and I’m excited about the opportunity. I want to say something, but I’m not sure how to put it.”

I glance at her, curious about her next words. “Tell me.”

“Whatever we are doing here...” She points between us. “I don’t want it to affect anything for me at work. This all happened so fast, and I just want you to know I expect nothing from you. I will keep whatever this is between us.”

The thought of her being my employee briefly crossed my mind once I came down from my orgasm earlier, but there is something about Blossom that seems so real and easy to trust, which is not something I do lightly. Growing up around shitty people made me a pretty damn good judge of character, and I feel secure in my gut instincts about her.

“This will never affect your career. And as far as what this is... I don’t do relationships, Blossom. But I’ve found myself craving your body since the minute I saw you on the side of the road this morning. Then when I saw you in my building, I knew I *had* to have you.”

As we turn into my driveway, I pull her chin so she’s looking at me. I see the intrigue in her eyes. “What do you say, Blossom... are you down for a good time? No questions asked, no promises or demands... just a little fun and a lot of pleasure.”



She takes a moment and then a lopsided grin falls upon her face as she nods. “Yeah D, I’m down for that.”



After deciding the stuffed mushrooms and whiskey would not keep us sustained for the night, we raided my fridge. I typically have a food delivery service, but lately, I’ve had to travel back and forth to New York so much that I told my assistant to stop the orders. It’s not in my nature to waste food and I already have a freezer full of uneaten meals.

“Sorry. I obviously wasn’t prepared for visitors, but I can call for some takeout. What do you want?” I ask as I look in my fridge, making sure I haven’t forgotten about anything I may have in there.

Blossom ponders for a minute as she looks under my arm that’s holding the fridge door open. “Do you like breakfast? I see some eggs in there.”

“I love it. It’s my favorite meal of the day.”

“Mine too.” She smiles. “Except I’m not a morning person, so I prefer to eat it at dinner.”

“I don’t think that’s considered breakfast then,” I say with a smirk.

She waves me off. “Nonsense. Do you have any bread?”

I open the door to my walk-in pantry and grab the bread from the shelf. She follows me in and heads toward my spices—grabbing what appears to be cinnamon and something else I can’t make out. Blossom turns and takes the bread out of my hand. “Do you like French toast?”

I watch her ass sashay out of my pantry.

*Damn, I can’t wait to see it marked red with my handprint.*

The thought makes me groan inwardly before I respond to her. “Yes... love it.”



We both walk out onto my terrace with full bellies and champagne in hand.

I didn't have OJ for mimosas, but I did have some Dom to go with our late-night breakfast.

"That was fucking delicious. Where did you learn to cook like that?" I say, taking a seat beside her on the patio furniture.

"It's just French toast, D," she says with that little smirk of hers.

"Yeah, but it's the fact you did it with such ease."

"My mom was the type of person who cooked every day of my life growing up and the minute I was old enough, I was expected to help in the kitchen. So, you could say I know my way around a stovetop. I can make some mean tamales, thanks to her." She licks her full lips at the thought and continues, "I bet you don't even know how to fry an egg, Mr. CEO." I know the last sentence is meant to be playful, but it just shows exactly how much she doesn't know about me.

"Nah, I can cook. I cooked for myself pretty much every day of my life until I met Sal and his wife. So now I hate cooking. I'd much rather someone else do it for me, especially someone with an ass like yours," I say, needing to change the subject.

She lets out a raspy laugh. "My ass could feel you staring... and we didn't mind it. Wow! This is one helluva view compared to my side of Long Beach."

"Beautiful, I get the feeling no matter where you are, the view is good."

Blossom moves to stand, surprising me when she places a soft kiss on my lips before walking out further onto my terrace, admiring the setup I have back here.

"I'll be right back," I call out, turning toward the house.

My backyard has a great view, especially with the ocean in the background, but I don't think I've seen it look quite *this* good.

With the bottle of champagne in my hand, I see a completely naked Blossom standing on the small stone steps leading into my heated grotto. Her curvy tan skin is on full display for me. *Every inch of her is pure perfection.*

The steam floats up around her as she steps in and looks back at me.

“You coming?” she asks. “Forget the glasses. Just bring the bottle with you!”

She is so fucking... *refreshing*. A girl who will drink Dom Perignon straight from the bottle *and* looks like that. *Damn.*

I pass her the bottle and shed my clothes. My cock grows even harder as I stare at her ample breasts, only partially covered by the water. With her eyes on me, she lifts the champagne to her lips and takes a big gulp before sitting it on the stone surrounding the edge.

Unable to stop myself with the way she’s eyeing my cock, the minute I reach her in the water, I’m on her. Our tongues tangle and twist as she mewls at my chest. *She’s so ready.*

Her legs wrap around my waist and my cock jolts from the contact with her sweet cunt.

She grinds down on me as I walk us further into the grotto and over to the bench where I sit her down.

I grab a handful of her big tits. “These fucking things are going to get me in a lot of trouble,” I growl before sucking one of her nipples into my mouth.

“Fuck, D. That feels so good... I want you inside of me.”

“Patience baby,” I say, moving to her other breast and running my hand up her thigh and in between her pussy lips. She lets out another moan as my fingers explore her.

In and out I stroke, leaning back as I admire her riding my hand. The water sloshes around her breasts as her body moves in sync with my fingers.

“Shit, I’m so close.” She moans and I slide my fingers out of her wet heat.

“Fuck... no, don’t stop. I was about to come.” She looks at me with her lips parted and chest panting up and down.

“And the next time you come tonight is going to be on my cock,” I say, flipping her over and moving her up on the bench inside the grotto so that only her legs are partially in the water.

“Yes, please, fill me up.” Her words have me spreading her ass cheeks so I can watch as I enter her and then I remember... *Fuuuck.*

“Damn baby, I don’t have a condom.” I’m at the point where I honestly don’t give a fuck, which is pretty stupid considering I just met her, but I’m way past want. *I need her.*

“I know a man like you is clean and I’m on birth control. Trust me, my Ma would kill me if I had a baby before I had a husband. I’ll find someone to settle down and marry later, but tonight... just fuck me. Now, please.” She practically growls the last part.

Not holding back I enter her in one full stroke, driving into her harder each time.

Unable to stop myself, I give each ass cheek a hard smack as she bounces back into me.

“Fuck yes... harder,” she moans. I pull back an inch and then slam back into her over and over. When I feel her pussy clench, I mark her ass with my hand print a third time, causing her to detonate. She likes it rough... *even better.*

I grab a fist full of her blonde hair and pull her to me. Her back is to my chest. I move deep inside of her while my free hand rubs her clit, taking it slower. The rhythm of my hips matching the pace of my fingers circling her clit. She moans out in pleasure, a beautifully broken mixture of Spanish and English. “D... Holy Shit... *Cojeme.* I think I’m going to come again.”

And when she does, I follow, shooting my cum deep inside her without a condom. Something I’ve only ever done with one other person.

Kissing her shoulder before I ease out of her, I whisper, “You are something fucking else, Blossom Rivera.”

“And you are unlike anything I’ve ever experienced before.” She responds with her eyes set low before dipping down into the water. When she stands, she slicks her wet hair back, looking like utter grotto porn perfection, causing my cock to immediately stir again.

“As awesome as this is, I did start a new job today, so I should probably get home and rest up for tomorrow,” she says as she comes to give me a soft kiss on the lips. “I can already tell you aren’t the kind of man who would be okay with me catching an Uber home this late, so do you mind giving me a ride, please?”

“Just stay. I can take you home in the morning so you can get clean clothes,” I say, surprising myself yet again.

“Don’t feel obligated to have me spend the night. I understand what you said to me in the car and I’m *more* than okay with this arrangement. I promise I don’t expect anything from you.”

“One thing you will learn about me, Blossom. I never do anything to appease someone else.” I climb the steps out of the grotto and before I walk over to grab towels from the outdoor closet, I turn back to her. “Stay,” I say sternly and motion for her to follow me.

“Okay D, but no cuddles... I mean it.”

I laugh at her response. “I don’t cuddle, so no need to worry there.”

A slight blush creeps onto her cheeks. I run my thumb across the reddening skin. “I can’t believe you’re blushing after the things we’ve done tonight. What are you thinking about?”

She looks up at me before speaking. “I never... I’ve never come more than once during sex and sometimes not even once.”

“Well, obviously you haven’t been fucking the right people.”

“Obviously,” she mutters.

Wrapping my hand around her neck, I say, “Oh Blossom... I’m going to have so much fun with you.”

## CHAPTER FOUR



Last night was like a dream. Honestly, I still can't believe it even happened. Who the hell do I think I am? Not only did I go to an exclusive club with my boss, a man whom I've known all of one day, but I proceeded to suck his dick in a VIP booth. Then to top it all off, I went home with him and let him bang me in his glorious grotto and stayed the night—after agreeing to a no strings attached relationship.

This so isn't me, but I'm kinda fucking loving it. What's wrong with a friend with benefits? Especially with an older, more experienced man... one that makes me feel so damn good. I think this may just be the perfect situation for me between a new job and my mom's declining health. This... Dalton... can be the one thing I do for myself.

I felt like I was on cloud nine all day, practically floating through the office. Dalton had to work late this evening, so he arranged for a car service to take me home. Through our brief introduction, I realized it's *not* a car service, but his personal driver, Nelson.

"Ms. Rivera, is there anywhere you need to stop before I drop you off? Mr. Layne insisted I take you wherever you need to go."

"No, not today, Nelson... Actually, do you think you could drop me off at an alternate address? It's around the block from my home."

"Not a problem."

With what a whirlwind of a day yesterday was, I almost forgot that today is Tuesday, and Ma and I have plans. Nothing major, just dinner and watching an episode of *Outlander*. I swear that woman is obsessed. Not that I'm complaining. I've already read the entire book series. Needless to say, I'm a diehard Jamie Fraser fan.

After rattling off the address, I sit back and watch the city skyline fade away. Daydreaming about Dalton's hands and mouth all over me. How his body felt against mine, claiming me. The way his filthy mouth made me melt beneath him. I look forward to our next rendezvous.

I'm no fool. I'm well aware this won't last forever. So, in the meantime, I will take full advantage of the moments I have with him. I get the feeling Dalton Layne has a lot of tricks up his sleeve, and I cannot wait for him to play them all on me.

When we arrive at my Ma's, Nelson informs me he will pick me up tomorrow and at what time. I thank him and then head inside before her nosey-ass neighbors see me getting out of the blacked-out Rolls Royce. I'm not ready for that inquisition.

Stepping through the front door, I smile at the delicious smells wafting from the kitchen. She must be having a good day if she started cooking without me.

"Smells delicioso, Mami."

"Ah, *Mija*. Go wash up, dinner is almost ready," she says with a smile, shooing me away with the dish towel in her hand. She looks ten years younger than she did a few days ago when I was here and she was having a rough day. During my teen years, we looked more like sisters than mother and daughter, even when I started highlighting my hair with blonde. But unfortunately, her multiple sclerosis has caused a lot of wear and tear on her body. I know it could always be worse, but I *hate* that fucking disease.

When I reenter the kitchen, I grab drinks from the refrigerator, seeing she is already plating our food.

"Glad to see you're up to cooking today."

“Yes, I’ve had a good day. Mr. Reynolds came over with a tea he made, and we sat outside for a few hours.”

“Oh, did he now? He’s been coming over a lot lately. Is there something you’re not telling me?”

“*Callate*, Mr. Reynolds is a good friend.”

“Mmhmm, sure.”

“Oh, and you’re one to talk. Don’t think I didn’t see you arrive in that fancy car. Care to explain that?”

“Fair enough. Well, I’m thankful he comes by to spend time with you,” I say, trying to steer the conversation away from Dalton.

“So, we’re just going to ignore the fact you arrived at my house in a Rolls Royce.”

“For now, yes. But if anything changes, you’ll be the first to know.” I smile at her and take a bite of my dinner, stopping this conversation before it even begins.

It’s not that I don’t want to tell her how amazing my night was. It’s more the fact that I refuse to get her hopes up over a fling. Because let’s be real, that’s all this is. The poor woman has been trying to get me into a relationship for as long as I can remember. She doesn’t believe in casual sex. Therefore, I will make sure my thing with Dalton stays on a need-to-know basis.

After dinner, I clean up the kitchen and allow Mami to rest in her chair before we start our show. I make us a bag of popcorn and refill our drinks before entering the living room.

“You know that’s all scripted, right?” I say to her while focusing on the Bravo TV drama blaring from the screen. Handing her a bowl of popcorn and placing her drink on the side table next to her chair, I then settled into my spot on the couch.

“Oh, you hush. You know I love my trash TV.” She laughs and then tosses me the remote. “But I’m ready for our Scottish prince.”



Within moments of putting on the show, we're both engrossed. It must be over a half hour before either of us speak. I hear Ma let out a loud sigh after a particularly romantic scene. "You know *mija*, you'll find that one day. I just know you'll find that type of love that sets your soul on fire. Then once you're married, you'll give me lots of grandbabies."

My heart constricts at her words. I realize she wants nothing more than to see me happily married with a family of my own. But it pains me to know Ma says these things because she worries she won't be around forever. Her late-onset MS has certainly changed her perspective and priorities in life. One of those is making sure I'm well-loved and cared for once she is no longer around.

"I know Mami, one day," I say, choking up a bit at the reality of it all.

A silence falls over the room as we finish the episode. Thankful for the reprieve, I focus on the show and not the thoughts racing through my brain. I turn off the TV as the credits begin and hear a faint snore coming from Ma's chair.

Tucking her in with a blanket and refilling her water, I lock up the house and begin my walk home. It's not very far. I made sure to get a place of my own that was within walking distance from her after her diagnosis, ensuring that I'd always be close by in case she needs me. It's only Ma and me here in L.A. The majority of her family still lives in Mexico. It might seem like a lot for a twenty-something-year-old to have the sole responsibility of taking care of their parent, but I would do anything for her.

She immigrated to California when she fell pregnant with me, wanting the opportunity to provide me with a better life. Having some friends who had already been living in the L.A. area, she settled in this little community she still lives in today. She was a single working mother, and not a day goes by that I'm not grateful for the hard work and sacrifices she made for me.

Sleep doesn't come easy to me tonight. My mind is too busy racing with all the what-ifs and could-bes. My bed is too cold

and lonely. After surrounding myself with a ridiculous number of pillows, I finally fall asleep to the thought of a delicious-smelling man's body wrapped around mine.



## FOUR DAYS LATER

“Big Sal’s Auto.”

“Hi, this is Blossom Rivera. I’m calling to check on the status of the Honda Accord.”

“Ah, sweet Blossom. How are you?”

“Hey, Sal. I’m great, thank you. How’s our girl looking? Were you able to fix her up good as new for me?”

“Of course we were. We did a few little extra repairs to ensure your girl is running smoothly. Nothing but the best for you.”

I figured there would be a few unexpected repairs Sal would need to do. Helen is old. I just hope it’s nothing too crazy.

“Okay great. Would you mind emailing over the final invoice so I can stop at the bank before I pick her up?”

“Oh, umm... sure. Same email you gave me for the estimate?”

“Yes, please. Thank you so much, Sal. You’ve been such a big help.”

“I can’t take all the credit. You’ll have to thank my boy D, too.”

“I’ll see you later,” I say, hanging up the phone. Although I am thankful for Dalton and his part in helping me out, I feel like I should be thanking Nelson instead. I haven’t seen D since Tuesday afternoon.

Nelson has been the one driving me to and from work, and even to the food store yesterday to pick up some essentials. This reminds me, I need to get him something as a thank you. I should have known when Dalton said he’d drive me to and from work. He didn’t actually mean *he* would be the driver. *Whatever... at least I got the wildest, most fulfilling sex of my life out of it.*

Dalton aside, I’ve had a great first week. Between all the training classes, HR paperwork, and meeting the marketing

team at Sikes Industries, the time has flown by.

My phone dings with an email notification and seeing Sal's name has me swiping it open instantly.

My jaw hits the floor as I scan the invoice again. *You have got to be kidding me.*

Without thinking much about it, I head to the elevators at the end of the hall, my foot tapping anxiously as I wait. When the doors open, I step inside and press the button for the top floor.

Bypassing his assistant's desk, I head right toward his door, which is slightly ajar. I can hear her calling after me, but I'm too focused on what I'm going to say to him. Because Ma raised me with manners, I politely knock but enter without waiting for an invitation, closing the door behind me.

Dalton is sitting behind his large desk. He has the phone pressed to his ear, so he gives me a wicked smirk and a hold-on-one-second gesture, giving me ample time to take in all his glory. Dalton looks sexy as hell in his blue pinstripe suit. His dark hair is styled in that sexy GQ parted way and doesn't even get me started on the scruff that lines his chiseled jaw. Recalling the feel of it as it scratched its way up my thighs, what I wouldn't give to have him clear off his desk and feast on me. I almost forget why I came in here... too distracted by my attraction to him.

Shaking my dirty thoughts away, I take a seat in one of the leather chairs situated in front of his desk. Dalton leans back in his seat and just stares at me. His eyes gleam with hunger and I cross my legs. *Don't get sidetracked Blossom. You're here for a reason.*

"Yes, I'm well aware of the consequences," he says. "Don't you worry, old friend. I can handle it... Yup, thanks again for all your work. I'll talk to you soon."

When he hangs up the phone, he returns to his relaxed position in his chair. Fingers steepled in front of him like he's prepared for what I'm going to say. I just scowl at him in return.

"Well..." He waves his hand, insinuating I should start talking.

He has some nerve, ignoring me all week and then pulling this shit.

“Well...” I say mockingly.

“Are you here to play games, Ms. Rivera? Because I happen to be a big fan of those. However, mine tend to take place in more of a private setting.”

My brain slightly short circuits when he adjusts himself in his seat. *At least I know I'm not the only one affected. But why has he ignored me?*

Before I can use my better judgment, I blurt out, “Why have you ignored me all week?”

I don't want to sound like a clingy hookup, but he made it seem like he was interested in something... even if it is casual. I didn't get the “one night stand” vibe from him.

“Is that why you came in here? To ask me why I haven't had you screaming my name again.”

“No. I mean sort of... My real question is why would you ignore me all week when you insisted on driving me around like it was something *you* actually wanted to do? Don't get me wrong, I'm thankful for Nelson's help. It's just not what I was expecting. Then, after not speaking to me, you go and pay Helen's repair bill. Who's the one playing games, Mr. Layne?” I smirk and recline in my chair, imitating his position and mentally patting myself on the back.

Dalton leans forward, resting his arms on his desk. His eyes assess me as I sit with a smug as fuck expression on my face. He knows I'm right.

“I don't think I heard a thank you in there for me.”

“There wasn't one... I will be paying you back for the repairs. I don't like handouts.”

“You intrigue me Blossom.”

“How's that?”

“Most people would appreciate their bill being taken care of... but I should have known you'd be mad.”

“I am mad. As I said, I don’t like handouts, especially from someone like you.”

“And why would you say that?”

I let out a long sigh. *Guess we’re getting deep with this convo.* “I don’t want your pity, Mr. Layne. I can pay for things myself. If you want the complete truth, it’s that I feel cheap with you paying this bill for me. I slept with you, and what... as payment, you took care of my bill like I’m some sort of prostitute.”

His gorgeous green eyes gleam with amusement at my words, and I can’t help but shift in my seat. *Stupid, handsome prick.*

“Ah, there she is. That fiery beauty,” he says with a chuckle.

“Do you find this amusing, sir? Because I sure as hell don’t!” I scold him, abruptly standing and crossing my arms over my chest.

Dalton pushes his chair back from his desk and looks at me earnestly. “Come here, Blossom,” he says in a tone that goes straight to my core.

I continue to hold my ground. Unwilling to fold to the handsome man in a suit, even if I know deep down, I want nothing more than to obey his every command.

“Blossom...”

Huffing out an audible breath, I walk to him, maintaining a safe distance from his chair, or so I thought.

Within seconds, his large hand grabs hold of my hip and pins me to his desk, directly between his legs. It takes me a moment to catch my breath, my chest heaving from his intoxicating scent and proximity. I’m so busy staring at his face that I almost miss his whispered words.

“I’m sorry. What did you say?”

“I said, I’m sorry. I never meant for you to feel used or cheap. That was never my intention.” His eyes study my face for a reaction. I get the feeling Dalton Layne isn’t one who apologizes much, and for some stupid reason that sends a thrill of excitement through me.

“I appreciate the apology.” Which I certainly do, but it still doesn’t explain his actions.

He smirks at me... fucking smirks. “Just so you know, I didn’t reach out because I was called to New York for an emergency meeting with a client. I was buried in paperwork and conference calls for two and a half days straight. I know that’s not an excuse for not reaching out, but I don’t want you to think I wasn’t fantasizing about burying myself deep inside this heavenly body of yours again.” His grip on my hips tightens as if to emphasize his point.

My body heats under his touch. Damn him... I came in here with the intent on setting him straight. Then, with a flash of his cocky grin and a few words, all that anger seems to have fizzled away.

“Don’t think you’re going to get away with this. Whether I pay you back or pay Sal double, I will pay for Helen’s repairs.”

“Mmhmm,” he murmurs while running his hands along my hips. I honestly don’t believe he’s paying attention to any of the words coming out of my mouth. He’s too busy staring at the lower half of my body.

“I’m serious!”

“Okay, Okay. Whatever you say, pay Sal double. He deserves it anyway,” he says, finally raising his gaze to meet mine, smiling at me with devilish intent.

“What’s that look for?”

“Beautiful, my cock has been rock solid since the moment you blazed through my door. Seeing you all worked up and passionate has me ready to bend you over my desk and fuck you senseless. You could’ve asked me for anything these last few moments and I would have agreed. I can’t focus on anything else.”

*Well Shit.*

“What is it you want, Mr. Layne?”

“I would love nothing more than to see your big brown eyes staring up at me while I feed you my cock.” *Sir, yes sir!*

Staying silent, I try to calm my breathing. This man’s dirty mouth drives me wild.

“Get on your knees, Blossom.”

My instincts take over and I drop down almost immediately. Dalton pushes his chair back a little further to allow me room. My hands fly toward his zipper, and his sexy chuckle has me eager to appease him.

I don’t think I’ve ever had this reaction to anyone. Normally I don’t take well to being bossed around, but with him, I don’t think twice about it. That’s something I’ll definitely have to dissect later, but for now, I’m going to suck this gorgeous, demanding man’s cock like I was made to do so.

Once his pants and boxer briefs are out of the way, I wrap my hands around his smooth length. Inching forward so I can taste the bead of liquid forming at the tip, I swirl my tongue over him and take him all the way down.

“Fuuuck,” he groans as I work my mouth over him. I love the control I feel when in this position.

“Look at me,” he demands, and my eyes shoot to his face just as my fingers tease his balls, causing his eyes to roll slightly in his head.

I pull my mouth off him but continue teasing him with my hands. “You like that, sir?” His cock twitches in my grip, confirming my answer.

Reaching out his hand, he cups my cheek. “You have no idea how good you feel. Now show me how you swallow my cock like a good girl.”

I shiver at his praise and put all my effort into making this powerful man before me lose all control.

With his hand now wrapped in my hair, I suck and lick his hard cock. The groans and the little words of encouragement coming from his filthy mouth have me soaking wet.



Dalton is getting close. I can feel his body tensing. The beep of his phone's intercom startles us both.

"Uh, Mr. Layne. I have your eleven o'clock appointment here," the hesitant voice says over the speaker.

Dalton's eyes connect with mine. "Don't stop, Beautiful. You're doing such a good job."

He then clicks the button again and as he does, I take him all the way down my throat, swallowing his long length. He shudders and with a shaky voice I'm sure surprised him, he responds, "Thank you, Amy, please tell him I'm finishing up and will be with him in ten." I suck him harder, hollowing out my cheeks. "Make that five minutes."

I giggle around his cock but continue.

"No problem, Mr. Layne," the intercom says, then goes silent.

"Fuck, Blossom. You're going to make me come."

Readjusting myself, I grab hold of him and continue to suck.

"Are you going to swallow all of me?"

I nod my head in response, focused on the task at hand, wanting nothing more than to see this man melt under my touch again.

A few moments later, I feel his cock jerk as he spills inside my mouth. His sexy groans are something I would pay to hear over and over again.

When I'm sure he's finished, I pull back and go to stand up, only to be caught in his grip and dragged onto his lap. His hand grabs the back of my head and pulls me in for an all-consuming kiss.

*Fuck, this man is going to be my demise.* I can see myself quickly becoming obsessed with him. Something I know I have no business doing.

Breaking apart, Dalton studies my face. His hands finding their way up my skirt, grazing over my soaked panties. "I wish more than anything I had the time to feast on this soaking

pussy of yours. Come over tonight? Let me apologize correctly to you.”

I nod my head and moan as he continues to tease my throbbing clit, unable to form real words.

“Mmm,” he says, nuzzling into my neck. “I’ll drive you to Sal’s to pick up Helen, then we’ll go to my place.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Standing up, I adjust myself and pull my hair into a ponytail, knowing damn well he made a mess of it.

Smacking my ass as I turn to leave, he adds, “Be prepared, Blossom. Tonight, I’m going to devour you.”

“Yes, sir.” I smirk and exit the room, nodding at his secretary as I head toward the elevators.

Once safely inside the elevator shaft, I do a girlish squeal, accompanied by a victory dance.

This is certainly going to be a wild ride.

## CHAPTER FIVE



The last two glorious nights have been spent in Dalton's bed. I'm almost certain I've had an orgasm on every surface in his house... and it's a big ass house.

To my surprise, when I left earlier to go check on my mom, he said the only way he would let me out of his sight was if I would go on a date with him tonight.

I tried my hardest to play it cool, but the giddy girl inside of me threatened to jump out and do a little victory dance. The fact he has had me in every position possible this weekend but still wants to hang out with me later is putting thoughts in my head. Thoughts that should never see the light of day. I must remind myself that this is casual... nothing serious. I can do that... *right?*



"I love the vibes here... I can't believe I've never been before. This has my name all over it, and so does this house sangria," I say before sipping on said sangria.

I feel Dalton's eyes on me as I take in my surroundings.

"What?"

"That dress was made for you, Beautiful," he says, raking his eyes over me, lingering on the cleavage that spills out of the top of my sundress.

“Well, casual looks good on you, too. Never thought I’d be sitting across from you at a local beach bar while you sip on a Modelo.”

He raises his beer to his full lips. My pussy pulses from the way he swallows the golden liquid.

“This tastes like nostalgia.” Dalton tips his beer at me. “And this place... takes me back to another lifetime. One I barely remember.”

This is the first time I’ve ever seen an ounce of emotion in his eyes, something he doesn’t seem to show very often. I want to press for more. I want to know more about him. But I get a distinct feeling that Dalton doesn’t tell anyone anything unless he wants to.

“It reminds me of a place my mom used to work at when I was growing up, but this is way cooler.”

“Tell me about your mom.”

A bright smile takes over my face at the thought of the most important person in my life.

“Well, it’s pretty much just been the two of us... She has always been fiercely determined, and luckily for me, she passed that down.”

He smirks, already getting a taste of my fierce side.

“When she first came to the U.S., she took courses so she could be a bilingual interpreter. During the days she worked for a law firm as a translator and at night she would work a few hours at a bar around the corner from our house...”

“She instilled that work ethic in you. I respect the hell out of you both for that.”

“How about you? I know Sal mentioned you working for him when you were younger.”

“Yeah, I was just an unlucky boy who worked hard and became a very fortunate man. But enough about me. Tell me what you really want to do in life, Blossom. This isn’t me asking as your boss, just a friend asking another friend. If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?”

I tap my pointer finger against my lip, thinking for a second. “I would love to be the head of a marketing department. When Sloan first started her blog, I was her personal assistant, but I also managed her marketing on social media and locally as well. Each day was a learning curve as we grew, but I became pretty knowledgeable about all things marketing and I kinda fell in love with that side of the business. It felt good to see my hard work pay off as her blog grew and became very well known.”

“I often say that marketing is the backbone of many companies. Without it, they would be nowhere. I think it’s fucking awesome that you helped grow such a major and well-loved blog from the ground up.”

I blush. “Well thank you, I’m eager to learn even more from your marketing gurus at Sikes.”

“Who knows? You might teach them a thing or two.” He chuckles and the sound of it goes straight to my ovaries.

The smug smirk he gives me causes that perfect dimple of his to pop, making me wonder if he knows the effect he constantly has on me.



“Fuck, that smells good. Thank you,” D says as our waiter drops off our food.

“Damn, this is delicious,” I mumble as I thoroughly enjoy every bite of my food. This place is fresh, authentic, and flavorful. I will definitely be back.

“Yeah, it’s been too damn long since I’ve been here. Now I remember why I love it so much.”

A little while later, we’re sitting on the restaurant patio that overlooks the beach, another round of drinks in our hands as we enjoy the view. The breeze drifting in from the waves has me appreciative of the small heaters they have scattered around.

“A long time ago, I was just a dumb kid hanging out on that beach with my friends.” Dalton nods his head out toward a group of teens enjoying the last bit of sunlight.

“It’s hard for me to picture you as anything but a man... Well, I mean like a grown man. You are just so distinguished.”

He lets out a hearty laugh. “Are you calling me old Bloss?”

I shake my head vigorously. Our age difference has never been a topic of conversation... and personally I like the fact that he’s older.

“Would you believe me if I told you I went streaking with my best friend on this beach?”

“Damn, I hate that I missed that. But yes, I would probably believe anything you tell me. Hell, you took me to a sex club on the first day we met.”

We both laugh at that statement.

It’s been forever since I’ve enjoyed the beauty a sunset paints across the sky. I move to the edge of the patio to get a better view of the sun descending to the other side of the world.

Dalton sneaks up behind me, resting his head on my shoulder and wrapping his strong arms around my middle. We stand there in silence, just admiring the picturesque scenery.

“I really like spending time with you, Blossom. I hope you know that.” He gently kisses my shoulder.

The vulnerability in his voice has me turning my head toward him and kissing that perfect little dimple of his as he grins down at me.

I turn back to face the sun. “Close your eyes, D. Feel that last ounce of sunshine on your face before she goes away until tomorrow.”

The flutter in my heart at the sight of his smile and the feel of his hands on me should be a sign of how easily this could turn into not-so-casual for me. But I ignore all that... choosing to live in this moment.

A snapshot I'll commit to my memory for all the days to come. He may not be my forever, but this moment in time will be.

## CHAPTER SIX



“I can’t believe I agreed to do this. We’ve only been seeing each other casually for what, two weeks now?”

“Girl, go live a little. No one turns down a weekend in Vegas,” my girlfriend Val’s voice cheers over the speakerphone. I’m busy manically running around my room packing for my trip.

“Eee, I’m so excited. Val, he’s so fucking hot I can’t contain myself around him.”

“I’m going to live vicariously through you for a while.”

Looking at the clock, I realize I don’t have much time before Nelson is supposed to be here.

“Shit, I have to go, Love. Thank you for checking in on Ma for me. I really appreciate it,” I say as I throw an excessive number of heels and clothes into my luggage. One would think I’m staying for a week with the amount of shit I’ve packed.

“No problem at all, go have fun! What did you tell her you were doing this weekend, just so I have my story straight?”

“I told her I was going to Vegas for a work event.”

“Ha! Okay, perfect. Can’t wait to hear all about it.”

“Bye Val. I’ll text you when we land.”

“Bye, babe.”

I let out a long sigh as I look at my overstuffed bag. Is this crazy... Am I crazy to agree to go with him?



The last couple of weeks have been a whirlwind. My days were filled with meetings on differing marketing strategies, and I spent most of my nights with Dalton, exploring each other's bodies and minds.

Yes, we're still keeping it casual. But I'm not going to lie, I can't contain the smile that spreads across my face when I see his name in my phone's notifications. It's like I'm in a Dalton bubble and currently have no desire to pop it.

We've been in each other's arms almost every night. Something neither one of us was keen on in the beginning, but now I find it's harder to fall asleep on my nights alone. I know I need to pull back and keep my emotions in check, especially after Valentine's Day. I was feeling some type of way when Dalton told me he was going to be out of town for a few days. But he assured me he would make it up to me by thoroughly worshiping my body when he returns.

I know I had no right to feel that way, but I was disappointed I wouldn't spend Valentine's Day with him. He seemed distant for those days as well, which didn't help curb my emotions. However, Dalton did send a gorgeous floral arrangement that let me know he was thinking about me.

On Wednesday, he returned from his trip and surprised me by showing up at my place in the middle of the night. I wasn't expecting to see him until the next day, so when I first saw his gorgeous smiling face in my doorbell app, my sleepy brain thought I was dreaming.

When he asked if I wanted to spend this weekend with him in Vegas, I was more than eager to jump at the chance.

I no sooner finish fighting with the zipper of my luggage when my doorbell rings. Glancing at the clock, I figure it's Nelson. Dalton said he would meet me at the office since that's where the helipad is.

*Helipad.*

I still can't get over the fact that I'm going to Vegas, let alone flying in Dalton's fricken helicopter.

Trying to calm my nerves, I do a once over in the bathroom and bedroom, double-checking that I haven't left anything.

Nelson grabs my suitcase and brings it to the car while I follow behind. After placing it in the trunk, he opens my door. As I go to sit, a familiar pair of large hands grab onto my hips and pull me across the seat. The action causes me to squeal with surprise.

"You said you were meeting me there," I say, placing a kiss on his perfect lips.

"I couldn't wait," he growls, tangling his hand in my hair and pulling me in for another kiss. This one, much deeper than the one before, has my toes curling.

"Be careful there, Mr. Layne. If I didn't know any better, I would think you missed me today."

"How could I not miss this?" His hands, which are currently roaming my body, squeeze and knead my soft flesh as if to emphasize his words. While his words send a flutter down my spine, they also serve as a necessary reminder, he missed my body, not me... *This is about sex for him Blossom, that's it... Just enjoy that piece of him and shut out the rest.*

Tucking me under his arm, he kisses the top of my head as Nelson drives us into the city.

"Are you excited?"

"I can't wait." I beam at him. It's the truth. I'm more than excited about this weekend. Especially, being able to spend the entire time with him, at his request. *Don't think too much into it!*

"Good, I'm looking forward to it, too."

I thought I would be fine on the helicopter ride considering I've been on a plane many times before, but nope. It was nothing like I thought it would be. It was bumpy and loud. Definitely not as intimate as the movies make it seem. But I held onto Dalton's hand the entire time as if it was a lifeline. It was cute, the way he attempted to distract me, speaking to me the entire time through our headsets, while he pointed out landmarks and other things through our windows.

Needless to say, I'm thrilled to be on solid ground again. Okay, not exactly solid ground because I'm currently standing in the middle of a breathtaking two-story Sky Villa. But I am upright on my own two feet and that's sufficient enough to settle me. At least enough to truly take in our suite for the weekend.

I don't think I've ever seen anything so elaborate in my entire life.

"I still can't get over the size of this place," I say, walking out onto the terrace and stopping dead in my tracks when I spot our private infinity edge pool.

"Holy shit," I whisper just as Dalton's hands wrap around my middle. He situates himself behind me with his chin on my head, pulling me closer into his warm embrace.

"You like it?"

Spinning around, I wrap my arms around his neck. "Are you kidding me? This place is amazing. I've never seen anything like it."

He leans in, kissing me with such tenderness my stomach does a little flip. "Happy Valentine's Day, Beautiful." I smile inwardly, relishing in his sweetness. He didn't have to acknowledge missing the holiday, but he did... and that means something. *Doesn't it?*

Eventually, I break free from his embrace to explore the villa more. I'm like a kid in Disney World. There's something new and exciting after every turn.

Dalton finally catches up to me by the billiard table, where I'm rolling a ball around.

"Do you play?" he asks, grabbing two fancy looking sticks out of the cabinet.

"I do," I say, trying to school my face. He doesn't have to know how well I play. I spent a good amount of my teen years in the back of the bar where Ma worked. There wasn't much for me to do once I finished my homework, so I taught myself how to play pool. With practice, I eventually became a decent player. Even the bar's regulars would challenge me, many

leaving disappointed when they got their ass beat by a fifteen-year-old.

I rack the balls as he chalks up the sticks.

“You seem sure of yourself... care to make the game a little interesting?” He grins at me as he sets himself up to break.

“What did you have in mind, sir?”

A devious glint flashes across his eyes and he wets his lips. “Play for clothes? For every ball sunk, the opponent removes a piece of clothing?”

“You’re on Big D... hope you’re not a sore loser.” I wink at him and step away from the table.

Within twenty minutes, Dalton is left standing in his tight black boxer briefs and I’m in my bra and panties. He’s a worthy opponent, that’s for sure.

“On our flight home, remind me to order a table for my house because this will not be the last time we play.” He chuckles as he sinks his second to last ball. Which means I’m now completely topless, and I plan to use that to my advantage.

Walking to the end of the table where he’s aiming, I take a big swig of my drink, purposefully spilling a little onto my chest. “Oops,” I say, rubbing my hands over my breasts to dry them off. *What? There were no rules about distractions.*

I hear him take his shot, but it misses. I smile sweetly at him. “Is it my turn?”

“You’re going to pay for that. Don’t think you can use that fucking gorgeous body of yours against me. It may have worked now, but later... it will be mine.”

“Looking forward to it.” I smirk as I sashay my way to the other end of the table. I only have to sink the eight ball.

He doesn’t even attempt to retaliate—he knows this shot is a given. The ball slides right into the pocket and I turn to face Dalton, who’s leaning against the bar with his arms crossed over his chiseled chest.

I stare at him for a moment, blatantly ogling his body.

“Well?” I gesture with my hand for him to remove his final piece of clothing, which is currently trying to contain his massive erection.

“Babe, if I take these off, it’s over for you... We will not make it to our dinner reservations or the casino. So, I’ll leave that decision up to you,” he says in a gruff tone that makes my pussy throb with need.

*Fuck, why is he so damn hot?*

Giving him my best innocent look, I say, “Well, I don’t want to be late for our plans. I guess I’ll have to take care of myself real quick.” I spin around and head in the direction of our bedroom.

One.

Two.

Thr—I squeal as he launches me over his shoulder and continues to march toward our room.

Dalton’s large hand smacks my ass with a loud thwack, and I gasp at the sensation.

“If you thought for a second I would let you touch this gorgeous fucking pussy without me, you’re mistaken. When I’m around, this pussy is mine, and only I can make you come.”

I shimmy on his shoulders as excitement thrums through me, which earns me another smack. “Is that understood, Blossom?”

“Sir, yes sir,” I croon just as he opens the door to our suite. He places me on my feet and grabs my chin, lifting it so I can see his expression. It’s a playful one, but that dominant presence is still prevalent. His other hand glides over my hip and settles between my thighs. He rubs my sensitive nub over my satin thong. I spread my legs a bit to give him more room. Just as my breathing picks up, he pulls his hand away.

“Now go get cleaned up and dressed, our reservation is in forty minutes.”

“Wha—What? You can’t leave me like this,” I say with a whine.

“I told you there’d be consequences for your little stunt earlier... Now go get ready.”

“But...”

“No buts Blossom, get dressed.”

Letting out a defeated sigh, I stomp my way to my unzipped suitcase. I can hear his soft chuckle behind me. Without glancing in his direction, I take my toiletry bag and head to the ensuite.

Several minutes later, after my quick shower, he appears in the bathroom and places a gentle kiss on my neck while I continue doing my makeup in the mirror.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous when you’re all wound up.”

“Well, I was able to get some release in the shower, so I’m better now,” I say, knowing damn well I didn’t, but that it would annoy him if I did.

He nuzzles into my neck a bit more. “Mmm, I love that you think you can fool me.” He runs his mouth up its length and bites my ear, my body jerking from his torture.

“But you know as well as I do, you won’t go against what I asked. And that this pussy is still aching to be satisfied.” His hand cups my aching center.

“Oh, and how do you know that?” I say with a heavy breath. Damn him for seeing right through me.

“Because you’re my good girl,” he says and walks out of the bathroom. Leaving me yet again, panting and unsatisfied.

*Fuck, this night is going to be torture.*

## CHAPTER SEVEN



Blossom's excitement for today is contagious. When my buddy Everett mentioned renting ATVs and joining him for some fun on the sand dunes right outside of Vegas, I didn't know how Blossom would feel about it. Most girls we hang around are not the types that want to get dirty on purpose, but she jumped at the idea.

"Do you want to ride with me or the old guy?" Everett flirts with Blossom as we walk up to the rental counter.

"I'm only eight years older than you, asshole," I growl at my thirty-year-old friend.

He chuckles before asking, "Well, how old are you, Blossom?"

"About to be twenty-six and I don't want to ride with either of you geriatrics. I'll take my own. Thank you very much." She gleams, looking at the rows of off-roading vehicles.

Grabbing her hips, I pull Blossom back into me and whisper, "I don't think a geriatric would have fucked you all night long, do you?"

With a smirk, she wiggles her ass into my dick and then trots over to a red ATV. "I want this one!" she exclaims.

"Damn, I was really hoping to feel her wrapped around me today... I like this one, Dal," Everett says while watching Blossom's ass as she walks away.

*Me too... more than I should.*

The owner, a friend of Everett's, gets us set up on a few of his best rides and Everett leads the way out into the desert. He

takes us to an area right outside of Nellies Dunes that is less crowded.

We ride for a few miles, enjoying the views and fresh air. Everett goes right for the biggest mound of sand he sees once we approach the dunes. He jumps it, getting some serious air. Before following him, I look at Blossom, pointing toward the way she can go down and meet us where we land. She gives me a thumbs up, but once I jump, I don't see her. Everett notices me looking around and he points up as Blossom's ATV jumps over the dune with both of her legs sticking straight out like she's doing a BMX show.

When she lands, she pumps both of her fists in the air and whips her helmet off. "That was fucking awesome. Let's do it again!"

Her long blonde hair falls wildly around her and the smile on her face is so youthful and happy. And it hits me like a ton of bricks... this girl deserves so much more than I can ever give her.

Everett's laugh pulls me out of my thoughts. "Damn girl, you hustling us? This can't be your first time."

"No, it really is. Let's just say I was slightly obsessed with Monster Jam as a kid and that was the one thing my mom would splurge on."

The reminder that she had it rough growing up sends a twinge to my soul. From the little she has shared, they didn't have much, but they had each other, and I know how important that is. *At least she had one loving parent.*

"Come on, let's hit that one!" Blossom yells at us as her tires spin sand, pointing at the giant mound in front of us.

I stare after her, shaking my head with a smirk on my face. I look over at Everett, who is doing the same. *This woman.*

"If she's down with sharing... then you have *got* to let me have a piece of her tonight at Members Only," he says, licking his lips suggestively.

I expected this from him, but the thought of sharing Blossom sends hot anger flooding through my veins. Everett and I like



to have a good time when I'm in town—which often means sharing women. It's one of our things. I've never had an issue with it before, but I don't know if I can go through with it tonight.

At the end of the dunes, Everett starts doing donuts. My little daredevil sits back, watching for a bit before she joins in right beside him. I sit back, smiling at the view of the two adrenaline junkies. Until Blossom's fourth circle gets out of control and two of her wheels come off the ground, throwing her off the side.

Running faster than I have in years, I get to her and see her chest and shoulders moving up and down. *Fuck, she's crying.*

I whip her helmet off. "Fucking hell Blossom, are you okay? Where are you—" and that's when I realize she's not hurt, she's laughing. Fucking laughing.

"Aw, Big D, you were worried about me?"

*You have no idea.*

Her small hands reach for me where I am sitting on my knees, and she tugs me down on the sand beside her. Rolling on top of me, she says, "I promise I'm fine. This is the most fun I've had since... well, since last night, but still, it's an awesome day. Thank you, Dalton."

Before I can speak, she presses her lips into mine. Lust and passion have fueled every kiss between us these past few weeks. It's present in this one as well, but this kiss is full of something else... sweetness and appreciation.

Right about the time lust is starting to win over as our tongues twist together, Everett's voice shouts through the wind. "Alright... alright, love birds. Glad everyone's okay, but let's go for a few more rounds so we can get back for the main event tonight." He winks and slides his helmet back down.

Blossom looks at me curiously.

"Can't come to town and not show you my place of business now, can we, Beautiful?" I say, pushing her hair behind her ear.

She swallows and shakes her head. That pretty little mind is probably racing with ideas about the debauchery that will ensue this evening.

*Tonight is going to be very interesting.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT



Walking into Members Only Las Vegas is certainly an experience. The place is just dripping with sex.

Dalton's hand is teasing the low back of my dress. Every swipe of his thumb against my skin is causing a shiver throughout my body. He's been teasing me all day, and I'm so on edge, I'm about to jump him right here and now.

Stopping at the bar for a cocktail, I turn to take in the main floor. I remember Sloan describing MOLV to me when she was purchasing Masqued, but to see it in person is something special. With its dim lights and rich colored walls and fabrics, it feels as if I've been transported to a time when gangsters ran Las Vegas.

With my arm in his, we explore the floor, taking in the booths and the main stage where a gorgeous blonde is doing a burlesque strip tease with large, ornate feather fans. Her motions are so hypnotizing that I stop in my tracks to watch her. I feel Dalton come up behind me, resting his head on my shoulder.

"Spectacular, isn't it?"

I nod my head in response, unable to take my eyes away from the show.

"Come with me. I have something special planned," he says, intertwining his fingers with mine.

He leads me toward a dim hallway where he stops at a hostess stand. Their conversation is brief and within moments we're heading further into the darkened corridor.

Every several feet, there's a set of windows and a door. Spectators gather around, peering into the rooms. Some have full viewing access, others have a smoke screen-like filter on them, and others are completely opaque for privacy.

We stop at room nine at the end of the hall, with its windows set to the semi-transparent setting. Dalton swipes his key and opens the door for me to walk through.

I'm only a few steps in when I abruptly stop. With a nervous glance, I peer at Dalton over my shoulder. He's directly behind me with his hands firmly on my arms. His lips kiss my neck and trail their way up to my ear.

"Do you trust me?" he asks, spinning me to face him.

"Yes," I respond without hesitation. He studies my face for a moment to ensure I'm telling the truth. I bite my bottom lip, craving whatever he has planned.

"That's my good girl." He smiles then spins me back to face the room again. "Now let's go greet our guest."

Inhaling a long breath, I straighten my spine and walk toward Everett, who is sitting in a leather chair near the bed.

He stands and walks toward us. Grabbing my hand, he raises it to his lips, placing a gentle kiss on top of it.

"You look absolutely stunning, Blossom," Everett says, nodding his greeting to Dalton, his eyes not leaving me for a moment.

There's no denying Everett is one of the most handsome men I've ever met. His dirty blond hair is swept away from his face, but a few stray pieces lay across his forehead, showcasing his piercing blue eyes, which are hard to ignore, especially when they are tracing every curve of my body.

"She does, doesn't she?" Dalton says, breaking me out of my Everett trance. He grabs my hand and walks us closer to the bed.

"Go make yourself comfortable, Everett," Dalton commands, and Everett returns to the chair he was in when we entered.

Dalton grabs my chin, forcing my eyes up to his. “Let’s fulfill some of those fantasies, Beautiful,” he says low enough for only me to hear.

Licking my lips, I nod frantically. Still not sure what he has planned, but at this point, I’m excited for anything and everything.

Dalton nods to Everett, who then clears his throat. “Get on your knees, Blossom,” he commands. I’m used to Dalton telling me what to do, but to hear Everett direct us is even more exhilarating.

I drop down, keeping my eyes on Dalton’s expression the entire time. “Undo his pants.”

My hands fly to his buckle as I rid him of it with ease. Once his zipper is down, I reach for his hard length and groan. Shoving his pants and boxers down, I take his length into my hands.

I pause momentarily, awaiting my next command.

“Show me how well you work his cock, Blossom,” comes from the seat beside us.

Not waiting a moment more, I take Dalton all the way into my mouth, causing both men to groan in unison. Dalton’s hand tangles into the back of my head as I tease his length. My hands roam over his thighs and gently stroke his balls as he picks up speed and fucks my mouth.

“Fuuuck,” Everett moans. “How does her mouth feel, Dal?”

I gaze up at him, taking in the look of adoration shining through his features. His one hand brushing the hair away from my face. “Like fucking heaven,” he says, shoving himself deeper into my mouth. I try my best not to gag. Breathing out of my nose, I swallow around him.

“She looks so fucking sexy on her knees for you... and she takes you so well.” I hear Everett’s praise as he shifts in his seat, but my eyes never leave Dalton. I’m too enamored by him and the unmistakable look of pleasure on his face.

“Fuck, I’m going to come down this pretty little throat of yours.” Dalton groans as his hand grips my hair harder, causing me to inch closer.

“That’s it, gorgeous. Swallow it all,” Everett demands with a husky voice. Fuck, this is so hot. I clench my core, trying to ease the steady throb there.

I feel Dalton’s cock pulse as his orgasm takes over. Slowing his thrusts, he releases the back of my head, his eyes locked with mine.

“Get undressed Blossom,” Everett says. I look to Dalton for confirmation. He nods his head and I strip down. No hesitation. I don’t know what it is about this situation, but I’ve never felt safer than I do right now. The hungry stares of both men have my confidence shooting through the roof.

“You are quite the sight, Blossom. Now lay on that bed with your legs off the edge facing me.”

“Yes, sir,” I say, earning a groan from Everett and a slap on the ass from Dalton.

I hear Everett chuckle, “Oh, it’s like that, is it?”

Dalton responds quietly enough that I can’t hear him. But I’m too distracted by what’s next to really care. Lying down as directed, I keep my legs somewhat closed.

“Spread your legs for me, gorgeous. Let me see that soaking wet pussy of yours. If I can’t touch it, I might as well get a good look at it.”

Doing as he asked, I slide my thighs apart, exposing my most sacred places. I lift onto my elbows as both men curse at the sight of me. I’ve never felt more sexually empowered than I do right now. Dalton quickly rids himself of the rest of his clothing as Everett shifts his position so he’s now leaning on his elbows with the perfect view of me on the bed.

Dalton comes between my legs and drops to the floor. “Does she taste as delicious as she looks?” Everett asks as Dalton’s tongue runs through my sex.

My body jolts at the feeling and I fall to my back. “Oh shit,” I moan, and my hand shoots to his head. Running my fingers through his dark brown hair, I grip it lightly as he teases my clit.

“Better,” Dalton grunts, then ravishes my pussy. Overwhelmed with sensation, I swear I can feel him everywhere. I’ve been on edge all day, then throw in the sexy man watching as Dalton eats me like an obsessed man, and I feel like I could come right now. But I want to drag this out. I’m enjoying the attention too much.

“Fuck, D. That feels so good. Please don’t stop.”

“I want to hear her scream, Dal. Please, just give me that,” Everett says from his chair. His tone has lost its authority. He sounds almost desperate now.

Propping myself up on my elbows again, I take in the sight before me. Dalton’s head between my thighs, feasting on me. Everett in his chair with his pants undone. He’s slowly rubbing his hand over his hard cock, which is still contained in his boxers. Both men with their full attention on me, like I’m the prize. My orgasm rips through me without warning.

“Oh god! I’m coming... Don’t stop. Shit, shit, shit... Aaah!” I scream as my body collapses onto the bed once more, my chest pounding erratically as I try to school my breathing. “So fucking perfect,” Everett says as Dalton runs his hands over my thighs.

“It’s time for you to leave now E.”

“You’re serious!” Everett says in shock.

“Be happy I let you see that much,” Dalton growls and turns his attention back to me. I see Everett stand up behind D and fix his clothing.

“Damn, you weren’t lying, were you? All right... I get it. Can’t say I’m not disappointed. She’s perfect, Dal, don’t fuck it up,” Everett says, then leaves us. I’m too blissed-out to truly comprehend what just transpired, nor do I care. All I care about is this connection I feel flowing freely between Dalton and me.

His hands grab onto my hips and pull me onto his hard length. He fills me with one swift thrust, and I yell out at the fullness.

“I couldn’t let him see how you look impaled on my cock. Only I get to see this look on your face,” he growls out while his hand gently strokes my cheek.

My heart does a stupid flutter at his words.

I moan out loud as he picks up his pace, his thumb rubbing against my clit.

“This body was made for me. I’m obsessed with every inch of you.”

No longer able to tell if this is my reality or a dream, I feel the fire of my release beginning to take over.

“Yes... every inch was made for you.”

Two more thrusts from him and I’m screaming his name once more. “Fuck yes, that’s it, baby. Come all over my cock... You feel so damn good.”

I feel his cock throb as he releases deep inside of me. He collapses on the bed beside me as we both try to catch our breath.

“That was—that was absolutely amazing,” I croon while I rub my fingers over his sweaty chest.

“It certainly was. I’m glad you liked that...”

“Liked it... I loved it. I can’t even begin to describe how perfect that was.”

“I don’t deserve you, Blossom Rivera,” he says, taking my mouth with his. I didn’t realize how much I needed his lips on mine till right now. Our tongues swirl with one another as my heart beats erratically in my chest.

*I need to be careful before I go and do something stupid... But I think it might already be too late.*



## CHAPTER NINE



Laid back in Sal's lounge, I close my eyes and pretend this could be my future for just a few moments. Sal's in his element flipping burgers and reminiscing with a few other old timers. Seeing the smile on the only man who has ever truly treated me like a son, sits right with my soul. Across the yard, Anne Marie is showing Blossom each and every one of her flowers as they sip on her homemade lemonade. The same lemonade she offered me with the first meal I had in days when they found us sleeping in Sal's garage all those years ago.

This life would be pretty perfect. *But it can't be mine...*

Blossom's raspy giggle has me opening my eyes to find her head tossed back, laughing at Anne Marie as she points to a flower that I swear has a phallic look to it.

"I'll never look at Bleeding Hearts the same," I hear Blossom say, and the two of them laugh again.

I'm getting too attached to seeing that gorgeous smile spread across her face. Finding myself thinking about her every second and it's not just because I love how her pussy feels wrapped around my cock. *I do*, but it's more than that. I can't seem to get enough of it, of her.

She works so hard to take care of herself and her mother. I wish she would let me buy her all the things she deserves, but I know she would have me by the balls before that ever happens.

A couple of nights ago, I woke up from a nightmare. One I have frequently, one that reminds me of the worst night of my life. It served as a reminder that I don't get to have the happily ever after I used to dream of. If *he* can't have it, then neither can I... it was all taken from him within seconds. And it was all because of me.

The guilt I have from that night consumes me daily, and I've come to terms that I'm destined to live a loveless life, full of meaningless fucks. Except for these last few weeks... Blossom has become anything but meaningless.

*I know I need to end it, but I just want to be selfish a little longer.*

"Dalton, you better eat another burger," Sal says, trying to pass me the plate across the table.

Patting my full belly, I say, "You still try to feed me like I'm a growing teenager. I'm full, I promise."

"Everything was delicious," Blossom says and looks to Anne Marie. "I see why you keep him around. He's good with cars and he knows how to grill a mean burger."

The loving couple laughs. Squeezing her husband's hand on top of the table, Anne Marie says, "And for many other reasons."

"Oh honey, you can't share all my tricks." Sal waggles his eyebrows up and down at his wife.

"No... just no." I shake my head at them, remembering the time I asked Sal why they never had children of their own. Pain slashed across his face but was quickly covered up with a sly comment and those same suggestive eyebrows. "*It's not from lack of practice son... if you know what I mean.*"

I didn't really understand back then, but in time I did. Just one more example of why it's hard for me to feel like I deserve anything in this life when the best people I know didn't get something they wanted so badly.



“Here’s another stack,” I say to Blossom who is busy washing dishes even though Anne Marie told her it wasn’t necessary.

I lightly smack her ass, and she looks back over her shoulder with a fake scowl on her face. “Oh, don’t pretend you don’t like it. It just looked so tempting, I couldn’t help it.”

Placing a gentle kiss on her exposed collar bone I say, “Take a break. I can finish these.” Blossom turns her head, touching her lips to mine. I deepen the kiss, unable to stop my need for her.

My tongue slides across her bottom lip for entry right as I hear, “Sweet girl, I made a plate for you to take... oh, oh sorry.” We both turn to look at Anne Marie like two teens caught red-handed. “Well, don’t stop on my account. The plate is for your mom, Blossom,” she says before turning to head back out.

Anne Marie’s hand lands on the door frame, stopping herself before exiting the room completely. “I just can’t help but say this, and I’m old so I can say what I want... but Dal, it’s so good to see you so happy again. I love the smile this beautiful lady puts on your face and vice versa. Sal and I used to not be able to keep our hands to ourselves, either. But you know what’s gotten us here... forty years later?” Not letting us respond, she continues, “It’s the constant desire to see the other one with a smile like that.” She points to us and continues, “Making sure you are internally happy as well as the one you care about will make for a great life built together.”

I know what she’s saying is true, there is no one I respect and look up to more than the Romeros. Blossom’s happiness has quickly moved to the forefront of my mind over the last month... it’s my own happiness that I’m unsure I’ll ever fully be able to embrace again.



“My mom’s not picking up, that’s strange. I tried her house and her cell.” Blossom says, gnawing on her bottom lip with

worry.

“I’m sure she’s fine, babe. We can head there now.” Blossom recently opened up about her mom’s multiple sclerosis and how she’s been having more bad days lately.

“Are you sure? My house isn’t far if you want to drop me off at my car first.”

Gently rubbing her jean-clad thigh, I try to soothe her mind. “No need to get your car if you are going to stay with me tonight. Let’s go meet the lady who raised such a wild spitfire.”

A wide smile spreads across her face at the thought of her mother. It’s special to see how much she adores her. I’m sure the sentiment is shared both ways.

“Mami... Ma, where are you?” Blossom calls out, opening the front door to her childhood home.

“*Mija*. In here.” Blossom’s shoulders visibly relax at the sound of her mother’s voice.

“Are you decent? I have a friend with me.”

I hear a gasp. “What type of friend...?”

Her dark brown eyes, enchanting like her daughters, go wide when she sees exactly what type of “friend” Blossom brought with her.

*Friend... why do I hate that fucking word right now?*

“Ah, *por dios*... I didn’t even cook anything today.” She tries to scramble up off the couch until her face morphs into a grimace.

Blossom rushes to her side. “Mami, we already ate. Calm down.” Brushing her hand through her mom’s shoulder-length hair, Blossom’s touch visibly calms her. “Another rough day?” The concern in her voice slices through me.

I hate seeing her mother in pain especially because I can tell it causes Blossom pain.

“I’m fine.” She turns her body toward me slightly. “Now, who’s your handsome friend?”

“Mami, this is Dalton...” I step toward her mom to shake her hand. “And Dalton, this is my mother, Angela.”

“Ooo, *Mija*, he’s big,” she says, trying to pull me down into a hug. I move to my knees, so she doesn’t struggle.

“Ma... stop you old cougar,” Blossom says as I swear I feel a brush across my ass.

“What? You’ve never brought such a good-looking man to visit me before.”

“Oh, so she brings lots of men to visit you then?” I snark back, making her mom throw her head back in laughter when she sees the look I give her daughter.

“No, never... not since that little punk Eddie down the street in high school. Until I caught him sneaking out of her bedroom window and chased him down the road with my broom. Had all the teens on the block calling me “*La Bruja*” for a little while.”

“I see where she gets her sass from... so what happened to Eddie, Bloss?” I raise my eyebrow in her direction.

But Angela speaks up, “She broke his heart, but he had nothing on you.” She winks at me and Blossom covers her face with both of her hands. “Maamiii stop. This is why I don’t bring anyone to meet you.”

“How do you know my girl, Dalton?”

Before I can answer her, a blushing Blossom interrupts, “We just stopped by really quick to bring you a plate of food from a BBQ we were at. Do you want me to warm it up for you?”

Her mother eyes her suspiciously, knowing full well that Blossom interrupted her on purpose. The look on her face tells me that won’t be the last time she asks her daughter how we know each other.

“I appreciate you two bringing me food, but honestly, I don’t have much of an appetite today. I will drink one of those Ensure drinks you got for me if you don’t mind grabbing me one.”

“Of course. Which flavor?”

“Chocolate please.” Then, turning to me, Angela asks, “Also I hate to hold you both up, but do you mind if Blossom helps me to the bathroom before you two head out?”

“Absolutely not. We are here for whatever you need.” I stand, nodding my head toward her other side to Blossom, and we help her to a standing position.

“Which way ladies?” They both point down the hall. She is so weak, I can’t believe Blossom normally does this on her own or that Angela has to deal with this every day.

“Dalton, make yourself at home,” her mom calls back to me as they enter the bathroom. But I stay put, wanting to be here to help when they finish.

Thoughts run through my head about how I can help these two. I don’t want to upset either of them, but surely there has to be something that can be done to make both their lives easier.

“Geez, Ma, you were laying it on thick in there, huh?” I hear Blossom say to her mother.

“I’m sorry *mi amor*, I was just surprised, that’s all. *Esta muy guapo.*” I’m unable to help the smile that spreads across my face from her mom calling me handsome.

“Yeah... he really is,” I hear Blossom whisper.

“What’s the problem, then? He wouldn’t be here if he didn’t like you. You are gorgeous, kind, smart, hardworking, and fun. What’s not to like?”

*Absolutely nothing. She’s fucking perfect.*

“Well, you pushed me out of your vagina so of course you think that, but seriously, we are just friends. I don’t think he’s into relationships at the moment, but he’s a wonderful man and will make some woman very happy one day. I just don’t think that woman is me.”

“I don’t see why not. Maybe you should talk to him, be honest about how you feel. I can see it in the way you look at him.”

“Mami, just leave it, please. I know you mean well, but I know what I’m doing here.”

“I’m sorry, *mija*. I just want you to find the happiness you deserve. You are meant to be the center of someone’s world... other than mine, of course. I don’t want you to live a life without a partner like I have. When you were younger, it wasn’t bad, but it’s... it’s hard these days.”

I can’t keep listening, I’ve heard enough. Her mother is absolutely correct. Blossom deserves someone who can give themselves to her completely and love her with no reservations. She’s too young to let a man like me hold her back from something more. I want that for her and for the first time in a very long time I wish I was able to give her that... but I can’t even love myself, much less someone else.

We get Angela all tucked in and she makes me promise to come back over so she can make her famous queso birrias. For the first time in my adult life, I lie to someone to appease them, but I just couldn’t bring myself to put out the little light I saw shine on her face from the time we got here until we left.

On the other hand, I know I need to take a step back from Blossom. I don’t want things to go any further and hurt her in any way because of my own fucked up past.

Maybe I need to take a little trip and see the one person who will remind me I don’t have the right to the happiness I feel when I’m with this amazing woman.

Blossom reaches over softly rubbing my hand. “Thank you for doing that with me. I know it meant a lot to my mom to have some new company.”

My car pulls up to the curb beside her house and I turn to her, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. “You are a wonderful daughter and person. I hope you know that. The love between you two is palpable. I’m glad I got to meet the woman who helped mold such a beautiful human being, inside and out.”

She blushes from the compliment. “Thanks D. She’s always put me first, so I’m just returning that love now.”

Blossom glances down at my phone that chimes in the center console and then toward her house. “I’ll run in and get my

clothes for work tomorrow. Be right back.” She moves to open her door, but I reach out to stop her.

Her big, round eyes look back at me with confusion. I swallow, my mouth suddenly dry. “Actually, I have to go to New York for the week. Sorry it’s last minute, but I got the call when you were in the bathroom. I’m taking the private jet tonight.”

Unable to acknowledge the unshed tears in her eyes, I chose to pretend I don’t notice them. I know she can see through my bullshit excuse, but I’m too much of a coward to open up and explain myself to her, at least right now.

I tug her toward me, searing my lips into hers. Nose to nose, forehead to forehead. I whisper, “I’ll miss you.”

Blossom gives me one last kiss on the corner of my lips and jumps out of my car, rushing into her house without turning back.

*Why does this feel like goodbye?*



## CHAPTER TEN



As my plane hits the landing strip at JFK, I'm immediately hit with a wave of trepidation. When Sloan called and invited me to a last-minute dress appointment at Saks with one of Wesley's old stylists, I jumped at the opportunity. Not only to see my best friend try on wedding dresses, but to get my mind off things.

That was until I realized the very thing... or should I say *person*, who has had my emotions all over the place this week is in this exact city. Or hell, maybe he went home. I wouldn't know. I've barely heard from him since he left Sunday evening.

I wanted to ignore the three little words I briefly caught sight of on his phone. Telling myself they could be anyone, but when he abruptly changed his plans and said he had to head to New York, I knew the "I've missed you" text I saw was his reason for going to the opposite side of the country. My mind started running with all kinds of possibilities. I know they recently sold the New York location to Sloan, so why was he still needed there so much? Unable to help it, I did some research at work and found out that Sikes & Layne do still have a few endeavors in the city that they are slowly selling off. But that doesn't mean he can't have someone waiting for him on the east coast.

I mean, I knew the deal when he told me the very first night, and I still agreed. But of course, like every no-strings-attached relationship, someone starts forming little strands of feelings

and before you know it, those strings you were never supposed to develop are like a rope around your heart.

Technically, he's done nothing wrong. He has always been honest with me, and we never spoke of exclusivity. After the time we've spent together over the last month, I know there is more to our relationship than just sex. Maybe for him, it's friendship, but I know I could never just be friends with him.

He has no idea I'm in the city right now, and I plan to keep it that way. The same way he has pulled away from me this week, I need to do the same... for my own self-preservation.

I take a deep breath in and out as I grab my luggage from the belt, trying to let the thoughts of Dalton go. My best friend is getting married, and I want to enjoy every second of her picking out her dream dress.



“Oh, hell yes!” I look up from my champagne flute as I hear Sloan's childhood bestie, Quinn, screech.

The bride-to-be's back is to us as the stylist fans out the long, impressive train that flows over the top of the steps to the small stage Sloan is standing on. She turns to us with tears in her eyes, looking simply stunning.

*Wes is going to lose his mind.*

“That's the one, my precious girl. The look on your face says it all.” Her mom cries as she approaches the stage to take in the intricate details of the dress.

She nods her head, unable to speak.

Ava, another member of the girl gang, lets out a low whistle, causing Lo to smile through the tears.

“You'd look gorgeous in a plastic bag, Lo, but this dress on you... it's out of this world.” I raise my glass toward her and all the ladies sip to that.

Wes's mom joins the mother of the bride. “My son is marrying the most stunning girl in the world... you make that dress look

damn good, honey.”

My eyes glance toward Sloan’s older sister, Maddie. As Lo’s friend, it took me some time to warm up to her, but honestly, despite the history between the two of them and Sloan’s fiancé Wes, her smile doesn’t skip a beat as she admires her sister.

Maddie joins her mom, giving her a side hug as they take in Sloan in all her glory.

“Your booty looks phenomenal in that thing.” Bumping her hip into her mother’s, she says, “She gets it from her mama.”

They all giggle, and Sloan gives the crowd a little ass shake.

“Oh, yeah... she’s twerk proof.” Quinn laughs. “Now, can we plan the bachelorette trip?”

It’s good to see Quinn so happy today. She may be putting that face on for her bestie, but either way, her smile seems genuine, unlike the last couple of times I’ve seen her.

Ava joins them and all three of them point to me. “Bloss needs a Cabo trip... the *tres locas* have turned into the *fantastic four* and she needs a wild night in Mexico for the official initiation.” The other two nod their heads at Quinn’s words.

“I don’t know whether to be excited or scared after the stories I’ve heard about that trip.”

“Maddie, you better prepare yourself too!” Sloan looks over at her sister.

Both the moms say in unison, “Can we come?”

“No!” everyone says at once.

“You two would be the most spiraling spiralers out of the entire squad,” Maddie says, and we all burst out laughing.

The celebration carries into a girl’s night out, including a fancy dinner and drinks at The Cellar, one of their favorite spots in the city. The multiple empty bottles of bubbly we left behind at Sloan and Wes’s penthouse are proof of our already tipsy state. We need some food in our system... pronto.

“Why do I feel like if we don’t get some carbs in our bellies to soak up this alcohol asap that someone is going to make a bad

decision?" I ask the ladies as we wait on our appetizers.

"Probably because I already am," Quinn responds, appearing to be typing and erasing something repeatedly on her phone. "Actually, someone take my phone from me," she says, flinging it to the middle of the table. The thread of texts from Eli, Sloan's older brother, is open and all I can see are a bunch of messages from him and no responses from her.

Sloan snatches the phone up and grabs Quinn by the chin. "No, ma'am... none of that nonsense, Quinnie. We are not going down that road tonight. Let's talk about something else. Something fun."

"Sex... Oooo, can we talk sex with Sloan for old times' sake?" Ava asks with giddiness.

"You know I'm always down to talk about fornication." Sloan giggles. "Why do I feel so immature right now? And I can't stop giggling... must have been that celebratory gummy Maddie slipped us before she left."

We all nod our heads eagerly. I forgot about the gummy. No wonder I feel so relaxed... and hungry.

*So hungry.*

"Okay, so where is the hottest place you guys have ever done it?" Ava asks the group as she sips her drink.

Every scenario with Dalton flits through my mind. The guilt hits me since I haven't shared my sexcapades with my best friend yet. At first, I didn't want to make a big deal out of it because I knew we were just hooking up and I had no idea how long it would last. Plus, the added factor of her knowing him made it a conversation I really wanted to have in person.

"Honestly, we have done it so many places... but probably on the rooftop of his building when we first reunited. It was nine years of built-up desires plus the idea of exhibitionism all added into one hot as hell night." Sloan smiles and then apparently starts reminiscing about that night if the flushed look on her face and her hand fanning herself are any indication. "Mmmhmm, I really wish that fine-ass man

wasn't out of town tonight. I would go home and ask for a reenactment."

Sloan looks to Ava. "Maybe tonight will be the night you finally tell us what happened in that private room at Masqued on opening night?"

Ava's face turns fifty shades of red as she sputters, "Lo... ugh... no." She covers her face with her hands before peeking out through her fingers and muttering quickly, "My lips are sealed... but that was by far the hottest night of my life."

Ava is the shy one of the group. Well, that is, until you put a mask on her in an all-exclusive club. She smacks Quinn on the arm, signaling for her to go.

"Hmmm, there's too many to count. Lots of sneaking around makes for fun places. I think my favorite was in the bullpen at the Carolina Bulls' stadium."

Sloan scrunches her nose up at Quinn. "Ew."

"Fuck, I need new memories... old ones hurt too much," Quinn says, rubbing her chest like she can stop the ache in her heart.

"Anywho, how about you Bloss? Any hot Cali men we need to know about?" Quinn says as she perks back up. That's something I've noticed about her. She's really good at pretending, but the more I get to know her, the more I can see through her happy facade.

"No one to know about really..." I lie, not making eye contact with Sloan. "But my hottest time was probably in a grotto. Let's just say I now know why Hugh Hefner had one built in his backyard. The ambiance just screamed hot, dirty sex... And that's what I got. Chef's kiss," I say, kissing my fingers right as the waiter arrives with our appetizers.

Sloan points her fork at me. "I need to hear more about this mystery man with the sexy grotto."

I mouth *later* to her with a wink as Ava and Quinn stare at the food we are about to devour.

Just wait till I tell her about Vegas... the actual hottest night of my life.

*Damn, did the temperature just rise in here suddenly?*



The food was superb, and of course, like the sweetest man he is, Wes called and paid for all our food and drinks. Wesley ‘Swoon’ King, ladies and gentleman.

I finish in the powder room first, so I head over to the coat check. An attractive blonde with a hot little cocktail dress on is in front of me in line. It’s obvious she’s familiar with the staff here. “Hi Tony.” She greets him with a kind voice and a bright smile. “Mrs. Layne. Surely you aren’t done yet, is everything okay?”

Her last name spikes my interest, but her next words have me clutching my throat. “Oh yes, I forgot to have Dalton grab the paper inside my coat pocket. Do you mind grabbing it for me? It’s in the left one.”

I feel like everything happens in slow motion. The attendant hands her the paper, and she walks away, oblivious to the ringing in my ears and pounding in my skull.

My body feels like it’s on fire from head to toe and not in a good way. This can’t be real... the names must be a coincidence. How on earth could he keep a secret like that from me? The little voice in the back of my head is reminding me of all the times in just the last month he has come to New York.

The hand on my shoulder has me jumping in place. “Shit, Bloss, I didn’t mean to scare you. Thought you saw us walk up.” Sloan must see the sheer shock and panic on my face. “What’s wrong, are you okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

It’s then that right over her shoulder my eyes follow Mrs. Layne to her table... where I spot *him* waiting for her.

Looking devastatingly handsome... and apparently *taken*.



I manage to say goodbye to the girls without breaking down, asking them to please give me time. My brain is so jumbled, the last thing I want to do is discuss this out in public where Dalton or *his wife* could walk up.

Have I been sleeping with a married man? How can this be? Do Sal and Anne Marie not know about her? I could never imagine them condoning an affair. But he clearly called her Mrs. Layne, and she is most certainly with him. Then I think about the text I saw on his phone... *I've missed you.*

“Hey babe, go change into something comfy. Then let’s talk, okay? I’m worried about you,” Sloan says to me as we enter her penthouse.

I nod my head, knowing this conversation needs to happen. I need to talk to someone about everything. Even if the beautiful blonde isn’t his wife, the employees at the restaurant obviously think she is, which means there is something going on between them. I can’t be the other woman. I *won’t* be the other woman. And my reaction to him pulling away and seeing him with her tonight is a big wake-up call. I need to end things with Dalton, no matter what. This is all too much. I don’t want to be casual anymore. I’m obviously not very good at it. I need more... I deserve more.

When I walk back out to the living room, I’m met with Sloan’s calming presence. She pats her hand on the couch beside her. I take the seat, curling my legs up under my butt, and she tosses the other half of her soft blanket over me.

“So, I think I messed up,” I whisper.

“We can fix whatever it is. I’m here for you. Just tell me,” she says, grabbing my hand gently to reassure me of her unwavering support.

“Imaybesortakindasleptwithmybossandsawhimtonight... I think he was with his wife.” My voice is unsteady, and my words come out extremely fast.

Her big blue eyes widen. “Did you know he was married?” she asks calmly.

“No, I still don’t, but they called her Mrs. Layne.”

“Wait, Layne? Blossom, where did the temp agency set you up for work?” The suspicion in her voice is clear.

I explain everything to her. Telling her I didn’t want her to know where I was working because I knew she would call in a favor for me and I wanted to earn the job permanently on my own if I liked it. I just never anticipated meeting my boss and hooking up with him on my very first day on the job.

She holds her hand up, stopping me before I get to the juicy details.

“I’m almost certain Dalton isn’t married. I’ve never heard anything about a family of his, other than his sister, when I’ve been in contact with them. And between the two of them, I feel like it would have come up before.”

“Hold on. Dalton has a sister, and you know her?” I ask, shaking my head. In all the conversations we’ve had, he never once mentioned a sibling. Why would he keep that from me?

“Yeah, Bloss... you know her too. Well, kind of. It’s Kelly... Kelly Layne Sikes. She is technically your boss right now. She prefers to go by Layne. From my understanding, it’s because of her late husband. Hearing her married name causes her too much pain, and she already hears it all the time because of her business.”

I remember Kelly’s name from when Sloan was purchasing the club in New York but have only ever heard her referred to as Kelly Sikes. Silly me for assuming she was a silent owner or something of the sort, or maybe even in the process of turning the company over to Dalton, since I’d yet to see or hear of her at work. It’s not uncommon for people to own a business and not actually be very involved. Especially if that business is owned by multiple people, which is what I assumed was going on in this case. I just had no clue it was Dalton’s sister, who is his seemingly silent partner.



My brain is turning with all sorts of scenarios. Sloan must read my mind. “What did the woman look like tonight?” Before I can answer, she reaches for her phone and starts searching.

She flips the screen in my direction once she finds what she’s looking for. A pretty blonde woman... with the same gorgeous eyes as her brother.

Relief floods through my veins at the realization that Dalton is not married.

The fact that I had no clue his business partner is actually his sister, probably one of the most important people in his life, is just proof that he never intends for this to be anything more than sex. Just like he told me from the beginning, he doesn’t do serious. I’m just another woman to pass his time. I know he’s done nothing wrong... Dalton has been honest with me since the day I met him, but tonight is the night I have to decide to cut this off for myself. I don’t want to be in limbo, not knowing what the deal is with us or if he is going to call me.

*I’m choosing me.*

When the first text in days comes in from Dalton the next morning, asking to see me when he gets back to L.A., I chose myself again... by not responding.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN



“Ms. Rivera, you’re wanted on the tenth floor. Please check in with Mr. Layne’s assistant when you reach the lobby,” my team lead says across the cubicles, causing all the eyes in the room to land on me.

*Great.*

I’ve managed to avoid Dalton the last couple of days in the office. Yesterday he texted, inviting me over for dinner and to talk, since I never responded to him on Sunday. I politely declined, telling him I was busy with my mom. Which was not a lie, but I could have made plans to go over afterward. I know we need to talk... he deserves to hear it from me face to face that I can’t continue our arrangement. My resolve isn’t strong enough to say no to him in his house. With only us there, it’d be too tempting to feel him just one more time. But I know I can’t go down that rabbit hole.

Marissa whispers to me on my way out the door. “What the hell did you do?” I shrug, not sure what to say. “I hope he puts you over his knee and gives you a good spanking.” She giggles and I wave her off.

*You have no idea, Marissa.*

Dalton’s secretary announces my presence as we enter the room.

“Thank you, Amy. You can shut the door on your way out.”

As soon as the door closes behind her, I’m met with smoldering green eyes boring into my own.

“Hello, Blossom.”

“Hi, how are you? How was New York?” I say all too quickly while Dalton strides around to the front of his desk.

“New York was good... very eye opening.”

“Yes, same.” I’m not trying to be a smart ass, but I did find some of the clarity I was needing on my trip.

“Yeah, to my surprise, I saw a picture this morning on your Instagram from your weekend in the city. Why didn’t you reach out to me?”

“Really, D? I barely heard from you last week. I didn’t think you’d care,” I answer honestly.

“Did you go to Masqued while you were in town?” he asks abruptly. My heart flutters on its own accord as I hear the jealousy in his harsh tone.

“No, I didn’t, actually. Sloan took the weekend off. What is all of this about?”

“Don’t play coy with me, Beautiful. I know you’ve been avoiding me.”

“You know what? You’re right, I have. But not for the reasons you may think.”

Dalton takes a step toward me, tucking a piece of my loose curls behind my ear. He runs his fingertip down my exposed throat, sending shivers down my spine.

“Then tell me why, Bloss,” he whispers and I take a step back, putting some distance between us.

“Because Dalton, I’ve realized I don’t do casual well. I tried, I really tried for you, but it’s just becoming too much, and I want... no, I need to end it before I get hurt.” I take a step toward the door, scared my emotions are about to overcome me.

I look over my shoulder at him with pleading eyes. “Please D. Give me some space. Just like we agreed, this is our secret. No one at work will ever know, but I can’t keep doing this. Thank

you for everything and for teaching me what I deserve. You are truly something special... and not just in bed.”

He appears to be stunned to silence by this change of events as I pull the heavy door open.

When I hear it slam behind me, I’m reminded of the old saying —when one door closes, another door opens.



For the last hour, I’ve dodged my mom’s questions about Dalton. She knows me well enough to know when something is going on.

My mom has accepted everything I’ve ever done, but I’m struggling to admit to her I agreed to have sex with a man who is my boss with no vision of a future together. Even though I would love nothing more than for Dalton to let me love him. I get the distinct feeling there’s something holding him back from his own happiness.

“I’m glad today has been a good day, Mami. It’s good to see you up in the kitchen cooking.” I smile at her, hoping to take her mind off my new friend.

“Yes, today is definitely a good day. Speaking of that, I forgot to mention to you what Dr. Jones told me today at my check-up.”

I typically take my mom to her appointments, but since I’m still in the probation period at my new job, I couldn’t take off. Thankfully Val’s mom, who’s a great friend to my Ma, could go with her.

“What did Dr. Jones say?”

“First off, he is going to switch some of my meds around, hoping that will help since lately I seem to have more bad days than good. But also, he said they approved me for a nurse aide three days a week.”

“Seriously?” This is something I have been fighting to get her now for the last six months. I knew when I stopped working

for Sloan that it may not always be as easy for me to drop everything I was doing to come help my mom. This is a huge stress reliever for me.

“I know I fought you on this at first, but I think it will be good for me and less worry for you. The doctor reminded me even if I’m having a good day, it will be nice to have someone around who can help me with things that are harder for me to do these days.”

“This is great news Mami. When will the nurse start?”

“Her name is Susan. She already called today to introduce herself over the phone. She starts next week.”

“That’s wonderful. I can’t wait to meet her.” I smile widely as the relief settles in.

“So, Maria said you and Val were having a girls’ night out tonight. Where are you going?”

“Yes, I actually need to go home and get ready. We’re having dinner at the tequila bar and then heading out to a club.”

“Sounds fun. Just be safe and maybe call Dalton if you need a ride home.” She just had to slide that last little plug in there about her new favorite person.

Kissing her forehead, I say my goodbyes and head out the door.

I feel like dressing up, drinking tequila, and shaking my ass with my friend tonight. And that’s exactly what I plan to do.



Val and I are three jumbo margaritas in when we make our way over to The Annex. Apparently, it’s the new “it” spot. The club is oozing with money. It’s obvious our pockets aren’t big enough to get us through the door, but since Val’s cousin is the bartender, he left our names at the door with the bouncer.

“Looking good B,” Cedric, Val’s cousin, calls to me as he passes us two tequila lime shooters.

“Thanks, Ced, and thanks for getting us in. This place is dope,” I say, looking around at the liveliness of the décor here.

“Anytime. The DJ tonight is one of my favorites too,” he yells over the noise as I notice a group of guys sidled up behind Val.

The music is definitely right up my alley. The beat is one of those that, no matter what you’re doing, you have to move your body.

“Damn, I wish I could leave this bar behind and follow you on that dance floor,” he calls out as I pull Val with me into the throng of people.

Cedric isn’t my type, but he’s fun to flirt with.

I recently realized I have a new type... tall, older, mysterious, with a filthy mouth.

*Dalton.*

“Cuff it” by Beyonce starts playing through the speakers at the perfect time. Tonight is about *NOT* thinking of *him*.

Val’s friends from the bar join us on the dance floor. One guy moves behind me and whispers in my ear, “You are fucking perfect. What’s your name?”

I look up at him. He’s hot. A few years older, probably Everett’s age.

*Why not?*

“Blossom.”

“Hi Blossom, I’m Christopher.” His breath skates across my neck. My heartbeat doesn’t race to the apex of my legs like it does with Dalton, but something does stir deep inside my belly.

Moving my ass in rhythm with his, he grabs onto my hips. My thoughts flee to Dalton, commanding him to sit and watch but not touch, just like he did with Everett. The fantasy of that sets my body off like a live wire, but when he moves his hands up toward my breasts, I push them back down to my hips. The idea of him watching is a hell of a turn on, but the thought of

him touching me somewhere that Dalton touched last... I'm just not ready yet.

"Can I buy you a drink, Blossom?" He leans down and whispers in my ear again.

Before I can answer, I hear a very familiar voice, or should I say roar, as I'm hauled up over a set of broad shoulders. "I've had enough."

"What's your problem?" I hear Christopher say as I slam my fists into Dalton's back.

"The problem is you don't touch her unless I give you permission to." Christopher just stands there, stunned by Dalton's words.

*What the fuck.*

"Who the fuck do you think you are?" I yell at him, trying to pick myself up off of him.

"I'm about to make it very clear exactly who I'm to you." He smacks my ass, and I honestly don't know what type of woman I am because it sends heat straight to my core.

I hear Christopher say something else as we walk away, Dalton ignoring him.

When we make it to a little alcove toward the back of the club, he sets me down on my feet, pinning my body to the wall with his own.

"Blossom, look at me." He grabs my chin, making me look him in his eyes. The deep shade of green I've grown to be obsessed with.

"I need to talk to you. I have things I *need* to tell you. And I think they're things you will want to hear. It'll probably answer a lot of the questions running through your mind about me."

He presses a light kiss to the corner of my mouth. "Fuck I've missed you, Beautiful." And I, without a doubt, believe him.

"Will you please come back to my house? I just want to talk in private."

“Okay,” is all I can manage to whisper.

“B, there you are. You good? What’s going on?” a worried looking Val questions as she comes around the corner.

“I’m good Val. This is Dalton.”

Her knowing eyes double in size. “Oh... oh shit. Hey Dalton.”

“Hi Val. I’m going to take Blossom home. Are you okay, or do you need a ride?”

She looks to me for confirmation and I nod, giving her the okay before she answers him.

“I’m good, thanks though. My cousin will give me a ride home.”

She gives me a quick kiss on the cheek and whispers for me to text her later.

Thirty seconds later, Dalton is pulling me out back to where his Aston Martin is parked.

This night just got very interesting. A mixture of hope and butterflies stirs in my belly.

*How did he find me?*

*And what does he want to talk to me about?*



## CHAPTER TWELVE



**M**y fingers are dying to touch her, grab onto her luscious curves, and pull her to me. She's too far away, sitting on the opposite side of the couch. Her posture is telling me to keep my distance, but her eyes are begging for me to hold her.

I hate the fact that I did this to her. I pulled away from the one person who has made me feel anything in the longest time.

“Come here, babe.” She hesitates for a moment, then slides closer. Letting out a deep breath, she looks up into my eyes. She's so young and beautiful... I'm still trying to convince myself I actually deserve her.

Fuck, here goes nothing.

“My sister and I had it rough growing up. Both our parents were addicts and cared more about getting their next fix than they did about making sure their children were fed. We packed our shit and ran away more times than I can count. Sometimes for a few hours, others for a day or two. But every time we returned, it was to a loveless, filthy house. No distraught parents waiting to embrace their missing children.”

Blossom moves even closer and grabs my hand.

“When I was fifteen and Kelly was around thirteen, we ran away and hid in back of Sal's auto shop. He found us and took us into his home. Anne Marie fed us and gave us clean clothes. For the first time in our entire lives, we were actually looked after and cared for. Sal and Anne Marie quickly became our guardian angels. We would go straight to their house after school and have dinner with them before returning home.

Eventually, Sal converted a spare room for us to always have a safe space to stay when we needed one.”

“Oh D, I couldn’t imagine growing up without the love of a parent. But I’m thankful you had Kelly by your side.”

“We really learned so much from Sal and Anne Marie during that time. I hung on to every word Sal ever said. He’s how I learned so much about cars.”

“Neither you nor Sal ever went into much detail other than you working for him, but I always felt the love you have for one another was much more than that. I didn’t want to push you for more, figured you’d tell me eventually. But by the way he lights up when he talks to you, I knew you were special to him.”

“Yeah, they gladly filled that role. After a few months, Kelly and I stopped going home and stayed at the Romeros’. And not to my surprise, our parents never looked for us or filed missing persons reports. My guess is that they were happy they no longer had us around.”

Blossom’s arms creep around my body, holding me tight to her.

“I don’t even know if they’re still alive. Never cared to look...”

“Thank you for sharing this with me. I know how it must be to drum up such painful memories.”

Pulling her onto my lap, I take her face into my hands and kiss her like the starved man I am.

“I’m a fool for ever thinking I could only keep this casual between us. I knew I was in trouble after our first time together. The way my hands craved to hold you, the way my mind couldn’t stop thinking of you, literally scared the shit out of me. Not only because you are the first woman to ever make me feel that way, but because for years, I believed I didn’t deserve it.”

Blossom’s eyes fill with tears at my words. “Never say that, Dalton. Look at where you are now and where you came from... You deserve everything in the world.”

I lower her hands, grasping them both in mine. “My parents aren’t the reason I feel that way. In high school, Kelly met Thomas Sikes. He was a great guy and soon became one of my best friends. The three of us did everything together, we even lived together in college. We would stay up late into the night brainstorming business ventures and ways we could make a name for ourselves. It was within those walls that Sikes Industries and Layne Investments were born. The day they married was probably one of the best days of my life. The love that shined through each of them that day will forever be ingrained in my soul.”

Peering at Blossom, I see her putting all the puzzle pieces together. Her concerned eyes watching me cautiously. She may have heard of Kelly’s husband’s passing through Sloan, but she doesn’t know that it’s all because of me. Thomas was one of my best friends, and there’s not a day that goes by that I don’t go to pick up the phone to call him only to be slapped in the face by the harsh reality that he’s gone, and I could have prevented it.

I stand up abruptly and walk toward the large windows overlooking the ocean. Running my fingers through my hair, I try to calm the waves of emotions that are pummeling me. Other than the Romeros and my sister, I’ve never shared the full details of that night.

“We were out late at a business dinner in Manhattan. Kelly was already out east in a house she rented us for the Fourth of July. I remember the warnings of a big storm coming through, but we didn’t know it would be that bad.”

I feel her presence behind me as her small hand squeezes mine, letting me know she’s here. “We hydroplaned while driving on the expressway, causing us to spin out of control. The airbags deployed when we hit the divider. Pain radiated through me, but I was still conscious enough to know he was still with me. I remember the noise, it still haunts me at night. The tires squealing, the feeling of utter chaos. And then within a few moments, I heard it. The sound of a tractor-trailer horn. Then complete darkness.”

Dropping her hand, I run my fingers through my hair. “I woke up two days later in the ICU with Kelly by my side. Her face swollen and red from tears. I had a concussion, a broken cheekbone, several cracked ribs, and a broken femur... Thomas died on impact. The tractor-trailer collided with his side of the car and it’s all my fault.”

“That is not your fault Dalton. No one would ever blame you for an accident like that.”

“I could have slowed down, knowing how bad it was raining. We could have stayed the night in the city and driven the next morning, but I insisted we drive. It didn’t have to end like that. I took away the love of my sister’s life. I’m the reason he’s gone, and she is left alone in this world. The guilt I feel still wakes me at night. It’s the reason I feel as if I don’t deserve happiness. Not when I took away my sister’s, the one person I love more than anyone on this planet.”

“You can’t go through life blaming yourself. Have you ever spoken to anyone after the accident?”

“Yeah, I went to therapy for a few years...”

We’re silent for a few moments, both of us deep in thought. I hope she understands I never meant to hurt her. I just wanted what I thought was best for her... and at the time, I didn’t think it was me.

“I saw Kelly this past week when I was in New York. We had some issues we needed to discuss within Sikes Industries, and I also needed her advice. I’ve been acting CEO for her since the accident. It was the least I could do to lessen the burden of it all. She still has her hand in it, of course, she wouldn’t be my sister if she didn’t, but Kelly has certainly taken a step back. My hope is one day she’ll return to L.A., to her family, and take back the life she once had.”

“Can I make a confession?” I turn to her to see her standing there looking at me sheepishly, like she has some sort of secret of her own to tell. I nod my head for her to continue.

“I saw you in New York. My girls and I were at The Cellar Saturday night celebrating. I didn’t know you had a sister, you

never mentioned her, nor do you have any pictures of her. All that, on top of you always flying to NY, I assumed she was someone you were in a relationship with. The jealousy and hurt I felt were something I couldn't ignore. I knew right then and there that I had to back away... it was no longer casual between us, or at least for me."

"I'm sorry. I wish I would have shared more of myself with you. I love my sister to death, but the guilt I feel when it comes to her and what her life has been crushes me. Maybe that's why I don't talk about Kelly much. I'm an asshole who thought that if we didn't dig too deep, I wouldn't get attached. But that attempt failed miserably. I thought by pulling away, I was doing what was best for you. Kelly quickly proved to me how fucked my thinking was."

Taking her face in my hands, I stare deep into her eyes. I hope she realizes I'm way past the causal stage as well. Shit, I've missed her so fucking much.

"Your sister sounds like an amazingly strong woman. Especially if she's dealt with you most of her life." Blossom smiles at me, and I'm thankful she is trying to lighten the subject.

"She's dying to meet you." She looks shocked by my statement, but I know they would get along great.

"You were the main topic of conversation at The Cellar. She was actually verbally kicking my ass. Berating me as to why I would ever pull away from the one thing she knew put a smile on my face for the first time in the longest time. Anne Marie let it slip to her a few weeks ago and the questions haven't stopped since. From our phone conversations and frequent visits, she realized how much I felt for you. So, when I showed up at dinner that night looking like a bag of shit, she knew something was wrong."

Blossom's big brown eyes search mine, and I lean my forehead to hers.

"She never verbally blamed me, but that first year I felt it every time I heard her sobs or saw her puffy red eyes. Every day that she couldn't get out of bed, I knew it was because of

me. Once she finally worked through her grief and was able to pick herself back up again, neither of us really brought it up. It was too painful to discuss.” Her arms wrap around my middle, holding me tight.

“Kelly knows the remorse I live with from Thomas’s death. But instead of trying to dismiss my feelings and tell me it’s not my fault like she has done for the last few years, she did something that freed me. She gave me her forgiveness. Which is something I never realized I needed to hear out loud until the words were out of her mouth. It felt like some of the weight was finally lifted from my chest, and the pain eased just a bit.”

“She told me I’d be a fool to let you go and live my life with yet another regret. Her words gave me permission to start living again. And honestly, for the first time in forever these past few weeks when I’m with you... I feel fucking alive.” I pull back just enough to see her face. God, she’s perfect. I hope it’s not too late for us.

“Fuck I’ve missed you. What do you say, Beautiful... Are you willing to give us a real chance this time?”

“Oh, Dalton... I would love nothing more,” is all she says before slamming her lips to mine. I let out a sigh of relief. Grabbing the back of her neck, I deepen our connection. I can feel her heart beating erratically in her chest, its tempo matching my own.

She feels so fucking good in my arms again... and this time, I’m not going to let her go.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN



6 MONTHS LATER

“It smells absolutely delicious in here,” Dalton says from behind as he wraps his arms around my middle.

I turn around in his arms with a spoonful of the birria I’ve been cooking all day.

“Careful, it’s hot,” I warn as he goes to take the large bite into his mouth. He chews for a bit, then grins. I stare at him anxiously awaiting the results of his taste test.

“Well?” I ask.

“Baby, it’s fucking amazing. Your mom will be very proud.” That causes me to smile from ear to ear.

I place a gentle kiss on his lips and turn back to my full stovetop. I want to make sure everything is perfect for today. We’re hosting Anne Marie and Sal, Kelly, and my mom tonight for dinner.

It’s the first time we’re having everyone over since Dalton convinced me to move in with him. If I’m being honest, it took little convincing. My one hang-up, of course, was moving away from Ma. Not that his place is very far, I just wouldn’t be down the road like I was before. Dalton, being the amazing man he is, already arranged to have the pool house renovated for her. He hired a talented architect and behind my back, spoke with my mom about what accommodations would make her life easier. After he admitted he was the one who pulled some strings to get Mom the nurse’s aide, it did not surprise me he had a plan prepared to make Ma’s new place easily accessible. *Sneaky thoughtful bastard.*

Needless to say, everyone else was already on board before he asked me. It rendered me speechless when he did. Never in a million years did I think when we first agreed to a casual fling that we would end up here, but I can’t picture my life any differently.

Dalton takes the spoon out of my hand and nudges me aside.



“Go get ready, love. They will be here in an hour. I got this,” he says, looking wide-eyed at the plethora of pots on the stove.

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah,” he responds, unsure.

Reaching over, I lower the heat on everything and then place a kiss on his cheek. “Just stir the rice in about ten minutes. Everything else can just simmer.”



“*Mija*, you did good,” Ma says as she takes another bite of the birria.

“Yes, this is amazing. I’m thankful you know how to cook because we know Dal is shit at it.” Kelly laughs as she spoons another mouthful of cilantro lime rice into her mouth.

“Excuse me, I *can* cook. I just choose not to anymore. Not when I now have a sexy live-in chef to spoil me,” Dalton interrupts, then stares at me with heat in his eyes.

“Thanks,” I say as a blush creeps up my cheeks. I don’t know why I’m acting shy around everyone. Honestly, we’ve all become much closer over the past few months, and they’ve all witnessed how much Dalton loves to love on me.

Dalton wraps his hand around my hip and scoots my chair closer to him. Leaning over, he whispers into my ear. “Thank you.”

Scrunching my eyebrows in question, he smiles and then continues, “You’re the reason we’re all here around this table and I couldn’t be happier.”

It really is amazing to see the changes in Dalton. He seems so much happier and free. Kelly’s forgiveness meant the world to him, allowing him to begin a healing journey of his own.

I smile, taking in all the grinning faces sitting around our table. Then peer at Dalton. “They’re here because of us,” I remind him.

“So, Bloss, I heard you’re starting your new position next week. Are you getting nervous?” Anne Marie asks from across the table.

After several intense interviews, they offered me a Social Media Marketing Manager position at Sikes Industries. I know it sounds suspicious considering my relationship with the current CEO, but he assured me he had nothing to do with the hiring decision. There is a Chief Marketing Officer at Sikes Industries, so I truly don’t answer to Dalton or Kelly. Now that she has officially moved back to this side of the country, she is slowly taking back some of her responsibilities.

I’m so happy that Kelly is coming around more. Her personality reminds me so much of Sloan. So, it’s no surprise she’s quickly turning into one of my favorite people.

“I’m really excited, actually. I’m looking forward to the challenge.” And that’s not a lie, it will be a challenge. Currently, their social media presence is mediocre at best. But I plan to work hard at taking them to another level.

“I know she will do great! Sloan had always boasted about how talented you were with *The Art of Seduction*,” Kelly chimes in.

We finish dinner, and after several glasses of wine, we say our goodbyes. Kelly retires to the guest room early, claiming she has an early flight to catch. That leaves Dalton and me sipping wine and watching the sunset over the horizon. I’m nestled between his thighs, leaning against his chest while his chin rests on top of my head as we both watch the waves crash onto the shore.

Sitting here brings me back to the first time we ever said I love you to each other. We were out to dinner at La Vista, the same beach bar we went to on our first date. We were sitting somewhat like we are now, straddling the picnic-style bench with my back leaning against him, with his chin resting on top of my head as we watched the sun set over Long Beach.

*“I don’t think I’ll ever tire of this,” Dalton says from behind me.*

*“Yeah me neither, just look at those colors.” I’m in awe of the purple, pink, and orange hues painting the sky. Peering up at him, I realize he’s not looking at the sunset, but solely at me.*

*“I mean you, Beautiful,” he says, placing a kiss on my forehead. “I thank my lucky stars for you daily. The love I feel for you is overwhelming, and there’s no denying how crazy I am about you. I love you, Blossom Rivera, with all my heart and soul.”*

*I sit up and twirl around to wrap my arms and legs around him. He grabs my face and pulls me into an all-consuming kiss. One where the world around me ceases to exist and all I’m left with is him and the connection we share.*

*“I love you too, so much it scares me.”*

*“Don’t be scared baby, I’m right here... always.”*

I still get goosebumps when I recall that night.

The gorgeous sunset turns into an even more stunning night sky. I must’ve fallen asleep by the firepit because I’m awoken when Dalton lifts me into his arms and carries me to our room.

“Shhh, go back to sleep, baby,” he whispers, laying me on the bed.

My arms are tightly wound around his neck, and I don’t let go until his body is resting on top of mine.

He laughs at me. His eyes shine with happiness and love, and it makes my heart skip a beat to know this beautifully broken hunk of a man is all mine. And I plan to cherish him every day and prove just how worthy of my love he truly is.

“I love you, D,” I say, kissing his soft lips while wrapping my legs around his back.

“I love you more,” he whispers to me.

We spend the rest of the night enveloped in each other’s arms, making love to one another like we have every night since the first I love you all those months ago.

# EPILOGUE

TWO MONTHS LATER

DALTON

Compared to the commotion I heard in the background of my phone conversation with Blossom a few minutes ago, I would say there is a stark difference between the groomsman's suite and the one containing the bride.

Wes is currently sitting around the lounge area sipping on an old fashion with his closest friends and family. Over the past few months, they have welcomed me into that fold.

It's funny to think back to the first time I met Sloan's soon-to-be husband. When he came storming into our business meeting, ready to claim his woman. I knew by the sight of him he was all in with her... she was his everything.

At the time, I had no desire for that to ever be me.

Until I let some of the pain go and opened my heart. It's the best thing that could have ever happened to me... *she's* the best thing that's ever happened to me.

My phone chimes. *Good girl.* I've been waiting for this response to my earlier question. My girl is far from shy, but she didn't seem to want to answer in front of all the ladies in the suite.

BEAUTIFUL

It feels... I feel so full. And so fucking horny D. Like I don't think I can make it all night with the type of need I'm feeling. I'm literally rubbing my thighs together under my dress as I type this.

Fuck if the visual from this morning of Blossom bent over while I slipped the lubed anal plug inside of her wasn't already enough, her words have all the blood in my body rushing to a central location.

ME

Well, lucky for you, I'm not a man with very much patience. I won't leave you needy for long baby. I can't wait to slide that gold dress over your hips and bend you over so I can see that pretty-pink plug as I fill you up. You think you feel full now... you just wait.

BEAUTIFUL

Ughh... Seriously, I can't with you right now. I feel like I'm on the verge of coming already.

ME

Just think of how explosive it's going to be when you finally do.

We have been exploring Blossom's kinks more and more lately. She's almost ready for me, and I can't wait to have that piece of her.

"Thirty more minutes, guys." The wedding planner peeks her head in and shouts out the reminder, snapping me out of my Blossom bubble and back to the room full of men.

Eli slaps his hand down on his best friend's shoulder. "Can't believe you are marrying my baby sis. It's about damn time, fucker."

"Who you telling, bud? I have been waiting for this day for a decade," Wes responds with a proud smile spread across his face.

"Now which one of you guys wants me to aim the garter your way?" he says, looking between Eli, myself, and their other buddy Parker.

Eli lets out a grumble. Parker gives him a fuck no, and I just smirk—knowing garter or not, Blossom will be my wife one day.

She has been my obsession for the last nine months and it didn't take me long to know I wanted to keep her forever. Cherish every inch of her for all eternity.

“Well, just for that, I’m aiming right between you two.” Wes points his fingers between Eli and Parker.

A knock at the door interrupts their laughter. “Hi guys. Wes, your blushing bride sent me in here to check on you. So, tell me you are doing good so I can report back,” Quinn says in her usual sarcastic tone.

“Is she ready? Can we start now?” Wes responds eagerly.

But it’s Eli I notice out of the corner of my eye, his gaze has so much longing within it, I hurt for the poor bastard. I know there is some history between them, but I also know he recently became a dad, and let’s just say she’s not the mama.

“She is ready... and she is utter perfection.” Quinn kisses the tips of her fingers before she continues, “But no, you can’t start now. You have to wait for all your guests to arrive.” She moves toward him and gives him a kiss on top of the head.

“I love you. Today is going to be the best day of your lives and one of the best days of mine. Two of my absolute best friends, my family, becoming one.” The genuine happiness on her face is felt in each word she says to Wes.

He stands and hugs her tightly. I see the emotion in her eyes as she briefly looks at Eli.

“I better head back to the bridal suite and take position.”

She turns and looks over her shoulder. “Oh and Eli... note to self, baby Addison apparently loves classic country. Your mom was struggling, so I gave her a break. Sang some Reba and Dolly while rocking her and down she went. She’s been out like a rock for the last hour.”

Quinn heads out the door before he can even respond, and he stands to follow her. I swear I hear him grumble something about being jealous of his own baby right now.

I check my watch and know it’s about time for me to go find my seat. Standing in front of Wes, I clink my scotch glass to his before downing the last of my drink. “Cheers friend. Happy to be a part of today. Bloss and I want to have you guys out to California once you get back from the honeymoon.”

“We would love that. Maybe we can go to Vegas, too. Your club out there treated me very well the last time we made a visit.” He emphasizes the words *very well* by raising his eyebrows.

“We can certainly make that happen.” I chuckle before shaking his hand. The wedding planner is back with a five-minute warning and that’s my cue.

When I step out into the hall, I hear hushed whispers. “You look so fucking gorgeous, Queenie.”

“Eli, please.” The emotion in her voice is clear. “Please don’t call me that. I—I can’t do this right now.”

I don’t want to invade their privacy, so I keep my head down and walk toward where the ceremony will be.

A little while later, as the groom stands front and center waiting on his bride, the breath is stolen right from my lungs.

*Beautiful Blossom.*

All long blonde hair, stunning brown eyes with long lashes, kissable plump lips, and sexy-as-sin curves wrapped up in one perfectly fitted bridesmaid dress.

Being with Blossom is pure bliss. And not just because of how absolutely stunning she is, but because of the happiness she has brought into my life. The smile she gives as she spots me at the end of the row has me unable to stop myself from reaching out and grabbing her hand. She squeezes it and mouths I love you as she glides past me.

Elation takes over my body with that one touch and those three words. Because of all the things I’ve been through in life, I know to never take the ones you love for granted and I plan to vow that to Blossom one day.

The ring in my pocket says... *one day sooner rather than later.*



# SNEAK PEEK

Here's a sneak peek at Wes and Sloan's love story, *Reckless Abandon*.

Book One in the *Reckless Hearts Series*

# RECKLESS ABANDON

## 9 YEARS AGO

My back is pushed up against the bedroom wall when his lips find the sensitive spot on the nape of my neck. I moan at the contact of his soft, luscious lips. Wes's knee presses between my locked thighs, begging for me to open. I slowly spread them apart as he quickly fills the space. Strong hands make their way up my shirt as a low growl escapes him. Grabbing onto his broad shoulders, I have the urge to drag my nails down his back.

"God, how long I've waited to taste you," he whispers into my neck, causing my blood to ignite. His mouth makes its way to my jaw as his fingers tease my hardened nipples. I grind my hips onto the large bulge forming in his pants, taking pleasure in the way his body wakes my inner siren. She's begging to be touched, needing the release only he can give me. Finally, his lips lightly brush against mine. I can no longer wait for their connection and grab the back of his head, pressing our lips together. His kiss is unlike anything I've ever experienced. Needy. Hard. Desperate. His lips devour mine and our tongues swirl together.

A sound I wasn't quite sure I could create escapes my mouth. "Please, Wesley," I beg him.

"Mmm, what do you need Lo," he responds as he moves his mouth back to my neck. Still grinding my body onto his, I feel a rush of heat between my thighs. I know one brush of his hand on my clit, and he'd send me over the edge.

"Please touch me, oh god... I need to feel your hands on me," I moan softly to him. He growls at my plea, grips my thighs, and hoists me up so I can wrap my legs around his firm body. Taking a few steps, he gently guides our entwined bodies onto my bed. Wes's lips find mine once again, thrusting his body to match my grinding hips. I moan loudly, no longer trying to keep my desire quiet.

“Shhh,” he whispers. “We can’t risk anyone hearing you.” I groan in return, not caring if the entire house hears us. This moment is exactly what I’ve craved for what feels like my whole life.

Wes’s hands make their way into my sleep shorts, sliding his fingers across my slick opening. I jolt forward at the connection. Dipping his fingers into my wet sex, he spreads it along my clit, swirling his fingers.

“So fucking wet for me, Lo,” he says with a predator-like growl. I feel my orgasm build, teetering on the edge of pure bliss. Our breathing is labored, and I’m panting uncontrollably, desperate for release.

I need him to push me over the edge.

I need it to be him.

Ignoring the light knocking sound I hear, it seems as if my heart is trying to escape my chest. Grabbing his head, I pull him into a kiss once again. The feel of a familiar tingling sensation takes over in the tips of my toes. I rock my hips into his touch, hearing the confirmation of my own desire. The light knocking sound appears again, and possibly a voice. Our lips break apart and Wesley’s eyes shoot to the door.

Our bodies still, hoping we’re just hearing things. Then I hear the voice again, “Sloan, it’s time to wake up.”

What the hell?

“Come on! We’re going to be late.” My eyes pop open, recognizing the voice of my older sister. I lie there panting, looking around and realizing I’m alone with my fingers on my throbbing clit.

“Fuck, it was all a dream.” I sigh to myself and throw my arm over my face.

I hear a knock again. “What the hell, Lo? Wake up!”

“I’m up, I’m up,” I yell back, trying to calm my racing heart. Happy to hear my sister’s voice and that she’s home but hating the fact she interrupted that good of a dream.

Dragging myself out of bed, I make my way into the bathroom. One look in the mirror and the aftermath of my wet-dream bliss is written all over my face. Smiling to myself, I touch my cheeks that are still flushed crimson.

Wow, what a dream. It felt so real. As if Wesley was really there with me. He seems to be a staple in my dreams lately. My mind starts racing and I run my hands down my body, enjoying the flushed color of my skin, my sex still throbbing.

I snap back to my current situation when the auto-start of my brother Eli's truck roars to life. Hearing the commotion of people and cars outside my window, I hurry to get myself together, ensuring my cheeks return to their natural color before leaving my room to face my family and all of our friends. Is it possible for a chick to have blue balls? If so, I'm going to have a serious case all day long.

## AFTERWORD

Thank you so much for reading Blossom and Bliss. It means the world to us to have your support.

Reviews are everything to us authors. So, if you enjoyed reading, please consider leaving a review!

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, we want to thank our readers. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for taking a chance on us.

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Eeep! My other half, thank you for doing this with me. We make one kick-ass team and I'm so proud of what we've accomplished so far. Let's show em' what we're made of! xox  
- L

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A New Yorker and a Southern Belle.

Two Book Obsessed Babes that became lifelong best friends over their love for a good romance novel.

When they're not writing, they're devouring a good book or spending time with their family and friends.

Total opposites in some ways and exactly the same in others, making them a dynamic author duo.

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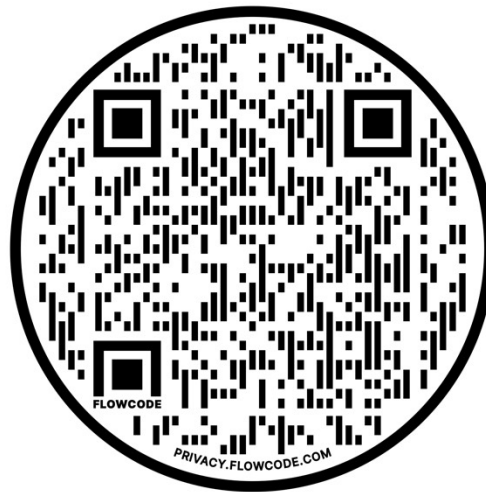
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