



Innocent
ROSE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
DARCY ROSE

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INNOCENT ROSE

Rose is my daughter's best friend, and I shouldn't want her the way I do.

For years, I've watched her grow and blossom into a beautiful woman. I've wanted her for so long, but I've been very good at disguising that with my father-like concern for her well-being.

Until the day I offer to let her move in and I realize I'm not as strong as I thought I was. I want to claim every inch of her, and I won't be as gentle as she deserves.

Rose might be innocent and completely off-limits, but I never was a rule follower.

Rose will be mine, and I'll do anything to ensure it.

CHAPTER 1

NOLAN

This has got to be the worst idea I've ever had.

What was I thinking, inviting Rose to live with us?

Keeping myself from obsessing over her has been hard enough from afar, but having her under the same roof will be impossible.

Fuck me. She's grieving, and all I can think of is how her tight little body tempts me every second of the day.

"Are you sure you don't mind having me?" Rose's sweet voice meets my ear. I almost choke on my own spit.

Do I mind having her? Having her is all I can think about. Having her on the couch, bent over the kitchen table, against the wall, in my bed. I want her everywhere and all the time.

"Nolan?" She touches my arm, concern etched into her pretty features. "Are you okay?"

"Yes! Of course I don't mind having you here. I'm glad you accepted my invitation. I don't like the idea of you staying in that old house by yourself."

"I don't either. You know I love being here."

My heart stutters when she runs a hand over her forehead, then lifts her thick, wavy golden hair to wipe perspiration from the back of her neck.

"You always make me feel at home, and you've already gone out of your way."

“Not at all.” I need to pry my gaze from the light film of perspiration still covering her chest, or else I’ll have no choice but to find out what it tastes like. I’ll have to dip my tongue between those two full globes, and *oh fuck, I’m staring at her tits.*

“I just want you to know how grateful I am.” Her big, luminous hazel eyes turn downward before she scuffs the floor with the toe of her sneaker. “I couldn’t stand the idea of being alone, but I would never have asked to stay here instead. I didn’t want to be an inconvenience. I’m so grateful you’re doing this.”

“It’s my pleasure.” Rather, I wish it *was* my pleasure. Right now, it’s more like my torture, and I doubt things will get easier. Knowing she’s here, two doors down from my room. Alone in her bed, wearing a nightshirt that barely covers her ass... or so I’ve already imagined.

If I didn’t know better, I think she’s deliberately trying to turn me on, leaning over a stack of boxes until her tits rest on the surface, pressed together by her folded arms. The low-cut tank top she’s wearing doesn’t leave much to the imagination. I have to force myself to turn away, and not only because I don’t want her to notice me staring.

Much more of this, and I’ll be as hard as a rock. She doesn’t need to see that.

No, she’s not a child anymore, but she may as well be. I’ve known her since my daughter marched up to me after school one day and announced Rose was her new best friend. That was seven years ago, and it’s true to this day.

Liz bursts into the bedroom that until two days ago was used for storage, carrying a tote bag over each shoulder. “I think that’s the last of it. Easy peasy.”

“Easy for you.” With my hands pressed against my lower back, I groan, stretching. “You didn’t put that bed frame together or help haul the dresser up here.”

Liz merely rolls her eyes the way eighteen-year-olds without sore backs tend to do, but Rose seems to take it

seriously. “I’m sorry. The last thing I want is to put you out.” As she speaks, she pulls the scrunchie from her wrist and, raising her arms, twists her thick, wavy blond locks into a bun on top of her head.

While I fight for my life, doing everything I can not to get caught checking her out. The way her pert nipples poke against the cotton encasing them, ready to burst free. The lifting of the shirt, revealing a strip of creamy skin over the waistband of her cutoffs. Cutoffs which already provide a heart-stopping view of her long, lean legs. Thighs begging to be parted, licked, even bitten until she sucks in a pained breath —

Shit. I’m half hard by the time I catch myself and turn my back to the girls. “You’re not putting me out.” Again, her choice of words leaves me choking.

It was already bad enough she consumed so much of my private thoughts. In the shower, in bed. That, I could handle, even if I felt like an old pervert obsessing over a luscious little body and a pretty face. It’s pathetic, but I wouldn’t be the first man to jerk off while thinking about a girl much too young for him.

Having her here takes everything to dangerous new levels.

She’s a kid who lost her grandfather, the only parent she’s had since she was five. She’s alone in the world and needs help, not an old man slobbering over her.

Maybe if I keep repeating that to myself, it’ll be enough to help me stop this sick obsession. That’s what it is. Sick. Out of control.

“I’ll help you with the clothes if you want.” Liz is beside herself, and seeing her this happy makes all the temptation worthwhile. It must feel like an extended slumber party with her best friend. Both girls decided to take a year before starting college rather than jumping straight into the commitment, meaning they’ll have plenty of time to spend together when Rose needs it most.

I can’t fuck this up for either of them.

It's time to remember I'm a grown man with responsibilities.

I can't remember a single one of those responsibilities when Rose unzips one of her tote bags and begins pulling clothes from it. Did she have to start with her underwear? Suddenly, the room contains no air. I need to fling the window open to get a breath.

She notices. "Are you okay, Nolan? You look like you don't feel good."

"I'm fine," I choke out. "A little winded is all."

"It's so weird that you call him Nolan." Liz laughs. "It sounds funny."

"He told me I could."

"That's right." I busy myself hanging brackets above the windows so she can have blinds for added privacy. The idea of anyone being able to look in on her is enough to make my blood boil. I'm not letting that happen.

But you can look at her all you want, right?

That's different. I can control myself. I don't know that some random asshole walking down the street would be able to say the same.

"Can I call you Nolan?" my daughter asks, snickering.

"You already know the answer to that one." I look over my shoulder in time to see Rose sorting through a stack of lacy, nearly sheer panties. Help me, God. I am completely fucked.

Especially once she lifts her gaze and catches me watching at the last moment. *Shit*. I snap my attention back to my work while my body trembles with the effort of keeping my hands to myself.

"Can you teach me how to drill, Nolan?"

She has no idea what she's saying. Stop being a fucking pervert. "Sure, it's not difficult," I croak. "But I just finished up. Maybe next time." Good thing, because I don't know if I could stand being much closer than we are now.

“I’m starved.” Liz closes the dresser drawer with a bang. “Let’s go downstairs and get dinner started.”

“Yeah, let’s make something nice.” Rose glances my way, wearing a shy smile. “All you have to do is rest. Maybe take a shower to help the soreness in your muscles.”

“It’s nice of you to care.” That isn’t what I need to ease most. Not when my dick is so damn determined to get me in trouble.

I can’t stop myself from staring at her ass as she and Liz leave the room, debating on what they want to fix tonight. Like a juicy peach begging me to sink my teeth in.

She’s right. I do need a shower, though not the kind that’ll ease the soreness in my shoulders and back. I need the water icy enough to shock my system and get me thinking like a sane man again.

I don’t know what made me offer to have her here. Concern was a part of it—she’s been a sister to Liz and has spent countless nights and weekends here. The idea of her living alone in her dead grandfather’s house didn’t compute.

But that’s not even close to the whole story. It’s what I tell myself to make this seem like the decent thing to do. I know damn well the thoughts in my head are anything but decent.

I was looking for the opportunity to have her close. Under my roof, at my dinner table, down the hall. I jumped at the chance when it was in front of me, and now I have to live with the constant temptation.

A shower isn’t a bad idea, though. Once my tools are packed away, I turn to leave the room when a flash of light-pink lace catches my eye.

I give in to the impulse before there’s time to stop myself, bending to snatch up what turns out to be a tiny pair of panties. Not a thong, but I doubt they’d cover even half of her tempting ass. Heat explodes low in my gut and there’s no keeping my dick from going hard in an instant.

What if she dropped them here for me?

I'm sure that's not it, but the idea runs through my head as I lift the crotch to my nose and inhale deeply, closing my eyes while the scent of fresh, young pussy fills my senses. What I wouldn't give to taste her.

Like your relationship with your kid.

My eyes open, and the vision of pretty pussy lips spreading for me vanishes.

So much for that.

It's not enough to stop me from shoving the panties in my pocket, though. If I can't have her cunt wrapped around my cock while I come, they'll have to.

CHAPTER 2

ROSE

O pening my eyes in Liz's house is nothing new.

I've spent I don't know how many nights sleeping over. A hundred, maybe, or two hundred. I've done this before.

But I wasn't in this room. That's one explanation for why my heart is ready to jump out of my chest when I realize I'm in an unfamiliar place.

The other is the thought of what wasn't sticking out from under the bed anymore when I came up here last night, after dinner and cleanup and sitting down together for a movie.

Liz never came in here. The only person in this room after we went down to the kitchen was Nolan. And when I came up to bed, the panties were gone.

He took them. I know he did. I told myself it was stupid to leave them there, like I was tempting him for no reason.

I guess I had to prove it to myself, either way. Whether they were here or gone, I would know where it left me with him. How he feels.

Now I know, and I'm surprised I got any sleep at all last night.

Maybe it's a good thing I have something to feel happy about right now, because otherwise I'd probably do nothing but lie around and cry all day. Not that Grandpa died out of nowhere—his health wasn't good for months, but I still kept hoping he'd pull through. I guess I didn't want to think past losing him. That would mean figuring a lot of other things out.

But here I am, and the house is in my name according to the will he left behind. I couldn't live there all alone. I would lose it if I had to spend every day around all those memories, not to mention going to sleep alone every night with the old floorboards creaking and settling.

It would be better if I sell the place real quick and get an apartment on my own. That, I could handle, and it would mean not being tortured by Nolan.

I've had a crush on him for as long as I can remember. I don't know when it started. I think it was his sense of humor that first got my attention. He's always made me laugh, yet not in that corny way some dads do. He never treated me like a stupid kid, either.

When he asked questions after he picked us up from a dance or a party, he always listened. Even now, I know if I ever had a problem, I could go to him, and he wouldn't judge me. I didn't always feel that way about my grandfather, who was too old-school to understand a lot of things.

All that aside, though, it's not like I only want him because he's funny and kind. Just the thought of his big, strong body makes me bite my lip as I roll onto my side, wrapped in a cocoon of sweet-smelling blankets.

I slide a hand over my thigh and imagine it's his, only it would have to cover a lot more skin if that was true.

I almost forgot what I was doing more than once yesterday. I couldn't take my eyes off the way those big hands managed the boxes and the bed frame like they didn't weigh anything. It must be a sickness or something, the way I couldn't help but imagine how he would handle me.

As usual, the picture in my head of Nolan running his giant hands over my much smaller body gets me wet.

And I get even wetter when I think about the panties again.

All this time, I figured it was just me. I told myself he only saw me as a kid, even as I got older and started catching the little looks he'd give me when he thought I didn't notice. I'd bend over to pick something up, and he'd look away real fast

when I stood, or I'd sit down across from him like I did at dinner last night, and he'd stare at my boobs. I don't even think he knows he's doing it sometimes since he acts all surprised before he looks away.

I figured it didn't mean any more than that. It's not like men have never looked at me that way. But he's the only one I wanted to look at me that way, that's the thing.

So now I'm supposed to live here, seeing him every day, and know the whole time that he took my panties.

What was I thinking when saying yes when he offered to let me stay with them? All that mattered was the idea of being near him.

Now I'm going to have to try harder than ever not to flirt or come too close to him. To touch him the way I fantasize about. Now, it's not just what I want. He wants it, too, and the idea of teasing him when I know he's interested.

I can't let it go too far, that's all. I don't want to hurt Liz, and I know it would. She would be too weirded out. She might even feel like I betrayed her if she ever knew I was trying to seduce her father.

So I guess I'm going to have to hang around with a wet pussy and hard nipples until I'm able to sell the house and get a place of my own.

I have no idea how long that will take.

Maybe I shouldn't have come, even if it would've been weird to be alone at the house. It would still be safer than facing him and having to pretend my heart doesn't skip a beat every time he walks into a room.

There's not a sound in the house but my breathing. I'm the only one here since both Nolan and Liz are at work. She's only working the morning shift at the coffee shop, though, so she'll be home by lunchtime.

We made plans to go to the grocery store after she gets home to pick up something for tonight's dinner. It's fun cooking together, but I can never tell her the other reason I suggested we cook again tonight.

I love knowing I made a meal for him, and watching him enjoy it made me feel so good inside. I want that feeling again and again for the rest of my life.

Getting up, I change out of my pajamas, biting my lip again when I look at the spot where I dropped the panties. I wonder what he did with them. What if he touched himself while he was holding them? What if he slept with them on his pillow? Or maybe he's carrying them around with him now, in his pocket, like a secret reminder.

Which would mean he's been thinking about me all day. My face goes hot at the idea, and a buzzing sensation spreads all through my body.

I wonder if it's true. Like if he's sitting in a meeting right now, thinking about me the whole time. I wonder if it makes his dick hard, the way I noticed yesterday when he thought I wasn't looking. He couldn't help himself.

I almost felt sorry for him. It wasn't enough to make me stop teasing him a little. Saying things I knew would get to him.

I really should try to get out of here and into my own place as soon as I can. Maybe for both our sakes.

If I wasn't here, I wouldn't have the pleasure of wandering the house by myself, reviewing his daily routine through the things I find lying around. Like the coffee cup in the sink. I pick it up, inhaling the aroma of what's left inside, then touch my lips to the rim before emptying it and putting it in the dishwasher. I have to start getting up earlier—maybe I can fix his coffee and breakfast in the morning.

It makes me smile as I pour myself a bowl of cereal. My skin tingles when I imagine standing at the stove, flipping pancakes when he comes in for breakfast. He'd hold me by my hips and nuzzle my neck before turning me around for a deep, long kiss.

And it would be the simplest thing in the world. Being together. Intimate. There wouldn't be anything to hide, and I

could kiss and touch him whenever I wanted. Until breakfast burned.

My cereal's soggy by the time I shake myself out of my fantasy. I don't even know what I'm thinking. It will never happen. Okay, so he wants me. Big deal. I bet he wants a billion dollars, too. That doesn't mean it's going to happen.

My heart sinks as I look around the big, homey kitchen. It'll never be mine, just like he'll never be mine. I need to stop thinking about him this way. It'll only end up hurting me.

For some reason, once I've finished eating, I let my curiosity take over anyway. I know I shouldn't, but the temptation is too strong. I've never been alone in this house. There's never been the chance to...

Don't do this. My conscience's screams aren't stopping me on my way up the stairs and down the hall. His bedroom door is up ahead, pulling me in. I want to feel close to him. There's nothing wrong with that.

I've peeked inside before, when the door was partly open, but stepping inside is another story. The navy bedspread is neatly smoothed out over the bed. I like that he makes it even though he sleeps alone. I like how neat he is.

He organizes the clothes in his closet neatly, too. I run a hand over the row of dress shirts and the colorful polos before leaning in and inhaling deeply. It's like being with him.

It's not enough. I cross the room and open the dresser drawers before coming to his T-shirts. They're soft to the touch, worn, and they all carry the same musky scent. Pulling out a gray shirt, I hold it to my nose, closing my eyes and imagining he's holding me and my head rests on his chest.

This is nice, but it's not enough.

A small part of me still knows this is a bad idea, but I can't help it. I don't want to. I want to lie down on the bed with his shirt spread out like he's lying beside me.

So that's what I do, curling up with my head on the shirt and my eyes closed. Now I can see it all more clearly. Lying

here with him. Touching him, being touched. His heart starts beating faster like mine does.

“Nolan,” I whisper, rolling onto my back, almost feeling his lips on my throat. In my mind, I run my hands through his thick hair. I’ve always thought the bits of gray running through the black strands are sexy. So hot.

My nipples are bullets, aching to be touched. The brush of my fingers against them makes me groan and arch my back, moaning. He’s touching me, exploring, taking my breath away. It’s so good. He’s so good. He knows my body like it’s his.

Smelling him all around me makes it so much easier to imagine him pushing me into the mattress with his big body. My head rolls from side to side while I sink deeper into the fantasy, and my hands slide over my boobs—then lower, to where I’m burning and sopping wet.

I want to make him groan. To hear him whisper my name. I’d live on it forever. All I can do now is imagine his deep voice rumbling in my ear while his hand works under my shorts and thong.

Oh God, my lips are coated in my juice, so wet my fingers glide over my skin before sinking deeper. To where it hurts the worst, aching and throbbing and needy. Needy for him, for Nolan, for his thick fingers to own every inch of my body.

I can see him on top of me, working in and out of my pussy. His face so close, his breath hot, his steel-gray eyes staring into mine. Hazy from the pleasure my body brings him. I’m making him feel as good as he’s making me feel, proving I’m enough for him. I’m not too young or inexperienced. I can make him feel good.

“*Rose... my sweet Rose...*” My whimpers echo through the room, and my hips lift off the mattress, my feet planted firmly. “*Your pussy feels so good...*”

“*Are you my good girl?*” he grunts, *pounding into me.* “*Gripping my dick so tight? Driving me crazy until I have to fuck you?*” And all I can do is *moan helplessly. I want to be his good girl. His sweet Rose, digging my fingers into his*

*shoulders, wrapping my legs around him to pull him deeper.
I'll be whoever he wants me to be.*

I'm racing to the finish line, my hips jerking, wetness coating my fingers and running down my crack. Just once, if I could have him only once it would be enough. On top of me. Inside me.

I know in the split second before it all comes crashing down, and I wail out my release that it will never be enough. Once, ten times, a thousand. I will always want more of him. Forever.

"Nolan." It sounds so good whispered breathlessly while I'm still trembling from the aftershocks. Only he's not here. It doesn't matter how clearly I picture him in my head or how good I am at convincing myself he's on top of me.

I should stop this. I need to stop this. Or else I won't be able to help myself much longer. It'll get harder and harder to stay away from him.

The lines are going to blur, and I'll wind up hurting Liz in the end. And maybe getting my heart broken.

The thought makes me jump off the bed. I need to be stronger, dammit. I can't hurt my best friend.

Though that doesn't stop me from grabbing the shirt and taking it with me as an afterthought. He'll never miss one shirt, and he never needs to know I'll be sleeping in it.

I'll know, and that will have to be enough.

CHAPTER 3

NOLAN

“*A*w, Dad. We made dinner for you and everything.” I could practically hear Liz pouting over the phone when I called earlier to say I’d be home late. “Rose wanted to make sure you had all your favorites tonight.”

It doesn’t mean anything. Stop being a fucking pervert. It was sick, the way my thoughts immediately moved in that direction. Like she was cooking for me because she wants me. Because that’s at all the same thing.

“I’m sorry, honey. Save me the leftovers to heat up when I get home.”

I don’t exactly look forward to heating up leftover pasta and chicken parm, even if Rose prepared them especially for me. I’d rather be eating her pussy than her cooking.

And that is the pathetic reason I stayed late at the office. Why I left long after everyone else, saying good night to the cleaning staff on the way out. Not that it’s exactly abnormal for me to work late, but I try to make it a point to do it from home nowadays. I want to be present for Liz.

She has Rose to keep her company now. At least I don’t have to worry about her losing out or feeling lonely because I can’t control my runaway lust for a kid nearly a quarter of a century younger than me.

It’s past ten o’clock by the time I turn the corner onto my block. My heart’s pounding for fuck’s sake. What am I getting so excited about? There’s a girl my daughter’s age staying in the guest room. She’s been legal for roughly five minutes.

I'm not a stupid man—at least, I never believed I was before now. I always wondered what was wrong with men who made mistakes that ended up tanking their lives. Affairs with the nanny and shit like that.

Now, I think I get it. Sometimes you come up against someone who robs you of reason and logic. What seems impossible when you're thinking clearly makes sense all of a sudden. You would tell yourself anything so long as it meant getting what you wanted.

I'm not going to make that mistake. I will not break my daughter's trust and take away a friendship that's meant so much to her.

The porch light is on, but the house is mostly dark. Liz has been working the morning shift lately, so she could be in bed by now. I'm hoping Rose followed suit with nothing better to do. Even if she's reading or on her laptop, so long as she's out of my sight and therefore not such a temptation, it's fine with me.

The only light burning on the first floor is the one above the stove. Liz stuck a Post-it to the rangehood. *Dinner's in the fridge. You'd better eat something.*

I can't help but laugh softly at the way my daughter tries to mother me.

Though I'm not in the mood for much of anything. My appetite passed while I buried myself in overdue emails and reports I should have read weeks ago. If one good thing has come from Rose moving in, it's the way I've already caught up on a lot of work. I might even empty my inbox thanks to her.

It's easy to laugh at myself now, with no sign of Rose's tempting body. As much as I long for her, I know it's for the best that we avoid each other. What am I supposed to do, though? Skip dinner at home until she's gone? How long will that last? What happens on the weekends?

I'm a grown man, but this girl may as well own my soul.

Rather than get so much as a snack, I go straight for the stairs. I'm past the age of eating anything more than a light snack at this time of night, anyway, not if I want to sleep. *Because you're an old man, or did you forget?* I don't much need to hear the taunting from my own subconscious.

What I need more than anything is rest after having spent most of last night wide-awake. I couldn't shake the memory of sitting on the sofa with her, watching a movie I don't remember a single minute of only twenty-four hours later. So aware of her every move. The way she chewed her lip when she was deep in the story. Her sniffles when things got emotional. Her helpless giggles at the jokes.

It's amazing I remembered to breathe.

I doubt things will improve tonight, but exhaustion has to win out eventually. I walk down the familiar hallway in the dark after only glancing at Rose's door on the way, flipping the lights on once I reach my room.

Instantly, it's clear something is off.

One thing about me that time will never change: I like things a certain way, at least in my bedroom and bathroom. I can't always control Liz's habits, but I can control my own, and I made my bed this morning as I always do.

A bed which it's clear someone has lain in since then. There's an indent in the pillows, and the bedspread is wrinkled. This isn't my imagination working overtime. It didn't look like this when I left for the office.

I'm still staring at the bed on my way to the dresser, where I open a drawer to pull out clothes for bed. Somehow, they look different, too. Like somebody went through my T-shirts.

Liz? She wouldn't have any reason to, and I would think she knows me well enough by now to know I would notice a slight difference.

She'd be more careful.

Rose? What reason would she have to go through my room?

I can't take my eyes off the bed as I undress. What do I do about this? If she's truly been going through my shit, it seems like this is the sort of thing that I need to nip in the bud. It's one thing for me to obsess over her, but I want to know I can trust her. She's never once given me an inkling that she's untrustworthy, never in all these years. I trust her like I trust my daughter.

You stole her panties. All right, maybe I'm not in any position to judge. There's a world of difference between picking a pair of panties up off the floor and going into a man's bedroom to rifle through his drawers and lie on his bed.

I'm not sure exactly what carries me from my room and into the hall. This isn't the kind of thing you wake a person up for. It doesn't look like she stole anything, and we could easily talk about this in the morning.

What am I going to do? Barge into the room and start firing off questions? A one-man SWAT team? The thought makes me laugh.

Even without the intention of waking her up, something carries me down the hall just the same. Interest in her, for one thing. Who is this girl? All this time I've had a certain idea of her. Sweet and innocent, levelheaded, honest.

I'm only human. I can't help but wonder now if something was behind all that shit she put me through yesterday. I wonder now if she was deliberately turning me on. If she's capable of breaking into my room and making herself comfortable, she's capable of anything.

Which would make all of this a hell of a lot more difficult.

It's one thing to tell myself she doesn't have the first clue what she's doing or how she's affecting me. Knowing there's something behind all of it, that she has the same sort of ideas about me as I do about her, would strip away what little self-control I have left.

I'm being a fucking idiot. No way she wants me, an old man, a father figure. A girl like her could have any man she wants, any man in the world.

Beautiful and fresh-faced and with a body worth mortgaging an entire life for. This is my ego talking, that's all.

I could even be imagining the situation with the bed.

Or that could be what I want to believe.

A way to absolve myself, pointing the blame that her for doing her best to get my attention. I need to get my ass to bed.

“No...”

At first, I'm not sure I heard it. So soft, barely a whisper. Paired with the creaking of bedsprings, though, the hair on the back of my neck stands up. The sound is coming from the other side of the closed door. *Rose's room.*

I'm reaching for the knob before I know it, turning it, and pushing the door open. “Rose?” I whisper.

This isn't wrong if I believe she needs help, and I do.

I can't see her, but I hear her thrashing around on the bed, breathing rapidly, whimpering like she's in pain.

“No, please,” she gasps. “Do something! Don't let it... you have to help him!”

The anguish in her voice sends me flying for the bed, concern gripping me by the throat. “Rose,” I murmur, shaking the mattress with my leg. “Rose, wake up. You're having a nightmare.”

I can make out her shadowy form in the lights from the street. She's shaking her head back and forth, frantic. “Don't let him die!”

“Rose.” I hate to do it, but anything is better than what it sounds like she's going through. I take her by the shoulders and give her a single, firm shake.

Thankfully, that's enough. She wakes with a sharp gasp before falling against me. “Oh my God. Oh God.”

“You're safe. It was a dream.” She's trembling like a scared animal, giving me no choice but to sit down and wrap my arms around her. There's nothing needy about it. I only want to help, to soothe.

“It was so real.” Her voice is muffled, her face pressed to my chest, but I can’t pretend I don’t hear the agony in her words.

It doesn’t take much to put everything together. “Were you dreaming about your grandfather?”

She’s quiet for a long time, and her breathing begins to slow.

Once she’s quieted down, she nods. “Nobody would help him. There was nothing I could do. I felt so helpless.”

And now I feel like the world’s biggest asshole. This girl has been through the trauma of losing somebody important to her. No wonder she didn’t want to be alone in that house. What if she had this nightmare and woke up alone, with nobody to hold her? Nothing but an empty house full of ghosts.

“You’re safe here. And Rose, there was nothing you could have done. You were by his side when he needed you, and that was all you could do.”

“I always feel so alone in the dream.”

“But you aren’t. You’ll never be alone—we are always here.”

My eyes have adjusted to the darkness, so much so that I can read her expression when she lifts her head. The fear, the helplessness. The uncertainty over her future. I want so much to take it all away.

I’ll take care of everything. I’ll be everything you need.

They’re so close to the tip of my tongue, those words, words I could never say. Because I can’t take them back. And I don’t know what I would do if she rejected me, which I know she would. She would have no choice.

“Why don’t you get back to sleep now?” I cannot spend another minute with her like this, sitting on the bed, so close to me. Now that the nightmare has passed, my yearning has resurfaced stronger than ever. I’ve never held her before, and the way she clings to me isn’t helping my weakness.

What's even worse is the fact that I recognize the shirt she's wearing as one of mine. The one she took from the dresser. She was on my bed. She's wearing my clothes.

It's not just me.

I need to leave this room immediately, or I'll end up making a mistake I can't fix.

CHAPTER 4

ROSE

This is all I've ever wanted. To be in his arms. He's holding me so gently, almost like he's afraid his big arms will crush me.

I've never felt so safe and protected.

I'm almost afraid I never woke up. That I'm still dreaming. But no, that can't be true, because there's never been a dream this vivid. I can even hear his heart beating under my ear when I rest my head against his chest.

Home. I'm home, finally. Where I've always belonged.

It took a long time to get here, but it was worth the wait. I wouldn't trade the time I spent wanting him for anything.

Every step brought me here. My eyes close and I smile softly to myself. Have I ever been this happy?

"I need to go."

My eyes fly open, my heart crying out for him to stop. That's what makes me clutch onto him. The fear of him leaving when I finally have him right where I've always wanted him.

It's not the first time I've had that nightmare. Not even close. But it's the first time I've woke up feeling safe and protected. Like I'm not alone.

And it was Nolan who did it. Who held me and let me rest in his arms. Nothing has ever felt so right, and he wants it to end.

"What did I do?" I whisper.

I'm desperate to make him stay now that I have him here. How do I know I'll ever have this chance again?

He turns his face away while pulling my hands from his shirt.

"Nothing. You didn't do a thing. But we both know it isn't right for me to be in here with you, like this."

"That's not true."

"It is, Rose." His voice comes out pained, and I feel sorry for him, but I want him too much to care.

I reach over and turn on the lamp beside the bed—now, I see the anguish etched into his gorgeous features instead of only hearing it in his voice.

"I'm the one who decides whether it's right or not, aren't I? I don't feel uncomfortable. I want you here."

"I have a say in it, too." He stands, shaking his head. "And this is wrong. It's wrong for me to be with you like this. You calmed down, and that's what I came in to make sure of."

No, I can't let this happen. I can't let him go.

"Please, stay," I whisper, on the verge of tears. "I don't want to be alone."

"I'm sorry, but—"

"I see the way you look at me."

Oh shit. Now I did it. I can't pretend I didn't, no more than he can.

The change that comes over him is clear. His body tenses, his shoulders lift, and I'd swear he stops breathing for a long, heavy moment.

"What?" he grunts, his eyes bulging.

"I said I've seen the way you look at me." It's too late to pretend otherwise, so I won't bother. "I know what it means. I know you want me."

"This is inappropriate." He turns away, and my heart threatens to shatter.

No, no, this isn't the way it's supposed to be. I can't let him walk out of this room.

"I know you took my panties." Sure, because why not make things worse? That's how desperate I am to keep him with me. I'd say anything, do anything to make him stay.

He's frozen in place, his back to me. "That isn't true," he grunts.

"I know it was you, and I don't mind. I like it. I left them on the floor for you."

He exhales, then lowers his head. "You did."

"Yes." Now that it's out, I can't hold myself back. Like a dam burst inside me. "I've wanted you for as long as I can remember."

"Rose..." The word comes out almost like a whimper.

"It's true. I know it isn't right, but I can't help how I feel. And I don't want to, either."

Every second we spend in silence is torture, but at least I was brave enough to put it out there.

Right. Tell yourself that when he kicks you out and you have to live alone.

The silence breaks.

"Is that why you're wearing my shirt?" He turns his head enough to catch me out of the corner of his eye. He noticed, but he doesn't seem upset.

"Do you want it back?" I don't know what has come over me.

I've never been this open and brazen, even in my wildest fantasies. I would never imagine crossing my arms over myself and pulling the shirt off. When he doesn't move, I ball it up and toss it at his back.

"This isn't a game. I know you aren't a stupid girl. You know what this means."

“You’re right. I’m not stupid, and I know it’s not a game. I’m not playing. All I want is you. And if you want me, there is no reason—”

“There is every reason.”

He starts to turn around, and his mouth falls open at the sight of me. The weight of his stare sends goose bumps racing over my arms while he licks his lips and stammers. “You should... should... cover yourself...”

“Why are you breathing so fast? Is it because you like what you see?” I can’t believe I’m doing this, saying this, but I don’t want to stop. For the first time in forever, things feel right. Like this is the way it was always meant to be.

“Look at me,” I plead in a whisper. “There’s nothing wrong with wanting me. I’m a grown woman, and you’re a grown man.”

“I’m too old for you.”

“I don’t think so. I think you’re the perfect age. And I think...”

I lower my gaze to the huge bulge in his gray sweatpants. “I think you know what you want. If we both want the same thing, what’s so bad about that?”

“You know what’s—”

“I only know I want you to touch me. Touch my body. I’ve wanted to say those words to you for years.”

He swallows hard. “I’ve wanted to hear them. Christ, what am I saying?”

Oh my God. I’ve got him.

I’ve really got him. He’s exactly where I’ve wanted him to be for years: in the palm of my hand, admitting he wants me. He can try all he wants to fight it, but it’s no use. He hasn’t taken his eyes off my chest since he turned around. I see the hunger in his eyes. I see how he wants me, no matter how he tries to fight it.

He only needs a little help to push him the rest of the way over the edge and into my arms.

“So you know I was in your room today?” I lean back on my palms, arching my back a little so my boobs stick out farther. His soft groan gives me more confidence. “Do you wanna know what I did on your bed?”

“Rose, you shouldn’t do this.” It’s almost a whine like he’s begging me instead of ordering.

“I touched myself,” I confess, and I don’t know if it’s shame or excitement that makes me blush. “I touched myself until I came, and I was thinking about you the whole time. Imagining you were there with me. All the things I’d want you to do to me if you were.”

“Oh my God,” he groans. Sweat’s starting to bead on his forehead.

“Should I describe those things to you? Or do you want to come over here and do them? Because I have waited a long time for it. I’m tired of waiting.”

My heart stutters, and a flash of fear races up my spine before I whisper, “And I know you want me just as much. We’re two adults. Why should we suffer if we don’t have to?”

I can’t believe I got it out before losing my nerve.

He rubs his hands on his thighs, grunting softly with every breath. “We could never, ever tell Liz.” He even winces a little when he says her name.

“Of course not. It would just be between you and me. Our little secret.” As I speak, I pull back the blanket so he can see my bare legs. Legs I spread slowly, staring at him and watching his reaction.

His eyelids lower before he takes one slow step toward the bed, then another, until finally, he’s standing in front of me with his dick sticking out so close I could rub my face against it.

I don’t, though, since I’m not sure what I would do after that. I’ve never been here before, have never let anybody see

my body. I've never touched a man—though I've watched videos, so I know a few things.

If he wanted to put it in my mouth, I would. Anything for him. So long as this doesn't have to end.

“Fuck, what am I supposed to do?”

He sounds tortured, but that doesn't stop him from reaching for me. Slowly, so slowly, and I hold my breath waiting for him to make contact.

When he does—when he runs his fingers over my jaw—I can't help but shudder in relief. In pleasure. “You're so beautiful,” he whispers, gazing down at me with those piercing eyes I've dreamed about for so long. “Perfect and young. Too good for me.”

“That isn't true.” I close my hand around his and slide it over my throat, then my chest. “You're what I want. I'm yours.”

We both moan when his palm runs over my already tight nipple. It feels so good, I could cry. I've touched myself to the thought of him so many times, but it was never like this. He's what's been missing all along. Not the idea of him. His touch, his warmth, the sound of his helpless groans while he cups my breast. It fits perfectly into his palm. I was made for him.

“More, please,” I whisper as I lie back. “Touch me. Touch all of me.”

“I shouldn't.” But he adds the other hand, just the same, massaging my boobs and stroking the nipples. I'm helpless against the sensations he's unleashed. “Does this feel good?”

“Mm-hmm...”

“Is your pussy wet?”

Holy shit, I can't believe this. “Yes,” I whisper, because it is. Dripping wet. “And it hurts. It aches so bad.”

“Because you're so hot and ready for me?” My head bobs up and down. “Maybe it will feel better if I kiss it. What do you think?”

His fingers press into my tender flesh. “Would that be good? If I kiss your pussy? If I drag my tongue through it?”

It’s only what I’ve imagined a hundred times, and now my body is burning hotter than ever. I’m amazed the bed doesn’t burst into flames.

“Please. Please do that, Nolan.”

He pauses, though, when I expect him to dive between my thighs. “Have you ever done this before?”

“I’ve never done anything before.” His gaze widens, but it’s the truth. “I wanted to wait for you. You’re all I’ve ever wanted.”

A shudder runs through him, and his nostrils flare. “You have no idea how much I wanted to hear that.”

I have to remember all of this. The way my heart races as he climbs onto the bed between my legs. The exhilaration of running my fingers through his hair, just as soft as I imagined. The broad, firm shoulders under my hands, the way his muscles move beneath his skin.

It feels so good. He feels so good.

His lips leave a trail of fire down my body, over my belly, then lower. “Oh God, yes,” I breathe, lifting my hips in offer to him.

My body is his. I am his, and I always have been.

“I can smell you. How hot and wet you are for me,” he growls before pressing his lips to my inner thigh. I don’t know what feels better, his lips or the rough stubble on his cheeks. I want more. That’s all I know.

There’s wickedness gleaming in his eyes and a nasty smirk tugging at his mouth when he runs a finger down the length of my slit, covered in soaking wet cotton. “You mean this is all for me?”

“Oh yeah,” I whine, raising my hips again. It’s agony, what he’s doing to me. He’s killing me. I can’t take it anymore.

But if he stopped, I’d kill him.

“What did I do to get this lucky?”

Instead of his finger, it's his tongue he runs along my slit until I have to shove my fist into my mouth to keep from waking Liz. I only thought I knew what it means to feel good before now, but I didn't have the first clue.

All of a sudden, he grunts, and the next thing I know, he's torn my thong to pieces and covered my pussy with his mouth. My hands shoot out and grip the back of his head before I know what I'm doing, holding it close.

He wraps his arms around my legs, spreading them wider, holding them down. I asked—begged—him to do this, but he's in control now. He knows exactly what I need. I couldn't have put it into words if I tried, but he knows.

His tongue works my clit in short, tight flicks that leave me biting my fist again for fear of waking Liz up. What would she think if she found her best friend splayed out naked under her dad?

Her dad, who's now grunting, demanding, hungry for me.

For my pussy, now dripping on his face so he can lick up every drop. I can't take much more. It's going to kill me, I'm going to die here, it's all too good. I can't handle it. My heart's going to explode.

Everything seizes up, and I go still an instant before the world shatters around me. Ripples of pure bliss begin in my core and move outward until tears roll down my cheeks. Tears of happiness and joy and relief.

“Nolan.” I smile through my tears.

Whispering his name while he can hear it? This is a dream come true.

He lifts his mouth away from me, then goes still. After what feels like too long I open my eyes and look down over the length of my body.

“Is everything okay? Did I do something wrong?”

“No. No, you didn't.” He's still hard when he pushes himself off the bed and runs an arm over his mouth. “Dammit.

This shouldn't have happened. What was I thinking?"

"I wanted it." I'm still breathless and shaky but I sit up.
"This was something I wanted. Don't put it only on yourself."

"Fine. Then what were we thinking?" He shakes his head, his face a mask of disgust that takes my body from burning to chilled. "This will never happen again."

No. He can't do this. He can't give me so much pleasure and joy and then take it away. "Please, don't say that."

"It happened this one time, and that will always stay between you and me." There's something close to a threat in his voice. I understand what he means, and it's a little insulting.

"I won't say a word."

"Otherwise, we forget everything we said." I open my mouth, ready to fight, but he cuts me off with a single headshake. "Everything. I'm too old for you. This can't happen."

"Please, can we talk about it?"

I'm talking to myself for all the good it does. He's gone, the door closed, by the time I've finished.

I can't give him up.

Not now. Not when I know how good it feels when he touches me.

I know how much he wants to touch me.

I'm never going to forget that, no matter how much he wants me to.

Even if it might be better that way.

CHAPTER 5

NOLAN

I am going to hell.

No doubt about it. I deserve to fry for all eternity after what I've done.

Calling her a woman would be a technicality. She's still a child. She's innocent, and until last night, she didn't have the first idea of what she was doing.

I was the first man to ever gaze upon her pussy. The first to ever feast on it.

What I wouldn't give to feast on her right now. My cock stiffens at the thought, which is something close to a miracle after jerking off three times during the night. I couldn't sleep. I could only remember and want—fuck me, did I want.

I already made the mistake. I can't make it again. She's too young. I've known her since she was a child. It's fucking sick.

She was an innocent child before I took advantage of her. She might not understand the depth of it, but I do, and what I did is unforgivable. She deserves better.

Throwing an arm over my eyes against the early morning sunlight, I groan in pure misery. Misery I deserve after being so weak. Indulging myself in her when I knew damn well how wrong it was.

Stiffer than ever, my cock doesn't seem to care. It doesn't matter how many times I say these things to myself. I won't be convinced, not deep down inside.

And that's a problem because it can't happen again. It absolutely cannot. I—we—made a mistake the way people

sometimes do, but that's it. We can move on from this.

Hell, it might even be easier to deal with having her around now that at least some of my fantasies have become reality.

Touching. Licking. Tasting. Hearing my name tumble from her lips while her juices coat my tongue and my chin.

So now I know. I don't have to guess anymore. I've made enough memories with her to last the rest of my life, if need be, and that's exactly how it should be. Because it cannot, must not happen again in any way, shape, or form. One of us has to be the adult. The realist.

So what if the idea causes me literal pain? My chest hurts like something sits on it by the time I get out of bed. I can still smell her lingering on my upper lip and it's enough to make me twitch painfully in my shorts. Her sweet pussy, as sweet as her name would suggest.

Pussy I can never taste again, or touch, or even think about. The more I think about it, the more I'll want it.

Talk about an impossible fucking situation.

Liz has been gone for hours by now, leaving me alone in the house with the temptress down the hall. It's almost cruel. I know if I were to go to her room right now, she would throw back the blanket and spread her legs and beg for more of what I gave her last night.

And I would be powerless against that, the way I was the moment she said she wanted me. By the time she stripped off that shirt, I was gone. There was no hope of resisting.

I can't put either of us in that situation again, that's all.

Today, I'll find ways to keep myself busy while Liz is at work. I can't believe I'm relying on my own daughter to serve as chaperone. It's shameful—at least, I should be ashamed. I can't bring myself to genuinely feel it, though.

Because that would mean forgetting how good it was. How right. Finally, I was able to give myself what I wanted most. What we both evidently wanted.

A cold shower might be in order this morning. But I doubt cold enough water exists to freeze her out of my system or to wipe away the memory of holding her down and forcing her to accept what I was so desperate to give.

Can I trust her to stay quiet? The question makes me cringe. I lean into the shower and turn on the taps before getting undressed, mulling it over. My cock is still stiff, but it isn't like I can trust him to care much about the truth. All he cares about is getting into her. A virgin. So fucking tight, so hot. If she came alive under my tongue, what would she do with me inside that silky sheath?

Oh my God, I'm going to lose it if I don't stop.

Why am I torturing myself like this?

By the time I'm in the shower, I've decided she's trustworthy.

She loves Liz like a sister and would never do anything to hurt their friendship. My daughter is a levelheaded, smart kid, but when it comes to touchy situations like this, that sort of thing tends not to matter.

I duck my head under the water, letting it run over my head and face. Maybe it'll help me think better. Something has to.

It takes a second for me to notice the bathroom door standing open, visible through the shower door. The glass swings open not a second before I realize I'm not alone.

My heart leaps at the sight of her, standing in front of me without a stitch of clothing to hide her gorgeous body. Perfection, head to toe. Untouched by anyone but me.

And those wide, innocent eyes that are somehow wise. Knowing. She knows exactly what she's doing, even if she doesn't yet understand the consequences of playing with fire.

Wake the fuck up. "What are you doing?" If I sound angry, it's with myself for encouraging this in the first place. "You don't walk in on me in the shower. You can't do that."

“I thought maybe you could use some help washing your back.” I barely bite back a groan when her white teeth sink into her bottom lip. “And whatever else you can’t reach.”

“I don’t need help,” I growl.

Yes, yes, I do, I need all the help I can get. Otherwise, I’ll have no choice but to make the same damn mistake like the hopeless fool I am.

“But you want it, don’t you? You want me.” She looks down at the floor and frowns. “Water’s getting everywhere. Either you let me in or close the door before the bathroom floods.”

She would have to leave it to me, wouldn’t she? As if I’d choose to close the door and leave her on the other side of it. Like I can resist the sight of her, just begging to be touched and claimed. I’m only human, for fuck’s sake.

And I can’t do anything to get around the fact she belongs to me. She is mine. Why would I want her so badly if this wasn’t meant to be? I’m thinking like a child, but I can’t shake the burning desire to make her mine forever. To bind her to me, body and soul.

It’s with a groan of weakness that I reach for her, pulling her to me, growling like the animal she’s turned me into. “What am I supposed to do with you?” I ask as the door swings closed, and steam envelops us.

Fuck, this is entirely different. Naked body to naked body, the water sluicing between us, her skin slippery under my hands. “You’re so big everywhere,” she coos, and her touch is magic, lighting up parts of me I thought were dead. Waking me up to what I’ve held myself back from for so long.

This woman. This magic, precious woman.

“Touch me,” she begs in a shaky whisper. “Touch me everywhere. I’m dying for you.”

I don’t know if she’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me or the worst. Driving me to do the things I only ever imagined until now. Molding her tits with my hands.

Memorizing the curve of her ass, the firmness of her thighs, the heat of her pussy when I tease it with a glancing touch.

Grinding my cock against her, I shudder with barely contained need.

“I want you to put this in me.” Her fingers close around my shaft, and my eyes damn near roll back in my head at her gentle touch.

“Where do you want me to put it?”

“Wherever you want.” She slides her hand up and down my length while I shudder again, my knees ready to buckle. She’s a wet dream come true, whispering what I’ve longed to hear.

“That’s a dangerous thing to offer.”

“I trust you.” Her mouth is close to mine, breath mingling between us. She’s undoing every scrap of self-control with those fingers of hers, stroking me enthusiastically if not skillfully. But enthusiasm goes a hell of a long way—already my balls are lifting, ready to drain themselves.

I have to close my hand around hers before it’s too late. “Slow down,” I advise, my lips brushing hers. The tension is unbearable, ready to combust. She whimpers, breathless, clinging to me.

“Show me what to do. Show me how to make you feel good like you made me feel good.” Her eyes are hazy when they meet mine, wide and full of lust. “That’s all I want. To make you feel good.”

“Get on your knees.” Because who could resist? This perfect, untouched creature is so eager to please me and ready to learn. And fuck, do I want to teach her.

“I’m going to put it in your mouth,” I grunt, holding myself up to her lips once she’s settled in before me. “I’ll show you what to do.”

“I know how to do some things,” she confesses, and as if to prove it then, she extends her tongue and swipes along the

underside. I have no choice but to lean my back against the wall for support.

“You do?”

“I’ve watched videos.”

“You like watching porn while you touch yourself?” I ask, stroking her slicked-back hair while watching her play with me.

“I watched it to learn what to do with you. When this happened, I wanted to know what you would like.”

And then all conscious thought is obliterated once she closes her lips around me and pulls me deep into her mouth. I can’t remember the last time I had my dick sucked, but it was worth the wait.

“You’ve learned well,” I groan, smiling down at her in approval while she pops her head slowly up and down, caressing me with those plump lips and running me across her tongue. “You’re making my cock feel so good.”

She moans, and I know she’s happy, and I surge in her mouth. It’s the simplest thing, this give-and-take, finally surrendering to what I’ve needed for so long.

“Good girl.” Taking her head in both hands, I can’t help but move my hips, deepening the strokes until I touch the back of her throat and make her gag. “Relax. Take it. You said you wanted me to feel good. Then take it. Suck on my cock.”

She groans but fights to hold on, her hands moving up and down my thighs, nails dragging over my skin and adding to the thrill. I’m using her, yes, but she’s in this with me. And I bet she’s dripping on the floor.

“Is your pussy hot and wet for me?” I ask, brushing her hair back from her face while I thrust into that sweet mouth.

The vibrations from her moans are almost enough to undo me. I have to pull back before I blow my load. She groans, sitting back on her heels. “Did I not do it right?” she asks, fretful.

“No, you did just perfect.” Nothing has ever been as beautiful as she is now, with her eager expression and those swollen red lips. “I don’t want to finish this way.”

“I was about to make you come.”

“Yes, innocent little Rose.” I catch her lips with mine, savoring their plumpness and the little sounds she makes. “You were going to make me come. And I’m going to come, but when I do I want you coming with me. Have you ever imagined it like that?” I ask, my cock trapped between us while I part her ass cheeks to allow water to run down between them.

Her head falls back, lustful moans filling the air. “Yes, all the time,” she whines.

I have a decision to make, and I make it quickly, urged on by my straining cock. I want her to be comfortable when we do this. What we must do, what we absolutely have to do. I need her. I’ve waited so long already.

She asks no questions while I turn off the water, only speaking once I step out of the stall and hand her a towel. “What are we doing?”

“I’m taking you to bed,” I grunt, grabbing another towel before pulling her along with me, back into the bedroom. Instead of using it on myself, I spread the towel over the bed, then take her by the waist and toss her on top of it. It’s effortless because she’s so light, and so willing to be moved around the way I want her.

“Spread those legs, baby.” There’s no time for gentleness or tenderness. Not when the only conscious thought I possess revolves around claiming and owning.

She brings me back to reality with a single question delivered as I climb onto the bed between her creamy thighs. “Is it going to hurt?”

Tenderness pushes lust aside. I’m careful as I stroke her wet hair away from her temple and tuck it behind her ear. So young, so fragile. “No, baby. I’ll do my best to make sure it doesn’t. You just hold on to me.”

We both groan at the touch of my hand against her lips, coated in juice that flows freely from her waiting hole. She offers herself so willingly that it's enough to almost break my heart. The trust shines from her eyes and smile as she looks up at me, waiting for me to take her.

"You're sure?" I ask, gripped both by desire and caring even as I twitch and drip with need.

"Please. Please give me what I want. This is all I want." She's on the verge of tears, but she's smiling. "Please, Nolan. I want it to be you. It's always been you."

Still, she seizes up at the pressure against her opening. I've barely started stretching her yet. "Relax." I lean down, peppering gentle kisses along her jaw and throat. "Relax for me. Let me inside."

Every brush of my lips eases her more until she loosens up enough to allow my bulbous head past her entrance.

"Oh God!" She grips me all at once, arms and legs locked around me, her nails breaking the skin of my back. "It feels so good! Oh God, yeah...!"

Yes, it is, and so fucking tight I can hardly move. I'm not going to last more than a few strokes at this rate—with her ripe body writhing underneath mine and her constant pleas for more ringing in my ears. She's so hungry, and all I want to do is meet that hunger and satisfy it.

I come up against her barrier, and she sucks in a pained breath. "Remember, relax." Only this time, it's delivered through gritted teeth, my control slipping away with every heartbeat. At the last second, I lower my head and cover her mouth with mine, plunging my tongue inside an instant before I press forward. The barrier suddenly gives way, and I'm practically sucked deep into her cunt.

She screams into my mouth, but my tongue strokes the pain away while my cock moves slowly, so slowly inside her. Stretching her, I fill her until her ecstatic cries almost drown out the rush of blood in my ears from my racing heartbeat.

I have to break the kiss to breathe, and she almost screams. “Yes! Yes, it’s so good. Oh my God! Nolan!” Her nails rake over my back, the sharp sting somehow heightening the sensations building in my balls and at the base of my spine, more intense with every touch, every stroke.

“I want you to come with me,” I grunt in her ear, and she nods frantically in response. “Come with me. Make your fantasies real, baby.”

She clenches tighter around me, every part of her drawing me deep and almost holding me in place. “Good! Oh, it’s so good!” she sobs, and her tears roll down her cheeks to wet my face. “Fuck me! Fuck me, Nolan! Please!”

Soon, that’s what I’m doing. I’m pounding into her, forgetting to be gentle in favor of obeying her body’s commands—and mine. She’s wild, bucking under me with her demands. Like all it took was my cock to unleash an animal. “Come on my cock,” I growl, slamming into her and taking what’s mine.

“I’m... I’m going to come!” And then she arches against me, her pussy clenching until I have to grind my teeth against a roar of near pain—before it crests and what feels like a million tiny muscles massage my length, milking me.

There’s no choice but to give in, to let go. I slam myself balls deep before release washes over me, and I fill her with blast after blast of hot cum. Pouring myself into her, I give her everything, all of me. Until nothing is left to do but fall against her, both of us panting, lost in the moment. It’s the closest thing I’ve felt to joy in years.

And it’s all hers, every bit of it. She gave it to me. To think, I tried to stop this.

“Nolan.” The satisfaction in her voice is enough, but I lift my head to look down at her anyway. Her smile is radiant, her eyes shining. “Nolan.”

“Rose.”

Reality has a way of breaking in at the worst possible moment. I came inside her. What the fuck was I thinking?

I was thinking I wanted her to be mine, entirely, and that means carrying my child, too. But there's too much around us, too much in the way. Too much we haven't worked out.

"What's wrong? I thought you were happy." She pushes herself up on her elbows when I untangle myself from her and sit up.

"I was—I am," I correct. "But there's too much undecided."

"I know what I want." She touches my shoulder, and I hate myself for causing her even the slightest pain or confusion.

"That might not always be the case." Covering my face with my hands, I shake my head in disgust and disappointment. What I want is to take her in my arms and hold her, but it would be just as irresponsible as what we've already done. What I've already done. "We shouldn't be doing this. You know it, and I know it. You're too—"

"I'm tired of you telling me I'm too young. I'm not too young to know what I want. Don't insult me."

"I'm trying to take care of you."

"You can take care of me by giving me what I want, which is you. I don't care if it's right or wrong in anybody else's eyes. It feels right to me. Doesn't that matter?"

I don't know what the fuck I'm thinking anymore or what I'm supposed to do now. I only know I already want her again, and I'll want her after that, too. It's never going to stop, no matter what I tell myself. No matter how I try. It's no use. She's in my blood now.

"Nobody can know," I whisper, lifting her hand from my shoulder and pressing my lips to the back. "Not yet."

There's mischief in her giggle. "It's sort of sexy, having a secret."

I only wish I could believe she'd always feel that way.

CHAPTER 6

ROSE

“*H*oly shit! Don’t look.” Liz digs her fingers into my arm, practically hanging off me as we walk through the store.

“What?” I whisper, staring straight ahead.

“It’s Scott and Hunter.” Her voice is tight with excitement. “They must be home for break.”

They’re the cutest guys in our class, and Liz went back and forth between having crushes on them for years. One day it was Hunter, and the next day, it was Scott. They were just as inseparable as the two of us, and I guess that hasn’t changed.

Now, glancing at them from the corner of my eye, I’m more confused than ever about why she likes them. I mean, they’re cute, but they’re children.

They might be the same age as me, but all I see are two little boys looking through racks of T-shirts as we pass by.

“I haven’t seen them since graduation,” she whispers, looking over her shoulder. “Stop for a second.”

In the men’s section? If it makes her happy. I mean, considering I’ve slept with her father, I guess it’s the least I can do.

I’m amazed she can’t see it written all over my face. The guilt and paranoia. I keep expecting the rest of the world to see it. I’m not a virgin anymore. I lost my virginity to the only man I ever wanted. He ruined me for everybody else because nobody could ever live up to him.

In the days since then, we've been careful to hide it from Liz. I've sneaked into his room every night and am always out before she gets up for work. Otherwise, we share the house like normal people who aren't fucking like animals.

And that's why, when the guys notice us, I don't feel anything. No excitement, though that's what Liz so clearly feels. She perks right up when they catch us lingering nearby, tossing her dark hair over one shoulder and popping her hip out to the side. "What, did you forget my number now that we've graduated? I thought you both dropped off the face of the planet."

I have to force a smile as I follow her over to them, but my mind is miles away. If she only knew, but she never can. It's been torture walking around with her today. Nolan is the only thing on my mind, and the only person I would ever talk to about my first time is the one person who can't know about it. I have to hold all of it inside.

I didn't know I was drifting off again until she nudged me. The look on her face tells me I missed something. "Sorry, what did you say?" I ask.

She widens her eyes in that special way that says *Back me up on this or you're dead to me*. "I said, we don't have anything planned tonight."

Hunter nods, grinning as he looks me up and down in a way I recognize. "We were thinking we could go grab something to eat later on tonight. Catch up and stuff."

It's the last thing I want to do. It means time spent away from Nolan. Like it's not bad enough I have to stand here and pretend there's nothing on my mind, just like I've had to do all afternoon while we shopped. I get to look forward to a whole night of doing the same thing.

Liz stands angled away from the guys, staring straight at me and wearing that same unmistakable look. I don't want to ruin this for her. I'm already doing enough to hurt our friendship behind her back. Who knows? She could end up dating one of them. This could lead to something that makes her very happy. I can't hold her back.

Even if my heart is nowhere near in it. Not even close. It sinks at the idea of spending hours acting like I care about either of these two and what they've been doing with themselves in the months since we graduated.

"Sure," I agree with a grin I don't feel. "That sounds great."

"WAIT A SECOND." Nolan's gaze bounces back and forth between Liz and me while the three of us stand in the living room. He lowers his brow with every passing second as her announcement sinks in. "You're doing what?"

"We're going out to dinner tonight at Luca's. Me and Rose."

"That's not the part I was asking about." He's trying very hard not to look at me, that much is obvious. Does Liz notice his clenched fists? I sure do.

My heart aches for her. It really does. She was so excited the whole way home, chattering nonstop about what to wear. As exhausting as it was, I did my best to match that excitement.

Now her face is falling. "You remember them, Dad. I went through school with them from first grade. They're nice guys. We're only going to catch up."

"It's not going to happen, so you may as well forget the idea right now."

"I don't understand." Her dark eyes fill with tears. "It's just dinner."

It's right on the tip of my tongue, the whole thing. The real reason he doesn't want her going out. It has nothing to do with the guys themselves. It has to do with me going out with somebody other than him. I feel it in my bones.

But I can't say it. I can't hurt her like that. It would be so much worse than what she's feeling right now. I can't believe

I'm caught between them like this.

She shoots me a pain-filled look that silently begs me to speak up for her.

"It's just dinner," I whisper. I wouldn't feel comfortable getting in the middle of this even if he had never laid a hand on me. I would still feel like it's not my place.

Is it as obvious to Liz as it is to me that he is deliberately avoiding looking at me? "It's not going to happen, so get the idea out of your head now. Call up those boys and tell them you're not going to dinner tonight or any other night."

"But why? Why are you being this way? This isn't like you!"

His face goes so red it scares me a little. He looks like he's about to explode. "Do not tell me how I'm supposed to feel or react, dammit."

It's like all the air gets sucked out of the room. I've never heard him curse before, not in anger. And not at Liz.

She's in so much pain, so confused, shaking her head a little like she can't believe what she just heard any more than I can.

"I don't understand. Why are you acting like this? What did I do?"

"What did you do?" He runs his hands through his hair before dropping them. "It's not enough that you won't listen to me without questioning everything? Let's start there. I'm still your father, and when I say something, that's it. That's the end of it."

"But I'm not a kid anymore."

"Says who?"

"Says the law!" she shouts back. "I'm eighteen years old. I've always done everything you wanted. I never go against you, ever. All I'm asking is for one night out to go to dinner with friends I haven't seen in months, and you're acting like I'm talking about a weekend in Vegas or something."

“Don’t pretend this is only a matter of seeing friends,” he sneers. “I don’t care that you’re eighteen. You still live under this roof, which means you obey my rules, and I don’t want you out with those boys or any other boys. Got it?”

Her chin trembles, but she holds her head high. “Fine. Maybe I won’t live under this roof anymore.”

This is crazy. I can’t let it go on without trying to help.

“Hey...” I whisper, reaching out to put an arm around her. Why? I have no idea. Maybe if I can get her out of the room, they’ll both cool off before either of them says something they can’t take back.

It’s all my fault. I should say something, I really should.

Then again, it’s not my fault Nolan can’t handle the idea of me going out for a simple dinner. I don’t want their relationship to suffer, but it’s not like I’m forcing him to act this way, either. This is all him.

She shakes me off, glaring at him. “I’m not a little girl anymore! And you can’t stop me from going out with friends.”

“You’re living in my house, and I’m paying all your bills, young lady, while you save up your earnings. I can do anything I want.”

Her face crumples in pain before she runs across the living room and stomps her way up the stairs. We both flinch when her bedroom door slams hard enough to rattle some of the pictures on the walls down here.

He whirls on me, and his eyes are wild. It’s completely messed up, but even now, my body reacts to him. My pulse starts to race, and I feel all hot inside. I can’t help but wish he would throw me on the floor and force his way inside me.

“You’re not going,” he whispers through clenched teeth, trembling with rage that only heightens the blaze burning in my core.

I can’t let my craving for his touch get in the way now.

“Who says?” I whisper. I can hardly believe myself—and it’s obvious from the way his mouth falls open that he can’t

believe it, either.

“Excuse me? Am I really hearing this?”

“That depends.” I face him head-on, hands on my hips.
“Because you can’t have it both ways.”

“What does that mean?” He mimics my posture, which leaves me grinding my teeth. I’m not going to take the bait and let my anger get in the way, though. This is much bigger than a petty squabble.

“It means you can’t tell me what to do. Either the two of us are in a relationship and we’re open about it or I’m going to see other guys. You can’t expect me to wait around for the rest of my life. What, should I join a convent? I’d have to convert first, you know.”

“Where is this coming from?” He’s looking at me like he’s never seen me before, and somehow that only makes things worse. Like he never expected me to have actual feelings or any desires of my own.

Like I don’t have needs as a person.

“It’s coming from reality. I meant what I said. I can’t spend the rest of my life waiting around for you to decide it’s okay for us to be together. Either we are a thing or I’m free to live my life. It’s up to you.”

I’m shaking and starting to sweat by the time I turn around on my heel, then march up the steps the way Liz did. My heart wants me to stop, to go back to him and pour out the truth.

I don’t want to see anybody else. Those boys don’t mean anything. Nobody means anything to me but him because I’ve only ever wanted him. I can’t even think of anybody I had a crush on throughout high school because I was too busy wanting him. Loving him.

Sometimes, though, you have to get super uncomfortable in the moment instead of being a little uncomfortable for the rest of your life. It hurts to see him like this, but maybe this is what he needs. He’s never going to make up his mind unless I force his hand, and that’s what I’m doing now.

Eventually, he'll have to accept the fact we're meant to be together. Maybe this is the push he needs to see what life could be like if he stays on the fence.

I have to believe that, or else I just hurt him—and me—for no reason.

CHAPTER 7

NOLAN

This is for the best.

She deserves a life of her own.

Someone her own age, the way it's meant to be. I'm an old man, at least compared to her.

This is the way her life should be. Dating and boys and all that happy horseshit.

I can tell myself whatever I want, but it will never work. I'll never stop wanting to smash every plate in the kitchen cabinets while she's on a date.

I don't have to like it, but this is best for her. If I care about Rose, I have to care about what she needs the most.

One day, she'll want a future.

So what if it feels like I'm being flayed alive as I pace the first floor like a caged animal?

I can't think about anything but her, sitting with some boy, laughing at his jokes, and letting him touch her. I don't know who he is, but I know he doesn't deserve to be in her presence, much less to touch her and flirt and get the wrong idea.

Because not one man on earth wouldn't get that same idea after spending half a minute with her. Her body, luscious and tempting—who could resist? I was that age once. I know how a young man's mind works.

Hell, I'm no better, and I'm more than twice their age.

What if she decides to date him? That I'm not worth waiting for? Fuck. I can't pretend that would be for the best.

Not when I need her as much as I need oxygen. Not when she is mine.

I need to piss or get off the pot, but I can't seem to get my dick and my head on the same page. I know what's right, but it doesn't feel right. I'm miserable, enraged, ready to kill.

My fists clench and unclench with every step back and forth across the house. No little boy could do to her what I have. She'll never be satisfied. They wouldn't know the first thing about how to handle her, probably pumping away, oblivious to anything but themselves.

I'm supposed to stay here and let that happen? Just stick around here and wait for some piece of shit to think he's entitled to her body?

I can hardly see straight. Rage clouds my thoughts as well as my vision, rage and something else. Something even darker, deeper, seething.

I stop dead in the center of the kitchen, the true weight of what's been holding me back all along slamming into me from all sides.

What if she decides I'm too old and throws me away?

That's it. That's the last piece of the puzzle clicking into place, and now the picture is clear. It isn't only that I don't want to ruin her life by saddling her with an old man like me.

I don't know that I could take the blow if she decides she deserves someone younger. One day, she'll decide she's tired of being seen with a man old enough to be her father and will discard me for a younger model. That's what frightens me the most because I love her. God, I fucking love her.

Rose isn't like that... is she? I can't imagine it, but then time can change people.

You know she'll never change.

I could be wrong. Then again, there are never guarantees. I didn't know when I started my business that I'd end up making a success of it. I had no idea when I decided to raise

Liz on my own after the divorce that we'd end up becoming a tight team. I had to take a leap of faith.

There's another leap to be made. My blood is pumping, adrenaline racing through my system as I stare down my options.

I can stay here and break every last piece of furniture in the fucking house.

Or I can go to her and lay the whole thing at her feet. All of me. I have to believe this is what she wants—but it would also mean taking the risk of trusting it will always be what she wants. That I will always be what she wants.

Dammit, we were meant to be together. End of story. If she wants me now, that's not going to change, any more than my love for her ever will. I've been looking at this all wrong. Nothing about what's between us is logical. It simply is, and you can't fight something that simply is.

That's what gets me out the door, keys in hand. Liz said they were going to Luca's, so that's the direction I drive in, not ten minutes away. This is fucking insane, but nothing in the world could keep me from her now that my mind's made up. I'll carry her out kicking and screaming if I have to, but before this night is over, Rose will know she's mine. There will never be another question about it.

It's seven thirty by the time I pull up in front of the restaurant, meaning they've been in there for around a half an hour. It's a weeknight, though, so not too many cars are in the lot. If I make a scene, it won't be in front of too many people.

I hope it doesn't come to that, but I'm not going to let it stop me. I've spent too long concerned with what others will think.

The aroma of garlic and tomatoes hits me the second I'm over the threshold. As always, there's a quiet, charming ambience. Unfortunately, I'm about to break it.

"Can I help you?" the girl behind the stand asks, all smiles.

"I'm looking for my daughter." Craning my neck, I search the room until I spot a familiar head of golden hair near the

back corner, in a semicircular booth.

Ignoring the hostess, I begin to cross the dining room, watching closely. They haven't noticed me, so I have the chance to observe. The girls sit in the middle, and Liz talks animatedly to both boys, laughing and teasing them while they obviously bust her balls a little bit, too. She's only pretending to be offended.

It's Rose who doesn't seem to belong. She sits with her arms folded over her chest, chewing her lip and staring down at what's left of her salad. Her forehead is creased in concentration. What is she thinking about? Whatever it is, it's keeping her from enjoying herself.

She and Liz couldn't be less alike. It could be my ego coloring my perception, but it doesn't seem like she wants to be here at all.

It isn't until I'm practically on top of the booth that anyone notices me. Liz gasps, while Rose sits up straighter, her mouth falling open. Now it's clear how differently the girls are dressed, with Rose in a turtleneck that leaves not an inch of skin uncovered.

Both of the boys look up, and I see vague recognition in their expressions. "Guys, I need a minute here."

"Wait a second." Liz shakes her head almost violently, glaring at me. "What are you doing?"

"Either you let your friends step away so I can say what I came here to say, or they can watch this up close. It's up to you."

"We'll go over here." One of them gestures to the other one, and they waste no time walking over to the front windows where a tense, whispered conversation takes place.

"Dad! Are you serious?" Liz looks like she's ready to crumble in misery, looking around like she's ashamed. "Why are you here? We talked about this."

Rose hasn't said a word. She's hardly reacted, choosing to stare silently at me. "It's not you I'm here for," I tell my daughter while gazing down at the woman I love.

It's all so clear now. All it took was seeing her with another man to know for sure this is the woman I was meant to spend my life with. The depth of emotion in my heart takes my breath away.

It was never just about her body or mine. She is my life.

"You know why I'm here," I tell her. "Don't you?"

Rose swallows, her lips set in a firm line as she shakes her head. So she's not going to make it easy on me.

"Fair enough. Liz," I tell my daughter, looking her way. "I should have been honest from the beginning. It wasn't that I didn't want you to come out tonight. It was Rose. Because..."

Please, don't let this be a mistake. "Because I'm in love with Rose."

"You are?" Rose whispers. There are tears in her eyes, making them sparkle. "For real? You're in love with me?"

"Head over heels. I've never felt this way before, but I can't spend another day of my life without it. I need you. Knowing you were here tonight made everything clear. You're mine, and I'm not letting you get away."

"That was all I wanted." She's laughing and crying all at once, brushing away her tears between giggles as she works her way out of the booth and throws herself into my arms. The peace that washes over me as soon as I've locked her in my embrace proves how right this is. How necessary she is to my happiness, my life.

There's someone else I can't forget, though. With Rose in my arms, I look at my daughter for forgiveness. She's wide-eyed, staring at us with her brow furrowed and her mouth slightly open. "I'm sorry, sweetheart," I murmur while she gapes at me. "I can't help it. I tried, but there was nothing I could do."

Pain begins to lance my heart once she covers her mouth with one hand. There was always going to be a sacrifice, wasn't there? I only wish it wasn't her.

Except she isn't crying or holding back a scream.

She's laughing. "Duh!" She claps her hands, laughing merrily. "Finally!"

"Wait. What?" Rose turns to her, hands on her hips. "Don't even pretend you know about this."

"I've known for ages! Are you kidding me? You're always looking at him, he was always looking at you, it was obvious. I almost felt like I should apologize just for being in the same room with the two of you." She runs a hand under her eyes, crying with laughter. "But it was obvious neither of you had the balls to go through with anything, so I figured I'd wait and see what happens."

Rose picks up a napkin and throws it at her. "I can't believe you! I've been twisting myself in knots over this!"

"Sorry," Liz tells her, snorting on a laugh. "I couldn't help it."

"And you're alright with this?" I ask, a little overwhelmed. My kid saw it. How blind have I been?

Her smile is warm, wise. "Yeah. I've had some time to think about it, and I guess some things you can't help. It's obvious this is the real thing, and I'm not going to get in the way of it. I just want you both to be happy, because I love you."

"Do you mind if I cut out early?" Rose asks her. "I hate leaving you alone."

Liz only pretends to gag. "Oh, my God, please. Go. I'll be loud when I come home so you know you're not alone anymore." She makes a big deal of rolling her eyes before waving to the boys across the room, gesturing for them to come back.

"Give me a second." With Rose's hand in mine, I turn toward the pair approaching the table. "You two. I remember you, and I know your parents. If either of you hurt my daughter, I'll cut your fucking balls off. Got it?"

"Yes, sir," they both murmur, hands folded in front of them and looking contrite.

“Okay. So long as we understand each other.” While still holding Rose’s hand, I leave the restaurant with her at my side.

The way she’s meant to be.

The way she always will be.

CHAPTER 8

ROSE

I have never been this happy. I didn't know it was possible for a person to be this happy. Sitting next to him, knowing he wants me. He wants to be out in the open with it and everything. I've never felt so proud as I do now, riding home with him. I want the world to know.

"You know I didn't really want to go." I feel like he already knows, but I want to say it anyway. Just to be sure.

"I hoped so." He reaches over and closes a hand over my knee. Even through my jeans, his touch is searing. "I saw it when I got there. You looked miserable."

"I was, but I was trying to prove a point."

"And you did."

"Don't be mad."

"I'm the furthest thing from mad." He gives my knee a squeeze, chuckling. "You opened my eyes. I should thank you for that."

"I can think of a way for you to thank me."

He laughs, shaking his head. "I've created a monster. Whatever happened to my innocent Rose?"

"You didn't put anything in my head that wasn't there already." I take his hand and slide it farther up my leg, between my thighs. "But now that I have you where I've always wanted you, I'm not going to waste any time."

"I think I've gone to heaven."

It feels like forever before we reach the driveway, where he puts the car in park before immediately turning to me, taking me by the back of the neck and pulling me in close. “I don’t love you. I fucking love you.”

The strength of his kiss surprises me, but my body reacts the way it always does. Immediately, I feel myself weakening, like I’m melting against him. My pulse picks up speed, my skin tingling, my pussy going warm and moist all at once. Like I’m always waiting for him, ready to go wherever he wants to take me.

“In the house. Now.” He kills the engine, then flings the door open hard enough that I would think he’s pissed if I didn’t know better. No, he’s just in that much of a hurry to get inside.

So am I, and my heart is bursting by the time we both stumble in. He kicks the door closed and flips the lock almost carelessly before grabbing me and hauling me in close. “I could devour you here and now,” he whispers while his fingers press into my ass and crush me against him. He’s already hard, practically bursting out of his pants and grinding against me.

He’s all mine. All of him. I have everything I want.

I can’t keep my hands off him just like he can’t stop touching me, and by the time we reach the stairs, I’m unbuttoning his shirt. He never even got changed after work. He was too busy losing it over me going out.

“Just rip the fucking thing,” he growls before doing it himself. Buttons pop off and scatter across the floor, and I take advantage by running my hands over his chest and down the ripples of his abs. I’ll never get enough of touching him.

“I’m going to defile you in every room of this house,” he vows, leaning over me until I sink to the stairs. When he works his hands under my sweater, I slip it off and throw it to the side while he pulls off my bra and buries his face between my boobs.

His desperation is a turn-on. He’s this needy for me. He can’t wait for me to get my clothes off.

All I can do is run my fingers through his hair as his touch and his kiss start a fire in my core. I can't help but work my hips, grinding them in circles, hoping to make contact with something, anything that will end the ache he caused.

Being with those boys earlier only reminded me what Nolan does to my body without ever touching me. Just the thought of him is enough, or a single look, or a smile.

What's between us is magic.

The hand he wedges between my thighs is another kind of magic. He presses in, pushing the seam against my clit. "I'm going to make you scream my name in every room. In every position. With my tongue up your cunt and my cock in your ass. I'm going to have all of you, and you will never forget who you belong to."

All I can do is nod, lost under his spell. I would agree to anything so long as he doesn't stop touching me. So long as he never stops.

"And we'll have a life together." He laps at my skin—my throat, nipples, whatever he can reach while I ride his hand. "A future. You and me."

"Yes!" I cry out, tugging his hair, straining.

"And you're going to have my baby. Aren't you?"

"Yes, Nolan! God, yes!" Even now, so close to the edge, I see it in my mind's eye. I can imagine carrying his baby as they grow inside me, then watching him adore our little girl or boy.

"Because you're mine. Every fucking part of you is mine." He presses firmly, almost painfully, but it's all I need to get me over the edge and make me scream again. It's like every wall left between us is gone, and there's nothing but this. The pleasure he brings me. The way he makes me feel safe in his arms.

When I open my eyes, he's looking down at me, and I forget to breathe. I have no idea how many times I've wished for this. How many times have I seen it in my head and told

myself it would never happen, that it could only be a dream? For years.

I'm so lucky. How many people ever get this? Knowing where they belong. They've found their person and will never go unloved another day.

"I love you, Nolan." I swear, my heart's going to explode. I almost can't believe it's real, and I'm actually saying those words to him.

I watch the love shine from his face. "I love you. My precious Rose."

It isn't all tenderness, though. Not once he kisses me and the heat flares to life again. He takes off my ankle boots while I unzip my jeans and shove them down along with my panties. I don't care where we are. I will die without him inside me. "Fuck me," I whisper, reaching for him and clutching him to me.

Our eyes meet, and I would swear electricity jumps between us. "On your knees. Roll over."

"Like this?" I do as I'm told, then wiggle my ass. My knees are on the second step, my hands above me, and I lift my hips to show myself off. Everything that belongs to him.

Having him on the same page as I am shouldn't be surprising. "And who does this belong to?" he asks, the sound of his zipper making my breath catch in anticipation.

"You. Only you."

"So pretty." He drags his fingers between my lips, parting them, then dipping them deep inside, only to pull out again.

I gasp in surprise and pleasure when he keeps moving, finally coming to a stop at my clenched asshole. "What are you doing?" I ask with a gasp, but the question ends on a moan when he traces circles around my entrance.

"You said you belong to me."

He's right. I did. Every part of me.

And that's why I lean into his touch, closing my eyes and focusing on the way he makes me feel. "Are you letting me in here tonight?" he whispers, pressing with his thumb, so close to entering.

How could I say no when it feels so good? It may be wrong and dirty, but that only makes me want it more. "Yes. Take all of me."

I'm watching over my shoulder as he steps up behind me, his thick, veiny dick in hand. I barely register the pressure against my pussy before he's inside me, rocking me forward. The angle is insane, letting him go deeper than before. Right away, I tighten around him. Like even my pussy is claiming him the way he's claiming me.

"Oh fuck, that's good," he grunts, grabbing my hips and pulling me back against him while he drives deep into my core. "Christ, so tight."

I go with him, moving against him, riding him like he's riding me. "That's right," he growls in approval, digging his fingers into my flesh until I groan in pain and pleasure. "Fuck yourself on my cock. Make yourself come all over me."

Something about his words unleashes something deep down inside me, something dark and wild. It scares me a little, but I welcome it, too, tightening my grip on the stairs above me and planting my knees more firmly before bouncing up and down on his length, riding him hard like my instincts tell me to.

"Like this?" I ask. "Is that right?"

"Fuck, yes! So fucking hot." He runs a hand up and down my back before twisting my hair in his fist. He leans down over me, biting the back of my neck before running his tongue over the same spot. The pain mixes with pleasure, and that, plus the way we slam together with every stroke, wipes away everything else until I'm screaming again, letting it out with nobody else to hear.

He's mine, he'll always be mine, and nobody will take him away from me. The way it's supposed to be.

“Nolan!” I sob, moving faster and harder as it builds. “I’m coming!”

“Give it to me,” he growls in my ear. “Give me all of it.”

I can’t help it. I have to. I have to give it to him, just like I have to let out all the tension building in me. My moans get higher in pitch until I’m almost shrieking, and he loves it. He moves with me, grunting, and the sound of him losing himself makes me lose myself—until the tension finally breaks.

As much as I don’t want this to end, it’s almost a relief.

“My good girl.” He slows his strokes but never stops, and the squelching sound gets louder now that I’ve come. I’m dripping, wetness coating my thighs and making his hands slide over my skin. He pulls out and strokes my ass and my legs.

But he’s not finished. “I need you to breathe for me,” he grunts, massaging my asshole. “I promise, I won’t hurt you. But I need to fuck this ass. It’s the only part of you I haven’t had.”

“It’s yours.” I turn my head, staring him straight in the eye so he knows I mean it. “Fuck my ass. Make me come again.”

“If this is a dream, nobody wake me up.” He runs his hands between my cheeks, coating them in my slickness before playing with me again. This time, instead of holding himself to only teasing the entrance, he slides his coated thumb into my ass.

It’s so much to adjust to, the new sensations sending my thoughts racing in a million directions. It’s so wrong, but it feels so good. So dirty, but there can’t be anything dirty between us. Not Nolan and me. We’re beyond that.

“More, give me more,” I beg. “Give me your cock. Please.” I don’t know what’s come over me, but I don’t care. I want this. I need this.

“There’s a big difference between a thumb and a—”

“I trust you.” I look back at him, biting my lip. “Please? Take my ass? Make me feel good.”

“You are such a bad girl when you want to be.” Sure, but that doesn’t stop him from taking himself in his hand and dragging through my wetness before stopping at my hole again.

“Relax for me.” That’s all he says before easing his way inside.

Everything around me seems to shatter in the best way. I never knew, couldn’t have guessed, how good this would feel. Once I get over the strangeness of it, deep pleasure settles into my bones and leaves me moaning his name as he fills me one inch at a time. He’s so gentle, he doesn’t want to hurt me, but I know from the way he breathes he’s barely holding on. I feel him fighting to maintain control.

“It’s good,” I moan to let him know. “So good. Give me more. Give me all of you!”

“Only if you come one more time.” His thighs touching mine and our bodies locked together, he shudders before speaking. “Touch yourself for me. Make yourself come while I fuck this ass. Be a good girl and come for me.”

I can’t help it when he talks that way. My body breaks out into shivers while my hand finds my sensitive clit, still throbbing like the rest of my pussy. The slightest touch and even the trace of pain vanishes once I start moving my fingers over the bundle of nerves, pushing myself higher the way he’s doing to himself with every move. Every thrust.

“Give it to me,” I pant, my fingers flying over my clit as I move against him. “Give me that cock. I want you to come inside me. Will you do that?”

“Oh fuck,” he moans, burying himself balls deep.

“Come inside my ass,” I plead, already so close to the edge. “Please. Please, Nolan, give it to me.”

“Here it comes, little girl. You ready?”

“Yes! Yes, give it to me. Give me everything!” Because I am about to come, everything inside me tightens up while unbearable heat spreads through me. It has to stop. I have to come.

“Get ready... oh shit... Rose!” He slams himself deep the split second before a rush of heat fills me and sends me falling over the edge, weak and whimpering and shaking but so happy. Overjoyed.

He’s still inside me when he leans over my body, a hand on either side of mine. “I love you. My perfect, beautiful Rose.” The only words I’ve ever wanted to hear. The only man I’ve ever wanted inside me.

“I love you.” Right now, totally wiped out, that’s all I know. I love him. Just the way I always have.

The way I always will, forever.

EPILOGUE

Nolan

“*I*t’s going to be great.” Liz practically bounces in her chair with excitement. “It’s so beautiful, and there’s plenty of space and sunlight, and the block is supposed to be safe.”

That’s her opinion, as far as I’m concerned. “I don’t know if I like the idea of you living so far away.”

Rose exchanges a look with her before offering a smile that tells me what I already guessed: she promised to be on Liz’s side. “It’s barely half an hour away. Not even, when there’s no traffic.”

“I should’ve known the two of you would gang up on me,” I grumble. I don’t really mean it—sure, I’m nervous about my daughter moving away on her own for the first time, but it had to happen eventually. I know that.

I don’t have to like it.

“Once I start class, I’m going to need my privacy,” Liz argues. “There’s never any peace and quiet around here.”

I know what she’s talking about, and I know she’s exaggerating, but it makes my throat tighten anyway. We do our best to be quiet. The only time we aren’t is when she’s not here.

I understand what she’s trying to say. She wants to give us our privacy, too, as much as she wants to have her own. She’s

happy for us, yes, but that doesn't mean it isn't sometimes a little strange. I mean, I share a bed with her best friend.

“If this is what you want, honey, it's what I want. Just please, for the love of everything that's holy, don't ask your old man to help move you in. How about we call a company and I pay for it instead of sacrificing my back this time?”

She grins from ear to ear while bobbing her head. “Like I would argue with that.” I return my attention to my food, but not before the girls exchange a thumbs-up they think I can't see.

“There I was, thinking you girls could go to school together.”

“We will,” Rose assures me. “But I'll drive there separately. Nothing really has to change.”

“I'm glad I took the time to figure things out,” Liz decides, helping herself to more spaghetti. “Now I know what I want to do. I'm not just guessing.”

“Same here,” Rose agrees.

“With that marketing degree you'll earn, you could come work for your old man.”

Liz rolls her eyes while Rose nudges me. “What about my education degree? Could I use that at your company?”

“I'll keep an eye out for any positions,” I offer with a wink. I'd like to see her in plenty of positions, and none of them have to do with my company. I'd rather know she's waiting here for me at the end of a long day, but it's not that simple. Loving her means letting her have her own life.

It isn't as if she wastes an opportunity to make me happy, either. Sometimes I think she goes out of her way to do everything with me in mind. Cooking my favorite foods, keeping the house clean. She's more organized than I am, which is saying a lot.

And when we're alone, just the two of us...

I can't think about that in mixed company. The past several months have been a lesson in self-discipline. Training myself

out of the habit of thinking too much about my sex life while my daughter is around. Before long, I won't have to worry about that anymore.

As much as I'll miss having Liz here, there's something to be said for having Rose alone. Just the two of us.

Rose takes a sip of her water before blowing out a deep breath. "So long as you don't mind me going on leave in six or seven months."

I'm twirling spaghetti on my fork, oblivious... until her words sink in. "Why would you need to go on leave?" In six or seven months?

"That's around the time the baby's due."

My fork clatters to the plate, forgotten. "You're having a baby?"

"So the doctor says. I went today." She's biting her lip, her features pinched, before tucking hair behind her ear in a nervous gesture. "Are you... happy?"

What a question. "I'm fucking thrilled! Are you kidding? It's what I told you I wanted!" I slam my chair back before pulling her out of hers and wrapping her in a hug.

"I told you he'd be happy." Liz laughs, and Rose laughs with her. I hear the relief in it. Was I not clear enough about what I wanted for us?

I'm about to ask her that question when she answers it. "I mean, it's one thing to say you want it, but another thing to be okay when it happens."

"I'm more than okay. I'm ecstatic." Words can't describe it. She's given me everything I've ever wanted. "Thank you. Our baby. I can hardly believe this."

"Now I'm definitely moving out, no offense." Liz folds her arms, smirking. "Who can get any studying done with a screaming baby?"

She's not kidding me. She's just as thrilled as I am.

And as far as I'm concerned, this won't be our last baby. I plan to breed Rose as often as possible and fill this house with kids. They'll be a joy if they're half as beautiful, kind, and smart as their mother.

Like the joy my Rose brings me.

"I'm a lucky man," I marvel, holding her face in my hands. "And I love you."

"I love you," she whispers back, beaming.

"And I'm going to spoil the shit out of you."

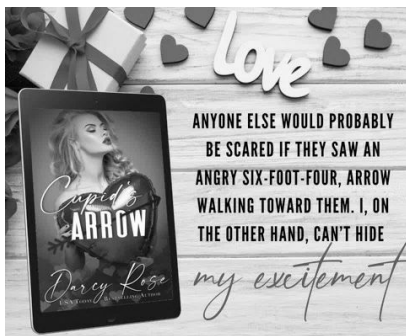
She giggles, arching an eyebrow. My beautiful, innocent little smart-ass. I wouldn't have her any other way. "Are you kidding? I know you will."

Thank you for reading Innocent Rose.

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CUPID'S ARROW

HE IS MY BROTHER'S BEST FRIEND,
MY CRUSH, AND MY OBSESSION.



I've spent years in love with Arrow. I'm also certain he doesn't know I exist.

Arrow is cold, sinister, and a criminal, but I can see the light shine through those cracks.

I know he can change, and I'm going to help him.

When he's released from jail, and my brother asks me to pick him up, I decide to make my move.

What happened next, I didn't see coming in a million years.

Darcy Rose

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